



Stout Research Centre for New Zealand Studies
Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington

JD Stout Annual Lecture 2023

Michael Brown
JD Stout Fellow 2023

Tracing digital footsteps A New Zealand musician in the Internet age

This lecture explores the potential and challenges of looking at New Zealand cultural history through the lens of the Internet. Since becoming widely accessible in the 1990s, the Internet has had a profound impact on creative fields such as music. For younger generations of New Zealand musicians, the Internet has opened the door to new musical discoveries, online communities, music-making tools, and global audiences. Some, such as self-described 'internet kid', Lorde, have risen to international superstardom, while others have found niches in more esoteric corners of the web.

The lecture is a case study of computer musician Luke Rowell's journey through 25 years of being online. Rowell initially found local success in the 2000s as the solo synthpop act Disasteradio, later gaining an online profile - mostly with overseas audiences - as Eyeliner. First dialling-up in 1998, Rowell's online activity and creative development are intertwined in a career spanning several epochs of Internet history. The lecture investigates these connections and discusses the task of tracing a music artist's digital footsteps through the Wayback Machine and other web archives. It will focus on three periods from Rowell's career: his involvement with music producers in the European demoscene (1999-2002), becoming part of the Internet music-genre vaporwave (2011-2013), and the contemporary context of streaming, uploads and user-generated content (2023). Each period highlights different issues for understanding New Zealand culture in the Internet era.

Michael Brown is JD Stout Fellow for 2023, based at the Stout Research Centre for New Zealand Studies, where he has carried out the research on which this lecture is based. He otherwise works as Curator, Music, at the Alexander Turnbull Library, and has published widely on New Zealand music.

Wednesday 1 November 2023

4.30pm – 5.30pm

Refreshments afterwards.

Hunter Council Chamber

Level 2 Hunter Building

Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington

Kelburn Parade

<https://vuw.zoom.us/j/99739517311>