ninthWavesound: feminism, low-frequency sound and empleasurement

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Abstract

The *ninthWavesound* project fuses feminist activism and a DJ practice to generate an installation and participatory art practice aimed at corporeal, low-frequency, sound-oriented experiences. Drawing from sound system, rave and music festival cultures, feminist events are facilitated as environments for shared listening and activism. *ninthWavesound,* a sound system designed for powerfully amplifying low-end frequencies, is the first system of her kind in Aotearoa to be built, owned and operated by women∞. (In this exegesis, woman/women is extended to 'woman∞/women∞', utilising the infinity symbol to signal an indefinite expansion of the meaning of woman∞ beyond the limits of heteropatriarchal experience). *ninthWave* performs as an active collaborator alongside DJs, producers and lovers of sound and electronic music, hosting a variety of participatory events such as DJ club nights, *Lazy Susan Listening Sessions* and immersive meditative sound experiences. Events strategically foreground women∞ (and often include all genders) with the intention of creating safer and less hierarchical spaces. The project affirms the potential of individual and collective feminist imaginaries through the pleasure of low-frequency sound vibrations, proposing an emergent *empleasured sonic bodie.*

This practice-orientated research draws on a feminist paradigm of embodiment (Rosi Braidotti; Elizabeth Grosz; Donna Haraway), the concept of 'sonic logos' (Julian Henriques) and low-end frequency sound theory (Paul Jasen). The vibrational space created around *ninthWavesound* intertwines human and non-human bodies, sound technologies, and feminist subjectivities. Feminist and low-frequency sound theories converge in bass-enhanced sound practices highlighting the *knowledge of the body* and enabling *knowing through sound.* This knowledge is realised as feelings, sensations and intuitive responses. The neologism 'empleasurement' expresses how the pleasurable sensations of powerful low-frequency sound foreground the matter of the bodie in collective experiences. The shortened plural 'bodie' signals the multiplicity of the collective body, building on the phrase *sonic bodies* (Henriques).

The methodology of *low-end empleasurement* is driven by *pleasure activism,* where orientating towards pleasure is subversive, radical, life affirming and liberating, and is a baseline for personal and collective well-being (adrienne brown; Audre Lorde). Pleasure, oppressed and distorted for women∞ through patriarchal power structures, is re-imagined through the embodied experiences of low-frequency sound. Immersed in the vibratorium (Nicholas Ridout) of a *ninthWavesound* event, the *vibe* or affective collective energy facilitates joyous feelings of potential, through which new possibilities and ways of being otherwise can be imagined and felt in an expanded imaginary. As an act of experimental feminist empowerment, *ninthWavesound* offers opportunities for women∞ to participate in sound events as DJs, dancers, MCs and sound meditators. The affective scope of these research events is extended through a feminist approach to event promotion and invitation, which subverts the normative structures and male-dominated practices of these activities within the music and sound art scenes. *ninthWavesound* forms the foundation of a *nomadic social platform* (Braidotti) upon which a community of bass-music loving women∞ is formed.

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Attestation of authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly mentioned), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.
January, 2022

Declaration of collaborations

The design of *ninthWave's* speaker cabinets was developed in incollaboration with many thanks to Jack Karuza of Perfect Sound Solutions, Onehunga, who continues to generously support technicalities of running *ninthWavesound* system.

Becoming the sound system for *Wendy's Wellness* tent at Splore Festival 2020-21 is due to the belief and immense support of my good friend Wendy Douglas. The *Yummy Yin* yoga sessions were also in collaboration with and lead by Wendy.

Our proposal for *ninthWavesound* to be the sound system for the electronic stage at Earth Beat Music Festival 2021 was developed and expanded through collaboration with Katie Martin of *The Sensonauts*, Wellington. Our resonant kaupapas for gender diversity and minimum requirements of representation of women∞ were successfully expressed and taken on board by the Earth Beat team, the Saturday night of the festival becoming the *ninthWavesound meets the Sensonauts Takeover.*

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The *ninthWavesound* project developed out of the opportunity provided by AUT's PhD program and the Vice Chancellor Scholarship I was awarded. But more specifically, it eventuated because my supervisors thought building a feminist sound system as a social participatory art project was not only a viable, but a great idea! #coolestphdever! Greatest thanks go to my supervisors, Janine Randerson, Chris Braddock and Sue Gallagher for being with/taking me on this mad journey! Thank you for your continuing academic belief and encouragement. Also to my Masters supervisors, Andy Thomson and Monique Redmond; and Layne Waera, my AUT homie; and to all my studio companions, good luck and love to you all.

Neverending thanks go to the best technicians ever, as advisors and colleagues in the 3D Lab at AUT: Harold Barton, Angus Roberts, Glenn Maxwell and Harriet Stockman. (Being Assistant Technician is the best job I've ever had!) Also: Greg Thomas, Suzie Gorodi and Struan Hamilton for supporting my demanding technical needs and late returns.

This project exists only through the expanding *ninthWavesound* crew:

Catherine Ellis, Tamari Lazarus, the Lushelection Crew, especially Jane Treseder a.k.a. Janiac for always being there in support with love and the finest tunes.

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Many many thanks to all who turned up to a *ninthWavesound* event, there will be many more happening in the near future!

And dearest thanks to my family for never ending words of encouragement and the occasional dollar: Annette Tiffen, my Mum; David Marsh, my Dad; Adrienne and Suzanne Marsh, my sisters; and the amazing support from my partner Thiago Carlos de Melo, who will be right in there for the next epic project—baby Marsh de Melo.

Ethics approval

This research was subject to AUT ethics approval, which was granted by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) on 6 August, 2019, number 19/278.

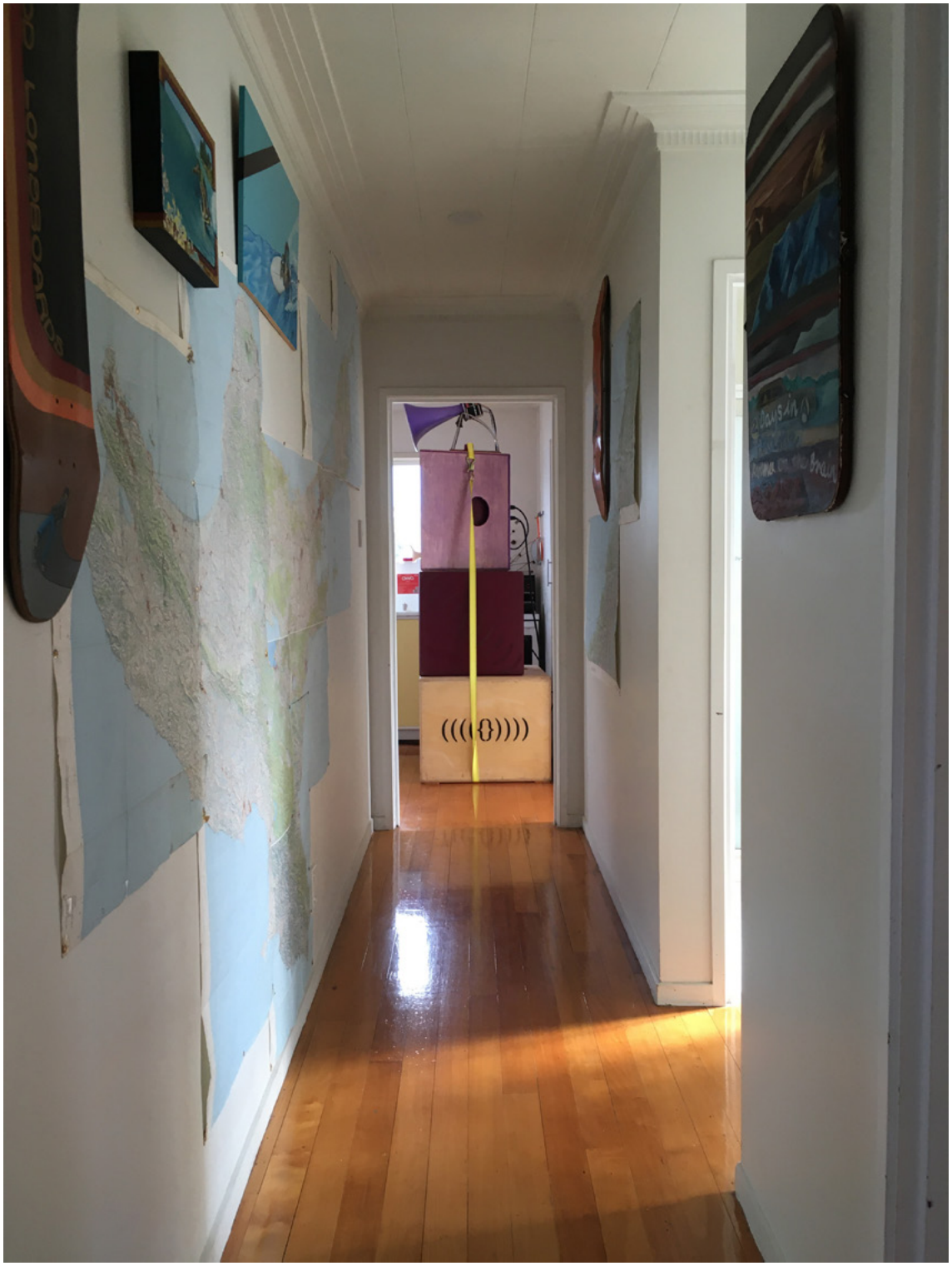

Figure 1: ninthWave in my kitchen in preparation for Lazy Listening Session #4, 23 May 2020.

Introduction

Introducing Laura Marsh a.k.a. DJ Laura Lush

Nō Ireland, no England ōku tīpuna.
I tipu ake au ki Te Waipounama, o te whanga o Ōtepoti.
I whānau mai au i te taha o Te Waipounamu, o te whanga o Ōtepoti.
I noho ahau i taku tamarikitanga ki te tahataha o te roto o Wanaka, i raro i te marumaru o te Maunga Tititea.
Ko Morva Graham rātou ko Warren Marsh, ko James Watson, ko Kathleen Wallis ōku tūpuna.
Ko Annette Tiffen rāua ko David Marsh ōku mātua.
Ko Laura Marsh toku ingoa.

I am a Pākehā cis-gendered woman∞.[1] I grew up primarily in Te Waipounamu/The South Island of Aotearoa New Zealand, and currently reside in Tairāwhiti/Gisborne City. At this time of writing, I am 43 years old. This project draws on my own situated knowledge as a vibrational and erotic body: I am a sensation seeker, I have oriented my lifestyle around the pleasure of sensation, including sensation sports—snowboarding, surfing, skating, dirt-biking—and I love to deejay bass music.[2] Experiencing sensation in my body is my greatest pleasure and *I cannot get enough of the physical sensation of bass music coming through a big sound system.* I have learnt that pleasurable sensory experiences are necessary to maintain my vibrancy, mental health and energy and without a regular dose, frustration arises and lethargy overcomes. Heightened sensational experiences are often heavily male-dominated activities. I have struggled to find enough women∞ to enjoy these activities with on a regular basis, and sharing with men often comes with heteronormative expectations.

[1] This project emerges from the 'situated knowledge' (Haraway, 1988) that I hold as a cis-woman who identifies as woman∞. The addition of an infinity symbol here (further explained on pages 20-22) indicates a wilful expansion of Woman beyond the normative limitations that the heteronormative world places upon the everyday use of that term. Because the term 'woman' by proxy also includes trans-women, '∞' is not needed to indicate this inclusion, but it is worth noting that this inclusive meaning is understood by my use of this symbol, while acknowledging that this is my perspective. Despite the 400-plus references to woman/en∞ in this exegesis, gender diverse, gender non-binary and gender fluid are welcomed into this project as it is about disrupting heteronormative spaces. However I hesitate to represent gender diverse folk under the term woman∞ as they may not desire to be.

[2] 'Deejay' is the verb meaning 'to play music as a DJ'. DJ is the noun, previously referring to 'disc jockey', that now means 'the person who plays recorded music for others via various technological media'. Today this usually means vinyl records and digital files, but can sometimes still mean CDs or tapes.

Figure 2: Still from the ninthWavesound Kickstarter.com campaign support video, online access, November 2019.

Figure 3: My artwork - Dreamcatcher 2 (2013, walnut wood, cotton thread, paint). Bowen Galleries, Wellington.

Figure 4: My artwork - Monument (2011, linen, wood, rope). Second Story, Auckland.

This project is driven by a personal desire to connect with more women∞ and gender diverse people who love the sensory experience of music and sound, as I do, and come together in an act of resistance to the patriarchal bias in the sound and music worlds of Aotearoa.

My herstory of artmaking spans the last thirteen years, and my DJ practice has evolved over the last fourteen. This project is an intersection of these two strands, with the sculptural dimension of my art practice enhanced through social activation. For my master's degree, my art practice was concerned with my position as Pākehā within the colonised cultural landscape of Aotearoa. Through woodwork, craft and video, I investigated the claiming of territory, ownership and 'the trouble with being a proud Pākehā' (descendant of colonialists).[3] Indoor spaces were activated by conceptual objects, banners and monument or museum-like installations; outdoor spaces were activated with flags, posts, tents and fences (see figures 3 & 4). The *ninthWavesound* project extends and fuses the making skills of my art practice and my love of sound and music into the building of a sound system. A desire to 'claim space' is shifted into a positive feminist framework through my role as facilitator of safer and more pleasurable spaces for women∞ to engage with deejaying, sound systems, and the pleasure of bass-focused music and sound experiences.

[3] My master's thesis project was entitled *The Trouble with being a Proud Pākehā*. See Laura Marsh, 'The Trouble with Being a Proud Pākehā' (Master's Thesis, AUT University, New Zealand, 2010), https://openrepository.aut.ac.nz/handle/10292/1431.

Figure 5: ninthWave and I, Snells Beach, June 2020

Introducing *ninthWave*

As the centre of the project, I introduce *ninthWave*. *'ninthWave'* is the name I have given to the stack of speakers and technology which forms the centrepiece of *'ninthWavesound'* events. When positioned as *'ninthWavesound'*, I refer to the entire system or assemblage of technology, sound *and* people that come together to activate a space. *ninthWave* is the first sound system in Aotearoa to be built by a woman∞, also the first to be run by women∞.[4] She is a custom-designed and hand-built, four-way, Jamaican-reggae style sound system. In this social art project, she is more than a speaker array—she can be understood as a tool of practice-as-research and, incorporating the nomadic thinking of Braidotti, a 'nomadic social platform', upon which a feminist community gathers. *ninthWave's* name affirms the potential of a future wave of feminism, where feminist resistance has shifted to an everyday integration of empowerment. As well as sound waves, and 'waves' of feminism, the name also reflects my relationship with the ocean as a surfer, where the mythical ninth wave is conjectured to be the biggest wave in a building 'set' of waves.[5]

As sound 'system', *ninthWavesound* is situated in a post-human paradigm, in which human and non-human elements are all deeply intertwined. *ninthWavesound,* as a post-human assemblage, offers a feminist space of resistance as a physical and conceptual 'vibratorium'. A vibratorium enacts the artistic process of channelling affective vibrations of light and sound, and is the circulation of energy "from performer to spectator and back again", as Nicholas Ridout describes in relation to theatre performance.[6] Similarly, the affective transmission of energy between the assemblage of sound system elements amasses as a vibrational realm of affects and is experienced as the 'vibe'. 'Vibratorium' therefore aptly describes a sound system event, where this affective energy exchange occurs between event elements, and is highlighted by the most prominent element, low-frequency sound, which intensively vibrates all matter.

[4] From what I have been able to discover, there are only a few sound systems in the world owned and operated by women∞. Out of around 5000 systems in the UK, only a handful have been built by women∞ (including: *Mousai, CAYA, and Rebel Rock*), possibly two in Brazil (one being *Feminine HiFi*), three in Australia (*General Feelings, Housewife's Choice, Honey Trap Sound System*). And according to Fiona Bourne, one in Germany, and one in Italy. So, simply to build and run one in itself is a significant feminist action.

[5] The story of the ninth wave as the largest and most dangerous in a set of progressively increasing waves is derived from ancient mariners' tales. This narrative is captured in the oil painting "*The Ninth Wave*" (1850) by Russian-Armenian painter Ivan Aivazovsky. State Russian Museum, St Petersburg. (1850, 221×332cm).

[6] Nicholas Ridout, 'Welcome to the Vibratorium', *The Senses and Society* 3, no. 2 (2008): 221–32, https://doi.org/10.2752/174589308X306448.

ninthWave is strategically anthropomorphised into a matriarchal figure and a technofeminist companion. As a catalytic matriarchal figure, she welcomes in lovers of bass music and low-frequency sound, open-armed towards all who resonate and support her kaupapa.[7] To me, she is also a child, 'birthed' through the power and skilful labour of my knowing body, and I resolve to always care for her and help facilitate her growth. For this exegesis, rather than using the distanced term 'participant' or audience, I have coined the word 'partycipants' to refer to the networks of friends and party-goers who are the shared listeners and reciprocal resonators with *ninthWavesound* .[8] The portable design of *ninthWavesound* enables the events surrounding these practices to be nomadic, while having four subs enables a full bass-heavy experience. Her tall stack positions the mid speakers and treble speakers to play over the top of a mass of humans for good dispersion of sound and my use of high-quality drivers and amps ensures an immersive, vibratory sonic experience. This exegesis will outline the process of her building, from idea inception to physical completion, the social platform that networks around her and her role in opening up the potential of empleasurement.

[7] 'Definition of "kaupapa"', in *Māori Dictionary s.v.* New Zealand: Longman/Pearson Education. Accessed 23 September 2021. https://maoridictionary.co.nz/.

[8] 'Partycipant' is a term I use throughout this exegesis to emphasis the entanglement of participants as being more than individuals doing their own thing, but instead being 'party to'. This refers to the sociality of the events in this research being affective worlds of intra-connection, activated further by the vibration of low-frequency sound, which concurrently realises the indefinability of boundaries between people and things.

Personal voice and positioning

> Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonised, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side, a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life, and new growth possible. It is that act of speech, of 'talking back' that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of moving from object to subject, that is the liberated voice.
>
> —hooks[9]

How I experience my 'self' has influenced how this thesis reads. This thesis expresses my perspective and my voice as a Pākehā cis-woman∞. In Aotearoa New Zealand, the experiences of women are still frequently unrepresented, or silenced; I recognise that I hold privilege as a descendant of white settlers of this country, as part of the majority ethnicity of a colonised society; I understand that the experiences of non-Pākehā women include further oppression. I recognise that my voice and body operate through a spectrum of masculine and feminine qualities. I have tried thinking and feeling outside of the masculine/feminine archetype to a gender non-binary position, but I find myself returning to my female body and my own experience as woman∞ while acknowledging a spectrum of gender positions for others. The feminine and masculine that I think and feel are shaped thoroughly by socio-cultural structures. Though I rebel against the constraints of Woman, I still desire to align with women∞, albeit in an expanded form. Therefore, I work with the yin/yang conception that within each of us we have both the masculine and feminine principles or polarities; these ebb and flow within us as a shifting spectrum rather than a binary division, and we have a right to express these and not be judged by their expression, or have them used to define us as being woman-like or man-like. As a collective energy system, we are currently weighted towards the masculine, meaning feminine energy has been repressed both within and as women∞, and also within men.

The balancing of my energies as a human involves 'binary' concepts, determined as such through the limits of our language system: masculine/feminine, outer/inner, thought/feeling, mind/body. My understanding is that these binaries are not separate poles, but exist inside and of each other, as Elizabeth Grosz's (1994) model of the möbius strip describes: a figure

[9] bell hooks, 'Talking Back', *Discourse* 8, no. SHE, the inappropriate/d other (87 1986): 123–28. 128.

where two sides of a strip are twisted and joined to create an infinite loop, where inside becomes outside and vice versa.[10] For example, the body is already sentient and the mind is already embodied—they are so entangled that there is no separation. The emphasis of mind over body inherited in Pākehā culture means people turn away from and suppress feelings and emotions, resulting in a reduced capacity for understanding the information that sensation can provide. Analysis and objectification, though useful tools, separate us from each other and our 'selves' rather than portray relationships, as Karen Barad has argued.[11] Our inability to express and share what we feel creates division and reduces our ability to care, and to show we are here, present, and accountable. The knowledge held within feeling (compared to objective analysing) is a relational response to our vibrational entanglement with all matter. The alignment of the feminine with feeling and the masculine with thinking prompts the questions: How can we be in touch with the feminine in a masculine-dominated world? How can we be in touch with our feelings and our bodies in a thought and language-led world? This thesis practices sensorial relationships, turning the thought/language/mind bias of hereropatriarchal culture inside out.

My concern with expanding normative conceptions of Woman (capitalised to indicate the nouning restrictions of cultural conditioning) into woman∞ responds to the current climate of discussions about gender.[12] In a non-binary or gender diverse world, foregrounding 'women', without using the term 'non-men/male', while being inclusive, creates complications. I started working with the term 'womxn', specifying 'womxn and nonbinary' to make an expanded notion of gender explicit. But, according to Cassie Barradas, though womxn is "an intersectional term intended to signal the inclusion of those who have traditionally been excluded from white feminist discourse: black women, women of colour, and trans-women [...and] nonbinary people", it is when this term is used to describe trans and nonbinary people it "becomes problematic". [13] As trans-women are women, they don't necessarily position themselves as 'womxn'. Though I formerly specified '...and nonbinary', this too can be problematic, as the people who don't identify as women, or womxn, may also not wish to be tagged into this gender grouping.[14]

I then experimented with woman*, adding a virtual sub-clause via an asterisk to describe an expansion of the meaning of Woman, and to express the intention that *ninthWavesound*

[10] Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994). xii.

[11] See Karen Barad, 'Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 28, no. 3 (2003): 801–31.

[12] Braidotti and Irigaray use Woman with a capital 'W' to indicate the narrowing of woman to 'universal woman' by mostly-male philosophers and psychoanalytic thinkers.

[13] Cassie Barradas, 'Why "Womxn" Isn't Exactly the Inclusive Term You Think It Is', Girlboss, 28 February 2021, https://www.girlboss.com.

[14] Barradas.

events are not limited to biological sex, but open to include fluid understandings of gender. The asterisk I employed was homage to and an appropriation of its use in 'trans*', in the "transgender phenomena, [where] the asterisk is used primarily… to open up transgender or trans to a greater range of meanings", as Avery Tompkins describes.[15] This expansion of meaning resonates with the intention of this thesis: to open up the limited parameters that a patriarchal construction of 'woman' has bound us to. But I now understand that I was making assumptions about how the gender diverse think and feel about being categorised. I can see that simply using 'woman' and explaining an expanded concept would suffice for an inclusion of trans-women, but my use of the infinity symbol operates beyond a desire for gender inclusion. I wish to foreground my notion of expanded woman in this exegesis with both a deconditioning and a literary purpose. I recognise that even I need to be reminded that any expanded idea of 'woman' is always already subsumed into 'Woman', as socio-cultural conditioning and gendered structures are all pervasive. Conscientious attention is applied to gender designations throughout this exegesis as best I can at this point in time.[16]

As you will see throughout this exegesis, I've settled upon 'woman$^{\infty}$', utilising the infinity symbol for an indefinite expansion of the meaning of woman$^{\infty}$, expressing that we$^{\infty}$ are often required to continue to exist under the sign, but desire to expand it, infinitely.[17] The infinite here represents the potential for there to always be one more expression of an individual 'thing', as Aristotle describes: "definite if you like at each stage, yet always different".[18] The infinity symbol is also a möbius strip: an inverted three-dimensional figure eight created by a two-sided strip with a single twist generating an infinite path where one side always continues into the other. Grosz offers the möbius figure as 'one possible representation' for a feminist embodiment, showing "the inflection of mind into body and body into mind".[19] The möbius strip, she continues:

> provides a way of problematising and rethinking the relations between the inside and the outside of the subject, its psychical interior and its corporeal exterior, … the passage, vector, or uncontrollable drift of the inside into the outside and the outside into the inside.[20]

[15] Avery Tompkins, 'Keywords: Asterisk', TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly 1, no. 1–2 (May 2014): 26–27. 26.

[16] Queer and trans theory powerfully questions gender structures, but I resonate with feminist theory that addresses the problem of Woman. See Chapter One for the Feminist Paradigm.

[17] I could have alternatively used ((((woman)))) to express the vibration that is explored in this project as a tool for indetermining; or woman^{9}, or woman^{ix}, to reflect a future wave of feminism not-yet come, expressed in the 'ninth' of *ninthWave*.

[18] Aristotle (206a32-33) quoted by Jaakko Hintikka, 'Aristotelian Infinity', *The Philosophical Review* 75, no. 2 (1966): 197–218, https://doi.org/10.2307/2183083. 199.

[19] Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism.* xii.

[20] Grosz. xii.

As an unbroken connection, and infinite expansion, woman$^{\infty}$/women$^{\infty}$ is therefore used here as a tool to express an opening to a not-yet and never-to-be finalised definition of 'woman', and therefore includes all others who find themselves existing under/working with the sign, or cultural construction of Woman. Lastly, 'woman$^{\infty}$' acknowledges that 'Woman' is limited by patriarchal conceptions of what *should* be, and that there is realm of potential *otherwise*.

As a final note on voice, I have often retained colloquial modes of speaking to the reader, rather than curtailing my voice to fit academic convention. This still involves an objective argument and theorisation but draws on experience and therefore voice as part of a methodology that will be comprehensible for my friendship and sound culture networks. This is also present in my day-to-day life through a practice of switching between my two 'personalities'—'Laura Marsh' and 'DJ Laura Lush'—a transition between that expresses different freedoms, such as a more provocative and alluring 'radio personality' I allow for as DJ Laura Lush. This approach to language is supported by the feminist bell hooks who argues:

> One of the major problems that we begin to face around a debate of theory is that people confuse theory with ways of using language, with styles of writing. They assume that the more complicated, convoluted, metalinguistic, and abstract the writing, the more theoretically legitimate it is. Such thinking has led to the devaluation of feminist theory written in more plain language that is accessible to a broader audience.[21]

[21] bell hooks and Tanya McKinnon, 'Sisterhood: Beyond Public and Private', *Signs* 21, no. 4 (1996): 814–29. 818.

Figure 6: ninthWavesound as the sound system for Wendy's Wellness at Splore Festival, Tāpapakanga Regional Park, Ōrere Point, Auckland, 20-23 February 2020.

Project questions and aims

This research aims to practically contribute to gender equity within the local music scene through forging a local bass-music community for women∞ which also welcomes all non-heteronormative genders. *ninthWavesound,* the major outcome of this research, has catalysed events in art galleries, music venues, and domestic settings that support a feminist ethos and imaginary. My research questions in this practice-led approach were initially sparked by the material feminist approach embedded in Grosz's question:

> Is feminist theory best served through its traditional focus on women's attainment of a freedom from patriarchal, racist, colonialist, heteronormative constraint? Or by exploring what the female—or feminist—subject is and is capable of making and doing? It is this broad and overarching question … that is at stake in exploring the subject's freedom through its immersion in materiality.[22]

As passionate maker, as 'doer', I have taken these words to heart, stepping outside the normative structures of the sound system and music scene cultures to build an autonomous social platform. As the research developed, the activism of *ninthWavesound*: feminist sound system emerged in the matter of low-frequency sound itself, or more specifically in the pleasure that low-frequency sound provides, prompting my guiding questions:

> *How might event-based gatherings designed and facilitated by women∞ and orientated toward pleasure and vibratory encounters, actively perform a feminist politics of embodiment? And what opportunities may be afforded because this politics of embodiment is enabled?*
>
> *How might new embodied feminist subjectivities emerge through participatory installation art practices of sonic immersion focused on low-frequency sound vibration?*
>
> *How does the affect and effect of low-frequency sound (with its experimental, intersubjective, multi-sensorial as well as pre-linguistic forces) assist in exploring/enabling collective feminist empowerment?*

[22] Elizabeth Grosz, *Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflections on Life, Politics, and Art.* (Durham, UK: Duke University Press, 2011). 61.

I also was drawn to Braidotti's notion of the 'nomadic' forming of subjects through which subjectivity is in flux and difference is foregrounded. How *ninthWavesound* could activate pleasure and work to expand culturally conditioned limitations of 'self' through collectively experiencing pleasure became the focus of the second phase of the research resulting in the questions:

> *How best to enable a nomadic social platform through an empleasured community of low-frequency sound-loving women$^{\infty}$?*
>
> *How to facilitate a ninthWavesound event where pleasure is an affective force with an activist feminist ethos?*

Rationale

> If knowledge is power, then understanding is liberation.[23]
>
> —Manu Aluli-Meyer

How do we best come to know and then understand the world? My Euro-Australasian heritage heavily relies on visual reasoning and division between things in order to establish clarity and fact, a tendency aligning with masculine/patriarchal culture. As part of a sensorial revolution, this project counters this tendency through foregrounding the senses of touch and hearing. This is part of a feminist activism and a 'sonic logos' (Henriques), revealing connection and relationality between things, human and non-human, that also makes what 'is' indeterminate.

This project argues that we are being denied our potential for becoming-women$^{\infty}$ when we are denied the experiences of pleasure. Pleasure is the key tool for liberation in this project, where it is both a measure and an activator of well-being. The vibrational body, as a body both present and in potential, is amplified, enhanced, stimulated, liberated by the pleasure of low-frequency sound vibration. *ninthWavesound* as a feminist sound system is the catalyst for bringing forth this as a possibility. In order for women$^{\infty}$ to experience fully empleasured potential in a sound system event, they need to be a lot safer than they are currently.

The demography of bass music events in Aotearoa is heavily dominated by men. Sound technology used in warfare has been adapted into the technology of bass cultures. Loud bass sound often continues to be aligned with warfare, as Steve Goodman argues, where sound is used forcefully, in "both seductive and violent, abstract and physical [ways] … to modulate the physical, affective, and libidinal dynamics of populations, of bodies, of crowds".[24] Bass when considered as a dominating power also aligns with 'male' militarism, and therefore a masculine imaginary. This project contributes to a re-gendering of bass as a space of feminist potential, for the purpose of expanding the feminist imaginary, where

[23] Manu Aluli-Meyer, 'The Triangulation of Meaning', *Hūlili Journal* 3, no. 1 (2006): 263–79. 275.

[24] Steve Goodman, *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear.* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2010). 10.

sound's 'seductive power', as Goodman also notes, can be used "to caress the skin, to immerse, to sooth, beckon, and heal, to modulate brain waves and massage the release of certain [pleasureable] hormones within the body".[25] Low-frequency sound is argued in this thesis to be good for well-being (on an empirical basis) and able to activate the vibrational and erotic body into new subjective trajectories through collective experiencing of pleasure.

Figure 7: Event poster for Femme'n'Bass, Winter Wilds edition, 13 August 2021. An event which actively promotes a safer space policy.

Enabling a safer space to experience the pleasure of low-frequency sound is a key practice and outcome for this project. 'Safer spaces policies' have started to appear in the local Aotearoa music scene as part of some event promotions over the last few years, with the intention of making the experience more inviting and enjoyable for all. For example, Auckland electronic music gig promotors, Friendly Potential, promote a 'safer space policy' before and at their gigs, primarily through on-site posters. Founding member Sam Harmon(y) explains their reason for doing so came from his observation that "in nightlife spaces the imbalance of power in society is amplified".[26] A member of the Friendly Potential team, Scarlett Lauren, reflects, "...even the concept of acknowledging that some people don't experience a dance floor in the same way as everybody else, I think, has had a ripple effect throughout".[27]

Safety policies appear more regularly now, and are passionately promoted within a certain sub-culture of events, operating in more gender and sexually diverse social groups. Some promotors will get on the microphone to announce and explain a 'kaupapa of consent', as Clare Gillard impressively did at an event I deejayed at—*Femme'n'Bass: Winter Wilds* (Moon Bar, Wellington, 13 August 2021).[28] This kind of clear voicing about boundaries and expected behaviour within the event helps to set the tone or the vibe, as does having a lineup full of women∞. In this context, the *ninthWavesound* project aspires to bring a safer, and at the same time more affirmative, joyful social platform to increase the pleasure potential for more women∞.

[25] Goodman.10.

[26] Matthew McAuley, 'Making Space on the Dancefloor: Friendly Potential Want to Change Club Culture', *The Spinoff* (blog), 18 October 2019, https://thespinoff.co.nz/music/18-10-2019/making-space-on-the-dancefloor-friendly-potential-want-to-change-club-culture/.

[27] Cited in McAuley.

[28] Event which I proudly headlined!

A methodology of low-end empleasurement

The *low-end empleasurement methodology* that underpins this project is designed to increase a sense of well-being through joy and pleasure, enabling women[∞] collectively to reimagine and feel the expansion of their erotic body, and, therefore, their own sense of political power and social agency through practices of empleasurement. In the vibratorium, where the vibration of sound subsumes a sense of self, the pleasure of the vibration is what then opens up space for potentially different versions of self, new connections and collaborations, and is what moves ideas and expands the imaginary.

The methodology developed in this thesis sits within a feminist paradigm drawn primarily from feminist theorists—Luce Irigaray, Rosi Braidotti, Elizabeth Grosz; feminist pleasure activists—adrienne brown, Audre Lorde; and complemented by low-frequency sound theorists—Julian Henriques and Paul Jasen, who all argue for an embodied knowledge. A regard for the agency of the material body in this project, often based on my own embodied experience, situates sensations of pleasure (or not-pleasure) as knowledge. As Grosz argues, it is sensation, a vibratory resonance with "(part of) the universe itself" that touches the body, opening it "up to some of the possibilities of being otherwise".[29] The experiencing of low-frequency sound vibration activates the vibrational and erotic body, allowing and practising access to this knowledge. Safe immersion in a vibratorium has the potential to reveal information or bring together disparate knowledges into new formations. The convergence of feminist theory and low-frequency sound theory is a new space for thinking about the activation of embodied knowledge. What low-frequency sound does to and for a body is experienced in the vibratory and social pleasures of the *ninthWavesound* vibratorium.

A *methodology of low-end empleasurement* is a reclamation of pleasure for feminist empowerment. Low-frequency sound activates the *ninthWavesound* vibratorium, a safe space within which to more freely experience the pleasure of low-frequency sound, and potentially reach a state of collective *jouissance* (drawn from Luce Irigaray) a key driver in

[29] E. A. Grosz, *Chaos, Territory & Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008). 80.

forming empleasurement.[30] The primary method for working towards empleasurement is the facilitation of a good *vibe*. In the *ninthWavesound* vibratorium (which indicates multiple types of low-frequency sound and vibrational events in galleries, homes, music venues and outdoor festivals) the vibe is a coalescing of the affective energy of all elements present.[31] Most importantly, this includes partycipants, *ninthWave*, and amplified low-frequency sound; but also significant are the environment, objects, decorations, smells, what's underfoot, what's overhead, and the intention behind the event. Each event is configured to shift the power dynamics of a space that is otherwise usually male-dominated in music culture, and arguably in the art galleries where iterations of *ninthWave* events have also been staged. Shifting power dynamics primarily includes considerations of the positioning of people (e.g., upon the ground or standing) and equipment, and amplifying the prominence of women∞ and practicing gender diversity.[32] One of the methods in the research has also been to create small group events for women∞ to test alternative spatial configurations and the affective potential of my works, including the *Lazy Susan Listening Sessions* from 2019-2020. *Chapter Five* also features specific interviews with partycipants of my events, their voices supporting my empirical observations of the vibe created and experienced.[33]

The sound system as a historical space of resistance is the enabler of activist, vibrational bodies, yet the body has been primarily male. A key thinker on Jamaican sound system culture, Julian Henriques, argues that "[i]n Jamaica and the diaspora, sound expresses not only power, but also a resistance to it".[34] Graham St John notes that raves, which are the child of sound system and carnival cultures, have been theoretically figured as 'anarcho-

[30] See Jane Gallop, 'Beyond the Jouissance Principle', *Representations, University of California Press* 7 (Summer 1984): 110–15.
Also *American Psychological Association Dictionary of Psychology*, s.v., 'Jouissance', accessed 17 April 2021, https://dictionary.apa.org/jouissance.
In French there are two words for pleasure: firstly, *plaisir* which in English can translate as 'pleasure-joy', "which is comfortable, ego-assuring, recognized and legitimated as culture". And *jouissance,* or excess pleasure: connoting *jouir* 'to come' in the sexual sense; an 'erotic ecstasy' or "pleasure that goes beyond mere satisfaction of an instinct. Such pleasure is seen as a subversive and destabilizing force".

[31] See Graham St John, *Technomad: Global Raving Countercultures*, Studies in Popular Music (London: Equinox Publishing, 2009).
Drawing from St John's exploration of scholarship around the meaning of dance music events, a vibe is: a "sacred collective *effervescence"* of the "*potential* inherent to the *vibrant* moment". 95.
For an in-depth development of the lived etymology of the 'vibe', refer to pages 94-98.

[32] Traditionally, the feminine is associated with the horizontal, and the masculine with the vertical. Henri Lefebvre starkly acknowledges this, arguing what "the vertical 'is' - namely, arrogance, the will to power, [...] a reference to the phallus and a spatial analogue of masculine brutality". Therefore, connecting to the ground, as 'base cultures' would have us do (see Chapter One, page 51), aligns with the feminine, and as I argue, turns us inward, potentialising a greater possibility for pleasure. In: Lefebvre, Henri, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1974). 144.

[33] Interviews and small group discussions were part of the research and cleared by AUT University's ethics committee: Ethics application #19/278—*ninthWavesound: sonic immanence and the empowerment of women*.

[34] Julian Henriques, *Sonic Bodies: Reggae Sound Systems, Performance Techniques, and Ways of Knowing* (New York: Continuum, 2011). 8.

liminal spaces', designed to provide a temporary escape and freedom from the 'consensus trance' of modern life.[35] Feminist intentions to resist the male-domination of the music scene often influence the curation of music for myself and my women∞ DJ friends, but as with sound system ownership, bass music produced by women∞ is rare. Seeking out women∞ produced sound and music and representing it adds to the pleasure of a feminist empowered practice. These vibrations of resistance and difference are reconfigured in this project to fuel the feminist, activist intention and potential of the *ninthWavesound* vibratorium.[36]

The collective amplification of curated affective elements in the vibratorium is designed to manifest a *vibe of empleasured potential*—an activist, energetic force of empleasured expansion, where new ways of being can be imagined and potentially realised. In a state of empleasurement—a collective experience of jouissance—our potential expands.

[35] St John, *Technomad: Global Raving Countercultures*. 147.
Also Simon Sellars, 'Hakim Bey: Repopulating the Temporary Autonomous Zone', *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 4, no. 2 (8 May 2011): 83–108, https://doi.org/10.1353/jsr.2010.0007.
Raves have been used in scholarship as examples of Hakim Bey's 'Temporary Autonomous Zone' or TAZ, (which "highlight indeterminate zones within late capitalism, everyday occurrences that refuse, whether by accident or design, to be incorporated into dominant narratives". However, Bey apparently didn't agree with this use of TAZ as a descriptor for raves.

[36] While I have begun learning the ropes of production to create low-frequency sound focused music and soundscapes during this project, the major creative artefact is *ninthWave* herself and my facilitation and DJ practice, rather than music production. But, as described in Chapter Six: Empleasured Findings, further development of my production skills in order to create original low-frequency sound orientated experiences is a future trajectory.

Chapter overview

Chapter One: A feminist paradigm of empleasurement outlines the feminist paradigm supporting this thesis and defines empleasurement as both an activist and receptive condition. I establish the impetus and feminist parameters for this project through a personal, situated narrative: my relationship with music and my involvement in male-dominated worlds. The pleasure of low-frequency sound vibrations experienced collectively is foregrounded in the development of an *empleasured sonic bodie*, the feminist bodie that emerges in the vibratorium of a *ninthWavesound* event. Sonic vibration and pleasure are argued to connect people and things. The sound amplification and DJ technology that makes this possible has historically been gendered; this is discussed through a sonic technofeminism extrapolated from low-end frequency thinking. *ninthWavesound,* as a reggae/dancehall-style speaker stack, draws from dancehall's sexually expressive nature as a feminist vibe of resistance to the limitations of what woman$^{\infty}$ 'should' be. As a base/bass culture, dancehall emphasises the bodily relationship with the earth, and the body's sensual/sexual relationship with the musical experience. The *ninthWavesound* logo ((((({})))) points in a similar direction; conceived from the embodied experience of a 'vibrating vagina' and displayed as symbol and poster text in the public sphere as the work *BATTLE* (2017) in urban Auckland. The essentialist challenge to the connection between the biological concept of woman$^{\infty}$ and vagina is discussed, and resituated as a relationship between symbology and matter. An empleasured feminist paradigm is established through the practices of low-frequency sound and an embodied feminism.

The early works of the thesis that helped develop the feminist paradigm and the final form as the *ninthWavesound* project are explored in *Chapter Two: The emergence of ninthWavesound.* Partycipatory works develop the physical and conceptual structure of the project as a 'nomadic social platform', bringing people together through social and vibrational pleasure with activist intention. This includes my artworks *The Vibrating Vaginas Dance Club* and *Jogja Jacuzzi* at Cemeti Art Institute, Yogyakarta, Java (2017), *PLEASURE* at Silo Park, Auckland (2017), and also the influential work of artists D.A.N.C.E. Art Club and Julia Croft. After the inception of the *ninthWavesound* project, her first low-frequency speaker or sub was activated in an art gallery context as *More Vibration Than We Think We Need...* at Papakura Art gallery (2018). This work explored the potential of low-frequency sound as a sculptural and interactive medium. I explain the processes of *ninthWave's* build, the development of her personality, the joy of her first outings and the feminist implications of my decision-making processes.

Bringing her to the world has resulted in bringing a pleasurable feminist activism into the local music scene.

The context of this project is embedded in the socio-cultural influences of traditional and diaspora of nomadic reggae/dancehall sound system, rave and festival cultures, and this is explored in *Chapter Three: Contextual soundings*. The involvement of women∞ in these worlds is examined, as well as the potential for feminist interventions of holding space for different ways of doing things in the music and sound scenes. The specific context of Aotearoa is also assessed. What bass and sub-bass, or infrasound, affords is explored through the works of artists Scott Arford and Randy Yao, Cat Hope, and Mark Bain, furthered by what the visceral impact of the texture of felt sound can open us to. The 'matter' of sound is relationally situated by extending the noun 'sound' into the verb 'sounding'. As a form of 'sonic logos' (Henriques), sounding is basis to a way of knowing, and I show how this resonates with feminist ideas around embodiment. Deejaying as a woman∞ includes specific concerns about the gendering of the role of DJ as male, and the lack of women∞ deejaying. Statistics and anecdotes back up these concerns. I explore the benefits of increasing the number of women∞ on lineups and having women∞ facilitating as ways to improve personal safety, to create a respectful vibe and to expand the imaginary.

Chapter Four: Empleasured Empowerment draws on adrienne brown's 'pleasure activism' and Audre Lorde's 'erotic' to develop the 'empleasured activism' of the thesis through low-frequency sound vibration. Several creative works are described in detail, focusing upon 'grounded' versions of the vibratorium: the *Lazy Susan Listening Sessions* (2019-2020) and the *Yummy Yin* (2020) *sessions.* I explore the role of social facilitation in my art practice, and pleasure in its collective potential. Strategies developed as part of the facilitation process are discussed, through both failures and successful research experiments, including at Oaariki's house party (2020) and the Winter Solstice party, Snells Beach (2020). For empleasurement to take place, the right 'vibe' must eventuate. A vibe and how it is created is reflected upon through raving, and through the transmission of feeling or affect between people and things. The chapter concludes with an acknowledgement that the facilitation of a nomadic social platform, built upon a methodology of low-end empleasurement, can shift the power dynamics of sound system events.

Empleasurement, and its role in expanding the imaginary through collective *jouissance* and ecstasy is explored in *Chapter Five: ninthWave Brings the Jouissance,* through the writings of Luce Irigaray, Rosi Braidotti and José Muño (who argues that through ecstasy we can step outside heteronormative time).[37] An empleasured vibe is created in the refined iterations of research experiments of the project: Splore Festival 2020, *Yummy Yin, Vibe Temple*, Briar's

[37] José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

40th, and Auckland Art Week's open night during *A Week of Vibrational Events* (2020). The penultimate event of the project, when *ninthWavesound* appeared at Earth Beat Festival 2021, demonstrates empleasurement in 'full effect'; the words of partycipants Janiac and Laura O bring the vibe to life in this last chapter.

Let's get this party started

Before this exegesis commences, I would like to describe an early moment in the research, when the first speaker built of *ninthWavesound* was an interactive installation as *More Vibration than We Think We Need* (2018) at the Papakura Art Gallery. The artwork offered the seductive experience of the vibration of low-frequency sound found in an electronic bass-music event and transferred this to a gallery context.

The 21″ subwoofer speaker sat in the corner of Papakura Public Art Gallery, made slightly more private behind two slight pink silk curtains. Upon the speaker was a thin silver cushion trimmed with soft pink binding. A vibratory soundscape consisting of only low-frequency sounds of 40Hz or below pulsed sporadically through the gallery. Visitors were invited to sit upon the speaker to connect with the source and feel the vibrations consciously with their bodies.

One afternoon, in the corner of the gallery, a tinamatua sat upon the large wooden subwoofer speaker with several of her group.[38] As the low-frequency tones were emitting from the speaker and vibrating the bodies and the room, she described what she was feeling to me through her helper who translated from Samoan: "I can feel it humming from my feet up my legs and through my body, it feels good, it relaxes me". She then began to cry but she did not appear distressed—just overcome with an emotion created by the sensations she struggled to further describe: "I never felt anything like this before". She explained later that it made her feel happy. This experience was also moving for me as I recalled moments of emotional release when being subsumed in the vibrational field of a sound system. The significance of providing a new space for the bodily appreciation of low-frequency sound expanded on from this moment.

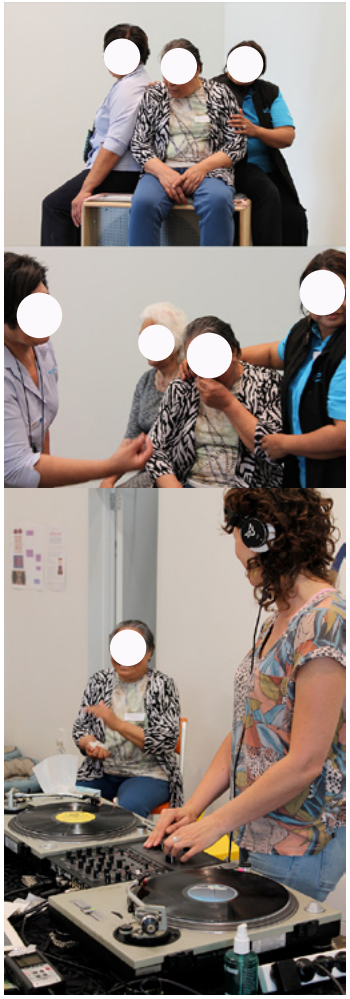

Figure 8: A tinamatua brought to tears by the vibrations of low-frequency sound. And then brought to dancing by some sweet beats. Images: Papakura Art Gallery.

[38] *Samoan-English Dictionary*, s.v. 'Grandmother', accessed 3 December 2021, https://samoan.english-dictionary.help.

Figure 9: The first subwoofer of ninthWavesound installed as More Vibration Then We Think We Need..., Papakura Art Gallery, 20 Oct - 1 Dec 2019.

Chapter One

A Feminist Paradigm of Empleasurement

The feminist paradigm of this project has developed through a personal experience of loving bass music with my whole body. The sensations of low-frequency sound bring me into my body, and my body is affected by the vibrations. The statement 'I embody low-frequency sound' aligns what low-frequency sound has to offer materially and conceptually with the sense that low-frequency sound brings me into embodiment. Such embodiment is the starting point for a feminist sense of being; the body is where we all must work from and into. The multi-faceted feminist paradigm in my low-frequency sound practice unfolds over the following chapter sections: first a personal narrative of my emergent love of bass music as DJ Laura Lush; then an unfolding of an empleasured sonic bodie, building on sound theorists Julian Henriques and Paul Jasen; followed by a positioning of the project in a sonic technofeminism and in base/bass cultures; and the discussion of the (((({})))) logo and the feminist theory that displaced it and reinstated it as meaningful symbology in this project.

The emergent feminism in this practice-orientated project affirms the potential of creation and expression already within partycipants, through affirmative considerations of the 'lived body'. This expands into practical activism to improve representation and practices of autonomy for women∞ participating in the local electronic music, sound system, and sound art scenes, while also affirming our sexual difference as something more than man's 'other'. This project contributes to an expanding feminist imaginary, for both women∞ and gender diverse people.[1] This imaginary is not just images held within the mind, nor a visually dictated realm of possibilities, but rather an embodied,

[1] Men will also benefit from the expansion of the feminist imaginary, but the bias for this project is a turn away from man and the masculine.

felt, and 'heard' or 'auralised imaginary'.[2] One where feminist desire to be as woman∞ has space to expand.

The pleasure of low-frequency sound is my feedback mechanism, a tool for measuring the potential affectivity of a sound system. My feminist desires as an individual DJ resonate with collective desire for change within the local and global DJ, sound system and music scenes. This demonstrates the feminist adage that 'the personal is the political' which extends into a feminist approach.[3] bell hooks (1996) describes how her process begins with "a location, a place, a standpoint" from which she engages in a theoretical process that then "returns us to concrete practice".[4] My feminist ethos is similar in cycle, as I go deep into the embodied 'real world' practice of making and facilitating, then turn to discover theoretical resonances, deepening understandings of each through each, entangling the knowledge of others with my knowing through practice, and a 'knowing through sound', such as Julian Henriques puts forward.[5]

This thesis 'mixes' 'waves' of feminism in an unorthodox way. The core feminist theorists who inform this research are diverse: from Luce Irigaray, Rosi Braidotti, Elizabeth Grosz to bell hooks, Audre Lorde, adrienne brown and Sara Ahmed. Each of these feminist thinkers speak of our lives as 'Women'; constrained, limited, and oppressed by a patriarchal system, yet they offer affirmative feminist practices where we regain autonomous ground. To briefly summarise the value of multiple 'waves' of feminist approaches to the *ninthWavesound* project: Lorde and brown highlight how pleasure—the erotic—has been/is denied to us through patriarchy and capitalism, but it is a force that women∞ can use to reclaim our power; Ahmed and hooks confront gendered power dynamics; Braidotti, Irigaray and Grosz expand the potential of 'becoming-woman' through a theory of sexual difference, and the 'virtual feminine' or the feminist imaginary. For if it cannot be imagined, then it cannot become 'real'.

This project's feminism affirms and expands imaginings and auralisings through the technologies of sonic pleasure and what this technology of sound amplification enables

[2] Pauline Oliveros, 'Auralizing in the Sonosphere: A Vocabulary for Inner Sound and Sounding', *Journal of Visual Culture* 10, no. 2 (August 2011): 162–68.

[3] Christopher J. Kelly, 'The Personal Is Political | Description, Origin, & Analysis', in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed 18 December 2020, https://www.britannica.com/topic/the-personal-is-political.
The *personal is the political* "is the basic assertion that lays the foundation of feminist morality", a basis for a feminist acknowledgment of the self, all selves, into society and into the political construction of society, the term became popular following the publication in 1970 of an essay of the same name by American feminist Carol Hanisch, who argued that many personal experiences (particularly those of women) can be traced to one's location within a system of power relationships.

[4] bell hooks and Tanya McKinnon, 'Sisterhood: Beyond Public and Private', Signs 21, no. 4 (1996): 814–29. 818.

[5] Julian Henriques, *Sonic Bodies: Reggae Sound Systems, Performance Techniques, and Ways of Knowing* (New York: Continuum, 2011).

the body to experience, to do, and to be collectively, as an *empleasured sonic bodie.* The technology of sound amplification is 'the machine' that enables building of a pleasurable energy matrix, or an empleasured sonic bodie in an empleasured vibe, through the amplification of sound—especially low-frequency sound. All other sound systems in Aotearoa New Zealand, at this moment, are owned and run by men, and most audio engineers are cis-male. Positioning *ninthWavesound* as a 'feminist' sound system immediately challenges this status, reclaiming the technology as a technofeminist tool, providing a space of resistance to the dominant norm, and freedom to use the 'tool/machine' in ways different to the 'usual' way. In addition, bass cultures, particularly that of Jamaican dancehall are briefly introduced in this chapter to ground this project in the roots of what an embodied experience of sound system culture can offer women[∞] and their sexual expression.

First, my personal journey to becoming a DJ; expressing how my personal is political.

Figure 10: Me deejaying the Lushelection radio show at BaseFM, circa 2011. Image by Oaariki.

Becoming DJ Laura Lush

In 1987, at the age of nine I was given a Walkman so that my parents wouldn't have to listen to Wham, Janet Jackson and Kylie Minogue on repeat (but they still had to hear me sing!).[6] Ages ten to thirteen I learnt several instruments (but unfortunately was never inspired to practice). In my tweens I took Jazz Ballet classes but preferred to dance freely around the lounge. At fifteen I discovered raving. It was the era of the Jungle genre and I surrounded myself with others who loved to go as hard as me on the dancefloor. In mid-1990s Christchurch there were regular warehouse raves in the city, and outdoor raves in natural limestone rock-formed amphitheatres in the Canterbury hills. My late teens found me in the mountains snowboarding, pushing my body to different extremes; we were listening to Hip Hop and R'n'B. When I arrived in Auckland in 2007, I felt very much at home in the local music scene which celebrated a soul-filled beat, expanding my love of genres into soul, funk and reggae.

In Auckland, 2008, I had a DJ boyfriend (like many women of my era who have become DJs). One night I was watching him deejay, and after a few transitions between tracks I thought: "Is that all you do? ... and you get paid how much?"[7] I gathered a few second-hand records and hustled my first set for a private party. *It went off.* I became *DJ Laura Lush.* For the next ten years I played Hip Hop, R'n'B, soul, funk, reggae and epic 90s house anthems in bars and restaurants, and deejayed at themed gigs. In the late 2000s in Auckland, a city rife with DJs, there were a mere handful of women DJs working the scene. Stepping into the business of the DJ scene was intimidating and caused me terrible anxiety, but if I was available, I always said 'yes!' and 8/10 times I enjoyed myself immensely. My lack of self-confidence was entangled with debilitating gender-related self-talk, but it was a hurdle I had previously practised climbing over through participating in the male-dominated sports of skating, snowboarding and surfing—these experiences helped to manage my anxiety as a DJ. Part of the impetus for this project is to provide a supportive space for women to practice overcoming or to feel less fear and anxiety when they choose to enter the DJ realm.

[6] Specifically: Wham, *The Final* (1986), Kylie Minogue's *The Kylie Collection* (1988), Janet Jackson's *Rhythm Nation* (1989).

[7] The going rate in 2008 was $80/hour cash in hand. They were good days.

Tomboy: Restricted potential

As a female participant in sports worlds, I have often been called a 'tom-boy': a word which in itself encapsulates the pervading sexism of our culture here in Aotearoa. Feminist scholar Sara Ahmed recognises how "a not-girly girl [being] called a tomboy teaches us how restricted 'girl' can be as a category of emergent personhood".[8] For when there is a lineup of men standing behind the decks exhibiting masculine-egos, it takes extra confidence as a woman accustomed to gender restrictions to step into their midst and hold ground. In a sexist culture, such as exists in Aotearoa, the potential of sexual harassment and discriminatory bias against women is common.[9] The tendency to retreat, which I have felt in myself, is a strategy for keeping safe, but also reflects what I now understand to be 'conditioning'.[10]

The deep extent of our cultural conditioning was first brought to my attention by second wave feminist Germaine Greer in her book *The Female Eunuch*. Greer wrote, "women must learn how to question the most basic assumptions about feminine normality in order to reopen the possibilities for development which have successively been locked off by conditioning".[11] My own conditioning became apparent as I reflected upon 'how' I and other women 'did' the board sports I mentioned. I would have previously described how women, including myself, 'act' or 'move' compared to men, as 'girly', but now I understand the difference as a restricted sense of an embodied self in the world. I see conditioning as a significant part of why women don't vie to take up space as DJs in the local scene. (The gendering of technology is also part of this as I explain later in the chapter). Iris Marion Young, in her essay *Throwing Like a Girl,* explored what it is that makes a girl throw 'worse'

[8] Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*. (Duke University Press: Durham, NC, 2017). 53.
A woman who enjoys these sensation sports, or making things out of wood, or DJing, seems to require being 're'-gendered into a 'boy'. The gendering of these activities into 'male' sports matters—to myself and many women[∞] I know, who suffer a crisis of confidence with the imagined or projected thoughts of unfamiliar men judging them through a gender lens. Anxieties and imaginaries around being or not being the 'right' kind of gender develop from a lifelong build-up of sexist experiences and patriarchal expectations. Of course, we can never actually know if anyone is thinking these thoughts. But the effect of even just a perceived judgement upon my actions has a real effect, distracting me, and holding me back from giving my all and expressing myself to my fullest. I recognise that there are confident women out there who may be untouched by these kinds of anxieties. But I do wonder if as many men suffer like this? I'm sure some do.

[9] Refer C Hoad and O Wilson, 'Gender Diversity Among Aotearoa/New Zealand's APRA AMCOS Membership' (Wellington: Massey University, 2020), https://nzmusic.org.nz/media/uploads/Amplify_Aotearoa_Gender_Diversity_Report.pdf.
Within the Aotearoa New Zealand music scene, sexual harassment is not unusual.

[10] This may be attributable to my generation, as I recognise that there is a different generation coming through, and even over the last few years of this project I have seen a radical change taking place through collective callout culture taking hold, e.g., the #metoo movement.

[11] Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch*. (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1971). 17. Though Germaine Greer is controversial today in the feminism-o-sphere with her views on defining 'woman', I pay respect to the pioneers of modern-day feminism.

than a boy.[12] Young argued that the main difference was that women suffer from "a failure to make full use of the body's spatial and lateral potentialities", through a subconscious perception of an embodied constriction developed through a layering of the social and the structural.[13] In other words, we are expected to take up less space, and this has a powerful effect on our sense of being in the world.

This inability to expand into or beyond a conditioned, restrained sense of a physical self, limits my imaginings and therefore the possibility of fully experiencing the potential of my body. My sense of self has in part developed through the barrage of 'perfect' images and ideas of the 'ideal' woman our culture provides, and the repetitive iterations of witnessing mostly men, rather than women, in action—reinforcing activities as masculine. My self-consciousness—sometimes shiftable, sometimes immovable—is an ongoing analytical objectification of self through the imagined eyes of others, an externalised existence rather than existing from within. We are affected by bodies surrounding us; hence this project's impetus to facilitate different kinds of bodies to be prominent in a *ninthWavesound* event.

A joyful relief came from the realisation that though I have been unconsciously absorbing sexist ideals which have helped form my negative mental bias about my abilities, this has been trained into me, which, most importantly, means that there is always space to re-train, learn differently, think otherwise. 'Conditioning' is key to understanding sexism as a system of oppression that operates both within and throughout our socio-cultural realms, and it is what the *ninthWavesound* project hopes to help dislodge, in a corner of the music scene, through means expanded upon in this thesis.

[12] Iris Marion Young, 'Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment Motility Spatiality.', *Human Studies* 3, no. 2 (April 1980): 137–56. 142.
See also: Daniel Brennan, 'Surfing like a Girl: A Critique of Feminine Embodied Movement in Surfing', *Hypatia* 31, no. 4 (Fall 2016): 907–22.
In 2016, Daniel Brennan applied Young's ideas to women surfers, establishing that despite the framing of a surfer girl as a symbol of women's liberation, social structures continue to constrict women's ability to move at their most free while surfing waves: that, compared to men, often a woman surfer seems to be 'held back' in her movements, even with other mitigating factors accounted for.

[13] Watching the development of women's surfing over the last 25 years, I often lamented the 'feminine', less powerful, less aggressive style of shortboard surfing that women[∞] had, their moves less radical in less extreme surf conditions. I lamented this lack of ability within myself, despite being a strong, fit and very co-ordinated human. But there were a handful of exceptions during my formative days as a surfer, such as the four-times World Surfing Champion, Lisa Anderson, who did not seem to foster what was labelled a 'feminine style' and excelled to similar levels to the men. I never could embody the why of how she did it, but I optimistically looked to her as a model of my potential. Thankfully nowadays, at pro-surfer level, women are more-or-less just as radical, and are, since 2018, rightfully getting paid the same prize-money.

Figure 11: Sister DJs Lush & Magnette as PashJams, Rhythm & Alps, Cardrona Valley, 2016 - 2021.

Evolving DJ LUSH

Over the past few years, I have been deejaying regularly with my sister Adrienne a.k.a. DJ Magnette as *PashJams*. The opportunities to share the stage with another woman DJ is empowering, and I have met more women∞ duos during this project: *Kedo & Carlo, Funk Soul Sisters*. Currently, in my personal career, I'm only interested in deejaying for dancefloors at festivals or warehouses where people have come for the music. As I've developed my dancefloor 'sound', I've had opportunities to play at Splore, Shipwrecked, Rhythm&Alps and Earth Beat festivals, where I indulge in my rekindled passion for the 'old school' jungle of my teenage raving years, expanding into related genres such as dub, dubstep, steppahs and footwork, also booty bass, jersey club, garage, afrobeat and trap.

This rekindled passion for the rave, 25 years later, has brought me back to a self I had accidentally left behind. The women∞ interviewees of Maria Pini's ethnographic study of 'women who raved' in the 1990s reflected upon how they could be their 'true' selves in the rave. In this culturally liminal space they discovered a sense of freedom from "traditional fictions of femininity".[14] This resonates with me. As a teenager in the mid-1990s I was positioned as rebellious, as a 'tomboy', as described earlier. But in the rave, immersed in sound, in relationship with the music, I experienced a freer 'me', and deejaying takes this even further into an artistic expression of myself. Pini's conclusion from her study was that in this special space of the rave, an "embodied female subjectivity can be *otherwise*".[15] This project is designed to offer similar experiences.

Holding space for women∞: it began with a radio show

Not long after I began deejaying, I started hosting a show on BaseFM, a community radio station where the content of a show is the DJ's choice. My show, *The Lushelection,* ran for ten years from 2008–2018 as various iterations.[16] The requirement to 'show-up' weekly expanded my music collection, and my love and understanding of sound and music exponentially. For most of this time I hosted the show by myself, inviting guests up every few weeks to have a jam.[17] Alone, a radio show is an intimate experience, a personal relationship with the music; my sonic desires and resonances are reflected back to me. In the last couple of years, I had weekly 'show-ups' from my women DJ friends—Janiac, Scarlett, MISA,

[14] Maria Pini, *Club Cultures and Female Subjectivity: The Move from Home to House.* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001). 157.

[15] Pini.

[16] The first couple of years at BaseFM I alternated weekly responsibility with a woman DJ, Gemma Dickinson, and our show was called *The Tuckshop*. When she gave the show up it became *The Lushelection.*

[17] To 'jam' in deejaying means generally to take turns to play a bunch of songs each, and see where it leads. This can also be a solo journey. More formalised jam sessions are 'back2back', where you play one track each; or '2for2' or '3for3', where you play 2 or 3 each before handing controls over to the other or next DJ.

and Lady Jane—and through this we became *Lushelection,* the 'crew'.[18] Regularly sharing music with my friends is self-expressive and self-affirming. Resonances and peculiarities between us are explored through verbal and non-verbal expressions of mutual pleasure-taking in the detail and context of each track shared. In this sharing, understandings and affinities are discovered and community is formed. *Lushelection* formed a community base for this project, and the experience of sharing is echoed the *Lazy Susan Listening Sessions* described in Chapters Four and Five.

Figure 13: The Lushelection Crew: MISA, LUSH, Scarlett, Janiac, (Lady Jane absent), Auckland, 2018.

Just before *ninthWave* was built, *Lushelection* promoted a gig called *Run with the Wolves* (20 July 2018) at Whammy Bar (Karangahape Rd, Auckland). It was an empowering experiment which has informed this project. The line-up was women∞only: Wendy Douglas, Janiac, K2K, Laura Lush, Scarlett, MISA. We focused on dramatic but subdued lighting and enhanced the aromatics of the venue with a diffusion of uplifting essential oils. We promoted the event as 'respectful', and this eventuated. The gender spread of attendees was balanced, there was a good vibe, and we had great feedback and a great time.[19] *Lushelection* is now part of the *ninthWavesound* crew, most of us regularly DJ in Auckland and beyond—except for when we are having babies.

Figure 12: Flyer for Run with the Wolves, Whammy Bar, K Rd, Auckland, Friday 20 July 2017.

My passion for music comes into its own when I, or one of my favourite DJ buddies, is playing a set of curated tracks, with a solid bass-line, through a really good sound system with really good bass. The sensual pleasure and joy of a good session could quite easily, for me, rival the sexual pleasure of an intimate encounter. Sensual experience rarely gets discussed in our culture outside of sexual relations, and I believe this restricts the embodied feminist cause. Low-frequency sound indetermines the distinction between sensual and sexual. To clarify how this takes place in the vibratorium, I have coined the neologism *empleasurement,* to which I now turn.

[18] In 2018, I handed over the responsibility of running the show to the rest of the crew so I could focus on the *ninthWavesound* project; the show becoming Run with The Wolves. I occasionally still make a guest appearance. Gender representation at BaseFM has increased slightly over the last 13 years, but yet, of 62 different shows running weekly or fortnightly, only eight or 13% of shows are (at the time of writing) officially presented by women∞. (Refer BaseFM, 'Shows / DJs - Base FM', accessed 20 May 2020, https://basefm.co.nz/shows-djs/.) Interestingly, the station is owned by a woman. Having a radio show as a strong platform for our voices is significant to us for ourselves as minority DJ-women, and for the voices of the artist and producers whom we choose to represent. BaseFM has no prescribed playlist, so as a crew we often make a point of, but seem to naturally be, representing more female music producers and artists than most other shows. We consciously practice the responsibility and opportunity to be a channel for the voices of others.

[19] Our next gig was *RWTW presents Eris Drew* (a trans-woman DJ from Chicago). We took a similar approach to the first event with a similar successful outcome.

Figure 14: Run with the Wolves, event hosted by the Lushelection Crew Friday 20 July 2018, Whammy Bar, Karangahape Rd, Auckland.

An empleasured sonic bodie

empleasurement [20] (effect) |ɪmˈplɛʒəmənt|

noun *[mass noun]*

"the Empleasurement Effect"

1. to be in a process or state of the pleasurable feeling of expansive potential: being empleasured by a good vibe; *raving brought her great empleasurement*

2. a feminist desire to be through a pleasurable embodied knowing

3. experiencing empleasurement: a deep cellular intimacy with the shared pleasures of low-frequency sound, collectively experienced

4. a fully embodied experience of expansion and delightful potential brought forth by vibratory sensation in the company of others

5. an affirmation of your current state of being by the presence of open-hearted others

6. to evoke joy in immanence

// empleasurement entails pleasure and the erotic as reasoned knowledge; hovers in and between sexual and sensual; allows for jouissance to occur, opens to *potentia.*

This research draws on many dimensions of pleasure through key philosophers on gender. An underlying premise for an empleasured activism is a fun, joyous, pleasurable feminism. Pleasure is reclaimed and expanded to become empleasurement and empleasuring: reclaiming space for eros and the erotic, which function as 'life-affirming ethos', as described by bell hooks.[21]

[20] The neologism 'empleasurement' developed out of reclaiming and expanding pleasure beyond sexual gratification, beyond the need to rely on another's touch for the experience of pleasure. The Empleasurement Effect riffs on psychological effects, such as placebo effect or the Pygmalion effect.The Empleasurement Effect captures affirmative expressions of pleasurable embodied feelings of many kinds, including those for which our language has no words, where feelings expand beyond our languaged self. It occurs while being immersed in the good vibe of an event, the indescribable feelings culminating broadly as an expansive 'feeling of great potential'. The naming of the Empleasurement Effect came to me with a laugh of delight as I realised I'd managed to pinpoint what I ultimately desire to feel. This was a bringing together of my personal experience of raving/sound system events' unique abilities to create this collective feeling, blended with two decades of engagement with self-help books and spirituality. Through the clarification that this term brings, I gained a deeper understanding of what 'embodiment' means or feels like. As a methodology, I now had a conceptual framework developed through empirical knowledge, enabling greater access to some of the feminist theory that I had been resonating with.

[21] bell hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate Politics* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2000). 92.

Feminist Bibi Bakare-Yusuf also focuses specifically on pleasure in Jamaican Dancehall culture.[22] This reclamation and re-conception of pleasure is explored through brown's 'pleasure activism'. Collective enjoyment of low-frequency sound is a form of 'empleasured activism', and a methodology of low-end empleasurement, discussed in detail in Chapter Four. While Braidotti emphasises the importance of "revaloris[ing] the merry-making aspect of the processes of social change"[23]; brown argues that "pleasure is a natural, safe, and liberated part of life", and you cannot "repress pleasure and expect liberation, satisfaction, or joy"[24]; and Lorde (1984) positions the erotic as a life-force that has been oppressed in women, but can become a "creative energy empowered".[25] Although Luce Irigaray's poststructuralist thought emerged earlier in the Twentieth Century than the other key theorists, in Chapter Five, I draw on her argument that within jouissance, or the excess of sensual pleasure, that the feminine can be found.[26] Irigaray's futurity and concern with potential was influential for Braidotti, and I find parallels with queer theorist José Esteban Muñoz's proposal that in shared ecstasy an 'otherwise' future can be collectively imagined and practiced. Empleasurement encompasses these aspects of joy, pleasure, ecstasy, jouissance, and the erotic.

A capacity for multiple registers of pleasure is facilitated in the sound system event. This is amplified through a vibrationally embodied reminder of our sensual nature when immersed in low-frequency sound, whether this is bathing in vibrations while 'grounded'—lying or sitting; or 'vertically' partycipating in the pleasurable activities of deejaying, dancing, and socialising. Pleasure entails the active reclaiming of the knowledge of our sensual and embodied nature as humans, and our innate capacity to connect affectively with one another in collectively experienced low-frequency vibrations.

[22] Bakare-Yusuf, Bibi "I Love Myself When I Am Dancing and Carrying on": Refiguring the Agency of Black Women's Creative Expression in Jamaican Dancehall Culture'. *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics* 1, no. 3 (2005): 263–76.

[23] Rosi Braidotti, *Posthuman Knowledge*, ebook (Oxford, U.K.: Polity Press, 2019). Chapter 2.

[24] adrienne maree brown, *Pleasure Activism* (Chico, Edinburgh: AK Press, 2019). 13, 22.

[25] Audre Lorde, 'Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power (1986)', in Pleasure Activism, ed. adrienne maree brown (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2019), 27–35. 30.
"The very word erotic comes from the Greek word eros, the personification of love in all its aspects—born of Chaos, and personifying creative power and harmony. When I speak of the erotic, then, I speak of it as an assertion of the lifeforce of women; of that creative energy empowered, the knowledge and use of which we are now reclaiming in our language, our history, our dancing, our loving, our work, our lives".

[26] Refer Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman (1974)* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985).
And Andrea Nye, 'The Hidden Host: Irigaray and Diotima at Plato's Symposium', *Hypatia* 3, no. 3 (Winter 1989): 45–61. 54.
Andrea Nye summarises Irigaray's argument: "In [Irigaray's] view, women's liberation is intimately connected with the recognition of and indulgence in a specifically feminine sexual pleasure. This feminine jouissance is defined in contrast with a dominant masculine sexuality. Masculine sexuality is phallic, that is, active, penetrative, aggressive, focused on orgasm. Women's pleasure, on the other hand, is self-touching, interactive, heterogeneous, plural, and flowing rather than gathering to a climax". 54.

The sonic body

The personal narrative at the start of this chapter has shaped my becoming a 'sonic body': a site of a multiplicity of affects, experienced in immersion in low-frequency sound events. The body, as experienced in low-frequency sound at a heavy bass music event, is conceptualised as the 'sonic body' by Julian Henriques and Paul Jasen. For Jasen, "the sonic body begins in material vibration [where] it is always potentially the start of something more: an incitement to thought, movement, collective transformation".[27] This body is a "process, a vibratory eventness that is also always conceptual, and a site of creation", where sound has "non-human social agency".[28] For Henriques the sonic body is the site of 'sounding'—a vibrational entity: a DJ who evaluates what track to play next through an intuitive knowing; an MC working the dancefloor with their amplified voice saying the right thing at the right time; the audio-engineer who is fine-tuning the sound with a talent of nuanced sound perception; and the partycipant enjoying the event are all sonic bodies.

Henriques' sonic body "*knows* through sounding"; the entire body is listening and evaluating, sensing vibrations, but is also "a figure of sound triangulating the head, heart and hand of sounding".[29] A sonic body is also the event itself, *as* event—"distinct from an object"—it is a multiplicitous process of relations, of sounding, of social-cultural relationships to and in the event, activated by a sound system (which includes all elements, human and non-human) continually in flux.[30] In addition, Henriques' sonic body has "a distinct and different way of thinking expressed through sounding ... emerg[ing] from the intimate nature of the relationship between sound and embodiment".[31] This embodied way of knowing or being aligns the 'feltness' of sound with the feminist intentions of this project, taking the representation or prominence of women∞ in the vibratorium into deeper theoretical territory.

The empleasured sonic bodie

Building on Jasen and Henriques understanding of the sonic body, I suggest that my sonic body is feminist and multiple—bodie (see page 4). The experience of this collective sonic bodie in the vibratorium is that of pleasurable encounter with the affects of low-frequency sound and the event in its entirety. Pleasure has been registered in many events, but has often been hampered for women∞ by unsolicited attention, unsafe situations, large numbers

[27] Paul C. Jasen, *Low End Theory: Bass, Bodies and the Materiality of Sonic Experience*. (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016). 22.

[28] Jasen. 16, 35.

[29] Julian Henriques, *Sonic Bodies: Reggae Sound Systems, Performance Techniques, and Ways of Knowing* (New York, N.Y.: Continuum, 2011). 81.

[30] Julian Henriques, *Sonic Bodies: Reggae Sound Systems, Performance Techniques, and Ways of Knowing* (New York: Continuum, 2011). 19.

[31] Henriques. xxvii.

of men and masculine energy, and bad smells. The moments of greatest pleasure for me register feminist intentions and affirmative environments, such as *Vibrating Vaginas Dance Club* (Cemeti Art Institute, Yogyakarta, Java, 2017) and *Run with the Wolves* (2018). These experiences became the impetus for the development of the *ninthWavesound* project and a feminist kaupapa—a kaupapa of facilitation to enable the *empleasured* sonic bodie. This is a collective feminist bodie—found in the vibratorium of low-frequency sound events, revelling in the pleasure of low-frequency sound and the vibe created by collective feminist experiences of a sound system event. I position the *empleasured sonic bodie* as an energy matrix that participants extend into and beyond. This bodie, pregnant with an expansive energy, is found in the *vibe of empleasured potential* within which pleasure is a source of power.

The *empleasured sonic bodie* also develops a Spinozian conception of the body—where mind and body are not separate—an influence via Elizabeth Grosz' feminist discourse on embodiment.[32] A 'self', as a mind-body assemblage, is always already in interaction with, and changed by, the world around it—where self can never be the same self again or is always at variance with itself. The self in its totality is a 'function' or a process, as Grosz continues, reflecting the patterns imbued through "the body's own formal pattern and inner constitution on one hand and, on the other, the influence of 'external' factors, such as other bodies".[33] This resonates with Henriques's *sonic bodies* which highlight that in the sound system, knowledge is an embodied knowing, or is part of "relationships and dynamic patterns" which are forever in flux.[34]

Also building on Spinozian thought, Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd suggest that "the experience of other bodies can intensify our awareness of our own desires, joys and pains".[35] This argument points to a social entanglement such as we would find in the bass-orientated vibratorium, where human individuality is not experienced separately, but through others. Affirmative, collective processes are essential to an *empleasured sonic bodie*. Grosz's description expresses the active nature of the Spinozian mind-body assemblage:

[32] Grosz describes Spinoza's fundamental assumption that all is made up of one substance, 'infinite' and 'nondivisible'. This "[s]ubstance has potentially infinite attributes to express its nature. …. Extension and thought—body and mind—are two such attributes. …. Infinite substance—God—is as readily expressed in extension as in thought and is as corporeal as it is mental. There is no question of interaction, for they are like two sides of a coin. …. An act of will and the movements of the body are a single event appearing under different aspects; they are two expressions of one and the same thing. To every mode of extension there exists a mode of thought". In Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994). 10.

[33] Grosz. 11.

[34] Henriques, *Sonic Bodies: Reggae Sound Systems, Performance Techniques, and Ways of Knowing*. xxviii.

[35] Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd, *Collective Imaginings: Spinoza, Past and Present* (London: Routledge, 1999). 14, Taylor & Francis E-library.

> The organism or entity strives to affirm, to maximize its potentialities, its powers, its possibilities. This impetus is not simply an effect of its inner constitution but can only be gauged, actualised, in terms of the concrete options its situation affords it.[36]

What we, as a body or as bodie, might be able to do in a situation, changes when offered new potentials. *ninthWavesound* as a feminist sound system offers actualised shifts within the local music scene. Spinozian thinking sits in contrast to the Cartesian restrictions of mind/body dualism. Gatens and Lloyd, Braidotti, and Grosz all cite Spinoza to suggest, "we don't know yet what bodies can do".[37] In this project, the potential of our selves to be realised through affirmative and joyous sonic experiences with others, translates here into my phrase: "we don't know yet what an empleasured sonic bodie can do".

Figure 15: Janiac and Wendy Douglas meet ninthWave for the first time, Audio Foundation, 9 October 2019.

[36] Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism.* 11.

[37] Grosz. 123.

Sonic technofeminism

> Outdoor dance culture projects a future where the individual is swallowed into the body of the crowd, where participation supersedes spectatorship, and where the needs of the body are integrated with those of the head. It provides a space in which nature and technology co-exist in harmony.
>
> —Sharon McIver [38]

The technological advancement enabling a sound system to amplify sound to immersive levels dissolves the division between nature and culture. The matter of the body is moved, manipulated, by vibrational forces that have previously been experienced only through cataclysmic seismic or dramatic weather events. To deejay and to produce music is to become at one with the technology in the art of manipulating sound. To take pleasure in the vibratorium is to be joyfully immersed in technologically amplified vibrations of sound. This is a meeting point of human and technology, or nature and culture, as in Haraway's "naturecultures".[39] In Judy Wajcman's *Technofeminism*, technology is positioned as 'social fabric', or "a seamless web or network combining artefacts, people, organisations, cultural meanings and knowledge".[40] This project claims technology for feminist ends, drawing on both Wajcman's and Haraway's positions.

The DJ in the vibratorium becomes an integrated extension of the sound system. She manipulates the controls on the DJ mixer. The mixer enables the DJ to select the next track (while listening to the one already playing), and to then layer one track into another,

[38] Sharon McIver, 'WaveShapeConversion: The Land as Reverent in the Dance Culture and Music of Aotearoa' (Doctor of Philosophy, University of Canterbury, New Zealand, 2007). 196.

[39] See Donna Haraway, 'The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness (2003)', in Manifestly Haraway (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 91–198.
'Naturecultures' describe the "indivisibility of nature and culture", as described by Helen Merrick, [in] 'Naturecultures and Feminist Materialism', in Routledge Handbook of Gender and Environment, ed. Sherilyn MacGregor (Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2017), 101–14.
Naturecultures, as Grebowicz and Merrick note, "are central to Haraway's critical oeuvre", as part of a strategic move to 'queer nature', because the opposing binary of nature/culture is a Western convention. They further argue that the "diffractive work implied by naturecultures has implications for a whole series of similarly divided and productive dualisms in Western thought: sex/gender, human/nonhuman, self/other, and material/semiotic". In Margret Grebowicz, Helen Merrick, and Donna Jeanne Haraway, *Beyond the Cyborg : Adventures with Donna Haraway*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013). 18, 23.

[40] Judy Wajcman, *Technofeminism* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2004). 106.

manipulating treble, mids and bass frequencies to do this smoothly. The DJ mixing tracks, 'becomes' a mixer, while using the electronic mixer device. A DJ at one with the technology uses the mixer as a musician uses their instrument, enacting a seamless instinctual performance of human-machine. Haraway's description of the cyborg is apt: "a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism...".[41] The organism extends to the entire sound system—DJ, crew, technology—becoming part of the technologically mediated relation between DJ and dancer, or sound artist and partycipant, facilitator and event, working to manipulate an empleasured vibe.

As a technology-dependent medium, rather than a medium requiring brute physical strength, deejaying should be just as accessible to women as it is to men. But, as Anna Gavanas and Rosa Reitsamer point out: "the history of music, regardless of genre, has been shaped by a mutually constituting relationship between technology and masculinity, with exclusionary effects for women who wish to become musicians, DJs and/or music producers".[42] A poignant example is that for boys and men, being in a band or being bedroom producers builds up their masculinity, whereas for girls and women, doing the same means they are "breaking the gender code".[43] It follows that a certain element of disrespect for the 'rules' is required; this is shown, for instance, in the attitudes of punk music's *Riot Gurrrl* movement of the 1990s.[44] But not every woman interested in deejaying, music production or sound systems is necessarily 'rebellious'. I have had to rebel against an inner voice that says, 'I don't belong here', 'I'm too anxious', or 'I'm tired of hustling so hard to get a break' with countering affirmative self-talk. Haraway's technofeminist figure of the cyborg offers a counter-model for 'owning' technology, brushing off the supposed contradiction of being technological and Woman, and doing it anyway.

The benefits of engaging with technology have, for me, outweighed the gendered challenges of being able to become a member of several 'bass-cults', as Jasen calls the cohorts of low-frequency sound lovers. Members of these unofficial 'cults' are interested in what sound and the technology required to create and amplify sound can offer us. Kodwo Eshun claims that DJs, producers, dancers, and low-frequency sound vibration lovers alike are "willingly mutated by intimate machines, abducted by audio into the populations of [our own] bodies"

[41] Donna Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century (1991)', in Manifestly Haraway (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 3–90. 5.

[42] Anna Gavanas and Rosa Reitsamer, 'DJ Technologies, Social Networks and Gendered Trajectories in European DJ Cultures', in *DJ Culture in the Mix: Power, Technology, and Social Change in Electronic Dance Music*, ed. B. A. Attias, A Gavanas, and H. C. Rietveld (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 51–77. 55.

[43] Gavanas and Reitsamer. 54.

[44] In reaction to a lack of recognition within the male-dominated punk scene, in 1991, a group of women, including the band Bikini Kill, decided to break away and create their own space. Bikini Kill and Brat Mobile were first 'zines' created by women∞ to speak to the sexism of the punk scene, which then evolved into all-women∞ punk bands.

—we do not fear technology, we embrace it, it becomes part of us. [45] Eshun furthers:

> Sound machines throw you onto the shores of the skin you're in. The hypersensual cyborg experiences herself as a galaxy of audiotactile sensations. You are not censors but sensors, not aesthetes but kinaesthetes. You are sensationalists.[46]

The figure of the feminine cyborg appears again morphing together human and machine. This perspective demonstrates, again, the sensation of low-frequency sound as aligned with embodiment that underpins the feminist paradigm in this project. Eshun insists that technology does not disembody, but that it instead enhances being a feeling human, that "machines *don't* distance you from your emotions, in fact quite the opposite. Sound machines make you feel *more* intensely, along a broader band of emotional spectra".[47] Humans melding with sonic enhancement technology, Eshun claims, is "a *hyperembodiment*, via the Technics SL 1200".[48] He refers here to *the* turntable of choice for the discerning DJ, up until the recent advancement of digital DJ consoles. The experiencing of the body is deepened through low-frequency sound, as the potential of the body is extended and expanded through machinic relationship.

In a post-human era, the amplification and manipulation of bass-centric music and low-frequency sound is what Jasen calls, "bio-aesthetic technology", which can "rhythmically reorganise bodies" and "pre-accelerate them in different directions".[49] In the *ninthWavesound* vibratorium, as in posthuman thinking, these differing directions are vital to imagining new ways of being. The vibratorium expands potential for what Braidotti describes as a "new political praxis' in the formation of a "posthuman feminist subject".[50] Braidotti's project, like mine, aims at "experimenting with what contemporary, biotechnologically mediated bodies are capable of doing in the radical immanence of their respective locations".[51] The technology of low-frequency sound is a tool for embodied expansion.

Low-frequency sound is further framed in this project as a bio-aesthetic technology of *pleasure*. Technology enables the expanding of our feminist potential *through* pleasure: the technologically created vibratorium enhanced through the skilful manipulation of sound in the hands of the DJ or music producer. *ninthWavesound* provides a space to help overcome gendered, culturally induced technophobia through role-modelling, knowledge-sharing,

[45] Kodwo Eshun, More Brilliant than the Sun: Adventures in Sonic Fiction (London: Quartet Books, 1998). 001.

[46] Eshun. 001.

[47] Eshun. 002.

[48] Eshun. 002.

[49] Jasen, *Low End Theory: Bass, Bodies and the Materiality of Sonic Experience.* 172.

[50] Rosi Braidotti, 'Four Theses on Posthuman Feminism', in *Anthropocene Feminism.*, ed. Richard A. Grusin, 21st Century Studies (University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 21–48. 34.

[51] Braidotti.

and the provision of a practice room, empowering emergent women∞ DJs. Next, I look at an example of how the sound system vibratorium affords a space of feminist resistance through an assertion of bodily expression in the Jamaican dancehall, which feeds into *ninthWavesound*'s activist vibe.

Base/bass cultures: Your lower half is closer to the ground

If you're feeling like you're lacking blood flow through the pelvis, head to a Zumba class at your local gym for some sanctioned, Latino-flavoured solo salsa-ing, designed to loosen up the atrophied hip joints of middle-aged women. Then, when those hips are released a little, head to an African dance class where the knees need to be flexed a little more to get a bit closer to the ground. Next, make sure you're well warmed up before hitting the latenight Jamaican dancehall dancefloor for some twerkable slow dutty whine or hardcore bashment.[52]

Figure 16: Twerking and whining gets you lower to the ground. An example of a twerking position. Impression by Laura Marsh.

The feminism of this project draws inspiration from spaces of resistance that have been part of forming the legacy of sound system culture, specifically the territory within the culture where women∞ have been able to express power through claiming the sexual power of their bodies in the Jamaican 'dancehall'. In the dominant image of Woman in Western culture, the feminine is associated with nature, the body, the abject, Earthly knowings, and 'irrational' feeling; i.e., that which is or must be dominated by 'man', thought reason, the mind, suppression of feelings, or 'civilisation'. The originating bass/base cultures of the Caribbean and their diasporic influences are similarly positioned. In bass culture there is a spectrum of response to the rhythm and sensation of heavy, low-end bass. Significant pockets of bass music culture, unlike most Western forms of dance, encourage movement of the lower realms of the body, where hips are centrally featured in the dance, and where sex and sexuality are expressed.

ninthWave's design, with her roots in Jamaican style sound system design, associates herself with the styles of music that have sprung from what Henriques calls 'base-culture'. Sexual expression through dancehall fits into brown's pleasure activism (see Chapter Four); the erotic qualities of dancehall also connect to Lorde's claim that when in touch with the erotic, woman∞ "become[s] less willing to accept powerlessness".[53] Base-cultures

[52] Annette Bischof-Campbell et al., 'Body Movement Is Associated With Orgasm During Vaginal Intercourse in Women', *The Journal of Sex Research* 53, no. 6 (2019): 356–66, https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2018.1531367. Interesting to note is this study confirming that proactive movement of the pelvis during sex provides more orgasms than rubbing of the clitoris. Get your dutty whine on!

[53] Lorde, 'Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power (1986)'. 33.

celebrate the 'lower' half, through the centralising of the body "in the multiple senses of 'base'" (or bass).[54] Henriques argues that in 'base culture', the 'bass-note' is expressed through the body, and 'baseness' is reference to "basic lower frequencies and embodied resonances [which] are considered as distinctly inferior to the higher notes that only the mind and not the body is considered capable of perceiving".[55] Higher notes correspond to high culture, far removed from terrestrial knowings, and the knowledge of the streets. Modern Jamaican dancehall is the 'basest' or 'duttyest' by far—'dutty' meaning 'dirty'. As Henriques describes, through "flat-footed stomps and stamps the dancers emphasise their earthly connection".[56] And through artful gyration of the hips a celebration of sexuality is displayed in the dancehall session—explicit hip movement and joining hips together with others. This is a radical flip on the 'high culture' of ballet, where the focus is on leaving the ground, and of pulling the buttocks in rather than sticking them out, a stark contrast to the 'twerk' and 'whine' of dancehall movements.[57] The sexuality of dancehall as Sonjah Stanley-Niaah argues, is "ultimately the choreographing of an identity that critiques aspects of Western domination".[58] The oppression of the erotic agency of women is part of this, and this is an important affective aspect in the *ninthWavesound* project.[59]

Carolyn Cooper argues that the dancehall "is a dedicated space for the flamboyant performing of sexuality".[60] The expression of this is defined as 'slackness', and is dismissed as vulgar by the elite, but slackness, as Cooper argues "can be much more permissively theorised as a radical, underground confrontation with the patriarchal gender ideology

[54] Beatrice Ferrara and Julian Henriques, 'The Sounding of the Notting Hill Carnival: Music as Space, Place and Territory', in *Black Popular Music in Britain Since 1945*, ed. Jon Stratten and Nabeel Zuberi (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014), 131–52. 132.

[55] Henriques, *Sonic Bodies: Reggae Sound Systems, Performance Techniques, and Ways of Knowing*. 18.

[56] Henriques. 19.

[57] Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, s.v., 'Twerking', accessed 26 November 2021, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/twerking
"Twerking: sexually suggestive dancing characterized by rapid, repeated hip thrusts and shaking of the buttocks especially while squatting".
Arley Gill, 'Whining: Genuine Caribbean Dance Form or Vulgarity?', Spiceislander.Com (blog), 21 September 2013, https://spiceislander.com/?p=10198.
"Whining: the thrusting or rotating of the pelvic girdle in a rhythmic pattern."

[58] Sonjah Stanley-Niaah, 'Kingston's Dancehall: A Story of Space and Celebration', *Space & Culture* 7, no. 1 (February 2004): 102–18. 103.

[59] Bibi Bakare-Yusuf, '"I Love Myself When I Am Dancing and Carrying on": Refiguring the Agency of Black Women's Creative Expression in Jamaican Dancehall Culture', *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics* 1, no. 3 (2005): 263–76.

[60] Carolyn Cooper, *Sound Clash: Jamaican Dancehall Culture at Large* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). 3.

and the duplicitous morality of fundamentalist Jamaican society".[61] Dancehall allows for "[w]oman as sexual being [to] claim the right to sexual pleasure as an essential sign of her identity".[62] This project aspires to a fully-fledged dancehall session. Dancehall and its associated genre of bashment was played by Janiac during the *ALLDAYRAVE* (17 October 2020), prompting an interlude of women∞ dancing in explicit ways. Cooper theorises this affirmative expression "of the pleasures of the body … as an act of self-conscious female assertion of control over the representation of her person".[63] The inclusion of dancehall in *ninthWave*'s repertoire creates space to explore the limits of sexual or "dutty" behaviour on the dancefloor. This contributes affectively into the vibe as 'permission' to go beyond the limits of cultural behavioural 'norms', *ninthWavesound* providing a safer space for women within which to fully express in this way if they so desire.

Sensual/sexual journey

A DJ can be considered as being employed to seduce the audience into continuing to dance.[64] And with the right tools, i.e., an amazing sound system, the easier the job is to do. In contrast to mainstream EDM DJ events with extreme moments of building up to an epic, explosive 'orgasmic coming' or masculine conclusion, an underground DJ event can be more aligned to a feminine pleasure journey, hovering around multiple peaks, with extended high(s)—and what is more aligned with empleasurement.[65] It is an extended euphoric state that is traversed, a more tantric experience that is aspired to, an extended 'journey', or a 'slow build' as DJ Chikaa calls it: where a set will be designed to gather everyone onto a similar wavelength, and take them upon a very pleasurable journey together.[66] Or in the case of my high energy footwork sets, the LUSH boat leaves the shore full throttle—so you better hold on—and I maintain the pace, with a subtle modulation up and down to give dancer's feet a short break, but

[61] Cooper.
"In Jamaican usage, the English word slackness has almost exclusively sexual overtones and is synonymous with licentiousness—'libertine, lascivious, lewd' behaviour—to cite the alliterative Oxford English Dictionary definition of the word. But the license in the English licentiousness is often repressed in its Jamaican equivalent and only the censure remains". 3.

[62] Cooper. 125.

[63] Cooper. 125.

[64] See: Hillegonda C. Rietveld, 'Introduction', in *DJ Culture in the Mix: Power, Technology, and Social Change in Electronic Dance Music*, ed. Bernardo A. Attias, Anna Gavanas, and Hillegonda C. Rietveld (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 1–14. 3.

[65] A popular EDM music set, designed to work with the drug ecstasy, will have repetitive builds and pauses designed into a set, each an intensive build to a 'climax', or orgasmic moment, designed to make the crowd 'lose their shit' when the beat finally drops. This set design has become a cheesy parody in mainstream comedy and tends not to be the energetic trajectory for most underground dance events, nor within in a *ninthWavesound* event. For an example, see *Saturday Night Live*, 'When Will the Bass Drop?' 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DoUV7Q1C1SU&ab_channel=SaturdayNightLive.

[66] Laura Marsh in conversation with Jodine Stodard a.k.a. DJ Chikaa, Audio recording, via Zoom, 9 November 2020.

without a dramatic 'build up' or 'come down'. It is a preference for keeping everyone 'up' at a heightened state of pleasure, and in the 'zone', without a particular moment of 'release'.

In the vibratorium, every part of the body is in a state of noticeable vibration. Henriques notes that in the sonic dominance of the body at a sound system event "[t]he bass line beats on your chest, vibrating the flesh, playing the bones and resonating the genitals".[67] A vibrational emphasis in the body can bring the sensual potential of the entire body into awareness, and this need not be expressed through explicit sexualised dancing. Irigaray's statement that a "woman has sex organs more or less everywhere" points to the potential of an all-encompassing vibrational massage being able to provide an orgasmic experience.[68] After all, *ninthWavesound*, the giant vibrating machine which became the focus of this research, is akin to a giant vibrator. Vibration of the female genitals was where the *ninthWavesound* (((({})))) logo began.

Figure 17: Jinja Cat performing at Ruapuke Roots Festival, 9-11 February 2018, Raglan, with the original Vibrating Vagina flag (2016, linen, 120x60cm).

[67] Julian Henriques, 'Sonic Dominance and the Reggae Sound System Session', in *The Auditory Cultures Reader*, ed. M Bull and L Back (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 451–80. 452.

[68] Luce Irigaray, *The Sex Which Is Not One* (1977), trans. Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985). 28.

((((({})))) Representation: Matter meets symbol

Female sexuality informs this project. A sexuality, as Irigaray describes, that is "never singular, unified or capable of definitive specification", and incorporates the sensuality of the whole body.[69] The early phase of works created for this thesis incorporated the use of vaginal symbology. The ((((({})))) 'vibrating vagina' symbol appeared on flags, stickers, posters and as shadow box. Five different coloured flags appeared in the window of Bowen Galleries, Wellington (figure 18, Window Gallery, Aug-Sept 2016), and I have taken the original yellow and black version and displayed it in poignant moments of woman∞prominence, including in *The Portal*, an underground rave zone at Splore Festival which boasts more than 50 percent women DJs, and when MC Jinja Cat was on the mic at Ruapuke Roots festival in 2017 (figure 17). Stickers were made, donated and sold to help fundraise for an artist run space, Ace House Collective, in Yogyakarta while I was on the residency previously mentioned (figure 19, April 2017). ((((({})))) represents a felt experience that is not always able to be articulated, and is drawn from multiple sensual and/or sexual affects—past, present or imaginary. Originally conceived to reflect the affective vibrational sensations experienced within my vagina with respect to a certain long-distance lover, it was noted that certain genres of music elicited a similar response in me, especially when experienced in the immersion of a large bass-heavy sound system. ((((({})))) is positioned both in jest and in defiance of the phallocentric imaginary that our culture insists on elevating, the symbol of the penis, the phallus. Over time, ((((({})))) has gathered more meaning. As the logo for *ninthWavesound* system, ((((({})))) has expanded into a vibrationally-induced symbolic sense of woman∞ and of feminine∞, and now represents a nomadic social platform for women∞ by women∞ in a masculine-dominated realm. The empleasured feminist foundations of ((((({})))) is reinforced by the thinking of Luce Irigaray, Grosz, Lorde and brown. ((((({})))) symbolises both the feminist kaupapa and the pleasurably embodied exploration inherent in the *ninthWavesound* vibratorium.

Figure 19: Vibrating Vagina flags (2016). Bowen Galleries, Wellington, Aug-Sept 2016.

Figure 18: Gallery turned night club for Vibrating Vaginas Dance Party, Cemeti Institute, Yogyakarta, 6 May 2017.

The building of *ninthWave* and her conceptual significance is a journey of small revelations, small tests and various iterations. In the early stages of formulating the project, as I threw around a few ((((({})))) stickers and flew the ((((({})))) flag, resonating feminist concerns within my community of fellow bass-loving women became more apparent. The symbol ((((({}))))

[69] Irigaray. 73.

was understood by my social world of women∞ who were DJs, potential DJs, and sound system event lovers. Often recognised as a vagina, (((({})))) signalled an expanded presence of feminist women∞ and operated as a 'douchebag repellent' (explained shortly). With this in mind, it was first used for an event as part of the *Vibrating Vaginas Dance Club* (which I discuss in the next chapter). I returned again to the symbol as a key design feature for my DJ crew's event *Run with the Wolves* for which it adorned social media advertising and flyers and shone out of a shadow-box above the DJs as a prominent lighting effect. Early conversations around (((({})))) brought to the surface the inherent, but not often talked about (at that time), gender discriminatory practices and male-dominated reality of the scene.[70] (((({})))) instigated feminist-inspired conversation, helping to clarify a local gender struggle, which led to the inception of this project.

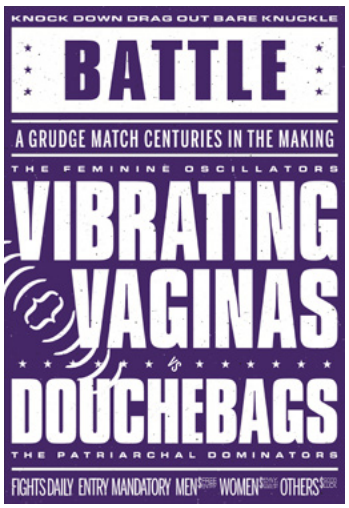

Figure 20: BATTLE (2017, printed posters, 594x841mm)

A preliminary work that explored phallus vs. (((({})))) was a poster I designed, *BATTLE* (2017). A cross between a gig poster and a fight poster, *BATTLE* was designed boldly for postering up on public walls—which took place for Talk Week 2017 (figures 20, 22). I placed thirty A1-sized pink, purple, and black posters across a temporary construction wall that was regularly postered and repostered indiscriminately in front of the Auckland Public Library, they read:

knock down drag out bare knuckle
BATTLE
a grudge match centuries in the making
THE FEMININE OSCILLATORS
VIBRATING VAGINAS vs. DOUCHEBAGS
THE PATRIARCHAL DOMINATORS
Fights Daily Entry Mandatory - Men: free entry, Women: pay with yourself, Others: good luck

The small print points to the lack of safety for not-men in a patriarchical society, I used 'douchebag' to delineate #notallmen (but definitely some men).[71] Michael Mark Cohen puts 'douchebag' forward as a descriptor of someone we are all up against, and as a symbol of the patriarchy. A douchebag is defined as "someone—overwhelmingly white, rich, heterosexual males—who insist upon, nay, demand their white male privilege in every possible set and setting".[72] Originally a medical tool for washing out wounds and in surplus after World War Two, the douchebag was monetised into a tool sold to women for the

[70] Public awareness of the problem of sexual harassment and gender discrimination within the music scenes of Aotearoa has risen dramatically since the inception of this thesis in 2017. A groundswell of shared stories, accusations and calling-out has taken place, and this project is a proudly active effort at making positive change.

[71] #notallmen is the defensive counter hashtag to the #metoo movement.

[72] Michael Mark Cohen, 'Douchebag: The White Racial Slur We've All Been Waiting For', *Medium* (blog), 13 October 2014, https://medium.com/the-secret-history-of-america/douchebag-the-white-racial-slur-weve-all-been-waiting-for-a2323002f85d.

dangerous practice of 'sanitising' their vaginas (figure 21). Cohen describes the douchebag as, "an anti-feminist practice pushed by male corporations on women using shame and insecurity as a weapon".[73] Cohen argues that this outdated tool for feminine hygiene has become a pejorative word for the douchebag men we recognise today as "useless, sexist tool[s]" and this critique has been transferred to the men who reinforce sexism.[74]

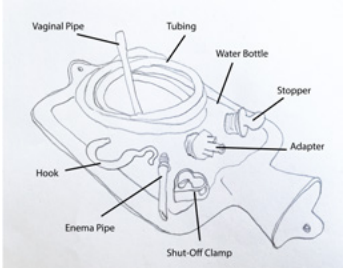

Figure 21: Douchebag equipment as sold on ebay. Drawn by Laura Marsh.

Placing the posters in the public domain was empowering—I was able to speak without challenge, temporarily claiming public space. To place the word 'vagina', in bold letters and as a symbol, upon a public wall was exhilarating; to make a salient and outspoken point about gendered power imbalances felt meaningful.[75] But the question was to loom large: was I being trans-exclusionary by associating a symbol of a vagina with the term woman? What is it to reference the lived matter of my own body in relation to my gender?

Figure 22: . BATTLE posters one month after post-up, outside the Auckland Public Library, Lorne St, November 2017.

[73] Cohen.

[74] Cohen.

[75] I found this far more exciting than drawing the usual genital reference of a 'cock and balls' found in everyday graffiti.

Becoming feminist

My naivety about possible trans-exclusionary readings of associating the feminine and/or women with the vagina became apparent during the inception of the project.[76] For myself and my cis-women friends, a 'vibrating vagina' is a meaningful embodied experience that comes to the fore in a low-frequency, sound-dominant experience and is a joyous and titillating acknowledgement. But potentially, trans-women may feel excluded or unsafe, which was not my intention.[77] Associating a symbol of vibrating female genitalia with women brings up the question of essentialism and the question of sexual difference that, since the 1970s, has added to the feminist debate about what it means to be 'woman', and how to define it. Whether or not to use (((({})))) has been an ongoing consideration throughout the project as I have developed my understanding of essentialist and anti-essentialist challenges through feminist art critiques, feminist new materialist thinking, the politics of location, and through an understanding of the sexual difference theories of Grosz, Braidotti and Irigaray.[78] (((({})))) has been fruitful to my personal feminist consciousness-raising; I outline several arguments around the question of essentialism below.

The body in this project is positioned biologically, discursively and structurally. Braidotti describes (after Adrienne Rich) a "situated way of seeing the subject states that the most important location or situation is the rooting of the subject into the spatial frame of the body".[79] Also, that the acknowledgment of an embodied location cannot ignore the relevance of the "sexually differentiated structure of the speaking subject".[80] This sits within a theory of sexual difference that recognises the differences between sexes but also the differences between all bodies. The body is not essentialised as finitely female=women, but due to living under the sign 'Woman' and the ascribed gender 'female', resonances exist and are important to the feminist project in order to affirm a lived reality. As Braidotti states: "[t]he first and foremost of locations in reality is one's own embodiment", therefore I write from the location of a cis-woman, and regularly reflect upon personal accounts of

[76] Highlighted somewhat violently by a cis-woman feminist historian, I was berated for my naivety. This traumatic experience taught me that this way of 'raising consciousness' around a feminist topic is not the way to go about it. My era/generation, and those before, have been socially conditioned into binary thinking, I have forty years of delineation to undo, and I live in a culture and social worlds which perpetuate such thinking. There is a lot of work to be done, and it can be done in sensitive ways.

[77] For a second iteration of *Run with the Wolves*, we were asked to host trans-woman DJ Eris Drew. Wishing to make use of the shadow box again we attempted to make contact with her and her management to ask how she felt about the logo. Unfortunately, we were unable to make contact, so in order to avoid offence we decided against using the logo for promotion or decoration.

[78] *Feminist new materialist thinking* is a term that Grosz, Braidotti and Haraway among many others, are often placed under. They have been identified as being part of a (re)turn towards ascribing agency to matter.

[79] Rosi Braidotti, 'Embodiment, Sexual Difference, and the Nomadic Subject', *Hypatia* 8, no. 1 (1993): 1–13, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.1993.tb00625.x. 7.

[80] Braidotti. 7.

partycipants, gathered through interviews and anecdotal comments in order to locate this thesis in the bodies of those involved.[81] We cannot escape the body, but it can also not be ignored, as it is the body, and the culturally mediated experiences that are engraved upon it, that we carry with us and that shapes our world around us.

Braidotti acknowledges the contradiction inherent in gathering around the very term that needs to be reconfigured. Rather than taking the weight of the 'historical contradiction' of defining as 'woman', Braidotti argues for a forward-looking ownership of 'I-women' and 'she-self', as "a mode of representation that would take the fact of being a woman as a positive, self-affirming political force".[82] Inside the community, the desire to be (that is sexed), merges with the will of a collective political consciousness and *affirms* the 'she-self' through 'she-other'.[83] Her thinking, and the 'she' pronoun, operates in a challenging space where my body is meaningful to my subjectivity, yet I equally advocate for the inclusivity of trans-women and non-binary genders. Braidotti advocates that we all need to go through a process of identifying as a position—of being in an embodied location—before we are able to blur, dissolve, or reject this position as inadequate, in order to enable a redefinition of female subjectivity. Part of this process is to experiment with Irigaray's strategy of mimesis—we take on the 'Idea' of woman that the patriarchy's sanctioned version of heteronormative behaviour has formed for us, and then we imitate it, play with it, break it, blur it into infinite multiplicity. In gendering *ninthWave* as she, I deploy a form of 'strategic essentialism' in order to deprioritise men, and feminise the space.

Strategic essentialism

Art historian Amelia Jones directly addresses the question of gender essentialism from a contemporary perspective. She states "the body is essentialism's great text",[84] during a

[81] Braidotti, 'Embodiment, Sexual Difference, and the Nomadic Subject'. 7.

[82] Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment & Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011). 131.

[83] Braidotti. 131.
Braidotti furthers: "...between 'she-self' and 'she-other' there is a bond Adrienne Rich describes as the 'continuum' of women's experience. This continuum draws the boundaries within which the conditions of possibility of a redefinition of the female subjects can be made operative", 131.

[84] Amelia Jones, 'Essentialism, Feminism, and Art: Spaces Where Woman "Oozes Away"' (Monash University Museum of Art (MUMA), 1 June 2018), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2RRxqqHx1eM.
And in Amelia Jones, 'Essentialism, Feminism, and Art: Spaces Where Woman "Oozes Away"', in *A Companion to Feminist Art*, ed. Hilary Robinson and Maria Elena Buszek (John Wiley & Sons, 2019), 157–80.
"...feminist theories are always courting essentialism; they cannot *not* court essentialism, given their goal of mapping how we identify ourselves in heteronormative regimes of sexual difference, not to mention our continual return to our own and others' bodies as sites of gender/sex identification, as well as sites of theorising or making art. Any method that seeks to analyse existing modes of identification, address modes of oppression of particular groups or classes of identified subjects, and open ways for change will entail essentialising moments. My point here, then, is not that any essentialising elements of an argument should (or can) be avoided and dismissed but, rather, that the essentialising elements of all theories and politics of identity must be self-reflexively acknowledged", 159.

lecture entitled *Essentialism, Feminism, and Art: spaces where woman 'oozes away'*—a title referencing a 1993 interview with Gayatri Spivak in which Spivak says she has "no time for essence/anti-essence discussion [anymore]".[85] Spivak, in the 1980s, promoted a 'strategic essentialism', in which the defence of essentialism is not a descriptive claim about social reality, but is to be used merely as a political strategy.[86] This was at the time of an essentialist/anti-essentialist debate which was partly in response to feminist artists in the 1970s. For example, Judy Chicago's work *The Dinner Party* (1974-1979), was lampooned as 'essentialist' for purportedly claiming an 'essence' of woman through an art practice which used vaginal symbology.[87]

Strategic essentialism is a response to the anti-essentialist conundrum. Alison Stone argues, "the rejection of essentialism problematically undercut feminist politics, by denying that women have any shared characteristics which could motivate them to task together as a collectivity".[88] But Jones furthers that as based either on anatomy or performativity, a degree of essentialising is required to form a definition such as 'woman', therefore "feminist theories are always courting essentialism".[89] And knowing what a woman *is,* is necessary in order to counter the oppression of 'woman' as a class. She furthers that "we are all essentialists in some way", programmed to work with a patriarchal concept of gender, always forming relationships to others based upon our own subjectivity and sexuality.[90] We can't escape how our bodies will be used for and against us, to define us and position us.

The symbolic and lived woman∞

The experience of knowing the world through a female body is significant in this thesis as visceral experiences of the touch of low-frequency sound are described. Within this project, statements such as 'I can feel the bass in my vagina', is a very specific reflection of mine, as not all vaginas register sensation, and biologically intersex or trans* people would have different experiences. In the low-frequency sound vibratorium, *empleasurement* describes very broadly that the biology of the body is affected by the materiality of sound, but not how. In the expansion of Woman to woman∞ gendered biology falls into the background, vibration indetermining its meaning as identity-defining.

[85] Sara Danius, Stefan Jonsson, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'An Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak', *Boundary 2* 20, no. 2 (1993): 24–50, https://doi.org/10.2307/303357.

[86] See Danius, Jonsson, and Spivak. Spivak chooses not to use this phrase anymore.

[87] See Jones, 'Essentialism, Feminism, and Art: Spaces Where Woman "Oozes Away"'. 160-3.

[88] Alison Stone, 'Essentialism and Anti-Essentialism in Feminist Philosophy', *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 1, no. 2 (2004), https://doi.org/10.1177/174046810400100202.

[89] Jones, 'Essentialism, Feminism, and Art: Spaces Where Woman "Oozes Away"'. 159.

[90] Amelia Jones, 'Essentialism, Feminism, and Art: Spaces Where Woman "Oozes Away"' (Monash University Museum of Art (MUMA), 1 June 2018), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2RRxqqHx1eM.

The sexed body is both lived and symbolic. (((({})))) symbolises the starting point, where we are positioned as bodies, but from there it is blurry and expands outward. Symbolically, a vibrating 'vagina', (((({})))) holds meaning as being 'other' to the *phallus*, and therefore also other to phallocentric/masculine derived ways of being.[91] As Irigaray argues, we live in a society formed through an imaginary that is divulged from a masculine sexuality. Masculine sexuality has become so dominant in Western thinking that feminine sexuality is left without a narrative. Understandings of women's pleasure seldom advance beyond the clitoris and the vagina; a 'hole', a sheath for the phallus. The focus upon attaining 'entry' translates into phallocentric thinking—singular, linear, goal orientated—and becomes a masculine understanding of a separation between object and subject, driven by the separation of penis from the instrument of pleasure giving, be it hand or orifice. This is in contrast to the female, whose pleasure, Irigaray argues, is always already multiple, she is two lips touching, already capable of self-pleasure, she is multiple erogenous zones—breasts, clitoris, vulva, vagina, cervix etc.—therefore a feminine desire is not definable or reducible like that of a masculine, phallus-oriented sexuality.[92] The (((({})))) symbol resonates with the following words of Irigaray, although I read them in retrospect: "(The/a) woman is always already in a state of anamorphosis in which every figure becomes fuzzy. A state of cyclic discontinuity closing in a slit whose lips merge into one another".[93] As a strategically-essentialised indicator of the prominence of women$^{\infty}$, (((({})))) can powerfully hold a space of resistance, within which the vibrations of low-frequency sound disrupt the gender-determined self, allowing for expansion beyond the boundaries of skin.

In a *ninthWavesound* event the novelty and safety of being a woman$^{\infty}$ in women$^{\infty}$prominent or women$^{\infty}$exclusive spaces can both highlight our women-ness, but also dissolve gender as woman-in-relation-to-man falls into the background, and generative differences emerge. A reflection upon difference is novel in the space of a sound system vibratorium. Women$^{\infty}$ as a group are not adequately represented in sound system culture and the electronic music scene at large, so we gather to claim a space of resistance to the dominant paradigm, establishing a collective feminist platform upon which to 'work through' what it is to become 'woman$^{\infty}$'.

[91] 'Phallocentrism', in Wikipedia s.v., 5 March 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Phallocentrism&oldid=1010496965.
"Phallocentrism is the ideology that the phallus, or male sexual organ, is the central element in the organization of the social world." See also: Richard Tarnas, The Passion of the Western Mind (London: Random House, 2010). 475. Phallocentric structuring permeates all aspects of Western culture, and is what the deep feminist project is set about trying to undo. As Richard Tarnas explains: "the evolution of the Western mind has been founded on the repression of the feminine—on the repression of undifferentiated unitary consciousness, of the participation mystique with nature: a progressive denial of the anima mundi, of the soul of the world, of the community of being, of the all-pervading, of mystery and ambiguity, of imagination, emotion, instinct, body, nature, woman—of all that which the masculine has projectively identified as "other."

[92] See Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1974). 29.

[93] Irigaray. 230.

Summarising an empleasured low-end paradigm

> Pleasure is a crucial hinge, a bodily resource, that is of enormous strategic utility in the ongoing interplay and transformations of power and resistance.
>
> –Grosz [94]

This chapter has explored the key elements of a feminist paradigm that the project's 'methodology of low-end empleasurement' rests upon. A personal narrative informs the paradigm: a journey of personal, feminist consciousness-raising, emphasising the embodied and embedded nature of myself as research subject, and the "unlimited confidence in lived experience", as Braidotti suggests.[95] My experiences of loving music as a youth and my experiences of multiple male-dominated sports worlds have benefited my DJ practice. Through reading feminist theorists, feminist understandings of my past experiences deepened, and a feeling for what my feminist practice would be started to form. I have connected theories of low-frequency sound by Henriques and Jasen, and their positioning of the body as 'sonic body', to the feminist project of recognising and valorising the role of the body, pleasure and the collective through an introduction to Lorde, brown, Grosz, Irigaray and Braidotti amongst others. The undervalued ability to know though sound and sensation works in both feminist and low-frequency sound-based theoretical realms to define and re-define a self outside of the dominant paradigm, and instead understand the forming of subjectivity through vibratory sensation and affect. The empleasured sonic bodie takes the concept of Henriques' and Jasen's sonic body and extends it through the realm of pleasure and through relation to others. As this thesis will argue, it is the experiencing of pleasure collectively in the *ninthWavesound* vibratorium that enables new feminist imaginings or practices of being—which I will explore thoroughly in Chapters Four and Five.

Empleasurement through low-frequency sound is only ever enabled because of the technology that allows a DJ to mix and the low-frequency sound to be amplified. The male-gendering of technology is a powerful perception to break through, especially as, at the time

[94] Elizabeth Grosz, *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power* (Durham, UK: Duke University Press, 2005). 191. Grosz riffing on Foucault's notion of power.

[95] Braidotti, 'Nomadic Ethics'. 354.

of writing, in Aotearoa every sound system other than *ninthWavesound* is owned and run by men. Technofeminism and post-human thinking suggests that technology is already part of us. Haraway and Braidotti make the call for women∞ to enable technology for the feminist cause. Low-frequency sound as a technological medium, according to Eshun, brings us into a state of hyperembodiment, already functioning as a feminist tool, but the project here is to make it work for women∞ as a 'bio aesthetic technology of pleasure'. Pleasure is also a spectrum of sexual and sensual sensation. In the sound-system-empowered Jamaican dancehall, Queens of the dancehall express their sexuality and their pleasure as their power through explicit dancing and expressing control over their own bodies in resistance to dominant Western ideals of cultural refinement and sexual and female repression, as shown by Cooper and Stanley-Niaah. Their defiance pushing the limits of the 'allowable' informs the empleasured vibe of *ninthWavesound* events, albeit often in a shifted context in Aotearoa, and points to the erotic experience of woman in the vibratorium.

The role of the body is centralised in this project's beginnings with a distinctive nod to the experiencing of low-frequency sound in my body, particularly my vagina. (((({})))) is a controversial symbol in the feminist question of essentialism, but as 'symbol' is open to interpretation. (((({})))) has begun life as a symbol of a vibrating vagina, but this symbol could be as fluid as gender itself – perhaps it is anus, perhaps a heart. When considered symbolically as a vibrating vagina though, it sits counter to the objective clarification of the phallus and to phallocentrism. As a vibrating vagina it remains blurry, inviting woman∞ in all her forms, still adhered to or located in a body (for "we are all of woman born") but nomadically poised, ready to move.[96] In the following chapter I explore the early works of the project in depth with this feminist paradigm in mind.

[96] Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2002). 60.

Figure 23: Images from social media campaign gifs to promote the successful Kickstarter fundraising effort. Featured on the @ninthWavesound Instagram account, November 2019.

Chapter Two

Early works: the emergence of *ninthWavesound*

The birthing of *ninthWave* into the local music scene felt like a small revolutionary act. A surge of empowerment ran through the first event held at the Audio Foundation, as my DJ girlfriends and I revelled in our new-found potential as part of the *ninthWavesound* system. The joy of potential emerged through performing with a sound system, hand-built by a woman∞, and the imaginings of what we might be able to do because of her. With the intention of building a community around *ninthWave*, this chapter charts how she developed as a 'nomadic social platform'.[1] A feminist intention underpinned her development from conception to building, as it also underpinned the early events in the research.

The idea for the *ninthWavesound* project grew out of interactive social art experiments and public artworks. This chapter commences with my foundational works in this research —the *Vibrating Vaginas Dance Club* and the *Jogja Jacuzzi* (Cemeti Institute, Yogyakarta, 2017), *PLEASURE* (Silo6, Auckland, 2017), and also the influential work of other artists—D.A.N.C.E. Art Club, and Julia Croft. These works are connected through concepts of pleasure, bodies, social interaction, and an awareness of the social positioning of women∞. Through these works the desire to form a mobile activist platform took shape as a sound system for feminist ends. My vibratory experiences of spending many hours sitting upon a sub as a DJ inform this project. I explore where this intimate bodily relationship with sound led in the work *More Vibration Than We Think We Need...* (Papakura Gallery, 2018). The vibratory pleasure of low-frequency sound is explored in the section *Sitting on Subs,* amplifying the elements

[1] A 'nomadic social platform' is a combination of Braidotti's nomadic ethics and nomadic subjects, and the social participatory art described by Claire Bishop. Refer Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment & Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory.*
And Rosi Braidotti, 'Nomadic Ethics', *Deleuze Studies* 7, no. 3 (2013): 342–59, https://doi.org/10.3366/dls.2013.0116.
Also Claire Bishop, 'Introduction', in *Participation.*, ed. Claire Bishop, Documents of Contemporary Art (London: Whitechapel, 2006).

that inform my concept of 'empleasurement'. This project argues that low-frequency sound is 'good for us', and I explore several scientific studies that endorse its therapeutic effects.[2] *ninthWave* was initially a single sub speaker working with low-frequency sound as a sculptural medium, then became a single stack with four overlapping channels of sound, and then later on, two stacks. In this chapter I work through my journey of hand-building her and reveal the implicit feminism in some of the design decisions made. I strategically wanted her to have a particular personality, expressed through promotion, facilitation and how I figure *ninthWave* as a being with her own meaning. The final throes of this chapter reveal the moment when she was launched as her vibrant self as two full stacks, able to play in stereo, with her tuned voice, and her vibrational powers.

Figure 24: Cemeti Institute (Art Gallery) tranformed into a night club for women-only event, the Vibrating Vaginas Dance Club, Yoyakarta, Indonesia, 6 May 2017.

[2] See Elsa A. Campbell et al., 'Exploring the Use of Vibroacoustic Treatment for Managing Chronic Pain and Comorbid Mood Disorders: A Mixed Methods Study', *Nordic Journal of Music Therapy* 38, no. 4 (2019): 291–314, https://doi.org/10.1080/08098131.2019.1604565. And Lili Naghdi et al., 'The Effect of Low-Frequency Sound Stimulation on Patients with Fibromyalgia: A Clinical Study', *Pain Research & Management : The Journal of the Canadian Pain Society* 20, no. 1 (2015): e21–27. Further discussed on pages 78-80.

A nomadic social platform of partycipation

This research commenced with a desire to develop my own feminism, applying an activist mindset to my sculptural and installation practice. Feminist activism developed through building the physical structures of sites and works, and engaging with public events and the social scene. The activism of this project found its form as a movable space of social engagement, developed here as a 'nomadic social platform', drawing on Rosi Braidotti's nomadic ethics where: "otherness prompts, mobilises and allows for flows of affirmation of values and forces which are not yet sustained by the current social and historical conditions".[3] Braidotti provides a model for how feminist subjectivities are nomadically formed through "forces, desires and values".[4] The various artworks and events generated in this project express a roving set of relationships between varying places, women∞ and low-frequency sound, designed to raise the feminist vibrational body. A nomadic social platform exists to lift a social group up, and a sound system platform is quite literally amplifying the 'voices' of those engaged. Forces, desires, and values act as empowering modes of becoming and to enable them, as Braidotti argues, a practical collective effort is required.[5]

All of my early works concerned encounter and reciprocity, gradually coming to mobilise the desires of the roving community that is drawn to the project, while working to affirm a feminist consciousness. Partycipants encountered a novel feminist space and each other, a space for activating and advancing their feminist desires. I explored how a physical reorientation of bodies could generate a new perspective and relationship to a physical space in an initial work *PLEASURE* (2017, figure 27). I then tested 'voicing' in the public domain through challenging activist posters pasted up on a wall outside the Auckland Central Library with *BATTLE*, described in the previous chapter (2017, figures 20, 22). Feeling an urge to more closely connect with people, I then realised the potential of an earlier social-participatory work I had undertaken during an art residency in Yogyakarta, Java, Indonesia. This culminated with the works *Jogja Jacuzzi*, an octagonal couch/conversation pit I built for conversations around

[3] Braidotti, 'Nomadic Ethics'. 342.

[4] Braidotti. 343.

[5] Braidotti. 344.

gender and cultural experiences (2017, figure 27), and *Vibrating Vaginas Dance Club*, a women-only DJ and dance night (2017, figures 24, 27). I expanded the activism of these works into this project, formulating *ninthWavesound* as a 'nomadic social platform'.

Reflecting on my experience in Yogyakarta during the early stages of research in this project, I came to understand how deeply cultural gender biases are ingrained, and how difficult it is to name this without fear of being considered irrational. My work at Cemeti Institute developed my 'becoming activist' and I began to imagine how a nomadic social platform may be of use. So, instead of arguing against and demanding space within the structure that perpetuates the gender discrimination of the music scene here in Aotearoa, I began to investigate how an independent, feminist space 'aside' might operate through early works with others and in my practice.

Bringing people together: D.A.N.C.E

Figure 25: D.A.N.C.E. Art Club (the Distinguished All Night Community Entertainers Art Club, 2008-ongoing).

A project I was briefly involved with as an invited DJ and partycipant, D.A.N.C.E. (the Distinguished All Night Community Entertainers Art Club, 2008–ongoing) inspired my first research event in Java. As a collaborative art collective, D.A.N.C.E. (Linda T. Tanoai, Ahilapalapa Rands, Vaimaila Urale, and Chris Fitzgerald) facilitate many events, in many venues, influenced by the multiple cultures of the group and their friends and whanau. In their own words, they: "celebrate… the social dynamic as a creative platform".[6] They opened my eyes to the joyous possibilities of a social art practice and a collaborative ethos. D.A.N.C.E. contend that, "[b]y situating their events in a variety of spaces… D.A.N.C.E Art Club blur the distinction between entertainment and art while creating democratic social spaces".[7] D.A.N.C.E did not try to 'design' experiences, they allowed the events to create themselves through collaboration with various people. An intention behind their collective actions was a "desire to disrupt what art can be and who it is made for", but ultimately their "focus [was] on the relationships that are formed during each project, through collaboration, music and the sharing of time and food".[9] The result was reciprocal exchange done with a lot of aroha. By offering a Moana and Tangata Whenua-led space to people who they knew would like to share with them and enjoy being part of something, they created a beautiful, heterogeneous

[6] Mark Amery, 'LettingSpace: D.A.N.C.E Art Club', accessed 8 July 2018, http://www.lettingspace.org.nz/essay-dance-art-club/.

[7] Huni Mancini, 'D.A.N.C.E. Art Club Artist Profile', Tautai: Guiding Pacific Arts Newsletter (blog), March 2011, https://archive.tautai.org/artist/d-a-n-c-e-art-club/.

mashup of good feelings, Indigenous affirmation, and loving exchange.[8]

Like D.A.N.C.E events, *ninthWave* events focus on open-ended relationships and affirmation through reciprocal giving, rather than a "logic of negation", which Braidotti critiques in her nomadic ethics.[9] Relating to others in their 'difference' and affirming them and their actions through accepting whatever they bring to the table is, in Braidotti's words, "[a]n ethically empowering relation to others [which] aims at increasing one's potential or empowering force and creates joyful energy in the process".[10] I suggest that an "ethically empowering relation" also works in reverse; by working with people who love and respect you to build a shared platform for social exchange, your own potential is also expanded. This is inherent and vital to the feminist, activist desire to build community in this project. In the following example it was the desire to dance with wild abandon, without men (which for women∞ in Java, Indonesia is not easy to do), that brought the Vibrating Vaginas together.

Women∞only dance club, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

The women∞only dance and deejaying space developed during a three-month long Asia: NZ Foundation residency at Cemeti Institute in Yogyakarta, Java, which I would now describe as an early 'nomadic social platform'. The first stage of the project began with the construction of an octagonal conversation pit I had local craftsmen build from bamboo, the *Jogja Jacuzzi* (2017, figure 27) which could hold ten to twelve people. The octagonal lounger was a platform for facilitating familial conversation among relative strangers, working to imitate the intimate sociality of a jacuzzi. Through practices of conversational engagement with the local women∞ of Yogyakarta in the (waterless) *Jacuzzi,* both difference and sameness between the lived experiences of women across cultures were compared through a developing understanding of cultural difference. The installation culminated in the hosting of a women∞'s only party called the *Vibrating Vaginas Dance Club* (6 May 2017). I invited two local women∞ DJs to play, and twenty or so women∞ (mostly Indonesian with a few ex-pats, in their twenties and early thirties) to dance for the evening. I hired the biggest sound system

Figure 26: Flyer for the Vibrating Vaginas Dance Club, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, 2017

[8] Refer Lopesi, Lana. 'Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries: Toward an Emerging Theory of Moana Art'. Doctoral thesis, Auckland University of Technology, 2021. 15.
Dr. Lana Lopesi uses "Moana to refer to the Pacific region, Pacific people and Pacific ways, rather than the terms Pacific/Oceania/Pasifika, in alignment with other Moana scholars who acknowledge that Pacific is a colonially imposed term placed on the region."
Also, refer "Definition of 'tangata whenua', in 'Definition of "Manaakitanga"', in Māori Dictionary s.v. (New Zealand: Longman/Pearson Education), accessed 23 September 2021, https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&histLoanWords=&keywords=tangata+whenua
Tangata Whenua are the "local people, hosts, indigenous people [of Aotearoa New Zealand, or of specific areas of Aotearoa] - people born of the whenua, i.e. of the placenta and of the land where the people's ancestors have lived and where their placenta are buried.

[9] Braidotti, 'Nomadic Ethics'. 343.
A 'logic of negation' implies something is not allowed, because it doesn't match with pre-determined ideas.

[10] Braidotti. 343.

I could with my privilege of NZ dollars.[11] This provided a novel opportunity for the women∞ in the local art scene, who normally would not facilitate an event by themselves due to financial and cultural constraints, whereas some of the local men could and would.

In preparation for deejaying for the evening, I exercised my acquired skills as a Wedding DJ, asking as many of the invitees as I could what their favourite feminist and favourite songs were. Including several Indonesian songs in my DJ set, as well as their favourite international songs, was essential to amplifying that this event was *for them*. We ended up with a very danceable vibe, and many of the women∞ appeared to be having the time of their lives. Hidden from the day-to-day constraints of their own culture in a space free from men they danced and ran around with reckless abandon. It was an amazing night. The joyous reaction of the women∞ involved appeared to me as a form of *jouissance*, which I will return to in Chapter Five. Many songs that I played on the night, I also included in *Puampuan Mixtape* which played through headphones during the final exhibition of the *Jacuzzi* a week later—the exhibition highlighting the role of the *Jacuzzi* as a platform for developing the relationships that had enabled the *Dance Club.*[12]

In the cultural context of Java, the event was unusual for the women who attended, as dance-music orientated experiences are often male-dominated domains in this largely Muslim part of Java. Most women remain out of sight at night. I observed that if a woman wants to go out to a club or music event, she will be one of only a few women present. In the *Jogja Jacuzzi,* several local women described instances of sexual harassment and suggested that sexual violence is not uncommon in these spaces. While I acknowledge the limitations of my knowledge of Javanese culture during this temporary art residency, women of the art scene in Yogyakarta expressed to me that the sentiment of the *Vibrating Vaginas Dance Club* was a welcome relief from these conditions, and also from the pervasive male gaze. In several group discussions, I found that many Indonesian and Southeast Asian women consider themselves to be essentially 'voiceless'. In a scenario where a woman is being harassed, even with a group of her friends around her, it is unlikely she will feel able to speak up in defence, and she is also unlikely to have her friends defend or help her.[13]

[11] In hindsight, I wondered whether throwing money around like this in a privileged way was perhaps not the best way to do this. Did it in some way intrude upon the local culture rather than lift them up? Would it have been more culturally sensitive to gather the tools of the sound system through their own channels of reciprocity. If that happened, though, I would also have been concerned that they were spending money they didn't have or acquiring financial burden in order to support my cause.

[12] Here is the mixcloud link for *Puampuan Mixtape,* 2017*:* https://www.mixcloud.com/djlauralush/puanpower-for-ladies-of-indonesia/ ('puampuan' meaning 'woman' in Bahasa Indonesian).

[13] Laura Marsh, Vibrating Vaginas Dance Club - in Discussion, May 2017, Booklet, May 2017. This unbalanced gendering of 'freedom' in Java is complicated by the separate lifestyles of men and women. Women usually live within 'safe spaces', as sexes are separated at school and at the mosque. Through the Jacuzzi discussions it was reiterated that a woman was regarded as making a 'choice' if she lived outside these 'safe' confines and therefore was 'endangering herself'.

Figure 27: 'Jogja Jacuzzi', an intimate waterless container, which held space for intimate discussion. Constructed from local bamboo by local craftsmen, whose skills impressed me as I realised how difficult working with bamboo was.

Figure 28: PLEASURE installed at SILO6, Silo Park, Auckland, 2017.

Bringing this knowledge into the context of my culture points to the fact that although most women∞ in Aotearoa are 'free' to enjoy night life, experiences are not always free from harassment; we are often physically endangered and discriminated against.[14] Upon my return home, the uncomfortable feelings of discrimination and oppression I experience in Aotearoa, now amplified through my experience in Indonesia, were compelling me to address them. I became interested in creating spaces that clearly pointed to what we were being denied as women∞ through patriarchal practices. We deserve the freedom to experience pleasure.

A physical platform for a new perspective

While partycipants sat together convivially in *Jogja Jacuzzi*, in *PLEASURE* (figure 28), bodies were orientated together but they looked up individually rather than at each other. As part of *Shifting Ground* group show (October 2017, Silo6, Auckland) *PLEASURE* was designed a site-specific participatory installation. Inside a 14-metre-tall silo, seven loungers in a circular formation invited viewers to reconfigure their body positions into an analyst's-couch-like, upward gaze into the dark abyss of an empty silo. The concave design of the viewing platforms required viewers to lie on their back and assume an 'unproductive' position inside this storage building, a remnant of proto-capitalist productivity. Multiple bodies were aligned in relation to each other by the positions of the loungers fanning out from the cenntre in a ritual-like formation. The circular acoustics of the 6-story high, empty, round silo added a seven-second reverb to inside and outside noises, blending them and creating an aural unsteadiness. A remote voice (my own) came mysteriously from above intermittently saying "looonnngg" and "short". The viewer could choose to become more participatory and engage with the accompanying print-out of morse code. When decoded, the letters spelt out the word P L E A S U R E.

The wooden platforms in this work experimented with re-positioning the body in order to reveal a new perspective. I made them by hand from recycled wood and left them unpadded to reflect the pragmatism of historical shipping environments. The woodwork and construction skills I have 'as a woman' are significant to the *ninthWave's* feminist project and promoted where possible.[15] Morse code also reflected a nautical location, which I have used as a tool for several works previously that inquire into Pākehā positioning, considered on multiple levels. If the code was broken and the word PLEASURE was discovered, an irony was present—as beyond the site-specific acoustics, there wasn't much sensual pleasure in the work: the platforms were hard, and the Silo cold. As noted by a spectator, the vertically cavernous space itself was vagina-like, so to look up into its dark depths with mysterious

[14] For harassment statistics within a grouping of surveyed musicians in Aotearoa, refer: Hoad and Wilson, 'Gender Diversity Among Aotearoa/New Zealand's APRA AMCOS Membership'.

[15] The construction of ninthWave is a statement about the affirmative relationship women can have with yet another male-dominated area, the workshop.

instructions to go long or short at seemingly random intervals, suggested a contemplation of a mechanical or rather austere idea of *PLEASURE*. The lack of pleasure in the work was also intended to point to the irony of capitalist values. David Howes acknowledges this, paraphrasing Karl Marx:

> ...not even among the bourgeoisie are the senses fulfilled. All of the capitalist's senses are ultimately fixed on one object—capital; and while the enjoyment of wealth is one of the objects of capitalism; even better is sacrificing pleasure in order to accumulate more wealth.[16]

This sentiment reflects our culture's obsessive gaze into the void of the endless accumulation of money. This installation focused on pleasure in resistance to such capitalist values. This activist energy expanded into a feminist context in later works.

Expanding activism: Creating a platform

PLEASURE (2017) was followed by *BATTLE* (2017), detailed in the previous chapter; a thrilling performative act of covertly postering up a strong, feminist statement of the text and symbol of 'vibrating vagina' under cover of darkness with my friend Briar Vivian. This act was a formative moment for my 'self': the rebellious-me from my teenage years was re-awakened and was morphed into 'activist'. This feeling was joyously shared with Briar, and this feeling-experience inspired the next stage of the thesis. The *ninthWavesound* project began to solidify as I came to terms with my own potential as an activist, as a feminist, as a skilled maker and emerging sound system builder in the form of a social artwork. It became clear that the sociality of interaction between people is where the meaning lies for my activism, and in the works described above, partycipants themselves create the meaning and value of the artwork.[17] The intimate bodily relationship with *ninthWave* is explored in the next section, as bodies and speakers come into direct contact and relation.

[16] David Howes, 'Hyperesthesia, or The Sensual Logic of Late Capitalism', in *Empire of the Senses : The Sensual Culture Reader.*, ed. David Howes, Sensory Formations Series (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 281–303. 283.

[17] Amelia Jones, 'Encountering: The Conceptual Body, or a Theory of When, Where, and How Art "Means"', TDR: The Drama Review (MIT Press) 62, no. 3 (2018): 12–34.

Sittin' on subs: Lovin' low frequencies

On a dull day of listless imaginings while the *ninthWavesound* project was in its nascent form, a colleague suggested that I go and do the most fun thing I could think of to provide myself with new ideas. So, I bought an electric bass guitar and an amp. The pleasure of direct physical connection to creating amplified vibrations of low-frequency sound solidified my desire to build the 'bassiest' sound system with the most powerful subs I could design and afford. Building into this desire was a fond memory of a relationship I'd previously had with a powerful sub.[18] I recalled my time as a resident DJ at the Britomart Country Club (2013-2016):

> *The DJ booth was set-up in a corner and the large sub of the inhouse sound system sat behind the booth, functioning as a table for records and a perfectly positioned seat for the DJ. At this time, I was playing a lot of Hip Hop and R'n'B. I spent many pleasurable hours sitting upon that subwoofer as it vibrated away, blissfully getting paid to feel bass-lines through my butt and genitals.*[19]

When the first sub of *ninthWave* was completed (the process will be detailed shortly), I translated my 'sub-sitting' DJ experience into a gallery experience as *More Vibration Than We Think We Need...* (Papakura Gallery, Auckland, 20 October–1 December 2018). This was my first foray at bringing low-frequency sound as sculptural material into a gallery context. The sub was placed in the corner of the gallery topped with an inviting cushion to indicate it was to be sat upon. I made the space for interaction with the sub private with sensuous soft pink silk curtains partially dividing the room. This lushness was set against the raw technology of an amplifier and a mid-high frequency range speaker box which added a subtle vibrancy to the bass sounds. The sound track I produced was a loosely constructed collection of whale sounds and bass synthesisers, using a range of tones that were harmonics to the Schumann Resonance and in a tuning of 432Hz, which is purportedly

[18] The subwoofer, or sub, of a system is the box that discretely pumps out the bass. 'Discrete' in that it can be hard to tell exactly where the bass is coming from, unless close enough to feel the air moving in time with the sound.

[19] The vibrations of a sub playing smooth basslines are not as vigorous as a washing machine in spin cycle, so reaching full orgasm is unlikely, but extended experiences of vibrational pleasure are very possible. During this DJ residency I produced the first two mixtapes in a series called Sittin' on Subs:
https://www.mixcloud.com/djlauralush/sitting-on-the-sub-dj-laura-lush-live-at-the-bcc-2015/
https://www.mixcloud.com/djlauralush/still-sittin-on-the-sub-live-at-the-bcc/

a more harmonious tuning.[20] When the volume was increased, the sound vibrated the structure of the gallery, rattling the cups in the kitchen, so (unfortunately) it had to be kept to an acceptable volume for the gallery supervisors.[21]

The inviting softness of this work was in stark contrast to the cold austerity of my work, *PLEASURE*, one year earlier in the industrial setting of the Silos. The sonic realm of *PLEASURE* was also contrasted in *More Vibration Than We Think We Need...*: the sound in the Silos was 'heady', wafting sounds of an echoing voice mixed with the trebly reverberated distortion of the external landscape; *More Vibration* shifted to the opposite end of the spectrum, physically grounding through low-frequency sounds and vibration. Also, a physical/visual orientation of looking upwards and 'just feeling', was assisted by the privatising effect of pink curtains. In *PLEASURE*, the experience is orientated towards the cerebral, through the Morse code and a lightness of sound. In *More Vibration*... the sonic body emerges through the vibration of the body but falls short of reaching the 'empleasured sonic bodie', as experiencing the work was usually done alone.

#lowfrequency4lyfe: the affects of low-frequency sound

Experiencing low-frequency sound vibration is stimulating, so what might it doing for or to us? Witnessing a tinamatua brought to tears while sitting on the sub (page 33), and hearing gallery staff report that an autistic child had an enjoyable time in the space while lying on and leaning against the sub, resonated with my own observations about experiences with bass sounds. There are moments where I have become 'choked up' with a release of emotion while having a moment alone on the dancefloor, which suggests potential for the sound system to be a tool for accessing and releasing underlying emotions. A music producer friend adamantly told me that she 'requires' a good night of dancing in front of

[20] Wikipedia, s.v., 'Schumann Resonances', last modified 16 August 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Schumann_resonances&oldid=1039053359.
The Schumann resonances are a set of spectrum peaks in the extremely low (ELF) portion of the Earth's electromagnetic field spectrum.
Chris Hampton, 'The 432Hz "God" Note: Why Fringe Audiophiles Want to Topple Standard Tuning', Opinion, Vice.com, 13 May 2014, https://www.vice.com/en/article/xywy74/the-fringe-audiophiles-who-want-to-topple-standard-tuning.; Alan Cross, 'The Great 440 Hz Conspiracy, and Why All of Our Music Is Wrong', Global News, 13 May 2018, https://globalnews.ca/news/4194106/440-hz-conspiracy-music/. And: D Calamassi and G.P. Pomponi, 'Music Tuned to 440 Hz Versus 432 Hz and the Health Effects: A Double-Blind Cross-over Pilot Study.', Explore 15, no. 4 (August 2019): 283–90, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.explore.2019.04.001.
The debate continues of the difference between standardised middle A=440Hz tuning of all Western instruments versus a supposedly 'more cosmically aligned' tuning of middle-A=432Hz, with studies suggesting that heart rates drop and participants feel calmer with 432Hz tuning.

[21] Notes from the work: the bass is actually felt more when around 3-4 metres in front of the speaker; I wanted the speaker cables to be on display to highlight the technology, but OSH requirements disallowed the possibility. I had a giant vibrating vagina sticker on the opposite wall, but a wall of posters to suggest activist intentions might have been more enlightening.

a sound system to maintain her equilibrium.[22] Several conversations around the work at Papakura sparkled with memories of delight about happy times spent somatically exploring the low-frequency sound of the music at dance parties. Many of us are attracted to the powerful vibrations and swear by the positive effects of a vibratory experience beyond just the social experience. Based on empirical observations over time, I suggest that experiences of low-frequency sound vibrations can improve our well-being. Sound-focused therapies often focus on vibration, and many have been gaining recognition as healing methods for a range of mental and physical ailments.

Figure 29: Porotiti: a spinning disc with two holes threaded with a string through both sides, the strin gis twisted and pulled between the hands and the air is vibrated. 'Ake Ake' (2014), carved by Brian Flintoff. Image sourced from: Noanoa, Julie, and Norm Heke. Māori Art for Kids. Nelson, NZ: Potton & Burton, n.d.

While it is outside the scope of this thesis to review literature on sound healing extensively, the following examples are cited in brief to demonstrate the value of vibratory practices. In Aotearoa, Māori rongoa, or healing practices, often incorporate vibratory instruments (taonga pūoro), such as the pūrerehua and porotiti (figure 29).[23] Goldsby and Goldsby summarise studies of traditional practices of sound vibration therapies, showing that experiencing the vibrations of Tibetan singing bowls, the Aboriginal didgeridoo and the Chinese gong can be stress-relieving. They suggest that the strength of these therapies is that they "perceive the individual in more wholistic terms", rather than focusing on a dysfunctional part.[24] Hypotheses as to what is taking place include the notions that: "brain waves may change from a normal or even agitated state (such as beta waves), to an exceptionally relaxed brain wave state (such as theta or even delta waves)"; and "the vibrations of the instruments may be interacting with [the body's] biofield".[25] VibroAcoustic Therapies have a more focused approach, working with recognised resonant frequencies that are felt in the body in specific areas, for example, that "40Hz is felt strongest in the calves/thighs".[26]

[22] Laura Marsh in conversation with Catherine Ellis, Audio recording, Auckland, 21 March 2020.

[23] SOUNZ Centre for NZ Music and Jerome Kavanagh, Introduction to Taonga Puoro: Porotiti and Pūrerehua, Online video, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LSdXLyWYgQg&ab_channel=SOUNZCentreforNZMusic.
Taonga pūoro, commonly translated as 'Māori instruments', are used in cultural performance and healing practices. The pūoro porotiti and pūrerehua both use spinning shapes, spun through the air to produce a 'deep sound', as Jason Kavanaugh explains, to emit a vibration that penetrates the body, providing a "mirimiri [massage] and recalibration" of the cells. The porotiti is spun between both hands and, for example, used to relieve headaches and sinus congestion.

[24] Tamara L. Goldsby and Michael E. Goldsby, 'Eastern Integrative Medicine and Ancient Sound Healing Treatments for Stress: Recent Research Advances', Integrative Medicine: A Clinician's Journal 19, no. 6 (December 2020): 24–30. 24.
Also Tamara L. Goldsby et al., 'Effects of Singing Bowl Sound Meditation on Mood, Tension, and Well-Being: An Observational Study', Journal of Evidence-Based Complementary & Alternative Medicine 22, no. 3 (30 September 2016): 401–6, https://doi.org/10.1177/2156587216668109.

[25] Goldsby and Goldsby, 'Eastern Integrative Medicine and Ancient Sound Healing Treatments for Stress: Recent Research Advances'. 28. "It has been hypothesised that the human body has an energy field surrounding it… [and] that both Reiki healing and sound healing may have an effect of vibrational attuning of the body and its biofield".

[26] Campbell et al., 'Exploring the Use of Vibroacoustic Treatment for Managing Chronic Pain and Comorbid Mood Disorders: A Mixed Methods Study'. 293.

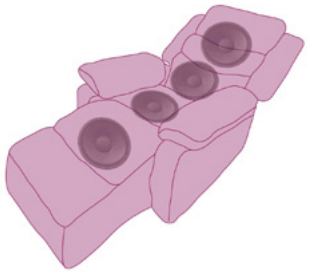

Figure 30: Diagram example of a VibroAcoustic Therapy chair. Artist's impression by Laura Marsh.

The first VibroAcoustic chairs and beds were produced for therapy in 1988. The VA100 model chair had six loudspeakers placed under different parts of the body, controllable for differing amplitudes or intensities. Accompanying sound was the combination of "music and a single low-frequency, rhythmically pulsed, sinusoidal sound wave".[27] Campbell et al. suggest that VibroAcoustic Therapy targets the chronic pain that occurs when the oscillation of rhythmical messaging (of around 40Hz) along neural pathways has been disrupted, resulting in "thalamocortical dysfunction".[28] VibroAcoustic Therapy often works with a similar low-frequency "under the hypothesis that it may act as a driving force for rhythmic (re)entrainment of this disrupted thalamocortical loop".[29] A 2015 study on 'The Effect of Low-Frequency Sound Stimulation on Patients with Fibromyalgia' observed '[s]ignificant improvements' for participants, with reduced pain, reduced need for medication and improved range of motion.[30] The affective frequency used in the study was also 40Hz, accompanied by harmonic frequencies. Another recent study has revealed potential for 'Whole Body Vibration' therapies to improve the state of intestinal microbiota and therefore the body's immunity.[31] While physical health benefits of *ninthWavesound* would need medical research to support any claims, I suggest here that low-frequency sound is beneficial based on anecdotal accounts of physical and mental well-being reported by partycipants in low-frequency sound powered events. Favourable vibratory encounters enliven this project and strengthen the resolve to create many more 'safe' spaces for women∞, so that we∞ may access the benefits more often.

A communal vibrator

The development of the (((({})))) symbol of a vibrating vagina, which I explored in the last chapter, was through no accidental connection between sitting on subs and sensual-

[27] Jeff Hooper, 'An Introduction to Vibroacoustic Therapy and an Examination of Its Place in Music Therapy Practice', British Journal of Music Therapy 15, no. 2 (2001): 69–77. 70.
"The pulsed effect was created by the difference in tone between two sinusoidal tones placed loosely together (e.g. 40Hz and 40.2 Hz)", 70.

[28] Campbell et al., 'Exploring the Use of Vibroacoustic Treatment for Managing Chronic Pain and Comorbid Mood Disorders: A Mixed Methods Study'.

[29] Lee R. Bartel et al., 'Vibroacoustic Stimulation and Brain Oscillation: From Basic Research to Clinical Application', Music and Medicine 9, no. 3 (2017): 153–66. Cited in Campbell et al., 'Exploring the Use of Vibroacoustic Treatment for Managing Chronic Pain and Comorbid Mood Disorders: A Mixed Methods Study'.

[30] Naghdi et al., 'The Effect of Low-Frequency Sound Stimulation on Patients with Fibromyalgia: A Clinical Study'. Nineteen female volunteers (median age 51 years; median duration of [fibromyalgia] 5.76 years) were administered 10 treatments (twice per week for five weeks). Treatments involved 23 minutes of [low-frequency sound stimulation] at 40 Hz, delivered using transducers (speakers) in a supine position.

[31] Ning Song et al., 'Whole Body Vibration Triggers a Change in the Mutual Shaping State of Intestinal Microbiota and Body's Immunity', Frontiers in Bioengineering and Biotechnology 7 (29 November 2019), https://doi.org/10.3389/fbioe.2019.00377.
This is fascinating, as I can attest through personal experience of gluten intolerance, that the health of my gut has a massive impact upon my state of mental health.

sexual experience. The pleasure of vibration applied to the genitals has been known to benefit women∞ in the form of a vibrator, since at least the 1800s, when a doctor invented a mechanical vibrator to relieve his wrist from the manual chore of bringing women∞ to orgasm in order to treat their 'hysteria'.[32] Imagining that women∞ in Victorian times had to go to the doctors to access desired intimate physical touch in order to feel 'sane' brings up a multitude of questions about our history of the denial and oppression of the sexual pleasure of women∞, and leads me to ask: do women∞ have a reduced potential of well-being due to a lack of sensual-sexual pleasure in their lives? Many self-help books would suggest 'yes', and multiple studies refer to an improved sense of well-being due to satisfying sexual relationships.[33]

A question of sound vibration's orgasmic potential was explored in a performance work by artists Julia Croft and Harriet Gilles called *Death Throes* (2019), where at a performance festival at the *Blue Room*, Perth, Julia and Harriet attempted to orgasm by speaker. Due to the unfortunate durational restriction of only four minutes, Julia confesses that "neither Harriet nor I had an orgasm. If we were braver we would have made the audience stay in the theatre for as long as it took. Next time".[34] Julia and I have discussed a future collaboration that would also include myself as sound producer, and *ninthWavesound* as a 'giant vibrator', where Julia will re-enact the piece. As fellow single white feminists, we have mused about both the potential and the tragic irony of the lack of satisfaction expressed in this work. Scientifically, anecdotally or artistically and joyously, the relationship between vibration and well-being is an expanding field of enquiry, which *ninthWavesound* is proudly part of. Next I turn to the building process of *ninthWave.*

[32] Passion and Power, Emiko Omori and Wendy Slick (Wabi-sabi, 2007), online documentary film.
First a manual, then a steam powered, then an electric vibrator were invented to save the wrists of physicians from the manual labour of bringing women to clitoral orgasm. When vibrators started appearing in sexy photographs the cover was blown and vibrators went underground, to be forgotten in the public imaginary until a discovery of a scalp massager and subsequent use of it otherwise by Betty Dobson in the 1970s. She authored 'Liberating Masturbation' (1974), running workshops educating women about what an orgasm was and how to have one, radically changing many women's lives. Vibrators are still restricted items in certain parts of America.

[33] For one example see: Stuart Brody and Rui M. Costa, 'Vaginal Orgasm Is Associated with Indices of Women's Better Psychological, Intimate Relationship, and Psychophysiological Function', The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality 26, no. 1 (2017): 1–4, https://doi.org/10.3138/cjhs.261-A3.

[34] Divulged in discussion with friend Julia Croft via text message. In 'Julia Croft and Laura Marsh Discuss Julia's Work', 6 March 2021.

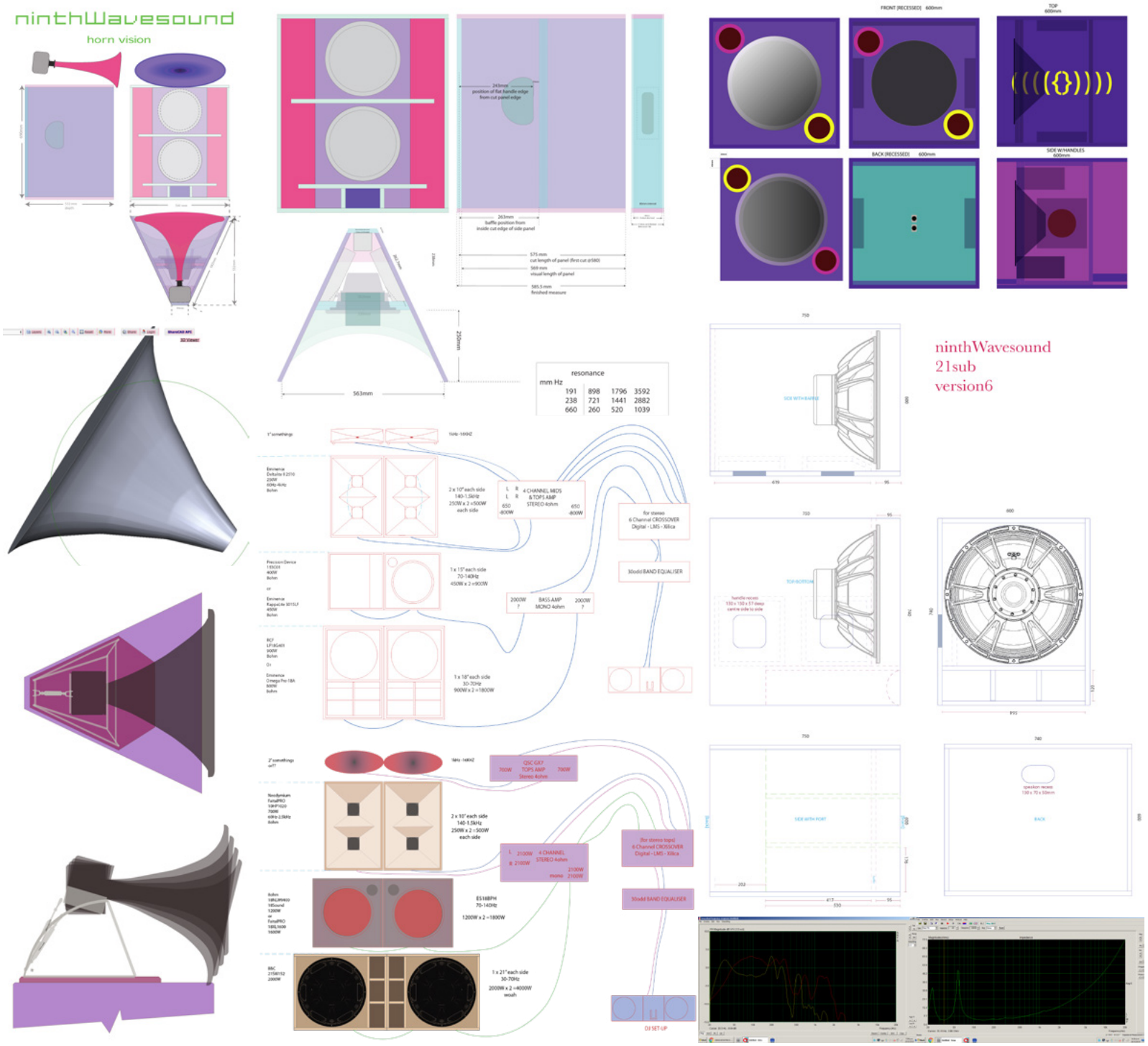

Figure 31: Collection of technical design drawings used in the development and build of ninthWave, 2018-2019.

Building *ninthWave*

Building a sound system is more than just building a stack of speaker boxes—it is a system of relationships between people, and between people and technology.

The *ninthWavesound* project was motivated by a powerful desire to bring people together. The design of the sound system was led by practical considerations about who, and how many, people I would need in order to move and set her up at venues. I wanted her to be easy for women to move around, so I needed a powerful and 'heavy' sound to come from a lightweight set of speakers.[35] This feminist desire for lightweight portability went against the grain of how sound systems are usually built within the male-dominated sound system culture. In the latter half of 2018, I began to draw up my vision for *ninthWave* and launched myself into working out what the details of the design would be.

Knowledge gathering, design and construction

I began conversations with local sound system owner/operators and builders who I already knew from crewing and deejaying, slowly gathering information and opinions. Knowing that I had people to ask for advice in my existing music industry networks, and knowing what they could build, was a significant reason why I felt I could make this project happen. I decided upon a four-way system in the style of a Jamaican sound system—separate speakers for low-subs, mid-subs, mids and highs—based on the practicalities of making the stack tall enough, while keeping the boxes small enough to handle. This also meant I would be able to dedicate the low-subs to reaching very low frequencies, and mid-subs dedicated to the upper part of the low-frequency range, allowing for more power for both. The mid-range frequencies would be covered by another pair, and the highs by a pair of small compression speakers with wave guides to direct the tiniest sound waves. This would be powered by two four-channel amps, which would feed the sound from the DJ mixer through a digital crossover component or management system. In classic reggae system style, I would need long cables to enable placing the speakers at a distance from the amps and controls. This means that the DJ can face the stack(s) and experience their own music at its best, rather than

[35] 'Heavy' meaning a powerful low end, where the low-frequencies are as low as possible in the audible and subaudible ranges.

Figure 32: Me getting my hands on a B&C 21" driver, which set my design plan for ninthWave's subs in motion.

Figure 33: Building the first subwoofer in the 3DLab workshop, AUT University.

being stuck behind the speakers in the muddiness of bass vibration.[36]

Beginning with the 21″ very low-end sub, I looked into a variety of tried and tested speaker designs available online, but I was unconvinced by the chat in the forums that large and heavy 'is the best way' (read: *only* way) to get the 'best' sound. Most bass-heavy systems discussed in forums were committed to large, heavy, folded horn designs or 'scoops' for their bass bins, which contain a lot of heavy wood. I wanted a 'heavy sound', as most of these builders did, but I also needed a very lightweight design, because I knew there would often just be me and one other person to move her around, and I didn't want to injure my crew, who were likely to be women who don't weight train.[37] 'Working smarter not harder' is an aspect of my methodology in this project.

A serendipitous discussion with Swiss-German sound engineer Jack Karuza of *Perfect Sound Solutions* (Auckland, NZ) enabled my desire for 'small and powerful' to come to fruition. Jack had a design theory for a simple ported design with a compact box around a large driver.[38] Though most systems use 18″ drivers, it came about that I could buy a set of high quality 21″ drivers, and I figured logically that the bigger the cone of the driver, the larger a sound wave I could move, therefore the lower the frequency that I could achieve. I input the parameters of the drivers into the speaker design software and Jack helped me decipher the output graphs for optimum design performance. I designed a spreadsheet to balance the dimensions of the cabinet with the internal volume required, calculating the internal litreage required for the cabinet, and also the dimensions of the port. I translated this into technical drawings and got to work in the workshop.

I worked on the low-end 21″ sub first as it was the most exciting and the most straight-forward. Still, this first build was the most stressful because there were many small decisions to be made along the way that would affect further decisions and the final outcome.[39] I was concerned with the overall aesthetic, but functionality and excellent

[36] This happens all the time, as the DJ is placed in-between the stacks, raised upon a stage in the 'God' position and swamped by the mud of sound behind the speakers. When it is a huge system such as the bass stage at Shipwrecked Festival or the DJ stage at Splore, deejaying is reduced to knowing your music well enough to be able to mix without being able to hear it properly, and as DJ, you are reduced to listening to your own work through headphones and a booth monitor, while everyone else listens to the set in all its glory in front of you.

[37] I have been doing weight training to make sure I don't injure myself, as often I need to move all the other speakers myself.

[38] A ported subwoofer has a mathematically proportioned 'hole' of a certain length and volume that allows for the air pressure created by the moving cone of the speaker driver. This creates a more efficient and therefore louder speaker, compared to a sealed box. Other possible designs for subs include the folded horn which is the 'traditional' option for Jamaican-style systems. These involve an internal 'maze' of wood through which compressed air created by the moving driver travels. It is a mathematical adaption of a horn or flaring duct, folding the shape to fit into a box. Though these are also very efficient, they use a lot of wood and are heavier than the ported or sealed versions.

[39] I had very little idea about what I was doing and the outcome very uncertain, Jack was confident based on the mathematical equations, so I trusted him and carried on.

sound was paramount. For this foundational speaker I used the recommended standard practice of 18mm birch plywood, which, though heavy, is strong. As desired, the ported design reduced the amount of wood, reducing the relative weight compared to the folded horns of most reggae systems. I felt that going heavier with the wood here was appropriate as the sub will always be upon the floor, getting a beating from people and large vibrations. After more than a week in the workshop, cutting, routing, sanding, gluing, and clamping, it was time to fix in place the 21″ driver (figure 34), wire it in, and plug it in. I bought my first amplifier, powerful enough to run two subs of this size at 2000W each. Jack and I rigged it up and turned it on… and it worked! *And it worked well!* Upon measuring, the resonant or optimum frequency of the cabinet design came out at 32Hz, which is much lower than the subs of most systems, i.e., triumphantly we had achieved *heavy*. The sub also measured a very clean resonant response throughout the lower frequency range up to 200Hz—a clear and solid design. So much so much hard work had paid off… *I was incredibly stoked, and very proud.*

Figure 34: Testing how low the 21" sub can go - the resulting 32Hz resonance is lower than most!

Confident, now bolstered by the successful functionality of the low-end sub, I continued with cabinet designs for the 15″ mid-subs, and a trapezoid design for a mids cabinet to hold two 10″ drivers. For both of these speakers, I broke from the tradition of using heavy birch ply and chose to use lightweight poplar plywood. At half the weight of birch, this removed many kilos from the designs, making it much easier to lift the speakers off the ground and place them on top of the 21″ sub where they will usually need to be. *I realised later that these decisions around weight and size were feminist moves within the context of sound system culture, as I will outline shortly.*

The 2″ high frequency compressor required a wave-guide or 'horn' to direct the sound. Rather than using the usual squared-out designs, I was fascinated by an oblique, spherical shape. I wanted a distinctly different looking sound system to all the standard reggae styles, something that would catch the eye, and these fit the bill. Controlling the direction of sound waves is a complex mathematical equation, and very important in the upper frequency ranges. I couldn't find a way to design it myself, so I contacted, by email, an Italian company which develops commercial software for speaker designs. I asked for 'just one' computer-simulated model to match my driver, and much to my delight Dario, who replied, very generously obliged, sending a computerised 3D model of a guide free of charge.[40] To construct the horn I adapted the 3D model into a pattern for the CNC router (computerised router) which cut a 'plug' (mold) for the fibre-glass version to be shaped over.[41] Fibre-glassing

[40] The details of the company are now unfortunately lost in digital maelstrom. Dario very much wished to visit New Zealand one day and had previously worked at the Italian speaker driver company FaitalPro (from which I bought my set of drivers) and he happened to have a file on hand.

[41] Fibreglass is a total nightmare, and I'm going to avoid it in the future. I would like to computer-cut a wave-guide directly out of wood for the next iteration.

was yet another steep learning curve, resulting in a lightweight 'plastic' horn, which, after construction I decided the outer profile, which would usually be contained in a box, was too sexy to hide. So I designed and welded up an angle-adjustable metal stand (learning to weld, also a new skill). I purchased a digital crossover, a.k.a. a Loud-speaker Management System (or LMS Processor) to separate the sound into the four separate ranges of frequencies that suited the parameters of the speakers. On the 3rd of October, 2019, I finally plugged each of the four speakers into the amp and for the first time heard her full-frequency spectrum of sound. One year on from the early concept sketches, *ninthWave's* first stack was complete. She was half-way to the envisioned double stack, but for the minute was a fully workable mono system: a functioning 'sound'.

Figure 35: The first stack completed and in full working order. Installed at the Audio Foundation as part of New Sound Perspectives exhibition, 9 Oct-11 Nov 2019, Auckland. Photo credit: Kate van der Drift

ninthWavesound makes her first moves

With the first stack in action, I began running sound and DJ events (explored in Chapter Four) and launched a Kickstarter campaign to raise funds for her second stack (which I will explore shortly). My friend Wendy Douglas, confident in my abilities to achieve stack two in time, booked *ninthWave* to be the sound system in her *Wellness Tent* at Splore 2020 for the next February. I spent most of the summer in the workshop to pull off the challenge, completing the second stack just hours before she was due to make her appearance. The sound engineer for the *Wellness Tent* at Splore, Tom Tyer-Drake, gave *ninthWave* a tune on the spot and she sounded pretty good. After the festival, Tom, auralising that she could sound better, generously organised two of Aotearoa's top sound engineers to further tune her.[42] Maddie English and Mark Corbett worked with Tom and their SMART software for five hours to smooth out tiny peculiarities of the cabinets (as they all have some). They placed a microphone in front of each speaker, playing 'pink noise' to read the uneven playing of certain frequencies of each cabinet, and then programmed the LMS processor to reduce or boost frequencies where required.[43]

The result of this tuning was experienced the next time I heard her months later, post-COVID lockdown, at the *Winter Solstice Party* (20 June 2020). I had tears of joy spilling out all night. The organisers, including Wendy, reported that they were astonished, 'blown away'.[44] I still had much to learn about *ninthWave's* sonic nuances, for events in different locations present different acoustic dynamics, but as this research has developed, I've learnt more about how to tweak her parameters to maintain her best sound. *ninthWave's* sound was described as 'exquisite' (Laura O) and 'surprisingly heavy' (the Lion Rockers) for her size.[45] This recognition has made me a very proud sound system Mumma. I could not (and still can't) believe how incredible she sounded at full volume with delicious bass-driven music pumping out of her.

[42] Oliveros, 'Auralizing in the Sonosphere: A Vocabulary for Inner Sound and Sounding'.
Auralising is a term developed by Pauline Oliveros, to express the aural imaginary, rather than the visual imaginary; to furturise with one's aural imagination.

[43] Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, s.v. 'Pink Noise', accessed 13 November 2021, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pink+noise. Pink Noise definition: "a mixture of sound waves with an intensity that diminishes proportionally with frequency to yield approximately equal energy per octave".

[44] Conversations held on the night with Brett Crockett, Wendy Douglas, 20 June 2020.

[45] Laura Marsh in conversation with Laura Owen-Wright a.k.a. Laura O, about Earth Beat, Audio recording, online, 10 August 2021. And Michael Robins, 'Michael Robins Compliments *NinthWavesound*', 13 October 2020.

ninthWave's specs:

ninthWave, as two stacks, is a 12,600W sound system. At *Earth Beat Festival* she confidently held the attention of an audience of around 300 people.[46]

Each of her two stacks consists of:

High frequencies (1.5kHz–18kHz): 2" FaitalPro compressor driver, 140W, fibreglass oblique spherical wave guide, 400 wide x 200 high x 500 deep;

Mid frequencies (200Hz–1.5kHz): 2 x 10" FaitalPRO drivers, 1200W x 2, trapezoid ported cabinet made of lightweight 15mm poplar plywood, 700 x 600 x 650mm;

Mid subs (150–200Hz): 15" FaitalPRO subwo`ofer drivers, 1400W, ported cabinet made of lightweight 18mm poplar plywood, 600 x 600 x 600mm;

Low-end subs (30-150Hz): 21" B&C 21SW152 drivers, 2000W, ported cabinet made of solid 18mm birch plywood, 600 x 740 x 750mm.

ninthWave's colourful personality

Figure 36: A Pico soundsystem, Columbia. Image of album cover: Salsa Picotera, Vol. 2, Vinyl LP, various artists. Colombia: Tico Records, 1980.

As the physical form of *ninthWave* came into being, my imagination extended into her personality. To activate *ninthWave's* potential, I started to also build her 'self' through her visual appearance and the design of promotional material. The detail of her construction needed to be complimented by her colourings. She was never to be the black, brown, or camouflage boxes that litter the sound system landscapes (i.e., all systems owned by men). She was to be a joyful being, carnivalesque in vibrant colours, which would never be accused of 'going with' the décor; she was always destined to stand out and disrupt visual expectations with delight.[47] At the time of choosing her colours I had been living in a stationary house truck of classic gypsy design, painted purple and maroon on the outside with a natural wood interior. I translated the nomadic vibe of the gypsy truck onto *ninthWave* through colour and wood detailing, adding a little bit of 'future' with subtle white and fluorescent pink detailing that appears under black light.[48]

The future-retro graphic I developed for the *ninthWavesound* project compliments her visual presence. The nostalgic feeling of unlimited potential that I experience through

[46] For Earth Beat Festival 2023 we hope to have two more 21″ subs to get through the mass of bodies and have a louder bottom end at the back of the crowd.

[47] The Pico sound systems of Colombia are an exception to the rule of drab box decoration. A Pico is decorated with a fluorescent mural depicting fierce animals or battle scenes from local history. Refer figure 36..

[48] Black lights being mandatory at any real rave.

1980s style is reflected in the 'vaporwave' aesthetics.[49] My earliest memory of this feeling is from watching the 1980s fantasy cartoon series *Jem and the Holograms*: where *Jem* is a rockstar, and her alter ego, *Jerrica,* owns a record company called Starlight Music and runs a foster home for girls.[50] For many childhood years I was 'pretty much' *Jem,* dancing and singing to all the songs from the show with my best friend Johanna. My desire to 'be' *Jem* motivated my participation in 'modern jazz' dance classes and to learn a variety of instruments. Still today, this formative part of my life is echoed through having an alter ego: as a DJ, I am *Laura Lush*, or *LUSH,* and I'm often rocking 80s styles. My choice of fashion taps into the 'power-dressing' that was afforded to 'successful' women in this era and reflects a feminist ethos of rejecting a prescribed 'femininity'.[51] Graphic and fashion aesthetics from the 1980s still trigger this feeling for me, despite the neo-liberal trajectories that I now understand led to the heady, self-indulgent hedonism of that era. In this project I am engaging subversively with this carefree/future-forgetful/anything-is-possible time and my own potential. My ethos, in contrast to the neo-liberal 80s, encompasses the uplifting of the individual along with affirmative community empowerment as well; *I* becomes *We*.

Figure 37: example of 'future retro' vaporwave aesthetic. Image sourced from: Ultimas Cosmology Wiki. 'Vaporwave Dimension'. Accessed 26 January 2022. https://ultimas-cosmology.fandom.com/wiki/Vaporwave_Dimension.

Figure 38: example of Jem graphic and the feeling of massive potential. Image sourced from Wikipedia, 'Jem (tv series)', accessed 23 Jan 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jem_(TV_series).

Designing differently

I began to appreciate the feminism of my design ambitions for a sound system when Agatha Johnson conscripted me as an interviewee in her anthropology thesis project 'Can You Hear Me Now: Sound System, Women, Marginalisation and Expansion'.[52] She pointed out that my decision to make *ninthWave* a 'lightweight' sound system might prove to have more on-flow effects than I had imagined. She pointed out that access to knowledge from within the bounds of a sound system must first be earned through demonstrating commitment

[49] Vaporwave vibes: refer figure 37.

[50] *Jem and the Holograms* was an American animated musical television series which ran from 1985 to 1988. Orphan Jerrica was left a hologram machine by her deceased father; this machine, with holographic technology, had the ability to transform her and her friends into badass rock stars, as *Jem and the Holograms*: an all-female rock band. Their bitter rivals, *The Misfits*, were also all female. The motherly hologram machine was called *Synergy*, and she could perform the transformation and many other 'life-saving' temporary visual illusions on call: "Show time Synergy!" The cartoon was a massive influence upon my life: my best friend and I spent many hours of our primary school years singing and dancing to the songs on tape. My passionately performed fantasy of rock-stardom, singing and dancing my heart out, being Jem, was a feeling that I now identify as jouissance: where the pleasure of potential exceeds the boundaries of the possible. Technology—Synergy, the hologram machine, and rock instruments—was able to create in the imaginary, freedom from the boundaries of the human body, which cannot escape the tropes of oppression. This imagined ability to 'do and be whatever I want', provides an energy, a vibration, a feeling, that lasts for many hours or days, opening up potential, enabling a question of 'what if . . .'. Refer figure 38.

[51] Caroline Evans, 'Fashion Is a Feminist Issue – Archive, 1989', The Guardian, 13 November 2019, sec. Fashion, https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2019/nov/13/fashion-is-a-feminist-issue-archive-1989.

[52] Agatha Johnson in conversation with Laura Marsh, audio recording, online, 18 August 2020.
Agatha Johnson's Master's degree in Visual Anthropology at the University of Manchester eventuated into a documentary film called Can You Hear Me Now in late 2020. See Agatha Johnson, Can You Hear Me Now?, Online video, Documentary (undistributed, 2020), https://youtu.be/OgXxqsZaz_E. And Agatha Johnson, 'Can You Hear Me Now: Sound System, Women, Marginalisation and Expansion' (Master's Thesis, Manchester University, UK, 2020).

to being part of the crew by first helping to pack in and out the speaker cabinets for the event. Several of Aggie's women∞ interviewees had noted that they were lacking in the brute strength required to lift very heavy speaker boxes and so were unable to become part of the crew, and therefore they were denied access to the knowledge. My experience with helping the Lion Rockers pack in and out their incredibly heavy boxes had allowed me access to the 'crew', and also access to the sound system-building knowledge of system builder Josh Llewellyn, but the sheer weight of their system was why I endeavoured to make ninthWave as light as possible. [53] By designing 'light and easy to set-up', I had inadvertently removed a hierarchical barrier to accessing knowledge for whomever would like it; I had designed in a feminist element of 'inclusion' not always there.[54]

Flouting the 'rules' of sound system-building by building a ported sub rather than a folded horn design and making the system light, highlights that 'size isn't everything', and ways of doing things can be otherwise. This includes visual considerations, as I wanted *ninthWave* to be warm, friendly, inviting, loving (pinks and purples say this for me). The make-up and vibe of a scene or community is influenced and shaped by those who run it. And up until this moment, the local sound system scene has been exclusively run by men, but the birth of *ninthWavesound* changed this. *ninthWave*, at this initial moment had begun to open a space for women∞ to engage with sound system technology, and for women to be involved in a deejaying community. With all this groundwork in place, still more doing remained: how to call the community in.

[53] Sound system-building knowledge is not standardised. None of the sound system owners I have met have trained as sound engineers; Josh of Lion Rockers was a cabinet maker by trade when he started building his sound. Online forums provide a lot of ideas and opinions, many dudes are very religious about how an 'authentic' system ought to be built. Though speaker plans are plentiful, I felt like many just reiterated the ideas of a couple of opinionated builders (all men) who claimed that a particular 18" Precision Device driver (PD1850) coupled with a folded horn design was the 'only' option for a heavy weight sound. This driver alone weighs 23kg. When you add the weight of folded horn design—the OThorne for example—you add almost three sheets of 18mm birch ply weighing approximately 30kg per sheet, getting to around 110kg for a single bass bin. This was impractical for my project.

[54] Of course, a certain level of able-bodied-ness is required to help with pack-in. But in realising how this could be exclusionary, I endeavour to be inclusive in other ways, as there is all kinds of work that is needed to be done other than lifting, such as promotion, design, decorating, hosting etc. Fundamentally, access to the *ninthWavesound* crew does not include an hierarchical requirement of lifting speakers.

Figure 39: ninthWavesound branding and promotional graphics, developed in 2019 and still in use.

Calling them in: *ninthWave* beckons

ninthWavesound had developed into a being, an entity ready to engage with others. This section explores some of the methods of announcing her arrival to the world and presenting her kaupapa to bring together a community of bass-loving women∞ around her. Through putting my hand to wood and my efforts at 'birthing' her into this world, I believe *ninthWave* emanates a life force. To impress this upon others and reflect the feminist intentions of the project, I have ascribed a personality and several roles to her: *ninthWave* is a welcoming feminist, interested in lifting up women∞; she has a powerful, bold, clear 'voice'; she is nomadic in her roles; she is matriarch; she is ally; she is child; she uses the pronouns she/her. *ninthWave's* powerful affective capacity is acknowledged through this strategy of anthropomorphising, activating her agency, her power to *do*.

By positioning *ninthWave* as an active agent, I suggest she has potential to build relations with many others—human and non-human—over time, gathering meaning and significance through the relationships she has with what, and with those, who interact with her. Braidotti's post-human thinking involves an immanent awareness of an anthropomorphic position: that "constitutes the start of a critique of delusional anthropocentrism".[55] The narcissism of humanist thinking separates us from the world around us. A post-human conceptualisation of our environment helps us to understand, as Braidotti advocates, "the complexity of our human and non-human relational universe" which allows for *ninthWave* to be wholly affective as 'herself'. Through a "vital neo-materialist philosophy", Braidotti argues that life contains forces and relations that we, as human, are not always equipped to understand.[56] Conceptualising *ninthWave* as an entity unto herself, combined with the affectivity of low-frequency sound, expresses a post-human understanding of relation, where 'we' are always already connected. This is reflected in the desire for a different, feminist, dynamic of power which underlies community building. Where *ninthWave* is interlocutor, activist, catalyst, and I am at her service as facilitator. Yet she also serves us, a reciprocal relationship in kind, in amplification.

[55] Braidotti, 'Four Theses on Posthuman Feminism'. 35.

[56] Braidotti, Posthuman Knowledge.

Getting the word out: Promoting as method of engagement

A sizeable amount of money is necessary to build a system of good quality and high power like ninthWavesound, and I wanted her to 'take the boys on'.[57] So, I launched a Kickstarter campaign to help finance the second stack and to draw attention to the project within the local music scene. I raised $6000 dollars through the exchange of merchandise that I handmade—stickers, t-shirts, posters—and the 'selling' of *ninthWavesound* events, and of opportunities to play on the sound system (figures 40, 41). To incorporate fund-raising as part of the artmaking process in this project blurs the line between social art and social enterprise, bringing together lived experience—and the necessities for living—with being able to express political-artistic concerns. (My friends and I proudly wear the t-shirts and place stickers wherever possible.)

Figure 40: Stills from Kickstarter promotional video: me demonstrating the rewards offered in exchange for money.

The process of promoting the Kickstarter campaign involved many people in my network, men∞ and women∞, who I felt would be interested in the project, whether or not they might be interested in contributing. What became apparent was the spectrum of relationships that I had with people, and in order to support these relationships, I decided to put effort into each communication through a personal message. This worked to promote the project throughout my DJ network and was a recognition that every relationship I have is nuanced, acknowledging the subtleties of the 'other' as I work to resonate with them. This approach was time-consuming, but it 'felt right' to choose personal relationship-building over impersonal efficiency for the purpose of raising funds. The results speak for my care and commitment, and they reflect an ethics of care drawn out of feminist concern.[58]

Figure 41: Badges and Tshirts were offered along with posters, stickers and hirage of ninthWave.

Promoting the project for the Kickstarter campaign involved clarifying the intention behind the project and using a visual identity in order to clearly communicate the intention to the public. A promotional video was required for the online Kickstarter portal, and I became the face and the voice. It was a vulnerable moment for me/DJ Laura Lush as I stepped out from

[57] This cost of building *ninthWave* highlighted that a sound system-builder must have adequate disposable income to finance what is usually a hobby, and an obsession with good sound. The discrepancy between men and women's income levels may help to explain the lack of women∞run sounds, as men have higher wages and more disposable income.
Refer Ministry for Women, 'Gender Pay Gap', Goverment of New Zealand, Ministry for Women, 18 August 2021, https://women.govt.nz/work-skills/income/gender-pay-gap.
And Alison Mau, 'Are We Being Duped on the Gender Pay Gap?', Stuff, 28 August 2021, https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/300393370/are-we-being-duped-on-the-gender-pay-gap.

[58] Jean Keller and Eva Feder Kittay, 'Feminist Ethics of Care', in The Routledge Companion to Feminist Philosophy (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 541–55.
A feminist ethics of care developed in the 1980s through the recognition that morality was based primarily on logic and reasoning, and failed to recognise the relationships between humans and the care inherent: that "the full range of human experience, from dependence and vulnerability at birth to frail old age, be considered when conceiving human agency and interactions". Beginning with the concern that the feminine tendency to nurture was ignored in moral reasoning, an ethics of care has granted "moral attention to human relationships, and new moral attention to the role of dependency in human life", and acknowledges the role of power in the labour of care. 541.

behind the protection of the radio microphone and the DJ booth and onto the screen. I was responsible for speaking for ninthWave until she could 'grow up', become two stacks who could speak for herself, and develop a reputation. Performance-wise, I took an infomercial-type format with a 'this product can change your life' angle, expressing my jokester side in order to draw people into the idea that feminism can be fun. Through making the video I discovered and affirmed an entertaining, publicly performing, feminist version of myself. Part of this involved working through uncertainties about the women-focused framing of the project and being prepared to naively get it wrong as I learned to negotiate the complexity of gendered language. This was to be an ongoing process, and eventually, as described in the introduction, I settled upon using an open-ended notion of 'woman' through the use of an infinity symbol, '∞', i.e., woman$^{\infty}$, women$^{\infty}$. As described in Chapter One, this project is inclusive of others who resonate with the feminist intentions of creating and revelling in a non-male-dominant space for the expansion of being otherwise to the male-paradigm, and is therefore strategically biased towards women$^{\infty}$.

A popular misquote remembered from a Kevin Costner movie from 1989 was sometimes enough to spur me on through the hard yards of building the foundations to this project: "build it and they will come".[59] After building her, there was, and still is, work to be done to facilitate events that will bring people together, often enough, for a community to build. Unfortunately, Covid-19 lockdowns and social restrictions have limited the number of events in the timeframe of the thesis. Through the *ninthWavesound* events undertaken in this project, *ninthWave* has made many friends; her activist feminist intention is expressed within each relationship she fosters, working to build into the greater feminist project required to make change in the local music and DJ scenes.

[59] Phil Alden Robinson, Field of Dreams, Movie (USA, 1989).
Kevin Costner's character heard a mysterious voice that repeatedly said, "build it and he will come", 'he' being a dead baseball player. So, Kevin cut down a field of wheat and built a baseball pitch, then the ghosts came, and they played ball.

A summary of a pleasurable nomadic social platform

The early artworks explored in this chapter were formative research towards the *ninthWavesound* project; including my works—*PLEASURE, Jogja Jacuzzi,* the *Vibrating Vaginas Dance Club,* and *More Vibration Than We Think We Need...*—and also my experience of the social practices of *D.A.N.C.E Art Club*. My immersion in a Muslim country during the residency in Yogyakarta helped me to identify and clarify what oppression 'feels like', as a woman. When there, I had to continually abide by a set of rules that restricted my movements and self-expression, rules that women in Indonesia live within everyday. Upon returning to Aotearoa, I was able to more clearly sense the more subtle, but definitely present, gender discrimination that is perpetuated here in our culture. For many women∞ in DJ and music-loving circles this concern has become increasingly prominent over the last few years. Comparing the social participatory artworks that I facilitated in Yogyakarta with the installation work of *PLEASURE* in Silo6, clarified my desire to engage more directly with the potential of the social as a feminist activist practice. The early works in this project helped me establish what would be the right kind of nomadic social platform for me and my community, and creating a space for feminist subjects was a strong intention behind the subsequent building of the *ninthWavesound* system.

Since the 1960s, social participatory art, as Claire Bishop argues, includes "the desire to create an active subject, one who will be empowered by the experience of physical or symbolic participation".[60] The socially engaged works described above were profoundly affecting for me, enlivening my and partycipants' feminist activism through gathering women∞ together in a "paradigm of physical involvement" as Bishop furthers.[61] I came to realise that a tangible 'location', a physical 'platform', a sound system, would anchor this involvement and clarify the changes required in my sonic worlds more than a branded gig night and a few DJ personalities would. Facilitating or running a sound system would mean I could provide opportunity for women∞ to be involved in a variety of ways, and have freedom to play with and control the sound system; its set-up and vibe would allow for a variety of experiments and risks to take place with both the physicalities and the

[60] Bishop, 'Introduction'. 12.

[61] Bishop. 12.

intention. So, to establish a formidable but adaptable platform to 'speak' from or into, and support a gathering of women∞, *ninthWave* as 'nomadic social platform' was conceived.

Along with Agatha Johnson, I have shown how a sound system built for women∞, with an inclusive attitude to women∞, such as through the building of small and lightweight speakers, brings forth potential not previously possible for novel relationships between women∞ and sound systems to emerge. I have a physical relationship, an affinity with *ninthWave* through lifting her, plugging her in, playing sound through her. For myself and others this manifests a sense of belonging to the project, affirmed through carrying her, caring for her, activating her. Equipment and experiences nomadically shift around into different sites, but the feminist intention remains the same. These elements form the foundational structure of the *nomadic social platform* without dictating what may be built upon it. *ninthWave* is nomadic by design both actually and virtually, through her embodied potential (discussed further through Braidotti and Irigaray in Chapter Five).

Sitting upon a sub is a good time, if I do say so myself. The feminist activism of some of these initial works more-or-less collided with a realisation of the significance of the pleasure of low-frequency sound as a formative part of my personal joy in be(com)ing-DJ, and consequently be(com)ing-sound system builder and operator. The realisation that low-frequency sound could become a tool for feminist action became more obvious through sensing what was missing from a more cerebral work such as PLEASURE, and through isolating low-frequency sound as a sculptural medium in More Vibration Than We Think We Need. The briefly cited studies of the health benefits of vibration in this chapter affirm the lived experience of myself and my DJ girlfriends—that big sound systems can be good for us, when channelling the right vibe. This embodied knowing motivated me through the hard work of building the sound system. A build which, being one of few women∞ to undertake such a mission, was a feminist exercise in itself, through which I learnt many new skills that I hope to share with other women∞. As a nomadic social platform, ninthWave holds space for an empleasured sonic bodie to emerge (the focus of Chapter Four), by welcoming women∞ into a space of resistance to the male-dominated music scene. She is nomadic in her moveable physical structure, reflecting the project's position between the art world and the rave/sound system worlds. In the next chapter, I explore the context of the scenes that she hovers in and between—sound system culture, rave and festival culture, the DJ world.

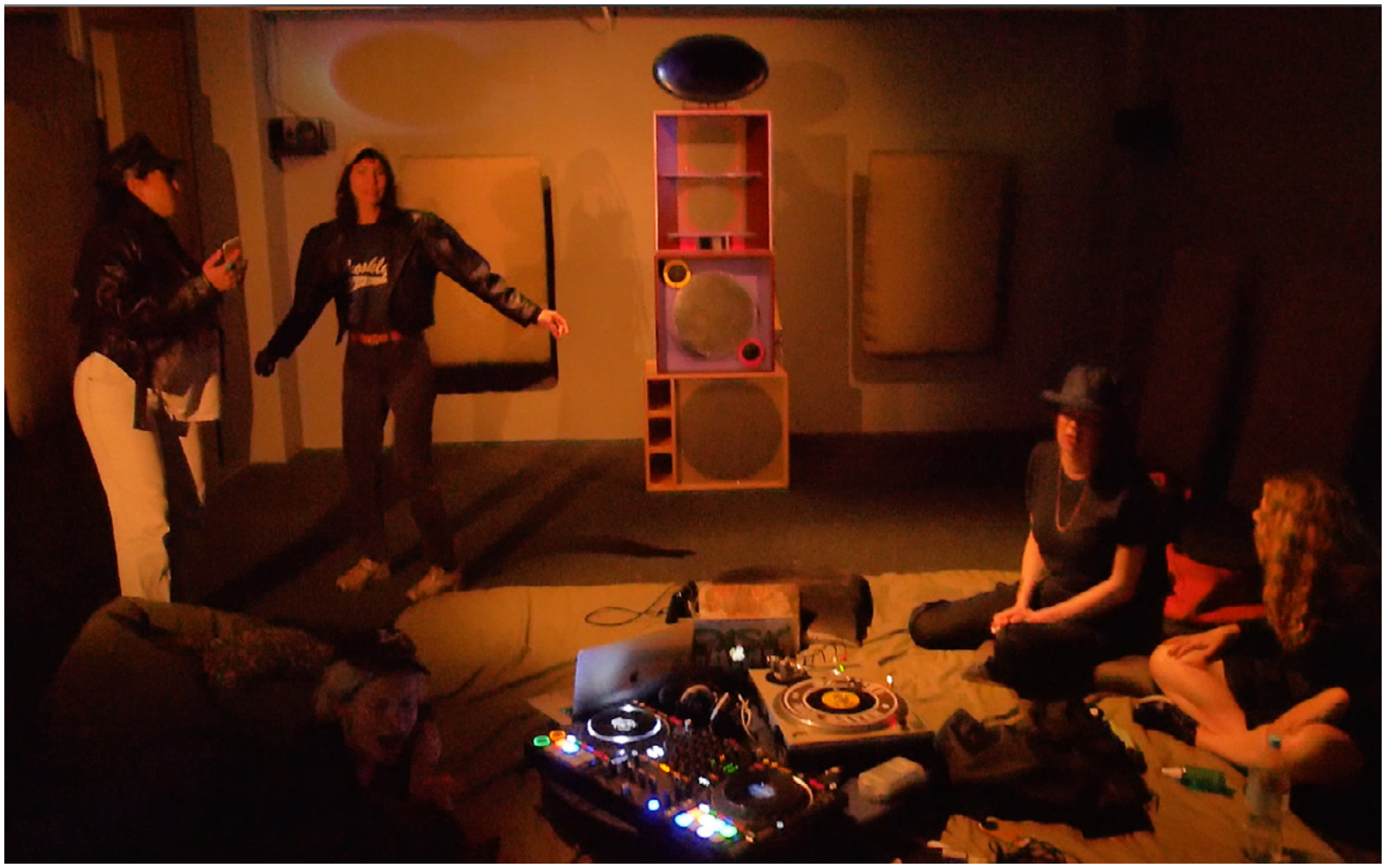

Figure 42: Lushelection Crew in attendance at Lazy Susan Listening Session #2, Audio Foundation, 25 October 2019.

Figure 43: Some of Aotearoa's sound systems. Across from top left: Bigbadaboom (Wellington, the second woman built and run system in Aotearoa); Roots Fire Sound System (Lyttelton, photo by Kamal Sunker); Chief Remedy Sound System (Christchurch, photo by Kamal Sunker); Temper Sound System (Dunedin); Fish & Bread (Auckland, photo by Kamal Sunker); PDC Sound System (Port Waikato, photo by Kamal Sunker); Fidelity Sound System (Queenstown).

Chapter Three
Contextual Soundings

The only good system is a sound system.[1]

The contextual soundings in this project centre around *ninthWavesound* system, her role socio-culturally, her ability to create low-frequency sound at high volumes, and what we (can) do with these aspects as DJs and artists. Sound systems, as a tool of practice-as-research, reflect a "*collective* rather than *individual* creative practice, as part of a popular rather than high art or avant-garde cultural tradition", as the organisers of *Outernational Sound System Conference* express.[2] Sound systems may be classed as 'popular' but they are not mainstream. Sound system events are grassroots practices, where, according to Linette Kamala, manager of Disya Jeneration Sound System (UK), "some of the core principles of a sound system [are simply] to strengthen the community, inform and entertain a crowd through music".[3] These are principles that Kamala advises all women[∞] to focus upon and expand into when becoming involved in sound system culture.

ninthWavesound looks towards both Jamaican reggae/dancehall sound system culture, and rave culture for technology, community ethos, and *vibes*. In this chapter, I explore how the sound system has functioned historically since its emergence in Jamaica in the 1960s, recognising that it travelled with the Jamaican diaspora around the world and here to Aotearoa in the 1980s. Reggae and dancehall sound system culture, and later rave and its associated festival culture, developed here throughout the 1990s, stylistically echoing

[1] Images found online using this trope have been used as inspiration for *ninthWave* t-shirt graphics, and are echoed in Honey Trap Sound System's tagline "the only good system is one that smashes the patriarchy".

[2] Brian D'Aquino, Julian Henriques, and Leonardo Vidigal, 'A Popular Culture Research Methodology: Sound System Outernational', *Volume: La Revue Des Musiques Populaires* 13, no. 2 (21 April 2017): 163–75.

3 Nottinghill Carnival, 'Women of the Sound Systems: Meet the Women Making Music at Notting Hill Carnival', Google Arts & Culture, accessed 6 November 2021, https://artsandculture.google.com/story/women-of-the-sound-systems/bgXBI2thW8-bfQ.

Europe's scenes. As a merging of Jamaican traditions of sound system culture and European traditions of the carnival, Graham St John positions outdoor raving as a "nexus of sub/cultural musical legacies".[4] In Europe, outdoor raves or 'free parties' were often unlawfully set up overnight, intentionally reclaiming back 'public' space temporarily, or reclaiming the meaning of raving back from sanctioned inner-city clubs by not charging entry. In Aotearoa, however, we are blessed with many a paddock with an owner up for a party, or a regional park in an idyllic situation available for public use. Therefore, sound systems in Aotearoa are less about political statements and more about holding space for sensual music lovers who exist on the fringes or appreciate the opportunity to exit 'normal' life and revel with people who similarly desire a sonic utopia.

To practice as a sound system builder/owner and/or a DJ as a woman∞ is a specific concern in this contextual chapter and forms part of the significant contribution of this PhD thesis. I expand on my own experience along with that of fellow women∞ DJs and women∞ sound system owners including Lucreccia Quintanilla (Aus), Fiona Borne (NZ/Aus), Nadine Dogliani (Italy), and event promotor Jodine Stodart (NZ). Underlying the potential of sound systems is the 'matter of sounding' itself—explored through the thinking of Julian Henriques, Paul Jasen, and Nina Eidsheim—where sound is re- or de-figured into 'process'. This expresses the possibility of experiencing music through not just audial means, but "also tactile, spatial, physical, material, and vibrational sensations [which] are at the core of all music", as Eidsheim describes.[5] This conceptually enables a 'different way of knowing'—a 'knowing through sound'—which places the body as central to 'knowing' in an alignment of low-frequency sound with feminist sensibilities. The visceral experience of immersion in powerful vibratory fields inescapably amplifies embodiment. Attention is drawn to this in different ways in the work of artists Scott Arford and Randy Yao, Cat Hope, and Mark Bain who use the medium of low-frequency sound as infrasound, 'bass', and vibration. What else bass can do, and how it affects us or draws us to action is extended through the physical experience of texture, or timbre, of sound. I explore the question: 'what does low-frequency sound afford?' from a feminist perspective.

[4] Frankie Mullin, 'How UK Ravers Raged Against the Ban', Vice Magazine, 16 July 2014, https://www.vice.com/en/article/vd8gbj/anti-rave-act-protests-20th-anniversary-204.
Set up unlawfully in empty countryside, free parties were banned in the UK in 1994, resulting in police raids, protests and a consolidation of the ethos of underground dance culture. Section 63 of the 1994 Criminal Justice Act gave police power to close events where the "music includes sounds wholly or predominantly characterised by the emission of a succession of repetitive beats". At a protest outside British parliament a banner claimed: "They wanna fight. We wanna dance".

[5] Nina Sun Eidsheim, *Sensing Sound: Singing and Listening as Vibrational Practice* (Durham, UK: Duke University Press, 2015). 8.

Jamaican sound system culture

Sound systems are foundational to the 'cultures of resistance' of rave and reggae. *ninthWavesound* draws on this positioning for activist energy. St John notes that raves have been theoretically figured as 'anarcho-liminal space[s]' designed to provide a temporary escape and freedom from the 'consensus trance' of modern life.[6] Key thinker on Jamaican sound system culture, Julian Henriques, argues that "[i]n Jamaica and the diaspora, sound expresses not only power, but also a resistance to it".[7] Powered up with sound at loud volumes, a sound system claims a sonic territory, extending as far as the power of the bass bins are able to throw out their low-frequency vibration, or the wind carry the highs. This sentiment is echoed in the practices of both cultures of rave and reggae, which have morphed into various subcultures, most operating outside the mainstream, and all utilising large sound systems to amplify music clearly and loudly, providing space for communities to dance and express their love and appreciation for sound and music culture.

In Jamaica, sound systems became cultural mainstays in the 1960s. Building from a strategy to entice customers into shops and bars into a cultural 'instrument', several 'sounds' would be set up in the streets on the weekends and for special occasions around Kingston, often in competition with each other.[8] Competitive engineers pushed audio technology beyond its intended design to create the 'heaviest' bass, taking both sound systems and sound production into low-end frequency and volume realms as yet unimagined, which naturally then further excited production desires for heavy weight sound. Sounds systems were very local and significant parts of the community, and they were integral to local economies. But these 'dancehall' sessions were regarded with contempt by the Western-influenced middle class, as they were considered 'savage', 'too wild', 'too black'.[9] Sound system culture arrived with Jamaican immigrants to England in the 1970s, forming a well-established sound system culture by the late 1980s.[10]

[6] Graham St John, *Technomad: Global Raving Countercultures*, Studies in Popular Music (London: Equinox Publishing, 2009). 147.
Raves have been used in scholarship as examples of Hakim Bey's 'Temporary Autonomous Zone' or TAZ, which "highlight indeterminate zones within late capitalism, everyday occurrences that refuse, whether by accident or design, to be incorporated into dominant narratives". Bey apparently didn't agree with the use of TAZ as a descriptor for raves. In Simon Sellars, 'Hakim Bey: Repopulating the Temporary Autonomous Zone', *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 4, no. 2 (8 May 2011): 83–108, https://doi.org/10.1353/jsr.2010.0007.

[7] Henriques, *Sonic Bodies: Reggae Sound Systems, Performance Techniques, and Ways of Knowing*. 8.

[8] Lloyd Bradley, *Bass Culture: When Reggae Was King* (London: Penguin Books, 2000). 26.

[9] Bradley.

[10] Bradley.

In Ponsonby, Auckland, Aotearoa, in the early 1980s, the Twelve Tribes of Israel Rastafarian community began hosting dances, welcoming in the public.[11] They set up a dancehall with *Jah Love Music Sound System*, played reggae and dancehall records from Jamaica and had Jamaican, Hensley Dyer, on the mic—spreading their message of Jah Love through the music and the dance.[12] Dreads and reggae were at that time very much 'otherwise' to 'Kiwi' culture, and in this safe space, devoid of alcohol in the Rastafarian way, a different way of being was allowed, encouraged, and affirmed. In the 1990s, a sound system night in Aotearoa was likely to travel through several genres, incorporating the intention and vibe of a reggae sound system but diversifying as each DJ played to their own strengths with their favourite music.[13] Danny Lemon, original member of Roots Foundation Sound System (Wellington) and rave host at the time, acknowledges that though originating with reggae, the music they progressed on to playing through their sound system was more about "illustrat[ing] the influence that Jamaican music has had on all the other genres of music".[14] Similarly, the 'sound' of *ninthWavesound* emerges from such reggae-related genres as reggae, dub, dancehall and jungle, and is genre diverse.[15] But many sound systems in Aotearoa still align themselves with traditional Jamaican sound system styles. Auckland locals include Jafa Mafia, PDC, Revolution Sound, Fish & Bread and Lion Rockers Hifi—Auckland's biggest sound system, who have been running roots reggae nights as a crew since 2012.

Figure 44: Lion Rockers HiFi sound system paraphrenalia: Ruapuke Roots lineup poster; Lion Rockers crew at Galatos, 2020; Lion Rockers crew, circa 2014; an original flyer from the first 'proper' event, circa 2012.

[11] Lewis Tennant, 'The Rise of the Sound Systems in Aotearoa', Audioculture: the noise library of New Zealand music, 18 December 2013, https://www.audioculture.co.nz/scenes/the-rise-of-the-sound-systems-in-aotearoa.

[12] Tennant.

[13] Tennant.

[14] Tennant.

[15] *ninthWavesound's* public event repitoire includes raves, festivals, and reggae sound system style events. Depending on which style of event, genres vary, reflecting her community's broad perception of bass music. Genres played through *ninthWave* to date include Jamaican derived bass genres—reggae, dancehall, dub, dubstep; UK derivatives—jungle, drum'n'bass, garage, grime; genres derived from Black American funk and jazz—techno, house, hip hop, R'n'B, soul; as well as my favourite, American/European development—footwork.

The gender diversity of sound system culture is mostly limited to the dancefloor, and is predominantly heteronormative. All of Aotearoa's sound systems have been built, owned, and run by men; that is (at the time of writing) up until *ninthWavesound*. Lion Rockers' current regular crew of six includes three women, plus myself at times, but the performers are usually men.[16] I was involved with the last, now legendary, Lion Rockers hosted, Ruapuke Roots Festival (Raglan, 9-11 Feb 2018, Ruapuke Campground, Raglan) for which Lion Rockers invited six other sounds. Despite their inclusive ways only two women emceed and two women deejayed—Jinja Cat, MC Silva a.k.a. Rubi Du, myself, and Miss Fee.[17] Perhaps just enough women were present and involved behind the scenes to amplify the feminine, along with the beautiful setting by the beach, as the event created good sounds and good vibes. Nevertheless, at this festival several conversations took place between myself and women∞ of the scene that solidified my desire to build my own system as a feminist act.

Women∞ running tings

The first woman∞ in Australasia to own and run a sound system was artist Lucreccia Quintanilla, with her system (formerly known as) *Other Planes of Here*, now *General Feelings* (Melbourne, 2013 onwards, figure 45). As part of her master's project, Quintanilla collaborated with marginal community groups to whom she offered her sound for public events. The project offered the services of *Other Planes of Here* as a powerful sound system to be 'of service', amplifying marginal 'voices'—their music and presence in Melbourne City—and therefore amplifying the complexity of an otherwise colonised landscape. One such event was a collaboration with WISA (Women's International Solidarity Australia): a women-organised reggae/dancehall block party, featuring all women DJs, fundraising to benefit women in India, held in North Fitzroy, Melbourne (25 Oct 2014).[18] This event was set-up, run, and performed by women, and included Australia's (then) "only female-built and owned sound system". [19] Quintanilla noted that in the local context of a male-dominated scene, this event "marked and celebrated the potential for self-reliance for

Figure 45: Lucreccia Quintanilla and General Feelings Sound System, nee Other Planes of Here (2013-ongoing).

[16] Lion Rockers Hi Fi was hand-built by Josh Llewelyn. The core performance crew includes Tim Bailey and Michael Robins. The extended crew includes Mitzi and Natalia among other volunteers, who muck in to bring the events to life. The music is usually roots/reggae played through eight large bass bins or scoops, each standing a metre high, dedicated to frequencies below 70Hz, 8x15" drivers for mid-bass 70Hz-130Hz, and another twenty-plus speakers for the mid and top frequencies. The sound is undoubtedly a physical experience—the low-end frequency vibrations completely dominating. Lion Rockers has formed a community of roots/reggae lovers that dedicatedly come out to the gigs. The magic of being a regular at a Lion Rockers gig is the growing sense of familiarity with seeing the same faces, and a warm inclusion in knowing you all enjoy the same music and good vibes.

[17] Source: Josh Llewelyn, 'Ruapuke Roots Festival 2018 Lineup', Facebook.com/ruapukerootsfestival, 2 May 2018. At the time of writing there are three other women∞ reggae selectors in Auckland: Empress Naima, Selectress and Becky. Also, dancehall DJ Janiac

[18] Luccrecia Quintanilla, 'Other Planes of Here: Sound, Multiplicity and the Social' (Master's Thesis, Monash University, Australia, 2015), https://bridges.monash.edu/articles/thesis/Other_planes_of_here_sound_multiplicity_and_the_social/4711954/1.

[19] Quintanilla. 44.

dancehall events run by women involved in this culture in Melbourne".[20] With *Other Planes of Here* as a central feature of individuated events, her impetus in her project was to see how "sound as a social-cultural multiplicity could translate in different contexts".[21] *Other Planes of Here* operates as a 'nomadic social platform', as *ninthWavesound* does, albeit with a different intention. *ninthWavesound* also had the opportunity to collaborate with Quintanilla, where *ninthWave* hosted her sound work, *Untitled* (2020), which was played during the day in a gallery context throughout *A Week of Vibrational Events* (Oct 2020).

Fiona Bourne a.k.a. Miss Fee is the first woman in Australia to build a do-it-yourself sound system from scratch as I have: *Housewife's Choice* (Melbourne, 2019-...). Bringing a 'sound' into the world was a natural but radical progression for Bourne, who has been playing reggae with Yasmin Rupesinghe a.k.a. Bellyas under the name *Housewife's Choice* in Melbourne for 18 years, and playing music for much longer. As *Housewife's* Choice they also host a radio show upon KISSFM (Australia), where they regularly feature other women-run reggae sound systems from around the world. Bourne wanted to design and build a sound to "create something of my own, to use my hands, and to put my own uniquely feminine stamp on it".[22] She understood that

> by building a sound, I would be building up much more than that, also a community of sound crew, musicians, etc., which excited me because I love to collaborate and most importantly, I don't ever want to get bored or complacent, so this new music mission was very much about pushing myself to go further than what I had done previously.[23]

Bourne's months of research, two years of planning, material and component gathering, and a year of building is a similar journey to mine. Completed in 2020, the configuration of her sound culminated as a "4-scoop stack run 5 ways, through QSC amplification. It is made up of 18" scoops, the kicks are 15" ported reflex boxes, sealed 12" mids and co-axel compression horns for the tops", she has plans underway to add more speaker boxes (figure 46).[24]

Having observed the music industry for more than twenty-five years, Bourne is motivated by the thought: "why let the boys have all the fun", and takes 'great pride in "contributing to shaping a more equal future".[25] Counter to the competitive nature of sound system culture,

[20] Quintanilla. 44.

[21] Lucreccia Quintanilla, *Lucreccia Quintanilla Speaks at FM[X] Sydney.*, mp3, 2016, https://liquidarchitecture.org.au/events/feminist-methodology/.

[22] Laura Marsh's email questions for Fiona Bourne a.k.a. Miss Fee, email interview, 12 June 2021. Refer to appendices (page 225) for the script of this significant interview.

[23] Laura Marsh's email questions for Fiona Bourne a.k.a. Miss Fee.

[24] Laura Marsh's email questions for Fiona Bourne a.k.a. Miss Fee.

[25] Laura Marsh's email questions for Fiona Bourne a.k.a. Miss Fee.

she has openly shared her process with friends and family, bringing them into an open dialogue about what sound system is, does and means: "I wanted to come into it with an open heart to learn from others and also to hopefully inspire others too".[26] Part of the magic of running a sound system for Bourne comes from being entirely self-sufficent:

> We have all our own equipment, from boxes and amps right through to generators and the truck to get it all there. All you need is a location such as a park, warehouse or venue... and people just come. It's a very liberating feeling. In the process of building a sound system, you also build up a community of people around you. And by that I am talking about everybody from sound system crew, box men & box women who help to carry the system, deejays, singers, MCs, selectors and musicians, to the audience.[27]

Another woman∞-run sound, *Honey Trap Sound System* has appeared in Sydney this year (2021), built by Maya Gold and friends. Their tagline is "the only good system is one that smashes the patriarchy".[28]

Figure 46: Housewife's Choice Sound System, built and run by Fiiona Borne aka Miss Fee, and co-run by Yasmine Rupesinghe aka Bellyas, Melbourne, Australia, 2019-ongoing.

[26] Laura Marsh's email questions for Fiona Bourne a.k.a. Miss Fee.

[27] Laura Marsh's email questions for Fiona Bourne a.k.a. Miss Fee.

[28] Maya Gold, 'Honey Trap Sound System Instagram Profile'. Accessed 19 January 2022. https://www.instagram.com/honeytrapsoundsystem/.

Potential in sound system culture

As Bourne a.k.a. Miss Fee explained, sound system is not just the technology of the speakers and amplifiers, it is also the socio-cultural system which exists because of, and in order to set up, the system and facilitate the event. It is also a place to belong, to feel love through the music, and through the people who love the music. Nadine Dogliani a.k.a. Muxima of *Sound System Muxima* (Italy, defunct) spoke in the same session as me during the sixth Outernational Sound System conference in 2020. Muxima expresses it this way:

> Sound system is not just a stack of boxes, rare tunes and exclusive dubplates. Sound system mobilise people in symbolic and material ways. To me it's my riddim of resistance. When I re-play music I exist.[29]

The diaspora of Jamaican sound system culture and its message of resistance to Babylonian (capitalist, colonialist, neoliberal, Western) ideals has reached far and wide around the world, but for the most part the male-dominance of sound system crews has also been repeated.[30] Perhaps women∞run sounds are the next great site of resistance. Muxima laments the reluctance of sound systems in Europe to be inclusive. Though the sound system is the 'voice of the people', she dreams of 'the many voices' that she would love to be able to hear; she "wish[es] sound-men not be scared to confront with women and all others".[31] Jamaican-style sound systems here in Aotearoa often invite cross-racial diversity, but, regrettably, the lyrics of many dancehall tracks do not tolerate sexual diversity. A crowd may get close to 50/50 for male/female gender ratios, but diversity within this is rare, and on the stage it is mostly men who perform. This simply reflects the fact that the systems are run by men who tend to dominate in a heteronormative male paradigm—the experiment remains to see how this will shift when women∞ get more opportunity to 'run tings' and practice an intersectional feminist ethics of care and safety.[32]

In silence, sound systems have presence. *ninthWave* is always already active, poised, ready to channel the power of sound for her feminist cause, sparking the imaginations of each who come into contact with her through the unique *vibe* which forms in the event. Artist Mark Leckey emphasised this inherent potential with his work at MOMA called *Soundsystems 2001-12*

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[29] Nadine Dogliani, 'Ain't Nobody's Ocean: No Man Is An Island, No Woman Stand Alone', in *Continental Drift: Global Sound System Environments* (Sound System Outernational #6, Online, 2020).

[30] 'Behind "Babylon"', TIDAL Magazine, accessed 5 November 2021, https://tidal.com/magazine/article/behind-babylon/1-73444.
Reggae music has a long tradition of songs calling out the corrupt system known as 'Babylon'. This catchall phrase applies to the police force, all forms of governmental 'politricks', religious and financial institutions, and the entire (in) justice system. Dreadlock Rastas, singers, disc jockeys, and all manner of rebellious youth use the term 'Babylon' to critique the power dynamic between the authorities and marginalised communities.

[31] Dogliani, 'Ain't Nobody's Ocean: No Man Is An Island, No Woman Stand Alone'.

[32] Run 'tings' means to run 'things' or be in charge of things, expressed in Jamaican patwa; a term my friends and I regularly use.

(2016, figure 47), where five functionable sound systems stood in silence.[33] Leckey explains that sound systems to him have:

> become almost natural… they don't seem man made, they start to feel like trees or rocks… I don't want to play them a lot, because I think there's something about their potential that might be greater other than their sound.[34]

The sculptural and symbolic potential Leckey recognised is inherent in the *ninthWavesound* project, but *ninthWave* will rarely choose silence, preferring to activate the sound system's 'grassroots' social potential of bringing people together. As sound system, this function of potential through 'natural' presence translates into 'support structure', the foundation for *ninthWavesound*: nomadic social platform.

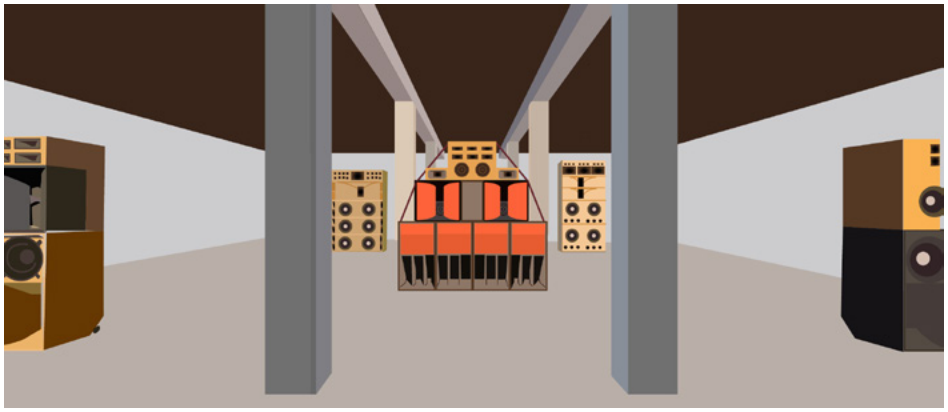

Figure 47: Mark Leckey, Soundsystems 2001-2012 (2016) MOMA PS1, New York. 'A drawing of' by Laura Marsh.

Feminist architect Céline Condorelli intuits that "support structures can release potential", not only in sympathetic response, but an always already active mode of being there.[35] In an affirmative vibe, when support is known to be there, Condorelli expands as to what may appear:

> the unspoken, the unsatisfied, the late and the latent, the in-process, the pre-thought, the not-yet manifest, the undeveloped, the unrecognised, the delayed, the unanswered, the unavailable, the not-deliverable, the discarded, the over-looked, the neglected, the hidden, the forgotten, the un-named, the un-paid, the missing, the longing, the invisible, the unseen, the behind-die-scene, the disappeared, the concealed, the unwanted, the dormant.[36]

[33] Mark Westall, 'Mark Leckey: Containers and Their Drivers', FAD Magazine, 24 October 2016, https://fadmagazine.com/2016/10/24/mark-leckey-containers-and-their-drivers/.

[34] Haus der Kunst, *Exhibition—Mark Leckey: As If* (Haus der Kunst. Jan-May 2015), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8HlSHTEtdc.

[35] Céline Condorelli, *Support Structures* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2009). 13.

[36] Condorelli.

Spaces of appropriate, safe, comfortable support for 'otherwise' within the music and sound scenes of Aotearoa are rarely present. What may be revealed through the space that *ninthWavesound* supports, and for the individual partycipant and collective, is undetermined because the list of what is 'not-yet' but may appear sits in potential. Reverence for the sound system incorporates the vibrations of resistance and potential for otherwise, this has fuelled the diasporic expansion of sound system culture, reflecting the "incredible resilience and wiseness of marginalised people that have to survive with the little they have and still being able to have joy", as Muxima argues.[37] And sound systems are the tool to express this resilience and joy, claiming territory around the world, sharing the pleasure of good vibes as an act of resistance to an oppressive dominant narrative, holding space for 'otherwise'. *ninthWavesound* and the sound systems built by women with feminist intentions, assimilate this vibration of resistance into their own vibes. This emergent feminist sound system culture is unbound by traditions; indeed, it actively disrupts them. We pressure the system that limits access to women, both socio-culturally through their male-dominated vibes and through the overtly heavy physical designs.

Figure 48: Housewife's Choice Sound System debut with Vida Sunshyne & Sahida Apsara. 'Forward Ever', 26 March 2021 at The Industrique, Melbourne.

[37] Dogliani, 'Ain't Nobody's Ocean: No Man Is An Island, No Woman Stand Alone'.

To rave, to festival: To be otherwise

> The rave is utopia in its original etymological sense: a nowhere/nowhen wonderland.[38]

The nineties in Aotearoa heralded the dawning and pinnacle of the raving era. Venues were warehouses and rural outdoor locations. The raves in Christchurch I attended in my teens were radical coming-of-age experiences: stimulating, thrilling, and massively counter to any other cultural experience of my working/middle-class upbringing. I had always loved music—loud in my lounge and in my headphones—now in the rave, I *was part of the music*. Dancing upon a rock overlooking a natural amphitheatre full of ravers at 3am on a crisp summer night in 1996, far from civilisation in the Canterbury high country, was a formative moment of several. Raves at this time in Christchurch were not in connection with a particular 'sound system', it was the name of the rave and the music that represented the vibe: *Initiation, Tranceformation, Destination*. Each upcoming event's psychedelic flyer found in local alternative café, Java, created a thrill of anticipation. St John points out that in those early days, the rave space was at the margins of culture, "allow[ing] a whole generation to experiment with new forms of subjectivity and singularity in a collective context".[39] I recall that at the time, I was just happy to get away from the bars full of drunk rugby heads, which featured horrendous pop music rather than self-explorative beats. The difference between us 'ravers' and people who wanted to hang out in bars seemed cavernous.

Figure 49: Image from one of the legendary raves held at Flock Hill Station, near Cave Stream, Castle Rock, 1996-2002. Photo: Alexis Ta.

Alice O'Grady also puts forward that the permissive vibe in a rave encourages experimentation, where, she writes, "performative acts of imagination can be executed and new identities formed".[40] For a particular rave held at the decommissioned West-End movie theatre, I recall making myself a green vinyl blazer and matching A-line mini skirt to go with my green Doc Martins—I knew no-one else would be wearing the same.[41] O'Grady argues that experiencing a new or different embodied 'self' "cannot be 'unfelt' and thus transforms its participants as they take their experience with them back into their daily

[38] Simon Reynolds, *Generation Ecstasy: Into the World of Techno and Rave Culture* (NY, NY.: Routledge, 1999). 248.

[39] Bernard Schütze, 'Carnivalesque Mutations in the Bahian Carnival and Rave Culture', *Religiologiques* 24 (2001): 155–63. Cited in St John, *Technomad: Global Raving Countercultures*. 95.

[40] Alice O'Grady, 'Spaces of Play: The Spatial Dimensions of Underground Club Culture and Locating the Subjunctive', *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture*, no. 1 (2012). 101.

[41] Though we were probably all wearing Doc Martins!

Figure 51: Ultra Sonic II, West End Theatre, Christchurch, was a rave I attended on my 17th birthday (1995) which I now see featured a woman DJ from Melbourne with a similar moniker to mine–DJ Lush; mine developing from a nickname given to me several years later. Photo: Marc Rosewarne.

Figure 50: The Gathering 96/97, Canaan Downs, Takaka, which Josephine Cachemaille was key in organising, and which I attended.

lives".[42] What this meant for myself, other young women, and perhaps all ravers, was that every iteration of experimentation was significantly formative. This moment of expression through the clothing and the particular kind of dancing that ensues at a rave—dancing that is not about pointedly attempting to seduce others, but about being seduced by the music—sits very much outside the dominant paradigm of conformity and gratuitous mate selection. Coupling may occur, but dancing as individuals in a collective body is paramount. Maria Pini's female interviewees from the raves of the 1990s, as referred to in Chapter One, testify to the part that raving played in their lives, allowing them to formulate new ways of being 'woman', rewriting 'femininity'.[43]

Historically, rave culture in Aotearoa has been much more gender-diverse than sound system culture. Women were very much involved in the set-up of many raves, such as *Eudeamony Tribe* (1995-2004) events and *The Gathering* (1996-2002)—Aotearoa's largest rave festival of the nineties. Josephine Cachemaille, an organiser of the first two *Gatherings*, 96/97 and 97/98, observed that in this time, in the Nelson and Golden Bay area, there were a lot of women involved in the facilitating of the party scene, more-so in the set-up and decorating effort, but not so much in the deejaying department. For a party, she explains, "people would create atmospheres and environments, and that's probably how I first started doing it, I really wanted to make those spaces really interesting and engaging and really friendly".[44] This extended into her role as general manager of *The Gathering* and of being in charge of health and safety.

Josephine recalls, that the scene was 'good for men', as it "encouraged men to be able to be kind and soft, and expressive and creative in ways that not many other places did".[45] But in order to deejay and run things, there was a requirement for women to be 'staunch' and 'really cool'. She notes that the women DJs, especially from the DnB/Jungle scene of Christchurch were 'intimidating': "a lot of those women were quite tough, you just... had to be... It was a currency of... ego, ya know, and competition... You had to do it like guys did it, certainly at that point in time, certainly in the South Island".[46] She regarded this as a loss. But for a 'punter', or someone who came to participate as dancer, she considered that:

[42] Alice O'Grady, 'Spaces of Play: The Spatial Dimensions of Underground Club Culture and Locating the Subjunctive'. 95.

[43] Pini, *Club Cultures and Female Subjectivity: The Move from Home to House.*

[44] Laura Marsh in conversation with Josephine Cachemaille, audio recording, via Zoom, 29 November 2021.

[45] Laura Marsh in conversation with Josephine Cachemaille.

[46] Laura Marsh in conversation with Josephine Cachemaille.
Christchurch is the largest town on the South Island of Aotearoa New Zealand, and became known colloquially in to the millennium as the D'n'B (drum'n'bass) capital of the world. Growing up in Christchurch, I can attest to the heteronormative vibe, and my own obsession with being 'cool' which, after this conversation with Josephine, I realised was an unconscious strategy for access into male-dominated realms I was involved in.

> dance party culture, certainly back then, served this possibility of being sincere, and really, like, being able to shake off aspects of 'coolness' and see them possibly for what they are, and how they're not serving you well … you can realise that there's… power in being open, which you're never being when you're being cool. It's part of the definition if you like: it's us, and it's them.[47]

That taste of experimentation I personally experienced as a punter had potential for opening me up to others, but I now realise was somewhat quashed as I turned away from raving and towards snowboarding and skating, where my unconscious strategy of being a 'cool chick' to access the upper echelons of these very male-dominated realms, also effected my ability to connect openly with others. The socio-cultural landscape of Aotearoa is not homogenous. The Christchurch music scene, both then and now, is a different experience to, for example, Auckland and Wellington. The cultural make-up of each locale presenting a different vibe. In the next section, cultural concerns of the rave space in Aotearoa is considered.

Raving on whenua: the collective sonic bodie

The socio-cultural landscape of Aotearoa and obligations or activations of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*, the founding document of our bi-cultural status, are reflected in some outdoor festivals taking place upon the land.[48] Festival spaces are more often than not Pākehā dominated spaces, but often take place upon land that is under guardianship of local iwi.[49] Sharon McIver explores how outdoor dance culture in Aotearoa holds space for imagining or practicing a utopia or "alternative society" where, she suggests, cultural harmony exists, but, this can be critiqued as still being part of a colonial mythology.[50] In her doctoral thesis she examined the inclusion of Māori and Polynesian art forms, the inclusion of pōwhiri to open and close festivals, and opportunities to learn about Māoritanga as a distinct attempt of facilitators and festival goers to educate and provide opportunity to engage in a closer and more respectful

[47] Laura Marsh in conversation with Josephine Cachemaille.

[48] *Māori Dictionary*, (New Zealand: Longman/Pearson Education), *s.v.*, "Tiriti o Waitangi", accessed 23 September 2021, https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?keywords=tiriti+o+waitangi

'Te Tiriti o Waitangi' translated from Māori to English is 'The Treaty of Waitangi'.

[49] *Māori Dictionary*, (New Zealand: Longman/Pearson Education), s.v. "iwi", accessed 23 September 2021, https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?keywords=iwi.

Iwi: "extended kinship group, tribe, nation, people, nationality, race - often refers to a large group of people descended from a common ancestor and associated with a distinct territory".

[50] Sharon McIver, 'WaveShapeConversion: The Land as Reverent in the Dance Culture and Music of Aotearoa' (Doctor of Philosophy, University of Canterbury, New Zealand, 2007). 196.

Figure 52: Splore website, screenshot, retrieved 18 Jan 2022, https://www.splore.net/mana-whenua.

Figure 53: Earth Beat Music Festival 'Kaupapa' on their website, retrieved 18 Jan 2022,

relationship with the whenua and with tangata whenua.[51]

McIver's thesis suggests that "greater confluence between dance culture and Māori may be the key to Aotearoa dance culture becoming more politically active" in environmental causes and cultural issues.[52] But she points out critically that this appears to need to be led by the organisers of the festivals through: the establishment of ongoing relationships with tangata whenua; through opportunities the festival can offer for engagement with local iwi issues; and by the patrons themselves, who need to practise respect for the land, for example, by picking up their rubbish. From my experience, over the last few years this connection has become more meaningful at certain festivals. Splore Festival for example has an established kaupapa of being a sustainable event and "work[s] closely with Tāpapakanga's iwi, Ngāti Paoa and Ngāti Whanaunga, to honour this beautiful land".[53] Earth Beat Music Festival (Atiu Creek Regional Park) promotes a kaupapa of respect for land and people as central and, interestingly, is also hosted upon 'publicly'/Crown owned land as Splore is (Tapapakanga Regional Park). In contrast, Shipwrecked (Te Arai Festival Site), for example, which takes place on private land that is a functioning sand mine, is less concerned.

Sincere efforts reflect concerns which, since McIver's research, have become more prominently mandated in governmental obligations to *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*. The colonial utopian imaginary became enshrined in the English language version of *Te Tiriti* for the supposed benefit of New Zealand's cultural harmony and progression while at the same time enabling colonial-capitalist expansion and Pākehā governance. However Māori sovereignty over land and all other taonga (cultural treasures) was endorsed in the Te Reo version of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*.[54] The colonial utopian ideal of 'cultural harmony' is promoted through festival structures, but the recognition of the rights of mana whenua is the paramount shift. The consequences of the twin destruction of Māori tikanga

[51] *Māori Dictionary*, (New Zealand: Longman/Pearson Education), s.v., accessed 23 September 2021, https://maoridictionary.co.nz/.
Pōwhiri is commonly translated as: welcome ceremony on a marae.
Māoritanga is commonly translated as: Māori culture, Māori practices and beliefs, Māoriness, Māori way of life.
Whenua is commonly translated as: land; placenta.
Tangata whenua is commonly translated as: local people, hosts, indigenous people of Aotearoa.
Te Reo is commonly translated as the Māori language.

[52] McIver, 'WaveShapeConversion: The Land as Reverent in the Dance Culture and Music of Aotearoa'. 200.

[53] Splore Festival, 'Splore Festival: Kaupapa', Event, Splore Festival, October 2021, https://www.splore.net/values#sustainability-intro.

[54] *Māori Dictionary*, (New Zealand: Longman/Pearson Education), s.v. "taonga", accessed 23 September 2021, https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&histLoanWords=&keywords=taonga
Taonga is commonly translated as: "treasure, anything prized - applied to anything considered to be of value including socially or culturally valuable objects, resources, phenomenon, ideas and techniques".

(protocol), and gender oppression particularly for wahine is explored in the work of Ani Mikaere (2003) and signals that more work needs to be done through cultural events such as festivals.[55]

Utopian ideals for living in more communal and respectful ways that motivated musical gatherings since the hippy era of the 1970s are still played out through the intentions and principles mandated in some of Aotearoa's music festivals. Accessing a better self through communal commitments underlies *Kiwiburn* (Hunterville, NZ, 2004-ongoing), who advocate for a 'do-ocracy'.[56] This is expressed in their *Participation Principle*: "We believe that transformative change, whether in the individual or in society, can occur only through the medium of deeply personal participation in experience. We achieve being through doing".[57] This is an example of a utopian narrative of a conscious festival, which often aligns with a hippy ethos of peace, love, unity, and respect (PLUR). O'Grady argues that such narratives develop a "social discourse [that] articulates the possible rather than dwelling on perceived obstacles".[58] This orientation or freedom *to,* rather than a freedom *from* resonates with Grosz's feminist new materialist thinking, which has inspired the mahi of this project. As mentioned on page 22, she focuses on what the feminist subject "is capable of making and doing". [59] Collaborative participation in the community is expected when at Kiwiburn, which creates the possibility or conditions for a different way of being.[60] This principle is held within the kaupapa of *ninthWavesound*, primarily as part of my personal ethos, and is encouraged in partycipants. This is seen clearly as they shift from audience to DJ, or as they help to set up the sound system and the zone. Expanding the self through partycipation

[55] Ani Mikaere, *The Balance Destroyed: The Consequences for Māori Women of the Colonisation of Tikanga Māori* (University of Waikato, Hamilton, NZ: International Research Institute for Māori and Indigenous Education, 2003). Over the latter part of the project, my awareness about colonial implications of gender oppression for Māori women has increased, with thanks to Ani Mikaere's thesis and argument that the gender oppression of Māori women within Māori culture is a direct result of the process of colonisation; that prior, the balance of gender was closer to a balanced harmony between the roles.

Māori Dictionary, (New Zealand: Longman/Pearson Education), s.v. "tikanga", accessed 23 September 2021, https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&histLoanWords=&keywords=tikanga. Tikanga is commonly translated as: "the customary system of values and practices that have developed over time and are deeply embedded in the social context" .

[56] Kiwiburn Community, 'Kiwiburn 2020 Survival Guide', Festival Information, Kiwiburn.com, 22 May 2021, http://www.kiwiburn.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/KB18-survival-guide-web.pdf. 7.

[57] Kiwiburn Community. 3.

[58] Alice O'Grady, 'Spaces of Play: The Spatial Dimensions of Underground Club Culture and Locating the Subjunctive'. 96.

[59] Elizabeth Grosz, *Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflections on Life, Politics, and Art.* (Durham, UK: Duke University Press, 2011). 61.

[60] Kiwiburn Community, 'Kiwiburn 2020 Survival Guide'. The principles of Kiwiburn (Hunterville, NZ, 2004-ongoing), based on the American version, Burning Man (Nevada, US, 1991-ongoing), are orientated towards: a non-monetary 'economy'; inclusion; self-reliance; radical self-expression; responsible communal ethos; participation; and immediacy. Where every participant buys a ticket, and every participant, in their 'collective camp' is required to contribute to the creation, execution and dismantling of their camp as an integral part of the festival experience.

helps to expand the imaginary through physical action, embodying the collective experiments of utopia building. I explore this utopic horizon as an indeterminable 'not yet' towards which we must continue to aspire in *Chapter Five: ninthWave brings the jouissance.*

An ethos of collectivity as a sonic bodie exists within most festival experiences that I have had, attending to the concern that *we may be different, but we are here together practising and enjoying a way of relating to each other that we would like our everyday lives to reflect. ninthWave* events ultimately practise a space without gender or cultural discrimination, and attempt to work around, dissolve, or overwrite the hang-ups of sexist and racist cultural conditioning. This is a physical practice of experiencing the novel, otherworldly, somewhat utopian space where women[∞] of diverse cultures are in charge of running things, which can open up imagination towards a potential feminist future. For certain rave or festival lovers, like myself, becoming a more integrated part of the collective is activated and enhanced through experiencing the sonic qualities of bass with others as a collective sonic bodie, helping us understand that we are all connected.

Figure 54: ALLDAYRAVE, St Paul St Gallery 3, Saturday 17 October 2020.

Figure 55: Clare Fleming feeling the low-frequency sound with her body, atop ninthWave's first 21" subwoofer, at More Vibration Then We Think We Need..., Papakura Gallery, Auckland, 1 December 2018.

Really feeling bass: Sub-bass and infrasound realms

In this section I explore how low-frequency sound as a sculptural medium can be a tool for activating feminist concerns through its amplification and its texture. *ninthWavesound's* hefty 21″ subs have a very low resonant frequency of 32Hz, where most subs are only 40-50Hz. This means that *ninthWave* can amplify low-frequencies much more powerfully than many systems, often incorporating subharmonics which sit in the 'infrasonic' or sub-audible spectrum (depending on hearing abilities, the inaudible frequency range sits below 16-20Hz).[61] Frequencies below 20Hz add infrasonic depth which vibrates buildings and bodies.[62] In a *ninthWavesound* event incorporating bass music, many sound waves below 20Hz are often produced, deepening the low end into pure sensation. Artists who work with low-frequency sound experiment with the unsettling nature of bass and infrasound, often working to open up thinking around musicality and sound beyond the audible and into the embodied: such as the work of artists Scott Arford and Randy Yao, Cat Hope, and Mark Bain described in this section.

Most infrasound we might have experienced is likely to be related to earthquakes, volcanic events or thunder, where seismic waves or sound with very large wave lengths move almost unimpeded through the thickest of matter.[63] Sophia Roosth describes how this "liminal vibration propagating at the cusp of human audibility, ever so slightly below the threshold of human perception, invites all-too-human anxieties about the limits of our own capacity to sense and know the environment in which we are embedded".[64] Initiated by the desires and genius of Jamaican sound system engineers, the emergence of bass music-loving 'cults' has

[61] Both the subharmonic (or undertones below the foundational note played) and harmonics (or overtones, above the foundational note) register more quietly than the foundational note but are very much present. These sounds simultaneously vibrate in relation to the foundational note, vibrating as partial or resonant elements of the foundational frequency. These appear at various depths depending on the instrument or the audio dynamics of the environment that a loudspeaker is in.

[62] *ninthWavesound's* 21″ subs have a very low resonant frequency rating of 32Hz. This means that they are very powerful down to this frequency. Below this frequency they are not as efficient, but at high volumes the harmonics inherent in bass notes below this are still able to be felt.

[63] 'Earthquake - Properties of Seismic Waves', *Encyclopedia Britannica s.v.,* accessed 23 August 2020, https://www.britannica.com/science/earthquake-geology.
Seismic waves can range from 0.1Hz through to the audible range above 20Hz.

[64] Sophia Roosth, 'Nineteen Hertz and Below: An Infrasonic History of the Twentieth Century', *Resilience: A Journal of the Environmental Humanities* 5, no. 3 (2018): 109–24. 120.

pushed the development of sound amplification technology, suggesting that this affect is very much desired—a desire to be vibrationally unsettled and potentially have the 'known' unravelled. This desire is translated in my project into feminist desire in the empleasured sonic bodie. It is a desire for the embodied feminist self to be affected, changed, and opened up though pleasurable encounters with low-frequency sound, and other, human and non-human, matter and beings.

Figure 56: Scott Arford and Randy Yao vibrate the building with Filling the Void: the Infrasound Series (2011), location unknown.

Infrasonic vibration calls attention to our embodiment as we experience being "sacs and pockets of quivering fluid and pulp", as Roosth describes. For some this is pleasurable awareness, but for others it unpleasantly causes nausea and dizziness.[65] It is at this threshold that Artists Scott Arford and Randy Yao explored the phenomenon of infrasound in their work *Filling the Void: The Infrasound Series* (2011), which was a touring performance of a low-frequency sound system and an orchestration of infrasound frequencies. Each building they performed in vibrated with inaudible sound, and the air was proclaimed to thicken and be of a felt substance. They want partycipants to "hear with [their] body", hoping for an experience of "internal and external realisation" through physically exploring "the phenomenon of resonance or sympathetic vibration—all things working in one continuum".[66] Reported physical responses to their work included physical healing, nausea and orgasms, inescapably bringing participants into their bodies, dissolving the threshold of the skin.[67] Roosth observes that subsumed in infrasound, we "resonate with an uncertain environment", the vulnerability of having a human body unable to be ignored.[68]

Cat Hope indetermines 'music'

As sound moves into the lowest registers, its pitch becomes increasingly difficult to determine, the definitiveness of music slipping into something 'else'. Australian musician, noise and performance artist Cat Hope often works with this characteristic of low-frequency sound to question the limits of what we call 'music' physically and conceptually. For Hope, bass can "activate responses other than the aural or be used as a kind of 'silent activator', enabling or affecting other sounds".[69] It is when sound is experienced in these lower registers, as Hope cites, that:

> the brain becomes increasingly sensitive to messages about sound from organs other than the ear, such as skin, through The Merkel Cell, Meissners corpuscles

[65] Roosth, 'Nineteen Hertz and Below: An Infrasonic History of the Twentieth Century'. 110.

[66] Scott Arford and Randy Yau, 'Infrasound', 31 March 2001, http://23five.org/infrasound/.

[67] Scott Arford and Randy Yau, 'Filling the Void: The Infrasound Series', in *Site of Sound #2: Of Architecture and the Ear*, by Brandon LaBelle and Cláudia Martinho (Berlin: Errant Bodies Press, 2011).

[68] Roosth, 'Nineteen Hertz and Below: An Infrasonic History of the Twentieth Century'. 120.

[69] Cat Hope, 'Infrasonic Music', *Leonardo Music Journal* 19, no. 1 (30 October 2009): 51–56. 51.

> and Pancinian corpuscles.[70]

She believes that through sound in the lower registers "an opportunity arises for a different kind of music and listening".[71] She suggests further that "the entire body, rather than any particular organ, is active in the listening experience".[72]

Hope's 'band' Abe Saba was a series of performances of "groups of 3 to 30 bass players from all different genres of music, playing in unconventional spaces aiming to "vibrate audiences with the extreme bass".[73] Bass players improvised "loud, rumbling soundscapes" for a set duration, constrained to play below 55Hz only, and to encourage their bass guitars to feed back. Hope describes the work:

> Abe Sada directs these sounds at various sites in a performance—onto bodies of the audience, transferred into the architecture of the performance venue or by vibrating objects in the room. These effects are not meticulously controlled, rather they ebb and flow with the input of the various performers featured in each Abe Saba performance.[74]

Abe Sada: Sada Abe 1936
2006

This is a piece for 1 – 8 bass guitarists performing under raked seating in a theatre.

The performers must all be beneath the seating, and this should not be apparent to the audience until after the performance is complete.

Amps should be 300W of tube amp, with 15" speakers. Place these against the seating structure: poles, under seats etc.

A video may be used to send some visual stimulus to the audience, but this must be abstract as to not let the audience know what is under the seats. Close ups of body/skin works well, sent via a live feed to a screen in the main 'performance' space.x

Feedback is permitted and can be manipulated with the body.

Use knives as plectrums.

Play as slowly and low and loudly as possible.

Do not play any note above the pitch of the A string (55 Hz), but you may detune higher strings. Dutuning lower strings is encouraged.

Strive to feel the seating structure vibrate.

Play for 20 minutes.

Silence signals the end.

Cat Hope

Figure 57: Excerpt from Volume One of the Abe Saba Song Book 2007-09, by Cat Hope.

Hope argues that the bodily absorption of infrasound, particularly through musical "patterns and formations", helps with a "realisation that the medium of sound is in fact a very visceral, physical phenomenon" bringing the entire body into play as we listen to our world.[75]

[70] Geoff Leventhall, 'A Review of Published Research on Low-frequency Noise and Its Effects' (London: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, May 2003). 22. Cited in Cat Hope, 'The Possibility of Infrasonic Music' (Tokyo, Japan: Journal of Low-frequency Noise Vibration and Active Control, 2008), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228689507_The_possibility_of_Infrasonic_Music/link/5706573408aecbf68ba9d284/download. 3.

[71] Hope, 'Infrasonic Music'. 51.

[72] Hope, 'The Possibility of Infrasonic Music'. 4.

[73] Cat Hope, 'Noise Performance: Australian Bass Orchestra', CAT HOPE, accessed 17 August 2020, https://www.cathope.com/noise-performance. *Abe Saba* is now the *Australian Bass Orchestra*.

[74] Hope, 'The Possibility of Infrasonic Music'. 9.

[75] Hope. 4.

Manipulation by bass

Artist Mark Bain's work *The Live Room* demonstrates how low-frequency vibration, independent of music, can be an agent of social and embodied affects. In his experiment *Live Room* (1998), a floating floor of a disused silo was enhanced with "rotary-type mechanical oscillators" that vibrated the floor from 1-30Hz, turning it into a giant transducer (speaker cone) which participants could—or could try to—walk on.[76] Up to 40 people in the space at one time would find themselves motivated into action by the vibrations, which varied in frequency at different points on the floor. Participants were manipulated further by Bain as he shifted the frequencies, causing them to move towards and away from certain intensities. Bain explains that the experience was "very personal, in that the waveforms reacted differently in each individual... bringing awareness to a place within the self".[77] Bain observed that a "sympathetic vibration" was taking place between participant and building, and also taking place between participants, creating relationship between them. Much of Bain's work is orientated towards creating unique situations for people to develop sociality and self-identify. This is similar to how Jasen positions the role of bass in bass-cults, where we are manipulated by the whim of the DJ, and also by the accompanying abilities of the sound system and its crew to fine tune the potential of this to create formative situations. Creating new situations also operates on a more subtle level as the production of music expands the possibility of sound. This includes the texture of sound to be party to stimulating the opening of body and thought through novel vibrational patterns or textures, to which I now turn.

The affordance of bass soundings

A bassline in music works to ground the chords and the rhythm of the track. In electronic dance music the bass also works to prioritise the beat and rhythm over melody and harmony. Bass music, specifically, brings even greater focus to the lowest frequencies of bass and rhythm, meaning the felt texture or timbre of bass is foregrounded as a track's animating sensation.[78] The percussive 'beat' is found in the lowest registers where the thump of kick-drums is often layered with bass, the bassline mirroring this or always anchored to the beat in some way. Luis-Manuel Garcia describes how the low frequencies of the main driving beats "beat not only time, but also surfaces, bodies, listeners, dancers, and crowds", with a "combination of low frequencies and high amplitudes that impact, penetrate, and

[76] Mark Bain, 'The Live Room: Transducing Resonant Architectures', *Organised Sound* 8, no. 2 (2003): 163–70, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1355771803000062. 164.

[77] Bain. 169.

[78] A bass note created by a simple sine-wave is a smooth hum, but ultimately boring and annoying. A bass-note created with a more complex wave shape, whether by an instrument or through manipulation of the wave by through synthesiser effects becomes infinite possibilities of sound textures.

resonate in the body".[79] More than just the force, it is the texture or *timbre* of the sounds, the "granular sounds and complex sonic textures", or "fleshy timbres", as Garcia describes, that foster an even deeper, embodied relationship to the soundings. These soundings contain "sonic traces" of action, evoking "striking, rubbing, crushing, and so on"—a "timbral evocation of flesh"—registering as sensations of action, abstracted enough to not be directly representative.[80] Literally absorbed by the body, timbre provides low-frequency sounding, a nuanced *matterly feel,* through a depth of texture at impact.

Timbre provides a description to sound that builds a story, adding *depth* to duration. Eve Sedgwick proposes that "to perceive texture is always, immediately, and de facto to be immersed in a field of active narrative hypothesising, testing, and re-understanding of how physical properties act and are acted upon over time".[81] Further, Sedgwick suggests that a texture perceived is always already forming the questions: "What is it like? … How does it impinge on me? … How did it get that way?" and most importantly for this thesis, "What could I do with it?"[82] In the textural bombardment of a bass music event, where sounding is free of direct textural representation, or references and objects, *ninthWave's* amplification of low-frequency sound affords narrative-building through texture and sensation. Combining this potential of the impact of sound, which can register as pain through to pleasure, with the narrative potentialising of sound's texture, immersion in low-frequency sound inevitably provides potential for action through the bodie's texturally stimulated enquiry. In the non-representative world of electronic sound's texture, there is no right or wrong answer, just an open-ended potentiality. Bass here is shown to be a medium, an activator, a manipulator. Next, in the last part of this chapter, I head into the 'matter' of sound and low-frequency sound to explore what 'sounding' can demonstrate to us as analogy, practice, and a way of knowing.

[79] Luis-Manuel Garcia, 'Beats, Flesh, and Grain: Sonic Tactility and Affect in Electronic Dance Music', *Sound Studies* 1, no. 1 (1 January 2015): 59–76, https://doi.org/10.1080/20551940.2015.1079072. 62.

[80] Garcia. 67.

[81] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, UK: Duke University Press, 2003). 13.

[82] Sedgwick.13.

The matter of sounding

Sound, as described in the introduction, is now *sounding*—always active, always in relation to what it is heard by, or felt by, or what it moves. Sounding is the epistemological foundation to the 'sonic body'. As described in Chapter One, the 'sonic body' is the basis of the collective 'empleasured sonic bodie' found in the *ninthWavesound* vibratorium. The 'sonic body' is the expression of a de-figuring of sound into 'sounding'. This refiguring into *sounding* shifts sound away from object, into 'a process or event', such as that proposed by Julien Henriques, and also Nina Sun Eidsheim and Paul Jasen.[83] Sound as process, Eidsheim argues, can "provide... a route for thinking about fluidity and distribution that does not distinguish between or across media".[84] This is echoed by Jasen who argues that sounding, as it travels into and through matter "undermines the apparent discreteness of the things it brings together in modulation" as they vibrate *together* in sympathetic resonance.[85] Henriques argues that knowing through sounding positions "resonances, sympathies and attunements between sound and listener [as] rather different ways of knowing that are immediately and intimately particular, situated and embodied".[86] This is a way of knowing that sits in contrast to a reliance on the visual, which creates object/subject divided understandings which can only ever achieve reflective or representative knowings.

Knowing-through-sounding is an understanding of relations based on "contingencies rather than abstract types or essentialisms".[87] In other words, things are left as motion and flow, as affective

[83] Henriques, *Sonic Bodies: Reggae Sound Systems, Performance Techniques, and Ways of Knowing*. xvii.
The conventional use of the term 'sounding' relates to the practice of ascertaining the depth of a body of water. Etymologically sounding "derives from the Old English *sund*, meaning 'swimming, water, sea'; it is not related to the word sound in the sense of noise or tones, but to *sound* a geographical term", and was practiced by lowering a weight of lead attached to a measurable line into the depths until it reached the bottom. Modern day 'sounding' indeed uses sound through echo location, or sonar, recording the "time interval between emission and return of a pulse" to record a depth measurement and a detailed topography of the ocean floor.
Refer 'Depth Sounding', in *Wikipedia s.v.*, 14 July 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Depth_sounding&oldid=1033565860. And 'Echo Sounding', in *Wikipedia s.v.*, 4 August 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Echo_sounding&oldid=1037043537.

[84] Eidsheim, *Sensing Sound: Singing and Listening as Vibrational Practice*. 16.

[85] Jasen, *Low End Theory: Bass, Bodies and the Materiality of Sonic Experience*. 14.
Further in *University of Alberta Dictionary of Cognitive Science*, s.v. ' Sympathetic Resonance' by Michael R.W. Dawson and David A. Medler, February 2010, http://www.bcp.psych.ualberta.ca/~mike/Pearl_Street/Dictionary/contents/S/sympres.html.
Sympathetic resonance, or sympathetic vibration, occurs when the vibrations in one object produce vibrations in another. Sympathetic resonance is an example of physical entrainment, in which periodic behaviour of one object can be communicated to another, even when there are no direct physical connections between the two.

[86] Henriques, *Sonic Bodies: Reggae Sound Systems, Performance Techniques, and Ways of Knowing*. 247.

[87] Henriques. xxxi.

events, where things are always already intra-acting (to use a Baradian term).[88] This allows for things and people to be themselves in all their difference and multiplicity without translation or deduction into a representative form, such as a noun, or a static conceptualisation as visual image—an identity. There is more space to move, an indeterminate realm of potential for 'other' directions, offering more choice and freedom from pre-prepared tropes and distinctions. This more nuanced and in-depth way of understanding, through *sounding*, is the basis for Henriques' model for a different way of knowing, a 'sonic logos'. A *logos* which is embodied rather than cerebral sits in sympathy with the situated processes and epistemologies of the feminist thinkers employed in this thesis, and describes how low-frequency sound and embodied feminism resonate.

Sonic logos—or a philosophy of sounding—is a knowledge of "relationships and dynamic patterns" and an understanding "that relationships are both continually in the process of becoming and always already made".[89] This reflects the nomadic formation of a subject as described (previously) by Braidotti. 'Knowing' in the sound system event, as Henriques describes, is an explicit practice of a sonic logos where DJ and crew are 'thinking through sounding'.[90] They have implicitly developed a sense of knowing what to do "without necessarily 'reflecting' or verbalising it", as they respond in kind to vibratory relationships between things and themselves.[91] This emphasises Henriques' reasoning that by practising different modes of sensory relation we can learn to allow for and trust our body to be "a reliable source of knowledge or understanding about the world".[92] A 'sonic logos', is a 'kind of reason' drawn from two understandings experienced through sound: one of the 'sense of sound' or the experiences of sound vibrations, and the other "the way in which sound 'makes sense'... 'getting a sense' of something, that is, 'knowing' about it".[93] Henriques' sonic logos is "concerned with the whole, rather than with separate parts, and synthesis", with heterarchy rather than hierarchy, bodies entwined.[94] This concern underlies the facilitation process of the creation of an *empleasured* vibe in a ninthWavesound vibratorium, a vibe which is created through the affective energies of curated soundings and matter/ings, of creating resonant relationships and sympathetic vibrations between soundings, things, people, and place. The vibe is explored in depth in the next chapter.

[88] Refer Karen Barad, 'Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter', in *Material Feminisms*, ed. Stacy Alaimo and Susan J. Hekman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 120–54. Barad states: "The notion of intra-action (in contrast to the usual "interaction", which presumes the prior existence of independent entities/relata) represents a profound conceptual shift. It is through specific agential intra-actions that the boundaries and properties of the "components" of phenomena become determinate and that particular embodied concepts become meaningful".

[89] Henriques, *Sonic Bodies: Reggae Sound Systems, Performance Techniques, and Ways of Knowing*. xxviii, 248.

[90] Henriques.

[91] Henriques. xxiv.
This also describes the ways dancers and partycipants physically or materially explore a sound performance.

[92] Henriques. 251.

[93] Henriques. 242.

[94] Henriques. 248.

Figure 58: Janiac playing in the Portal at Splore Festival, Tāpapakanga Regional Park, Auckland, 2019.

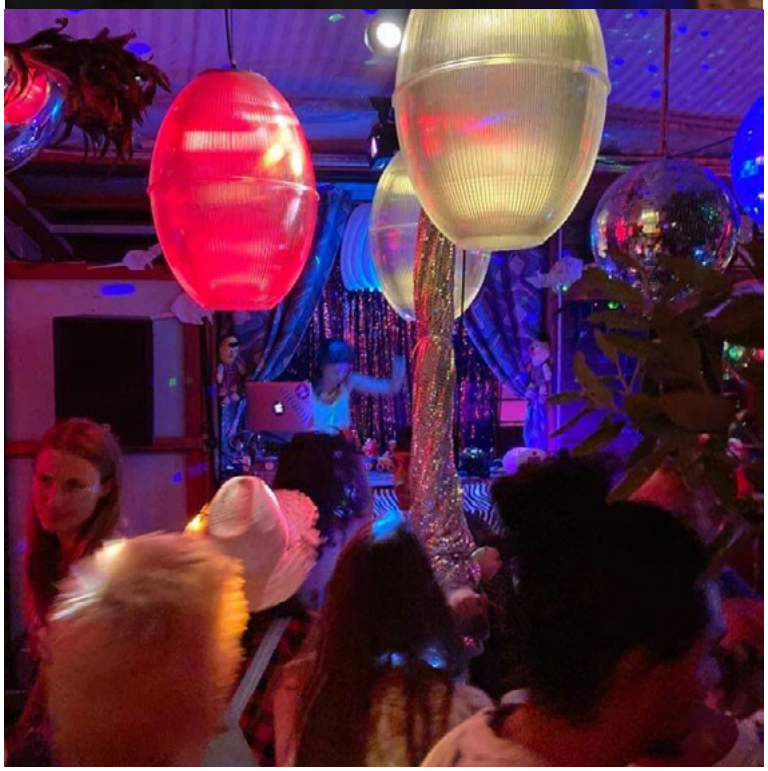

Figure 59: Me playing in the Portal at Splore Festival, Tāpapakanga Regional Park, Auckland, 2021.

To deejay/be DJ/be a woman DJ

Counting is, after all, a feminist strategy

—Maura Reilly[95]

A DJ thinks through sounding, she is formulating relations between sound and bodies. According to Hillegonda Rietveld (2013), a DJ is *facilitator:* "a component in a network of relationships between the participants, music culture, [and] DJ technology".[96] The DJ facilitates the specific content of a sonically manipulated vibe. Each decision she makes is a reflection of her knowledge of dance music and the sounds within it, a projection of her bass-driven desires, which become part of the fabric of the event. Her decisions are entangled in both the immediate moment of audience or dancefloor response and integrated into the mythic outcome of the event. Rietveld describes how the practice of the dance DJ is embodied as: "a heterogeneous existence, created through the manipulation, deconstruction and re-assemblage of existing artefacts into a new, temporary, whole".[97] As artist, she gathers tracks and sounds she resonates with to form her 'sounding' that is unique to her—an expression of a self through the music productions of others, and also her own sound creations if she herself is producing.

A DJ is remembered for the particular sensory experience of her set and how well she resonated with her audience. As an 'original' composer of sorts, Rietveld argues the DJ takes on a creative, magical role toward the formation of a 'local cultural identity'.[98] She is culture maker. Whether she decides to 'throw-back' to an era, be part of a current trend, or push into uncharted territory with fresh new tracks, genres and sounds, or blend differing trajectories together, success is an expression of 'knowing through sound' and understanding what resonates with both self and others, 'seducing' the floor into continuing to dance on. The preferred pleasures of the floor become apparent as dancers "ruthlessly

[95] Maura Reilly, 'Taking the Figure of Sexism: Facts, Figures and Fixes', *ArtNews*, June 2015, 39–47. 46.

[96] Rietveld, 'Introduction'. 3.

[97] Rietveld. 7.

[98] Rietveld. 7.
Rietveld expands: "By creating unique (re)combinations of musical elements in response to the dancers on the floor, the successful club and party DJ can take on a magical role in a culture of industrial reproduction and alienating globalisation. As a creative performance, the DJ set has the potential to communicate new ways of being, of feeling, producing musical discourses that are nevertheless embedded in real-world, material politics".

vote with their feet".[99] Their discernments fold back into the DJ's demand for new tracks, sounds, and genres from producers. But this story is ultimately gendered, male, and disproportionately white. Women's influence upon the formation of music culture in the role of DJ has often been left out of historical scholarship (this is in line with much of history in general).[100]

In Aotearoa, deejaying and sound systems are male-dominated environments. Anecdotes from local women DJs align with global and local statistics. The *Women's Audio Mission* (San Francisco) states that "[l]ess than 5% of the people creating the sounds, music and media in the daily soundtrack of our lives are women/gender non-conforming individuals".[101] DJ Mag's *Top 100 (EDM) DJs Poll*, voted on by the public, has reached a maximum of eight women∞ so far in any single year (2015-19), the overwhelming majority of whom are also white.[102] Why is it that the percentage of women∞ involved in the electronic music scene is (still) just a small proportion after all these waves of feminism and so many calls for gender equality?

In the cultural world of the DJ, from DJ super stars through to bedroom, the DJ is "normalised as masculine or, at least, as androgynous", argues Reitveld.[103] This is perpetuated through the mediation of imagery and stories in advertising and scholarship where DJs are categorised into hegemonic gender norms. This popularism dissolves the significance, continues Rietveld, of the "historically crucial role of women and gay men [and POC] in the heterogeneous development of DJ practices".[104] Tara Rodgers in her book of interviews of women∞ electronic producers and performers adds to this argument, noting that the study of electronic music often excludes women in the scope of their studies: the

[99] Rietveld. 3.

[100] Tara Rodgers notes that the study of electronic music often excludes women in the scope of their studies, or acknowledges their lack of inclusion, but fails to "explain women's absence". The "cumulative effect gives the impression that women are rarely present in DJ, electronic music, and sound art cultures; that they have not made significant contributions to these fields to the extent that men have; or that gender categories ultimately pose restrictions on professional survival." Refer Tara Rodgers, *Pink Noises: Women on Electronic Music and Sound* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010). 11.

[101] Women's Audio Mission, 'About:WAM', *Women's Audio Mission* (blog), 27 August 2020, https://womensaudiomission.org/about/.

[102] In 'Top 100 DJs Poll', DJMag.com, accessed 4 September 2020, https://djmag.com/top100djs.
The following gives the ranking of the highest placed woman in the charts, as well as the total number of women out of 100 DJs in each given year.
2019: Womxn first appear at (and below) #24; a total of 8
2018: Womxn first appear at #27; a total of 6
2017: Womxn first appear at #42; a total of 4
2016: Womxn first appear at #45; a total of 2
2015: Womxn first appear at #24; a total of 2

[103] Rietveld, 'Introduction'. 8.

[104] Rietveld. 9.

"cumulative effect gives the impression that women are rarely present in DJ, electronic music, and sound art cultures; that they have not made significant contributions to these fields to the extent that men have".[105] This lack of acknowledgement and visibility creates a feedback loop that discourages women from engaging in the field, and increases the impression that this is not a viable profession for women∞. Rodgers' book demonstrates that there are many women∞ who deserve to be regarded as significant contributors but have often been ignored by 'authoritative' commentators (Pauline Oliveros and Le Tigre were the only two that I recognised, out of the 24 DJs and producers). In my DJ practice, I find I have to do a lot of research to discover women music producers to play. Deejaying is often the precursor to producing, and as *ninthWavesound* supports women∞ DJs, potentially this will ripple into supporting women∞producers.[106]

Festival promotors will often respond to the challenge of 'where are the women∞?' with the answer that 'there just aren't enough female acts'—as exemplified in a particular response I received after challenging a festival promotor about the lack of women in his line-up: "in NZ its [sic] totally lack of talent".[107] But, *female:pressure* beg to differ—they have created a website database of talented women∞ DJs, sound technicians etc, which proves this often-heard mantra to be straight-up incorrect, and they argue that it's "not about a total number, it's about how and if we are recognised!"[108] The sticking point seems to be that events and festivals are often run by men, and therefore men decide who will appear on a bill. Positively, Rietveld suggests that as women (very) slowly take up more positions as public performers, "taking control of the various musical soundscapes that move the crowds", they poke holes in the "patriarchal social order".[109] The *ninthWavesound* project is most definitely aspiring to do exactly this, but what we might see through these holes is yet to be determined.

[105] Rodgers, *Pink Noises: Women on Electronic Music and Sound*. 11.

[106] Both production and deejaying workshops for women∞ and gender diverse have been taking place more regularly over the last few years, with thanks to Serato (NZ's international digital DJ software company), Katie Martin, and Paige Julia of the Sensonauts. And apparently, more women than ever are gaining the qualification of an NZ Certificate in DJ and Electronic Music Production at MAINZ and SIT learning institutes.

[107] In text conversation with a studio, venue, and festival owner who shall remain nameless, 20 Nov 2019.

[108] Electric Indigo, 'Female:Pressure', female:pressure, accessed 20 May 2020, https://femalepressure.wordpress.com/.
"*female:pressure* is an international network of database and network of women∞, AFAB, transgender, transfeminine, transmasculine, intersex (+gender optional), genderqueer, gender nonconforming, a-gender or/and non-binary artists in electronic music and digital arts founded by Electric Indigo: from musicians, composers and DJs to visual artists, cultural workers and researchers. A worldwide resource of talent that can be searched after criteria like location, profession, style or name".

[109] Rietveld, 'Introduction'. 7.

Make change

If women only ever see men upon the stage, the potential for women to imagine themselves upon the stage is reduced. Jodine Stodard a.k.a DJ Chikaa, Auckland local and international festival DJ and event promoter agrees with this and frames part of her role as DJ as

> ...exampling. I really believe in demonstrating... women see me doing it and it gives them this kind of permission and accessibility to that dream, through watching someone else 'like them' do it.[110]

The significance of the power of affirming the presence of women∞ by placing them up on the stage cannot be understated—for the imaginary of the audience but also for vibe of the event. In the music scene of Toronto, Canada, Maren Hancock studied the necessity or value of women-identified DJ lineups, concluding that when a woman is placed in a position of power upon the stage as a DJ, a more respectful atmosphere is created during the event and less sexual harassment is likely to occur.[111]

But it can take a radical, affirmative stand to get women up on the stage. Emi Pogoni, the Events Manager at Caroline Bar in Wellington between 2016 and 2018, implemented a policy to include women on lineups, which was met with significant kickback as she described to me: "a super young band wasn't impressed by that, sought opinion online and a lot of misogyny ensued, basically. This band ended up doing a 180° after all the vitriol came out".[112] Pogoni explained that when she faced challenges like these, she would alter her response depending on the kind of event being organised, including discussion and recommendations of some quality acts, which included women∞, to add into the performers night. Already circulating were multiple spreadsheets of acts that were gender inclusive, which were either referred to or directly passed onto event organisers. A similar bottom-line approach applies to *ninthWavesound* collaborations, where the parameters of engagement include only allowing lineups in which more than fifty percent of the acts are women∞ or gender diverse. This will have a positive ripple effect into the community, helping through example to develop the practice of women∞prominent, 'safer', more supportive and affirmative event spaces.

While trying to avoid recourse to gender essentialism, a theory of sexual difference suggests that a specific 'different' to the heteronormative mainstream be available for women∞ DJs. A booking agent for fourteen venues who I worked with told me that he preferred to book women for certain spaces as they tended to be less aggressive in their music choices,

[110] Laura Marsh in conversation with Jodine Stodard a.k.a. DJ Chikaa, Audio recording, via Zoom, 9 November 2020.

[111] Maren Hancock, 'Lick My Legacy: Are Women-Identified Spaces Still Needed to Nurture Women-Identified DJs?', *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* 9, no. 1 (2017): 73–89.

[112] Emi Pogoni and Laura Marsh, 'Feminist Actions by You That Olivia Webb Told Me About', 11 September 2021, email.

and liked to play tunes that encourage women to get onto the dancefloor.[113] In an *I-D:Vice Mag* article, reggae selector Dubplate Pearl states that, "[t]he way we play is different. Guys might try and be more obscure, they don't want to play 'common' records, but we play tunes because we like them".[114] I have witnessed this style of playing by women∞ more often than by men, where the posturing of claiming 'better' or 'more rare' selections is put to the side, and instead, a connection to the audience rather than self-referencing those they 'know' in the DJ 'club' is chosen, often in the interest of playing songs that they, and the people they are playing for, love.[115] Women∞ also tend to be 'less concerned with the potential for wowing the crowd through technology, e.g., such as 'scratching' and using filter effects and the addition of sample and ID stings, i.e., overlaying one's own sting, 'DJ Laaaauraaaa Luuuush'. Whether this is due to a lack of knowledge, gendered technophobia, or a lack of ego or lack of desire to is an interesting question.

As outlined in Chapter One, a 'sonic technofeminism' supports the feminist paradigm of this project as an activism that works against the male-gendering of technology, and the practices involved in this project aim to make technology more accessible to women∞. Whatever level of technological confidence, when faced with a crowd of expectant dancers, there is a requirement to become 'at one' with the physicality and performance-enhancing potential of a DJ mixer or controller in order to seamlessly control the vibe through the music. It is the steadiness of embodied physical experience which grounds the process of 'becoming DJ'. This embodiment is amplified though the vibrations of low-frequency sound that the DJ or artist is manipulating as they think through sounding and become a 'sonic body', embodying a 'sonic logos'. My flip on the 'sonic body' is a feminist strategy which prioritises the pleasure of low-frequency sound to affirm these becomings where thought and flesh meet as 'self', as I will explore in the next chapter.

[113] 'Laura Marsh in Conversation with Richie Harvey, Auckland', circa 2012.

[114] Emma Finamore, 'The Hidden Women of Sound System Culture', Magazine, *I-D:Vice Mag* (blog), 13 January 2016, https://i-d.vice.com/en_uk/article/43w55j/the-hidden-women-of-sound-system-culture.

[115] This is not to be applied as a generalisation across women∞ DJs by any means, but simply extends the idea that we∞ can and may respond in different ways at times through our selecting, and potentially in ways that have yet to be, or may never be able to be analysed.

Summary of contextual relations

This chapter has argued that *ninthWavesound* is embedded in the socio-cultural influences of traditional and diasporic morphing of reggae/dancehall sound system culture, and rave and festival cultures. An indirect activism is lived through each iteration of these liminal events as sites of resistance. The shortcomings of sound system culture's gender diversity are questioned and challenged by the proclamation of *ninthWavesound* as a 'feminist' sound system. Sound systems are activated to bring together like-minded people but are considered here as a potential space for a new kind of resistance, a shift within the culture in support of the feminist project.

In the rave space, as Alice O'Grady argues, certain freedoms are permitted because these outdoor venues are 'symbolically separated' from the heteronormative everyday and are a permissive place of escape.[116] In this space, subjectivity and expressions of the 'feminine' can be experimented with in ways that are different from daily mainstream life. Splore, for example, has become renowned for the revellers' abundance of enthusiasm in dressing up and pushing the boundaries of who they are, even if just for a weekend. In support of this sense of escapism, in the nomadic space of the festival, devoid of markers of permanent occupancy and repetitive time, Simon Reynolds suggests the rave incites a "nowhere–and nowhen–ness".[117] Rather than a sense of connection with place, it is about being-there-with-others in that moment that locates (*"You had to be there!"*). An itinerant community also grants subjective freedom; there are few expectations to be the 'you' you are outside of the rave space. Released from direction and expectation, the temporariness of the nomadic state impregnates the *vibe* with a sense of freedom within the here and now, allowing for new configurations and utopic imaginings, an expansion of which I explore through *empleasurement* and *jouissance* in Chapter Five. As this project is located within the socio-cultural and political landscape of Aotearoa, I acknowledge the potential of festivals and raving as spaces for collective engagement with our country's founding document, *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*.

The *ninthWavesound* project explores the potential for sounding in the lower frequencies, or the 'low-end', to bring us into our bodies, disrupt thought patterns and work to reconfigure our perception of the world around us, and of our 'selves'. The affectivity of sound in relationship to matter returns us to a key concern of feminist new materialist writers such as Grosz. Jasen also describes sound and matter's "tendency and capacities to affect and be

[116] Alice O'Grady, 'Spaces of Play: The Spatial Dimensions of Underground Club Culture and Locating the Subjunctive'. 91.

[117] Reynolds, *Generation Ecstasy: Into the World of Techno and Rave Culture*. 241.

affected".[118] *ninthWavesound* reaches different audiences, and invites women∞ and others to respond differently to sound vibrations, based upon their own material and energetic nature. This includes the potential that low-frequency sound has for disrupting thought through affective vibration in the matter of the body. I build upon the unsettling nature of Jasen's 'sonic body', through the capacity of low-frequency sound to stimulate the 'empleasured sonic bodie'. Sounding in practice is the subtle and not-so-subtle 'shifting' of matter which helps us to understand the world around us, working into an epistemology of intra-active relation as a 'sonic logos', a 'reason' known through the body rather the visual sense. Through technological amplification, the subtle shifts of matter that are transformative can be enhanced into macro-sized manoeuvres.

The pleasure of the touch and texture of sound moves us to create stories and potential action, and the social environment we are in effects the potential of these experiences to affectively open us up to affirmative becomings in the world. Deejaying with music that foregrounds bass is a form of sounding that is simultaneously external and internal touch; sounding moves through our skin boundaries, inner and outer merge as we similarly experience sensation at the same time as another. Western constructions of individuality and separateness are challenged through the experience of be(com)ing an empleasured sonic bodie. As this thesis describes in other ways, low-frequency sound has a seductive affect upon libidinal dynamics through the pleasure of sound's intimate touch. This is the experience of the 'empleasured sonic bodie'. I have argued that the DJ is a catalyst for bringing the empleasured sonic bodie into being, and that increasing the representation of women∞ DJs has a socio-political effect.

This chapter has shown that low-frequency sound and vibration, as explored by artists Scott Arford and Randy Yao, Cat Hope and Mark Bain through infrasound, bass guitar 'orchestras', and vibrational platforms, highlights the embodied experience. And also, as Mark Leckey describes, potential lies inherent in even a silent sound system, waiting to be activated through the body. The power of the bass in bass music to move people goes hand in hand with rhythm, but as shown through the examples of artists working with bass in non-rhythmical ways, bass itself is also a stand-alone force expanded infinitely by texture, or timbre, to open up new lines of thought.[119] Low-frequency sound is the catalyst or activator for a turn towards the body, amplified by collective experience. This project utilises low-frequency sound to activate the potential knowledge contained in the body and what this embodied knowledge allows or affords. In the next chapter I look at *ninthWavesound* events as forms of sonic activism, through a methodology of low-end empleasurement, within the feminist paradigm already established.

[118] Jasen, *Low End Theory: Bass, Bodies and the Materiality of Sonic Experience.* 13.

[119] But music makes it way more fun!

Figure 60: Janiac bonding with ninthWave after a long lockdown of no heavy bass, Oaariki's house party, 15 May 2020.

Chapter Four
Empleasured Empowerment

Pleasure connects
Pleasure expands
Pleasure affirms
Pleasure is power

> There are many kinds of power, used and unused, acknowledged or otherwise. The erotic is a resource within each of us that lies in a deeply female and spiritual plane, firmly rooted in the power of our unexpressed or unrecognised feeling.
>
> – Audre Lorde[1]

The kaupapa of this project is to generate an *empleasured activism* through low-frequency sound events produced by *ninthWavesound*. In this chapter, I connect intimate-scale social events hosted by *ninthWavesound*, with Lorde's 'power of the erotic', and adrienne maree brown's 'pleasure activism'. brown's activism promotes pleasure, eros, and the erotic as a powerful and untapped resource for self-knowledge, self-awareness, well-being, and a collective understanding of freedom and agency. Through empleasured activism, collectively experienced pleasure in the low-frequency sound vibratorium of *ninthWavesound* reveals a personal and collective resistance to the male-domination of the local music scene, along with its depersonalising, monetising, and dehumanising tendencies. This resistance is present in the community-building practices through social events for small groups such as the *Lazy Susan Listening Sessions* and in the embodied practices of the *Yummy Yin* event discussed in this chapter. Where, through an empleasured feminist reclaiming of space within the sound system, sound art, and electronic music spaces, new potential emerges for what it is that an empleasured sonic bodie might be able to *do,* as we∞ do and desire differently.

[1] Audre Lorde, 'Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power (1986)', in *Pleasure Activism*, ed. adrienne maree brown (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2019), 27–35. 27.

The methodology of *low-end empleasurement* that underpins this project is designed to increase a sense of well-being through joy and pleasure, enabling women∞ collectively to reimagine the erotic body. I suggest that a sense of political power and social agency emerges through practices of empleasurement through bass sounds and grounded experiences. In the vibratorium, where the vibration of sound subsumes the self, pleasure opens up space for different self-realisations, expansive connections and collaborations: an emergent feminist imaginary. The *vibe of empleasured potential* activates new ways of being in order to animate the *empleasured sonic bodie*.

Pleasure in mainstream culture in Aotearoa is still 'suspect'; the power of pleasure and the erotic are distorted, limited and tainted within Western society, or in Audre Lorde's words: "vilified, abused, and devalued".[2] But what if, instead, we believe pleasure to be a form of social activism to generate well-being?[3] An empleasured sonic bodie is one that offers, like Lorde's erotic, "a well of replenishing and provocative force", and an activation of pleasure.[4] Pleasure and eros, the erotic, are figured in this project as empowering forces for personal and collective change, drawing on Lorde and brown. In addition, Elizabeth Grosz's conception of pleasure and vibration as forces of becoming fittingly expresses their power as activators of a new pleasure revolution. In what follows, I suggest that liberation, well-being and empowerment are located in low-end empleasured *ninthWavesound* experiences.

Empleasured activism

> *To freely and fearlessly experience one's capacity for immanent joy, and to affectively and affirmatively share it with others is to reach a state of empleasurement.*

When I am immersed in pleasurable low-frequency sound, my entire body is stimulated into a pleasurable response: opening into the moment, pleasure provides access into a feeling

[2] Lorde. 27.

[3] For this view on happiness see Veronica Huta, 'An Overview of Hedonic and Eudaimonic Well-Being Concepts', in *Handbook of Media Use and Well-Being*, ed. L Reinecke and M.B Oliver (New York: Routledge, 2015). And Sabine Sonnentag, 'Dynamics of Well-Being', *The Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior* 2 (22 January 2015): 261–93, https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-032414-111347. Philosophers have long argued that happiness and well-being are derived from hedonic experiences or eudaemonic experiences since Aristippus and Aristotle held opposing views in the 4th Century BCE (Huta, 2015). This project works with a definition that "[w]ell-being refers to a person's hedonic experience of feeling good and to the eudaimonic experience of fulfillment and purpose□" (Sonnentag, 2015). An historically significant era of rave events in the nineties were those hosted by the *Eudaimony Tribe* in the South Island of Aotearoa.

[4] Lorde. 28.

of satisfaction.[5] Locating Lorde's 'erotic' in this project enlivens the potential outcome of the pleasure of low-frequency sound and bass-music to be a self and collectively affirming force. The activation of participants in this project is focused on: promoting empleasurement as both a 'measure of' and 'integral to' well-being and collective feminist agency; providing a comfortable space that allows women∞ to expand into the pleasure of low-frequency sound; and creating a supportive pleasurable vibe that enables women∞ to expand beyond the heteronormative concept. But this requires a reclaiming or refiguring of pleasure, and an activation of its power for social change. Below are ideas about what pleasure does, bringing it out of Judeo-Christian legacies of sin and guilt into active and embodied feminist empowerment. Importantly, activism is reached through the sharing of the pleasurable experience with others.

Empleasured activism works with the vibrant, affirmative, and shared pleasurable energy in a women∞prominent environment as a mode of resistance to the dominant model. This builds on adrienne maree brown's concept of 'pleasure activism', which she defines as "work and life lived in the realms of satisfaction, joy, and erotic aliveness that bring about social and political change".[6] A *methodology of low-end empleasurement* involves developing an awareness that how much pleasure we 'allow ourselves' has been scripted into our personal belief systems through cultural conditioning, and a belief that there is no limit to how much pleasure we can experience. Pleasure in this project is a multi-dimensional spectrum of touch sensation, flow sensation and joy sensation; also, sensation that comes from both external stimuli and an internal resonance with self.[7] Pleasure here is a spectrum that extends through both sensual and sexual pleasure. Part of the reclaiming process involves re-sensitisation, as we learn to expand the potential of our sensory pleasure system.

ninthWavesound events provide safe spaces for women∞ where they don't have to 'keep their guard up', because an environment which is uncomfortable dramatically reduces the potential of pleasure. Perhaps through trauma or a lack of opportunity, many of us have a reduced sensitivity to pleasure, but through practice we can learn to experience more

[5] I have experienced many pleasures for I seek them out. But often 'satisfaction' was not quite reachable; or maybe it was there, I could 'touch' it, but I couldn't embrace it. Anxieties got in the way. I've explained this 'shortcoming' to myself as 'needing permission', or 'not deserving'. Personal inner work has helped me move past these, and I am able to open into experiencing pleasure more readily. The personal activism of this project is to practice moving past these kinds of blocks or conditionings through the therapy of low-frequency sound, supported by the beliefs and actions of others around me.

[6] adrienne maree brown, *Pleasure Activism* (Chico, Edinburgh: AK Press, 2019). 13.

[7] Pleasure operates in multiple ways. Felt pleasure is that which is found in sensation and touch—in a *ninthWavesound* event this is primarily experienced in the sonic dominance of low-frequency sound. Flow pleasure is experienced when completely absorbed in doing—when your mindbody is completely focused upon the activity such as DJing, or dancing, or meditating, and time disappears. Joy is slightly broader, where the Dionysian joy of play is involved in partycipating—feeling the sound and loving the music—and becomes a heightened experience because it is done socially with others. Other ideas and uses of pleasure are also present, such as 'taking great pleasure' in the doing of sound system activities.

pleasure. The fundamental practice of this project is a facilitation process which manifests a supportive vibe to allow for an empleasured experience. The process is a curation of conditions and affective elements which allow for the unfolding of joyful resonance between sound, people, and environment. The energy formed within the collective affective field, the vibe, creates an energy matrix, always more than the sum of its parts.

The oppressive structures of a patriarchal and capitalist society are designed to prevent us, especially not-men, from accessing pleasure. For, as brown argues, "our misery only serves those who wish to control us, to have our existence be in service to their own".[8] Low-frequency sound events produced by *ninthWavesound* generate conditions that are otherwise to the often-oppressive structural norms of the music scene. Lorde argues that if pleasure or connecting to the erotic is power, then "women so empowered are dangerous".[9] In the context of *ninthWavesound*, women∞ thus empowered through pleasure might present a dangerous disruption of the patriarchal order, especially in events that exist outside traditional music venues such as I will outline in the second part of this chapter.

[8] brown, *Pleasure Activism*. 437.

[9] Lorde, 'Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power (1986)'. 29.

The political potential of collective pleasure

> We're not meant to suffer alone. We're meant to experience pleasure and togetherness.
>
> —adrienne brown[10]

For brown, pleasure activism is "the work we do to reclaim our whole, happy, and satisfiable selves from the impacts, delusions, and limitations of oppression and/or supremacy".[11] This begins with "transforming what is possible between us", believing that "we can generate justice and liberation, growing a healing abundance", together.[12] brown refers to Lorde's essay *Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power*, and her subsequent internalising of Lorde's philosophy, as being instrumental in her own healing processes as a queer black woman∞. She now recognises her body as a site of politics as she decolonises through building up her 'sensual awareness' in resistance to capitalism's demands for productivity over pleasure.[13] brown believes that we have been convinced of a false scarcity of pleasure, that capitalism packages up what we should rightfully have in abundance and then sells "us back to ourselves".[14] To counter this, she argues, we can access our inherent goodness and "generate, from within and from between us, an abundance [of pleasure] from which we can all have enough".[15] Affective sharing of the pleasure generated through sensations of music and sound and the subsequent relationship-building of the community cumulatively releases this potential.

An impetus in my facilitation role is to promote the use of pleasure as a measure of well-being, as well as a tool for achieving well-being. The kaupapa of *ninthWavesound* encourages the idea that the pleasure of sound can be foregrounded as pleasure unto itself, rather than the hedonism of excessive drink and drugs which causes unsafe environments

[10] brown, *Pleasure Activism*. 48.

[11] brown. 13.

[12] brown. 13.

[13] brown. 7.

[14] brown. 15.

[15] brown. 15.

and a messy vibe, as described below in Oaariki's House Party. brown makes the salient point that "[t]he idea is not to be in a heady state of ecstasy at all times, but rather to learn how to sense when something is good for you, to be able to feel what enough is".[16]

brown's activism also involves a belief that social and political change need not feel like hard work all the time, instead it can be about ensuring that the pleasure of those most impacted by oppression is prioritised. In *ninthWavesound* events, women∞ are prioritised as key partycipators, gender diverse people are welcomed and there is a consciousness towards inclusivity and race and class diversity.[17] In low-end empleasured activism, as with brown's 'pleasure activism', the facilitation process is an activist reclaiming of pleasure in the interest of feminist, personal, and collective empowerment.[18] The collective experience of pleasure is what affirms our desires, dissolving anxieties about what we 'should' or 'shouldn't' be doing because it falls outside the model of capitalist productivity or other social drivers. And through this shared enjoyment we form community, the empleasured sonic bodie becoming ever more pluralised. This project is a small effort at establishing pleasurable connections through technologically-enhanced vibration as an act of resistance to our age of separation, and ultimately dissolving the strength of subject/object division.

[16] brown. 15.
Also refer Michel Onfray, *A Hedonist Manifesto: The Power to Exist*, ebook (Columbia, NY: Columbia University Press, 2015). Chapter 3: A Philosophical Life.
Here pleasure is not a selfish pursuit, instead it is framed as an 'ethical hedonism,' something Michael Onfray defines as "enjoy[ing] and have others enjoy, without doing harm to yourself or anyone else".

[17] Ana-Maria Deliu and Laura T. Ilea, 'Combined and Uneven Feminism: Intersectional and Post-Constructivist Tendencies', Metacritic Journal for Comparative Studies and Theory 4, no. 1 (2018): 5–21, https://doi.org/10.24193/mjcst.2018.5.01.
This kaupapa is drawn from an understanding of the mechanics of intersectional feminism. Intersectionality, as coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, sought to address the disregard in American law for considering a black woman to be even more overtly oppressed, and facing a specific set of circumstances by being both black and a woman. Intersectionality provides theoretical and practical tools that link gender to other forms of discrimination or 'pervasive social power dynamics', including race, class and the effects of colonisation for instance.

[18] I have often denied myself pleasures that in hindsight were actually sources of vital energy for my soul, such as buying music, going dancing, or snowboarding on a powder day when time was mine to decide. And I have suffered from the regret of these decisions: "what was I punishing myself for?" Insight gained through various healing modalities has revealed many small events and cultural conditionings which through my life have radically informed my self-negating subjectivity, causing me to 'not feel deserving' of pleasure. Through these healings I have learnt that, as an adult, I am now in charge of the difference between being subsumed by these affects that have shaped my being negatively, and of seeking out experiences which shape me in positive, affirming ways. I can choose to do things that feel good, I can choose to feel good. This is a personal revelation that I hope to share through the kaupapa and practices of this project.

Facilitation: Enabling the possibility of empleasurement

Sharing experiences of pleasure with others in the *ninthWavesound* vibratorium opens up the possibility of pleasure becoming an empowering force for feminist change. To enable this requires the coordination of multiple elements. As in brown's project, the activism of reclaiming and experiencing pleasure in *ninthWavesound* events is created through facilitation, where facilitating is about "making it easy for those transforming the world to be with each other, be impactful together".[19] Through a variety of experimental events undertaken as part of this research project, through successes and failures, and through experiencing how others do it well, I have developed a facilitation method that enables a collective, pleasurable, empowering collective feminist activist sonic vibe of potential—or empleasurement—to occur. This approach was developed through reflective analysis of experiments during the research process, and adapted to differing situations, i.e., public and private events where participants might be grounded or vertically positioned in relation to the sound system. The following list will continue to be refined over time:

Strategies for creating an empleasured vibe:

— ensure everyone is as comfortable as possible
— maintain a sense of revolutionary excitement/rebellious intention/activist passion
— maximise pleasurable sound vibration through a high-quality powerful sound system
— bias invite lists towards women∞ and the gender diverse
— welcome and introduce partycipants to each other and the kaupapa, i.e., 'please let me know if you need anything, this is what we're doing here, these are the guidelines for participation.'
— acknowledge and respect cultural differences
— establish a safe space protocol, practice a culture of consent, staunchly action a 'no douchebag' policy
— encourage engagement with technology
— encourage connection between self and sound, self and others
— encourage community through regular gatherings
— remove corporate influence and minimise alcohol presence
— create a pleasurable olfactory environment

[19] brown, *Pleasure Activism*. 23.

Figure 61: Lazy Susan Listening Session #1, 19 October 2019, Audio Foundation, Auckland.

Lazy Susan Listening Session #1 (*LSLS#1)* at the Audio Foundation in October 2020 was the first experiment in facilitating a pleasurable vibe, and an introduction of *ninthWave* to her potential community. This was followed a week later by *LSLS#2.* The invitation list consisted of women in my friendship-based network, who are interested in amplified music, dancing, and deejaying. The first of the two sessions included a few men who I knew supported the project. Partycipants were asked to bring a few tracks of bass music to share. We sat or lay on the ground upon a thick, soft mat and cushions around a giant 'Lazy Susan' I constructed to hold the DJ gear—controller/mixer, turntable, computer. The Lazy Susan's rotatable design allowed for a smooth passing around of the DJ equipment to each other so we could take turns to play our tunes. The equipment in this low position, close to the floor rather than on the table at which DJs usually stand, enabled a relaxed engagement with each other and with the technology (as the technology can be intimidating for some). The practicality of a Lazy Susan for this purpose was the impetus for its use, but the satire of using a piece of domestic enhancement equipment for feminist ends was quietly subversive.

Power dynamics in the Lazy Susan Listening Sessions

The event design of the *LSLS* stepped away from the usual scenario of experiencing amplified music in a bar or club, and several power dynamics were shifted in the process. The grounded position of a sit-down event was significant in that the cultural crux of holding onto a beverage while standing was not required. The impetus was on relaxing and chatting, with shared music tracks and *ninthWave* herself able to be conversation starters, helping to sidestep awkward small chat. The spatial arrangement of positioning bodies on the floor and around the central feature of the equipment eliminated the standard 'DJ as God' dynamic that most events hold. The sharing of favourite tracks worked to position us all as 'the DJ', bringing us more closely to equal standing, whether partycipants were 'actual' DJs or not. The context of the location was also significant. Audio Foundation as an 'art' space meant that there was no commercial pressure to maximise numbers, or to have the impetus of selling alcohol. Therefore, the focus was the music, the people, and the enjoyment of sharing music together—as our sober selves.[20]

Chilling out in this way for a couple of hours was comfortable for all who attended.[21] Sitting or lying eases the pressure on the body, removing the usual vertical requirement

20 Aotearoa New Zealand has a strong binge drinking culture. Rave and alternative festival culture tends to not demonstrate such a penchant for getting 'munted', and *ninthWavesound* events aspire to turn away from mainstream rites of alcohol consumption, partly in the interest of being more family-orientated out of respect and inclusion of mothers.

21 I appreciate that not everyone is able to sit upon the floor, but in this case, I was familiar with the partycipants abilities. Non-able-bodied people would be accommodated for in a caring and respectful way.

Figure 62: Poster for Lazy Susan Listening Sessions #1 & #2, Audio Foundation, October 2019.

to be 'productive', attentive or 'doing', or 'needing' to hold a drink.[22] When relaxed, it is easier for low-frequency sound to get more deeply into the body, and one can 'allow', or grant permission for sound vibrations to be pleasurable. I learnt through this event that being comfortable is the foundation for manifesting the kind of pleasure I'm interested in in this project, whether for events with bodies positioned in stationary ways, or for more active dance and movement. The relaxed state here subscribes to a mantra that echoes throughout this research: 'allowing is empowering'; allowing is required in order to access pleasure, with a consciousness that allowing requires trust and familiarity in order to reach a comfortable state, but also that boundaries often need to be part of this.

Further strategies to achieve comfort and ease within a *LSLS* are founded upon a practice of *manaakitanga*: the Māori cultural practice of "extending aroha, care, generosity and respect towards others".[23] This is shown through welcoming each participant personally; thanking them for coming and introducing or announcing them to the rest of the participants as they arrive; offering to show people who aren't comfortable with operating the DJ equipment how to do so, or offering to do it for them; verbally emphasising the non-judgemental sharing kaupapa of the session; acknowledging cultural concerns; and providing refreshments. It is also important to provide space for physical expansion—there was plenty of room to dance around the edge of the mat if the urge arose, which it did for a couple of women∞.

Exclusive/inclusive

The second *LSLS* session without any men present felt 'better' and more powerfully in line with the purpose of the project to carve out a women∞prominent space in the male-dominated Auckland music scene. Having spent such a large part of my life in male-dominated worlds outside of my close friend group, to experience the novelty of a such a high level of women∞prominent engagement, which I had worked so hard towards achieving, was exhilarating and felt radical. It was also radical for one of the cis-male participants at the first *LSLS,* from my research notes:

> *Invited man-DJ friend arrives at the session. He looks uncomfortable even though he knows most of the women in there, but he sticks around. He comments later on in the evening to one of us: "it was like walking into a women's circle, I wasn't sure if I was meant to be there or not". In relaying this story to other*

[22] Maoritanga (cultural concerns) of not stepping over bodies was not remembered by me at the time, but has come to my awareness since and will be attended to during introductory rites to 'grounded events' in the future.

[23] 'Definition of "Manaakitanga"', in *Māori Dictionary s.v.* (New Zealand: Longman/Pearson Education), accessed 23 September 2021, https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?keywords=manaakitanga.
Manaakitanga as a Maori practice of "hospitality, kindness, generosity, support", is a concept that has sunk into my way of thinking through a life lived as a Pākehā in Aotearoa New Zealand. The word and concept has become everyday language for me, and the meaning commonly understood by my peers.

> *women partycipants later on, reactions similarly reflected mine: "Welcome to our world!", i.e., as women, we have experienced this feeling often in our journeys of engaging with the local DJ scene.*[24]

Figure 63: Poster for Performance Night at Audio Foundation as part of Auckland Art Week, 17 Oct 2019.

Prompted by this event, the term 'woman-dominated' came into my head for, surprisingly, the first time ever. 'Male-dominated' has been a concept very present in the worlds I inhabit, but I'd never before had reason to use or hear 'women' and 'dominated' put together. After some time, the aggressiveness of the term 'dominated' became uncomfortable, and so I subsequently moved into using women∞prominent, though the term women∞dominated can make more sense at times.[25] I had considered making the project "not cis-men", but I'm interested in occasionally engaging with men who are allies or potential allies.[26] I have hovered between exclusionary and inclusionary strategies, realising that each context requires a considered approach, i.e., not every event needs to be exclusive of men, but *every* event needs to be inclusive of women and gender-non-binary. And it is about proportions—in the intimate scenario of ten to fifteen participants, a masculine entity becomes a significant proportion of presence, whereas a large event that is women∞prominent can accommodate the presence of a few men.[27] Therefore, women∞prominent—or a bias towards women∞—has become a key strategy to forming these new kinds of spaces, prioritising not-men without always being exclusive of men. A women∞prominent strategy means that public events not run by *ninthWavesound*, such as Earth Beat and Splore Festivals, focus upon a women∞dominated lineup and necessitate a baseline implementation of safer space for women∞ and gender-non-binary people as a requirement for *ninthWave* being present. However, as I facilitated the events described next I was able to maintain women∞prominent events.

[24] A reaction noted in personal research notes, from Lazy Susan Listening Session #1, Audio Foundation, Auckland, 19 October 2021.

[25] It has been suggested that "non-man-dominated" is a useful term to include gender-non-binary people, but using the term 'man' brings the feeling/idea of men to the fore, and instead of using 'not' I would rather prioritise women (and others) in an affirmative way.

[26] LIES Collective and FLOC, 'To Make Many Lines, to Form Many Bonds // Thoughts on Autonomous Organizing', *Lies: A Journal of Materialist Feminism* 2 (August 2015): 57–70. Queer feminist collective LIES describe their practice of autonomous feminism by creating separate spaces that aim to provide 'breathing room' for women and gender non-binary people. LIES talk about gender oppression working in private ways: that through the isolations of work, home, romantic love and fear, gender oppression can leave us with no one to speak to. Their way to work around this is autonomy from cis-men, as it removes a form of social segregation that "isolates the recipients of patriarchal violence from one another", which can mean that there is no fear of offending cis-males in one's life, and no 'boys club' to worry about. LIES state that they "didn't begin to engage with the idea of working together without cis-men as a mere theoretical interest", rather, for some of them it was "out of necessity", for others, it was a way to "circumvent an impasse".

[27] I refer here to events held in Aotearoa. It was a different story in Muslim Yogyakarta, Java for the *Vibrating Vaginas Dance Party*, where it would have been culturally inappropriate to have men in the space at all.

A touch of subversion

Hosting the *Lazy Susan Listening Sessions* in the *Audio Foundation* space felt appropriate and exciting. This was partly because of the underground feel of the space and partly because *Audio Foundation* is an experimental sound gallery and venue, so the context for 'different from' was already set, automatically placing the *ninthWavesound* event between sound event and gallery context (and I was to be inviting people who don't venture into these spaces often). The intention of the women∞prominent nature of the *Lazy Susan Listening Sessions* was a feminist intervention into the male-dominated sound and experimental art world that the *Audio Foundation* often caters to. This contrast helped create a powerful assertion of the intention of the project, a feeling that we had claimed a space on the very first attempt, which imbued the vibe with activist intent. This, my first interaction with the experimental sound world, emphasised just how deep the gender imbalance in sound-related practices is, even in this underground liminal space.[28] And how important this project is for helping to shift the power dynamic of a scene through *ninthWave*'s active presence.

An interesting flip on holding the event in the *Audio Foundation* took place for the public Performance Night during Auckland Art Week (17 October 2019). I programmed a standard DJ lineup structure as a celebration for my DJ girlfriends. As it was more aligned with DJ gig culture than experimental sound culture, the vibe of this event within the experimental sound venue was slightly awkward in one sense, as 'art scene' expectations would have been for something more experimental compared to the more popular styles of music genres played. But what I found interesting in this clash/entanglement of scenes was how powerful the focus upon *ninthWave* as an artwork-with-presence was. This was generated by having *ninthWave* placed in a 'gallery' context, lit and framed in a central position as a 'sculpture', her presence was emphasised by placing the DJ table at the far end of the room in the shadows. I placed the *LSLS* floor mat and cushions central in the room, which inadvertently kept the view of her clear for people who entered the room, seeing her first before they realised there were DJs playing the music emanating from her. This is a stark contrast to the standard modern DJ gig where the DJ is framed as the most important feature.

[28] The liminal music venues on Karangahape Road, in central Auckland, all tend to have a similar vibe of dingy, smelly seediness imbued in them, in purposeful contrast to the shiny, bourgeois venues of upmarket suburbs and downtown CBD. This is created through a combination of alcohol spillage, sweat, uncleaned or uncleanable surfaces, dark painted walls, and a lack of need or desire for it to be otherwise. Most music gigs are held in spaces designed for alcohol profiteering such as Neck of the Woods—a space definitely not designed for sound quality with a ceiling of metal aircon vents and concrete walls. At the time of writing, Whammy Bar is the current gig space preferred by many of my friends who are promotors—grimy, dingy, verging on trashed. Many underground sounds flock to the space, gigs are often only $10. The house system comes with a resident sound engineer signaling an upfront concern for sound quality. This was where we held the successful *RWTW* events.

Figure 64: Performance Night as part of New Sound Perspectives exhibition, Audio Foundation, during Auckland Art Week, 17 October 2019

Practising being in the body, going within, feeling sensation

As an example of collaborating to produce empleasured sonic bodie(s), a *Yummy Yin Yoga* session (22 June 2020) took place in Snell's Beach on the Monday following the Winter Solstice party (described shortly) in which *ninthWave* had been featured, with about sixteen of the party's partycipants (figure 65). This session was a valuable experiment in empirically considering whether an inward-turning bodily consciousness of practicing yin yoga allowed the pleasure of low-frequency sound to come forth, or whether the pleasurable vibrations of low-frequency sound enabled a deeper state of relaxation, physical comfort and expansion.

ninthWavesound was still set-up in the large, carpeted under-house room, which had been cleaned after the Solstice party the week before. Sixteen partycipants, thirteen of whom were women∞, took part in a yin yoga class led by Wendy Douglas, assisted by Tessa Baird (who added relaxing aromatics and extra hands-on for the partycipants), and with me as DJ. As vibratory enhancement I deejayed a background soundscape, mixing a variety of drone and ambient tracks, layering in the low-frequencies of whale song, bass gongs and sub-basslines. Partycipants lay upon their yoga mats evenly apart upon the floor. The vibrations of the amplified sound worked with the calming intentions of the sequence of yoga asana (positions) that Wendy led the group through, her direction focusing the minds of partycipants into their bodies, and into the vibrational sensations also taking place. The yin yoga session was a self-focused experience, yet, as I will argue shortly through Teresa Brennan's 'transmission of affect' (see page 160), the affect of each person's state of relaxation combined to amplify the calming vibe of the whole group.

The result was an all-encompassing, relaxing vibe. A ninety-minute journey towards an incredibly relaxed group of partycipants, so much so that in the final stage many entered a deep state of meditation (or fell asleep), and it was difficult to raise them after it was over.[29] The collective vibe, upon release from the meditative pose at the end, was vibrant and uplifting, with animated conversation and connection between partycipants. Conversations directly following affirmed that the experiment of incorporating a vibrational low-frequency sound journey with the yoga worked to great effect. "It felt so good!", "when's the next one?", "wow, I'm so relaxed" were repeated, affirmative sentiments. The deep pleasure of profound relaxation found in this event can be understood as akin to jouissance. In a sensorially delicious, relaxing experience, where the feeling of expansiveness occurs in a horizontal meditative stillness, the touch of low-frequency sound 'erotically' expands the pleasure of being in a body—the edges of the body expand, the limits of the imaginary with it.

[29] Event notes: It eventuated that for the session I was positioned standing at the DJ table that was used for the party. I would prefer to also be positioned upon the floor to be able to feel relaxed and integrated into the event more, rather than lording above at a DJ booth. But as I was positioned behind the partycipants it wasn't the intrusion on the vibe it might have been if I'd been in their direct line of vision.

This experiment highlighted that the pleasure of low-frequency sound vibrations is to be enjoyed by both horizontal and vertical bodies. And it emphasised that pleasure "has the power to embody the self fully in the exceedingly narrow spatial and temporal zone of the here and now".[30] A practice focusing on bodily sensations is part of many 'mindfulness' practices, but they perhaps should be 'bodyfulness' practices.[31] Silencing thought and bringing our consciousness into the sensations of the body helps us to become more sensitive to the pleasure of low-frequency sound. While the stimulated vibrancy of 'ecstatic' was not reached, I argue that what happened here was also a state of joyous empleasurement, which I will expand upon in the next chapter. Buoyed by the strong affect of this event, we decided to use another *Yummy Yin* session (figure 66) as a strategy to warm up the crew before the *ALLDAYRAVE* event begun as part of *A Week of Vibrational Events* (20 Oct 2020).

Figure 65: Yummy Yin Session #1, Wendy Douglas, Tess Brady and myself bringing partycipants into a deep space of relaxation. Snells Beach, 29 June 2020.

[30] Phillip Vannini, Dennis Waskul, and Simon Gottschalk, *The Senses in Self, Society and Culture: A Sociology of the Senses* (New York: Routledge, 2012). 34.

[31] See Christina Caldwell, *Bodyfulness: Somatic Practices for Presence, Empowerment, and Waking up in This Life* (Boulder, Colorado.: Shambala Productions, 2018).

Figure 66: 'Ready to Rave': an empleasured vibe in action, moments after the second Yummy Yin Session at St Paul St Gallery 3, Auckland, 20 October 2020.

Pleasure is a skill you can build

These 'grounded-vibratorium' works, or 'events not experienced standing up', are practices designed to increase the consciousness of the effects of low-frequency vibration in the body without the distractions of the active sociality of a 'vertical-vibratorium' event. Also, in the grounded-vibratorium, partycipants have increased contact to ground surfaces which, depending on the medium, can expand sensory potential. When grounded, a more mindful relationship with the pleasure of vibration is possible. Katie Martin, a.k.a. Sorchalula of *The Sensonauts*, and collaborator with *ninthWavesound*, described to me how she has increased her capacity for pleasure through a pleasure-enhancing course that integrated mindfulness practices, dancing, and non-linear movement.[32] She takes what she has learnt into her work as *The Sensonauts* and into the public sensory events she builds, which include sound-sensory-taste journeys and meditative 'bass baths' which are low-frequency sound immersive experiences.[33] She believes that "pleasure is a skill you can build", and sees this as "...quite revolutionary [be]cause it means you can exponentially increase the amount of pleasure that you feel from now".[34] Martin notes that increasing this capacity involves developing a deeper understanding of one's own "boundaries... consent, and emotional awareness", also, one needs to learn how to "self regulat[e] your emotions"; this self-awareness is necessary in order to "have greater sensitivity, to feel more pleasure".[35] This reflects *ninthWave's* kaupapa of creating boundaries, such as the 'no douchebag' policy, to enable safe spaces for women∞ in order for them to feel like they can more freely allow pleasure to be theirs.

Pleasure is a measure used to understand our boundaries of engagement and consent, and to be able to assert these an awareness of them must be developed and practiced over time. The enthusiastic 'yes' required for sexual consent also applies more broadly to understanding ourselves, and the where and how we want to be in a situation.

Setting boundaries of *ninthWavesound*, aligning intentions

Designing events around *ninthWave* and working with collaborators has been an iterative process of attunement to different environmental settings and different types of people. In May 2020, eager to 'get *ninthWave* out there', I took the opportunity of a post-lockdown house party of 25+ people to show her off. My friend and fellow DJ, Oaariki, has a flat in central Auckland and was keen to host, for which I volunteered the services of a single stack

[32] Bonnie Bliss, 'Yoni Club', accessed 22 August 2021, https://www.bonniebliss.com.au/yoniclub.

[33] Katie Martin, 'About The Sensonauts', The Sensonauts, accessed 22 August 2021, https://www.thesensonauts.com/about. In Martin's words, The Sensonauts facilitate: "Explorations and experiences, adventure[s] through the realms of music, dance, the senses, exploring joy, and more".

[34] Laura Marsh in conversation with Katie Martin a.k.a. Sorchalula, Audio recording, Wellington, 13 August 2021.

[35] Laura Marsh in conversation with Katie Martin a.k.a. Sorchalula.

Figure 67: ninthWave at Winter Solstice 2020, Snells Beach. The DJ lineup in the bunker zone featuring the wonderful NattyKat (pictured).

of *ninthWave.* I attempted to have some sway as to how the night would run and how many women would be involved, but reception to my ideas was lukewarm, and just 'going with the flow' was a preferred approach. Unfortunately, as Covid-19 infection concerns kept some women DJs at home, the women-count was limited to two—Janiac and myself—amongst a plethora of male DJs. Perhaps inevitably, the vibe of the evening revealed itself to be male-dominated and not what I desire *ninthWave* to be associated with: most of the people there were more interested in getting drunk and high than enjoying the experiences of sound and music. In a space full of leary, messy people, the chance of me getting to a satisfying state of empleasurement was low, and as the number of men outweighed women four to one, self-defensive guards were naturally up. The only thing to do was to indeed 'go with the flow'; Janiac and myself entertaining ourselves by inserting ourselves into the 3-for-3 DJ lineup at will. This experience helped me to clarify the responsibility of my role as facilitator and how I would have to develop my skills of negotiating and stewardship: i.e., putting down the firm ground rule or boundary of having half of the lineup be women∞, but ultimately avoiding being involved with a party that predictably wouldn't be focused around a love for sound, and therefore wouldn't give me any chance of manifesting a vibe of empleasured potential.

Winter Solstice, June 2020*,* was held at a house prepared for large indoor/outdoor parties in Snells Beach, North Auckland, and heralded an event where *ninthWave* was invited (figure 67). Wendy of *Wendy's Wellness* at Splore Festival was one of eight hosts, so I excitedly agreed, eager to test out *ninthWave's* new tuning and have the chance to turn her up to full volume in front of 100+ people. But I was to learn that, despite predicting a crowd to be more interested in the sound and the music, I cannot make assumptions that all hosts will be on the same page regarding women∞prominence. The lineup for the *ninthWavesound* zone was to include Wendy, myself, and five male DJs. Wendy and I were allocated the early warm up slots, which left the rest of the evening as a full male lineup from 8.30pm until 5am. I spoke with Wendy about the male-domination of the whole night, including all the prime slots. She informed me she had already mentioned this but had been overruled. So, together we decided that it was time to assert the feminist values of *ninthWavesound.*

I nervously summoned the courage to explain our position to the male person who was 'in charge'. There was resistance—they were reluctant to change the lineup, so I put my foot down and asserted, "well, these are the conditions of use". With Wendy and her partner Brett, the homeowner of the venue, to back us up, they relented, shifting the timeslots around and enabling an extra woman DJ to play. I invited Natalie Jane a.k.a. NattyKat (who was to be attending the party anyway) to step into the fold and play her epic, uplifting house for us during the prime house party slot of 11pm. Another woman was invited to play the sunrise set, bringing the total to four women and five men, which was a radical improvement and was satisfactory for the moment. I realised that in order to go through the stress of being a feminist 'killjoy'—Ahmed's feminist character who feels compelled to "ruin what

ruins" feminist causes—clearly stating *ninthWavesound's* kaupapa when I make the offer, rather than asserting provisos after the fact, would be far more constructive and possibly cause less resistance.[36] The lesson: feminist boundaries must be asserted in the very first instance, and elaborated on to ensure everybody involved is in full understanding from the outset of communications. In the end, the resulting party was an successful night with 150 people moving between two dance zones. *ninthWave's* quality soundings significantly contributing to an empleasured vibe.[37]

Claiming space

The courage required to ensure the shift in gender dynamic described above, connects to how *ninthWavesound* draws on the energy of 'resistance' inherent in reggae-style sound systems and the 'free-party' culture of raving. This is transmitted through the form of *ninthWave,* who holds authoritative presence as an impressive stack of speakers, and through her powerful abilities to produce very loud sound and to sonically claim space. In addition, the vibe created through the joy, fun and pleasure factor is significant. Ahmed observes that "[s]paces are claimed through enjoyment", such as during Auckland's Pride Parade, a celebratory queer gathering operating, as Ahmed would describe, as a form "of activism; [a way] of claiming back the street, as well as the spaces of clubs, bars, parks and homes".[38] But space-claiming need not be a public spectacle. As women∞ gather in the space of *ninthWavesound*, of *their* sound system, they are claiming a space that has not previously been allowed to be *theirs*, it has been primarily the domain of men. The *LSLS* sessions and a woman∞prominent lineup at an all-gender party both represent a 'sitting-in' or 'acting up' protest respectively, and an ownership of the space for 'doing with it what we will'.

The affirmation of consent

A significant finding emerged from the *LSLS* sessions, Oaariki's house party, and Winter Solstice, is that in order to facilitate the potential of empleasurement, emotional, professional, and physical comfort is paramount. I found that there is high value in events taking place in intimate and domestic environments, which can work to create connection and build community. But to enable this, the need for establishing practical and communicative boundaries for all involved became clear. I learnt how to do this

[36] Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*. (Duke University Press: Durham, NC, 2017). 40.
To be feminist is to register the disharmony between the frequency of myself internally, and the frequencies of the world around me, and to do what I can to return it. As Ahmed acknowledges, to be an active feminist is to be 'wilful', to point out that which is unjust is to be a 'killjoy'. "A feminist killjoy is an affect alien. We are not made happy by the right things". In Ahmed. 57.

[37] Though I personally managed to clear the floor with my set. Another lesson on a personal DJ level that has informed my understanding of the nuances of the DJ scenes... some people are just not ready for Footwork or Jersey Club. But it was worth it to hear my favourite tracks played through *ninthWave* sounding her most epic best yet!

[38] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2004). 165.

through mistakes made which led to 'how I didn't want to feel'. As described previously, boundary-making and asking for consent are becoming part of a new consciousness in fringe dance cultures. The growing 'consent culture' in music event spaces over the last few years is the affirmative response to the prevalence of 'rape culture' acknowledged within the dominant culture of Aotearoa.[39] But, I have realised through the practice of facilitation, that consent and boundaries also apply to the more subtle call and response of everyday communication. This is a recognition that 'being on the same page' is an important underlying energy which supports the possibility of being comfortable, of enjoying oneself, and of allowing for empleasurement, or *jouissance* to be possible. I will return to *jouissance* in more detail in the next chapter.

Consent and boundaries of partycipants and collaborators also need to be understood and incorporated. This involves a recognition that artistic collaboration is a form of intimacy as ideas are shared and discussed, and feelings must be allowed for and acknowledged. Concerns about money, through myself being the 'host' of *ninthWavesound* and bringing other collaborators onboard, initially highlighted the need to be upfront and transparent, and to employ a high level of communication. Working out what to ask and how to ask about time, money, and labour—and whether these things will be given freely or charged for—is a developing skill in this project. The *ninthWavesound* kaupapa aspires to be able to financially, and therefore ethically, support partycipants and collaborators who are likely to be a part of the 'precariat'—a position of precariousness within the proletariat class of the cultural and creative worker.[40] This preliminary work of asking questions about needs in order to understand boundaries and expectations, works to make everyone comfortable. This intention is backed up as a set of advertised guidelines for partycipants to govern their actions, and it is established as a prerequisite for partycipation in event invitations on social media, and on posters displayed at venues. Done prior to the event and re-iterated when required as part of the intention of the event, these guidelines are part of the renegotiation of space into one that works for women∞.

[39] See Gender Equal NZ, 'Comment an Example of Rape Culture', News, Scoop News, 22 June 2018, https://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PO1806/S00253/comment-an-example-of-rape-culture.htm.
"New Zealand has the highest rates of domestic and sexual violence in the OECD" Rape culture is our cultural tendency to make excuses for it, often through victim blaming.

[40] Rosalind Gill and Andy Pratt, 'Precarity and Cultural Work in the Social Factory: Immaterial Labour, Precariousness and Cultural Work', OnCurating.Org 16, no. 13 (circa 2012): 26–40. "[T]he new 'precariat'—a neologism that brings together the meanings of precariousness and proletariat to signify both an experience of exploitation and a (potential) new political subjectivity", 26.

Keep it sensorial

Lazy Susan Listening Session #4 (23 May 2020, figures 68, 69) was another example of a *ninthWavesound* social exchange, but again with conditions I learned to avoid in subsequent iterations. In an event soon after the 2020 Covid-19 lockdown, twelve women were invited to my house where half of *ninthWave* was set up in the lounge and half of her in the kitchen. Setting her up to dominate the space in the kitchen was poetically 'inappropriate', and casually disrupted the power dynamics of the domestic sphere. For the event, I attempted to expand outside the usual listening experience of a *LSLS*, and incorporated a game of writing down emotional word associations to tracks that were being shared. This was in the interest of expanding our language around music. But I realised that the language-focused task distracted from the sensorial intention of the project, as the task was too cerebral, because, though word lists were shared, the task of writing was self-focused. On reflection, a better idea would have been to sit in a circle on the floor with closed eyes and become 'bodyful', feeling the sensations and then discussing whatever thoughts and feelings arose. This may have worked to create connection between partycipants and further the intention of the project to practise sensory attunement to low-frequency vibrations. As it was, people were sitting around the outside of the room, only speaking to those beside them, rather than being engaged with the larger group.

The exercise reduced the comfort level for me and perhaps for others too. After the lockdown, presence and connection would have been enough, rather than me pushing my mandate upon them. Through this experience, I developed a clear appreciation of the fluidity of a DJ event where all the partycipants understand what the format is, can relax and are free to roam, while the DJ upon the decks works like a durational anchor in the space, holding the vibe and flow of the evening. But there is also simplicity in a casual gathering and the simple sharing of music that isn't necessarily mixed skilfully but where track follows track, with chat and discussion in between, the chat facilitating the flow, such as the initial *Listening Sessions* showed. However, the intimate domestic setting of this *Session*, and the invitation of a limited number of women[∞] only, enabled those inclined to have a jam on the decks afterwards, in a more experimental setting to the hierarchy of a conventional DJ event.

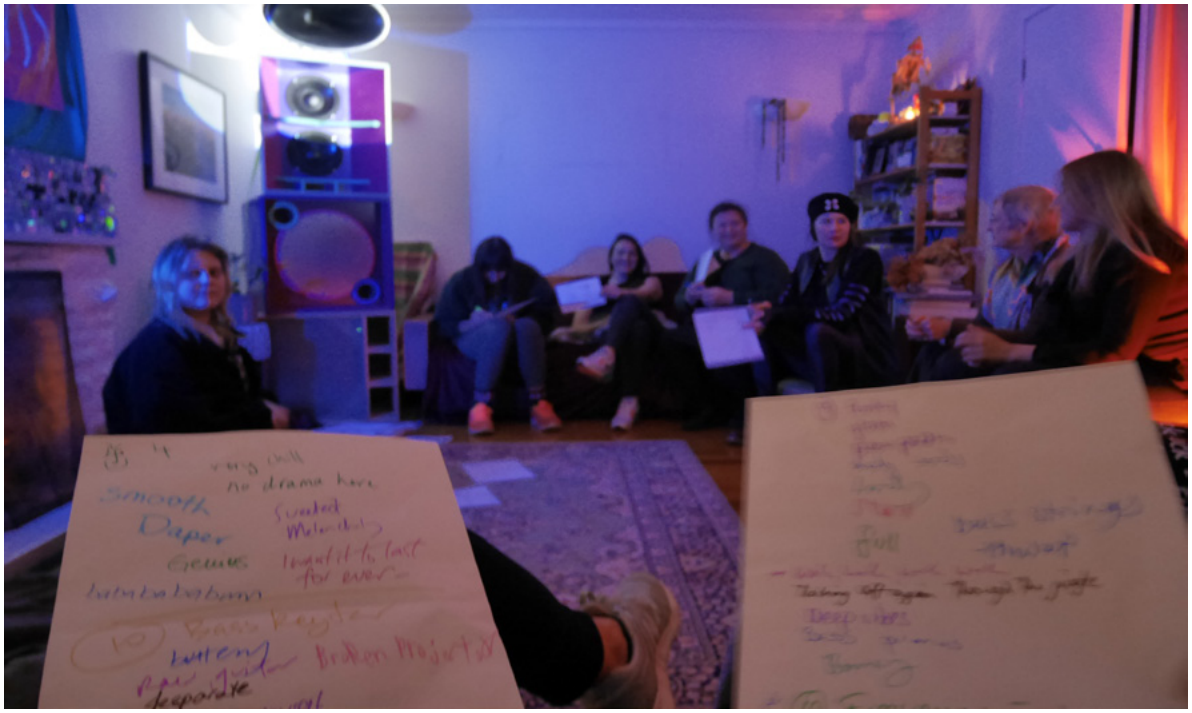

Figure 68: Lazy Susan Listening Session #4, a game of words in response to shared music. The lounge of my house, Te Atatu Peninsula, Auckland, 23 May 2020.

Figure 69: Lazy Susan Listening Session #4, DJ session. The kitchen of my house, Te Atatu Peninsula, Auckland, 23 May 2020.

Let's facilitate!

ninthWavesound events experiment with alternatives to the implicit hierarchies and power positions in the normative technical set-up for sound events. A key dynamic that is often shifted in classic reggae-style events is to place the sound system on the ground and not raise the DJ up upon a stage, in an effort to at least soften hierarchies between participant, sound, and DJ; this is a strategy I attempt to employ as often as possible. For the Winter Solstice 2020 party described above, I talked the hosts into positioning the DJ table at the opposite end of the room to *ninthWave*. This had the effect of reorientating the crowd away from the DJ as the primary focal point, dispersing attention between sound, DJ, and each other. In comparing the earlier *LSLS* sessions to the fourth just described, I noted that the physicality of gathering around the technology upon the Lazy Susan was much more effective at drawing people into relation with each other when compared to sitting around the edges of a room on couches. As I discussed in *Chapter 2: Early Works,* the installation work *PLEASURE* experimented with bodily positions and the disarming or contemplative action that a horizontal position in the art gallery experience can provide. *More Vibration Than We Think We Need...* at Papakura Art Gallery included a cushion fixed atop the sub, inviting physical engagement with the work and removing the distancing that occurs between partycipant and artwork, and between partycipant and technology, thus taking technology and the artist off the pedestal. (And literally allowing for the partycipant to experience sitting atop the pedestal themselves.)

As feminist facilitator, I have a responsibility and a care to disrupt the patriarchal power dynamics in the sound system event, and work to set up a vibe of inclusion and collective empowerment. A question to keep returning to is: How to facilitate an event where pleasure is prioritised over power? Or, how to facilitate an event where pleasure *is* 'power' or an affective force with an activist feminist intention? Like brown, making sure people feel good about being involved and have a pleasurable experience together, is a priority for me as facilitator. In gauging her own work, brown asks: "Does the agenda or space allow for aliveness, connection, and joy? Is there a 'yes!' at the centre of the work?" and does this "yes!" have "a future".[41] When it's a 'yes!' we will do it again, and again, and other women∞ may follow with similar projects, exponentially encouraging new ways of practicing sound events, and new feminist spaces to emerge within and outside of the scene.

Changing the physical orientation of the body positions it differently for experiencing the vibration of sound, and shifts the focus to sound, DJ, and people. The two versions of a vibratorium described in this thesis each work to facilitate differing versions of a vibe. In a 'grounded vibratorium' where partycipants are sitting or lying, the vibe is experienced more internally, amplified by the collective experience of internal sensations. In the 'vertical' or

[41] brown, *Pleasure Activism*. 23.

'standing vibratorium' the vibe is in a state of greater movement, where the expression of dancing freely can be for no-one else but oneself, for the pleasure of responding through the body to vibrational stimulus. (A state that appears more-so in the events described in the upcoming chapter.) A relationship to vibrational sound is also changed when the social environment supports respective boundaries of collaborators and partycipants. The ultimate aspiration of a *ninthWavesound* event is to create a vibe that is comfortable, in that safety of all is paramount, and then from there we can explore our inner boundaries of self, find places where external limitations can be shifted, allow them to expand into new territory, and imagine new versions of feminist selves.

Affective vibrations: Creating an empleasuring vibe

> Vibrations, waves, oscillations, resonances affect living bodies, not for any higher purpose but for pleasure alone. Living beings are vibratory beings: vibration is their mode of differentiation, the way they enhance and enjoy the forces of the earth itself.[42]
>
> —Elizabeth Grosz

Sound system events are affective vibratory encounters, where immersion in low-frequency sound affects us alongside the ongoing affective energy exchange taking place between the multiplicity of facilitated elements. The sound system, the sound, the event environment, partycipants and DJs are the assemblage of the vibratorium and experienced by partycipants as 'the vibe'. As Grosz notes, the Universe is a vibratory structure, and at the other end of the scale, so is the vibratorium of a small-scale participatory art event such as a *ninthWavesound Lazy Susan Listening Session*.[43] For Grosz, art is a translational process out of the chaos of the Universe's vibrations: art is the contraction of "vibratory waves, rhythms, that traverse the body" into sensation "and make of the body a link with forces it cannot otherwise perceive and act upon".[44] This directly reflects the vibe of the event as an embodied experience of the vibratorium, where the specific mixture of affective vibrations from all entities folds into the vibe, a collectively shared experience of affective sensation linked through each partycipants body. A *vibe* is an ever-expanding, multiplying, non-science of vibration, *vibe-making is an art*.[45]

The feeling of a vibe in an event is made up of a unique set of affective circumstances, it is the energising *subtle realm* of a coalescing of affects. Making up this realm includes the affects of the sensation of low-frequency sound; the quality of sound from a system; the emotional spectrum of a particular track; the flow of a DJs curated set; the performance of

[42] E. A. Grosz, *Chaos, Territory & Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008). 33.

[43] Grosz. 23.

[44] Grosz. 23.

[45] As a delicate choreography of facilitating affective elements, often through intuitive decision making, pulling together a good vibe can be considered an artistic practice.

the DJ; lighting ambiance; smell; the location and its history; and significantly, the feelings of the partycipants. But, as St John notes, it is the "motivation and intention" of the event and its partycipants which modulates this energy into being and of being sustained through different states of time, including in the moment; forward in further attempts at recreating it; and into the past as a mythic shared memory.[46] The desire of *ninthWave* is to create an empleasuring vibe of great potential—immersion within which potentially creates the unfettered feeling that *you can do and become anything that you desire to do and become*.

Key to the vibe of a *ninthWavesound* event is the feminist activism behind the project, which brings an element of rebellion or revolution into the vibe. As discussed in Chapter Two, sound systems and raving were originally, and often continue to be, positioned as 'sites of resistance'. Feminist intention maps this territory out, energetically demarcating events as 'activist', adding 'resistance' to the vibe. This intention is essential to the development of an empowering vibe of empleasured potential. Taking this 'stand' has affective activist resonance with and affirms the desires of the partycipants for change, for something different—for resisting/working against/stepping outside the male-dominated structures of the local music and sound art scenes. By concurrently foregrounding the pleasure of the experience of low-frequency sound, and positioning pleasure as a force, as a power, the vibe of the event can reach a joyous level of empleasurement.

To return to St John's argument, the vibe defies a singular description as "it is known only through affect, an experience lost in textual translation".[47] Reflecting back on how the vibe operates in my practice I see vibe *as* affect or a multiplicity of affects. I also argue that the vibe is feminist, or a feminine registration of knowing: where the knowledge of the body and of the subtle senses is granted agency, and an undefinable feeling is valued as knowledge, whether or not it can be explained in language.

A good smelling vibe

I experience *the vibe* as energy entering and subsuming my vibrational field, attuning me to the resonance of the holistic experience, which along with audial and visual affect includes the sense of smell. Our DJ crew's instinctual efforts to influence the smell at the venue for *Run with the Wolves* gigs through selected aromatherapy oils is a significant affect to engineer. Since the abolishment of smoking indoors, human odour is the overwhelming smell in a sweaty club. Sexually assertive, entitled-male pheromones can create an intimidating vibe. The potential of experiencing sensual pleasure may be overwhelmed by un-welcomed pheromonal desires entering our bodies unwillingly. From this, olfactory considerations have

[46] Graham St John, *Technomad: Global Raving Countercultures*, Studies in Popular Music (London: Equinox Publishing, 2009). 94.

[47] St John. 93.

become part of the strategy of creating the *vibe of empleasurement*. In Teresa Brennan's argument for the transmission of affect, much of inter-personal affect is transmitted through olfactory registers, i.e., through pheromones, but it became so that this affective susceptibility was a feminine condition as, derisively "only women suffered from the vapours".[48]

Brennan argues that thinking we are 'separate beings' with set boundaries is a fairly recent historical construction, divulged from Western culture's emphasis on sight, and the subsequent conceptual separation between object and subject "render[ing] us discrete, while [in contrast] transmission [of affect] breaches individual boundaries".[49] Considering things—human and non-human—as part of an affective field, helps us to imagine energetic connections between people and with the immediate surrounds. Brennan argues that "the emotions or affects of one person, and the enhancing or depressing energies these affects entail, can enter into another", these affects entering the body, being 'felt' in some way by the people around them.[50] She states "that affects have an energetic dimension", meaning that "they can enhance or deplete" whatever is in the affective field, an example of *potentia/potestas*.[51] The intention of a *ninthWavesound* event is to *enhance* the affective vibrations of affirmation—from the significant presence of women∞ as key DJs, by learning that a woman built the sound system, and by building into the kaupapa that we are entitled to feel safe, even down to the olfactory environment. These are powerful affirmative feminist affects, enhancing the potential of the individual and collective feminist imaginary to expand into ideas or ways of being perhaps not previously felt possible.

Vibe of empleasured potential: Low end empleasurement

The ultimate vibe attempting to be manifested in the vibratorium emerges from a methodology for realising the potential of low-end empleasurement. This potential is generated through affect, where affect is registered as sensation within the body—as feeling, as emotion, as sensation. This affect is generated as bodies encounter and interact. In this project, bodies include that of sound vibration and its encounter with matter, and the transmitted affects between environmental attributes and human bodies as described above. Arguably, the vibratorium manifests potential through the process of low-end sonic encounter, which translates into opportunities for action, whether virtual or actual. Grosz connects this to a power in pleasure, arguing that "there is something about vibration, even in the most primitive of creatures, that generates pleasurable or intensifying passions,

[48] Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2004). 17.

[49] Brennan. 17.

[50] Brennan. 3.

[51] Brennan. 6.

excites organs, and invests movements with greater force or energy".[52] This is the vibe of empleasured potential, this is *potentia* expanding. Where there is vibrational excess there is a burgeoning of variety and vibrancy, vibrational transmissions; it is a turning towards the greatest stimulation of pleasurable vibration, which enables new connections to be made, bringing forth the possibility of something new.

Grosz states that through sensation "[t]he body is opened up now to other forces and becomings that it might also affirm in and as the future".[53] This futuristic aspect is important in this project, and is discussed further in the next chapter. In an auralisation of the vibrations of affect manifested through this project, I auralise ripples of *ninthWave* affect expanding out into the social stratosphere: the story of *ninthWave* touching people; women∞ moved to think more expansively for themselves or others, and motivated to take action, to *do,* to create, whether within the sound art/music scene or their expansive imaginings translated into another area of feminist potential.

The vibe includes the chemical energy of pheromones but allows for other ideas of what 'energy' is through other conceptions of 'affect'. However the vibe 'works', "the transmission of affect [or the collective vibe], if only for an instant, alters the biochemistry and neurology of the subject", as Brennan explains, "the 'atmosphere' or the environment literally gets into the individual".[54] Therefore, the intention, facilitation process and 'affect engineering' of a *ninthWavesound* event is vital to the empleasured potential of the meaning and outcome of the experience, individually and collectively.

[52] Grosz, *Chaos, Territory & Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth*. 33.
For this argument Grosz draws on Charles Darwin's work. She furthers: "This force is not directed to survival, to the acquisition of pragmatic skills, except perhaps indirectly; instead it is linked to expression and intensification, to sexual selection, to the increasing differentiation of the sexes from each other .... In affirming the radical distinction between natural and sexual selection—that is, between skills and qualities that enable survival, and those that enable courtship and pleasure, which sometimes overlap but commonly do not—Darwin introduced an excessiveness into the development and transformation of species. .... Vibrations, waves, oscillations, resonances affect living bodies, not for any higher purpose but for pleasure alone. Living beings are vibratory beings: vibration is their mode of differentiation, the way they enhance and enjoy the forces of the earth itself."

[53] Grosz. 80.

[54] Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*. 1.

In summary: How a methodology of low-end empleasurement shifts power

The works described in this chapter, using the full power of *ninthWave*'s two stacks, establish the collective feminist ground of the project. Primarily appearing in domestic settings, from large under-house parties to intimate in-kitchen gatherings, I have highlighted negotiations of her boundaries and the boundaries of collaborators and partycipants. I have argued that facilitated negotiations are essential to a methodology of low-end empleasurement to achieve comfortable spaces where women∞ may find the space to enjoy the pleasure of sound safely. Intimate experiences of low-frequency sound are made more available in the 'grounded vibratorium', which has been the focus of much of this chapter. To be 'grounded' is to be more at home, calmer, more 'here'. In the vibratorium, the physical orientation of the body on the ground literally allows for a more inward-experiencing of the sound, increasing sensory attunement to the pleasure of vibration.

The findings of this chapter are largely formed from my empirical observations and casual conversations during and after these events. In finding the tightness in the body in a *Yummy Yin Yoga* session and allowing the sensations of low-frequency vibration from *ninthWave* to pleasurably get into those spots, an ever-growing awareness of what the body is telling us was apparent. Lorde points to a basic premise of acknowledging when something *feels right*. As Lorde promotes:

> when we begin to live from within outward, in touch with the power of the erotic within ourselves, and allowing that power to inform and illuminate our actions upon the world around us, then we begin to be responsible to ourselves in the deepest sense.[55]

By being in 'touch' with what brings us pleasure, understanding that it can improve our well-being and expand our sense of self, as Lorde argues, we begin to "acknowledge… the strength of the erotic [as] a true knowledge, for what that means is the first and most powerful guiding light toward any understanding".[56] As empleasured activists, we grant embodied knowledge worth—trusting the feeling of yeses and noes before thinking them,

[55] Lorde, 'Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power (1986)'. 33.

[56] Lorde. 31.

using pleasure as a measure. This is knowledge that can be *felt* before it is disseminated into language, knowledge without words—bodily 'reason'.

The potential inherent in the empleasured sonic bodie is formed and expanded through pleasure. Grosz argues that "[p]leasure and pain are the corporeal registrations of the forces of the world, the visceral impact of forces, what we use to struggle with and against, in order to become more and other".[57] Where pain is *potestas* (restrictive), *potentia* is found in pleasure: opening, affirming, a "most powerful aid... to learning and the most direct and effective stimuli for action, and thus for the expansion of force".[58] The expansive methodology of low-end vibrational pleasure is designed to comfortably empower women∞ to access personal and collective power through empleasurement, through the catalyst of a sound system. To enable the potential of this to happen, the vibe of the event is full of the care, respect, and affirmation that women∞ are and should be entitled to. The vibe at a *ninthWave* event must be receptive, welcoming, open, uplifting, vibrant. And it must, fundamentally, be comfortable, for only then is it possible to experience the collective pleasure of low-frequency sound. Grosz argues that it is in vibrational 'comfort', or resonance, that life is most easily able to intensify and expand. She also notes that music, as the foundational language, is a vibrational, sensory force not directly designed for the means of survival, but for expression and intensification.[59]

By placing ourselves with the affective field of *ninthWavesound,* in early configurations in the *Lazy Susan Listening Sessions,* we resonated with others around us who enjoy similar pleasures, gathering the affective energy of an empleasured force of expanded potential; this shifted us in new personal directions—including, potentially, a greater sense of self-knowledge and well-being—through a feeling that we are not alone in our feminist desires, and that we are empowered by collective affirmation. The activism of this project's approach emerges in the pleasurable vibing with others in a community of bass-loving women∞, in accessing *the erotic* within ourselves, which is a powerful, often untapped resource of personal and collective power.

Through the tools of a low-end empleasured activism, we might also encounter a sense of social responsibility for precarious labour and those behind the production of pleasure. Expanding this responsibility, we practise empleasurement, fostering a belief that pleasure shared with others generates more pleasure, and improves our collective well-being. Experiencing pleasure and improving well-being is an act of defiance/resistance to a system that might otherwise turns pleasure into a commodity. We delimit our potential self through the feeling of potential found in the collective experiencing of the pleasure of low-frequency

[57] Elizabeth Grosz, *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power* (Durham, UK: Duke University Press, 2005). 190.

[58] Grosz. 190.

[59] See pages 30-1 in Grosz, *Chaos, Territory & Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth*.

sound. In the next chapter, which focuses on practices involving *ninthWave* in her full capacity, I explore the potential of pleasure to create and expand a feminist imaginary—the virtual aspect of an actualised feminine—through 'excess' pleasure in jouissance.

> 'Love without limit, play without restraint, live without dead time'. We can trust our livingness, which is pleasure, and if we are true to it, pleasure frees. If we are true to it, if we let pleasure free us, we become all the more attuned to creating freedom and ensuring it for everyone.
>
> – Alta [60]

[60] 'Alta' speaking with brown, *Pleasure Activism*. 389. Alta quotes, then expands upon the slogan for the general strike in Paris, May 1968.

Figure 70: Seestar Tamari Lazaruz a.k.a. Shebrew generating empleasurement at Earth Beat Festival, Sunday 21 March, Ātiu Creek Regional Park, Wellsford.

Figure 71: Ecstatic dancing has commenced during Vibe Temple, 16 October 2020, St Paul St Gallery III, Auckland.

Chapter Five

ninthWave brings the jouissance

Empleasurement is the feeling of potential brought on and allowed for by a building of collective pleasure which manifests in the supportive space held by *ninthWavesound.* This chapter suggests that the *ninthWave* vibratorium activates pleasure through low-frequency sound vibrations and the affective energies of human and non-human entities; a feeling which is captured in the post-structural concept of *jouissance,* drawing on Luce Irigaray. I expand on the term empleasurement in this chapter, pairing this term with *jouissance*, a force of expansion unleashed through personal erotic energy which fuels *eros* as a collective force for life. The second part of the chapter explores happenings within this project which reveal specific moments of empleasurement and jouissance during the events Splore Festival 2020*, Yummy Yin* (29 June 2020)*, Vibe Temple* (16 Oct 2020), Briar's 40th (7 Nov 2020), and *DJ Showcase* for Auckland Art Week's open night during *A Week of Vibrational Events* (13 Oct 2020). Ultimately, a heightened sense of empleasurement, or jouissance, appeared during what I call *ninthWave*'s 'full effect' or her deepest capacity, at Earth Beat Music Festival (2021).

Across these events, I adopt a qualitative process of comparison to earlier iterations in the research by gauging the experience of participants through observation and conversation. The five following aspects will be evaluated on a spectrum of experiences of empleasurement and jouissance: from private/intimate settings to the public and mass gathering; from a 'grounded' horizontal version of the vibratorium to a vertical or standing experience of the vibratorium; from the relationship between all-gender inclusive, to women∞prominent, to women∞only experiences; from the collaborative premise of friendship-based networks to professional relationships; and the art scene versus the music gig context. Reflection upon events and an analysis of the lived experiences of myself and key partycipants, Janiac and Laura O, also work as feminist consciousness-raising strategies. This is exemplified in the last section on Earth Beat Music Festival, where interviews with these women∞ substantiate the effects and affects of *ninthWavesound*.

Within a state of empleasurement exists the possibility of experiencing *excess pleasure*: that moment or extended moment when everything comes together in an 'orgasmic yes'. This is jouissance, but also ecstasy: a deep erotic knowing. Through jouissance, synonymous in English with ecstasy, we can expand beyond a 'self' constrained by the limits of culture into a limitless self, beyond prescribed patriarchal, phallogocentric, or heteronormative identities.[1] Jouissance, or ecstasy, functions as a portal into the feminist imaginary, a way of accessing it, creating it, and expanding it through low-frequency sound. This chapter locates jouissance and the potential for feminist imaginary within *ninthWavesound* events and collective relationships. In this imaginary I argue that we can experience an unlimited feeling of our own potential: the expansive feeling of hope, power, and agency, where imaginings or auralisings of new realities emerge.

Jouissance and ecstasy: Irigaray, Braidotti and Muñoz

Jouissance and its close relation ecstasy provide openings into other ways of being through the pleasure of the body, entailing a step outside the constriction of personal and social imaginaries. I expand this through the thinking of Irigaray, Muñoz and Braidotti. Feminist post-structural theorist Luce Irigaray argues that within the state of jouissance 'the feminine' can be found, and through experiencing jouissance the feminist imaginary has the potential to expand, and the potential of woman∞ expands with it. Jouissance is from "*jouir* 'to come' in the sexual sense", it is an 'erotic ecstasy' that exists beyond what is required for sustaining life.[2] With Irigaray, I propose this excess pleasure is therefore 'not required' in the social imaginings of mainstream culture. This is in contrast to pleasure that *is* permissible or legitimised in culture: '*plaisir*' or 'pleasure-joy'. Through a psychoanalytic framing, jouissance is that which is the most personal, that which remains subconscious after the effects of language, reason and the conformist pressures of the socio-cultural have shaped the self.[3] Jouissance, therefore, is where the pre-patriarchal *feminine* can be found, in the pre-linguistic subconscious. Existing outside phallogocentric or masculine structures of language and discourse, it resides where the constructed symbolic cannot reach; it is where *being* is pre-symbolic, 'other' to the *masculine* of reason and logic.

The feminine that we are presented with in normative culture has been co-opted into the masculine imaginary through oppressive means, through language—for as Irigaray argues we cannot speak of or *think feminine*, we can only ever "speak like men". The feminine

[1] Online Etymology Dictionary, s.v. 'Ecstasy', accessed 5 September 2021, https://www.etymonline.com/word/ecstasy. In a state of jouissance the boundaries of the 'self' that culture has formed or sanctioned is breached or left behind. Similarly, ecstasy as 'ekstasis' in Ancient Greek derives "from existanai 'displace, put out of place', 'drive out of one›s mind' (existanai phrenon), from ek 'out' + histanai 'to place, cause to stand'".

[2] 'Jouissance', in *Oxford Reference*, accessed 16 April 2021, https://doi.org/10.1093/oi/authority.20110810105200943.

[3] Juliet Flower MacCannell, 'Jouissance', in *Glossalalia: A Alphabet of Critical Keywords*, ed. Julian Wolfreys (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 157–66. 158.

expressed through words is only ever returned back into the symbolic masculine.[4] As long as women are treated 'the same' as men then their 'different' experience remains invalid, and so we must imagine, auralise, and practice other ways of being. This project approaches the feminine imaginary through embodied experience of *ninthWavesound*, through an emphasis on pleasurable sensation and feeling opening into the subconscious, turning away from linguistic encounter.

Irigaray calls the virtual space that the feminine can access, the 'feminine/female imaginary' (1985), while Braidotti, calls it the 'virtual feminine' (2011).[5] In this virtual space we can reimagine, or auralise the feminine, beyond the feminine we 'know' through 'patriarchal assumptions' and masculine desire.[6] The feminist project is therefore: "the process of bringing into representation the female feminine subject", as what that might be is currently "coded as unrepresentable within the dominant discourse of subjectivity".[7] This new representation doesn't simply create 'equality' or sameness by just switching around binary alignments of Masculine/Feminine. To attempt this, we must begin with a baseline of 'sexual difference', and a work of the imagination is required. As Braidotti argues, "[i]t requires both conceptual and affective creativity".[8] As virtual, the feminine is a *futurised* potential—the space within which we can work to manifest potential versions of collective feminist 'selves' that cannot exist in the masculine imaginary. Existing outside phallogocentric/masculine structures of language and discourse, the feminine resides where the constructed symbolic cannot reach, it is where *being* is a pre-symbolic 'other' to the *masculine* of reason and logic. The 'virtual feminine' is outside the symbolic, structural reality, while *ninthWavesound*, as described in Chapter Two, is a nomadic social platform, housing a virtual feminine while manifesting a physical form.

[4] But it is not about discovering the feminine to then be able to express it through words, for that just draws it into the masculine, into the dominant. It is in the virtual feminine that feminine exists in a pre-symbolic state, i.e., the only state it can exist in, for as fellow psychoanalytical thinkers Irigaray and Julia Kristeva argue, language makes it impossible to conceptualise 'feminine' as anything else other than the projection of the desire of a masculine subject. "To claim that the feminine can be expressed in the form of a concept is to allow oneself to be caught up again in a system of 'masculine' representations, in which women are trapped in a system of meaning which serves the auto-affection of the (masculine) subject. If it is really a matter of calling 'femininity' into question, there is still no need to elaborate another 'concept'—unless a woman is renouncing her sex and wants to speak like men. For the elaboration of a theory of woman, men, I think, suffice. In a woman('s) language, the concept as such would have no place". Luce Irigaray, *The Sex Which Is Not One (1977)*, trans. Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985). 122.

[5] Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment & Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

[6] Braidotti. 93.

[7] Braidotti. 94.

[8] Braidotti. 93.

Similarly, queer theorist José Esteban Muñoz argues that through ecstasy, a future horizon appears, and this is where queer potentiality lies, a time outside heteronormativity.[9] In Irigaray's jouissance and Muñoz's ecstasy, queer and feminist thinking echo each other. They both strive for freedom from the heteronormative, the phallogocentric, the Majority, the Same—a 'self' structured by the confines of 'thought'. Irigaray and Muñoz both position the experience of ecstasy, jouissance, as outside culture, and the entry point to imagining an otherwise to a 'phallocratic economy' (Irigaray), or 'straight time's presentness' (Muñoz).[10]

Muñoz argues that both ecstasy and jouissance "represent an individualistic move outside of the self".[11] While I see this as an expansion of self, we can never really remove ourselves from the history of self because it leaves 'marks' upon/within the body. Queer futurity presents a queer utopia that is "primarily a critique of the here and now", an understanding that currently there is "something missing".[12] For Muñoz, 'queer temporality' is a queer futuristic practice where the heteronormative-weighted present, the straight time we endure, is in his words, "interrupted or stepped out of" through the act of entering ecstatic time".[13] Muñoz's futuristic queer utopia of indeterminate-ness resonates with Irigaray's feminist project, as she argues that through jouissance we can move outside of a conformist femininity, or a frozen 'Idea' of woman that is too 'obedient to sex'.[14] Jouissance is the tool that dissolves the pre-determined masculine definition of Woman, which is designed to limit and disempower. Irigaray continues: "[w]hereas what happens in the jouissance of women exceeds all this. It is indefinite flood in which all manner of developments can be inscribed".[15] This *indefinition* is key to the feminist project, where the limits of 'possible' become opened into 'potential' through the experiencing of ecstasy, jouissance, or empleasurement.

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[9] José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

[10] Irigaray, *The Sex Which Is Not One* (1977). 78.
A phallocratic economy is one where the feminine is defined only within and in reflection of the masculine, rather than unto itself. Also, where a simple shift of power from man to woman perpetuates the power structure, and women would simply be "resubjecting themselves, deliberately or not, to a phallocratic order." 81.

Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. 25.
"Straight time is a self-naturalising temporality. Straight time's 'presentness' needs to be phenomenologically questioned. …. Queerness's ecstatic and horizontal temporality is a path and a movement to a greater openness to the world." 25.

[11] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. 186.

[12] Muñoz. 99

[13] Muñoz. 188, 32.
Irigaray agrees: "Indeed, it is not a matter of changing such and such a thing within a horizon already defined as human culture, it is a matter of changing the horizon itself". From Luce Irigaray, 'Love Between Us', in *Who Comes After The Subject?* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 167–77.

[14] Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman (1974)* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985). 229.

[15] Irigaray. 229.

For as long as women[∞] or Others are treated 'the same' as men, their experience is essentially invalidated. In excess pleasure we can connect to the 'otherwise' denied to us in dominant culture. We step into the expansive, undefined unknown, into a future we may not be able to describe in words but where imagining or auralising informs our embodied understanding of being and knowing, collapsing the 'not yet' into the here and now. It is the feeling of 'being' in the most profound sense. This is the trajectory along which the *ninthWavesound* project operates, encouraging stepping through the opening into the imaginary and the feeling of potential in being *otherwise,* that the excess pleasure or jouissance of low-frequency sound creates. *ninthWavesound* events encourage entry into the spaces between the symbols set in language and cultural imagination, refusing the limitations of identity labels, sitting in the dislodgement that low-frequency sound vibration creates and allows, allowing things to blur.

This indefinite, the in-between, returns us to the embodied experience of being immersed in the vibratory sonic indeterminism of a loudly amplified sound system event, where reference points are durational hums and beats, heard but unable to be held or fixed as objects, mere shimmers of textures of electronic sound, stimulating directly without external reference. Low-frequency sound vibrations lose discernible pitch the lower they go, becoming ever more indeterminate. Through experiences that are unable to be put into words, and with the immersion of the body in pleasurable (erotic sensual) touch, it is no wonder that in the rave or the sound system we find ourselves potentially able to reach a level of pleasure, to reach *jouissance,* to experience *empleasurement*.

Figure 72: Ed Zuccolo playing a bass laden sound track on his synths for a Sensonauts Session with Katie Martin leading us into relaxation with her sultry directions on the mic, (Katie and Ed pictured below). Thursday 18 March, Ātiu Creek Regional Park, Wellsford.

Expanding the imaginary through collective jouissance

As the embodied experience of low-frequency sound draws us into the here and now of the *ninthWavesound* vibratorium, there is simultaneously a powerful futurising: the creation of a projected vision through *empleasured* practices designed to expand the collective potential of experiencing jouissance, and of expanding the 'feminist imaginary'. Jouissance for *ninthWavesound* is both a conceptual and physical access point into imagining and expanding the feminist imaginary, a potential future affirmed through revelling in a radically different space to the dominant hetero-patriarchal paradigm. This is the futuristic feminist potential I experienced in my youth while watching *Jem & the Holograms,* and which is echoed in Irigaray/Braidotti's 'virtual feminine', and also José Muñoz's 'queer futurity': i.e., that which is 'not yet' as both Muñoz and Irigaray describe above. This feeling of 'great potential' is strongly reminiscent of the freedom of spirit found in the joyous, loving, open feeling experienced through the serotonin release activated by MDMA, the active constituent in the party drug Ecstasy.[16]

Ecstasy, both as a drug and as a state of being, has long been associated with raving and dance culture. Graham St John argues, "[e]lectronic dance music cultures are steeped in a complex and often contradictory legacy of technological sophistication, independence, idealism, and jouissance".[17] Set outside the dominant culture, raves, music festivals, and certain sound system vibratoriums have the potential to be havens within which to experience the excess pleasures of bass-heavy music. They are also spaces within which to collectively experience a freedom of expression and an 'other' sense of self emerging, different and in excess to daily, culturally sanctioned ways of being. We gather, we revel together. And as Muñoz insists, essential to the expansion of potential is the idea that *ecstasy must be experienced (taken) together.* In a state of ecstasy, as the individual falls away, I argue that the collective becomes the sanctuary and the affirmative structure of

[16] For an interesting note on MDMA, refer: J.M. Mitchell et al., 'MDMA-Assisted Therapy for Severe PTSD: A Randomized, Double-Blind, Placebo-Controlled Phase 3 Study', *Nature Medicine* 27 (2021): 1025–33, https://doi.org/10.1038/s41591-021-01336-3.
Though categorised as a Class A drug with hefty penalties for possession and dealing, in studies, MDMA is currently proving a successful treatment for PTSD and trauma sufferers in the U.S.A.

[17] Graham St John, *Technomad: Global Raving Countercultures*, Studies in Popular Music (London: Equinox Publishing, 2009). 5.

a safe, pleasure-filled space, rather than a lonely, unsure road. I will argue later in the chapter that the vibratorium can be a holding space in the rave or the music festival, such as in the Earth Beat Festival. To make the proclaimed freedom of the rave/sound system space more accessible to women∞, safety measures, such as a 'no-douchebag' policy, and resistance to the alcohol-fuelled mainstream culture of Aotearoa are practiced. Drug taking is not actively encouraged, but the safe space that *ninthWavesound* provides is more appropriate for women∞ to experiment in than a male-dominant alcohol-infused space would be. *ninthWavesound* provides a space for women∞ to engage with *otherwise*, (however partycipants choose to access it): a space to step outside, shed or expand ourselves in an ecstatic state of jouissance, ecstasy and empleasurement.

Creating novel space for feminine bodies in sound system spaces in order to expand the feminist imagination is the modus operandi of this project. The imaginary of this project aligns with Irigaray's, statement that "[t]o concern oneself in the present about the future certainly does not consist in programming it in advance but in trying to bring it into existence".[18] This is a virtual, desired future, and we practice versions of the utopia we so desire in order to expand the potential for whatever it may yet be to come forth. The baseline of potential in Irigaray's utopia is the freedom for gendered difference, or sexual difference, as being always already accepted, acknowledged, and enjoyed in its infinite multiplicity; this is still a developing 'virtuality'. Aligning with the possibilities enabled through a theory of sexual difference, but also with the understanding that 'the utopia of sexual difference' is yet to come, as Braidotti and Grosz also position it, *ninthWavesound* aspires to be the space where sexual difference can be expressed, by women∞ as women∞ (infinitied).[19] This is imagined here as a futuristic wave of feminism, as the 'ninth' wave in *ninthWave*.

In other words, sexual difference must be accepted before our feminist imaginary, or auralising, can become actualised. In the time of the future anterior, where the 'virtual feminine' exists, Braidotti finds "the 'other of the Other', the collectively empowered, self-defined feminist subject"; this is a futuristic subject developed through practices and understandings of 'sexual difference'.[20] This collective empowerment through communal activities, such as *ninthWave* offers, requires the affirmative presence of others. Braidotti emphasises that the feminist project is "an ethical one insofar as it stresses the primacy of the bond, the presence of the other, of the community as a vital step in the redefinition of

[18] Irigaray, quoted in Margaret Whitford, *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine* (London: Routledge, 1991)., 14.

[19] Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2002). 24. This is echoed by Elizabeth Grosz as she argues: "Sexual difference is that which has yet to take place, and thus exists only in virtuality, in and through a future anterior, the only tense that openly addresses the question of the future without preempting it in concrete form or in present terms". In Elizabeth Grosz, *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power* (Durham, UK: Duke University Press, 2005). 176.

[20] Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming*. 23.

the self"; i.e., we affirm through others in like, but we also affirm our nomadic self through difference.[21] The affirmation of new feminist subjectivities and the expansion of the potential for what this might look and sound like, requires a community that vibes on a recognition of difference. In other words, *ninthWavesound* activates Braidotti and Irigaray's concepts of sexual difference, or nomadic otherness in order to prompt, mobilise, 'actualise virtual potentials' and bring forth the imaginary into expression in the world.[22]

My research is a series of experiments into facilitating variations of feminist opportunities for action, and into how to increase potential rather than decrease it. It is in how we interact with and through other bodies that affects what we can do with our own body, either submitting it to external power limitations (*potestas*) or expanding it through internal will (*potentia*). Braidotti's nomadic thinking describes the formation of the self through encounters with other bodies—human and non-human— through varying intensities of affect and varying degrees of desire. We are always already 'becoming' and are always already forming 'in relation' to others. Ongoing interactive or relational processes 'affect' us energetically, such as the moments of pleasurable relaxation of low-frequency sound in 'grounded' orientations, or in more intense moments of vertical response, expression, and social interaction.

This brings us to affect in the affirmative; a pleasurable vibe; creating potential. Spinoza's '*affectus*' describes how "encounters between bodies (here understood abstractly, as any kind of object) transmit and generate affect, which increase or decrease the potential for further action".[23] This is Spinozian thinking, as opposed to Cartesian thinking, that conjoins rather than divides the mind and body. Gatens and Lloyd, following Spinoza, define imagination in terms of bodily awareness, specifically as: "the awareness of our own bodies together with others".[24] Imagination is held in the body, the body *is* imagination. In the *ninthWavesound* vibratorium, the feminine imaginary has space to expand through new freedoms available to bodies, and gatherings of different and differing bodies with new or now freed desires. Feminist, low-frequency loving bodies are able to revel in the space of resistance to the oppressive norm held just for them. The next section shifts to specific moments in *ninthWavesound* events where experiences of *empleasurement* and *jouissance* occurred in collective moments.

[21] Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment & Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*. 131.

[22] Rosi Braidotti, 'Nomadic Ethics', *Deleuze Studies* 7, no. 3 (2013): 342–59, https://doi.org/10.3366/dls.2013.0116. 355.

[23] Garcia, "Beats, Flesh, and Grain: Sonic Tactility and Affect in Electronic Dance Music". 72.

[24] Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd, *Collective Imaginings: Spinoza, Past and Present* (London: Routledge, 1999). 27.

Jouissance rising: Moments of full empleasurement

The deepest aspiration of the *ninthWavesound* project is to enable a state of *empleasurement* for partycipants: the state of collective jouissance, ecstasy, erotic knowing, and the feeling of potential held within this experience. In this section I outline several research events held with *ninthWave* in her 'full effect' that, in this regard, 'worked' to capacity.[25] Knowledge was drawn from these affirmative experiences about how to better facilitate the *vibe of empleasured potential.* I highlight differences between approaches and moments of 'knowing when it all comes together' in various modes of jouissance at Splore Festival 2020*, Yummy Yin, Vibe Temple*, Briar's 40th, and Auckland Art Week's open night during *A Week of Vibrational Events*, before concluding with 'when it *really* all came together' at Earth Beat Festival.

The learning process through the *ninthWavesound* events in this research was by no means a linear progression. Within the journey there were a variety of moments of 'ah hah'. The first was a personal moment for me when I began my DJ set on the Saturday night in Wendy's Wellness Tent at Splore Festival 2020. It was the first time I had played through *ninthWave* in her full capacity.[26] I positioned myself in the sweet spot of the sound, centred between her stacks, seated on cushions upon the ground, DJ controller in front of me. I dropped the dub track *CCTV* by LV...

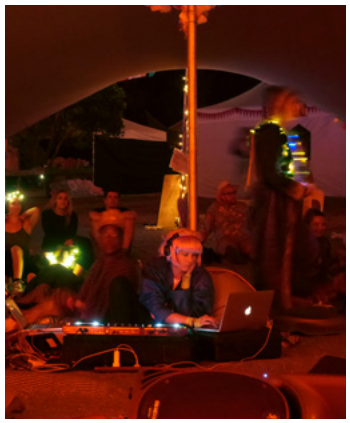

Figure 73: Me, DJ Laura Lush set up upon the ground for my first ever set through ninthWave's two stacks at Splore Festival, Tāpapakanga Regional Park, Ōrere Point, Auckland, 1am 23 February 2020.

BWWWOWWWWWWMMMMMMMMM. The subs came into their own as moments into the track the very low bass dropped, moving through the earth and into the bodies of the seated listeners. I looked up to several of my friends who were looking at me with wide, delighted eyes of understanding that This. Was. AWESOME. This was a moment of ecstatic realisation about what I had accomplished; I felt a wave of jouissance. I continued to play a variety of dub and dubstep tracks, engaging a few dancers, but mostly vibing out those who were chilling, lying, or sitting upon the ground. This deejaying experience brought me a joy and an openness I had never felt before, a feeling I can only try to describe through sincere words: "if I can achieve this, then I can achieve anything I truly desire, for I have

[25] 'Full capacity' was still a work in progress, as the tuning that took place later on revealed, but in this moment she had physically become the envisaged two stacks, and sounded pretty damn good.

[26] This was because I had literally finished building the second stack on the Tuesday

never desired like this before, nor been satisfied like this before". I had reached a new level of understanding about myself, my abilities, and my potential; I was experiencing the feeling of an exciting future of happenings not previously imaginable, and now possible. I had expanded.

The next *ninthWavesound* moment of jouissance occurred in the very different environment of an art gallery. *ninthWave* was set up for *A Week of Vibrational Events,* which included Auckland Art Week's open night (13 Oct 2020). The system was set up for the week in Gallery III of AUT ST Paul St Gallery, which I decorated with the help of installation artist Catherine Ellis (see figures 54 & 66). On either side of *ninthWave* we lined half the room with long navy and maroon velvet curtains (about a metre in from the walls to size the room down). A large carpet covered most of the concrete floor, and nine sound baffle panels lined the walls opposite the system—all these elements helping to improve the sound by reducing echo in the otherwise 'bright' room.[27] Two thirds of the way back into the room, a thick soft mat lay upon the floor with cushions atop it; a round projection screen hung angled from the ceiling above, showing a circular animation made by video artist Naomi Lamb; two drops of pink silk covered the view from the doorway; daylight was mostly blocked out; and purple, pink, and black UV lights were added to create a theatrical soft-rave vibe. All elements combining to make the space more intimate. The gallery was open in the evening for this event.

For the open night of *Auckland Artweek*, I facilitated a *DJ Showcase*, and invited DJ Becky to play whatever she felt would maximise her own pleasure through *ninthWave's* abilities.[28] She played a selection of reggae, dub, and dancehall, much to the delight of myself, Sophie Kuebler, and Michael Robins (*Lion Rockers*) who were momentarily four like-minded music lovers, meeting, unscripted, for an intimate moment with *ninthWavesound*. I closed the door to keep out all other noise. We were spread out on the dance floor, each in our own space, *apart together*, vibing on the sound in our own ways. Becky played several tracks familiar to us all and this brought the vibe profoundly into *'perfect'*, and we danced... I was struck by a gracious feeling... absorbed in my entirety, *one* with the sound, in full sonic immersion, subsumed by delicious low-frequency dub vibration, each of my cells hovering in vibratory oscillation. All of the hard work to bring this moment into being dissolved and I was without thought, entirely present, within my body—yet expanded, vibrationally sharing this moment with the others; a sense of timeless joyous harmony with myself and these bodies here with me. I don't remember what broke the spell several tracks later, but it didn't matter, because the feeling had taken place and become part of me. I was satisfied. Speaking to Becky afterwards, she was visibly moved by the experience of deejaying with

[27] 'Bright' means a room that focuses the high frequencies too much, which then needed to be dampened.

[28] The event ran from 5-8pm, with 20+ participants coming through to enjoy the music.

ninthWave, exclaiming "vibe girl!" and, "it's so great to be playing on a sound system this big"; Michael also gave the compliment, "[*ninthWave*] sounds better the louder [she] plays".[29] This intimate experience of the sound shared with just a few fellow appreciators highlighted the difference between the distracted experience of appreciating these tracks in a typically more populated sound system event, and the opportunity offered here by an art practice-led, safe, non-alcohol related vibe, held within the affects of being a gallery installation.

Aiding relaxation and connection enables the potential for empleasurement

In order to enable empleasurement, the body on multiple levels must become open to *the vibe*, both the embodied self and the collective bodie. To be open is to be relaxed, meaning that it is more possible to 'allow' the vibrations and affect to enter. As mentioned previously, the series of *ninthWavesound* experiments explore differing relations of body to vibration through two loose groupings: being 'still' or more 'grounded', lying or sitting—the grounded vibratorium; or being vertical and moving, i.e., dancing—the vertical vibratorium. *Yummy Yin* (previously discussed) was the first fully grounded 'meditation-through-vibratory-embodiment' event with *ninthWave*—a slightly different iteration to the 'grounded vibratorium' of the *Lazy Susan Listening Sessions*, as participants were inward-focused rather than socially focused. Taking this idea of bringing partycipants into a state of relaxation, and then moving from a grounded state into a more active vertical state was the next experiment.

The *Vibe Temple with Chikka, Ora & Nektah,* held on the Thursday evening of *A Week of Vibrational Events* (16 Oct 2020) was a journey that led from guided body meditation into danceable DJ set; an inward-focused grounded vibratorium into a vertical vibratorium. Notably, more than ninety percent of the partycipants at this event were women∞. The event was a set duration of ninety minutes, beginning with partycipants sitting in a circle around Ora and her bowls. Performers were introduced, then everyone was invited by the soothing voice of DJ Chikaa to lie down and close their eyes. Ora performed her crystal bowls, lulling all into a relaxed state. Ora and Nektah, amplified by *ninthWave*, began chanting and singing, Nektah also adding in percussive detail. After a time of being caressed by their sonic vibrations, Chikaa began a guided meditation, taking us under the ocean to discover a treasure chest. The chest was personalised with inscriptions, suggesting that what we were to find inside was what we had been missing from our selves for some time, and that we were to retrieve it, remember it. We opened our treasure chest and soaked up its offerings.

Chikaa then began to deejay, selecting rhythmic tribal house tracks, chosen to lift us out of the meditative state, slowly increasing in bass weight, tempo, and intensity, carrying

[29] Informal comments from research notes, *DJ Showcase*, 13 October 2020.

us gently into a vertical vibratorium, and an ever more excitable state of dance, working towards the ecstatic.[30] All except one of the partycipants in the *Vibe Temple* were up and dancing by the end, some with great fervour. The music wasn't really my kind of music, but it wasn't about me! One friend came to me afterwards exclaiming that she "very much needed that", and had come away wholly satisfied. What works to open up some people doesn't always work for all. We bring ourselves into the vibratorium, and sometimes we resonate and sometimes we don't.

As facilitator, I am interested in keeping *ninthWavesound* open to DJs and collaborators who sit slightly outside my personally nuanced musical appetite of vigorously danceable music, which tends towards genres with a lot of broken beat and syncopated percussion, such as jungle and footwork, or hard-hitting, double-timed, bass-heavy dubstep and digi-dub or steppahs reggae. Open to a wide selection of genres, I impose only a few boundaries about what kind of music I won't allow to be played through *ninthWave* as I believe certain genres to be aggressive, overtly masculine, commercial and soulless.[31]

Most domestic events for the nomadic *ninthWavesound* are less structured than the *Vibe Temple*, but incorporate a journey-like aspect and are generative of experiences of jouissance, nonetheless. One such was a friendship-based collaboration with my friend Briar Vivian for her 40th birthday party at her house in Piha (7 November 2020).[32] We set up one half of *ninthWavesound* in Briar's lounge. The evening again began with a crystal sound bowl session from Brooke Ora, for which over twenty partycipants joined in, all lying upon their backs in the lounge with blankets and pillows, again activating the 'grounded' version of the vibratorium. We slightly amplified Brooke's harmonising vocals through *ninthWavesound*, and I added a delicate reverb, which beautifully complemented the un-amplified crystal bowls. I slowly faded in and out very low-frequency bass hums in accompaniment, drawing the vibrations of the performance into the lower realms of vibration. A floor full of bodies was held in meditative rapture for forty minutes. Upon release from the session, the vibe was light and vibrant; the experience set up a conversation starting point for guests, as

[30] The performers of this event are practitioners of 'Ecstatic Dance', a world-wide movement of events which move through several stages of free dance movement towards the ecstatic.

[31] This list includes glitch, chunky funk, popular EDM.

[32] Most of the collaborations in this project are with friends who work within the music scene. Briar is someone one who appears in that scene but operates mostly alongside it in multiple creative fields. Friendship-based collaborations have for the most part been the most desirable for the beginnings of this project and the growing of the *ninthWavesound* network because we already understand each other's way of communicating and where we sit musically. Also, as women∞friends brought together in music, we are already always complicit in the feminist challenges that this project seeks to address. The instances of working with women∞ who were not already friends, such as through the Earth Beat Music Festival, which brought together women from further afield than Auckland, has resulted in creating new relationships that, given the right follow-up situations, could easily blossom into friendships. The world of DJing women∞ in Aotearoa is ultimately not very large, and it is a beautiful thing that we do not seem to stand in competition to each other, and that we are keen to form alliances and networks to bring each other up, as women∞, as DJs, and as music lovers.

not all guests knew each other. It was a great start to a celebratory party which brought many interesting pockets of (primarily) women together. The rest of the evening was a fluid movement of DJs and dancers taking turns when required or desired. The dance floor was a classic fortieth party vibe, frequented by many within the usual house party movements of splitting time between the kitchen and outdoor hang zones.

The intimate domestic setting and the friendship-based connections that supported this gathering at Briar's, similarly to the *Yummy Yin* session and to *LSLS#4* (as discussed in the last chapter), have added an important intimate slant to the research and an affective vibration to the project. Those partycipants who have experienced connecting with *ninthWave* in these more domestic and/or intimate experiences can take their sense of familiarity with them, which will influence how they then respond to the next *ninthWave* space, such as how, in the next section, Janiac describes this worked for her at Earth Beat Festival. In these intimate spaces partycipants practice 'knowing' this empleasured women∞prominent vibe, through embodied experience, potentially making it more easily accessible upon their next encounter. Next, an exploration of the penultimate event for *ninthWavesound* for the thesis project: Earth Beat Festival 2021.

Figure 74: Shebrew managing the vibe, Janiac in the pink hat, Sunday 21 March 2021, Earth Beat Festival, Atiu Creek Regional Park, Wellsford.

Jouissance empleasured: When it all comes together

Earth Beat Music Festival: 17th - 21st March 2021

Empleasurement occurs most powerfully when 'it all comes together': people, place, time, space—and, usually, after a lot of hard work. For Earth Beat Music and Art Festival (17th-21st March 2021), *ninthWavesound* was the sound system for the second stage, the electronic music stage, and it was here during the festival that it *all came together.* The experience was a joyful culmination of affective elements manifesting in collective empleasurement. Earth Beat booked *ninthWave* in full support of our kaupapa, insisting on a collaborative relationship. Through a cosmic alignment of intentions, Earth Beat brought together a perfect team: *ninthWave*; myself; Katie 'Sorchalula' Martin of *The Sensonauts* (Wellington-based DJ and event creator, who had just prior made a resonating connection with me through our feminist intentions and love of bass music)*;* and Catherine Ellis as the stage designer (a techno producer and friend of *ninthWave,* who had worked with me designing and installing the *Week of Vibrational Events* at Gallery 3). Katie, the Earth Beat team and I, hustled up a women∞prominent line-up for the stage: working through different genre-themed nights for the first four days, and then curating our dream line-up of bass music-orientated DJs for Saturday day and into the night. The stage was perfectly enhanced by Catherine's stage and lighting design which used complementary colours and shapes to *ninthWave's*. The Saturday featured eight women and five men from 8am-4am: Sensonauts Workshop (w); D-Low (m); Shebrewr (w); Shady Lady (w); Strobi (m); Greysound (m); Sorchalula (w); Janiac (w); Laura Lush (w); RSD (m); Paige Julia (w); Zuke (m); DJ Chikaa (w).

Reflecting upon the vibe of the *ninthWavesound* zone within the festival and the Saturday *Sensonauts & ninthWavesound* 'takeover', the words of friends present best express the vibe that was created; the words of seasoned friend Jane Treseder (a.k.a. Janiac, DJ on the night), and Laura Owen-Wright (good friend-to-be, who popped her *ninthWave* cherry by turning up at Earth Beat fresh out of quarantine as a COVID refugee from London). Their words confirmed and clarified for me that indeed a level of empleasurement had been reached that was foundational to moments of jouissance. I asked Jane what kind of things impressed themselves upon her, and how she felt about the space on the Saturday, knowing that she would be taking control of the decks herself later that day:

Janiac: ...the system sounded amazing! It was another level of proud... I was like damn it sounds good! Especially during the day with hardly anyone there and the space to dance around in bare feet, and that was such a nice feeling, and the breeze that was flowing through the tent, and the outlook, yeah it was beautiful […]

The vibe there was amazing, like everyone was really happy. I even had the confidence to walk up to a girl I had seen follow me on Instagram, you know Laura O, 'cause I felt a sense of being a host, maybe? I felt like I could be someone who could make the experience good for other people as well, like a hostess would.

I walked over and said, "hey! You started following me on Instagram." Haha! cos she was just by herself, but I don't normally do that, maybe it was something in the zone that made me feel like that.

Me: ...you are part of *ninthWave*, so I guess you had a sense of ownership of the space as well...

Janiac: Yeah, I felt like I was a hostess […] which I don't feel like at any other gigs, I don't feel, like, responsible for others having a good experience [normally], I'm not that important. […]

[The *ninthWave stage*] was definitely a space where I felt comfortable in bare feet during the day, it was nice to have bare feet, […] that's like a real sense of letting go, and vulnerability, taking your shoes off. So, I'd already made friends with the zone you know! I mean I'd already tapped into the grounding-ness of the environment through taking my shoes off, and so I already felt connected… by the time I got up there [behind the decks] I felt pretty connected to the zone. So yeah, it felt pretty comfortable, and I feel like I played a fairly good set, yeah! I don't think I was disappointed in any part of my set, I think I was on cue most of the time! I don't often get to feel like that, yeah!

[And] I loved dancing on the stage with you [when we were crossing over] it was really fun, it felt like we were hanging out, it was nice, it wasn't like lots of pressure, it felt fun.[33]

Janiac's feeling of groundedness is a satisfying response to the work of facilitating the space, and it was echoed by Laura Owen-Wright. The Saturday was the first time that Jane

[33] Laura Marsh in conversation with Jane Treseder a.k.a. Janiac, about Earth Beat, audio recording, videocall, 10 July 2021.

Figure 75: Salina-Pearl in full effect. Friday 19 March 2021, Earth Beat Festival, Atiu Creek Regional Park, Wellsford.

and I met Laura O, and Laura met *ninthWavesound.* Laura's impressions were without the influence of prior knowledge of the project, she came just with her own life experiences. It has been important throughout this project to recognise that each partycipant always already starts from 'them', their location, their history, their body. Their location, both virtual and actual, affects their experiencing of *ninthWavesound* and their potential of pleasure, empleasurement, and jouissance. This is the 'politics of location', now inherent in the feminism of *ninthWavesound.*

> Laura O: I think that emotionally, on a personal level, it was really hard, and scary for me to actually come here [to NZ] at the time. […] I went through MIQ and I was here, and I just felt sooo strange, and I felt so weird for so long, and I just, I think I was disassociating quite a lot with my body, because I've had a lot of pain, I've been through a lot of surgeries […]
>
> And that day, I went there [to Earth Beat], I literally knew zero people and when I got to that sound system, I just had… it just hit me, not just the sound, the sound obviously was what drew me in, and I was like 'this is a beautiful sound'. But, you know, when I got there, I just felt like […] I was 'home'[…] and I didn't get that feeling from being at home back with my parents, sorry Mum!
>
> But like, it was really overwhelming, a really, really strong feeling of being… feeling grounded, feeling okay, feeling comfortable, feeling like I kind of belonged there. And I hadn't even met you at that point, I was just like hanging around there, like, just haha *hanging around!* Like, 'well, I'm not going to leave now!' Ha![34]

Both Jane and Laura are reflecting upon the sense of belonging that allowed them to relax, have a pleasurable time and be open to engagement with others in the space. What is reinforced through their experience is the friendship-like connection of person to person and the extension of manaakitanga. Laura points to the moment of meeting and being welcomed by Janiac at Earth Beat, and also a similar moment where at another sound system gig a few weeks later, Tamari Lazarus (also part of the *ninthWavesound* crew) introduced herself to Laura, and in Laura's words, "treated me like she knows me".[35] Laura describes this as 'sisterhood isn't it', where an 'an unspoken etiquette' is in play. In this space of resistance, we are connected together as women with similar passions and desires, a virtual space "like a field, we can all stand on, can all stand in, where we're all worthy to be there, you know, without judgement", as Laura describes.[36]

[34] Laura Marsh in conversation with Laura Owen-Wright a.k.a. Laura O, about Earth Beat, audio recording, videocall, 10 August 2021.

[35] Laura Marsh in conversation with Laura Owen-Wright a.k.a. Laura O, about Earth Beat.

[36] Laura Marsh in conversation with Laura Owen-Wright a.k.a. Laura O, about Earth Beat.

I asked Laura to further reflect upon what it was that attracted her to the ninthWavesound space at Earth Beat:

> Laura O: ...it was the exquisite nature of the sound in the beginning, it was so beautiful, it was Ed Zuccollo playing an ambient set in the afternoon [on the Thursday which] was my first moment, and I just sat there, and I just cried. I was like what is this! What am I listening to? […] just looking at this thing in this environment with all the mangroves and the mud and everything all around, which added to it you know, added to the quality of the sound. […] It was just so beautiful. […] it was 'exquisite' to my ears, I wouldn't use any other word.
>
> And […] the colours that you've chosen, the physical design of it, I'd never seen horns exposed like that […] Like why did you choose to make them round? […] I was looking at it going 'this is so feminine'. I had this thought in my head and I literally knew nothing about it yet. So that message, something got through to me without even knowing anything about it, why are they round? I could see them, when usually it's all enclosed, way more square looking, boxy, you know. It stuck me that did.[37]

Laura's use of the word 'exquisite' as a response to the sound quality was valuable for me; *ninthWave's* sonic qualities are the most affective element upon which all other affects are entangled and is what holds the whole vibe together. At no point have I tried to consciously create 'feminine' shapes, although the colour choice was deliberate, but not consciously chosen to be feminine, just interesting! I was fascinated by oblique spherical horns for their aesthetics but also, as I understood it, for the smooth way they would project the high frequencies. I asked Laura whether there was anything else in particular that made her feel the way she did in the space:

> Laura O: Um, it's very difficult to put your finger on, because it's much more likely that it's a combination of all my life experiences, and all the love and the work that *you* put in and all the energy, doyaknowhatimean, it's so many things […] so, it's difficult to come up with a word that it is. […] The facade at the front with some shapes and things on it and […] ya, if I was going to go for something tangible it would be the colours, and the kinds of shapes, and there was some kind of dangly thing coming from the roof... and it was just! a few little things that said 'this is not like so many of the other sound systems I've been around'. This is not *that*, this is something different here, because it's not painted black and yellow, it's not […] camouflage nets, it's

[37] Laura Marsh in conversation with Laura Owen-Wright a.k.a. Laura O, about Earth Beat.

> not got a load of dudes hanging out behind it, there's no dudes in black polo shirts hanging around, like things like that! it's not... it's just different![38]

Maroon and purple colours were the foundational palette, with pink, turquoise and yellow to compliment. These colours drawn out of the colour palette of the gypsy house truck as I described earlier, but also my wardrobe. Of course, this reads as not-masculine when compared to the black boxes usually present at sound events. I consider colours to emanate affective vibrations, and this seemed to be the case at Earth Beat. Catherine's stage design (figure 74) complimented *ninthWave*'s palette and textures perfectly with her choice of angles, wood, pinks, and purples, reflecting an aligned collaboration based on friendship, and also respect for *ninthWave*'s personal style. The lack of 'dudes' claiming the space was of course a strategic move in the creation of a *ninthWave* resonant space, with the women∞prominent line-up and the presence of the *ninthWave* and *Sensonauts* crew. For Jane this was significant:

> Janiac: Seeing you there, behind the [scenes], if there was a problem [you were] going and seeing what was wrong. It was very inspiring to see a woman in control of all of that. And to know that you understood the ins and out, it was a proud moment to see […]. 'Cause it's very rare, you don't see that, it's a rare sighting. It made me feel like, […] women are more respected in this realm, in here, right now.[39]

For Laura O this was also very important:

> Laura O: ...I guess when I think about it, like... having spent 15 years in the UK in a lot of male-dominated projects and groups and things like that, I think maybe you perhaps become, hyper-vigilant or something, yeah you know when I stepped into the space, I felt different... safe! Safe and grounded.[40]

The team working in the space at Earth Beat, which *ninthWavesound* was central to, had achieved a level of vibe that I will proclaim to be nothing less than *empleasurement*. (And this was before the extended 'peak' of the event on the Saturday night). It was an honour to be part of creating resonant feelings for Jane and Laura like *home, proud, different, feminine, grounded, comfortable,* and *belonging.* A space within which they felt safe, felt part of, and for Laura O, which created an experience that was meaningful, needed, life affirming and (potentially) life changing!

[38] Laura Marsh in conversation with Laura Owen-Wright a.k.a. Laura O, about Earth Beat.

[39] Laura Marsh in conversation with Jane Treseder a.k.a. Janiac, about Earth Beat.

[40] Laura Marsh in conversation with Laura Owen-Wright a.k.a. Laura O, about Earth Beat.

Laura O: ...it's an understanding that this is the space that is gonna hold you, it's gonna allow you to grow and it's gonna give you permission, it's gonna allow you to be, with all your experiences. You know, just an understanding […] that lots of other situations make you feel angry or frustrated, you know, and this one doesn't! And I really admire how you've done it. You've kinda carved a way for your voice, ...kinda like a dolphin, ducking and diving around the...

Me: ...the masculine poles haha!

Laura O: […] I feel like you've managed to duck and dive around that and present this whole really radical protest! […]

You know, when I met you, I thought fucking hell, in all the 15 years of being in the UK, I never ever met one woman running her own sound system. Let alone building it! It really hit home to me. That I'd never had in my thinking, and all the advocacy and support I've been a part of […], that was like BOOOOM! I was like fuck! Fuck! It's not just about producing music, but it's about the whole thing. It made me feel really happy! It gave me a lot of energy, a lot of energy, that experience. That's what I came home with. Like I was really happy about something. You made me really happy Laura! Like HAPPY. Not like because of a relationship, or because of better health or anything, it was kind of... so much energy, it moved me, like it moved me yeah. Like it moves the air, it moved me, it was real powerful yeah. It changed me…

Laura Lush: Wow, that's so amazing. I feel like I've given, I've given a gift.

Laura O: Yeah you have, you really have, because I feel like it might actually inform so much of what I'd like to do next.[41]

I realise, after talking with my old and my new friend, that empleasurement is both expansive and expanding but also it doesn't need to be a cataclysmic explosive moment; it can be an extended feeling of joy, harmony, pleasure, and love that extends out (connective, expansive, potentia) and downwards (grounding, belonging), and lifts up (spirit, mood). As *ninthWavesound* strives to facilitate a *vibe of empleasurement*, it is within the vibe that *jouissance* exists, but this excess pleasure also dances with, in and through (em)pleasure(ment), forming into different shapes for different people depending on their own personal time and space, their location, their life experiences, their 'here-and-now', and potentially their future.

[41] Laura Marsh in conversation with Laura Owen-Wright a.k.a. Laura O, about Earth Beat.

Figure 76: Kaipara Stage with ninthWavesound and The Sensonauts lineup in full effect. Saturday 20 March 2021, Earth Beat Festival, Atiu Creek Regional Park, Wellsford.

Summarising as 'collective potentiality'

The feminist space of *ninthWavesound* is a virtual amplifier through which we critique illusions habitualised into our current social imaginary. Within and through *ninthWavesound* events we might, in Gatens and Lloyd's words, "educat[e] our powers of imagining; and no limits can be prescribed in advance to this process".[42] They argue, "what powers our bodies can come to have is not fixed in advance".[43] These ideas are derived from the Spinozian premise that *we do not know yet what bodies can do*, which is embedded in the thinking of Grosz, Braidotti (building on Deleuzean thought), and later Gatens and Lloyd.[44] This translates through low-frequency sound into: we don't know yet what the *empleasured sonic bodie* can become. Because when the body is expanded through shared pleasure, the imagination is expanded; and when the imagination is expanded, the potential of the collective bodie is also expanded.

When all the elements or affects come into alignment, pleasure opens me up to the *vibe of empleasured potential,* I feel all bodily tension release. This feeling might happen for an extended period of time or just briefly; it needs only to appear for a moment, as it can echo in the body for some time to come, leaving open a door for new thoughts and feelings of possibility to emerge over time, just as Laura Owen-Wright describes the affects of Earth Beat for her. The aspiration of the project is that this can happen for all partycipants. Their affective vibrations add into the vibe of the event, lifting others with them, during and afterwards, affective ripples emanating outwards in time and space.

Difference brings us together on multiple levels, offering potential through 'otherness': the desire to be different-to-the-majority of male DJs; the 'differences between' the motley crew of women∞ that affirm difference as a positive; and the resonant desires for low-frequency sound that are not catered to within the alcohol-fuelled, 'unsafe' realms of mainstream culture. Difference and resonance are affirmed at every event, but the pleasure of engagement with sound, vibrations, and an empleasured vibe is what binds and carries the nomadic community of *ninthWavesound*. On such potentials, Braidotti writes:

[42] Gatens and Lloyd, *Collective Imaginings: Spinoza, Past and Present*. 38.

[43] Gatens and Lloyd. 38.

[44] "We do not even know of what a body is capable, says Spinoza". In Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza (New York: Zone Books, 1990)* (New York: Zone Books, 1990). 266. Paraphrased from Benedictus de Spinoza, *A Spinoza Reader: Ethics and Other Works*, trans. Edwin Curley (Princeton, NJ; Chichester, West Sussex: Princeton University Press, 1994). II/143, 156.

> [they] are by definition not contained in the present conditions and cannot emerge from them. They have to be brought about or generated creatively by a qualitative leap of the collective imaginary.[45]

An imaginary that builds through every experimental iteration of pleasurably doing things differently. The aim is a collective experience of pleasure, the sharing of pleasure and the transformational properties of pleasure to be recognised and revelled in. The expanding prominence of women∞ in the DJ scene is an important aspect of a powerful feminist blooming developing through pleasure and joy, as we practice a version of utopian potentiality. This project resonates with Muñoz's emphasis that a *shared* experience of ecstasy calls to the desired space-time that is 'not-yet-here' but is part of a "flight plan for a collective political becoming".[46]

Through collective experiences in the vibratorium, we shapeshift from feminist killjoy to an *ecstatic empleasured sonic bodie*. Through processes of affirming our pleasures, feeling like we belong, feeling the vibe of *otherwise,* expanding the body through the pleasures of low-frequency sound, we expand a feminist imaginary. Gatens and Lloyd argue: "To define imagination in terms of bodily awareness, within the context of Spinoza's philosophy, is to move imagination to the very centre of the story of human well-being and flourishing".[47] No longer happy with the bounds of a masculine-tethered feminine, or of woman∞ limited through the social imaginary, we collectively realise our feminist selves and feel the potential of what we can do and be as women∞. This feeling arises within the context of the social and vibrational experience of the *ninthWavesound* vibratorium, the feeling I call *empleasured potential.* In the *ninthWavesound* vibratorium, the ecstatic move outside of the self is more about turning away from a version of self that we feel we must present to 'fit in' to society, and instead expand beyond, moving towards a place, a self that feels more like 'home', where we feel grounded. This trajectory or orientation operates as resistance to heteronormatively biased limitations of 'Woman', working ever closer towards woman∞. Through experiences of jouissance and ecstasy in the vibratorium, the potential of what woman∞ or the feminine might be is indefinite, open, blurred.

Differing modes of vibratorium provide different access points to empleasurement. The grounded, inward, sensing-listening versions were explored in the *Yummy Yin* sessions, as meditative openings to Briar's 40th and the *Vibe Temple*, and they provided my revelatory moment of personal expansion when I dropped the bassiest track I could at Splore Festival 2020. These 'grounded vibratoriums' are compared to the vertical experience of Auckland Art Week's open night and the vertical moments of the *Vibe Temple* and Briar's 40th. In

[45] Braidotti, 'Nomadic Ethics'. 355.

[46] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. 187, 189.

[47] Gatens and Lloyd, *Collective Imaginings: Spinoza, Past and Present*. 27.

these 'vertical vibratoriums', empleasurement more directly involves a relationship to others in the space, where the sharing of pleasure is more readily acknowledged in the moment and amplified through recognition of each other's being here-and-now. Though grouped into grounded and vertical, each event in their different context provides differing modes of affect. This was amplified in the moment when sound system lovers, Becky, Sophie, Michael, and I experienced a freedom granted in an art installation context that is not usually present in sound system events. This tendency towards the benefits of private, intimate, and domestic settings is important to the formation of community in the project, and it builds towards the affective power of a public *ninthWavesound* event such as Earth Beat Festival. These experiments demonstrate different ways of bringing about pleasurable experiences of low-frequency sound and the variations of enabling access to empleasurement.

In the hands of Irigaray jouissance has become part of a conceptual paradigm shift about how and where women$^{\infty}$ might come to connect with 'the feminine' outside of the patriarchal structural order. For me, jouissance is the beyond-explainable pleasure of 'you had to be there'; measured as the resounding echoes of bodily pleasure, and initiated by a unique feminist experience of low-frequency sound. When immersed in a sound system zone surrounded by like-minded, bass-loving women$^{\infty}$, where day-to-day worries have been left behind, I have found a deep bodily opening brought on by resonant, low-frequency vibration. In feelings of pleasure, joy, jouissance, or ecstasy, the feeling of being able to 'do anything' can appear, opening up the imaginary though the expansive feeling of the body. This is a form of empowerment, this is empleasurement.

We are formed by those around us, and we can be nomadic and seek out differing spaces and bodies that we desire to affirmatively affect us; *ninthWavesound* is a bodie designed to intensify encounters for this purpose. Through the collective experiencing of *jouissance*, what was individualised dissolves, merging with the collective, enhancing the potential (power) of the self through the collective, and therefore the power of the feminist collective. The 'virtual feminine' is a deep collective imaginary that affects and supports change in the social imaginary. Collectively, we expand feminist selves in the vibratorium, taking our empleasured selves out into society, into our social worlds, affectively transmitting our affirmative empleasured vibrations into our everyday lives.

Figure 77: Sorchalula a.k.a. Katie Martin playing heavy empleasuring basslines, just how I like it (me pictured dancing). Saturday sunset, 20 March 2021, Earth Beat Festival, Atiu Creek Regional Park, Wellsford.

Conclusion: Empleasured findings

> Sensation fills the living body with the resonance of (part of) the universe itself, a vibratory wave that opens up the body to these unrepresented and unknowable forces, the forces of becoming-other.
>
> – Elizabeth Grosz [1]

The *ninthWavesound* project, as part of a sensorial revolution, was founded upon a belief that pleasure is an activist force for social and political change, and a belief that we need more pleasure in our lives to live to our fullest. This conviction is activated by the affective power of low-frequency sound pleasure and becomes 'empleasured activism'. Pleasure has been positioned in this research as a personal and collective measure, a way to register experiences against their resonation with our inner desires—resonances that are required for a life of well-being. *ninthWavesound* events support the courage necessary to put pleasure first. With Grosz, I seek a vibratory resonance through the events I facilitate and art works I make. I have shown how Lorde positions erotic pleasure as "offer[ing] a well of replenishing and provocative force to the woman who does not fear its revelation".[2] For when empowered with a deep knowledge of personal desire we may then demand change, and as Lorde states, "women so empowered are dangerous".[3] This project, rather than entering a gender battle, has created, alongside the male-dominated music industry, an autonomous space for women∞ that is open to gender diversity, where we resist a normative repetition of 'how it has always been'.

Pleasure here is not a selfish hedonistic pleasure, but a sensory information feed, a vibrational force, and a tool for bringing together an activist feminist community. This

[1] E. A. Grosz, *Chaos, Territory & Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008). 80.

[2] Audre Lorde, 'Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power (1986)', in *Pleasure Activism*, ed. adrienne maree brown (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2019), 27–35. 28.

[3] Lorde. 29.

research has drawn on Sara Ahmed's argument that "[p]leasure is expansive … opening bodies to worlds through an opening up of the body to others".[4] In *ninthWavesound* events we can also find that shared joy, as Lorde suggests, "forms a bridge between the sharers which can be the basis for understanding much of what is not shared between them, and lessens the threat of their difference".[5] The thesis has found that my role as feminist sound system operator, event facilitator and DJ generates pleasure as a connective force, capable of bringing people together and helping to develop collaborative and meaningful relationships. A belief in the multiple powers of pleasure and its accessibility through low-frequency sound has developed over the course of this project; a belief that the vibrations of shared pleasure or collective jouissance change us, that we can 'become-otherwise'.[6]

Reflections on creative practice events

In Chapter One I explored an emergent sense of pleasure for women∞ as a powerful force through the illicit pleasure of rebranding public space with the (((({})))) symbol on flags, stickers and posters. This early phase generated important questions for the research around the politics between the gender diverse, women, and men, and drew on contemporary feminist positionings. In Chapter Two I described early works and practices—*Vibrating Vaginas Dance Club* and the *Jogja Jacuzzi* (Cemeti Art Institute, Yogyakarta, 2017)—as anticipatory examples of nomadic social platforms. The *Jacuzzi* was also a first experiment at reorientating bodies, making partycipants face inward to encourage conversational interaction. *PLEASURE* (2017), required bodies to lie down and face up, heads together in a circle. The early installation artworks of the project—*PLEASURE* (2017), *BATTLE* (2017) and *More Vibration Than We Think We Need…* (2017)—were motivated by the sense that we don't get enough pleasure; a proclamation that there is a battle to get enough pleasure; and an attempt at accessing pleasure by sitting on a vibrating subwoofer. *More Vibration…* was my first foray into sound as a catalyst for activism. In the latter part of this chapter, I recounted the practical feminist politics and techniques involved in the building of *ninthWave*.

By Chapter Four, *ninthWavesound* was up and running and the focus shifted to how I could practice as a feminist sound system operator, event facilitator and DJ through events such as the *Lazy Susan Listening Sessions* (19, 25 October 2019) at the Audio Foundation, the *Yummy Yin* session (29 June 2020) and events in domestic spaces. I found through these intimate events that an activist politics and a relational ethics of care are just as important as in the large-scale events in Chapter Five. What manifests in all events is a *vibe*, and a well-facilitated event culminates in a *vibe of empleasured potential*. Chapter Five explored

[4] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2004). 164.

[5] Lorde, 'Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power (1986)'. 31.

[6] Grosz, *Chaos, Territory & Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth*. 80.

the moments of collective jouissance that manifested in *Yummy Yin* (29 June 2020), *Vibe Temple* (16 Oct 2020), Briar's 40th (7 Nov 2020), Auckland Art Week's open night during *A Week of Vibrational Events* (13 Oct 2020), and Splore Festival 2020. These events brought forth empleasurement at an intimate scale in homes and art galleries, and at a larger scale in festivals through the sculptural and sonic platform *ninthWavesound* provides.

In all of the events above, low-frequency vibration is employed as collaborator in an activist, feminist practice of turning away from the ocular-centric nature of Western culture with its conceptual separation between subject and object. Instead, a sonic bodie is orientated towards a more holistic, embodied, sensory understanding of the world. This is enabled through a bias towards listening, sensing and feeling through the matter of the body, a sonic logos and a 'knowing through sound' as described by Julian Henriques, and practiced through the pleasurable, intimate touch of low-frequency sounding and associated energetic affects. Experiencing through sounding, sensing or vibration, rather than through visual means, brings forward the intimate affective relations of matter: between things, people, and our 'selves'. From the first phase with the *Jacuzzi* and the hand-built loungers in Silo6, to the nomadic *ninthWave* sound system speaker stack, sculptural 'social platforms' catalysed vibratory sonic experiences and collective feminist empowerment.

In the vibratorium we are harnessing technology for feminist ends. We join forces with technology, assuming a post-human position that grants technology—*ninthWave*—agency. She is nomadic, shifting, and moves with intention. The differing forms of events developed over the project take place in various venues, domestic and public. These experiments with intimate, private and larger public events revealed potential for different engagements between low-frequency sound and partycipants, manifesting different forms of 'vibratorium'. Three formations of vibratoriums emerged: the 'grounded', such as the *Lazy Susan Listening Sessions* and *Yummy Yin*; 'vertical', such as the *ALLDAYRAVE*; and ones that involve a transition between both, such as *Vibe Temple*. Operating in both domestic and public scales, with grounded and vertical relationships, and with either outwardly social or inwardly reflective modes, these vibratoriums all build into various iterations of potential for experiencing the empleasurement effect. There is no hierarchical structure to the types of events; one kind of event is not better or more affecting than another. A small event can be a preparatory event for engagement with a larger one, or a large one can be an introduction into the folds of the closer community. The facilitation of events that surround her is designed to upset power structures that permeate the local sound and music scenes. Experimental strategies attempt to de-verticalise power through: grounding sensory practices; shift gender balances by promoting women∞prominent spaces; provide easier access to bass-activating knowledge; and advocate pleasure as an empowering force for change.

The final thesis exhibition could have taken one of two forms due to the chance of Covid-19 level changes. If Splore Festival would have gone ahead, *ninthWave* would have appeared for the third time as the sound system in Wendy's Wellness Tent, where a collaboration with selected women∞ DJs present at Splore, manifesting into a ninety-minute *ninthWavesound* experience. But the alternative option took place: a smaller event in Tairāwhiti/Gisborne; a domestic setting with invited partycipants and an invitation to share music and start to bring together a local community in my new place of residence. Each form allowing different kinds of encounters with low-end frequencies and with *ninthWavesound*, but the common thread of each will be my role as DJ and vocal host, heralding a return to using my voice for subtle activist intervention as I did when I hosted *Lushelection* on BaseFM (2008-2018). The significance of each location and its unique cultural context will be acknowledged before and during the event.[7]

ninthWavesound has materialised as a practical tool for my feminist activism and the practice of building her by hand has helped me realise my own potential as a DJ, facilitator and sound system builder and operator. As she has moved from my imaginary into being built and actualised, and through her ability to nomadically and easily shift into multiple contexts, the potential of what she means in the local music, art and academic scenes has expanded. A parallel journey into feminism and feminist theory has deepened my understanding of how powerful pleasure and practical action can be, as we make space for women∞ to explore their empleasured potential, and how *ninthWave* can operate to expand the feminist imaginary and help to form new feminist subjectivities. The nomadic nature of *ninthWavesound* means that she is agile and adaptive. In this current climate of uncertainty about how many people are legally allowed to gather under Covid-19 restrictions, it is a distinct advantage to be able to convene a big sound for the pleasure of a few. Or even for one, as *More Vibration Than We Think We Need...* at Papakura Art Gallery revealed early in the project, and as my personal relationship with *ninthWave* deepened during lockdowns when I self-empleasured in my lounge most days. But, as argued, the benefits of the project to well-being are amplified and affirmed through the collective experience of jouissance and the expansiveness of experiencing pleasure together.

Methodological reflections on the project

The methodology of low-end empleasurement developed in this thesis, which builds on the 'pleasure activism' of adrienne brown within a feminist paradigm, is one of the key contributions of this project. The methodology includes strategies of practice that work with an affirmative formation of the nomadic feminist subject, as proposed by Rosi Braidotti, through an expanded feminist imaginary. This imaginary is activated by the opening afforded in jouissance, and it

[7] Local iwi of Turanganui-a-kiwa/Tairāwhiti include Ngāi Tāmanuhiri, Ngāti Porou, Rongowhakaata, Te Aitanga ā Māhaki, Ngāti Ruapani, Ngāti Tūtekohe and Te Aitanga-a-Hauiti. Splore Festival work with local iwi, Ngāti Whanaunga and Ngāti Paoa.

draws on Luce Irigaray's argument for the 'feminine/female imaginary', in this case through practice-orientated research. Future researchers can draw on these research strategies to formulate practices that foreground collective pleasure as an activist force, which is manifested as empleasurement through low-frequency sound vibration in the vibratorium.

Limitations of this methodology include the difficulty of assessing to what extent a feminist imaginary has expanded and empleasurement has occurred in others. My individual empirical experience of empleasurement and the affirmation of similar experiences through interviews builds my argument, but further quantifying of these affects, sensations and tangible change is beyond the scope of this art practice-led project. As the project continues to evolve and expand, further empirical and anecdotal evidence will amass.

The written argument of this exegesis is positioned by my situated desire and knowledge as a woman$^{\infty}$, who is interested in unpacking 'Woman' and expanding into woman$^{\infty}$. This could be seen as limiting in that some of the vagina imagery and the feminist theoretical references are not always comfortable for those who sit outside the sign of Woman or woman$^{\infty}$, i.e., gender non-binary and gender diverse. But in practice this concern is less evident, because in public the project works through the practicalities of primarily facilitating safer spaces. This is mostly achieved through the key strategy of promoting feminist intentions and creating women$^{\infty}$prominent spaces, which are intended to allow for greater inclusion of all non-normative expressions of gender. Male feminists and allies, in the larger-scale events, are also welcomed under the notion of the empleasured sonic bodie: a term that is not gender specific and expands to the collective heterogeneity of all genders. The term woman$^{\infty}$ lives in this text, but the *ninthWavesound* marketing material is never gender-exclusive through language.

The written exegesis is a personal journey reflecting my concerns about what *else* it can mean to be a woman$^{\infty}$ in my worlds, which are predominantly patriarchally and heteronormatively subsumed and structured. Gender-specifics and language-limited theoretical considerations aside, the feminist practice of this project can be accessed by any one and any body. It rests on my personal embodied knowledge that I am able to *feel* outside of the limitations of normative conceptions of Woman in situations where the normative male-dominated culture falls into the background. As argued, combining a non-male-dominated space with the affective abilities of pleasurable low-frequency sound works to amplify and make indeterminate these limitations. Collective jouissance is brought forth by bringing partycipants together in desirous resonation, helping to affirm the vibe of expansive potential and expand the feminist imaginary.

Significance of the study

What *ninthWave* and her partycipants' potential might manifest is open. In this respect, knowing what might happen, or attempting to control the outcome of the project, is part of a narrowing habit that feeds back into limitations of identity tropes and 'representation'.[8] Perhaps this potential will be related directly to *ninthWavesound's* desire to empower more women∞ to be DJs and to become part of a sound system, but perhaps it will become something else, expanding feminist potential beyond this realm. Any changes in partycipants lives that shake off restrictive or oppressive social conditionings, and which take place after engaging with *ninthWavesound*, are successful outcomes of the project.

The significance of the study is multi-faceted. The project has already impacted the local DJ and sound system scenes, despite limited appearances due to lockdowns. An interview with Rebekah Bristow for the blog of the local nightclub Neck of the Woods (6 Nov 2019), places the project firmly in the local electronic music scene. *ninthWave's* appearances at Splore Festival and Earth Beat Festival have cemented her as a significant figure within the festival landscape, eliciting both grounded and vertical vibratoriums in both locations through a variety of practitioners performing in these spaces. *ninthWave*'s presence in Auckland Art Week at the Audio Foundation, in St Paul St Gallery III, and Papakura Art Gallery has introduced feminist sound system culture into local visual and sound art spaces, resonating internationally with Lucreccia Quintanilla's sound system/social art practice, *General Feelings* (a.k.a. *Other Planes of Here*) in Melbourne. *ninthWavesound* is now on the relatively short list of sound systems built and run by women throughout the world, and this network slowly continues to expand through passionate sound system culture activators such as DJs Miss Fee and Bellyas (Housewife's Choice Sound System, Melbourne) who connect with women-owned sounds internationally through their radio show. The presentation of my paper at Goldsmiths University's *Outernational Sound System Conference #6* (June 2020) affirmed the value of the project to academic sound system practices, and other papers delivered by women involved in the scene confirmed the importance of pushing feminism within the culture. My appearance on Karen Hay's radio show on Radio New Zealand (16 Jan 2020) was a hat tip that a feminist sound system in Aotearoa is of interest to the general radio-listening public.

The labours of building *ninthWavesound* and of becoming facilitator and collaborator to events she represents has developed in me a deep sense of responsibility and understanding of feminist concerns. I have developed and enabled strategies in order to disrupt the patriarchal power dynamics in the sound system event, and these affirmatively work to set up a vibe of inclusion and collective empowerment. The question I proposed, as

[8] Phillip Vannini, 'An Introduction', in *Non-Representational Methodologies: Re-Envisioning Research.*, ed. Phillip Vannini (NY, NY.: Routledge, 2015), 1–18. 4.

to how to facilitate an event where pleasure is prioritised over power, and how pleasure can be mobilised as an affective force with an activist feminist intention, I feel I can now answer with my experience of facilitation and observational feedback of *ninthWavesound* events.

Reflections on Meet *ninthWavesound*, 27th of February 2022

The final examination event of this thesis—Meet *ninthWavesound*—took place on the 27th of February 2022. A group of sixteen women joined myself and collaborator Amy Bassett Jr. (Rongowhakaata ki Manutuke and Ngai Tūhoe ki Ruatāhuna) on the back deck of friend Rochelle Skuse's house in Tairāwhiti/Gisborne City. In this section I reflect upon what took place in this final examination event and how this orientates the future of *ninthWavesound*. This final event explored some unresolved inter-cultural concerns and helped to clarify the ongoing direction of the project beyond the PhD. The final event also emphasised *ninthWave's* nomadic abilities to slip between contexts, including: collaboration as a productive process; developing a 'tikanga bottom-line' (customary acknowledgement of tangata whenua) for performing 'in place' upon the whenua in respect of local tangata whenua; and enhancing respectful cultural acknowledgment and exchange through the development of a sonic signature for *ninthWavesound* that reflects the cultural context and relationships within place. Also, working with sound and music producers, while also developing my own production skills and DJ repertoire, to facilitate sonic collaborations and somatic relationships within a grounded vibratorium. First, I will compare the two very different scenarios that were proposed for the final examination, and the latter executed for the final examined event of the thesis.

Figure 78: Amy Bassett's instagram story post. 27 February 2022

The venue and form of the final event was shifted and adapted at the last moment due to Splore Festival 2022 (Tapapakanga Regional Park, Orere Point, Auckland) having to be cancelled because of a Covid/Omicron outbreak in Aotearoa. The original concept for the final event at Splore Festival was a dedicated time slot built into the programme of the Wellness Tent at Splore Festival, where *ninthWave* would have had her third Splore appearance. The ninty minute *ninthWavesound* experience was to take place after Katie Martin had, as The Sensonauts, led a sensory bass vibration workshop, and before Laura Ellen's *How to F**ck a Goddess (all genders)* workshop. The *ninthWavesound* experience was to involve several women∞ bass-music DJs who were to play at the festival, and I has asked them to choose their most bass-heavy tracks to showcase through *ninthWave's* formidable subs. I was to be 'host', slipping back into my former role I held at BaseFM as 'radio host', peppering the experience with sensual and sexual, pleasure alluding, Laura Lush-isms in a radio style voice over, while explaining the kaupapa of the *ninthWavesound* project, and extrapolating elements of the session into a celebration of the shift towards gender-equality that has been taking place over the last few years in Aotearoa's festival space. The feminist kaupapa of shifting power structures was to be performed through physically relocating the DJs in the space away from the stage, vocally highlighting the

producers of tracks that the DJs were playing, and emphasising the physical experience of the sound vibrations through suggesting a variety of bodily alignments to the speakers and each other. The examiners were to be present and partycipate in the event. But, as fate would have it, the alternative event was a radically different affair located in a private rather than dance festival setting.

In May 2021 I moved my home base from Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland to Tairāwhiti Gisborne, and *ninthWave* joined me in early 2022. With *ninthWave* now in Gisborne, I decided to take the opportunity of the final event to introduce her to her new local community. Here, reunited, I was excited to run her again, and to begin to build a new network of music loving women∞ and gender diverse. The population of Tairāwhiti Gisborne is just forty thousand, but host to a small but well-connected community of music lovers and creative people, including a substantial Māori presence in the region.[9] I reached out to several women I had connected to already with the idea for a daytime sound meditation and music event in a domestic setting, and in turn, they reached out to their friends to create a vibe of inclusion. I connected directly with these potential partycipants through email, messaging and in-person meetings explaining the kaupapa and purpose of the event. I intentionally shaped the event as an offering to the community, allowing the local DJs to set the vibe with their selections, giving up my power as an event-determining DJ. The idea was met with enthusiasm, drawing in sixteen partycipants on the day. The event was documented by local videographer and news reporter Renae Lolohea. The documentation was later edited by myself into a record for examination, and by Renae into a profile for a 'local focus' news story on both the Gisborne and Auckland Herald websites, and prompting a feature article about myself and *ninthWave* to be written for the Gizzy Local weekly event newsletter.[10]

At 2pm on a Sunday afternoon as the sun was coming out from behind the rain clouds, the partycipants began arriving at Rochelle's house. The large back deck was adorned with mats and cushions, a DJ table and *ninthWavesound* stood proud once again, both stacks together in one corner, facing the newcomers. One of the first there was Nikki O'Connor who brought with her a large bag of vinyl records to play a set, and several of the other partycipants came with a song in mind to share. The event proceedings began with introductions of myself and Amy. Amy then leading the meditation, followed by me deejaying while inviting and helping those who wanted to play a tune to share. Then, Nikki and Amy looked after the rest of the afternoon with their selections.

[9] Local Gisborne iwis include: Rongowhakaata ki Manutuke, Ngāi Tāmanuhiri, Te Aitanga-a-Māhaki Ngāti Porou, Te Aitanga-a-Hauiti, Ngati Ruapani, and Ngati Tutekohe. Refer https://www.creativenz.govt.nz/assets/paperclip/publication_documents/documents/427/original/iwi_map.pdf?1442981395 and https://www.tkm.govt.nz/localauthority/gisborne-district-council/.

[10] Refer to Rene Lololea's article and video at https://www.gisborneherald.co.nz/entertainment/20220331/good-vibrations/. And Sarah Cleavey's article at https://gizzylocal.squarespace.com/posts/ninthwave.

Amy's presence as tangata whenua, whose whakapapa includes Rongowhakaata ki Manutuke (Tairawhiti/Gisborne) and Ngai Tūhoe ki Ruatāhuna (Napier/Hawkes Bay) marked a significant opening in the project towards establishing a 'tikanga-bottom line', in resonance with *ninthWave*'s feminist 'bottom-line'. At 2:30pm Amy initiated proceedings with a karakia, I introduced myself and *ninthWave*, explained my project then handed things back over to Amy who introduced herself with a mihi (traditional Māori introduction) and an introduction to her practice as a tantrik hatha yoga instructor, here on this day, to lead us through a mantra and sound meditation.[11] This included focusing the mind and the body upon the amplified sonic vibrations of yogic chant, mixed into a drone track. Amy then led partycipants through a chakra clearing process, moving twice through the chakra points from the base to the crown. At the conclusion of this process she played her kōauau ponga ihu, a traditional Māori nose flute made from a small hue or gourd, while my selected drone track "3105_18" produced by DR harmonised and filled the space.[12] This mixing of culturally diverse music modalities highlighted the subtle activism and productive experience that opens up through cultural collaboration, and signified a moment that Amy and I plan to build upon for future iterations of *ninthWavesound* collaborations.

Figure 79: Nikki O'Connor plays vinyl records at the final event of the ninthWavesound PhD project. Tairāwhiti, 27 February 2022.

[11] On this day, for this initial collaborative experiment, I invited Amy to draw on her own somatic experiences of her yoga practice to engage with the group. The event would have been different with a different collaborator. Going forward into future collaborative events with Amy, we will step away from the structures of yoga practice towards creating context specific experiences, engaging more directly with the soundsystem and low-frequency vibration.

[12] 3105_18" by DR, on the album Drone Music can be found at http://drmusic.bandcamp.com.

Figure 80: Sarah Cleavy and Beka Melville chat after the sound meditation at the final event of the ninthWavesound PhD project. Tairāwhiti, 27 February 2022.

Figure 81: Layla and Josefa have their first go at deejaying at the final event of the ninthWavesound PhD project. Tairāwhiti, 27 February 2022.

Amy's manaakitanga (generous hospitality) supported the event in a way I would have fallen short of by myself, as she took it upon herself to cook up a big pot of chicken casserole on the morning of the event, whereas I had only snack food. Prompted by the examiner's reports I received shortly after the event, I asked for advice from Amy about what a 'tikanga-bottom line' for *ninthWave* events might feel like going forward, because as a Pākehā and conscientious treaty partner I want it to be more than a token acknowledgement in words. She replied:

> ...it's tinanatanga, it's embodying your experience, which is true to the whole kaupapa of the sound system ... to let it move right through you, and know it in your being rather than just speaking to it.[13]
>
> *ninthWave* is a guest in this space, and she offers vibrations as a gift to that mana whenua ... she offers up her healing.[14] She's elemental. Acknowledging the rohe on that level is a great place to start.[15]

This means that there will now always be a karakia, and an acknowledgement of the local iwi (local tribe/s), and the local maunga (mountain) and awa (river) that the iwi whakapapa (is related) to: in Amy's words, a 'mihi mana whenua' or an offering of salutations to the spiritual keepers of the land. Post-event Amy and I have discussed how we could expand the sound collaboration to respectfully acknowledge the affective nature of the sound vibrations that *ninthWave* enacts upon the whenua, and we have a few ideas and further collaborative work brewing.

ninthWave's ability to function nomadically, and slip between a variety of contexts as 'nomadic social platform' were highlighted when comparing the two different scenarios proposed for the final event. Her refusal to be categorised and deny the limitations of fixed

[13] Definition of 'tinana' in *Māori Dictionary*, (New Zealand: Longman/Pearson Education), s.v. "tinana", accessed 23 September 2021, https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&histLoanWords=&keywords=tinana
'Tinana' is commonly translated as body, -tanga here is used as a "suffix added to nouns to designate the quality derived from the base noun". i.e, 'bodying'

Definition of 'Kaupapa' in *Māori Dictionary*, (New Zealand: Longman/Pearson Education), .s.v. "Kaupapa", accessed 30 May 2022, https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&histLoanWords=&keywords=kaupapa
'Kaupapa' here is translatable as "purpose".

[14] Definition of 'Mana whenua' in *Māori Dictionary*, (New Zealand: Longman/Pearson Education), .s.v. "Mana whenua", accessed 30 May 2022, https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&histLoanWords=&keywords=mana+whenua
'Mana whenua' is translated here as "power [of] the land".

[15] Definition of 'Rohe' in *Māori Dictionary*, (New Zealand: Longman/Pearson Education), .s.v. "Rohe", accessed 30 May 2022, https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&histLoanWords=&keywords=rohe
'Rohe' is translated here as "region".

Laura Marsh in conversation with Amy Bassett. Audio recording, phonecall. 6 March 2022.

identity express infinity and open-ended potential, such that Braidotti and Irigaray advocate in the feminisms before her. This is the expansion of Braidotti and Irigaray's virtual feminine or feminist imaginary, that *ninthWave* expands for her partycipants. Where sexual difference is measured in infinite gradients; and the expansion of difference divides into infinite multiplicities. Slippage and difference in this project are facilitated through collaborative practice where *ninthWave* acts as mediator and open platform. As a platform appearing in a new community, she worked to create a new pathway of connection between newcomers and locals.[16]

Figure 82: Beks Erikson's Instagram story post. 27 February 2022

The key to the feminist activist paradigm of this thesis remains within both contextual scenarios explored for the proposal and the execution of the final event: that the somatic experience of sound and particularly low-frequency sound attracts and activates the potential of empleasurement to be realised. Whether it is at the forefront of the experience of an event as it would have been at Splore Festival, focused on and curated by the DJs who are practiced at stimulating their audiences with fully immersive maximum volume vibrations; or explored by a yogi in resonance with a vibrationally charged meditation practice; and/or explored through a socially focused and pedagogical experience as partycipants are initiated into an accessible and approachable world of deejaying. Whichever mode of feminist vibratorium that *ninthWave* activates—grounded, vertical, or both—a paradigm shift takes place, where the novelty of a space free from male-domination activates the feminist imaginary for something else, for otherwise. As Amy expressed after the event:

> I kept having a very gentle revelations throughout the day that I couldn't believe I had never been in a women∞only space with music. After deejaying for years, [...] I was quite astounded by that, and how there's a whole layer of tension that's just not there, and it's quite a revelation... in terms of my personality, in terms of how I behave when men are there, and how I felt when men were absent [...] I just felt so comfortable, and at ease.[17]

ninthWavesound events offer up potential for expansion into multiple realms, as indicated by partycipant Bec's experience:

> At one point I went and stood in front of her just to feel it come all through my body. And I was in my own little world, had my mask on, and I just came up and had a huge rush through my entire body, came up through my feet and out through my crown, ya, it was really powerful.

[16] A work that operates similarly is Rirkrit Tiravanija's project *Rehearsal Studio No. 6* I (1996, Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen, Switzerland). Rirkrit constructed areplica of a New York rehearsal studio he regularly hangs out in with his friends, open to people to use the instruments and have a jam. His intention was to "build[] a bridge to the local music and performance scene in St.Gallen and the surrounding area". Refer https://www.kunsthallesanktgallen.ch/en/exhibition/rehearsal-studio-no-6-rirkrit-tiravanija-2.html

[17] Laura Marsh in conversation with Amy Bassett. Audio recording, phonecall. 6 March 2022.

> I had that smile on my face that hurts! [...] I was just that ecstatic, it was really cool, it was such a buzz.[18]

ninthWave and I look forward to providing and holding space for more partycipant revelations and expansions, and developing a collection of original somatic practices.

Figure 83: Amy Bassett having the best time deejaying at the final ninthWavesound PhD project event. 27 February 2022.

[18] Laura Marsh in conversation with Becs Erikson. In person. 15 March 2022.

Future directions

The project continues past the thesis as *ninthWave* sets forth into realms outside of Auckland City. A tour of Aotearoa in collaboration with Katie Martin of *The Sensonauts* is in the planning stages. Specific manifestions of events will vary and take onboard the many learnings had during this thesis, including gender and cultural concerns, creating comfort for partycipants and collaborators, and creating a supportive space outside heteronormativity for DJs producers and lovers of low-frequency sound.

Scholarly contributions to relevant publications will potentially include Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Cultures (Maynooth University, Ireland), which is the most relevant publication for discussion about the empleasuring potential of low-frequency sound; Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies (Taylor & Francis), which will be a fitting publication for reflections upon the local Australasian emerging feminist sound system scene; Leonardo Journal (now amalgamating Leonardo Music Journal, MIT Press), who may be interested in my project's concerns with the relationship between sound amplification technology and feminist activism; Resonance: Journal of Sound and Culture (University of California) would also be an appropriate publication to submit to; and another inclusion in Goldsmith University's Outernational Sound System Conference will be sought after.

My material art practice will expand further into producing and composing low-frequency sound-focused works and bass-music productions. Somatic experiences will be invented through this, without necessarily drawing on Western traditions such as yoga. The associated activist arm of my art practice will involve sharing knowledge and skills, and releasing *ninthWave*'s plans to women∞ and gender diverse people who desire to follow in her vibratory path and build a 'feminist sound', thus building the community further along this trajectory. I have begun to design a home-sized version of *ninthWave*, and, when perfected, plan on converting the design into limited edition 'flatpacks'—so you may 'build one yourself at home!' As long as *ninthWave* is in working order, she will hold a place in the scene, and the community of *ninthWavesound* will expand. She will continue to hold a space of resistance to the dominant male paradigm, welcoming all who prefer to do, practice and imagine an empleasured otherwise.

> Pleasure is the point. Feeling good is not frivolous, it is freedom.[19]
>
> —adrienne brown

[19] adrienne maree brown, Pleasure Activism (Chico, Edinburgh: AK Press, 2019). 441.

Figure 84: Me in an epic state of empleasurement, deejaying on Saturday night, as part of the ninthWavesound & The Sensonauts Takeover, Earth Beat Festival, Atiu Creek Regional Park, Wellsford.

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Appendices

Appendix One:
Works, events, exhibitions & appearances

April – May 2017

Jogja Jacuzzi is in action

Cemeti Art Institute, Yogyakarta, Java, Indonesia.

Several group discussions are facilitated with differing topics addressing poignant differences between Indonesian and New Zealand culture, including safety, rubbish and gender.

3 May 2017

Vibrating Vaginas Dance Club

Cemeti Art Institute, Yogyakarta, Java, Indonesia.

Private event, 20 partycipants.

August 2017

Battle Poster

Black, pink and purple A0 posters are plastered up outside the Auckland Public Library, Auckland CBD.

October 2017

PLEASURE

SILO6, Auckland CBD, public art installation as part of Shifting Ground group show.

Friday 20 July 2018

Run with the Wolves

featuring Wendy Douglas, Janiac, Laura Lush, Misa, Scarlett, K2K

Whammy Back Bar, K Rd, Auckland

Public event, 80 plus partycipants.

October 2018

First subwoofer build completed!

20 October–1 December 2018

More Vibration Than We Think We Need...

Papakura Art Gallery, public gallery installation.

—Thursday 29 November: Papakura Art Gallery workshop, organised by the gallery, with eight residents of a local home for the elderly.

3 October 2019

First stack completed!

9 October-11 November 2019

New Sound Perspectives exhibition at Audio Foundation

—Thursday 17 October 6-9pm

DJ Performance Night.
Part of Auckland Art Week late night, public event, 50-plus partycipators.

—Saturday 19 October 4-6.30pm

Lazy Susan Listening Session #1

Private event/active installation, 14 partycipants.

—Friday 25 October 6-8.30pm

Lazy Susan Listening Session #2

Private event/active installation, 16 partycipants.

November 2019

Online Kickstarter Fundraiser campaign runs for the month

Raising over $6000 through 'reward' purchasing, 82 pledgers.

6 November 2019

Interview for Neck of the Woods blog

'Laura Lush - Building Sonic Immanence and Empowerment for Womxn'

Saturday 23rd November 2019

[not so] Lazy Susan Listening Session #3

Old Folks Association, Newton, Auckland, private gig/active installation, 10 partycipants.

1.25pm 16 January 2020

Interview with Karyn Hay on Radio New Zealand

17 February 2020

Second stack completed = ninthWavesound is complete!

February 20-23 2020

ninthWavesound in the Wellness Tent at Splore Festival 2020

Tāpapakanga Regional Park, Ōrere Point, Auckland, ticketed event, 10,000-plus revellers at the festival.

—1am Sunday 23 February

DJ Laura Lush set in the Wellness Tent

I deejay through *ninthWavesound* for the first time and jouissensibly experience her bass potential.

27 February 2020

Outsider Sounds, Auckland Fringe Festival, Auckland Town Hall

A single stack of *ninthWave* is set up in the upper anteroom of the Auckland Townhall, and I deejay a collection of heavily vibratory dub music to sooth my own soul.

25 March – 13 May 2020

Covid-19 Level 4 lockdown

ninthWave is set up in my lounge and I self-empleasure every few days.

15 May 2020

Oaariki's House Party

Level 2 Lockdown freedom party @ Oaariki's flat

Saturday 23 May 2020

Lazy Susan Listening Session #4

Domestic event at my house, a stack in the lounge, a stack in the kitchen, 12 partycipants.

11 June 2020

Sound System Outernational Conference #6

Online presentation of "ninthWavesound: A feminist sound system", a paper about this PhD project.

Saturday 20 June 2020

Winter Solstice 2020

Private party in a Snells Beach Bunker, 100-plus participants.

Monday 29 June 2020

Yummy Yin #1

Private Yin Yoga session hosted by Wendy Douglas, Snells Beach Bunker, 19 partycipants.

16 August 2020

Jawsh 685/Jason Derulo music video appearance

ninthWave features in the New Zealand production of the music video for internationally popular song 'Savage Love' by Jason Derulo featuring the TikTok sensational beat made by Jawsh 685 of South Auckland. Filmed in Mangere, Auckland.

13-17 October 2020

A Week of Vibrational Events at St Paul St Gallery 3

—11am-5pm Tuesday 13 - Friday 16 October

Lucreccia Quintanilla & Laura Marsh

Sound works running in the gallery space. Open to the public, 20-plus visitors over the week.

—5-8pm Tuesday 13 October

DJ Showcase featuring Becky, Scarlett & Lush

Part of Auckland Art Week late night, open to the public, 20+ partycipants.

—6-8pm Thursday 15 October

DJ Lessons

Private hangs, 3 partycipants.

— 7-9.30pm Friday 16 October

Vibe Temple w Ora, Chikaa & Nektah

Private event, 17 partycipants.

—11am-1pm Saturday 17 October

Yummy Yin #2 with Wendy Douglas, Talai Loma, Tess & Laura Lush

Private event, 20 participants.

— 1-9pm Saturday 17 October

ALLDAYRAVE

with DJs: Chikaa, Mia, Lush, LittleWild, Noncharlot, Scarlett, Janiac, Carlø & Kedu. Public/private event, 30-plus participants.

7th November 2020

Briar Vivian's 40th birthday party

Private party at Briar's house in Piha. Singing bowl meditation session, classic 40th birthday DJ session. 25-plus partycipants.

17-21 March 2021

ninthWavesound is the second stage sound system at Earth Beat Music Festival 2021

ninthWavesound and the Sensonauts collaborate to curate the DJ lineup for the electronic stage. Atiu Creek Regional Park, Tapora, Auckland, ticketed event, 2,500-plus revellers at the festival.

25-28 March 2021

ninthWavesound in the Wellness Tent at Splore Festival 2021

Tāpapakanga Regional Park, Ōrere Point, Auckland, ticketed event, 12,000-plus revellers at the festival.

27 February 2022

Meet ninthWavesound: introduction to the Gisborne Tairāwhiti community event.

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Miss Fee responds to questions I emailed her regarding her sound system she has built in Melbourne, Australia. She is the first woman to design and build her own system in Australia, and the second woman to own and run a system in Australia.

What brought you to commit the time and energy to going through with the full build of Housewife's Choice? And what was the experience of building like for you?
Feel free to talk about your life of music, the relevance of being a woman, how long Housewife's Choice took to conceive, plan, build, and anything or all the things that influenced you to do this radical thing... and why you called it Housewife's Choice! (Excellent feminist satire btw!)

History/Housewife's Choice – the name:

Building the sound was a natural progression. Much like many of my creative and musical endeavours, it has come from a sheer passion and drive to create, explore, learn and push forward in life, ultimately, to just do what makes me happy.

In order to tell the story of Housewife's Choice I always feel compelled to go right back to the beginning, essentially back to my roots in my hometown of Palmerston North in the North Island of New Zealand, because that's where I feel it all really began. Also, as a kiwi living in Oz it's an important part of acknowledging my heritage, as the old saying goes – you have to know where you come from to know where you're going.

So it started from humble beginnings in Palmy in Manawatu when I was living in NZ. Growing up I spent a lot of time at Poutu my marae in Shannon. I also belong to Whakawehi marae. Ngati Raukawa is my iwi and Ngati Whakatere is my hapu. My childhood was full of whanau get-togethers always with someone strumming a guitar and lots of singing. So, I guess music has always been an integral part of who I am.

I went to my first rave at the age of 15 along with a couple of girlfriends from high school. It was a pinnacle moment in my life where I felt like a switch inside me had been flicked and I was more in my element and had found 'my people'. All of

a sudden I felt more understood and almost more whole as a person. I will never forget that experience – of watching a DJ for the first time, standing in front of the decks completely mesmerised, trying to understand how he was able to blend the tracks and the way he was manipulating the equipment in front of him – it just completely opened me up to a whole new world, not to mention the music I was hearing (underground dance music – drum n bass, house & techno). It was truly a transformative experience. I made some life-long friends that night whom I bonded with over music, which became part of a series of events where music became the centre of my world, which spurred a passion of becoming an avid vinyl collector and then later playing gigs, running events and so on.

Fast forward to roughly a year later, at the age of 16 in Palmy, I had been religiously tuning in to a house and techno show called Housewives Choice. It was run by an English guy called Gavin, and so myself and 2 girlfriends would always listen together and make regular weekly requests. One week while making a request for a particular tune, Gavin told us that he was needing to relocate back to the UK and was going back home to complete his Master's. He basically offered us the show, I'm guessing because we had a mutual respect for each other's taste in music.

So, we ended up taking over the show and decided to keep the name Housewives Choice because it felt quite fitting, given we were all female and I was into playing house music then too (I think the show name was originally taken from a German record label). So that's where Housewife's Choice was essentially born, but over the years it has evolved fairly organically, at times moving in slightly different directions but ultimately with the same mission.

Up until that point I had been collecting CDs, but because there were turntables up in the studio at the radio station, I turned to buying records and practising mixing up at the station and became an obsessive record collector from the early 90s up until this day.

Early 2001, I moved to Melbourne and by then my taste in music had evolved and I became quite heavily involved in the reggae scene here – deejaying and putting on events. I met my now very close friend and music partner Yasmin, in 2004, at a reggae dance called More Fire, and we clicked instantly, finding we had very similar taste in music, which led us to spending a lot of time together doing gigs and so forth. I had a Friday night residency at Croft Institute around the mid 2000s which also led to us putting on our own monthly dance called Riddim Method (ha ha). That's another key moment for me, it's shortly after meeting Yas when I decided to revive the name Housewife's Choice, and we have been travelling and playing together ever since under that name for the last 18 years. We still do many things independently under our own DJ names Miss Fee & Bellyas, also.

The name Housewife's Choice carries a lot of history and significance which I love because in a sense it's my story. From back when I started doing radio at age 16, to moving to Australia and making a life for myself in this home away from home, and becoming immersed in the reggae scene here in Melbourne. Having developed a passion for the sounds coming out of Jamaica, the name Housewife's Choice took on even more meaning after meeting Yas with our shared passion for reggae music, when I discovered the popular ska duet called Housewife's Choice by Derrick Morgan and Patsy Todd. When it was first recorded they named it 'You Don't Know How Much I Love You'. After being played on JBC Radio it was so well received and requested so much by housewives tuning in at home that they renamed it 'Housewife's Choice' and released it on a 7''. It's a tune I have played countless times over the span of my DJ career and one that hardly leaves my record box. We adopted the song as our theme tune for obvious reasons. It's also a nod to an era of foundation music that we love dearly.

Background:

I've been around sound system for a long time – going to sound system parties after moving to Melbourne, Australia, and attending many of the well-known Basement Sessions run by Heartical Hi-Powa. Travelling to the UK was a huge source of inspiration for me, especially to see some of the greats such as Aba Shanti, Jah Shaka and Channel One play during my time there. I have always had an affinity with the UK since I was young, due to my passion for music and culture coming out of the UK. However Australia has been my home base for over 20 years. I met my husband in early 2012 when he migrated to Australia from the UK and shipped his sound system over on a boat! (That's dedication for ya). When we started dating, I remember being so impressed by his bedroom set up, which literally was a tiny square room full to the brim with DIY speaker boxes because there was nowhere else to store them in a share-house of ten other people. We slept on a mattress on top of 18'' hog scoops (haha). I got my grounding in the technical side of sound system by helping my husband set up and organise sound system events over the last 10 years, and learning more intimately about sound system culture, and just came to love it really just as an extension of who I am as a person and its importance to Jamaican culture.

From there a seed was planted, and by the start of 2017 I was starting to think about the future and different creative avenues I could take that would be sustainable for me to continue playing music as I got older (i.e., not just playing the DJ club circuit every weekend) and looking at ways to align my music hobbies with other core values and work passions. I have worked in the Education sector for 10 years and am a passionate advocate for the rights of people with disability and working

with vulnerable youth and groups in society. I was looking to do further study in the area of Community Services and change sectors eventually. And that's when I decided I wanted to build the sound. I developed a strong sense of wanting to create something of my own, to use my hands, and to put my own uniquely feminine stamp on it. I also knew that by building a sound, I would be building up much more than that, also a community of sound crew, musicians etc which excited me because I love to collaborate and most importantly, I don't ever want to get bored or complacent, so this new music mission was very much about pushing myself to go further than what I had done previously.

It started with me doing drawings at first, and 3D mock ups out of cardboard. I had a very clear vision from the beginning of what I imagined the sound to look and sound like, but then it was just a matter of researching to see what was possible. It started to get real when I bought 4 x 12" second-hand drivers in November 2017. So, at that point I was fully committed to building the sound, which was a bit scary to be honest, but there was no looking back after that!

Building Process:

Our boxes are custom designed. You can't get the plans elsewhere.

I started thinking about the design concept early 2017. I picked up a copy of the 'ElectroVoice PA Bible' and I spent months researching on the internet looking at speaker plans and going on audio forums, reading books and talking to people as well. Right from the start I had visualised what I wanted it to look and sound like. I wanted a modern sound with a more vintage aesthetic, which is why I decided to stain and varnish my boxes all by hand. A lot of people tend to paint their boxes. I had a lot of fun doing drawings and making 3D models out of cardboard in order to design the grills, which I wanted to be a focal point. I did lots of research on the type of drivers I wanted that would produce the sound I wanted whilst obviously needing to stay within my budget. Once the design concept was complete, I ordered the drivers from the UK which took 7 months to get here to Australia by boat. We designed our boxes from scratch and spent the first 2 years sourcing parts and then the last year was spent actually building. All up it basically took 3 years to complete from start to finish.

The rig is a 4-scoop stack run 5 ways, through QSC amplification, and made up of 18" scoops, the kicks are 15" ported reflex boxes, sealed 12" mids and co-axel compression horns for the tops.

I finished building the sound in 2020 and took it out for a private screening as part of a proof of concept for a festival project we were working on at the time. But March of 2021 was when we officially launched the sound at our first public sound

system gig at Forward Ever at The Industrique. In saying that, the work is never done. Since 2020, I have stained it and put the protective coat on, I have changed up some of the drivers from 2nd hand to brand new, bought a brand new tops amp, and now that we are out of lockdown and started doing gigs again - I am currently looking at building a few more boxes because the types of events we are lined up to do in 2022 are already much bigger than I anticipated in terms of venue and crowd size – so I want to be able to cater the sound properly for that. I have learned very quickly that there is always work to be done and I don't think I will ever stop making improvements – for example – although I feel that I executed the build exactly how I wanted it to look and sound like, the grill design is still work in progress which I will probably revisit at a later date. But it's just not a priority right now.

What does it mean to you to be only the second woman in Australia with a sound, and the first to build one from scratch!
Feel free to talk about any experiences you've had, to do with doubt, belief, from yourself and others.

Having worked in and been a part of the music industry for over 25 years now, and seeing the gender gap slowly improve, I take a great sense of pride in knowing that I am contributing to shaping a more equal future. What's clear to me is that passion for music is not gendered, and there is an abundance of inspirational women talent out there in Australia and the world over, so I think it is important we celebrate that. There is a lot of women talent in Melbourne and especially now but the sound system scene is still very male dominated. It got to the point where I thought "why let the boys have all the fun".

And that's what I have made a point of doing through the building process, by sharing my journey on Facebook, taking videos and photos, which to be honest goes against my nature, because I can be quite shy and introverted at the best of times. But I wanted friends, family overseas and my mates in music to be part of the journey. And by doing so it brings people into the fold, it opens conversations to speaking with, and learning from others and creates open dialogue. It's no secret that the sound system scene can be very competitive. I wanted to come into it with an open heart, to learn from others and also to hopefully inspire others too.

There is a women run sound in Sydney called Honey Trap who recently finished building 4 tapped horn subs. I was able to link with the boss lady Maya who came to my official sound system launch in March 2021, which was great. There is also Lucreccia of General Feelings whose system I have played on back in 2014 I think it was, for an International Women's Day Fundraiser. We think there are at least 2 in Brazil, 1 in Germany and Italy, and a handful in the UK and possibly 1 in Japan. When you think about the actual number of sound systems in different countries...

for example the UK has maybe 5000 total at a guess...so comparatively speaking... the representation of women in sound is still very small.

DIY Aspect:

DIY is an incredibly important aspect of sound system. I get a huge sense of achievement knowing I built my boxes with my own hands. Anyone can go and buy some commercial speakers from a shop – what we call Hi-Fi or PA systems, and sound the same as anyone else. But the DIY route means that every sound system is truly unique. Also, I love the idea of being self-sufficient and not relying on anyone for anything, you build 'everything' from the ground up. We have all our own equipment from boxes and amps right through to generators and the truck to get it all there. All you need is a location such as a park, warehouse or venue... and people just come. It's a very liberating feeling. In the process of building a sound system, you also build up a community of people around you. And by that I am talking about everybody from - sound system crew, box men & box women who help to carry the system, Deejays, Singers, MCs, Selectors and musicians to the audience. The other side to it, is that as a creative person, it is part of an essential outlet and a form of expression of who I am.

Housewife's Choice has naturally always been a very woman-centric led mission from the start because of the naturally strong female bonds, friendships created, and the collaborations with female artists over the years, through the music. For the most part I have always had a strong sense of respect and support from my male counter parts, but I think I have always found strength in supporting and being supported by other women because to an extent there is that mutual understanding of what it can be like to navigate such a male dominated industry, but also I think I have always been acutely aware of what I have to offer as a women. So, I am all about harnessing those feminine qualities ....and that may be something as simple as just feeling empowered being in my own skin as a woman for example, the different energy I bring when I perform, that type of thing.

You have to have self-belief. I think that is what keeps you on your path when there is a lot of white noise around you – whether that is negative comments or people who don't have the same belief in you. I just try to maintain focus on what makes me happy and putting my energy into those things and the people who are on the same path as me because life is too short to waste time and energy where it is not deserving.

There is a lot of competitiveness when it comes to sound system, and to a certain degree I think that it is fairly healthy and just comes with the territory. But for me personally, I think there is enough space on our world-wide stage for us to do our

own thing, celebrate our differences and not feel the need to compare what we are doing to others, because my story is my story alone to tell. That is the one great thing about sound system – each sound you come across can be so different from one to the next – the style of music, the box design, the people behind it and their different stories.

Why build a sound:

I guess to help put it into context, the core music we play is predominantly the sounds coming out of Jamaica – so I'm talking about ska, rocksteady, roots to foundation and dancehall. Sound system is an important part of Jamaican culture and Reggae Music was traditionally made to be played and heard on a sound system. On a normal HiFi it sounds completely different, you might only hear 50 percent of the track. On a sound system you play a tune and you hear it to its fullest extent. For me personally though, it's about providing a space for freedom of expression, for DJs, singers, dancers and players of instruments to use their gifts for good and help people unite, and in the same instance for the crowd - it's an immersive experience, where typically lots of different people from different walks of life can come together as one and feel a sense of belonging. They bring the energy to help us create something really special. So, everyone who attends a sound system event contributes in their own way.

Behind the scenes the work is endless, you're moving heavy boxes around loading and unloading into vans, setting up and packing down, testing equipment, doing repairs or maintenance constantly etc. So it's definitely not for the faint hearted, and something you do for love. A lot of people only see the glamour and glitter when the sounds are strung up and everything is irie. But logistically and physically it's a labour intensive effort that requires a lot of sweat and hard work for that one dance to happen. It can also be pretty financially taxing too.

Tell me about your partnership with Yasmin, what brought you together, about your radio show, about representing a sound together...

The first time Yas & I tested the sound and came together for a bit of a 'listening party/celebration' was actually quite emotional. Yas put one of her favourite records on the turntable, and it just hit us. I think partially because we have been on quite a long journey together, and so that point kind of signified a new chapter starting for us and perhaps solidified that musical bond we share, all over again.

Housewife's Choice has been a stalwart of the Australian Reggae & Dancehall scene for over 18 years. Together, as selectors Miss Fee and Bellyas (Yasmin), we aim to deliver uplifting music to the people with a conscious message. It's not just about entertainment for us. Our music partnership is based on a strong foundation of

friendship and we share similar passions through music, food, travel, our previous and current history in radio and the list goes on. We both bring our own strengths to the table and balance each other out, which is why our friendship has lasted so long. Melbourne has a healthy representation of women in the reggae scene here, but when we both respectively started to cut our teeth in radio and deejaying (myself in New Zealand and Yas in Australia) there were very few other women doing the same thing.

Bellyas immersed herself into the world of reggae in 1998, establishing her style as a young player on community radio in Melbourne and sharing her collection of roots reggae and dancehall 45s on air and in clubs. As a vinyl enthusiast since the early 1990s with a collection curated over 25 years encompassing reggae, dancehall, hip- hop, jungle and much more, my arrival into the world of music began when I hosted and produced a radio show at the age of 16 in New Zealand. Moving permanently to Melbourne in 2001, I quickly became a fixture of the local reggae scene; as a prominent performer, promoter, event producer. After meeting for the first time in 2004, we immediately found musical synergy and joined forces. We are known for juggling up-to-the-time riddims alongside foundation tunes & exclusive dubplates.

Celebrating our 18-year musical milestone in 2021 was definitely a high point as we turned another corner with the official launch of the sound and being able to present as the first all-female DIY reggae sound system in Australia. It feels amazing to have enjoyed the longevity that we have as Housewife's Choice as we continue to grow both personally and professionally. You can only do that if you love what you are doing, it's that simple. Having the opportunity to program our own weekly show on KISS FM Australia 87.8 is a dream come true. We were both involved in doing radio before we knew each other, and over the years we have only hosted guest spots on radio shows together but not had our own joint-show. Over the years our work careers and commitments did not allow us to. But as fate has it, I was doing a guest spot on a friends show early this year in 2021 and soon after talking to the station manager I was offered my own show as he was keen to add a specialist reggae show to the 24/7 station dedicated to dance music. It was a no brainer really, I spoke to Yas and although a weekly radio show is a huge commitment, we knew we couldn't let the opportunity slip by to finally do our own radio show together. It means a lot to us because as we have matured its really easy to let life get in the way of creative endeavours. The radio gives us the ability to connect each week and make time to converse and discover new music, and really forces you to stay current and abreast of music and all things reggae. Whatever we are going through in our lives, the show gives us the time to re-set and have time for ourselves and focus on music...it's our happy place.

In terms of the sound, I think we just naturally slipped into our own roles and do what we do best. We both select music and perform together as we always have done, so nothing has changed in that respect. Yas assumes mic duties most often, and if I am not playing music you will find me behind the control tower. I own and operate the sound, but in the end, we just play to our individual strengths as needed in order to contribute to the running of the sound.

What does your radio show bring into your world and the world?

Well obviously we get to do one of our favourite things which is play music, but more importantly we get to educate people about roots and culture and reach a wider audience who would otherwise not get to experience our sounds. What I love about KISS FM Australia is that it has quite a different demographic of listeners in the 18 and up age bracket – and I like to think that we are able to help those young ears develop an appreciation for reggae music and sound system culture by exposing it to the next generation. Having a show definitely broadens our horizons through linking with other artists to play newly released music. Our radio show also provides a platform to showcase a lot of great musical talent local and abroad. We try to support especially local artists putting in the work and making good music that we connect with. Recently during the last Melbourne lockdown we featured different women in reggae, dub and sound system each week through a series of mixtapes and interviews. It was a special experience to be able to link with other women involved in sound system around the world and share their stories.

What are some of the feelings and ideas you get about the state of sound system culture through interacting with other women run sounds on your show?

Sound system culture is very much alive and thriving. I get a sense that it has definitely evolved and that there are more women involved and contributing to sound system culture now than before. Through interacting with other women I was blown away at the level of multi-faceted talents they each bought to the table – I'm talking about further education, raising kids (trying to get the baby to be quiet for 5mins while they record for a radio show!), releasing their own music, doing their own radio shows, gigs on the weekend and/or touring festivals, building up their own sound systems or being involved in sound system and sometimes with one or more other projects on the go such as running workshops, doing talks or being involved in their local community. It's awesome. In the same instance I have heard some really interesting thoughts and perspectives of what being a woman in sound is like which I could very much relate to in my own way, and one perspective that stood out to me was 'feeling a certain type of pressure to prove yourself through doing more activity, as if playing the sound was not good enough'.

About sound system culture, the role of women, changing soundscapes, the differences between Australia/NZ and the places/worlds/women you talk with on the show… whatever has come up for you. And any cool things that they have brought to light for you…

For us…and I am sure many would agree…It's an immersive experience. It's about culture, community and connection. The sound system scene in Melbourne is inclusive and culturally diverse and as a whole we aim to showcase emerging and established artists and creative types. (From sound system crew to singers, dancers, DJs, MCs and instrument players…).

Geographically speaking…Just as it was bought to the UK with the mass immigration of Jamaicans in the 60s with the likes of Duke Vin (first sound man in England) and Coxone Sound (Lloyd Coxone) to name a few of the greats…it has reached other parts of the globe in a similar way. Sound system culture has, and continues to develop differently in different urban contexts. It takes on a different meaning and represents many things for many people. But ultimately, I feel it's about culture, community and that human connection – feeling that you're a part of something. For example, out of the roughly 30 sound systems in Melbourne – you have different sounds that are dedicated to different styles of music, such as reggae, dub, d'n'b, jungle, techno, house, cumbia, funk n soul etc. In addition to that, some represent different causes and missions …for example the sounds that are sympathetic to the teachings of Rastafari, activist sounds who are active in the community e.g., Black Lives Matter Rallys/First Nation Peoples rights protests etc. For *Housewife's Choice* – we aim to spread conscious music with a positive message that brings unity in the community and although we bring our own individual style, we aim to educate listeners and the crowd on the different aspects of Jamaican music and all that comes with it.

Since 2011 here in Melbourne Australia there has been an explosion of DIY sound systems and the scene has gone from only a few, with *Heartical Hi Powa* being the real pioneer from around the mid 2000s after moving from the UK to Australia and building his rig here. There were are few others that were established a little earlier such as *Virus*, *Bedlam & Negus Negast* Sound Systems in the late 90s, and Milton of *Earth Shaker Sound System* who arrived from the UK and rebuilt his sound system from scratch here around the early 2000s…to my knowledge that is. You would have to talk to someone who has been around much longer than I have to get the exact history. *Adrian's Wall* arrived from the UK in 2012 shipping his rig over on a boat and from there it really grew and within 6 months you saw newer sounds like *System Unknown, DIY HiFi* and *Rouge Magnetic Sound* building up, which meant we started to see Sound System meetings take place with 2 or more sounds playing together in a dance. There are approximately 80 sounds across Australia to my knowledge. There is a really good piece of literature written by my good friend

Lewis Tennant entitled 'The Rise of the Sound Systems in Aotearoa' which covers a lot of information, which in my absence of living overseas helps me to understand where the scene is at. I have had the privilege of being on the line up at Ruapuke Roots Festival, (Raglan, New Zealand, 2017-18) both years, which is dedicated to sound system, and at the last one I played on Fish n Bread Sound which was an honour.

I love the diversity of the sounds here. What I'm starting to see now is they are finding a place in more mainstream settings where previously you would have to go to an underground basement venue to hear one play. It's still very hard finding venues, and sound restrictions are always an issue. Being able to play more public open spaces in order to put on free community events can prove difficult too, which makes it hard for organisers who just are not operating at that level where they want or can afford to pay huge council fees and licences.

My hope is that the cultural heritage of sound system can be protected and valued so that it is seen to have an important role in society and that it has earned its place. A few years ago, Notting Hill Carnival in the UK came close to being at risk of getting shut down. *Channel One* were key drivers in petitioning against this happening. I can't imagine such a rich piece of the UKs history and cultural heritage being taken away like that. It has been going since around the 70s. But that is an example of what I am talking about.

What do you see in the future for women and sound system culture?

I am positive that we will see more women come up in the future. I think that with few women in sound now it will only pave the way for others to be inspired too who might have aspirations to follow that path. I think it's still a long road ahead before we see the same ratio of women to men though.

OR How do you rate its potential for continuing as a site of resistance?
OR What can sound system culture do?!

Building your own sound system is a rebel act. As long as sound system exists it will always represent underground culture.