

“Like Embers in the Tune”: an examination of Burial’s sample reuse

Angus Maclaurin

RMIT University

angussss.maclaurin@gmail.com

Mike Callander

RMIT University

mike.callander@rmit.edu.au

Submitted: 2024-09-01

Abstract: British electronic musician, Burial, is best known for *Untrue* (2007), the Mercury Music Prize-nominated album assembled using unorthodox audio editing software and source materials. This paper identifies and examines one of Burial’s production approaches: the use and reuse of vocal samples. Using ‘unmixing’ software to separate vocal ‘stems’, we analyse four sampled sources from Burial’s body of work and their reuse across a period of seventeen years. Drawing on Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s theoretical approach to repetition and a model of sonic affect from theorist Steve Goodman, we argue that the redeployment of identifiable vocal samples by Burial is a unique affective tool in contemporary electronic dance music. This paper is pertinent to discourse on sampling and music production as it identifies a self-referential approach that transcends single arrangements or albums and presents ideas and qualities shared across a decades-long body of work. It is significant to broader discourse on affect and electronic music in the digital age, as Burial’s self-imposed limitation in defiance of abundant resources manifests as an affective music production tool.

Introduction

To this day, very little has been written about the electronic musician, Burial. Except for a spate of interviews after his second album, *Untrue* (2007) was nominated for the prestigious Mercury Music Prize, Burial hasn’t spoken to the media. Unless an album is reviewed or reissued, there is not much by way of critical engagement with Burial’s work. The current legacy of Burial could be increasingly seen as that of a nostalgia

artist; a musician obsessed with the post-rave era of UK electronic music; a discography of elegies for the halcyon days of electronic dance music culture in Britain. Instead of nostalgic reversion, we posit that Burial's reverence for Britain's pioneering period of electronic dance music manifests over his career in a production aesthetic premised on an affective charge that compresses past, present and future in the listener. Using a theoretical approach that mixes music-adjacent academic scholarship and a technical track analysis of Burial's music, this paper focuses on one such technique in his uncanny production style: an ongoing practice of reusing vocal samples. This paper is a literal, and figurative, sample analysis of Burial's reuse of vocals. Combining an analysis of four recurring vocal samples over nine tracks and almost two decades with a non-metered approach to repetition, the sonic affect of Burial's sample reuse is treated as an anomaly in contemporary electronic music.

In the next section we analyse four vocal samples using the program RipX DAW (Hit'n'Mix, 2024). These four vocal samples will be dissected and charted across nine songs spanning seventeen years. Rather than a quantitative analysis of all vocal samples used by Burial, this article presents a snapshot of how select samples are utilised, both on multiple tracks on the same EP, and on an extended timeline across multiple decades. After the technical extraction and analysis of Burial's vocal samples, we consider the evidence alongside a theoretical approach to repetition from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari by way of scholar Adam Harper. We then link this discussion of repetition and Burial's reuse of vocal samples to sonic theorist Steve Goodman's concept of *déjà entendu* to interrogate the commonly held notion that electronic dance music's physical materiality is its main affective tool.

Analysis Tools and Materials

Tracing the lineage of samples and their applied use in commercial music releases, commonly labelled 'sample hunting', is not limited to academia nor to the work of a single producer. Concurrently there are threads on Reddit, videos on YouTube, and contributor-driven online databases such as Whosampled.com that are devoted to charting sample use by a range of artists and their 'classic' sample-heavy albums. Notable examples of these include *Paul's Boutique* by Beastie Boys (Horowitz, Yauch, Diamond et al., 1989), *Fat of The Land* by The Prodigy (Howlett, 1997), *Endtroducing.....* by DJ Shadow (Davis, 1996) and *Since I Left You* by The Avalanches (Chater, Seltmann and Di Blasi, 2000). These texts, communities, and resources represent part of a digital continuum: a 1970s record is sampled by a 1990s Hip Hop artist; in the 2010s the work is uploaded to YouTube and soon joined by remixes and cover versions; in the 21st century, databases are established to document the lineage of sampling and remixing; sites and applications for creating 'YouTube rips' put these materials and resources within the immediate reach of everyone online.

This paper seeks to add value to the various materials, discussions, analyses, and community-driven sample-hunting efforts by drawing together multiple lines of inquiry concerned with the work of a single artist. In the analysis, new software technology and abstracted approaches to musicology will together facilitate a focused insight into the function of Burial’s vocal samples. In addition to consolidating a part of that inquiry, we posit that it can inform others. New technologies for AI-driven ‘stem’ separation add another thread to the continuum; it is now possible to ‘unmix’ any audio text to facilitate cross-sectioning. The drums, vocals, or bassline from any song can be isolated, analysed, and redeployed, leading to the rapid expansion of musical materials made accessible.

We used RipX DAW (Hit’n’Mix, 2024) to separate the vocals from each of the Burial tracks. Upon its release in 2021 (and previously under the name ‘Infinity’, see Vincent, 2020), the software ‘caught attention’ for its ability to extract audio from stereo files and redistribute it as instrument-based layers, known as stems (Walden, 2024). While other programs such as Steinberg’s SpectraLayers and Izotope’s RX can perform stem separation, the quality of the separation processing within RipX is ‘a highlight of the software’ (Walden, 2024). For background, we conducted initial track analyses using another program, Virtual DJ by Atomix Productions, but found RipX to be the more useful program, not only for its separation abilities, but also for its immediacy and flexibility.

In an interview at the Audio Engineering Society conference, RipX CEO, Martin Dawe, explained how the software affords flexibility: ‘it is a bit like MIDI, but MIDI that is so detailed it has the full quality of the original audio’ (Sound On Sound, 2019). In music production parlance, audio files have historically been considered *less* flexible than the Music Instrument Digital Interface (MIDI); once recorded and rendered as a stereo audio file, the combined parts cannot be unsummed. Dawe’s inference that audio extraction and subsequent editing and processing of extracted materials can be as flexible as MIDI, along with user experience of the software’s capabilities, has led to the labelling of RipX as an ‘unmixing’ program (Jones, 2024). Using RipX, seemingly ‘concrete’ stereo files, which are the sum of multiple discrete components, can be deconstructed to their raw ingredients.

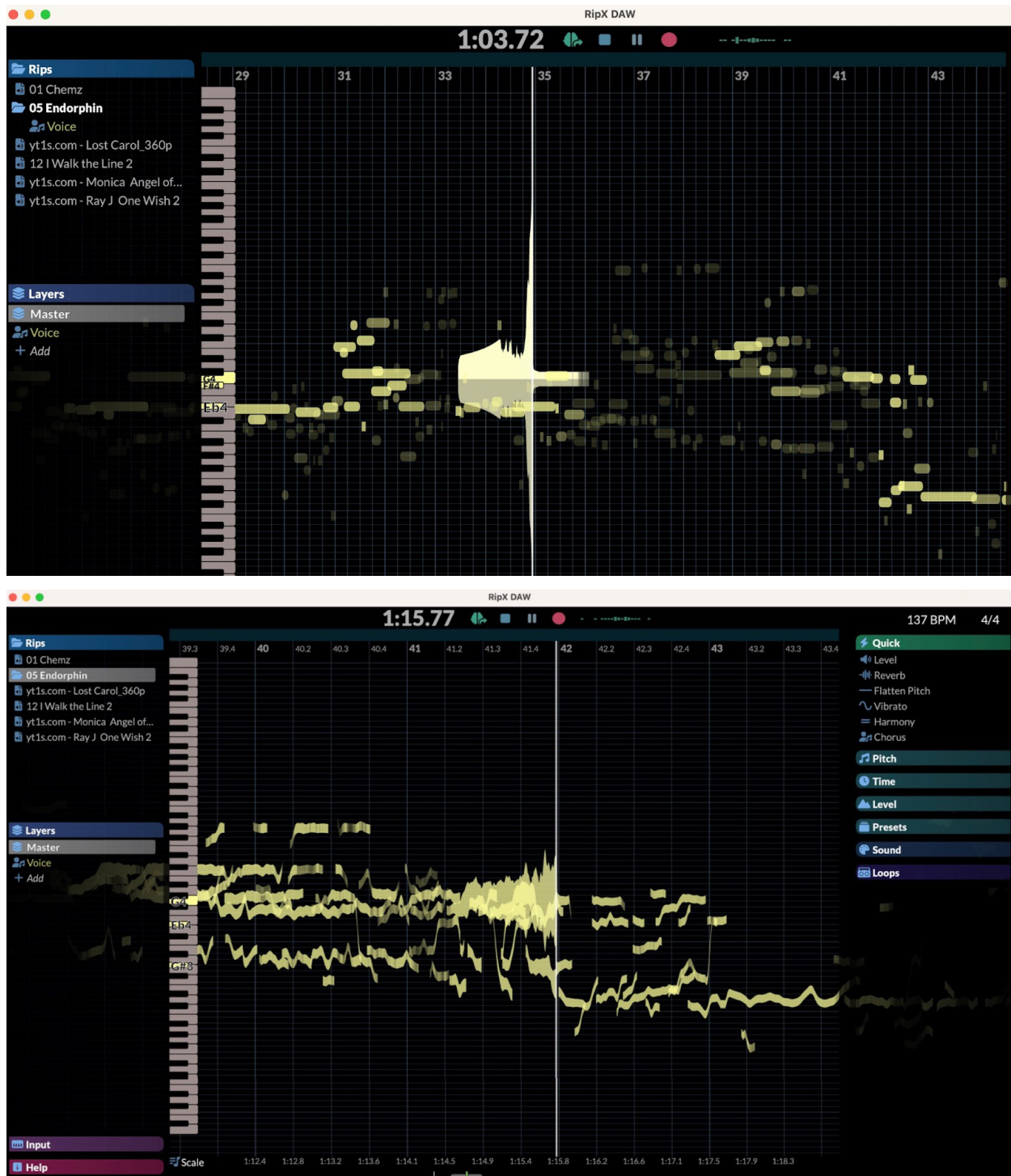


Fig. 1 and Fig. 2. Views of separated audio tracks in RipX DAW

Akin to the pitch correction software Melodyne, where ‘notes are represented as blobs’ (Celemony, n.d.), in RipX DAW each sample can be viewed as a separate entity, and is easily correlated to the piano roll for analysis of pitch-shifting and other processing. That said, our use of the program’s audio separation technology was not to test the scale of its powers, but to perform a simple task: separating the vocal stems from each release to better

identify how samples were used and reused. We did not utilise any other RipX affordances; it simply facilitated more detail (and less interference from other elements) as we focused our listening and analysis.

Broadly speaking, the vocal stems revealed production techniques that are common to existing readings of Burial tracks: time-stretching, pitch-shifting, and liberal use of reverb and delay (Fisher, 2012). For example, Burial evidently utilises a far wider dynamic range when situating these vocals in his productions than could be audibly perceived without that degree of separation. The isolated vocal stems revealed a complex range of vocal placement that is, to our ears, simply inaudible in the full tracks, especially during moments where vocals are combined with drums, bass, and other sounds. The sound of separated vocal stems was at times reminiscent of Ryan Maquire's compositions (or re-compositions) entitled *Ghost in the mp3* (2014), which sought to recover 'lost' sounds from the mp3 encoding process. There was indeed a *ghostly* quality to the sound of extracted vocals (see *File 01*).

Textural Example.

Stream File **01.** at [10.5281/zenodo.15015980](https://zenodo.org/record/15015980/files/10.5281/zenodo.15015980)

Concerned that this quality might represent a by-product of the RipX separation process rather than an accurate representation of Burial's handling of the audio, we conducted a control test for the vocal separation processing by using other sources. Our first non-Burial test was conducted on *I Walk The Line* by Johnny Cash (1964), resulting in a very different quality: we could hear the vocal clearly, and could identify relatively modest use of reverb (compared to Burial productions) along with a very short 'slap-back' delay, true to recordings of that time (Buskin, 2003) (see *File 02*).

I Walk The Line (RipX vocal separation).

Stream File **02.** at [10.5281/zenodo.15015980](https://zenodo.org/record/15015980/files/10.5281/zenodo.15015980)

Knowing that Burial pursues a textural quality in his sampled audio, distinct from audio that is high-fidelity or 'perfect'—the few existing Burial interviews document this preferred quality (Fisher, 2012)—we further considered whether the textures might be revealed in sources already sampled by Burial. Accordingly, we tested a 'YouTube rip' of a known recording used by Burial in an early work, 'Archangel' (2007): *One Wish* by Ray J (Bevan, 2007; Norwood, 2005) (see *File 03*).

One Wish (RipX vocal separation).

Stream File **03.** at [10.5281/zenodo.15015980](https://zenodo.org/record/15015980/files/10.5281/zenodo.15015980)

This experiment yielded a similar result: the vocal was successfully separated and clearly audible, with a textural quality that sounds much like the vocal in the complete commercial release.

We replicated this another time using one of the sources charted in this study of Burial tracks, with a similar result: no textural change to the audio as a result of the RipX processing (see File 04).

Karen Malik YouTube acapella (RipX vocal separation).

Stream File 04. at [10.5281/zenodo.15015980](https://zenodo.org/record/15015980)

Confident that the textural quality heard in the Burial vocals was a result of his production, rather than a by-product of RipX separation, these tests afforded us the confidence to proceed.

Sources and Samples; Use and Reuse

Here we present detail on four sources of sampled audio and nine examples of their use in Burial tracks. Spanning seventeen years between 2007 and 2024, eight of the tracks are original works and one is a remix.

Sampled Audio A: ‘sent from above’.

Stream File 05. at [10.5281/zenodo.15015980](https://zenodo.org/record/15015980)

In the original video (*see File 05*), YouTube contributor Karen Malik sits on a bedroom floor, looks to the camera and introduces her ‘acapella cover of Angel of Mine by Monica’ (Malik, 2010). Burial is known for using YouTube acapella versions or stripped-back accompaniments (Resident Advisor, 2017), likely for the separation offered by these sources in a pre-stem and pre-RipX era of sampling.

At 01:03, Malik can be heard singing the words ‘sent from above’.

Burial Track A1: ‘Come Down To Us’ (2013)

Stream File 06. at [10.5281/zenodo.15015980](https://zenodo.org/record/15015980)

Three years later, these words appeared in the Burial track ‘Come Down To Us’ (Bevan, 2013) at 10:41 (*see File 06*). In this instance the vocal has been pitched down by two semitones to start at note C4 (the original begins at note D4).

Burial Track A2: ‘Boy Sent From Above’ (2024)

Stream File 07. at [10.5281/zenodo.15015980](https://zenodo.org/record/15015980)

Following this—eleven years after the first identified use of the sample and fourteen years after the original recording—the sample reappeared in the Burial track ‘Boy Sent From Above’ (2024) at 01:05 (*see File 07*). In this instance, the sampled words also represent the track title and are more of a feature; they are accompanied by various other samples from the same source. The pitch of this audio feels closer to the original

recording, though the placement of vocals feels slightly stretched; at 1:05 the ‘sent from above’ line plays out over 2.625 seconds, rather than 2.25 seconds in the YouTube recording. Notwithstanding the audible change in pitch in Burial’s use of the sample in ‘Come Down To Us’, the length of this sample also plays out over 2.625 seconds. It is very likely then, that Burial eventually used a warping or time-stretching process to alter the pitch without changing the sample length. At the end of this section we revisit this discovery with more detail.

Sampled Audio B: ‘free, beyond everything’.

Stream File 08. at [10.5281/zenodo.15015980](https://zenodo.org/record/15015980/files/10.5281/zenodo.15015980)

At 26:26 in the 2014 film *Clouds of Sils Maria* (Assayas, 2014), Juliette Binoche delivers the following line: ‘Sigrid is free, beyond everything, and, most of all she’s destructive, unpredictable’ (*see File 08*).

Burial Track B1: ‘Deep Summer’ (Burial Remix) by Mønic (2017)

Stream File 09. at [10.5281/zenodo.15015980](https://zenodo.org/record/15015980/files/10.5281/zenodo.15015980)

In Burial’s remix for Mønic’s ‘Deep Summer’ (Shreeve, 2017), the line appears at 08:31 (cutting the name ‘Sigrid’ from the beginning, and fading out immediately after ‘everything’) (*see File 09*). The duration of this sample, based on our recreation of the edit from the original source and without additional editing or time-stretching, is 2.125 seconds. In the Burial remix, however, the sample is cut once more to separate ‘free’ and ‘from everything’. This results in added emphasis on both sides of the edit, extending the play time of the phrase to 4.75 seconds.

Burial Track B2: ‘New Love’ (2022)

Stream File 10. at [10.5281/zenodo.15015980](https://zenodo.org/record/15015980/files/10.5281/zenodo.15015980)

The sample reappeared five years later, this time in a Burial original: ‘New Love’ (Bevan, 2022). At 0:11, the line plays in identical fashion to the 2017 remix, that is, with a pause between ‘free’ and ‘beyond everything’ and with a duration of 4.75 seconds (*see File 10*). However, to our ears the volume fade after ‘everything’ has been revised, further removing any evidence of the word ‘and’ which follows on quickly in the original source audio.

Sampled Audio C: ‘mah, whoa whoaw’ and ‘heya, yah, yeah, eeyeah’.

Stream File 11. at [10.5281/zenodo.15015980](https://zenodo.org/record/15015980/files/10.5281/zenodo.15015980)

Burial is known for sampling audio from video games, not only from the game's original soundtrack, but also gameplay foley and sound effects (Fisher, 2012; Resident Advisor, 2017). The original soundtrack for a Playstation 2 video game, *Silent Hill 3* (Yamaoka, 2003), features a vocal performance by Mary Elizabeth McGlynn, a section of which was used by Burial (Fisher, 2012). A 13.7 second excerpt is taken from a longer performance (37.3 seconds as it was uploaded to YouTube by the rights holder) (*see File 11*).

Burial Track C1: 'Endorphin' (2007)

Stream File 12. at [10.5281/zenodo.15015980](https://zenodo.org/record/15015980/files/10.5281/zenodo.15015980)

In his 2007 work, 'Endorphin' (Bevan, 2007), Burial transposed the audio by +5 semitones, resulting in a shortening of the 13.7 second sample to 10.27 seconds (based on our recreation of the edits). He further split the audio into two sections, resulting in Section 1 lasting 4.4 seconds, and Section 2 lasting 5.86 seconds. For the sake of textualizing these edits of a vocal performance, our reading of Section 1 is 'mah, whoa whoaw', and Section 2: 'heya, yah, yeah, eeyeah'. Section 1 appears five times throughout the 2:57 arrangement, while Section 2 appears eight times (*see File 12*). Both appear consistently after 00:15 within the track. After the initial edit, the sections are placed without any noteworthy alterations (only minor volume fades).

Burial Track C2: 'Chemz' (2020)

Stream File 13. at [10.5281/zenodo.15015980](https://zenodo.org/record/15015980/files/10.5281/zenodo.15015980)

Thirteen years later, a shorter excerpt of Section 1 ('mah whoa') appeared in 'Chemz' (Bevan, 2020) at 0:15 (*see File 13*). The pitch of the sample is lower here than for 'Endorphin', and much closer to the pitch of the original sampled audio.

Burial Track C3: 'Dreamfear' (2024)

Stream File 14. at [10.5281/zenodo.15015980](https://zenodo.org/record/15015980/files/10.5281/zenodo.15015980)

A further four years later, Section 1 reappears in 'Dreamfear' (Bevan, 2024) at 6:06 (*see File 14*). The elaborate blend of vocals at this timestamp made for difficult analysis, but we suggest a sample length of 2.5 seconds, and a pitch-shift of +2 semitones from the original source (therefore -3 semitones compared to 'Endorphin').

Sampled Audio D: ‘coming down’; ‘to us’; ‘city lights brighter than ever’ (and more).

Stream File 15. at [10.5281/zenodo.15015980](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15015980)

In the YouTube video (*see File 15*), NASA Earth Scientist Melissa Dawson describes her role in the Crew Earth Observation program at Johnson Space Center (NASA Johnson, 2012).

A range of Dawson’s words from the six-minute video are deployed across three tracks on Burial’s *Rival Dealer EP* (2013): ‘Rival Dealer’, ‘Hiders’, and ‘Come Down To Us’. The sampled words include: ‘to us’ at 00:41; ‘city lights at nighttime’ at 01:28; ‘constellations’ at 02:47; ‘we can see, um, city lights brighter than ever’ at 02:52; ‘this is the best way to go’ at 02:58; ‘coming down’ at 03:21; and ‘it’s breathtaking’ at 05:29.

In addition to further evidencing Burial’s capture of ‘clean’ (unaccompanied) voice recordings from YouTube for redeployment in musical arrangements (Resident Advisor, 2017), the *Rival Dealer EP* is notable for his rearranging of these words to form new sequences and arguably new meanings. Most prominent is the micro-edit of ‘coming down’ at 03:21 and its pairing with ‘to us’ at 00:41 to form the titular line ‘come down to us’.

Burial Track D1: Rival Dealer (2013)

Stream File 16. at [10.5281/zenodo.15015980](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15015980)

At 09:50 in ‘Rival Dealer’ (*see File 16*) we hear various words from Dawson’s original interview: ‘this is the best way to go’, followed by ‘at night’ (edited from ‘city lights at nighttime’ in the original video), then ‘we can see, um, city lights brighter than ever’. This is followed by a section of concatenated vocals that includes ‘constellations’ and ‘it’s breathtaking’. While some longer portions of Dawson’s commentary remain intact, they are combined here with additional words from other sections in the original video, and subsequently imbued with greater emphasis.

Burial Track D2: Hiders (2013)

Stream file 17. at [10.5281/zenodo.15015980](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15015980)

The use of material from Sampled Audio D is less elaborate in ‘Hiders’ (*see File 17*). At 03:43, a middle section from Dawson’s phrase ‘coming down’ is edited to sound like ‘come down’ and then combined with ‘to us’; the latter two of these words appeared in the original video approximately one minute and forty seconds earlier. While on the *Rival Dealer EP* (2013) Burial’s cross-referential sample reuse connects tracks on the same release, rather than a timeline of tracks spanning several years, it is noteworthy that the RipX DAW visualisation

of this audio shows that these words are indeed concatenated; the software evidently sees that Dawson did not deliver these words in the sequence by which they appear. Looking at the resulting ‘come down to us’ on the RipX piano roll, the shortened ‘come’ is shown as a separate ‘blob’ from the words ‘down to’, despite all three words being near-identical in pitch.

Burial Track D3: Come Down To Us (2013)

Stream file 18. at [10.5281/zenodo.15015980](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15015980)

Finally, ‘Come Down To Us’ (a Burial track that we analysed earlier with a focus on Sampled Audio A, ‘sent from above’), includes two short references to the same material from Sampled Audio D (*see File 18*). First, at 01:16 we hear ‘at night’, then at 02:43 another instance of ‘down to us’. While our earlier review of the complete track led us to assume that the full phrase ‘come down to us’ appeared at this point (this is true at other points), analysis on the RipX DAW piano roll shows that the phrase appeared here without the accompanying ‘come’ (from the original ‘coming’) that appears elsewhere on the *Rival Dealer EP*.

Observations

As stated previously, the disparities in duration and pitch could be explained by a change in software and techniques: early Burial works utilised audio editing software (Resident Advisor, 2017) rather than a full-featured Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) with a sequencer and quantised grid. Burial’s 2007 handling of the audio for ‘Endorphin’ likely achieved a combined +5 semitone pitch shift and a shortening of the duration in one fell swoop (because the digital audio was handled in a fashion similar to tape, that is: higher pitch means a faster sample playback). The more recent works (Bevan, 2020; Bevan, 2024) were likely realised by using a DAW, where pitch and length (timing) can be manipulated separately. In the absence of recent interviews on the topic, this assumption is further informed by the discourse (on forums such as Reddit) regarding old-versus-new Burial tracks, which sometimes includes lamentations on the lost rhythmic dissonance that was distinct in early Burial works (Fisher, 2012). This assumption would fit with Burial’s general post-rave aesthetic; even as his technology is improved, his production is still based on aesthetic hallmarks from the post-rave era of British electronic dance music.

Notwithstanding our observations on Burial’s audio editing, time-stretching, and pitch-shifting, it was evident that samples were at least occasionally reused near-identically, or in a fashion that ensured they remained easily identifiable. For the samples identified here we posit that, once processed in the first instance and placed in a work that was commercially released, audio was reused with relatively minimal additional processing. Even

if elsewhere in these tracks Burial deployed time-stretching and pitch-shifting with a heavier hand to the extent that the samples became unrecognisable—as is our suspicion based on the rich, textural quality of the separated vocals—Burial still elected to leave identifiable markers of past works across a 17-year timeline.

Discussion

Our track analysis has charted various markers of Burial’s reuse of vocal samples to identify a body of evidence against which theoretical concepts—ideas of rhythm and repetition from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (DeleuzoGuattarian) and their relation to Steve Goodman’s idea of sonic affect—may be examined. Applying a DeleuzoGuattarian framework to the reuse of Burial’s vocal samples facilitates a theoretical view of repetition that is relational and focused on difference, rather than a (more common) musical view that is centred on structured metre. In the following section, this idea of repetition is expanded using the work of Adam Harper and the relation of musical images, showing how Burial’s sample reuse collapses temporalities in a listener. We then position the affective outcome of these collapsed temporal images in the listener as akin to Goodman’s idea of *déjà entendu*.

Repetition

The concept of repetition used in this paper is markedly different to notions of musical repetition as defined by uniformity and division (Bogue, 2003, p. 25; Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 345-6). Drawn from DeleuzoGuattarian writing on rhythm and the refrain (1987, p. 342-386), repetition in this instance relates to the reappearance of a musical image—between albums, performances and discographies, across styles and instruments—that in each recurrence alters our temporal relation to the last. In this notion of repetition, the focus is not on metered, discrete musical phrases but the fluctuations of difference between a musical image across time (Harper, 2011, p. 154). For this study we chose to identify samples (musical images) within Burial’s discography that reoccur across large time spans, i.e. samples across decades and albums, to exemplify this abstracted notion of repetition.

Using evidence from our track analysis, this relational idea of repetition is explored as a twofold function of musical images (Harper, 2011, p. 157-61). The *first* function of this concept of repetition allows the listener to perceive what is the ‘same’ by creating a musical image in a fixed timeframe. By highlighting a musical object, like [Sampled Audio C](#), within a fixed timeframe, for example in the song ‘Endorphin’ (2007), Burial creates a musical image based on sameness. This sameness can be formed even if the musical image only appears once within a fixed timeframe. As in [Sampled Audio A](#) and [Sampled Audio B](#), even though they only appear once in

[Burial Track A1](#) and [Burial Track A2](#), the outcome is a distinct musical image thanks to Burial’s production techniques foregrounding the vocal fragments as “little glowing bits” (Burial, 2007, 2009). This first function of repetition allows the listener to perceive changes, within a fixed timeframe, between what is seen as the same—the vocal sample—and what differs around it: the melody, the drums, production effects and so on. This catalyses an independence for the vocal sample as a musical image.

The *second* function of repetition is the reappearance of this individuated musical image, for example our [Sampled Audio C](#) in [Burial Track C1: ‘Endorphin’\(2007\)](#), in a new temporal continuum. In the track analysis of [Sampled Audio C](#), this repetition occurs not in the same song, album, or even decade, but in [Burial Track C2: ‘Chemz’ \(2020\)](#) and [Burial Track C3: ‘Dreamfear’ \(2024\)](#). This second function adds indeterminacy and difference to the supposed sameness of the first image, shattering its perceived independence. This relational approach to repetition *creates* and then *alters* the ‘same’ musical image; repetition of the image created in the first function creates an awareness of temporality through its relation to the second, supposedly same image (Harper, 2011, p. 158). In this dual function, the reuse of Burial’s samples are an example of how when “music ‘re-samples’ itself” it creates and alters “images of itself to listeners”(Harper, 2011, p. 158). Burial implicitly links this reuse of vocal samples to this idea of repetition when talking about his tendency in production to want to create a feeling “where you thought you heard the lyrics, but the next time you heard it, it didn’t say that at all” (Burial, 2007). This repetition-as-difference is an active process of temporal dislocation that creates and changes our relation to a sample's original and subsequent hearing. This relational model of repetition—the collapsing of temporality through the fluctuation of the *same* musical image—is counter to the natural order of repetition in electronic dance music, where machinic and metronomic rhythms reign supreme.

This theoretical analysis shows how Burial’s vocal samples don’t just function as “... looping or repeating indivisible units” (Hemment, 2004, p. 89), instead, as demonstrated through dissection in our track analysis, their repetitions change the nature of the musical works within which they initially appear and then reappear (Hemment, 2004, p. 89). In the concept of repetition applied in this paper, Burial’s vocal samples do not simply *reproduce* sonorous images, they create and alter them. Burial’s reuse of vocal samples makes this temporal antimony explicit, in what sonic theorist Steve Goodman designates as the sensation of *déjà entendu*.

Déjà Entendu

Using the evidence extracted from our samples and drawing on the concept of musical repetition as the creation of temporal antimony, Burial’s sample reuse becomes a repertoire to create an affective tone that Steve Goodman describes as the sonic affect of “*deja entendu*.” *Déjà entendu* is a schizophrenic condition where the

recognition of a sound becomes detached from its source in both space and time. In *déjà entendu*, a sound reverberates in the listener as both memory and anticipated future (Goodman 2010, p. 150). Expanding on the temporal antimony created in the repetition and reuse of Burial's vocal samples, *déjà entendu* illuminates how repetition creates an affective charge where past and future merge in the listener. Further to this, sonic theorist Kodwo Eshun discusses this achronological looping as a compression of the distinction between past, present and future. Through the recognition of previously heard samples, the listener is "always being grabbed away by the music" (Eshun, 1998, p. 180). The abduction by audio that *déjà entendu* enacts is the "vague sense of familiarity" when a previously heard fragment repeats across a non-structured or metered time frame (Goodman, 2010 p. 150).

As an example of Goodman's model of sonic affect, *déjà entendu* becomes a means to discuss how music creates an affective tone: a way of thinking around how "sound can modulate mood" (Goodman, 2010, p. xiv). This paper contends that as an example of the previously discussed repetition of musical images, Burial's sample reuse creates an affective tone of *déjà entendu*, a sensation not often discussed or utilised in electronic dance music. The physical materiality of electronic dance music's emphasised low-end frequency is often the privileged avenue for discussions of sensation and affect (Jasen, 2017; Henriques, 2010; 2022), but in Burial's repetition of vocal samples, the phenomenological sensation of *déjà entendu* takes precedence, a subtle and unique emotive tool for contemporary electronic dance music.

Conclusion

In the minimal correspondence he has had with the media, Burial has stated his goal of treating vocal samples "like embers in the tune": voices that transmit emotionality, potent in their brevity; made to disappear, to leave you dislocated in their movement between presence and absence (Burial 2009). This paper, in analysing the fluctuating appearances and disappearances of Burial's vocal samples, positions these embers as examples of non-metered repetition that create the sensation of *déjà entendu*: an affective tone not often privileged in electronic dance music. AI-driven 'unmixing' software was utilised to extract these (re)appearances of Burial's vocal samples. This evidence was then discussed in regard to a DeleuzoGuattarian rhythm and Adam Harper's repetition of musical images. Relying on this approach to musicality when analysing Burial's reuse of vocal samples represents a rerouting of normative discussions on musicality in an always-already futile attempt to write about the sensation of music. Nevertheless, it is one that helps to illuminate the legacy and endearing attraction of Burial's music. As Burial's body of work spreads across multiple decades, we note that the scale of his sample reuse is larger than reported here. In the interest of proving our concept within the scope of this paper, we have limited our analysis to the recurring use of four vocal samples, though as part of the inquiry we uncovered an

additional two recurring vocal samples, and evidence of the potential for more still. We envisage a larger-scale research project undertaken in pursuit of all sample reuse, in which case this paper can function as a foundational primer. To facilitate broader enquiry and continued discourse on sample reuse, this paper presents an analytical and theoretical approach to formalist audio analysis that transcends individual arrangements and albums, extending across an entire discography of work.

References

- Assayas, O. (Director). (2014). *Clouds of Sils Maria* [Film]. GC Cinéma; Pallas Film; CAB Productions; Vortex Sutra; Arte France Cinéma; ZDF/Arte; Orange Studio; RTS; SRG-SSR.
- Bevan, W. (2007). Archangel [Recorded by Burial]. On *Untrue* [CD]. Hyperdub.
- Bevan, W. (2007). Endorphin [Recorded by Burial]. On *Untrue* [CD]. Hyperdub.
- Bevan, W. (2013). Come Down To Us [Recorded by Burial]. On *Tunes 2011-2019* [CD]. Hyperdub.
- Bevan, W. (2013). Rival Dealer [Recorded by Burial]. On *Tunes 2011-2019* [CD]. Hyperdub.
- Bevan, W. (2021). Chemz [Recorded by Burial]. On *Chemz / Dolphins* [Digital Download]. Hyperdub.
- Bevan, W. (2022). New Love [Recorded by Burial]. On *Antidawn* [CD]. Hyperdub.
- Bevan, W. (2024). Boy Sent From Above [Recorded by Burial]. On *Dreamfear / Boy Sent From Above* [Digital Download]. XL Recordings.
- Bevan, W. (2024). Dreamfear [Recorded by Burial]. On *Dreamfear / Boy Sent From Above* [Digital Download]. XL Recordings.
- Bogue, R. (2003). *Deleuze on Music, Painting, and the Arts* (1st ed., Vol. 3). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315822044>
- Burial. (2007, November 24). *Burial: 'Tunes for the last party on earth.'* (E. Hennings, Interviewer)[CyclicDefrost]. <https://www.cyclicdefrost.com/2007/11/burial-interview-by-emmy-hennings/>
- Burial. (2009). *Burial Interview: The elusive dubstep master on making music to get lost in* (Kek-W, Interviewer) [Fact Magazine]. <https://www.factmag.com/2012/07/01/burial-interview/>
- Buskin, R. (2003). *Sam Phillips: Sun Records*. Sound On Sound. <https://www.soundonsound.com/people/sam-phillips-sun-records>
- Cash, J. (1964). I Walk The Line [Recorded by Johnny Cash]. On *I Walk The Line* [LP]. CBS.
- Celemony. (n.d.). *What Is Melodyne?* <https://www.celemony.com/en/melodyne/what-is-melodyne>
- Chater, R., Selmann, D., Di Blasi, T. (2000). *Since I Left You* [Recorded by The Avalanches]. [CD]. Modular Recordings.
- Colebrook, C. (2018). Escaping Meaning, Escaping Music. *CR: The New Centennial Review*, 18(2), 9–34.
<https://doi.org/10.14321/crnewcentrevi.18.2.0009>
- Coverley, M. (2020). Ghosts of Futures Past. In *Hauntology* (pp. 197–300). Oldcastle Books.
- Davis, J. (1996). *Endtroducing.....* [Recorded by DJ Shadow][CD]. Mo'Wax Recordings.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). *A Thousand Plateaus* (B. Massumi, Trans.). Continuum. [2004].
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1994). *What is Philosophy?* Verso. [2009].
- Eshun, K. (1998). *More Brilliant Than The Sun*. Quartet Books.

- Fisher, M. (December 2012). Burial: Unedited Transcript. The Wire. https://www.thewire.co.uk/in-writing/interviews/burial_unedited-transcript
- Goodman, S. (2002). Agents [Webzine]. *Hyperdub*.
<https://web.archive.org/web/20020810173130/http://www.hyperdub.com/software/agents.cfm>
- Goodman, S. (2010). *Sonic Warfare*. The MIT Press.
- Harper, A. (2011). *Infinite Music : Imagining the next millennium of human music-making*. John Hunt Publishing Limited.
- Hemment, D. (2004). Chapter 4 Affect and Individuation in Popular Electronic Music. In *Deleuze and Music* (pp. 76-94). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781474465489-005>
- Henriques, J. (2010). The Vibrations of Affect and their Propagation on a Night Out on Kingston's Dancehall Scene. *Body & Society*, 16(1), 57–89.
- Henriques, J. (2022). Engines of Affect: Experimenting with Auditory Intensities in the Jamaican Sound System Session. In B. Timm Knudsen, M. Krogh, & C. Stage (Eds.), *Methodologies of Affective Experimentation* (pp. 93–115). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hit'n'Mix. (n.d.). *RipX DAW*. <https://hitnmix.com/ripx-daw/>
- Horowitz, A., Yauch, A., Diamond, M., King, J., Simpson, M. (1989). *Paul's Boutique* [Recorded by Beastie Boys]. [CD]. Capitol Records.
- Howlett, L. (1997). *Fat of The Land* [Recorded by The Prodigy]. [CD]. XL Recordings.
- Jasen, P. C. (2017). *Low End Theory : Bass, bodies and the materiality of sonic experience*. Bloomsbury Academic & Professional.
- Jones, H. (2024, February 21). *Hit'n'Mix's AI DAW, RipX: Forget everything you thought you knew about unmixing music*. MusicTech. <https://musictech.com/reviews/digital-audio-workstations/hitnmix-ripx-daw-review/>
- Mackay, R. (1997). Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Wildstyle in Full Effect. In *Deleuze and Philosophy* (1st ed., pp. 247–269). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203002360-18>
- Maguire, R. (2014). The Ghost in the MP3. *Proceedings ICMC-2014. International Computer Music Conference*. <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.bbp2372.2014.038>
- Malik, A. (2010). *Monica - Angel of Mine (acapella cover) By: Karen Malik* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5wHfmHncgEo>
- NASA Johnson. (2012). 15. *Interview With NASA Earth Scientist Melissa Dawson* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3swQ5j4ngZ8>
- Norwood, R. (2005). One Wish [Recorded by Ray J]. On *One Wish* [CD]. Sanctuary.
- Resident Advisor. (2017). *Burial's Untrue: The making of a masterpiece* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Et5B-zfAIlo>
- Shreeve, S. (2017). *Deep Summer – Burial Remix* [Digital Download]. Osiris.

- Sound On Sound. (2019, October 19). *Hit'n'mix Infinity - AES 2019 - Sound On Sound* [Video]. YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=00SbsgX9LG8&t=9s>
- Vincent, R. (January 2020) *Hit'n'Mix Infinity*. Sound On Sound.
<https://www.soundonsound.com/reviews/hitnmix-infinity>
- Walden, J. (May 2024). *Hit'n'Mix RipX DAW PRO*. Sound On Sound.
<https://www.soundonsound.com/reviews/hitnmix-ripx-daw-pro>
- Yamaoka, A. (2003). Lost Carol [Recorded by Mary Elizabeth McGlynn]. On *Silent Hill 3* [Video Game Original Soundtrack]. Konami Computer Entertainment.