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The Influence of the Past

A Study of Retromania and Technostalgia in
Contemporary Popular Music

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ABSTRACT

Throughout the 2000s there has been a growing nostalgia for the past. This thesis explores the underlying factors for this increased infatuation with the past in relation to contemporary popular music and music production. As popular music is inherently tied to music technology, this study is focused on both the occurrence of retro aesthetics in popular music and nostalgia towards technology. In order to provide an understanding of how and why nostalgia is becoming an increasingly larger part of contemporary pop music, this thesis seeks to contextualise the state of today's pop in relation to its past and how the emergence of new technology has contributed in ushering in a longing for times gone by.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the last couple of decades, retro aesthetics have become increasingly apparent in popular culture. As the 2000s have progressed there has been a rise in nostalgia for the past, both in music and music technology. Two central umbrella terms in this thesis will be ‘retromania’ and ‘technostalgia’. Retromania as a term covers retro aesthetics in every aspect of popular culture whilst technostalgia is used to describe nostalgia for out-dated technology. In this study, the terms are primarily discussed in relation to popular music and music technology. By discussing several aspects surrounding these areas, this thesis will explore how retro aesthetics and nostalgia for technology have come to be a significant part of modern popular music culture. Contemporary popular music culture as it is understood in this thesis encompasses music culture as a larger area, consisting of such areas as technology, the music industry, different aspects of music culture, production practices and, although to a lesser degree, the music itself.

Nostalgia is at the centre of both retromania and technostalgia. As both concerns the past it is useful to have a basic understanding of popular music production history as a way of understanding the underlying factors that have led to the occurrence of retro aesthetics in contemporary pop culture. Technological development in other fields, such as the evolution of the Internet and its impact on distribution and consumer habits, are also important to consider.¹

Nostalgia

The term nostalgia was first introduced in the seventeenth century. Physician Johannes Hofer invented the concept to describe the homesickness of Swiss mercenaries away on military duty. Military doctors were concerned with this

¹ Both the Internet and the development of music technology will be discussed further in chapter 1.

² The two articles by Bennett are *Revisiting the ‘Double Production Industry’: Advertising,*

condition up until the end of the nineteenth century because of its negative effect on morale. As described by Simon Reynolds, nostalgia was originally concerned with space rather than time. The condition afflicted soldiers on military duty, longing to return home. In time, nostalgia became less about geography and more about a desire to revisit a time of one's life now lost. This shift also marked the de-medicalization of the condition. Nostalgia was no longer seen as just an individual emotion, but now encompassed a collective longing for the past (2011,xxv).

Micheal Bull (2009, 85) describes nostalgia as 'a dominant mode of address in contemporary urban experience'. Focusing on mobile reproduction of music, such as MP3 players, Bull states that experiences are being reproduced by listening to music, which in turn gives coherence to a mobile world. In the mind of the subject, mediated nostalgia enables the return to the past. The development of mechanical reproduction technology becomes the 'history of the increased ability of people to create patterns of instant recall in which they conjure up real or imagined memories of home, place and identity' (Bull 2009, 85).

Bull points to the *Edison Survey of American Record Listeners*, conducted in 1921, as an example of how listening to music is linked to memory and nostalgia. The survey found that for many Americans, especially immigrants, listening to music was a way to reminisce, to travel back in time, to absent families or their previous homes. Listening to gramophonic recordings was in a sense a way to stimulate emotions connected to memories of the past (Bull 2009, 85).

The main difference between the original meaning of nostalgia and nostalgia in the modern sense is that the original condition was curable. Anyone suffering from nostalgia could simply move to the geographical space one was longing for. The modern version of nostalgia is incurable, as the time one is nostalgic about has passed. An explanation for this change of meaning might be the increasingly higher pace the world has changed. Rapid changes and development in economics, technology and culture have made it possible for society to develop so

fast that the world one grew up in is no longer recognizable when one grows old. Landscapes changes and new technologies are introduced to everyday life (Reynolds, 2011, xxv-xxvi).

Reynolds (2011, xxviii) cites Svetlana Boym, author of *The Future of Nostalgia*, on her idea of how it is possible to be 'nostalgic for a prenostalgic state of being'. In other words, nostalgia for a time of total immersion in the present: a time where one was not nostalgic. As Reynolds (2012, xxxix) points out the interesting thing with nostalgia in popular music (and by extension, popular culture) is 'in that peculiar nostalgia you can feel for the glory days of 'living in the now that you didn't . . . actually . . . *live* through'. Reynolds exemplifies this with the 'Swinging Sixties' ability to invoke nostalgia. As Reynolds points out, the reemergence of endless sixties revivals can partially be attributed to the 1960s lack of revivalism and nostalgia. The attraction of the decade, what we are actually nostalgic about, is its immersion in the present.

Nostalgia became an increasingly bigger part of popular culture in the second half of the twentieth century. Reynolds argues that nostalgia:

expressed itself *through* pop culture (revivals, golden-oldie shows on the radio, reissues et al.), but it would also be triggered *by* the pop culture of one's youth: artifacts of mass entertainment such as bygone celebrities and vintage TV shows, quaint commercials and dance crazes, ancient hit songs and dated slang. (Reynolds 2011, xxix)

In his 1979 study *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia*, Fred Davies argues that mass culture of the past increasingly outweighed political events such as wars or elections as reference points for how people remembers the past (cited in Reynolds, 2011). Reynolds (2011, xxix) elaborates on this, stating that people who grew up in the 1930s becomes nostalgic when hearing radio comedies and live musical broadcasts, whilst for people growing up in the 1960s and 1970s, TV shows like *American Bandstand* and *Soul Train* functions as triggers for nostalgia. For the generation after that, the people growing up in the 1980s,

nostalgia is induced by the early attempts of video-as-art-form featured on MTV and the then futuristic computer and arcade games.

It is when mass culture meets personal memory that retro occurs. The word itself seems likely to have come into use as a detached prefix, unstuck from words like 'retrospection', 'retrograde' or 'retrogressive'. Words such as these tend to have negative implications. Retrogressive, as an example, is the opposite of progressive (Reynolds, 2011, xxx-xxxii). It is interesting to note that people interviewed by Reynolds for his book did not associate themselves with retro culture, even though many of them have dedicated their life to a specific era of the past. In Reynolds's (2011, xxxii) own words:

But retro? *Oh no . . .* It's not that people dislike the image of being obsessed with musty, mouldering old stuff, or of being a curmudgeon who thinks the present can't compare with the past. In fact, many proudly dismiss all modern pop culture. What makes them recoil from retro are the associations with camp, irony and mere trendiness. Retro, as far as they're concerned, signifies a shallow, surface-oriented attunement to style, as opposed to a deep, passionate love of music's essence.

The above quote paints an important image of retro culture. It is interesting that people like the ones interviewed by Reynolds do not identify themselves with retro culture although they are clearly concerning themselves with music and culture firmly within a retro aesthetic framework. This might imply that people who do not identify with retro culture might still be contributing to it. That they see retro as a superficial 'attunement to style' also signalises that there might be people unknowingly taking part in retro culture simply by following the latest retro fad.

According to Reynolds, 'the word "retro" has a quite specific meaning: it refers to a self-conscious fetish for period stylization' (2011, xii). This fetish can include any aspect of popular culture, from music and fashion to design and video games. In this sense, retro tends to be a field for people with great knowledge of whatever period or era of popular culture they are interested in. It has usually

been the domain of collectors, aesthetes and connoisseurs. In recent time, the word retro has become increasingly more vague and is now commonly used to describe 'pretty much anything that relates to the relatively recent past of popular culture' (Reynolds, 2001, xiii).

Retromania and Technostalgia

The aim of this thesis is to explore different aspects concerning retromania in contemporary popular music and the correlation between retromania and technostalgia. The first chapter of the thesis explores how retromania has manifested itself in today's popular culture, with emphasis on popular music, underlying factors for how retromania has come to influence popular music to a larger degree than in the past and the effect retromania has had on how popular music is created. This is in part done by comparing the present state of popular music to its past in terms of music production practices, technology and the effect the Internet has had on music consumption, the record industry and record collecting culture. The subjects discussed in the first chapter are largely based on ideas presented in Simon Reynolds' 2011 book *Retromania*.

The second chapter of the thesis is an exploration of the phenomenon technostalgia. This part explores the emergence of technostalgia and implications regarding its effect on popular music. The issues discussed in this part are the marketing of technology, analogue equipment in the digital domain and the role of analogue gear in the modern recording studio.

The overall theme of this thesis is the issue of nostalgia. Both retromania and technostalgia concerns the past. It is easy to attribute every aspect of these cultural phenomena to nostalgia alone. The issue of nostalgia in contemporary popular music and technology will be discussed throughout the thesis as certain practices seemingly rooted in nostalgia might be a result of unrelated factors. In other words, what might appear to be a result of nostalgia might actually be a result of something else. The intention of this thesis is to outline some of the

cultural and technological aspects concerning the current state of popular music in comparison to its past.

The scale of retromania and technostalgia in popular music make them problematic subjects to discuss in a thesis like this; there are simply not enough pages to cover every aspect. There are always new directions to explore. Because of this the issues discussed in this thesis must be viewed as a selection of some of the aspects concerning retro culture. Just as with the fields of retromania and technostalgia, it is not possible to discuss all aspects concerning all popular music released between the turn of the century and up to today in a thesis like this. For the purpose of this thesis, the idea that popular music is increasingly occupied with retro aesthetics, as presented by Simon Reynolds is taken as a given. Although the first chapter does concern itself with how retro aesthetics manifest itself in popular culture and music, the main issue is rather why it manifests itself and what might be considered retro or not.

Chapter two will provide examples of technostalgia's presence in music culture and music making. The main focus is not the fact that technostalgia exists, but rather how it has come to be a part of contemporary music making, its role in regards to retro aesthetics and when it is logical or not to think the use of out-dated technology is caused by nostalgia. The basis for the discussions will be largely based on interviews conducted for this study, Timothy D. Taylor's book, *Strange Sounds: Music, Technology and Culture* and two articles by Samantha Bennett.² The interviews conducted will provide additional perspective. As will be discussed in chapter two, the use of old music technology does not necessarily have to be rooted in nostalgia.

The main issue of this thesis can be summed up in the following question: How and why has retromania and technostalgia grown in the 2000s?

² The two articles by Bennett are *Revisiting the 'Double Production Industry': Advertising, Consumption and 'Technoporn' Surrounding the Music Technology Press* and *Endless Analogue: Situating Vintage Technologies In The Contemporary Recording & Production Workplace*.

The Role of the Internet

The effect of the Internet on popular music culture throughout the 2000s cannot be ignored. The emergence of digital distribution of music along with digital platforms for obtaining music, such as iTunes, Spotify and illegal file-sharing, is important to take into consideration when discussing the increasing degree of retro aesthetics and technostalgia surrounding both the wider popular culture and popular music of the new millennium. Changes in consumer habits, both in terms of listening and music technologies, can be traced to the accessibility provided by the Internet, be it digital online stores and retailers such as Amazon or eBay.

The Internet has also changed how information about music is shared and obtained. Music blogs, articles and forums make it possible to read and talk about music that is underrepresented, or not represented at all, in music press and literature. Within the World Wide Web, there is music of the past to be discovered, or perhaps rather rediscovered, that would otherwise be forgotten.³ In other words, online forums and blogs are helping the past move into the present.

Simon Reynolds (2011, 56-57) points to YouTube as an example of over-documentation and what he calls ‘the astronomic expansion of humanity’s resources of memory’. When information becomes digitalised, it greatly increases the capability to store, sort and access data. The lack of limitations in digital space enables endless storing of music, video, text and pictures: any and every more or less interesting titbit gets uploaded online without any filtering. Not because it is necessarily important information, but because the endless capacity of the Internet allows it. Before the Internet became part of everyday life there were already more culture and information than any one person could possibly go through in a lifetime. The difference is that data and culture in the pre-Internet era had to be sought out in the physical world. The information was not immediately available. As the Internet has enabled increasingly easier and faster

³ This will be discussed further in chapter one.

access to information, the presence of the past in our own time has, as Reynolds points out, ‘increased immeasurably and insidiously’ (Reynolds 2011, 57).

Research

Data for this thesis has been gathered through interviews with several producers. All of the people interviewed for this thesis work and live in Trondheim with the exception of producer Gary Bromham, who is UK-based and has previously worked on Iceland and in the United States. In a study like this thesis it is important to conduct fieldwork in order to ground the presented issues in practice. Among the subjects discussed with the interviewees are the effects of streaming services on the music industry and music making, the digitalization of vintage, analogue gear and the role of analogue gear in contemporary production practices. Jostein Ansnes, Skjalg M. Raaen, Rhys Marsh and Magnus Kofoed were all interviewed at their respective studios. The studios all vary in size from Raaen’s Strengleik Studio’s humble 20 square meters (including both the recording and the control room) to Ansnes’ Øra Studio and its 90 square meters recording room. The interviews conducted in these studios also include a rundown of the available recording equipment (such as preamps, outboard effects and plugins) and how the gear is used. The interview with Thomas Henriksen, who worked at Nidaros Studio from 2000 to 2010,⁴ and now runs Supersound Studio as well as lecturing at the programme for music technology at NTNU,⁵ was conducted at NTNU’s locales in Fjordgata 1 in Trondheim. The same goes for the interview with Gary Bromham, although at a different date.

The interview subjects were all asked to participate in this study because of who they are and their backgrounds as producers and practitioners. Although quotes from them should be seen as opinions and not necessarily part of a wider consensus, the perspectives offered have a real value as these observations and

⁴Nidaros Studio is the largest, oldest and most known studio in Trondheim, famous for albums of such Norwegian acts as Dum Dum Boys, Stage Dolls and TNT.

⁵ NTNU is the abbreviation of Norwegian University of Science and Technology located in the city of Trondheim.

opinions tell something about how practitioners relate to the issues discussed in this thesis. It is important to note that the interviewees are not people who necessarily connect to retro aesthetics in the same way as for example the case studies presented by Samantha Bennett presented in the second chapter of this thesis. The selection of producers interviewed is rather meant to cover a wider general area of music production conducted in present day Trondheim.

Gary Bromham is the only person interviewed who does not work in Trondheim, but he does have ties to NTNU as a guest lecturer on music production. Bromham's experience as a producer and his interests in retro aesthetics and technostalgia makes his input on the issues discussed in this thesis highly valuable and his views are therefore represented to large degree throughout the thesis.

All of the interviews were recorded and transcripts of selected extracts can be found in the appendices. All appearances of interview citations in the body matter are translated by the author, the exception being citations from the interview with Rhys Marsh and Gary Bromham as those interviews were conducted in English.

Literature

Nostalgia as cultural, technological and psychological phenomena have been thoroughly explored and discussed in academic literature. That said, academic interest in the relation between nostalgia and popular music seems to be more recent. The interest for both popular culture and music's relation to nostalgia seem to have grown in the 2000s. There is a striking parallel between the increased degree of retro aesthetics in popular music and the increase in academic interest for pop nostalgia. The 2014 book *Media and Nostalgia: Yearning for the Past, Present and Future* is an example this. Edited by Katharina Niemeyer, the book consists of sixteen different articles, all written by different authors, concerning different aspects of nostalgia in popular culture. In

the introduction of the book, Niemeyer (2014, 5) cites numerous scholars and academics that have studied various aspects of nostalgia such as historical (Bolziger, 2007), ethnographical (Nash 2012) and sociological (Davis 1977; Keightley and Pickering 2006). Although all of these fields are interesting, for the purpose of this thesis nostalgia will be treated in a wider context. In other words, this thesis will not dwell much on what kinds of nostalgias are present in popular music and culture, but rather how these nostalgias have come to be part of contemporary pop.

That is not to say that this thesis will treat nostalgia simplistically. As pointed out by Niemeyer, the bloom and width of 'nostalgia studies' indicates that nostalgia should not be reduced to 'the concept of a unique regressive, embellished social phenomenon of popular culture, historical amnesia or the consumer world' (2014, 6). As the amount of literature on nostalgia has increased, so to have different perspectives on the issue emerged. The issues discussed in this thesis might imply different nostalgias. For example the revival of space age pop discussed in chapter two might be considered to be of a cultural or ethnographical nostalgic character as opposed to for example a psychological or literary nostalgia.

The book *Retromania* (2011) by Simon Reynolds forms much of the basis for the subjects explored and discussed in the first chapter of this thesis. His book is mainly focused on cultural aspects surrounding retro aesthetics both in popular culture context and in popular music of the 2000s. What his book perhaps lacks is the recognition of retro trends in music technology and its impact on popular music in the first decade of the new century. He does mention that the expansion of the Internet and emergence of MP3 players like the iPod has affected people's listening and music collecting habits, but he does not delve much into music production technologies and technostalgia. As argued throughout this thesis, popular music is greatly dependent on the available music technology and it is therefore important to consider technology when discussing retro aesthetics in popular music.

In his 2001 book *Strange Sounds: Music, Technology and Culture*, Timothy D. Taylor has devoted a chapter to the subject of technostalgia.⁶ Focusing on the revival of Space Age Pop, Taylor recognises the role of technology in the re-emergence of a (at the time his book was released) 50-year-old genre, but fails to explore it closely. The title of Taylor's chapter is somewhat misleading, as it is more concerned with retro aesthetics of the Space Age Pop revival than retro technology. This serves as an example of how literature seemingly concerning itself with technostalgia in relation to popular music is not necessarily actually concerning itself with technology. That said, the term technostalgia introduced by Taylor has been adopted and used to describe nostalgia towards music technology in for example articles featured in JARP by such scholars as Samantha Bennett (2012), Alan Williams (2015) and Phillip McIntyre (2015).⁷

Beyond the aforementioned fieldwork interviews, another part of the research done for this thesis consisted of primary text studies in popular-press articles, interviews and online blogs, among other resources. As a large part of this thesis concerns the relationship between technostalgia and retromania in contemporary popular music and music making, the Internet is an important source for information on trends in popular music and music production technology as information is continuously uploaded. Additionally, the Internet serves as a source of reviews and in-depth articles on production and mixing practices otherwise not represented in academia. As part of this thesis concerns music production, it is important to ground the research in practice. As with the interviews conducted, online material helps to serve this purpose. Some of the web articles and blogs cited should be considered opinion pieces; although they do not necessarily represent absolute facts, they are still valuable as they tell something about how people view these issues.

⁶ This will be discussed further in chapter two.

⁷ JARP is the abbreviation of *Journal on the Art of Record Production*, which is an online peer-reviewed journal tied to the previously annual, now biannual, Art of Record Production conference.

CHAPTER ONE

REASSEMBLING THE PAST IN THE PRESENT

Retromania is the obsession with the past within living memory. In the last 15 years, popular culture has entered a state where its own past has caught up with it. According to Simon Reynolds's 2011 book, *Retromania: Pop Culture's Addiction to Its Own Past*, the first decade of the new millennium has been crowded by its own past. Instead of carving out its own path, the 2000s involved a significant amount of 'new' music that was built from references to earlier music. The 2000s saw the return of every previous decade, all happening again simultaneously. As older styles and genres resurfaced as part of contemporary pop, the decade's sense of self diminished. The 2000s were the decade for revivals, reissues, reformation and reunion. We saw modern incarnations of bands like Led Zeppelin, the Police and Pixies reuniting for tours whilst other older bands – like Fleetwood Mac, Stooges and My Bloody Valentine – returned to the studio as recording artists (Reynolds 2011, x-xi).

Every decade in popular music history carries with it associations to distinct sounds or genres. Whether it is the funk, blues-rock and the British invasion of the 1960s or the disco, hard rock and punk of the 1970s. The 1980s saw the arrival of New Wave of British heavy metal and the early years of rap and the 1990s brought with it eurodance, boy bands and grunge. By contrast, the 2000s are harder to pinpoint in terms of the exact defining styles of popular music that emerged in that decade. That is not to say that there is no innovation and originality in music of the 2000s, but it seems that a large part of the music created in the recent past is defined not by how it stands out from its predecessors, but in what way it reuses elements of the past.

During the interviews the practitioners were asked what new sounds and genres they felt defined the last fifteen years. Generally they recognised the views presented by Reynolds. As producer and studio owner of Autumnsongs Studio Rhys Marsh says:

I don't know, 'cause a few years ago there was a disco revival, it's just revivals... Maybe in 50 years we will see it more clearly... But everything seems to be retro. Even, even the pop music like the Daft Punk that came out a few years ago. Instead of programming disco beats they've got disco players from the late seventies. So even the modern music is retro. Air, French band, they're doing kind of modern music, but they're doing it in a way that if, if these modern instruments existed in the seventies that's what it would sound like. Yeah, so it's just kind of like a mish-mash. (Marsh 2016).

Studio owner and long time producer Jostein Ansnes of Øra Studio expresses during the interview that he feels that the last fifteen years has been lacking in innovation. He says that although there are genres that have been further developed in the 2000s, 'haven't we really just been treading the waters of older genres? ...Are there any new genres? I mean, hip-hop is not new... but at least it has evolved. But there is nothing that has originated in the 2000s' (Ansnes 2016). The last decade and a half can perhaps be summed up in the words of music journalist Edna Gundersen (2009) who argues that the biggest and most significant hit of the 2000s was the iPod, whilst pop music itself dissolved into passing trends.

On the subject of retro, Simon Reynolds offers a four-part definition as a way to distinguish it from other ways of relating to the past. First, retro concerns the past within living memory. Second, retro needs to be recalled accurately and are therefore dependent on documentation such as recordings, videos and photographs. This reliance on documentation makes retro culture less likely to misinterpret the past. The third factor is the retro culture's inclusion of popular culture artefacts. According to Reynolds, this sets retro culture apart from earlier revivals concerned with high culture and exquisite collectables. The acquisition of retro artefacts is more concerned with searching through thrift shops than attending auctions. The fourth and final factor concerns retro culture's treatment of the past. Retro culture tends to be amused and charmed by the past, rather than idealising or sentimentalise it Reynolds goes on to state that retro culture's 'approach is not scholarly and purist, but ironic and eclectic' and that it is more about extracting subcultural capital from the past and imposing it on the

present, than actually bringing back the past (2011, xxx-xxxi). The recycling and recombining of retro elements is what Reynolds calls 'the bricolage of bric-a-brac' (2011, xxxi), meaning something constructed from a collection of ornamental or sentimental articles.

Popular culture's return to its past is also recognised by Katharina Niemeyer. Although she states that fascination with the past is not new to our time, she does question how the new century so far has become increasingly preoccupied with expressions of nostalgia: in movies or digital photographs taken by mobile phones edited to look like Polaroids. By contrast, the 1990s envisioned a future fuelled by new technology (Niemeyer 2014, 1). Although the 2000s certainly has seen the arrival of new technology, Niemeyer is referencing the growing interest for and nostalgia towards old technology.

As recognised by Niemeyer, retromania is not exclusive to popular music, but plays a role in many aspects of popular culture. The recent output of the film industry, as an example, is riddled with remakes of old blockbusters originally released several decades ago: *Alfie*, *Ocean's Eleven*, *Casino Royale*, *Robocop*, *King Kong*. The list goes on and on. In addition to this, Hollywood seems to have a manic need to reintroduce old franchises. *Star Trek* got a reboot in 2009. *The Fantastic Four* franchise was re-launched in 2015. The Spiderman-franchise started over as *The Amazing Spider-Man* in 2012, only five years after *Spider-Man 3* and the series are starting yet again in 2017. The industry is not only rebooting and remaking. TV-shows like *The Dukes of Hazzard*, *Charlie's Angels* and *Get Smart* were all adapted for the silver screen in the 2000s alongside children cartoons like *The Smurfs* and *Garfield*. At the time of this writing it is only a month until the premier of a new *Star Wars* movie, *Star Wars: Episode VII – The Force Awakens*.

The musical theatre has undergone some of the same trips down memory lane. The spin-off and remake culture is strongly represented by so called 'jukebox musicals'. Musicals like this are either based around the music of some legendary band or artist (Queen: *We Will Rock You*, Beach Boys, *Good Vibrations*, or Bob

Dylan, *The Times They Are A-Changin'*) or music from a specific era in popular music history, as with the 1980s 'hair metal' used in the jukebox musical *Rock Of Ages* (Reynolds 2011, xvi). Musicals that fall under the jukebox musical category have actually existed since the 1970s, but there has never been produced more of them than in the 2000s. Between 2000 and 2009 there were produced as many as 38 of these musicals and an additional 18 between 2010 and 2015. By comparison from the mid-seventies and up to the turn of the new millennium there had only been produced 14.⁸

Cravings for the past are also present in the world of fashion. The twenty-first century vintage clothing market has been booming and designers seem to have recycled old ideas at a significantly higher rate than before. Looking to the past for inspiration has always been a big part of fashion design, but never on such a scale as in the new millennium (Reynolds 2011, xvii). As Joan Juliet Buck, editor-in-chief of French *Vogue* between 1994 and 2001, points out:

The present, which in French is gloriously called 'the dawn of the third millennium', was supposed to be all spacesuits and horrible helmets.

Instead, it's chaos: revivals of every past possible, with a preponderance of transparent chiffon. (Buck 2011).

We have entered a state where present fashion cannot be style-dated. Fashion tells us something about who we are supposed to be. It is supposed to remind us of the context of the time (Buck, 2011).

Whilst music, movies and fashion are among the most obvious areas to be affected by retromania, there are also signs of it in several niche commercial markets. Retro toy collections, retro gaming, retro food, retro interior design, retro candy, retro ring-tones, retro travel and retro architecture. There has even been a rising demand for retro porn. People have started to a larger degree to collect and share porn from particular periods of the past. Assisted by the

⁸ The list was retrieved from Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jukebox_musical, accessed 4 November 2015.

Internet, people are able to easily access porn from a time before plastic surgery and Brazilian wax and cable TV broadcasts the occasional black and white stag movies or fifties nudie reels (Reynolds 2011, xvii-xviii).

Katharina Niemeyer (2014, 2) also recognises several of the retro niche markets mentioned by Reynolds. She argues that although it is easy to discuss the observable signs of retro culture in terms of emerging retro trends and cultures, nostalgia for the past implies something more: as nostalgia concerns negative or positive associations to the past, it cannot be seen as a trend or fashion.

According to Niemeyer 'It [nostalgia] is related to a way of living, imagining and sometimes exploiting or (re)inventing the past, present and future' (2014, 2). This implies that the issue of nostalgia and retro culture is as much a way of life and living for some as it is a passing trend.

Although retromania can be found across our entire popular culture, it seems to be most prominent in popular music. As Simon Reynolds points out it might be because it feels wrong in the context of contemporary pop. According to Reynolds, pop music is for the young; it is supposed to reflect and shape current trends and identity. So why are even young people feeling nostalgic towards epochs in popular music history they haven't even experienced themselves? Pop is all about renewal: about rewriting itself according to the present time surrounding its conception. Pop, alongside fashion, has the ability to date-stamp a period in history (2011, xviii-xix). As previously mentioned, songs from the previous century invokes associations to its own time. This quality in pop is a big part of what used to keep it moving forward. It does not take long before pop music becomes dated. It defines a certain period and then moves on, evolves, in order to stay relevant to contemporary culture and society.

The 2000s was the decade of recycling. It saw the return of garage-punk with bands like The White Stripes, The Hives, The Vines and Jet (even the word 'the' in band names invoke associations to the past; *The* Rolling Stones, *The* Beatles, *The* Clash). Vintage-soul got resurrected through the music of Amy Winehouse, Duffy, Adele and other young white females who sound like Afro-American

singers from the sixties. La Roux, Little Boots and Lady Gaga are all heavily influenced by eighties synth-pop (Reynolds, 2011, xix-xx).

Modern retro culture has also brought with it the return of older audio formats. According to the Nielsen report for music sales in the U.S., vinyl sales grew in 2014 by 51.8 percent, totalling 9,2 million records sold (businesswire.com, 2015). Many thought the vinyl format would slowly die as the compact disc became more and more common, and in this day and age where streaming services is for many the main source of acquiring music it might seem counterintuitive that vinyl is having such a strong comeback. Just north of 9 million sold vinyl records are not that much compared with CD and digital sales of music, but the fact remains that there exists a growing market for the format. In his opinion piece *Why Vinyl Has Made a Comeback*, Lee Barron (2015) makes an attempt at exploring some of the factors leading to this increase in vinyl sales. One possibility recognised by Barron is that the increase is yet another symptom of Reynold's contemporary condition of retromania. The vinyl market exists because of nostalgia for the past; 'large and fragile discs in cardboard sleeves that manifest a distinctly un-digital crackle when played on the similarly redundant technology of the record player' (Barron 2015). But, Barron argues, if it is nostalgia that is responsible for the vinyl's comeback, how come the first No. 1 album on the official U.K. vinyl LP and singles chart (launched on 13 April 2015) was *Future Hearts* by U.S. band All Time Low? In fact, the majority of albums on the Top 10 list were by contemporary artists such as Sufjan Stevens, Turbowolf, Nadine Shah and James Bay.

Barron (2015) continues by citing the analogue sound of vinyl as a reason for it's newfound popularity. The fact that vinyl and the record player is wholly analogue gives the sound certain characteristics that does not exist in digital audio (audio like CDs, MP3s and streaming). Record players, like all analogue equipment, have certain 'flaws' that will colour the sound it produces in certain ways. This colouring is most commonly referred to as 'warmth', which is a product of analogue distortion of the sound, recognizable by the crackling sound a

record player makes.⁹ He then goes on to argue that the record players lack of ability to skip tracks makes for a more immersive listening experience as you have to listen to a whole album from beginning to end. It forces the listener to listen to the tracks in the order the artist originally intended. Finally, he points to the vinyl's possessive quality, a quality that downloaded or streamed music lacks. There is a whole ritual to acquiring a vinyl, from the opening and handling of the disc to the sleeve with artwork and printed lyrics (Barron, 2015).

In Barron's opinion piece he sees nostalgia as a sign of retromania, whilst the vinyl's analogue sound, it's supposedly immersive listening experience compared to digital formats and its collectors value as signs of the opposite. It could be argued that all the factors he mentions fits into the concept of retromania. All the factors he lists up are nostalgic and in that sense retro. The way the record player colours the sound of the vinyl does undeniably conjure associations to previous decades. The same does the fact that you have to listen through the whole album, as opposed from the digital age when one can easily assemble playlists consisting of whatever songs one like. The collector's aspect is also well rooted in the retro culture; the desire to own a physical record collection as opposed to a digital library of tracks. He does have a point about the majority of albums on the Top 10 list being released by contemporary artists. A closer look at the music produced by these artists reveals a certain retro feel to their music. James Bay is rooted in folk and indie rock with influences from Jeff Buckley. Nadine Shah's music carries influences from the likes of PJ Harvey, Arthur Russell and Nick Cave. Turbowolf sounds like a mix of 1970s heavy metal and 1960s psychedelic rock and Sufjan Stevens's 2015 album *Carrie and Lowell* is well within indie folk territory. It could be argued that since all of these artists have a certain retro vibe to them, their albums might have been released on vinyl as a result of a desire to frame their work within a retro setting.

Even more peculiar than the return of the vinyl is the return of the cassette. The National Audio Company (NAC) is the last audiocassette manufacturer in the

⁹ The issue of "warmth" will be discussed further in chapter two.

world. NAC has made deals with several major record companies like Universal Music Group and Sony Music Entertainment and in 2014 they manufactured more than 10 million audiocassette which made it the best year in the company's 46 year long history. Although a lot of the cassettes sold are blank, the quantity of music cassettes manufactured is still significant. The soundtrack of the 2014 film *Guardians of the Galaxy* sold 11,500 copies on audiocassette, and 5000 more were ordered for 2015.¹⁰ The president of NAC, Steve Stepp, attributes this surprising increase in demand to the retro movement, 'the nostalgia of holding the audiocassette in your hand'. It is not older people who have started buying cassettes again as a significant portion of NAC's clientele are below 35 years of age. Among their customers are also independent bands releasing their music on cassette in the hope of acquiring analogue warmth for their music (Arce, 2015).

The signs of retromania in our culture are abundant, but to simply attribute the condition to nostalgia is not an explanation for it. As Niemeyer (2014, 2) argues nostalgia cannot be seen as simply a passing trend. In order to understand where retromania comes from, it is important to take a closer look at several of the aspects that has changed around popular music culture over the last couple of decades.

Degrees of Retro: Little Lion Man

Retro elements in popular music might not necessarily be a product of the artist's, or producer's, desire to associate the music with the past. It is important to draw a difference between conscious and less conscious retro culture. As an example, an artist recording his or her album in a studio with a mixing console from the 1970s might not be conscious about the sonic impact such a mixer can have on the sound of the production. It might be that the artist has chosen to record in that studio for reasons entirely unrelated to the studio's recording equipment, and although the studio might add certain sound qualities associated

¹⁰ One of the themes of the movie was a handmade cassette mixtape giving to the main character by his dying mother. Much of the movie's soundtrack consists of songs from this mixtape featuring such artists as 10cc, Jackson 5 and Blue Swede.

with the past, it would not be a result of a conscious choice involving retro aesthetics. Likewise, a recording done with vintage analogue instruments cannot necessarily be considered retro simply because of the instruments themselves. If, on the other hand, an artist or a producer would choose to use vintage, analogue instruments in order to achieve a specific sound associated with a specific era of popular music history, they consciously impose retro aesthetics on their music.

In the same way that retro aesthetics can occur both consciously and less consciously, it must also be considered in various degrees: in balances between new and old. All music comes from other music in some way or another. Simon Reynolds (2011, xxxiii) recognises this, stating that music being influenced by music is not retro in and of itself. Reynolds points to the British folk scene as an example of this. The movement has roots back to the end of the nineteenth century. It started with the collection of old traditional British folk songs. Collectors would visit villages and make cylinder recordings of old men and women performing folk ballads. This had nothing to do with retro, but was rather about preserving and documenting traditional British music as a sort of ethnomusicological project. This enabled others to perform the music as faithfully to the originals as possible. As the movement developed, there occurred a growing division between the purists and those who felt it was important to renew or modernise folk in order to keep it relevant. This was achieved by changing instrumentation, adding influences from different genres and writing original songs.

The 78 Project is an interesting modern day parallel to the collection of British folk songs at the end of the nineteenth century. According to their website, the 78 Project is inspired by Alan Lomax and his work on collecting and recording folk music in the early twentieth century.¹¹ The aim of the project was to 'bring the spirit of his [Lomax's] work into the present' by traveling across America to record musicians in their hometown. The main premise of the project, which culminated in the 2014 documentary film *The 78 Project Movie*, is not the

¹¹ Data gathered from <http://the78project.com/about/> 6 May 2016.

recording itself, but the recording equipment. All recordings were done on an authentic 1930's Presto direct-to-acetate disk recorder, using one microphone and giving the musicians one take of three minutes to record their performance. In this sense, the project is wholeheartedly retro. By contrast to the ethnomusicological collection of British folk music in the late nineteenth century, this project seems to be more about revisiting the past than preserving it. If the goal of the project were to preserve music of the past, the use of modern recording techniques would have rendered a more high fidelity reproduction and would therefore perhaps be more suitable.

To give an example of varying degrees of retro aesthetics it is useful take a look at present-day British folk artist Eliza Carthy, who is considered to be a leading figure within the genre. The daughter of Norma Waterson and Martin Carthy, both prominent figures in the British folk revival, Eliza Carthy is rooted well within the folk genre. She is however not a strict traditionalist as she at times applies influences from trip hop or jazz in her music or uses synthesizers as well as more traditional acoustic instruments. She also does not seem to have any reservations against recording with digital recording technology. In contrast, the free-folk movement in America is more retro oriented. Groups such as MV & EE, Wooden Wand and Espers are highly influenced by British Folk of the late 1960s and early 1970s.¹² The bands of the free-folk movement are very much trying to mirror the past. Period instrumentation and achieving a vintage and analogue sound are instrumental. The difference between Carthy and the free folk movement is also seen in how bands and artists are presenting themselves. Eliza Carthy has appeared both onstage and on her album covers with facial piercings and dyed hair. The American free-folk movement is more concerned with anchoring their image in the past, adopting a fashion resembling that worn by earlier folk bands and artists. Likewise, the artwork of their albums is often referencing this era (Reynolds, 2011, xxxiii-xxxiv).

¹² This was the period when Eliza Carthy's parents, Norma Waterson and Martin Carthy made their name in the British folk movement.

Eliza Carthy grew up in the British folk movement; it is part of whom she is. The difference between her and the bands and artists of contemporary American folk are that they have experienced the genre almost entirely through records from the late 1960s and early 1970s. As the free-folk outfits are largely focused on British folk rather than American folk from the same era, the distance between the artists and the culture that have influenced them becomes even bigger: it is not only a distance in time, but also geographically. Carthy has tried to update folk music in order to give it contemporary relevance, whilst the free-folk movement wants to bring back the past (Reynolds, 2011, xxxiv). It would be wrong to consider Carthy as part of a retro movement. Folk music as a genre is not inherently retro as it is more concerned with preserving a musical tradition. What Carthy is trying to do is to bring the tradition she is part of forwards. In contrast, the free-folk artists are to a much larger degree working within a retro framework as they are simulating or adopting a tradition they are not part of and more importantly, a specific era within that genre.

The 2009 single 'Little Lion Man' by Mumford and Sons also serves as an example of varying degrees of retro aesthetics. The overall sound of the production is rooted in folk rock music. The instrumentation of the song, consisting mainly of acoustic guitar, double bass, piano, banjo, drums, lead vocals and backing vocals, is also well rooted in the British folk tradition. The influence of folk rock music becomes clear when comparing the track to songs like 'Buck Creek Girls' by The New Lost City Ramblers. On the surface, the song might seem to be nothing more than a blueprint of 1960s folk rock, but closer listening to the production reveals a more contemporary production approach. Apart from the higher fidelity compared to recordings of earlier folk rock, the production also features elements not associated with the genre. Throughout the song one can hear sound effects produced by playing an electric guitar with a bow moving across the stereo spectrum. Additionally the amount of reverb on the kick drum is not consistent throughout the song, suggesting that the reverb is not the result of the room it was recorded in, but was added in the post-production of the track.

In 2011 *Sound On Sound* magazine conducted an interview with Ruadhri Cushnan who was the mixing engineer on 'Little Lion Man'. In addition to taking the reader through the mix, Cushnan talks about the overall sound of Mumford And Sons, stating that although there are influences from folk in their music, he is not sure he would 'call them a folk band at all'. To him, the band sound contemporary (Tingen, 2011). This is interesting since the band has been widely recognised as a folk rock group. Frontman of the band, Marcus Mumford, have stated: 'We wouldn't be playing music at all if it wasn't for Dylan' (Fitzpatrick, 2013). When Cushnan is speaking of the influences of the band, he is speaking in the capacity of being the mixing engineer for the song. Through working on the production he has become familiar with every aspect of the track. The fact that he does not wholly recognise the band as a folk rock group suggests that there are elements in the production not typically found in folk rock music: elements that might not be noticed by the average listener.

Further on in the interview, Cushnan goes through the mixing process of the song. He gives a run down of the entire mix, describing how he processed each of the different audio tracks and what audio plugins and outboard equipment he used. On several of the instruments, Cushnan had multiple microphones to chose from, such as the banjo and double bass. The drum recordings consist of 12 individual tracks. In addition Cushnan also utilised drum samples to enhance the sound of some of the drums. He explains that he used the different drum tracks to build the dynamic of the song by starting out with only some of the tracks and then adding more of the tracks as the song progressed (Tingen, 2011).

The use of contemporary recording and mixing practices on 'Little Lion Man' sets the track apart from earlier folk rock. The overall sound of the song is reminiscent of earlier music of the genre, but the production is on a much more advanced level. In terms of degrees of retro, the song itself is well placed within a folk rock revival culture, whilst the production is not. It is important to differ between retro elements in a production and production practices and techniques

that have formed over time. A production does not necessarily become retro simply because it makes use of such ‘tricks of the trade’.

The music video for the single is also worth considering.¹³ The band is seen playing the song live in front of an empty concert hall with light bulbs hanging in rows from the roof. The performance is done without amplification; there are no microphones or a PA system featured, giving the impression that the performance is acoustic (even though the ‘piano’ featured in the video seems to be a Nord Clavia Stage Piano). Their clothing is likely not coincidental either. In the video, the four band members have donned clothing associated with Americana, much in the same way as the free-folk movement mentioned earlier. As stated in a 2010 *American Songwriter* interview with the band, the soundtrack for the 2000 movie *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* was a turning point for the band.¹⁴ As the movie is set in mid-1930’s rural Mississippi, much of the soundtrack consists of period folk music. The fashions and styles of the movie are also eerily reminiscent of the clothing seen in the music video for ‘Little Lion Man’.

The music video is not only an important part of the promotion for the single; it is also contributing to forming the image of the group. The video plays on the associations its viewers have to the folk rock genre. To which degree the song can be deemed retro or not can be discussed at length, but as is evident in the music video, retro aesthetics is part of its marketing.

The Transition from Knowledge Guardian to Sharify Culture

Music piracy and streaming (along with digital sales of music) have undeniably had a huge effect on music consumption. Not only has music become more available, it has also transcended the physical world and made a move to the virtual. In the last twenty years, music production has reached a state where the

¹³ Music video accessed at YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LLJf9qJHR3E>. Accessed 11 April 2016.

¹⁴ Interview accessed at <http://americansongwriter.com/2010/12/drinks-with-mumford-sons/>, Accessed 6 May 2016. This is confirmed by band yet again in an interview posted in the June 2011 issue of Spin Magazine.

music never actually has to exist outside the digital domain; it can be both created and distributed digitally without ever existing outside a computer. File-sharing, and eventually streaming of music, has created a virtual space where music of the past exists alongside music of the present. It could be argued that this has always been the case in record stores as well, but the main difference is the ratio of new to old music. A record store cannot stock endless copies of every album ever released; the physical space of a store would simply not be able to accommodate it. Additionally, a record store often promotes new releases by advertising them or placing them near the entrance of the store, for example in a top ten shelf. The older or more unknown records can be found in the back corner by leafing through tens, if not hundreds of records. One would think that in the virtual domain, where all of these records exist simultaneously, they would also be as equals. In the interview conducted with owner of Strengleik Studio Skjalg M. Raaen, he observes that the music in streaming services is not represented equally:

we see it when we open Tidal or Spotify. We see what pops up on the screen, right? It isn't the little unknown [bands]... It is Adele and it is Jay-Z... So in that sense it isn't so fucking different from standing in front of a CD-rack and looking at that'. He says that even though we have access to all the music in the world, he does not think that people can be bothered to search out different music, outside of the already set and promoted playlists. (Raaen 2016).

Not only have internet technology provided ways to share and (more or less legally) acquire music, it has also provided a platform for obscure and thought-to-be-forgotten music. Simon Reynolds writes about the online culture of 'sharity' ('share' + 'charity' + 'rarity'). The sharity culture is based around music blogs about artists or records where the blog would feature a link to download whatever music the blogger is writing about. As Reynolds notes, almost any form of music imaginable is represented: from mainstream to the most obscure and inaccessible. Some blogs could for example feature the whole discography of Iron Maiden, whilst others, such as the folk specialised blog Time Has Told Me, features music that is much harder to find elsewhere. In the case of the Time Has

Told Me blog,¹⁵ it went on what Reynolds calls a ‘cranny of History-rummaging journey through British folk’ looking for forgotten music of the genre before moving on to such music as French folk, Dutch folk, Quebecois folk, Christian folk and Christian psychedelic folk (Reynolds 2011, 105-106).

The Internet has changed how music is collected. In the past, obsessive record collectors seemed to be relatively few in numbers. In the 2000s, new technology of storage and distribution enabled music collecting to become a part of the mainstream. The iPod was revolutionary in how it made it possible to collect and categorise large quantities of music without having to worry about physical storage space or the physical effort of finding rare recordings in record stores. Combined with the previous mentioned file sharing and iTunes cultures, the way music was listened to changed forever. The sharity culture serves as an example of how music collecting culture changed after the turn of the century:

The impetus behind record collecting used to be: ‘I want to have something that no one else has’. But with the advent of sharity that’s shifted to: ‘I’ve just got hold of something no one else has got, so I’m immediately going to make it available to EVERYBODY’. There’s a weird mix of competitive generosity and showing off how cool and esoteric your taste is. What made the sharity blog circuit different from the peer-to-peer file-sharing communities that preceded it is the exhibitionism. Knowledge became cultural capital and bloggers became cult figures, ‘faces’ on the scene, even though their real-world identity was shrouded. (Reynolds 2011, 106-107).

As Reynolds mentions in the quote above, record collection in the past was about obtaining music no one else had access to or knowledge of for the purpose of owning something rare. By contrast, the sharity culture is about obtaining music no one else has knowledge of in order to share it with the rest of the world.

The record collector’s desire to have something that no one else had can be seen as a way to oppose oneself from the mainstream. Will Straw (1997, 11) references Eric Weisbard (1994) on that the record collector’s interest in the obscure and marginal may be related to myths of oppositionality found in rock culture. He goes on to reference Lawrence Grossberg (1984) on that ‘to collect

¹⁵ The Time Has Told Me blog still exists as of 5th May 2016.

the obscure is to refuse the mainstream', thereby participating in the process within rock culture that Grossberg calls 'excorporation'. Straw (1997, 11) sees this division in rock culture as giving 'the investment in the obscure and the margin a heroic edge, and made of it the very foundation of rock politics'. This might be true in relation to both the record collecting culture of the past and the sharity culture of the 2000s. The difference is that the collectors of the sharity movement are broadcasting their opposition to the mainstream whilst the collectors of the past was either not concerned with this or simply was not able to do it due to limited communication technology.

This shift in record collecting culture is discussed in Alexandra Molotkow's 2012 article *Why the Old-School Music Snob Is the Least Cool Kid on Twitter*. In her article, Molotkow describes how knowledge of obscure music in the early 2000s used to be a means to stand out as 'cool'. At the time, Molotkow herself had adopted what she calls 'knowledge-guardian culture'; a culture driven by a notion that obscure music equalled good music. In order to gain knowledge of the 'right' bands, you had to know the right people, go to the right record stores. Obscure knowledge was reserved for the 'cool'. As the decade progressed, file-sharing became increasingly common. Molotkow recognises that as music became available to anyone for free, cultural knowledge was no longer exclusively reserved for the initiated. File-sharing had made the 'knowledge guardians' irrelevant and knowledge of obscure music was no longer a way to distinguish between the cool and uncool (Molotkow, 2012).

The 'knowledge guardians' described by Molotkow exemplifies the record collectors of the past as described by Reynolds (2012). The difference between the knowledge guardians's approach to record collecting and the sharity culture described by Reynolds is that the sharity community is to a much larger degree catering to an audience. The fact that the sharity culture operates exclusively in the virtual domain means that the audience is (potentially) of a global scale. This in turn suggests that the rediscovery of an obscure and long-forgotten record is

no longer made by a single person, but by a whole community of record enthusiasts.

The transition in record collecting culture and the emergence of sharity relates to retromania in that they are both cultures that glorifies the past. It should be noted that not every part of these cultures necessarily concerns the music of yesteryear: obscure music is not necessarily the same as old music. Although it should not be taken for granted that obscurity and age is the same thing, new music in general tends to not be obscure in that it has not yet had time to be forgotten. A big part of the sharity culture is the rediscovery of music. It enables a culture for preservation and distribution of music that would otherwise be lost for a wider audio audience. The music that becomes rediscovered becomes glorified not because it is something completely different from music that people are already familiar with, but because of the inherent novelty of obscure music.

Technological Advances and Their Effects on Popular Music Creation

In 1999, Brian Eno wrote the article 'The Revenge of the Intuitive' for the magazine *Wired*. In the article, Eno describes spending three days working on 'possibly the most advanced recording console in the world' (Eno 1999). Eno long ago recognised the recording studio's potential as a musical instrument in its own rights and have lectured on how the studio enables the creation of music that could otherwise not exist. The three days working on the console left Eno frustrated with the amount of options provided with modern recording technology. The console itself had more than 10,000 controls, adding several steps to processes that would earlier have required as little as a single switch. This resulted in what Eno calls 'a new layer of bureaucracy' between the producer and the music (Eno 1999).

Eno recognises that modern technology design is stuck on the idea that more options in music making are the same as greater freedom. As digital music technology has evolved, music production has made a shift from being a muscular

process to a mental process. As the amount of options increase, the intuition of the producer or artist becomes diminished. When using technology familiar to us, we are drawing on collective cultural associations tied to the equipment: the scratching of vinyl, the grainy quality of black and white film. The limit of technology enables intimacy. When technology becomes seemingly limitless, this intimacy is compromised as without limits the technology is in a state of constant change (Eno, 1999).

The views presented by Eno has been generally recognised by the practitioners interviewed for this thesis. Gary Bromham (2016) is a U.K.-based producer with almost thirty years experience in the music industry. He expresses that for him, too many options in technology make it difficult to push the technology to its limits. In contrast to this, having only a few options will force him to be creative and explore the limits of the gear. Although he recognises that the amount of options will effect how he approaches technology, he does question its impact on creativity stating that more options does not necessarily prevent creativity, but rather delays it and forces you to re-evaluate it. Magnus Kofoed (2016), Producer at Brygga Studio, makes a comparison between working in DAWs like Pro Tools and working on analogue mixing consoles or with tape machines.¹⁶ In the interview, Kofoed states that with an analogue mixer or tape machine, one can push the technology in a way that is not possible with a DAW and in doing so create new sounds. As the analogue equipment he refers to has limited options compared to Pro Tools, it is interesting to see that Kofoed sees the limitations of the gear as something that can be used creatively.

Eno's idea that more options does not necessarily equal more freedom is tied to retromania in the sense that as music production has become democratised through digital software solutions such as the DAW, music is now being created on technology that is only limited by the processing power of the computer it is installed on. The democratisation of music production is not retro in itself as it is

¹⁶ DAW is the abbreviation of Digital Audio Workstation.

enabled by new technology, but it might be contributing to the stagnation of innovation in contemporary popular music. In this sense, the lack of limits in contemporary production practices is indirectly contributing to retromania by not contributing to innovation. As already mentioned by Bromham (2016), more options do not prevent creativity, but it might delay it. If Eno is right in his notion that more options leads to a decline in intuition in the producer and the artist, this might very well be the case.

Much like Eno, Jostein Ansnes (2016) of Øra Studio expresses dissatisfaction over the loss of intuition in contemporary music making. According to him, pop music today is too concerned with having 'everything right'. Perfect, but not too perfect. Ansnes describes that some of the artists that come to his studio will listen to the mix of their songs over and over again, replay them to friends and try to find every fault and eliminate it. In his opinion, this diminishes some of the original spontaneity of the music disappear, and perhaps the music gets duller and more boring because of it.

As recognised by Eno, music technology at the end of the 1990s was becoming increasingly more focused on creating as many options as possible available to the user. The emergence of new pop music goes hand in hand with the development of new music technology. The sheer amount of music technology created in the twentieth century is staggering, both in the world of performance and the world of recording. The limits of music technology have been increasingly diminished as the years have progressed. The difference between creative music making practices now and those of the past is how the technology was used, or perhaps more accurately, misused. Popular music history is full of examples of this and in order to fully understand the current state of music creation it is useful to look at how the limited technology of the past was used by comparison to the technology available today.

In the late 1940s every requirement was in place for rock'n roll to be born. The electric guitar had long since been commercialised and U.S. companies like Harmony and Kay were now offering budget-priced guitars. As more affordable guitars were produced, the market expanded. At this point in time, guitarists had already started experimenting with ways to make the guitar sound differently than it was intended to. Dale Hawkins used banjo strings (which was lighter than the guitar strings available on the market) on his guitar in order to make it possible to simulate the vibrato of slide guitar playing. Buddy Holly experimented with double tracked vocals on songs like 'Words of Love'. The New Orleans based guitarist Guitar Slim was among the first to make use of the overdriven guitar sound (Trynka 2002, p. 37-42).

The 1960s saw an expansion in the guitars colour palette through the work of amplifier designers and effects-unit manufacturers that had been made aware of the musician's misuse of their technology. In the late 1950s/early 1960s, guitar amplifier manufacturers like Vox and Fender built amps that were supposed to sound as clean as possible. This kind of crisp, clear sound was however already becoming a thing of the past. Guitarists in the 1960s, especially in Britain, got increasingly more interested in distorting their amps as it gave them new possibilities to shape their sound. Afro-American blues guitarists had used distorted guitars since the 1950s by turning relatively small amplifiers to max volume and gain and it was recordings of these artists that turned the young British musicians on to distortion. As a result new amplifiers were produced, designed specifically to distort and stomp-boxes (portable effects-units) got introduced in the first half of this decade. The engineers of the day hugely expanded the guitarist's repertoire of sound and texture by inventing and building effects-units capable of producing fuzz-, wah-wah- and octavate-effects (Trynka, 2002, p. 83-85). The emergence of overdriven and distorted guitar is an example of the symbiotic relationship between artists and manufacturers and the misuse of technology. The manufacturers released a technology to the public,

which was used in a way it was not intended. This in turn led to the manufacturers creating products intended to create and expand on effects already produced by the misuse of earlier technology.

As the twentieth century progressed, so too did innovation as a result of creative use of limited technology. The example with electric guitars and amplifiers from the middle of the last century demonstrates how innovation is not only a result of new technology being introduced to the market, but also of the misuse of the technology. Another example of the creative use of music technology can be found in the work of George Martin and his collaboration with the Beatles.

When Martin became the producer for the Beatles, he already had experience with creating new sonic textures. Working on comedy records with people like Peter Sellers, Dudley Moore and Peter Ustinov had given him the opportunity to experiment with the creation of sound effects. This laid the foundation for his musical experimentation as a record producer for the Beatles. Martin was recording on four-track recorders. Martin worked around the limitation of only having four tracks to record on by using multiple recorders. He and his production team were able to mix several tracks down to a single track, thus freeing up additional tracks for recording. In the case of the Beatles' 1967 album, *Sergeant Pepper*, Martin would use up to three four-track recorders. In Martin's own words: 'when it later came to the making of the *Sergeant Pepper* Album, that technique was taken almost to absurdity' (Moorefield 2005, loc. 482-520).

The album *Revolver* was released in 1966, the same year the Beatles retired from touring. This album marks a turning point in how Martin and the Beatles approached the studio. From *Revolver* to *White Album* they experimented so much that the music could no longer be performed live in any practical sense. They moved from recording 'real' music to recording 'figurative' music. This caused the audience's expectation of what a record could be to change. Recorded

music did no longer have to be a (more or less) live capture of a performance, but could also take on a more internal form (Moorefield 2005, loc. 518). The transition from ‘real’ to ‘figurative’ recordings is significant as it signals a move away from the intended purpose of the studio. In this sense, Martin and the Beatles were not only pushing the limits of the available technology, but also of the role of the studio.

In 1973, British progressive rock band Pink Floyd released the album *Dark Side of the Moon*. Recorded five years after *Sergeant Pepper* (in the same studio; Abbey Road in London), it expands on the concept album format. Compared to *Sergeant Pepper*, it gives an image of how fast recording technology developed through the 1960s and 1970s. *Sergeant Pepper* was recorded using three four-track recorders, giving a total of twelve tracks, whereas *Dark Side* was recorded on two sixteen-track recorders bumping the number of available tracks up to thirty-two (Moorefield, 2005, loc. 708).

On *Dark Side* Pink Floyd and studio engineer Alan Parson pushed the limits for what a production could be. The opening track ‘Speak To Me’ consists entirely of different sonic tableaux looping over a continuous heartbeat. The opening was at the time impossible to recreate accurately live and could be seen as an extension of the figurative recordings of the Beatles.¹⁷ The third track on the album, ‘On The Run’, is another example of how the technology had evolved from the sixties. This track is dominated by ambient synthesizers laying layer after layer onto each other with several pads and sound effects such as running and the rotor of a helicopter. Particularly interesting is the use of panning as several sounds will enter the song from one side of the stereo spectrum and gradually move over to the other side. Although stereo recording and stereo mixing was not new to this time, they used stereo imaging in unconventional ways. This kind of exploratory

¹⁷ By comparison the live version of ‘Speak To Me’ on Pink Floyd’s *Live At The Empire Pool, Wembley, London* record from 1974 is very different from the studio version.

sonic imaging goes on through the record, like the loops with chiming clocks on 'Time' or the sounds of cash registers on 'Money'. Especially the loops on 'Money' must have demanded a painful amount of time and precision. The loops are in time with the music, which means they would have to splice the tapes over and over in order to get them to sound coherent with one another.

The processes of making the records mentioned above was not only centred on pushing technology to its limits, but also on a deep understanding for and knowledge of what could be achieved with the recording equipment. On the discussion of the democratisation of music production, Skjalg M. Raaen (2016) emphasises this kind of underlying knowledge as a way to differentiate between professional and amateur music making today. As digital production technology has developed, so too has its ease of use. Many plugins feature presets with settings for different audio recordings, such as 'snare drum' or 'rhythm guitar'. In his interview, Raaen voiced concerns about the convenience of such presets, stating that the use of presets ignores the knowledge behind the audio processing. Gary Bromham (2016) expands on this issue of convenience saying that there is a sense that consumers of plugins want to achieve maximum output for minimum effort. The problem, as Bromham sees it, is when a preset is used without the interrogation of the technology. In his own words: 'Where I maybe differ from an eighteen-year-old coming to this is that I know how to change it to make it work for me, whereas maybe they don't even question it?' (Bromham 2016). One implication from this is that the next generation of music producers can develop their skills within a digital domain where they do not actually have to understand the underlying processes behind the technology, at least not to the same extent as professional practitioners have so far. This is important in relation to retromania and the stagnation of innovation as it marks a move away from an approach to music production based on intimate knowledge of music technology. Such milestones in music production history as the albums of the Beatles and Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon* was made possible by such an

understanding of the technology. If a producer of tomorrow's popular music is not familiar with the limits of the technology they are using, creative use of technology to create innovative music may become all the more difficult to achieve.

Whilst producers and artists such as George Martin and Pink Floyd had already started using the studio as a fully-fledged instrument, they were still primarily using it as a tool to shape music they had already written. Producer Brian Eno took it one step further. With the rise of multi-tracking, he started what he called 'in-studio composition'. The concept was to enter the studio without an idea of what the final piece of music would be, but rather just a simple idea to start from or nothing at all. In this practice, the producer also functions as composer. The studio is no longer just a place for enhancing already existing music; it's also a place where music can be created from scratch. On albums such as *Discreet Music* (1975) and *Music for Films* (1978), Eno is presenting music that is not performed in the conventional way. Eno himself noted that records do not have anything to do with performance. With the then contemporary recording studio it was possible to create music that was neither performed or could be performed. Suddenly it was possible to create music that did not exist outside of the record at all. Realistic recording was no longer the point; the record industry was no longer occupied with trying to replicate concert experiences (Moorefield, 2005, loc. 841-859).

These examples tell a lot of how producers and artists in the past approached music technology. Even though the equipment had limitations, practitioners would seek out new ways of using it in order to create something new and different. The transition from intuitive, muscular music creation processes to mental process mentioned by Eno (1999) did not happen overnight, but can perhaps be traced back as far as the 1980s and the development of new digital music technology.

MIDI¹⁸ was first introduced in the 1980s and made it possible for artists and producers to connect different electronic instruments like synthesizers, drum machines, computers and samplers, giving them much more control and the ability to play several instruments at the same time. It also enabled the first home studios, making it possible to record and create music without being dependent on having a large recording room available (Bateman 2012). As digital music technology developed in the 1990s, the DAW became increasingly more suitable for use in music production. In 1992 both the first version of Steinberg's 'Cubase' and Emagic's 'Emagic Logic' (which later became 'Logic') were released. Both of these software are now industry standards. Today we have a multitude of DAWs to choose from, all with their own pros and cons (Vaughn, 2014).

Further into the nineties Steinberg developed the first VSTs,¹⁹ which are software simulating studio hardware such as EQ, compression and a multitude of effects. The first DAW to successfully integrate this new technology was Steinberg's own 'Cubase 3.02', released on the market in 1996. It included four VST-plugins effects: a reverb, a chorus effect, a stereo echo and an auto-panner (SoundOnSound 1996). This marked a turning point in music production; tools that previously had only existed as physical hardware were now implemented in digital music technology.

The trend of computer based music production was further developed in the new millennium. In his blog producer/engineer/author Bobby Owsinski writes about what he considers the most prominent changes in music production in the 2000s. Among these are the further development of software, mixing in the box and the home studio. Before the digital revolution, it was common for every professional studio to have outboard analogue gear worth north of \$100k. This gear could

¹⁸ MIDI is the abbreviation of Musical Instrument Digital Interface.

¹⁹ VST is the abbreviation of Virtual Studio Technology.

include equalizers, compressors, reverbs, different time based effects and whatever else one needed to get an edge in the market. A studio often became known for its gear, as the gear was very much an integrated part of a studio's trademark sound. As we got further into the 2000s, the industry made a shift to software plugins, many of which are emulating older analogue gear (Owsinski, 2009). One reason for the increasing popularity of plugins is that they are a lot cheaper compared to their analogue counterpart. Take for example the API 2500 stereo compressor. The hardware unit costs around \$3000, whilst the plugin version offered by the company Waves is at a tenth of that price.²⁰

This development of cheap (compared to analogue recording technology), digital music technology did not only enable the democratisation of music production, but also the increase in amount of options available. As an example, imagine a standard collection of plugins. It could consist of twelve different EQs, twelve compressors, six reverbs, six delays, tens of plugins designed to provide various effects and tools for enhancing sounds along with virtual instruments ranging from several drum kits, electric bass, string and horn sections, various effects and several hundred different synthesizer sounds, all of which is installed on a 15-inch laptop that can be moved anywhere. Several of these plugins might be modelled after old vintage outboard gear and just one of these in its original hardware form could easily be worth several times the collective cost of the plugins. This example does not necessarily represent just the collections of professional producers, but could also be owned by any recording enthusiast.

The above example ties directly to Eno's (1999) notion of options versus intuition. The increase in options combined with the preset-culture described by Raaen (2016) and Bromham (2016) might enable a culture where users do not make any decisions based on their own knowledge, but rather someone else's. In the past, producers were forced to work with the tools available to them: if they were not

²⁰ Prices compared on eBay.com and Waves.com, 9 December 2015.

satisfied with the initial result, they would have to work the equipment until it sounded the way they wanted. The amount of software plugins available today make it possible to switch one plugin for another if the first plugin does not achieve the desired result. This, as already suggested by Bromham (2016), enables the use of modern technology without having to question or understand it.

As pointed out by Owsinski (2009), as the quality of DAWs and plugins has improved, the artist can now work completely independently from record companies. The implications of this are both good and bad. It has given unknown artists the possibility to record, create and commercially release music without being dependent on support from a record company. Whilst that might seem like a good thing, it also means there will be music released that normally would not have made it through the filter provided by the record labels.

It's in the cross-section between home studios and self-released music that the impact of the available music technology becomes clear. Skjalg M. Raaen (2016) of Strengleik studio offers an analogy on the consequences of digital distribution services and equal distribution possibilities. Imagine a large concert hall filled with stacks of post-it notes, filling the room from floor to ceiling. Somewhere in one of those stacks is a post-it note with your song. As Raaen points out *'how the hell am I supposed to find your song?'* He goes on to note that the only way someone will find the song is by accident. His analogy translates to streaming services. Finding a song released by an independent artist is not easy unless one knows the name of either the artist or the song. Upon opening Spotify, one is greeted with an overview over several playlists put together to serve different moods and genres. There is a function for new releases, but the records featured do not seem to stray far from the mainstream. The 'discover' function, offering suggestions on music similar to what has previously been listened to, might seem like a way to discover less known bands and artists, but it too features

predominantly the more known artists. Like Raaen (2016) comments in his interview, when you open Tidal or Spotify you are greeted by the well established artists and their new music rather than more unknown music. It might also be because the available information for the unknown artist is lacking, making it problematic to link to other music. The result is that although your music is available to anyone, they still have to actively seek out your music.

The 2000s have been the age of convenience and accessibility. There have probably never been this many artists, big and small, recording and releasing music. The technology on offer today has made it much easier for anyone to release his or her own music. Rhys Marsh of AutumnSongs studio comments that:

now, anyone who can turn on a computer can hit a few buttons in a program and put a few notes together and then put it on Soundcloud or iTunes or God knows where else. And you don't know if they're serious or if they're just kind of messing around. (Marsh 2016).

Some of the artists making music today, would perhaps not have made any had there not been the ability to self-publish the music and as the filter provided by the record labels is gone, music that would otherwise not be released still reaches the market. At the same time our consumer habits differ greatly from the past. Music can be bought by the push of a button saving us from a trip to the record store. As if that was not convenient enough one can always illegally download music for free. We have access to more music than we could ever listen to. At the same time music is released in increasingly greater quantities. Raaen (2016) suspects that people are not willing to spend time searching through Spotify or other streaming services to find new music. As he describes in his interview, everything is becoming increasingly simpler and faster. Technology has enabled a culture of presets where everything is not only immediately available, but the work (what Raaen refers to as underlying knowledge) behind the process can be circumvented entirely.

The Industry's Reluctance to Support Innovative Artists

As the record industry has been at the centre of popular music throughout the nineteenth century, it would be wrong to omit it in a discussion on the increased occurrence of retro aesthetics in pop. As retromania is present in contemporary pop, the record industry would have to relate to it in some way or another.

The record industry has experienced a huge decline since the emergence of illegal downloading and file-sharing. Record sales have plummeted the last fifteen years. In the U.S. there were 785.1 million albums sold in 2000. Eleven years later, in 2011, that number was more than halved to 330.57 million albums. Not only did album sales overall take a dive, the combined sales of the top ten most sold albums in 2011 were at a third, 20.2 million copies, compared to the ten bestselling albums in 2000 at 60.4 million copies. The 1980s was the decade for blockbuster albums. Over the course of this decade 84 albums sold over 5 million copies and 19 albums sold past the 10 million mark. By contrast the biggest selling album in the year 2000 sold 9.94 million copies (*No Strings Attached* by N'Sync) and only 18 albums sold past 3 million copies. Fast-track to the end of the decade when the biggest selling album of the year, Taylor Swift's *Fearless*, sold 3.2 million copies. Even though record sales are down, the demand for music is still high. 43,000 albums scanned at least one copy in 1999. In 2011 that number had risen to 73,875 albums. As the amount of albums released continue to grow, the demand for music is also becoming increasingly fragmented. This means that record labels cannot rely on having a couple of million selling artist and are instead dependent on releasing several albums selling in the vicinity of 10,000 copies. This means that the labels must operate with a smaller overhead to cover their expenses, and thereby reducing production budgets (Busch, 2012).

The major labels have been accused of only backing artists they know they can earn money on. In 2013 Martin Mills, the founder of Beggars Group, said that the major labels are only investing in artists that they expect to sell at least half a

million copies. Beggars Group houses four of the most known independent record labels: 4AD, Matador, Rough Trade and XL Recordings. Mills goes on in saying that although the major labels certainly invest a lot of money in their artists, but it is short term and almost only aimed at the mainstream market. Alan Davey, head of the Music Momentum fund that are aimed at artists creating and performing contemporary popular music, joins him in his criticism. Davey also points to the major labels' short term approach, saying they: 'want talent to be delivered to them ready made and they're not prepared to take a risk over a long period of time investing in talent' (cited in Linvall 2013). He also accuses them of releasing music that they think the public will like, and therefore buy, rather than giving the public something brand new that they did not know they would like. Many artists ranging from Elvis Presley to Oasis, White Stripes, Prodigy, Depeche Mode and Nirvana started out on independent record labels before becoming part mainstream popular music (Lindvall 2013).

Skjalg M. Raaen (2016) supports Davey's theory that the major labels will only back artists they know they can profit from. According to him, it is not a question of money and the problem is rather that the labels will often differentiate between the income of new artists and back catalogue:

if you view it in relation to how much money they get from their back-catalogues and on other things, they are actually sitting on quite a lot of capital, right? They are still sitting there, taking the same cut from the record [sales] that they did back in the eighties for instance. But back then they were also responsible for getting the record printed. Maybe getting someone to design the cover... A totally different cost than it is putting it out on the web. But they are still taking the same percentages now, right? (Raaen 2016).

He comments that if the labels would invest some of their money on new artists and future income, they could easily make good recordings with a talented band or artist. Another interviewee who agrees is Jostein Ansnes (2016). He says that a lot of the music released today seems 'cowardly produced' and that the industry does not seem to be willing to take any chances out of fear of not achieving

commercial success. Although he says these things move in waves there 'still aren't many things in the mainstream that challenges, much' (Ansens 2016).

These trends in the music industry seem to be somewhat connected to the decline of record sales. The combination of the fact that the labels no longer can expect to release million selling albums paired with the reduction in recording and production budgets results in that they cannot afford to invest too much time or capital on developing an artist, as they are dependent on making every investment as profitable as possible. In previous decades when artists were selling tens of millions of records a label would earn enough on one artist or band to cover any losses they might have on artists that had yet to gain commercial success. In this way an artist would have time to build a career more slowly in contrast to now when it seems that new artist appear (and disappears) almost overnight. In the financial climate of the present recording industry, the labels are left with no other choice but to go for the 'safe bet'. In this way the major labels are more or less involuntarily contributing to the wave of retromania experienced in the past fifteen years. This does not mean that the independent labels are exclusively signing cutting-edge artists and acts (Adele, for example, is signed to the Beggars Group), but the bar for signing an unknown and innovative artist are lower than at the major labels. The problem is that whilst the independent labels might be willing to invest time and money on developing an artist, they do not come near the financial muscle of the major labels. Popular music is therefore at an impasse in the development of new and innovative popular music; the major labels does not want to risk money on artists that may not sell particularly many albums and the independent labels lacks the funds to promote their artists into the mainstream.

A significant contributing factor to retro aesthetics is not necessarily just the industry's reluctance to support new and exciting artists, but that in supporting artists that feel familiar to the public, the innovation of pop becomes stagnated. As theorised by Maël Guesdon and Phillipe Le Guern (2014), one explanation for the occurrence of retro aesthetics in contemporary popular music is that pop has

to deal with its ever increasingly more significant past. By referencing its own past, pop music is tapping into associations to its glory days, thus making it more accessible to an already familiarised audience (2014, 70).

The issue for new artists is not only that no one sells tens of millions of records anymore; it's also what kind of records that are bought. The criticism of the record labels being short-term minded in building their artists' careers is not necessarily wrong, but it might not take all factors into account. Ed Christman, the senior retail editor at *Billboard*, shares the notion that 'pop music is more fleeting nowadays' (cited in Reynolds 2011, 63). The industry divides releases into two categories; 'current', which is counted from the day of release and to fifteen months later, and 'catalogue', which is counted from the sixteenth month. Catalogue consists of two subgroups, namely recent and 'deep catalogue'. Releases are moved to the deep catalogue three years after their release date. In Christman's opinion, the recent catalogue is 'not as strong as it used to be'. In 2000 recent and deep catalogue sales accounted for 34.4 percent of the total album sales in America, whilst current held 65.6 percent of the market. In 2008, catalogue sales had risen to 41.7 percent. Initially this might not seem like a significant change in the market, but the percentage of catalogue sales has increased steadily throughout the 2000s. Compared to the nineties, when the ratio between current and catalogue sales was static, those 7.3 percent starts to matter (Reynolds 2011, 64).

This trend has continued into the next decade. According to the 2014 *Nielsen Music U.S. Report*, catalogue has risen to about 50 per cent of the market share. Current physical album sales were at 77.6 millions, whilst catalogue sales were at 73 millions. In digital sales, catalogue surpasses current in both digital albums and single tracks selling 53.6 millions albums and 569.6 millions tracks, whereas current sales were at 52.9 millions and 532.9 millions. It might be worth noting that whilst CD sales declined by 14.9 per cent and digital sales by 9.4 per cent, vinyl had an increase in sales of 51.8 per cent. This marked 2014 as the ninth

consecutive year of growth for the vinyl market, putting it at 6 per cent of total physical album sales (businesswire.com, 2015).

The rising demand for catalogue is something of a paradox. As we have progressed further into the 2000s the numbers of record stores have been dwindling and the one that remains have been forced to reduce the size of their music catalogue and to carry non-musical products (such as books and video games). At the same time as record stores are becoming fewer and fewer, the demand for old music is increasing. A part of the explanation can be found in online shopping. The twenty-first century has seen a shift in both how and where music is bought. Anything can be ordered online and delivered to your door. Record stores are dependent on customers physically coming to their store, giving them a disadvantage compared to online retailers. Physical stores are also dependent on having enough space for their catalogue; they only have room for a set amount of records. Online retail juggernauts like Amazon on the other hand can have huge warehouses in low-rent areas giving them the opportunity to stock millions of records including records you would not normally find at a record store (Reynolds 2011, 67).

A record store would have to replace certain products in their stock. If a record has been collecting dust on the shelf for a long time, it gets replaced with a different record. Space is finite and the store cannot afford to waste it on products that do not sell. With the warehouses of online retail the cost of storage space is so low that the retailers can afford to keep any record in stock for as long as it takes for someone to buy it. When the cost of storage becomes insignificant, every record sold equals profit even when it has to be stored for years. This becomes even more profitable in the realm of digital download (like iTunes) where everything can be stored at servers and hard drives taking up next to nothing in physical space. Combine this with streaming services and the available quantity of music of the past will greatly outweigh the present. Every year in music has to compete with the ever-growing past behind it. It might not just be an issue of quantity, but also quality. Let us say that there has been

released a set amount of quality records every year since 1960, for argument's sake we will say ten recordings. That would mean that the ten quality albums released in 2015 would have to compete with every great album released in the past 54 years (in this thought experiment that would be ten records against 540). This is of course a simplification of the issue with made up numbers, but it is still a point worth considering. As the previously mentioned Maël and Le Guern (2014) suggests, the further we go into the future, the bigger and seemingly greater the past becomes.

The increased interest for back catalogue leaves the record industry with two choices: either go against the flow of the past or join it. Maël and Le Guern (2014, 71) argues that rather than trying to reinvent itself, the industry is capitalising on nostalgia turning it into a selling point. They go on to argue that the idea of a 'lost golden age of pop' is being used as a way to invoke dissatisfaction in the listener that can be remedied at the sound of retro occurrences, such as references to retro sounds, in contemporary pop. In relation to promoting popular culture, Maël and Le Guern states that the objective is 'to stage authenticity in order to guarantee for the consumer that he will retain a glimmer of what time cannot give him' (2014, 71). This implies that the industry is not necessarily avoiding innovative artist out of fear for not capitalising on them but are rather prioritising artists that can be marketed within a nostalgic framework. This in turn results in the record industry contributing to the condition of retromania.

The Transition From Artist to Curator

Over the past decades there seem to have occurred a shift in how we approach innovation; innovation used to be about bringing a particular genre or style in a new direction that would then become a new style of its own. Looking at the great innovators of pop and rock there is a sense of movement or transition from one style of music to a new one. Chuck Berry was influenced by artist like Fats Domino, Louis Jordan and T-Bone Walker. His music is obviously rooted in blues and RnB, yet Berry took it in a new direction and in doing so created his own

unique sound. Berry in turn influenced a whole generation of bands and artist like the Rolling Stones and the Beach Boys who in turn made their own mark on popular music history.

One of the difference between innovation throughout the twentieth century and the last fifteen years might not only be what kind of music that influences us, but also the age of the music. It seems that earlier artists and bands were to a larger degree inspired by other artists and bands that were active at the same time. A lot of bands in the last fifteen years seem to get a lot of their influences from music released in earlier decades. The Australian band Wolfmother serves as an example of this. A quick listen to their 2005 debut album gives the impression of seventies hard rock mixed with the sound of The White Stripes. It is interesting to see how different critics relate to this. In his fairly positive review Micheal Legat compares them to Led Zeppelin in the sense that they 'both are awesome' (Legat, 2008), whilst in Stylus Magazine's review, critic Patrick McNally describes it as a pale copy of Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath and Deep Purple (McNally, 2006). Even though Legat and McNally rate the music differently, they are both acknowledging that the sound of the band is rooted in music over three decades old.

The early 2000s saw the rise of the rock curator. The term curator itself is most likely borrowed from the art world. Originally, the curator was the person in charge of collecting and often also the care of the collection at institutions museum or art galleries. In musical terms the title got adopted at the start of the new millennium as a way of lending integrity to among other things music festivals. Booking of bands suddenly became curating. The use of the word gave certain implications; musicians that were curating bands utilised the same skill sets that a museum or, perhaps more fittingly, art gallery curator would apply to his or her job. Even though the term was not commonly used in music until the twenty-first century, producer Brian Eno recognised the importance of it as early as in 1991. He proclaimed the role of the curator to be

the big new job of our times: it is the task of re-evaluating, filtering, digesting, and connecting together. In an age saturated with new artifacts and information, it is perhaps the curator, the connection maker, who is the new storyteller, the meta-author. (Cited in Reynolds 2011, 130).

In an interview with *Wired* in 1995 he recast the role of the artist saying that the contemporary artist is not so much a creator as a connector. He was thinking along these lines as early as 1986 when he argued that innovation was ‘a much smaller proportion’ of artistic activity than we usually think’ (cited in Reynolds 2011, 130). The artist re-evaluates and reintroduces past ideas and styles and then adds his or her own forms of innovation (Reynolds, 2011, 130).

The producer T Bone Burnett seem to fit the description of the curator presented by Eno. Taking on many roles throughout his career, Burnett has been artist, producer and record label owner. Through his extensive career, he has worked with such artists as B.B. King, Robert Plant, Willie Nelson and Elvis Costello as well as being the music producer for such movies as *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, *Across the Universe* and *Walk the Line* and the TV-series *True Detective* and *Nashville*.²¹ Although his work on these movies is very much as a curator, choosing (or perhaps more accurately curating) a collection of songs from the back catalogue of different artists, this does not necessarily tie in with the idea of the artists as curator. For the purpose of this thesis it is more interesting to look at Burnett’s approach as a producer and artist. In a 2008 interview with *Tape Op*, Burnett expresses discontent with processing of audio, stating that he cannot stand it.²² In the interview he emphasises the importance of the room going on to say that he does not close-mic anything and avoid transistor based equipment. Perhaps surprising coming from a professional producer, he also says that he does not particularly like recordings and that although he can listen to a

²¹ The music of the movies consists largely of period-specific folk music for *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, the music of the Beatles for *Across the Universe* and the music of Johnny Cash for *Walk the Line*. Data retrieved from T-Bone Burnett’s webpage, <http://tboneburnett.com/>, 6 May 2016.

²² Prossesing of audio in this sense seems to concern the process of compressing, equalising and otherwise altering audio as part of a music production process.

recording and enjoy a song or a piece of music, he almost never feels the same towards the production (Crane 2008).

Burnett elaborates on his approach to music production in a 2006 interview with *Mix Magazine*. On the question of whether or not his aesthetics as a producer is based on retro technology, Burnett acknowledges this to an extent, stating that he and his engineer, Mike Piersante, use the lowest and the highest technology, but not much between. He specifically refers to the use of 'an old Rickenbacker amplifier that was put together by a woman who learned to solder during the Second World War' and high-end electronics. When he decides to record through a computer, he records at the relatively high sample rate of 192kHz.²³ He goes on to say that his approach to technology is to use it in a way that is either transparent or apparent, whilst considering anything in the middle of those to extremities as distracting. Even though Burnett is happy to record into a DAW, he states that he always return to tape in the end (Jackson 2006). It seems that when Burnett is talking about using technology in a way that is transparent, he is referring to modern, digital technology, which could explain why he chooses to record at a sample rate of 192kHz. When he is referring to using technology in an apparent way, this seems to be referring to the use of vintage, analogue gear, such as the Rickenbacker amplifier mentioned in the interview. Whilst his approach to music production cannot be said to be wholly retro, it does seem that his aesthetics as a producer are based on retro technology, whilst more contemporary technology is being used out of practicality.

Burnett's discontent with processing of audio, which is a large part of modern production practices, along with his seemingly retro approach to recording is interesting considering the high demand Burnett is in. As well as having worked on movies where such aesthetics is very much in line with the themes of the films, such as the previous mentioned *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, *Across the Universe* and *Walk The Line*, he has also been involved as executive music

²³ 192kHz refers to the digital resolution of the recorded audio. As higher sample rates demand more hard drive space, recording at 44.1kHz or 48kHz is more common.

producer of the 2012 movie *The Hunger Games*. As this movie is set in a dystopian alternate universe, it does not inherently carry associations to the musical aesthetics of Burnett. It could be argued that the Burnett's success as a music producer in the 2000s can be linked to the emergence of retromania. As other medias, such as movies and television, seeks to tie their work to cultural heritage, so too grows the need for the music curator.

Although the term curator (in music) does not seem to be that commonly used anymore, it does seem like a fitting description for a lot of the artists we see today. It seem that a majority of artists are doing exactly what Brian Eno was describing in the 1980s; connecting styles and sound of the past within a contemporary framework. It seems that the difference between the artist as curator and the artists that emerged in the 2000s is that the contemporary framework is weakened, in other words the innovation is toned down. This is evident in the production of 'Little Lion Man' by Mumford and Sons described earlier. Creating music becomes an activity of cherry picking whatever the artist (or producer/) happens to like from past decades. The result is a decade and half that is not defined by any particular genre of music.

There should be little doubt that retromania is a big part of contemporary popular music. The past fifteen years has not been defined by any particular artist or genre, but rather by the lack of direction. The identity of the 2000s are so fragmented that it's virtually non-existent; it is every possible identity happening all at once. Popular music, although always having been closely linked to technology, has never been so defined by it as it has in the last decade and half. We consume music differently than before as it has become increasingly easier to carry with us. The way we acquire music has changed through illegal downloading, streaming and online retail. The decline in revenue for the record labels has caused them to be less inclined to invest in new artists, leading them to release predictable music they know they can sell. Music production has become democratised through cheaper computer technology and huge advances in audio software.

This might in part have been caused by the commercialization of the World Wide Web. The Internet serves as the vessel for digital music piracy, which in turn has led to the decline of record sales. It has also made past music indefinitely more accessible through music and video streaming services. The web serves as the biggest archive for music imaginable and operates without geographical borders. This was inevitable; the real fault lies at the music industry that failed to properly utilise this medium when it first started to become part of the household. The internet makes sure that every fact and titbit is available to us at all times and help bring the past into the present in a way that other mediums could never have achieved.

In time, the Internet has also enable the emergence of platforms like MySpace and Soundcloud where anyone can upload their own music for anyone to hear. This, along with social medias like Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, gives unsigned artists an unprecedented opportunity to promote their music. Whilst the free exposure might be considered a good thing, there is a glaring disadvantage to uploading your music to these kinds of sites; you will not earn a single cent from it. There is a minuscule chance you might get picked up by a record company, but it is not very likely. So we find ourselves in a time where the music industry has considerably less revenue than it did in the last century at the same time as more and more artists and bands releases or uploads their music every day. The independent artists earn little or no money, whilst the big names earn less than they used to. Whatever innovation there might be is drowned out by everything else. When the music industry had monopoly on releasing new music, they acted as a filter for what artists the public would have access to. They do keep this role today, but it has been severely weakened in the digital age. Nowadays the industry only acts as a filter for what it wants to release under its own name, but have little to no influence over what gets uploaded to various websites or distributed by companies like CD Baby or DistroKid. The result is musical anarchy.

One would perhaps think that all the technological advances in the last hundred years would have yielded a whole new arsenal of digital instruments, but most digital instruments today are designed to emulate sounds and instruments already in existence. The electric guitar is still in use almost a century after its invention.

CHAPTER TWO

TECHNOSTALGIA: NEW MUSIC, OLD GEAR

Technostalgia is nostalgia for outdated technology. This chapter will explore several areas related to technostalgia. When a whole generation starts to use old technology to create music, the music is strongly influenced by sounds from a bygone era. We use old technology, not to explore it in new ways, but to achieve the sounds of past decades. There have certainly been changes in how we record and produce music in the twenty-first century, but these changes seem to be more about expanding the amount of options available and ease of use than anything else. Throughout the first fifteen years of this century we have experienced the ever-increasing popularisation of the DAW. Combined with cheaper computer technology and increasingly more powerful laptops, the studio has now become mobile. Anyone who buys a Macintosh computer will get Garage Band pre-installed on his or her new computer, ready to record or program MIDI. Whilst the DAW certainly provides new ways to produce music, most of its functions are mirroring past practices. The main difference between now and then is that the DAW makes processes like editing audio tracks, automation or arranging MIDI a lot easier than their predecessors.

Why Lounge? Why Now?

In his 2001 book *Strange Sounds: Music, Technology and Culture*, Timothy D. Taylor has dedicated a chapter to the revival of ‘space age pop’ (or ‘lounge’ as it is also known) exemplified with the British alternative band Stereolab. Although the chapter is called *Technostalgia*, Taylor is not focusing exclusively on technology, but rather on several aspects concerning the revival of space age pop.

Stereolab, founded in London in 1990, is interesting in that on the surface the band seems to embody a culture of both retromania and technostalgia, and one might see their music and approach to music making as a sort of foreshadowing to the bloom in retro culture in the 2000s. According to Taylor (2001, 108-109),

the band embraced not only early analogue instruments, but also the iconography associated with 1950- and 60s futurism. The band's name is derived from a line of recording issued by the Vanguard record label in the 1950s used to test hi-fi systems. The cover to the band's 1993 EP *Space Age Bachelor Pad Music* is very much in line with 1950s futurism and iconography, featuring only a few different colours, sound waves and the orbit of an atom. Even the title itself bears a clear reference to the past.

The band's interest in 1950s views of the future is evident in this quote by Stereolab cofounder Tim Gane:

In the '50s and '60s, when they were writing music, they had to imagine what music would sound like in the future, they had to imagine what music would sound like from another world... it was about their imagination trying to think of what it would sound like, so you'd throw away the rules, and they'd try to create music which would be nothing like what was going on at the time. Much of this music was pretty cynical, but despite that, so many amazing things were happening for the first time, which opened doors to people later on to explore those things – mixtures of electronics, of orchestrations, different dynamics. (Taylor 2001, 109).

Stereolab was not only inspired by 1950s iconography and futurism, but also made use of early analogue electronic instruments. Gane's views on analogue instruments are also worth taking into consideration:

We use the older effect because they're more direct, more extreme, and they're more like plasticine; you can shape them into loads of things. Modern effects sound blander to me and are less human, more characterless. The older effects have a strong sound straightaway. (Taylor 2001, 110).

It is interesting to see that although Stereolab is strongly influenced by the music of the space age pop era, the music itself is not the only source of inspiration. In both of the quotes above, Gane is pointing to aspects regarding process. In talking about how people were writing music in the 1950s and 1960s, he is not talking about chord progressions or song structures, but about the underlying cognitive process: the approach to music writing. In the same way, it seems that Stereolab's use of early analogue instruments does not necessarily

come from a desire to recreate the sounds of space age pop, but rather from a desire to shape sound in ways you could not achieve digitally (at least at that time).

As previously mentioned, Taylor (2001) has called his chapter on space age pop revival *Technostalgia*, but he does not really spend much time on the technology itself. Focusing on space age pop revival, he seems to be more concerned with cultural aspects than technological ones. He mentions technology in regards to Stereolab's use of older analogue instruments, but as pointed out, Stereolab's choice to make use of such instruments is rooted more in the process of music making than in nostalgia. Even though one cannot attribute the revival of space age pop solely to nostalgia, it is equally important to not neglect nostalgia. In the case of Stereolab and technostalgia, one has to ask the question whether their use of older analogue instruments and effects are a result of the space age pop revival, or if the revival is in part a result of their use of older analogue instruments.

Even though the reasoning behind Stereolab's use of older analogue gear is based on process, one cannot escape the fact that older analogue instruments and effects carries with it certain associations. A view offered by Trondheim-based producer Thomas Henriksen (2016) is that the use of older sound aesthetics in retro music can lend authority to the music. He suggests that even though the average, unconscious listener might not be aware of it, the music will nonetheless appeal to the listener through association with music from different eras. He goes on to say that as a listener one will always listen to music with some degree of retro-perspective. This suggests that even though a band like Stereolab is not necessarily using older analogue instruments out of nostalgia, it will still evoke nostalgia in the listener, knowingly or unknowingly.

In the Market for Recording Technology: From Audio Professionals to Enthusiasts and the Emergence of Technoporn

Technostalgia in relation to music technology is to a very large degree based on an objectification of technology. It is not what the technology can do that is important, but rather what cultural or musical associations it carries. This part of the thesis aims to outline the underlying history of how music technology came to be objectified and thus tied to nostalgia.

The music technology industry was once reserved for the professionals. Since the introduction of affordable, digital music technology in the 1980s, the market has made a shift from catering seemingly exclusively to the professional recording engineers and producers to including the amateur segment. This shift can in part be attributed to the rise of music technology press. Samantha Bennett (2012b) quotes Théberge on his theory of ‘double production’ industry:

New technology has been reified as the tie that binds a community of musicians together, whilst, at the same time, it is the object of consumption whose success in the marketplace is essential to the survival of the electronic instrument industry. In the final analysis, there is a double production going on: One industry produces technology and the other produces consumers. (Théberge, cited in Bennett 2012b).

Théberge’s argument is that the music technology press created the market for music technology consumption, but as Bennett points out, there exists a combination of several factors that influenced the increase in the market. One of the factors mentioned by Bennett is the increase in trade shows in the 1980s, where manufacturers would demonstrate their latest products to both the music industry and the consumer audience. The early trade shows, such as AES and APRS conventions, catered to the professional audio industry, but in time there arose other shows aimed at a wider audience. The advert for the 1990 show *MIDI Music Show* claimed: ‘Everything for the professional and the enthusiast under one roof’. Several shows and conventions aimed at the semi-professional and amateur market was held throughout the 1990s, but it was the *MIDI Music Show* in particular that helped identify the enthusiasts as consumers. The trade shows of this period helped substantiate the focus of the music technology press.

The focus was not necessarily on the intention, user value or potential output of the technology, but on the technology itself (Bennett, 2012b).

Magazines concerning music technology emerged more or less at the same time as new technology was introduced to the market. Aimed at both project studio owners, home studio enthusiasts and musicians, several of these magazines contained reviews of new gear, 'how-to' guides for setting up MIDI systems and editorial pieces as well as large amounts of equipment advertisements. One such magazine was *Sound On Sound*. First released in 1985, *Sound On Sound* featured equipment reviews, lists of books (many of which was guides on how to set up a home studio) and a Q&A segment, which encouraged reader interaction with the publication as well as making the magazine accessible to its readers. Perhaps most importantly was that it featured interviews with well-known producers and engineers, effectively trying to associate itself with the professional segment of the industry. This is particularly interesting as the magazine rarely featured equipment reviews or advertisement of high-end technology (Bennett, 2012b).

As we progressed through the 1980s and into the 1990s, several other periodicals were founded, covering different areas of music technology. *Audio Media* magazine, which made its debut in 1990, is aimed specifically at professional working with audio or video. The magazine often features advertisements from high-end equipment manufacturers as well as technical reports and articles on high-end equipment and professional practices. *Pro Sounds News Europe* on the other hand was aimed at professionals working or manufacturing in audio sub-sectors, such as live sound, broadcasting and engineering. It featured among other things reports on conventions and conferences. The UK magazine *Making Music*, in print from 1987 to 2002, was aimed at the recording musician. It was more focused on budget recording technology such as portable four-track recorders and instruments such as guitars and synthesizers. Much of the advertisement in the magazine was for budget analogue and digital equipment. Further into the 1990s to the first half of the 2000s, magazines focused

specifically on computer music production and home-studio recording started to emerge. Magazines such as *Computer Music* (est. 1998), *Future Music* (est. 1992) and *Music Tech Magazine* (est. 2003) are all mainly focused on working in the DAW and features ‘tips and tricks’ segments for different software as well as a large portion of equipment advertisement (Bennett, 2012b).

The rise of music technology press is in parallel to the development of cheaper, more affordable recording technology from the late 1980s and onward. As Bennett (2012b) notes in her article, the role of the music technology press has not been as ‘independent or impartial advisors to consumers, but as business partners with technology manufacturers’. The Internet has enabled more interaction from the audience, as it is now possible to discuss technology on forums such as GearsLutz or on manufacturer websites. This enables a culture of ‘talking about’ the technology, rather than a culture of practice. This in turn becomes objectification of the technology, what Bennett (2012b) describes as ‘technoporn’.

In describing the term ‘technoporn’, Bennett says:

[it] is a term often bandied about the audio and technology industry landscape in reference to the ubiquity of cheap digital equipment and the sexualization of music technology. Alluding to the voyeuristic, obsessive, perhaps glamorous nature of technology, the word ‘technoporn’ is not just a light-hearted critique of audiophilia but representational of a cultural shift in both the marketing and consumption of technology. Particularly in the last five years, such a shift is evident and has permeated the advertising methods and themes used by equipment manufactures in the music technology press. (Bennett 2012b).

In this passage by Bennett, she is summing up how the music technology press has shifted the focus of the consumer from what the technology actually can do to the technology itself. The term ‘technoporn’ can be seen as an extension of technophilia, which is the obsession with or addiction to technology. Effectively, technoporn becomes the obsession with technology for the sake of technology itself.

The following quote from former *Sound On Sound* editor David Mellor is particularly interesting:

I felt in the 1980s that if I didn't have these pieces of equipment, then I wasn't competing with the professionals. So I think the role of the magazine was that it just displayed it for you, you opened the pages and it was sexy, it was desirable and you want it and you look at the pictures and read the text and think 'that guy's had access to that piece of equipment and I haven't' so there was this real feeling of envy. It made you feel bad, like you couldn't compete. The unspoken sub-text was that you needed this equipment. It's easy to get lulled into the myth that you need certain equipment to get the results that the top professionals are getting. (Mellor, cited in Bennett 2012b).

The quote is a good example of how products have been presented in music technology press. It is interesting to see that Mellor is using words like 'sexy' and 'desirable' to describe the advertisements, substantiating the objectification of technology mentioned by Bennett. His notion that he needed certain pieces of gear in order to compete with professionals is also worth noting. Bennett (2012b) sees this as further proof of the press marketing technology as 'a route into the professional domain'. Through the use of Q&A pages, reviews, advertisement and articles on technique advice, the press laid the foundation for a consumer market based on home and project studio production. The interesting thing is that music technology 'were – and still are – marketed as almost entirely separate entities to music itself' (Bennett 2012b). This has helped furthering the objectification of the technology as it separates the technology from its intended purpose.

Although the music press is still present to this day, Internet forums have enabled audience interaction on a much larger scale. Bennett (2012b) describes the previous mentioned online forum *Gearslutz* as 'perhaps the epitome of online music technoporn'. She goes on to say that although the forum presents itself as a 'Forum for professional and amateur recording engineers to share techniques and advice', this does not necessarily translate to its content. The most popular forum, 'So much gear, so little time!', contains threads such as 'Gear porn thread – pics of your slutty setups' and 'A little x rated audio porn' with more than 1.5 million posts. In contrast, the apparently least popular threads seem to be Q&A session with professional recording engineers and producers. These threads also

seem to be the least interacted with. Bennett points to the interview thread with recording engineer Daniel Lanois as an example, which only contains 78 posts compared with the 1.5 million posts in the 'So much gear, so little time!' thread. The implication is that technology for the sake of technology is more important to the consumer market than the purpose of the technology.

In understanding the basis for technoporn, we may also gain insight in the phenomena of technostalgia. At the very core of technostalgia is the objectification of technology, which is what technoporn is all about. In this sense, technoporn forms the foundation for technostalgia, the difference being that technoporn concerns all music technology, whilst technostalgia concerns outdated technology. When the consumer audience start buying vintage, analogue equipment, it may not necessarily be because of the function of the equipment, but because the piece of gear is appealing in itself. There exists a large number of analogue gear considered 'classics', often because of the recordings and production they have been used on or because the gear has become commonly used over the course of music production history (such as the Neumann U87 microphone). Much in the same way as when famous producers or engineers are endorsing recording equipment, gear associated with 'classic' recordings has been 'endorsed' (for lack of a better word) by the recording it is associated with.

As Bennett (2012b) has written in her article, the consumer audience for music technology consists of both amateurs/enthusiasts and professional recordists. It might also be useful to look at the consumer audience from a different perspective: the conscious and the unconscious consumer. It is important to note that these two categories are not exclusive to any one group within the market. An enthusiast can be just as conscious to the technology as a professional recordist. The difference is whether a consumer of vintage, analogue technology is buying vintage equipment out of technostalgia (or technoporn) or if the consumer has a conscious relationship to the functionality of the equipment, in other words the potential output or purpose of the technology.

The introduction of online retailers such as eBay and Amazon has enabled the market for second-hand vintage gear to grow in size. Earlier, the consumer would have to seek out physical stores and outlets in order to buy their desired music technology. Nowadays, one can find almost anything online and have it shipped to anywhere in the world. This has not only allowed an increase in the number of consumers, it has also allowed an increase in availability. Combined with the fact that the number of people who are making a living from record production has decreased over the last twenty years, it might not be wrong to assume that the number of unconscious consumers now outnumbers the conscious. Much in line with the issue of technoporn, and therefore also technostalgia, consumers might therefore opt to buy for example a 1970s Fender Stratocaster or an AKG D 12 microphone from the 1950s, not because of the build quality or even the sound of the equipment, but because of the technology's relation to a different era of popular music history.

The Digitalisation of Vintage Gear

With the expansion of the market for digital plugins, more and more analogue gear has received digital counterparts. Digital versions of old, classic gear makes it possible for anyone to achieve the sounds of the past for a fraction of the price of the original analogue gear. The convenient packaging of digital plugins also means that a single person can have access to nearly unlimited amounts of digital versions of vintage gear. The website <http://www.audio-hardware-emus.com/> lists more than two hundred different vintage gear that have been emulated digitally (as of 2014), many of them several times by several different companies. The Pultec EQP-1A for example have been reissued as digital emulation as many as fourteen times, in other words the original EQ is now sold as fourteen different plugins all designed to sound like the original hardware unit. Whilst some of the emulations are sold under their original name (like Waves's API 2500 compressor plugin), many of the plugins emulating vintage gear are named differently than the original hardware; the Neve 2254 compressor plugin sold by Waves is sold as V-Comp, the plugin version of the

ALTEC 1567A EQ is sold as Soundtoys Radiator. This implies that one could actually unknowingly be buying plugin versions of vintage hardware.

It is interesting to look at the GUI, graphic user interface, of such emulation plugins. For example, an emulation plugin of an SSL channel is clearly designed to look like the original hardware. This serves mainly two purposes; it becomes recognisable to people who have worked on the hardware unit and it looks appealing to younger producers and technicians who might never even have seen the original console in real life, but who has read and heard about this piece of gear. Another example is Waves's saturation/delay/compression plugin Kramer Tape, which is modelled on a rare ¼-inch reel-to-reel machine in collaboration with iconic producer Eddie Kramer (Jimi Hendrix, Led Zeppelin, Rolling Stones). Upon opening the plugin one will immediately notice tape reels turning. This is of course nothing more than a visual presentation of what was going on in the original hardware unit, but it plays a very important part in how one perceives the plugin. When discussing GUI with producer Gary Bromham (2016), he raised the question of why we are turning knobs in plugins, rather than sliding faders. In his view, as we are operating plugins with a computer mouse, the knobs seem counterintuitive. This implies that the GUI is not actually based on working within the DAW, but is made to resemble analogue gear and giving associations to hardware technology. Perception is a key element in marketing these plugins. Filling your DAW with plugins looking like something from a 1960's, 1970's or 1980's recording studio might instill a sense of not only looking at the past but also of owning a small part of it. In other words one is, in a sense, utilising the same gear that was used on one's favourite records.

Another interesting side of the plugin-industry is the arrival of signature plugin bundles. The company Waves for instance have created several plugin bundles called *Signature Series* in cooperation with famous and iconic producers and mixing engineers. It is interesting to see how they are presenting their product. In the case of Eddie Kramer's signature bundle, they have listed up the following:

When The Beatles recorded 'All You Need Is Love', the man behind the board was Eddie Kramer.

When Jimi Hendrix recorded 'Purple Haze', the man behind the board was Eddie Kramer.

When Led Zeppelin recorded 'Whole Lotta Love', the man behind the board was Eddie Kramer.

When you're ready to make some music history of your own, get Eddie Kramer behind the board.²⁴

This quote from the product webpage exemplifies the industry's ability to capitalise on nostalgia. Every selling point presented by the company is tied directly to iconic tracks from popular music history. By marketing it this way, they are implying that by buying the sounds of Eddie Kramer, one can become part music history. In an interview concerning the bundle, Kramer (2010) stated that the concept behind his signature series was to 'address the issue of ease of operation' and giving 'people a chance to basically hit one button'. He goes on to say:

Essentially, it's a number of devices that are combined in a unique way to give my stamp on the sound. In other words, it's a blend that constitutes my final sound that I use on mixes in the studio. (Eddie Kramer 2010).

Above all, it is the ease of use that is being highlighted. The product promises a sound that has been cultivated by Kramer throughout his extensive experience in music production, packaged in a way that enables the user to quickly and easily achieves the desired result. This could be seen as another example of the move towards convenience that has marked the twenty-first century.

Waves have also developed several other plugin-bundles in collaboration with famous mixing engineers. Greg Wells, Tony Maserati, Manny Marroquin, Chris Lord-Alge and Jack Joseph Puig have all lent their name on their own signature series of plugins. These plugins have mainly two things in common: firstly they are designed to be easy to use and secondly they are supposed to give you the signature sound of these engineers. It is all about maximum value presented in a

²⁴ Data gathered from <http://www.waves.com/bundles/eddie-kramer-signature-series>, 11 March 2016.

time efficient package. In other words, getting a professional sounding production with as little effort as possible. This is recognised by Gary Bromham (2016) who says that people seem to want; ‘maximum output, minimum effort to get it’. He also says that for someone experienced, the digital emulations of analogue gear can be used as a shortcut to get what they want, but to someone inexperienced that do not interrogate the technology, they could end up with similar sonic outputs all the time:

They [the inexperienced] just will use that preset without questioning the context. And I think there’s definitely a, a sense of celebrity mix engineer presets making you believe that you can get their sound. Which of course, you won’t get their sound. You get an approximation. A distorted... Very distorted vision of what their sound is. And you still won’t sound like them. (Bromham 2016).

The collaboration between plugin-manufacturers and mixing engineers and producers serves as an example of the endorsement culture described by Samantha Bennett (2012b). Although Bennett is focused on the marketing of hardware technology, the idea of having professionals endorsing a product translate well into the world of digital, virtual music technology. On their website, Waves has no less than six pages of engineers, live artists and producers endorsing their products. Likewise, the company iZotope has divided their endorsements into six categories, ranging from recording artists to post production. The same goes for several manufacturers such as Sonnox, Soundtoys and McDSP.²⁵

This can be seen in relation to the theories surrounding ‘technporn’. By getting endorsed by professional, the industry is implying the idea that the ‘enthusiast’ can become a professional by simply buying the right products. What is neglected in the process is the experience of the producers and engineers endorsing the product. This is very much in line with the ideas presented by Bennett (2012b), but it is important to not overlook the emphasis on ease-of-use and convenience in the marketing of plugins. As already pointed out, the artist signature series

²⁵ Data gathered from waves.com, izotope.com, sonnox.com, soundtoys.com and mcdsp.com, 14 March 2016.

from Waves is all about getting the sound of well-known producers and mixing engineers in as short a time as possible and with the least amount of effort.

On the subject of emulation culture and artist signature plugins, Gary Bromham had this to say:

It worries me because it's, it's based on marketing primarily, in my experience, so, it's there to sell products. And I would take what a lot of these celebrity mix engineers say with a pinch of salt. Cause they're obviously being paid to say these things. So I don't believe for one moment that they think it sounds exactly the same. (Bromham 2016).

The last sentence is especially interesting. Bromham is referring to plugins emulating vintage analogue gear and how these are marketed.

It is important to remember that the industry is just that: an industry. As the market for plugins have expanded, more and more companies have emerged in the plugin-business. The marketing of the plugin industry is similar to the marketing of cheap and affordable music technology in music technology press described earlier in this thesis. The 'enthusiast' is at the core of the market. The difference between the hardware market aimed at an amateur audience in 1980s and 1990s music technology press and the plugin market is not necessarily the consumers, but the technology itself. Hardware necessarily takes up physical space, whilst software, such as plugins, exists in the virtual domain. With modern hard drives, the amount of plugins one can have installed at the same time is in the hundreds, if not thousands. There are always more plugins to try out and the prices of plugins are cheap enough (compared to hardware) that most amateurs and enthusiasts can afford to build a sizeable collection.

The plugin consumers might be seen as a part of the larger music technology consumer audience. The issue of the conscious consumer versus the unconscious consumer theorised earlier in relation to the larger music technology market could therefore also be seen as applicable to this segment of consumers. This is particularly evident with plugins emulating older hardware. The main difference between emulation plugins and non-emulation plugins is that a lot of people have actually worked with the original hardware the emulations are based on. The

issue of sonic differences between the emulation and the original piece of gear has been debated at length. It is interesting to see that several of the persons interviewed in relation to this thesis have different views on this. Jostein Ansnes (2016) for instance believes that the difference in sound quality between a piece of hardware and its digital counterpart is hardly audible, largely because of how popular music has undergone increasing levels of compression. He goes on to state that in a blind test most would struggle to tell them apart. Magnus Kofoed (2016) on the other hand offers a different view. In Brygga Studio where he works they have both the hardware and the plugin versions of the API-550B and API-560 EQs. When questioned about the difference between working with the hardware version versus the digital plugin version, he states that:

The hardware, I believe to be much better. I think sonically it sounds different. I have never AB tested on the same settings. But I get a different feeling when I'm using it. If it's the sonic difference between them or if it's just because I physically turn the knob, that doesn't really matter... ..I can't say what's better with it; it's just that it feels better than the plugin version. (Kofoed 2016).

It is interesting to see that although Kofoed starts by addressing the difference in sound quality, he also seems to be conscious about the difference in process between working on analogue gear and working in the DAW. Both Ansnes and Kofoed have clearly reflected upon the issue of digital emulation in terms of the application of the technology. As they are both professional recordists with experience in both the digital and analogue domain, a certain level of consciousness surrounding music technology is to be expected, even though they present two different views on the issue. On one hand, if Kofoed is right in saying that the hardware unit is indeed better, the implication becomes that the plugin industry is tricking consumers into purchasing emulation plugins marketed as sounding the same as 'the real thing'. On the other hand, if Ansnes' view of the barely audible difference between analogue gear and digital emulation is correct, the implication is that the technostalgia culture are holding analogue gear in a higher esteem than it deserves. It should be noted that although Ansnes view the audible differences between analogue gear and emulation plugins as more or less

irrelevant, he recognises the difference in process involved with working on analogue technology compared to working ‘in the box’, as he himself works largely within the analogue domain.

When asked about what he thought about the differences in analogue gear and digital plugins Gary Bromham says that:

the problem with digital emulation of analogue technology is... The analogue magic is in the errors. It's in all the things that are wrong with the analogue gear. That's where the personality is! Otherwise. Of course! You can model anything. But trying to model the things that are wrong with something rather than the things that are right with it, that's the interesting part for me. (Bromham 2016).

He also says that some of the phase-shifts in the analogue gear and the heating and cooling of the different elements will have an effect on the final sound that would be possible to emulate digitally with delays and that these faults and phase-shifts are some of the things that the studio technicians of the past have been trying to get rid of for years (Bromham 2016).

Thomas Henriksen (2016) offers another view. Having worked on a SSL 4000E console whilst running Nidaros Studio, he recalls when plugins emulating the console first came on market. Being in a very good position to judge the differences between the plugin and the actual hardware, he found that although he liked the plugin, it sounded completely different from the actual hardware. From Henriksen's perspective, the plugin is not an inferior version of the hardware, but something else entirely. If Henriksen is right in that the plugin does not sound like the original console, the issue is no longer just the comparable sound quality but also how the plugin is marketed. When the plugin was first released, Henriksen experienced people that had not worked on the original console reviewing the plugin and in his experience one cannot really review an emulation plugin without having worked on the original analogue gear. This implies two things. Firstly that a person who has purchased (in this case) the SSL plugin might get a false impression of how the original hardware actually sounds like, and secondly, that the industry might be marketing plugins

as something they are not. By marketing emulation plugins under the same name as the hardware it is based on, the industry is appealing to a culture of technostalgia within the consumer audience.

Reissuing Analogue Instruments in Digital and Physical Form

It is not only old compressors and EQs that have received digital makeovers. The market is also filled with digital versions of old analogue synthesizers and keyboards. Moog's Minimoog, Korg's Polysix, Roland's Jupiter-8 and Yamaha's CS80 have all been emulated as virtual instruments. The mellotron has also received eternal digital life in the form of GForce Software's M-Tron and M-Tron pro. The most interesting part of this trend is not the digitalization of vintage synthesizers, but the reissue of the analogue version that some of them have received. Blogger James Grahame (2015) notes that the reissue of old analogue synthesizers was greatly represented at the 2015 NAMM-convention (National Association of Music Merchants). Moog reissued three of their models, Moog System 15, System 35 and System 55, with prices ranging from \$10,000 to \$35,000. Korg reissued a scaled down version of their ARP Odyssey and Dave Smith Instruments released a modernised version of the Prophet-6 (Grahame 2015). The interesting thing is that all of the original synthesizers, which the reissued versions are based on, are all from the 1970s. Although all three of the Moog synthesizers were released as a limited edition, 150 units for the System 15, 35 units for System 35, and 55 units for System 55, it still shows that there still exists a market for not only analogue synthesizers, but also vintage synthesizers. Roland has also reissued new versions of old gear and announced new versions of their 808 and 909 drum machines and the 303 bass synthesizer in 2014. The increase of demand has greatly influenced the pricing of hardware and the 303 have seen a tenfold increase in price on the second hand market, from \$100 to \$1000 (Reidy, 2014). Today, in 2016, the price of an original Roland 303 has risen to north of \$2500 on eBay.²⁶

²⁶ Prices compared at ebay.com 1 March 2016.

Dave Spiers (in Computer Music 2014) of GForce Software attributes some of the growing interest for vintage synthesizers to the controls of analogue gear. By operating physical knobs and faders, the user experiences a more hands-on and instinctive approach to sound sculpting. Vintage analogue tuning is a lot more imprecise compared to more modern synthesizers. Spiers notes that 'people sometimes look back with rose-tinted specs, forgetting some of the pitfalls. That's where sanity can occasionally fall victim to retro-fetishism' (cited in Computer Music 2014).

Lead engineer at synthesizer manufacturer Arturia, Thierry Chatelain, points to the familiarity of vintage sounds as part of the vintage synthesizer's comeback. In his view the sounds 'became as popular as the songs they were used in' (cited in Computer Music 2014). When a younger generation of artists becomes influenced by the previous generation, the sounds carry over. The question of whether analogue is better than digital is a highly subjective matter. According to Chatelain, analogue synthesizers sound warmer than their digital counterparts and have an inherent organic quality that seems to be sought after in today's music production. Spiers on the other hand seems to think the analogue vs digital debate pointless, saying that both digital and analogue have cons and pros and that the important part is whether or not it's right for the job (Computer Music 2014). There are also classic synthesizers that were originally unpopular at their release. Both the Roland Juno-106 and the drum machine and sampler E-mu SP-1200 were undesired when they hit the market in the eighties, but are now both considered classics. There are still being produced new synthesizers with their own unique sound, what remains to be seen is if they will ever be able to reach the same status as their already legendary forebears (Computer Music, 2014).

Tech editor of DJ Mag, Mick Wilson, points to nostalgia as a cause for the increase in analogue gear sales. He believes that the analogue sound is softer than what can be achieved with digital soft synthesizers, claiming that modern artists like Skrillex utilises 'very harsh sounding digital equipment' (cited in

Reidy 2014). Another possible cause could be in the form of a reaction to the huge sample libraries that can be found in most DAWs. A music producer is just as dependent on being able to stand out in the crowd as any artist. In a world where everyone has access to the same sounds, it becomes increasingly important to create an identity of your own in your music. Adam Saville, music editor of DJ Mag, thinks that just selecting sounds from ones computer can make the music lack character. In the world of electronic music it's not only about analogue versus digital, but also about vintage analogue versus modern analogue. DJ and producer Alexander Green emphasises the character of old hardware, a character he claims comes from the degrading of the inner circuits. In other words a twenty-year-old machine will not sound the same as a brand new one, even if it's the same model (Reidy, 2014).

It is interesting to note that Magnus Kofoed (2016) of Brygga Studio wholeheartedly disagrees with Alexander Green. Kofoed claims that a synthesizer does not get its character from deteriorating components and that deteriorating components simply makes the synthesizer sound bad. In other words, a synthesizer with degrading components is inferior to a synthesizer in pristine condition. Both Kofoed's and Green's view have implications when it comes to digital emulation of hardware synthesizers. If Green is right in that it is the degrading of circuits that gives the synthesizer its character, it becomes very hard to manufacture a realistic emulation. Take in to account that the machines will degrade differently based on how well they are maintained, how much they have been used and what kind of environment they have been stationed in, and the task of making a perfect digitalised version becomes more or less impossible. If Kofoed is right in that a synthesizer with degrading components simply sound worse than a properly maintained synthesizer, the issue of emulation becomes increasingly less complicated, but it would still be dependent of having access to a synthesizer in mint condition.

Analogue Gear: Case Studies by Samantha Bennett

As Samantha Bennett (2012a) points out in her article ‘Endless Analogue: Situating Vintage Technologies in the Contemporary Recording and Production Workplace’, new music technology is highly prominent in music technology press, technology trade shows like NAMM and online forums such as GearsLutz. The general consensus is that new technology is good technology. At the same time vintage and analogue gear is manifesting itself in music recording and production practices, both as digital plugins and as the integration of analogue gear in the digital workspace. On the subject of digital emulations of older analogue technology, she cites G. Barlindhaug:

By following this quest for analog sound, digital technology helps to create an acknowledgement of analog aesthetics. This must not be seen as merely an act of nostalgia, but rather as a sense that the context of its use is what really makes a particular technology novel. (Barlindhaug, cited in Bennett 2012a).

Whilst agreeing with Barlindhaug that the context in which the technology is used demands careful consideration, she raises the question of the place of original systems in the modern recording and production chain. In this, Bennett is effectively dividing analogue recording technology into two categories: plugins emulating older analogue gear and the original systems themselves. In Bennett’s view, the notion that the use of vintage analogue gear is nostalgic is a simplification of the matter. Labelling the use of vintage gear as nostalgic leaves out many of the choices a recordist has to make ‘such as sonic characteristics, aesthetic intention, preferred processes or techniques, availability or accessibility of preferred technologies’ (Bennett 2012a). She goes on to cite several different sources such as *Analog Days: The Invention and Impact of the Moog Synthesiser* by Pinch and Trocco:

It is easy to dismiss this analogue revival as a form of nostalgia. Nostalgia is usually taken to be a means whereby present uncertainties and discontents are addressed by drawing on a past era or culture. But we think something more interesting is going on. In users’ adaptation of and reversion to old technologies we see salient criticisms of how the synthesiser has evolved and expressions of genuine feelings of loss. (Pinch and Trocco, cited in Bennett 2012a).

and *Analogue Artists Defying the Digital Age* by O'Hagan, where O'Hagan cites certain younger artists' decision to use technological precursors as a reaction against digital culture:

The work of these artists is born of dissatisfaction with digital culture's obsession with the new, the next, the instant. It values the hand-made, the detailed and the patiently skilful over the instantly upgradeable and the disposable. (O'Hagan, cited in Bennett 2012a).

In Bennett's view, approaches to music technology such as those presented in her article is not a reaction or resistance to newer technology. It should be seen as artists choosing technology that will help them achieve their intended sound. The use of vintage systems is therefore not a reaction to modern contemporary technology, but merely the tools that happens to have been chosen for the job.

The Perceived Iconicity of Vintage Gear

Regarding the application of vintage gear as part of the recording studio, Bennett presents three case studies in her article; *Snap!* Studios, Toerag Studios and Evangelist Studio, all of them utilizing an abundance of vintage recording technology. In her interviews with the owners of the studios, Bennett touches upon several aspects of vintage gear in the modern recording studio. One aspect is the issue of technological iconicity. Certain vintage recording equipment has become classics in record production, often on the basis of being used on key productions in popular music history. CEO of Evangelist Studio, Lewis Durham, has this to say on how older gear achieves its iconicity:

I think one of the reasons is that every engineer and producer knows that the old mic amplifiers and processors, limiters, EQs, are the best. Every engineer will go on about Fairchild compressors, Pultec EQs, they'll say it's the ultimate. (Durham, cited in Bennett 2012a).

Marco Pasquariello of *Snap!* Studios ads to this observation by pointing to the studio's Fairchild 670 compressor as a draw for clients (along with their collection of microphones). In his own words, the Fairchild 670 is 'regarded as a 'holy grail' piece of kit'. He also points to the general vintage gear found in his studio as a draw for clients:

People demand it because it's the golden age of gear from a golden age of recording. Analogue tape is in demand because it's the best, sonically. It's also to do with the process, the limitations of tape. There is romance involved to an extent. But 99% of people using this room want to mix down to tape. (Pasquariello, cited in Bennett 2012a).

Although both sonic characteristics and romanticism are part of the allure of analogue recording, Bennett labels the process as key aspect. Analogue tape recording is more often associated with capturing the performance of a band or artist, in contrast to multi-track recordings done in digital recording where the approach often emphasises constructing tracks layer on layer. For some, the combination of tape recording and live performance gives authenticity to the recording. The views of Liam Watson of Toerag Studios stand apart from Pasquariello and Durham. On the subject of vintage gear and iconicity he states that he avoids the Fairchild compressor as much as possible, labeling it as overpriced and saying he has not found anything about it that he is not able to do with equipment priced at next to nothing. Furthermore on the pricing of vintage iconic gear he has this to say:

...it's just ridiculous! It's really stupid. It's actually stupid. And it's reached a point where a lot of this stuff is just one-upmanship. It's just people saying, 'Oh, I've got a Fairchild' or 'I've got a Pultec' and it's absolute bollocks. With Pultec Eqs, I know they're good Eqs, I know that everyone says they're great and they made a whole range of them, but they're too expensive. (Watson, cited in Bennett 2012a).

Vintage gear like the Fairchild Limiter and Pultec EQs have increased dramatically in value over the last twenty years. The issue comes down to just how much of a difference any given piece of equipment makes. This is a subjective matter, but it is interesting to see how Pasquariello calls the Fairchild a *'holy grail piece of kit'* at the same time as Watson shows indifference to it and even reluctance to applying it in his recording process.

According to Bennet there has been a wider cultural shift in the perception of music production that can be traced back to the introduction of affordable digital technologies in the mid- to late 1980s. The cultural focus has moved from a recording process based on musical performance and producer influence to a

technology-centric recording process. The music technology press, along with online forums like *Gearslutz*, reinforces this perception of the recording process.

Issues of Sonic Character

In any discussion about analogue versus digital, the word ‘warmth’ seems to be mandatory. Whether the debate is concerning analogue synthesizers versus digital emulations or vinyl versus CD it very often boils down to that one word. Warmth is an expression used to describe one of the characteristics of any given production. The main problem with analogue warmth is that people often have a hard time explaining exactly what it is (even though they might very well use the term to describe a production or sound). In order to truly understand the difference between analogue and digital recording, it is important to have a basic understanding of the contributing factors to warmth. In a Sound on Sound article from 2010, Hugh Robjohns took a closer look at what we perceive as analogue warmth.

Character in music production consists of many different factors, ranging from instruments and musicians to what microphones and preamps were used (and how) to post processing and effects. Analogue warmth is usually associated with what analogue recording gear does to the sound. When digital recording became a thing in the eighties it brought with it cleaner signal chains that made it possible to reproduce the recorded sound more accurately. Analogue warmth was not necessarily something that producers in the past actively sought after, but it was rather a byproduct of recording on tape and through all-analogue gear. Analogue recording adds certain imperfections and distortion that a lot of people find pleasing. Digital recording lacks these imperfections, but makes up for it with convenience. All analogue gear demands maintenance and are priced far above the digital equivalent. Digital plugins and hardware tools have now made it possible to achieve analogue warmth (or at least something in the vicinity of analogue warmth) in digital recordings (Robjohn, 2010).

In any analogue recording chain there are several opportunities to create what we perceive as warmth; it could be anything from what microphones are being used, how they are positioned, what preamps or console they are run through to whether or not they are running through outboard EQs and compressors. Whilst all of these factors will influence the end result, what really gives the impression of analogue warmth is the combination of magnetic tape, distortion (harmonic or non-harmonic) and active circuitry. Of these three it is the magnetic tape that is mostly missing from modern recording practices. Tape machines are both more expensive and reliant on proper maintenance than their digital equivalent. The main difference between recording on analogue tape and digital recording is that the tape has certain imperfections concerning its instability in speed, meaning that the tape will playback in different speed causing such artifacts called wow and flutter in the sound. By the 1980s, the amount of tape-related sonic artifacts had been greatly reduced to as little as 0.04 percent (according to the manual) on the Studer A820 two-track machine. This might seem like an insignificant amount, but compared to digital systems it will actually make a difference. Word-clock stability in digital recording is the equivalent of wow and flutter in analogue recording and is so much more stable that it cannot even be measured. The thing about tape is that even the lowest levels of wow and flutter will influence the sound of a recording by introducing what is known as side-bands. Side-bands are basically frequency modulation, meaning that the tape will generate additional frequencies above and below a signal. These additional signals add subtle noise to the recording and have become part of what we call analogue warmth. Before digital recording, tracks would often be bounced down to make more tracks available for recording. Every bounce-down would add to the side-bands. This aspect of recording is all but gone in modern digital recording (Robjohns, 2010).

Another important part of analogue warmth is what is known as tape saturation. Analogue recording tape is affected by several different factors within the recorder itself. The saturation of the tape is a product from the combination of tape formulation, record and replay head construction, tape speed, tape width,

record and playback equalizations along with phase shifts, and the level and waveform of high-frequency bias. All of these parameters can be different from tape recorder to tape recorder and add distortion to the recorded signal. To counter this distortion, most professional tape recorders are slightly 'over-biased'. In practice, this will reduce the distortion of low- and mid-frequencies at the cost of higher frequency response and transient accuracy. This gives a warmer impression of the sound as opposed to digital recording where the frequency response is significantly more linear. The frequency response is clearly a part of adding warmth to a production, but it could easily have been emulated in digital recording. What really sets tape recording apart from digital recording is the tape's effect on signal transients. Magnetic tape is simply not able to properly reproduce loud transients in the upper frequencies. Tape loses higher frequencies for each time it is played back, meaning that the top end will be slightly more reduced for every playback at the same time as transient details are reduced. This is a large part of analogue warmth. In digital recording you can play back a recorded sound any number of times without any loss in either frequency response or transient detail. There have been released a number of plugins designed to add tape saturation to a digital production, but it is easy to forget that tape is not the only contributing factor to analogue warmth (Robjohns, 2010).

Transformers also play an integral part in analogue recording and analogue warmth. Transformers can be found in any device that utilises magnetic couplings and have been in use since the early days of recording. It was not unusual to find ten or more transformers in a recording chain in the sixties and seventies. All transformers will add distortion to a signal, either because the signal is too low in level, or because it is too high. The last contributing factor to analogue warmth is the active gain stages, which is basically amplification. This amplification is used to raise signal levels, and in doing so will add some degree of distortion. What kind of distortion the active gain stage will add is dependent on everything from its circuits to its power supply. It is through the combination

of several or all of these factors that we perceive analogue warmth (Robjohns, 2010).

Analogue warmth is a complex matter, dependent on many factors, all of which are themselves dependent on several different parameters. Warmth is not a product of one thing, but of several elements in a chain. It is interesting to see that all of the factors that Hugh Robjohns considers part of analogue warmth are something that was used before the standardization of digital recording. Digital recording have always been about getting the cleanest signal possible, in contrast to the unavoidable distortion of older (and newer) analogue recording equipment. Judging by the number of tape saturation of plugins out on the market, warmth seems to still be sought after in digital music production. The issue with many of these plugins is that they are often emulating just on part of the signal chain, whilst analogue warmth occurs as a result of several contributing factors.

The keyword that goes through the entirety of Robjohns article is 'distortion'. In every part of the analogue recording chain, with the exception of (most) microphones, we find equipment that is not only capable of distortion, but will add distortion whether it is wanted or not. Every aspect of analogue distortion, and therefore also analogue warmth, is a product of flaws in the recording technology that often act in unpredictable ways. This suggests that what people seem to like with analogue recordings are not that it has superior sound quality compared to digital recordings, but rather that it has inherent flaws that add certain colours to the sound that many find pleasing. One implication we can draw from this is that the return to analogue warmth, either in the form of recording on tape or using digital tape saturation plugins, might be a reaction to the clean recording practices that came with digital recording.

Bennett (2012a) also cites 'warmth' as one of the fundamental reasons why practitioners choose to record on analogue gear, the other reasons being quality and sonic character. According to her article it was the 'quiet' nature of digital recording that led to the uptake of digital technology in the early 1980s. The then

new technology was in opposition to the hiss and noise associated with analogue tape. The comeback of analogue recording gear is not only represented by hardware, but also in how plugins have started to feature analogue ‘faults’. Izotope’s Vinyl plugin features settings for ‘dust’, ‘scratch’ and ‘mechanical noise’ and Avid’s Tape Saturation plugin features ‘wow’ and ‘flutter’. These ‘faults’ of the analogue domain were long considered undesirable by studio practitioners, but are now marketed as selling points in plugins. What is really interesting are the reasons her interview subjects give for choosing analogue gear over digital.

Lewis Durham says that he is open to the idea of replacing his analogue equipment for digital software-based solutions if he could find anything that sounded as good, stating that:

If it sounded better, I’d do it in a blink. But I haven’t found it yet. I don’t think I will, because this equipment [the technology in Evangelist studios] will surpass anything that’s built. They can’t make this stuff [the technology in Evangelist studios] anymore because it’s far too expensive to manufacture and no one could afford it. This tape recorder [Ampex 5258] cost the price of a house when it was brand new. What studio is going to buy that? No one. You can’t build that anymore. You can hear the build quality in the sound. You can hear those transformers, those massive pieces of iron pulsating in that sound. (Durham, cited in Bennett 2012a).

It is interesting to see that Durham contributes the sound quality of his analogue gear to its build quality as he goes on:

The only reason I use it, is because I have compared all this to new stuff, I’ve got in good transistor amps and compared them to the older amps. It’s not just about ‘old’ it’s about the good, professional ones... The reason I like this sort of equipment and I knew it was superior to anything produced after the period of really sort of the British Empire and the US stuff after the mid-1960s, was because of the build quality... But people don’t necessarily get it. People do half get it. They say ‘Yes, that’s true’. But when they get to the studio, all that goes out of their head and they say ‘Yea, lets just bring up these plug-ins. (Durham, cited in Bennett 2012a).

Durham expresses frustration about his views on analogue gear, which although seemingly widely acknowledged, is not necessarily practiced. In other words,

practitioners are choosing digital over analogue despite knowing that analogue is better. Bennett points to certain key arguments as to why practitioners have opted to use digital software over analogue hardware: it is more conveniently sized, cheaper, not as reliant on maintenance and more practical. Benefits like these have over time outweighed the arguable difference in sonic quality and character. However, the sonic difference between analogue sound recording equipment and digital is not easy to pin down, and it is problematic to compare the two as being 'black and white'. According to Durham:

There is not 'one' analogue. Analogue spans over 100 years of technology and all those decades sound completely different. There tends to be this thing where analogue sounds one way and digital sounds another, but that doesn't really mean anything. (Durham, cited in Bennett 2012a).

Marco Pasquariello of *Snap!* Studios recognises that clients at his studio are not necessarily concerned with getting a vintage sound, but that they are just looking for quality sound. The difference between sounds that are labelled 'vintage' or 'old' and sounds that are 'quality' is also recognised by Durham:

People think this stuff has an 'old sound'. They only say that because they are completely used to the new sound. To me, this is the original sound. With the studios now, that [current, computer-based sound recording and processing] is a tainted version of what is going into the microphone. (Durham, cited in Bennett 2012a).

Bennett takes Durham's point as an argument for the original purpose of recording equipment: to capture a musical performance. Differing from the viewpoints of Durham and Pasquariello, Liam Watson of Toerag Studios argues that there is no real difference between analogue and digital recording. At the time of Bennett's interview with him he was looking to increase the number of track recording capabilities in his studio. It is interesting to see that Watson was not considering any 16 or 24-track analogue tape recorders, but was more interested in a second-hand Otari Radar II. The Otari, originally released in 1999, is a 24-track hard disk recorder. On the subject of analogue recording versus digital recording, he has this to say:

It's frustrating, because these people [bands/ musicians] think there's some sort of difference between recording on analogue or digital. Well there fucking isn't. If you're going to record like that, why not use a machine

that has 24 tracks on it? The Otari [Radar II] sounds really good. Some people have said, 'Why don't you get a 2" 16-track or a 2" 24-track?' But I'd rather not. I've had a 2" 16-track and I don't really like 2" tape; it's too expensive, the machine is much more fussy to align – it can be aligned, but it goes out of alignment quicker – the azimuth is a bugger, you never get the tracks at the top... they're never really in phase with each other, so I'd rather just have a fucking hard disk recorder! I don't have to line it [the Otari Radar II] up; it's just there. I'm not someone who sees a lot of difference between analogue and digital. Fuck it. If it sounds good, it sounds good. (Watson, cited in Bennett 2012a).

It is important to note that this comes from the same man who runs a studio with gear such as the Studer A-80 tape recorder, a 1950s EMI REDD 17 console and a large range of vintage microphones and outboard equipment. It is interesting that a studio owner renowned for his use of vintage, analogue gear is opting for a digital alternative instead of an analogue 16- or 24-track tape recorder. This is purely out of practical and process-oriented reasons, and he is citing both price and maintenance as deciding factors. Bennett takes this as an example of what she calls a common viewpoint among professional recordists who view technology as a means to an end, rather than technology as systems that will alter the sound recorded. She links this view with the previously mentioned 'performance capture' approach to recording.

The Issue of Romanticism

In her article, Bennett (2012a) highlights the topics of romanticism, authenticity and performance. Through her interviews she has drawn the conclusion that these three topics are somewhat linked with each other. She goes on to suggesting that there is very little evidence that practitioners are using vintage analogue recording equipment out of nostalgia, trends or sentimentalism, writing that attributing the use of vintage gear to nostalgia is the same as ignoring factors such as musical and recording aesthetics, sonic characteristics and client expectations. This is evident in her interviews with Durham, Watson and Pasquariello. All of them seem to be using vintage recording gear for reasons that are not founded in nostalgia. On the other hand, they all recognise a certain degree of romanticism towards vintage equipment in their clients. As

Pasquariello observes: 'Dealing with the client, you can hear the romance in their voice, there is a romance about working with tape' (Pasquariello, cited in Bennett 2012a). Durham's choice of pre-1960 recording gear is based on the records he has listened to. It is his recognition of pre-1960s systems, on which early Rock and Roll and Blues records have been recorded, that has caused him to set up his own studio as similar to a professional studio of that time as possible.

Watson recognises certain clients for whom recording on analogue tape is part of a rebellion towards computer-based recording. During the last two years clients of a certain age have entered the studio with a kind of dismissal of all things modern. He says that they come because of the analogue equipment and dismiss stuff 'without really understanding it, in the same that their answer to it is something they don't understand either' (Watson, cited in Bennett 2012a). They have a view that since the equipment is analogue it must be better:

Thinking there's some kind of magic box, which is just stupid. But people really do think like that. And you can tell they haven't thought it through because they haven't really realised that for one, the multitrack machine here is an 8-track. ...They haven't realised that there aren't separate tracks for everything. So they're like, 'Oh yeah, great, cool, we can just drop in...' 'No, it's not cool. He just fucked up there and this guy dropped a beat here and this guy here did a bum note here'. 'Yeah, but you can just correct that'. So, they're still thinking in terms of 'Oh, it will be alright, it will be corrected, it's only a little mistake'. But how? They haven't quite got it yet. This is a completely different world and I'm noticing that more and more. (Watson, cited in Bennett 2012a).

As Watson is pointing out, the technological aspects of recording on tape are recognised by the client as sonically preferred over digital recording, but the client often lacks insight in the process of tape recording. The client's perception of tape recording as a better way to capture his or her music may be problematic, as it requires a higher level of performance from the musicians involved. Durham also recognises this lack of consciousness around the recording process:

Nowadays, a lot of studio tools are used to compensate for bad performances. So if a drummer's slightly off the beat, they'll use the computer to make it in. If you were around before that, you'd have been kicked out the studio because you can't drum. And if you can't drum, then you shouldn't be drumming! But I don't cater for those types of people.

That's why no one would come to me to make a number 1 record for a major label, because I couldn't do that. I'm not interested in that because it's not music to me. The music I like is performance-based. (Durham, cited in Bennett 2012a).

As exemplified in the quotes from Watson and Durham, recording on analogue tape might come from a desire to achieve a specific sonic character, but with it comes a recording process and aesthetic that is very different from the modern recording studio. A bad performance recorded on tape cannot be repaired in the same way as within the DAW. The fact that people are choosing to record on tape might therefore be seen as a way to distance oneself from the cleaner, quantised recording practices that came with digital recording. It might serve as an example of rebellion against the mainstream.

Issues Discussed in Interviews Conducted for this Thesis

It is interesting to see that a lot of the subjects discussed in Bennett's (2012a) article have come up in the interviews conducted for this thesis. Rhys Marsh (2016) of Autumnsongs Studio, although stating that he probably would be happy working with digital sounds, points to the workflow of working on analogue gear. To him, it is the unpredictability of analogue gear that sets it apart from working within the digital domain, but at the same time he appreciates the convenience of recording digitally.

Jostein Ansnes (2016) of Øra Studio highlights the marketing value of having analogue gear in your studio, stating that having a large mixing console and several hardware outboard units in the control room invoke a certain 'wow-factor' in the customers. When asked about whether or not the Neve VR60 Legend console in his studio was worth the extra maintenance, Ansnes was adamant that the value of the console outweighs the cons of maintenance for several reasons. Once again, it is the effect it has on a customer entering the studio. Ansnes claims that when a customer enters a studio of the size of Øra Studio, they are expecting a large console in the control room. Another reason is the process of working on an analogue console compared to working in the DAW. In the control

room at Øra Studio, the computer screen is turned away from the mixing console and the monitors, giving the opportunity to work more intuitively on the console rather than in the DAW. One mixing on the console compared to in the DAW, Ansnes says:

Adjusting the EQ, and as I said to you, you turn up (the EQ), you end up turning up 10dB. You would never be doing that in the box. You would have followed the mouse carefully to 0,8dB and then it's like you're almost expecting it to explode... Two different ways to do it. (Ansnnes 2016).

Another aspect mentioned by Ansnes is the sound quality. In his opinion, a production becomes more three-dimensional and gains a higher resolution, meaning depth, when mixed on an analogue console. Jo Ranheim (2016),²⁷ who works as a recording engineer and producer at Øra Studio, also points to the value of customers being able to find the recording of themselves on faders on a console, rather than having to dive into a computer screen. The last aspect mentioned by Ansnes is that working on analogue gear enables them to be 70-80% done with the mix as early as in the recording session. Ansnes goes on to recognizing that when working exclusively in the DAW, the mixing process of the production comes at a much later time, often after the band or the artist have left the studio. By working on analogue gear, although they are recording in the DAW, they can give the customers a better impression of how the production will actually end up sounding and it enables them to present a decent mix to the customers as the recording progresses.

Magnus Kofoed (2016) of Brygga Studio recognises the difference in workflow when working on analogue gear compared to working in the DAW. When it comes to mixing, he feels it is more comfortable to turn knobs on the studio's 1979 SSL 4000E and that he is able to achieve the desired result in less time compared to mixing 'in the box'. Although he prefers the workflow of mixing on the studio's console, he also does mixing digitally in the DAW. Time is the deciding factor to whether to mix is done on the console or in the DAW. As Kofoed points out, having to do a total recall on the mixer three weeks after the initial mix is done

²⁷ Jo Ranheim is briefly represented in the interview with Jostein Ansnes.

just to adjust the vocals 1dB takes both a lot of time and work and you can never be sure that you will get it to sound exactly the same.

On the issue of the iconicity of vintage gear, Thomas Henriksen (2016) offers a colourful anecdote. Whilst working at Nidaros Studio, he was recording a band that wanted to record on tape:

I put the tape in the tape machine, but then I know that this band needs a lot of editing, right? And I don't have a year on this album. I have one and a half week. So I have actually put the tape in, pressed play and then I just recorded through Pro Tools. And they [the band] come in and listen and 'Yes! This sounds really good! This is just the sound we wanted!' ...It is nostalgia, yeah... It is quite a strong white lie too, because I say "Yes. This has been on tape before it gets to Pro Tools." It has not been through the tape at all. (Henriksen 2016).

This story is a good example of how musicians might have a desire to record on tape because of the music historical associations tied to it, whilst not actually recognise that their recording has never been on tape at all.

In all of the interviews conducted, apart from the interview with Gary Bromham, the interviewees was asked the question of what new sounds or genres have emerged in the 2000s. Generally this was considered a difficult question to answer. Henriksen (2016) argues that there are still much to go on in terms of performing music. Magnus Kofoed (2016) recognises that contemporary popular music is in a very retro-centric period and that there are no rules as to what kinds of music that are being created. Rhys Marsh (2016) also recognises that popular music has become more retro-oriented. He goes on to say that new genres in the past had a tendency to explode, but wonders if there are genres in more recent popular music that has done the same. Skjalg M. Raaen (2016) states that music has become more diversified and that we are now being exposed for a wider range of styles than in the past. According to him, this is both good and bad in the sense that he thinks that people should be allowed to release their music, but at the same time the sheer quantity of music makes it more difficult for that music to be discovered.

Jostein Ansnes (2016) expands on the issue of quantity, stating that perhaps there are too many artists releasing music today. On the question of new sounds in the 2000s, Ansnes argues that the changes in music over the last fifteen years have not been so much in the music itself, but rather in the technology on which it is produced. He argues that perhaps the changes in technology have been so extensive that the artists have been so caught up in the technology that all they have been able to do is to reproduce music rather than innovating it. He goes on to say that even though pop and rock music is not dead, it might have lost its ability to create something new.

The Symbiotic Relationship of Retromania and Technostalgia

It is important to understand that the development of new music technology and the evolution of new pop are intricately related to each other. Looking back through the history of popular music, the emergence of new music is often, although not always, dependent on or resulting from the introduction of new technology. Pop music history is full of examples of this. Without the electric guitar, popular music might not even have come to be in the first place. Synthpop is by definition dependent on the synthesizer. Hard rock and metal music would not exist without overdriven and distorted guitar amplifiers. It is a paradox that now that music technology is at its pinnacle, consumers and professionals are returning to older, out-dated recording equipment and instruments.

One issue with the relationship between retromania and technostalgia is deciding whether technostalgia is a result of retromania or if retromania is a result of technostalgia. It could be argued that neither is the case, but that both phenomena have arisen as symptoms of a condition of nostalgia in contemporary society.

CONCLUSION

The influence of retro aesthetics on popular culture is not new in the 2000s. All popular culture builds on previous culture, developing elements of the past into something new. It is not the occurrence of retro aesthetics in itself that has defined the last decade and a half, but rather the degree or scale of retro in pop culture. Reboots of old movies, old TV series resurrected on the silver screen, returning fashion and jukebox musicals all add to this. Out-dated music formats such as the LP is back. Retro is very much part of present day popular culture.

As Simon Reynolds (2011, xix-xx) describes, the 2000s saw the return of a number of different genre and styles: garage punk, vintage-soul and 1980s synth pop all got reincarnated through acts such as The White Stripes, Amy Winehouse and Lady Gaga. Pop music in the first decade of the new millennium has, as pointed out by Reynolds (2011, x-xi), been defined by genres and styles from every previous decade happening again simultaneously. Unlike every decade before it, popular music of the 2000s has not been defined by any particular new genre or musical style, but rather by every kind of sound existing within the same present. This is apparent in the interviews conducted in relation to this thesis as none of the interviewees could point to a defining sound or genre in the last fifteen years.

Although the 2000s has seen the return of yesteryear's sound aesthetics, it is imperative to consider retromania in different degrees. The 2009 single 'Little Lion Man' by Mumford and Sons serves as an example of this. As described in chapter one, the song might on the surface seem to be nothing more than an attempt at folk rock revival. Closer listening, however, reveals much about the production of the song, as it is clear that the song is produced using modern recording and mixing techniques. This becomes even clearer in Sound on Sound's interview with Ruadhri Cushnan who mixed the track. Although such elements

as the instrumentations, the melody and the chord progression inhabit an apparent retro vibe, the production is not retro at all. There is a balance between retro and non-retro, and it is crucial to be aware of this when discussing retro aesthetics in contemporary popular music.

As is evident in the material presented in this thesis, discussing technostalgia in regards to music technology is not as simple as attributing the use of older analogue and vintage gear to nostalgia alone. The people interviewed for this thesis, the case studies presented by Samantha Bennett (2012a) and the band Stereolab represented in Timothy D. Taylor's book *Strange Sounds: Music, Technology and Culture* (2001), all give different reasons for the use of analogue equipment, very few of which seem rooted in nostalgia. For many practitioners, workflow seems to be a more important factor than the iconicity of analogue gear. Other factors are build quality and sonic quality or even marketing purposes. As these are all professional practitioners, it is expected that they have significant knowledge about the technology they are utilizing and that they have made a conscious decision to use it.

As the market for music technology has expanded over the course of the last couple of decades, the consumer market has come to include amateurs and enthusiasts as well as professionals. The increased affordability of music technology has made it possible for people who do not make a living from music production to be part of the market. As described by Samantha Bennett (2012b), the music technology press has changed alongside the emergence of increasingly more affordable technology. Originally aimed at the professional market, music technology has become increasingly marketed towards the amateur musician and enthusiast since the 1980s. Q&A sections in the press allowed interaction with the audience: a way to talk about the gear. Online forums such as GearsLutz now fill this role, enabling to a much larger degree a culture of talking about and glorifying music technology. The sum of such forums and the press has resulted in what is known as technoporn; the obsession with technology for the sake of technology itself. In this culture, the intended purpose of technology is less

important than the iconicity or historical associations of the equipment. This objectification of technology has laid the foundation from which technostalgia has emerged.

Whilst nostalgia alone cannot account for every piece of vintage gear in use, the music technology industry is certainly capitalizing on nostalgia for technology. This seems evident in how companies such as Waves are marketing some of their products. The marketing of their The Eddie Kramer Signature Series plugin bundle is emphasizing the musical legacy of Eddie Kramer, listing iconic productions he has worked on. The focus is on nostalgic associations tied to the producer. The product in question is not actually related to any of the productions mentioned in its marketing.

In discussing technostalgia and technoporn it is important to differ between the conscious and the less conscious consumer. As mentioned earlier, both the people interviewed for this thesis and the case studies presented by Bennett (2012a) are practitioners with a conscious relationship to the equipment they are using. These producers and studio owners have acquired technology based on factors such as the purpose or the sonic qualities of the equipment. The less conscious consumer segment of the market is buying gear based on the perceived iconicity or cultural association of the technology.

In terms of a conclusion it is difficult to boil the topics of retromania and technostalgia down to a single answer. Not only is it problematic to do so, it would also be a way of ignoring the many aspects and directions of the issues. Although it might be unwise to draw any single conclusion this thesis does present material that have implications concerning the matter of nostalgia in popular music.. Retro aesthetics in popular music occurs in correlation with the available music technology and it is important to not ignore it when discussing the present state of contemporary pop. Although it is important to understand retro aesthetics and the use of vintage equipment it cannot be attributed to nostalgia alone, and ignoring nostalgia as a factor would be equally wrong.

The presence of retro aesthetics in contemporary pop and in music technology can hardly be ignored, but one of the issues not discussed in this thesis is whether or not retro aesthetics have a negative or positive influence on popular music. Many would say that all music is built on other music. The reuse of elements from past pop might not have negative implications. On the other hand, as implied by Ansnes (2016), it does beg the question of whether or not popular music has stopped being relevant.

Further inquiries into the issues concerning retromania and technostalgia could take a multitude of forms. It would be interesting to see a scientific study on how contemporary popular music compares sonically to older pop. Such a project could for example focus on frequency responses in the top ten lists now as compared to before or measurements of parameters such as dynamics or harmonic distortion. Another route could be to look at why some genres and styles are not revisited to the same degree as others: what aesthetics do contemporary artists adopt and, perhaps more importantly, what aesthetics do they not.

The importance of fieldwork in studying retro aesthetics in popular culture, music and technology is vital. Interviews, such as those presented in this thesis, give an insight in how technology is both used and viewed by the practitioners that are actually using it. Although the six producers interviewed for this thesis offer important input on several aspects of the state of contemporary pop and music production, they are too few in number to represent a larger consensus within the music production industry. If this thesis were to be expanded on, it would be interesting to do interviews with a much larger number of producers in order to see how the music production industry on a larger scale relates to the topics discussed in this thesis. As the producers interviewed for this thesis is based in Trondheim (with the exception of U.K.-based Gary Bromham), it would also be interesting to see how, or if, producers from different parts of the world relate to retromania and technostalgia. Perhaps more important than further studies on how and why retromania and technostalgia is a part of popular music

would be studies on where all of this leads: what is the future of pop music and music technology?

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Selected extracts from interview with Rhys Marsh

The interview with Rhys Marsh was conducted on the 21 January 2016 at Autumnsongs Recording Studio. The interview is divided into part 1 and part 2. Part 1 concerns different aspects of music production culture and industry such as creativity, streaming services, the development of technology and retro aesthetics. Part 2 is a run down of the recording equipment in the studio as well as how the equipment is used. The time that the different extracts appear in the recording of the interview is noted in the transcription in minutes and seconds. Additionally, at times the transcript will not include everything that has been said after a question. This is noted with how much time in approximately minutes has gone by before the transcript start again.

Part 1.

(10:43)

Anders Jordbrekk: So, uh, we've already touched upon it, but could you say something about, uh, the aesthetics of your, of you as a producer. I mean you work in this fairly large room without a separate control room. The control room is in middle of the room, so you're kind of in the recording as it happens.

Rhys Marsh: Yeah, um, that was to... Firstly because, well, there's two reasons for that. The atmosphere that you get, I think is worth it. You, um, you lack the kind of separation that you might need sometimes, but most of my favourite records are recorded in one room anyway. And, it was the idea of it, of this room, was kind of based on the way they recorded the Band album in a poolhouse. Were they where all in the same room, and the console in the same room. And the atmosphere of that and the vibe of that record is pretty much unmatched. So I like, I like that sound a lot. I like the sound of like when you can hear the one instrument, but you can hear the hihat in the vocal mic cause it's going through into the reverb that the vocal mic has on it and stuff like that. You get that a lot on the, on the early Zeppelin albums as well. Like, the guide vocal is still there

because they did the guide vocal and the acoustic guitar at the same time. And then they did a new vocal, but he sings it differently. Stuff like that. I really like that. The atmosphere you get from that, the realness of it. And the other reason for having one room is because if I'm recording myself, which I do a lot here, then I don't have to open doors and forget to close them and then have to open it again. And then if I have to start the take again then I have open the door again. The amount of doors I have to...

J: Back and forth between.

M: Yeah, so now I just have to run around a couple of corners and I'm at the drumkit. And, and I got a bigger room as well. I get a much larger live room rather than chopping it in half. So then, I use the space, and I put microphones, I put them over here (points to the back of the room). I've had microphones, stereo room mics, I've had them facing the corner there, and then it's a long live room. So, that's a large part of the sound that I get from here as well. I do with drums and also sometimes guitar, electric guitar. I've even done that with bass as well, having a stereo bass sound. Having one mic close to the amp and having another one way over here (points to the back of the room). And then pan it left and right. The bass sound is amazing. So yeah, there's no reason to not use the room by chopping it in half.

J: So you're not only running this studio as a producer, but you're also running your own record label. Um, and the thing that kind of puts your record label apart from most contemporary record labels is that you release only a small fraction of your music to streaming services like Spotify and Tidal and Wimp. What's the reasoning behind that?

M: I prefer the physical format and I, well if it's on Spotify then there's no reason for people to buy it. So, that's what people think anyway, that's the way people think these days, so it's not what I think. But that's just the popular mindset. So I put singles from the albums on streaming services including YouTube, which I

think is the best streaming service because they don't pretend that they're going to pay you. And the albums, should be, they should be enjoyed at a decent quality. And the packing as well. It's like, the packing is equally important, well not equally important, but the packing is a large part of it. The way it feels, so, there's a, there's a story within the photography and the artwork, which compliments the way it sounds. Um, and that's, that's why I grew up listening to vinyl, looking at, at the pictures. And I would love it when they would have photos of them in the studio, and I would look at all stuff they were using and look at that photo whilst listening to it kind of imagining how they were recording it. And looking at the liner notes as well. The recording credits, where it was recorded, who recorded it, who mixed it. All of this was really, really important as a way to, to enjoy the music. And I don't want to look at a, like a tiny thumbnail. That doesn't give me any, any information about what I'm listening to really, it's just, it's just rubbish.

(17:22)

J: Is there, you know, any period of time that is, have been more significant to you in popular music history than others?

M: The most significant period? Well, I think, I guess the answer is the same that most people tend to give is kind of 68 to 78. Yeah, it would be probably then for the inventiveness of the musicians, the experimental ideas that people had and the newness of everything. And the sound. The quality of the sound as well. Everything that made it out was recorded well, mixed well. That's actually a quite important thing as well. To release something in the early seventies it did have to be really good otherwise it just wasn't going to happen. But now, anyone who can turn on a computer can hit a few buttons in a program and put a few notes together and then put it on Soundcloud or iTunes or God knows where else. And you don't know if they're serious or if they're just kind of messing around. So, (laughs) it's difficult to separate the wheat from the chaff.

(20:00)

J: Do you have a feeling that music now a days isn't as inclined to experiment with things as people were in the sixties and seventies?

M (one minute later): In the days where you only had four tracks then you had to think differently, which forces you to become, kind of think outside the box. Yeah, technology has kind of spoiled people cause now the limits have been removed in many ways.

(21:39)

J: Final question, you know throughout the decades of the previous century, you know, we had, every decade had distinct sounds and technology and bands and artists. What would you say is the sound of the 2000s, of the last fifteen years?

M: Um, you can think about the genre, the names, the new genres that have popped up, like rock 'n' roll, progressive rock, heavy metal, disco, electronica, all these things, and punk. Did I say punk already?

J: You've said it now.

M: Reggae. All these things that have previously popped up in lots of decades that happened before the 2000s, but it's, I don't know, 'cause a few years ago there was a disco revival, it's just revivals. I'm not sure if there is a... Maybe in 50 years we will see it more clearly. It doesn't feel like there's such a distinct thing. I mean, indie, indie rock it's not just, not even 2000s is it?

J: No, that goes way back.

M: Kind of a nineties' thing. Grunge nineties. But combining different things, like with the, there was something called folk-tronica, have you heard about that?

J: No.

M: It's like singer songwriter, acoustic guitar, add some electronic fuzziness and stuff to it. Like the Magnet album *On Your Side* when it came out 2003 or something. That was that quite a lot and that was, that was really cool, that was like a futuristic retro thing. But everything seems to be retro. Even, even the pop music like the Daft Punk that came out a few years ago. Instead of programming disco beats they've got disco players from the late seventies. So even the modern music is retro. Air, French band, they're doing kind of modern music, but they're doing it in a way that if, if these modern instruments existed in the seventies that's what it would sound like. Yeah, so it's just kind of like a mish-mash. Maybe, for example when... No, because new genre tend to explode a bit more on the scene. Like when the first King Crimson album came out, then it was my God was is this? It's progressive rock. When the Sex Pistols arrived, what is it? It's punk. It doesn't seem to be so subtle when a new thing arrives, it tends to explode a bit. Grunge exploded. What has exploded since then though? I don't know. Has any genres exploded since, since grunge.

M (one and a half minutes later): The last fifteen years have been a bit non-descript, I guess. I mean even the last year (2015) I can't really think of any great music that's come out lately. Somebody, uh, well there is always great music coming out, but it's becoming a bit more bland in a way. But then again it always has been a bit bland unless you dig under the surface.

J: Yeah, yeah. Absolutely.

M: Someone asked me to write down for this kind of online thing that we're doing of different people giving their top ten albums of the last year. And the guy asked if I could write a top ten list for the article and I thought about it. I can't even think of ten albums that came out last year. It's just so, so boring. I said to him I can think of, I think two. And he sent me a list, a link to, what is it, Discogs or something where, lists all the albums that came out. And I went through it, oh my God, is this the last year in music? Some horrible stuff. I eventually found, I did find ten, but I said to him, they're not in any order and I would not necessarily

put them in my top ten. And not like they're top ten quality, but here are ten. The only ones that I could find.

(29:36)

M: But, I don't think it's always been like that. I remember say 1994, 1995, it wouldn't take long to think of ten great albums that came in those years. Not to mention 1971, like you could probably get closer to 50 in a few minutes of great albums that came out.

Part 2.

(15:06)

J: You mentioned you've, you know, tested the Yamaha synth against the plugin version of it. So, you know, all analogue gear deteriorates. In a way that's what gives them their character a lot of the time because they're unpredictable and, you know, and a ten year old analogue synthesizer won't sound the same as a brand new one. Is that part of your creative process to try to use gear in that way?

M: No, not in a conscious way. I mean I could probably use... be happy getting sounds from digital stuff, but I just prefer the workflow of it more. I like not having presets. It kind of irritates me a bit when I try to remember how it sounded last week. And sometimes, it's happened a couple of times where it's taking me a few minutes to actually get a sound from it because I've done something with the filters and I can't remember what I've done. And so... and I can't just reset it, I have to play around with it thinking how the hell... how did I get a sound from it. When I got it, when I took it out of the box I couldn't make it stop and it took me ten-fifteen minutes to realise that there is a hold button on it that makes the note continuously play. So, stuff like that. I really like things like that. Cause it kind of has a life of its own. And I just kind of... we just work together and stuff rather than me pressing a button and looking on a screen to see which preset it is. Then it would be exactly the same. It's always gonna be a

bit different. That variation in the way the stuff work. Like when I pick up a guitar it doesn't sound the way it did yesterday. Acoustic instruments always change the way they sound and the fingers and the person playing it changes. But if you press C major triad on a digital keyboard it's probably gonna sound the same that it did yesterday and that's kind of boring. So I like stuff that has some life to it.

(26:22)

J: So, you know, as you said in a perfect world you would have the API console and run everything through that. Is there any other gear that you, you know, you just wish that you had available?

M: That would be everything, right? (Laughs)

J: Where to start?

M: Yeah. I do, I do really like the convenience of recording into a computer. That's one of the good things about technology, is that when I open up Cubase I don't have to calibrate it, I don't have to clean the heads, I don't have to spend half an hour preparing it to open. It just spends thirty seconds or so telling me who made it on that load up screen and then it opens.

(37:26)

J: You kind of get a whole generation of music producers who are all having access to exactly the same stuff and there's no limit to the amount of gear they have access to.

M: Yeah, but the... I kind of... The room that's being recorded in is... is very, very important, the sound of the space. I spent a long time working on the drum sound I get in here and it's one of the best drum sounds I've heard actually, but it took ages trying to figure out where to put the drums and what to do with the microphones, just experimenting with them. And, it was actually just doing it in

the most simple way that I could think of that gave me the best sound. And you get this... You could record them dry and then put some a room plugin on it, but it would sound like a room that everybody else has access to. And a lot the great albums like Led Zeppelin, *When the Levee Breaks*, the drum sound, you couldn't get that drum sound anywhere else. You could drums sound a bit like that, but you're not going to get the same drum sounds.

J: That's the one recorded in the hallway where they put mics from the third floor or something?

M: Yeah, so it's about using the space. Space is really important and that's what you don't get if you have a laptop in the corner of your bedroom, you don't have that space. You need to have a, well you don't need to, but it helps a lot to have that space, the kind of... the recording studio environment. You have a sound of a room, which is meant to be a good sounding space, which is why we have all this stuff hanging up on the walls. So that's... that's massively overlooked, I think, these days with all these great studios closing down.

Appendix B: Selected extracts from interview with Skjalg M. Raaen

The interview with Skjalg M. Raaen was conducted on the 29 January 2016 at Strengleik Studio. The interview is divided into part 1 and part 2. Both parts concern different aspects of music production culture and industry such as creativity, streaming services, the development of technology and retro aesthetics. The recording of the interview is split into two parts due to a small break after the first 71 minutes. The time that the different extracts appear in the recording of the interview is noted in the transcription in minutes and seconds.

Part 1.

(9:30)

Anders Jordbrekk: Når vi er inne på dette med Beatles og Kinks og alt det de gjorde med veldig begrenset utstyr så... det slår jo meg at opp gjennom seksti sytti, åtti og til dels nitti-tallet så er det alltid et eller annet nytt som kommer teknologisk som gjør at folk kan presse teknologien litt videre og utforske nye muligheter, men jeg har en følelse av... Eller jeg er ganske sikker på at de fra ca midten av nitti-tallet når DAWene begynte å komme og bli kommersielle og hjemmestudio virkelig begynte å komme så har teknologien handlet i større og større grad om tilgjengelighet.

Skjalg M. Raaen: Mhm, det kan nok stemme.

J: Og at det skal være lett å bruke. Så, hva tror du det... hvordan påvirker det musikk produsenten eller musikeren eller alle de som skal arbeide med et kreativt håndverk i dag når ting handler om tilgjengelighet i stedet for innovasjon?

R: Nei altså, jeg skjønner... alle kan jo forstå den ideen med tilgjengelighet. Selg et kommersielt produkt sant? Så det er jo noe... Altså det er viktig at folk får til å bruke det ganske kjapt. Sant? Så det at det være lett tilgjengelig og lett å bruke

er jo en bra ide, men det som er bøygen med det kan du si er når du ikke må jobbe noe for å få de lydene, sant, du er ikke nødt til å sette deg inn i hvorfor... hvorfor høres the Edge sånn ut når Slash høres sånn ut. Altså, du trenger ikke noe bakenforliggende kunnskap om hvordan det blir så du bare blar deg inn i en meny, trykker på presets så popper det opp noen bilder av noe utstyr som du kanskje har lest om på nettet og så låter det som... som det skal. Sant? Så har du ikke... da har du ikke kunnskapen om hvordan du får til den lyden. Det er jo det som kanskje kan gå litt tapt da sant, med... med at alt er så tilgjengelig som det er. Sant? Alle kan kjøpe en plugin å hive på, sant, som ligner på en SSL-kanal og hive på en basstromme og så lete opp et sånn snare-preset så låter det greit. Sant? Men man har ikke noe kunnskap om hva det er som skjer, hvorfor låter det greit. Hvorfor låter det bedre nå enn i stad når den pluginen ikke var på? Sant, den kunnskapen. Og den kunnskapen er noe som folk selvfølgelig kan lese til, til en viss grad, men så er det noe med altså learning by doing og sånn og prøv det ut. For en skarptromme er jo ikke en skarptromme. Kommer jo helt an på hvilken skarptromme det er og hvem som slår på den og hvor mikken står og hvilken mikk det er. Sant? Så det er jo ikke en hellig gral av en løsning der heller. Sant? Så det der... den kunnskap... bakenforliggende kunnskapen der som på en måte er vesentlig og var mye mer vesentlig før, den går tapt. For man har ikke gått den... den løypen fram til å skjønne hvorfor det må være sånn. Sant?

J: Ja, og før var det jo og i mye større grad sånn at folk begynte med å koke kaffe i et studio og så jobbet seg opp i gradene.

R: Ja, også lærte man av folk som var rundt og det har jo jeg gjort her, sant. Jeg har sittet og kikket over skulderen til Bjørn Nessjø og Rune Nordal og Ronny Wikmark og folk som har drevet på i bransjen siden delvis seksti og sytti og åttitallet, sant?²⁸ Og som har vært med å jobbet med masse store plater, masse store artister og lange dager i studio som sitter på... virkelig har gått den løypen og

²⁸ Bjørn Nessjø, Rune Nordal and Ronny Wikmark are all working at Nidaros Studio which is located in the same building as Raaen's studio.

kanskje laget malen på en del ting og. Og så har jeg fått lov til å kikke på hvordan de sitter og jobber og så har jeg hatt muligheten til spørre. Hvorfor gjør du nå? Hva gjorde nå? For det låt kult. Hva var det du gjorde? Nei, jeg gjorde sånn og sånn og sånn. Ja, hvorfor det? Får du svar på det, sant. I stedet for at man bare loader et preset som noen har satt på et eller annet kontor en eller annen plass og så låter det kjempe fett tror du. Men, men... og det kan være en form for kreativitet det og, men den er veldig styrt. Hvis du skjønner? For at da gjør vi det og så funker det, men du er egentlig ikke kreativ. Det er noen andre sin ide, det er en annen greie som du inkorporerer i det du holder på med. Men du sitter ikke å leker deg med... du går ikke hele den veien frem til den lyden og ender opp med at det her synes jeg var det kuleste jeg kom fram til. Du laster bare inn en ting, sant? Du er ikke kreativ i den forstand at man starter på et punkt og så jobber man seg videre derifra for å se hva mer kan jeg gjøre? Sant? Hva mer kan jeg gjøre med det her? Hvordan funker det her? Altså, det skal stå sånn, hva skjer hvis jeg gainer opp eller ned der i stedet for motsatt sånn som det står nå. Sant, man... da er man kreativ. Da tester man og leker man og så lærer man seg nye ting. Det er noe helt annet enn å laste opp et preset som er laget av noen andre, sant? Så det er liksom... men da er det den bakenforliggende kunnskapen som er fraværende. Som gjør at, altså, det er stygt å si at det ikke er kreativt, men en helt annen type kreativitet da.

J: Litt enkel kreativitet?

R: Ja, men så gjennom det så blir man vant med at ting er lett tilgjengelig. Og da blir også sånn at hvis det blir for mye prakk med noen ting da, hvis ting blir for strevsomt eller det tar for lang tid og så kommer det en ny plugin som er enda litt lettere og har enda litt flere preset og som låter enda litt hippere så kjøper man den også og bruker den i stedet for, da sparer man fjorten millisekund. Sant? Og så er det en preset som er annerledes. Sånn som i ana... ikke analog synth, men i sånn... i synth verden, sant, så er det jo... jeg har... en del av de folkene som hender at de hører sånn russelåter og sånn... hiter og noen sånn

som... og så men det her er jo en Nexus.²⁹ Sant? Software synth med svære lydbibliotek. Vi hører jo... de hører det tvert at det her er... her er det ikke noen Jean Michel Jarre som har sittet og skrudd og lett seg fram til en lyd, sant, gjennom en analog synth og gjennom noen filter og så videre.³⁰ Her er det preset i Nexus. Sant? En pakke som koster femten hundre – to tusen kroner. Sant, etter at du har kjøpt synthen og diverse sånn så kan du bla i den så hvis du bare gidder å lete lenge nok blant alle de tusen lydene så finner du den lyden der. Den ligger der. Er det kreativitet? Egentlig? Sant? Det er jo i forhold til bruken av det, musikal... men å lage lyden. Det er det noen andre som har gjort. Sant? Det er en lyd som er tilgjengelig for absolutt alle. Og da... og da er man jo inn på dette her med utstyr igjen, men... men det er ingen andre som høres ut som Jimmy Page og han brukte billige Supro amper med 15" element i, sant? Det var ikke svære Marshaller i studio der. Det er jo han som har produsert i hvert fall de første tre eller fire Led Zeppelin platene. Jævlig skarp fyr hvis du hører på de soniske løsningene og miksene og måten det er gjort på. Trenger ikke å like musikken, men det er ganske hipt gjort altså. Igjen tilbake til hvor lite muligheter man faktiske hadde.

(16:46)

J: Når vi nå likevel er inne på presets og sånn, så... sånn som... går vi tilbake til den tiden studioene fortsatt var analoge, eller i hvert fall alt av EQ og kompresjon og sånn var outboard utstyr, så var det jo gjerne sånn at folk reiste til et studio fordi det hadde den sounden eller den mikseren eller det var den stereo reverben eller hva nå enn det...

R: Ja, eller det fine... det rommet. Altså veldig ofte så var det jo det rommet, sant? Ikke sant? Ikke minst.

J: Men nå så har vi jo sånn som du nevnte SSL-stripen fra Waves som er emulert og, altså du kan få alle disse gamle hardware unitene i... i plugin form, så du

²⁹ Raaen is referring to the Nexus synthesizer plugin.

³⁰ Jean Michel Jarre is a French music producer specializing in electronic music.

ender egentlig opp med en verden der alle som har en laptop har... kan potensielt ha alt det gamle utstyret...

R: Ja, altså i teorien kan man si det.

J: litt i hermetegn da selvfølgelig. Men, hva gjør det med verdien av å ha dette (analoge) utstyret?

R: Det der er og en sånn... det er... Altså det er forskjell i tilnærming og vet du, for at veldig ofte nå, og det gjør jo jeg selv også til en viss grad, er at når man recorder ting da recorder man flatt. Sant? Og så er det en bra mikk inn i en bra preamp inn i et bra lydkort inn i en datamaskin. Sant? Så du har et best mulig nullpunkt som du kan jobbe med etterpå. Men det var jo ikke det man ofte gjorde før, da skrudde man jo lyden på vei inn og. Man tok kreative valg i prosessen. I ytterste konsekvens nå så kan man si at... at man kan sitte igjen med en hel... altså femten-tyve line-spor, sant? Daue line-spor med gitar plagget rett i... i lydkortet, sant, og MIDI og sånne ting og det... og så setter man alt i plugins etterpå. Men det var ikke de man gjorde da. Skulle man ha trommesettet til å låte sånn så satt man og... skrudde man på mikseren og skrudde lyden på trommesettet som man tenkte at det låt tøft.

R (4 minutes later): Så er det jo klart at det er kjempebra det at alle kan kjøpe en SSL lignende plugin. Jeg har jo dem jeg og. Både Waves sine og Slate sine, så det er ikke noe med det. Jeg bruker dem jo masse fordi at det er gode verktøy. Men jeg har ingen sånn... ingen sånn illusjon om at det skal gjøre... at det som er gjort... miksa av, kan du si, av meg på macen min her med... med de pluginene skal låte like bra som det som er gjort nede i studio 1 der de faktisk har... der det faktisk står en 64-kannals SSL G4000 mikser.³¹ Som er helt strøken og der det er inne på lageret en svær EMT klang, sant? To faktisk. Sant? Old school. The real deal. Alt det er står nede der. Det er klart at det låter ikke likt her, uansett hvor

³¹ Raaen is referring to studio 1 of Nidaros Studio.

kraftig mac jeg har, sant? Men det er fine verktøy, er det. De har sin karakter og de har noe harmonisk overstyring og de... og det merker du hvis du bruker Waves sin V-serie kontra SSL-serien så er det klart at det er en annen respons i... i hva som skjer når du skrur på mellomtone-filtrene eller i toppen. Eller API-serien som jeg bruker veldig ofte for den er veldig sånn... synes jeg har veldig luftig og fin topp og er veldig annerledes enn både SSL sin og V-serien. Men det er verktøy, sant? Det kunne like gjerne ha stått Bill, Bob og Ted på dem sånn sett. Sant? Det er jo ikke en Neve. Den har noe karakteristikk, kanskje, som ligner på den, men det er jo ikke en Neve. Det der er jo den... ja og en Neve er jo heller ikke nødvendigvis en Neve, sant, for her snakker vi analoge komponenter som jobber sammen. Sant? Det er derfor en stripe eller en kanal på en mikser kan låte annerledes enn på en annen som i prinsippet skal være lik, for det er noe med hvilken temperatur har de stått i, sant, hva slags tilstand er de i, sant, hvor godt ivaretatt hatt de blitt. Og hvordan var formen til han som loddet den dagen, for det klart at toleransen i forhold til avvik på elektroniske komponenter var litt annerledes på seksti, sytti og åttitallet enn den er nå. Sant? Man har nå... man har mulighet til å være mye mer nøyaktig når man... når man bare produserer og man må måle dem før de brukes i produksjon nå enn hva dem var da. Det er derfor at en Marshall topp, for eksempel, fra 68 kan låte dritbra og så kan du prøve en annen Marshall topp fra 68 som låter dass. Som i prinsippet er helt lik, men det er alle de avvikene. I forhold... sånn, sånn, ube... mikroavvik på elektroniske komponenter, men som ikke hadde muligheten til å måle da, de hadde ikke måleutstyr som var bra nok. Og man hadde ikke produksjonsmetoder som var bra nok til at man fikk en sånn konstant. Så det ble sånn der in the neighbourhood of, sant? Og da har du sånn art by accident da. Plutselig så dett det veldig på plass og det blir en jævlig fin amp. Eller en fin preamp eller en fin mikrofon eller noe sånn ut av det. Så det... det er liksom det der analoge. Det som er stilig med analogt utstyr er at det er uforutsigbart. Sant? Som han Terje Tranaas som spiller i Sambandet sa i forhold til... i forhold til keyboards, og han har jo en stor keyboard-samling, han har mellotron, han har hammond orgel, han har analoge synther, han har... for at han har vært... han er utdannet tannlege så har han aldri måttet solgt noen ting. Sant? Så han har jo alt det der, men han

sier at sytti, åtti, nittitallet, sant? Altså, så sier han det... men han bruker mye analog synther han og fordi at det er lett vint og det er enkelt.

J: Ja, analog synther?

R: Nei, altså, plugins mener jeg. Selvfølgelig. Altså, software instrumenter mente jeg. Men det som han sier at altså... men uansett hvor bra, og veldig mye av det er jævlig bra, men uansett hvor mye du snur og vender på det så er det en algoritme som er der, sant? Du får ikke den der... sånn tilfeldige avvikene som du får med analogt utstyr som vil skje når man driver med analogt utstyr rett og slett. For alt er programmert, det er en algoritme her, det er enere og nuller. Og på et eller annet tidspunkt så vil akkurat det samme avviket komme igjen. Sant? Hvis du skjønner? Ja, for det er kalkulert på et eller annet vis. Så det er noe sånn... det er noe med det som ikke blir det samme. Det oppleves ikke... selv om det er nært så er det ikke helt det samme. Og da blir heller den der avvenning mellom at og så... hva er det som låter best og hva er det som mest praktisk. Faktisk. Sant? (Chuckles) Da blir det fort at man tar med seg et par midibrett og et lyd kort og en mac kontra at man har med seg en lastebil med sånne... sant?

(32:26, on the subject of increased accesibility to technology)

R: Alle kan ha en helt streit laptop og et helt streit lyd kort og programvare som gjør at... at man får til ting som for... for ti-femten år siden var helt utenkelig. Når jeg begynte å snuse på det her... for tjue år siden når jeg begynte å snuse på det her med innspilling så vil det ha kostet meg rett i underkant av ti tusen kroner for en Fostex fire-spors maskin med mikrofoninnganger med kassett, sant? Og to sånne SM58 mikrofoner. Det var ikke noe phantom-mating eller noe sånn å snakke om i hele tatt. Til meg var det sånn basic greie. Ikke noe klang, ingenting. Kun de tingene der. Rett under ti tusen kroner, sant? Og nå kan du på en helt streit iPad... og Garageband har du alt. Sant? Men da blir da jo sånn... men... men den... lang utgreiing her nå da, sant? Men hele den veien da, sant, i fra liksom begrenset utstyr, begrenset recording fasiliteter til at man får mer og mer og mer og mer og mer muligheter, sant, til nå, det... man har det på

telefonen. Sant? Før... altså hvis du tenker i starten så måtte du ha et hus. Og da måtte du spille sånn som det skulle bli på platen for at du hadde ikke noe mulig til å gå inn og rette opp i noen ting. Nå har du alt sammen på telefonen. Sant? Og du kan sitte å redigere det på bussen hvis det er noe du er misfornøyd med, sant? Og da blir... men, men... så blir det kanskje noe som skjer da, men... men hvorfor hører vi fremdeles på de skivene da? Hvorfor hører vi fremdeles på Elvis eller Bob Dylan eller (Rolling) Stones eller Beatles eller Beach Boys eller Joan Baez eller Jimi Hendrix eller... altså hvorfor er det de skivene vi hører på?

J: Det er det som er spørsmålet.

R: Ikke sant? Nei, men... men da... kanskje det har noe med... Altså selvfølgelig så har det noe med at den musikken har fått lov å vokse på oss i femti, seksti, sytti år. For det er ikke uvesentlig. Det her er musikk som på en måte har... har fått lov å bli spilt og så har fått lov til å bli hørt over så lang tid. Musikk per i dag er ferskvare. Som jeg spurte en om i går: hvor mange låter husker du som var hit... svære hiter for en måned siden? Eller for et halv år siden?

J: Ja, ikke sant?

R: Ja. Hva var det som var på alles lepper og som var det nye store for 2015, for et år siden? Husker vi det? Ikke sjans. Ikke litt en gang. Sant? Men om du begynner å spørre folk om 92/93, hva slags musikk hørte du på da? Nei, det var Pearl Jam og Nirvana og... sant? Det var det som var hipt. Det husker vi. Sant? Fordi det var musikk som fikk lov å være i bevisstheten vår over lengre tid før det kom noe annet, sant? Det var... det... Artister ga ikke ut en låt og så skulle de fyre av den mest mulig i en måned for å se om det funkete og så kom det en ny låt kanskje en måned eller to etterpå det. Sant? Det kom en skive og så ble det jobbet med den skiven og den skiven ble spilt og den skiven ble turnert med og sånn over tid. Mens nå er det ferskvare. Hvis en låt ikke catcher på i løpet av en til... ja, maks egentlig en uke etter release så blir det ikke noe. Med mindre noen

dukk... tilfeldigvis legger merke til den og plukker den opp senere. Men det er jo unntaksvis.

(One minute later, on the subject of production process)

R: Og da søker man kanskje tilbake litt igjen da, sant, i forhold til... altså hva var det som gjorde at det låt så tøft av det (productions pre 2000s). Det er ikke nødvendigvis den SSL-pluginen, sant? Det blir ikke det samme. Det er det man har oppdaget, at her er det noe annet som har skjedd. Det... det er i hvert fall det jeg har landet på... prosessen. Den prosessen det var å spille inn en skive da... det er en sånn... hvordan kan på en måte inkorporer den i musikk produksjon anno 2016? Sant? Man trenger ikke gjøre det på samme måten. Man trenger ikke å reise til en hytte ut i skogen med bare analogt utstyr og sitte der og se på månen og være i isolat i ukesvis. Men den prosessen. Den lekestuen. Det med å leke seg. Prøv ut. Eksperimenter. Nitti prosent av gangene så låter det jo dass selvfølgelig. Men den siste ti prosenten, sant, det er du kanskje finner et eller annet stilig som gjør 'Åh, det var stilig! Kult!' Det jobber vi videre på. Men hvis du ikke gjør det og utsetter det til miksen, sant, så kommer du aldri til den at 'men det jobber vi videre på, for det her var stilig'.

R (2,5 minutes later): Nei, men i hvert fall sånn summa sumarum tilbake til det med plugin-greien, så... Det er et verktøy. Det er det man på en måte kanskje har glemt litt en periode, men det er jo det man kanskje prøve å være litt mer bevisst. Og mange tror jeg er det, at det her er verktøy. Altså, det er en ting man bruker og det er ment å brukes kreativt for å på en måte finspisse den ideen man har. Men de er ikke nødvendigvis der for å lage ideene for deg. Men det er jo det som kanskje delvis har skjedd tilbake til det med preset der man trykker en knapp og så låter man som (the) Edge. Sant? Du gjør jo ikke det, men du har ikke noe kunnskap om hvordan du skal komme dit så da laster du opp et preset.

(41:27)

J: Det er jo ikke bare det at alle har tilgang til alt dette her (music production technology) og at alle kan spille, men alle kan og nå gi ut musikken sin via

tjenester som CDBaby, for eksempel. Og det er jo ikke bare musikk, altså, jeg kunne jo fått dette intervjuet lagt ut på iTunes og Spotify innen en uke for 300 kroner og distribuert i fysisk format. Og... altså, så kombinasjonen med at alle kan få musikken sin ut og i kombinasjon med streaming tjenester som Spotify, Wimp og Tidal som gjør at alle plutselig har tilgang på tretti millioner låter, hva gjør det med kvaliteten på musikk som blir laget? Eller hvordan påvirker det musikken som er av kvalitet som blir laget?

R (one minute later): Men så er det den der, når alle kan gi ut musikk... en sammenligning som jeg har brukt når jeg har noen forelesning bort på... eller seminar på Trøndertun, det er si... altså, hvis du ser for deg... har du vært i Nidarøhallen?

J: Nei.

R: Nei, se for deg Oslo Spektrum da.³²

J: Ja.

R: Ja. Og det er hele... altså hele Oslo Spektrum fra gulv til tak og hver en liten flik på gulvet er dekket av stabler med post-it lapper. Sant? Fra hele... hele jævla rommet. Låten din ligger en sånn to-tre meter skrått inn i fra venstre hjørne borti der. Sånn ca midt på, men litt under den stabelen med post-it lapper. Hvordan i helvete skal jeg finne den?! Sant? Det er sånn. By accident i så fall, sant? Og uansett om det er sånn at alle kan ut... jo da, men vi ser jo når vi åpner Tidal eller Spotify. Vi ser jo hva som popper opp på startskjermen, sant? Det er jo ikke de små, ukjente. Ikke sant? Det er Adele og det er jo Jay Z og det er jo bilder av de nye tingene deres som dukker opp. Så sånn sett så er det ikke så jævlig annerledes bortsett fra at vi ikke står framfor et CD-stativ og kikker på det. Vi står ikke fremfor en vegg der vi har liksom topp førti skiver eller sånn noe, så du

³² Oslo Spektrum is a concert hall in the capital of Norway.

må liksom gå inn i materien. Og så er det selvfølgelig med spillelister og sånn der folk kan gjør den jobben for deg. Eller du kan bruke masse tid på å sitte å lete opp musikk og det er mange som gidder det. Men, det er bakkdelen igjen da, tilbake til det som var i stad, at nei, men det har kommet en ny plugin som er litt kjappere. Samme... samme er det med det der, sant... man var til sånn vinyl plater og så kom det kassetter for at det var et mye mer robust format og så lettere å ha med seg og så kommer CDer, bedre lyd og lettere å ha med seg og sånn, og så kommer mp3 som er lett... lettere og ikke taper seg i kvalitet og lett tilgjengelig og så... og så har du nå streaming da, sant? Og så alt, det blir lettere og lettere og lettere og lettere og det krever mindre og mindre og mindre og mindre for å finne det. Sant? Selv om all musikk i hele verden ligger der. Så, majoriteten av folk tror jeg gidder ikke å sitte og lete. Dem... for dem gidder jo i utgangspunktet ikke å gå på platebutikken å kjøp en plate som dem er interessert i heller. Dem... så da har det blitt lettere, lettere, lettere, lettere, sant? Så... og jeg merker det jo selv, sant, hvis du tenker på i forhold til internett. Tidligere så hadde du godt kunnet sittet i fem minutter og ventet på å laste ned et sånn dårlig oppløst bilde. Nå blir du pissesur hvis du bruke mer enn et og et halvt minutt på å laste ned 150-200 megabyte. Sant? Fordi at vi blir utålmodig. Vi er vant til at det går så kjapt. Og med streaming og... man sitter ikke å leter. Nødvendigvis. Man bare leter opp musikk som man skal høre. En eller annen spilleliste som noen andre har laget. Et preset. Som man tar ned og setter på. 'Soul Training' er det noen som har laget, sant? Okay, men da er det sikkert Motown og Stax låter og sånne ting da og sikkert litt moderne ting og som passer til trening. Sant? 'Chill French Café'. Sant? Det er noen som har laget liste på det. Da er det sikkert noe sånn gypsy jazz og sånn noe med litt sånn ned tempo... høres bra ut. Preset. Spilleliste preset. Men man sitter jo ikke å leter. Sant? Det gikk jo på sånn... bla gjennom platesamling da, sant? Eller gjennom iTunes Store eller et eller annet sånn og der man leter opp noen ting og sjekker ut ting man ikke vett om. Man gjør jo ikke det. Med mindre man sitter og slår i hjel tid. Mesteparten av folk gjør ikke det, trur ikke jeg. Og da er det hele den greien med at alle kan gi ut musikk, vi kunne ha lagt ut det intervjuet her, vi kunne ha spilt inn en låt nå og gitt den ut. Vi har jo label vi og. Tre dager fra vi

legger det inn til det er ute og da er det... tror jeg en sytti digitale tjenester internasjonalt, både salg og streaming. Men, men, men kvalitetssikringen på det er jo i beste fall spekulativ. Og så... og så er jo betalingsmodellene, sant, på det der som er en helt annen sak. Men du kan si at upsiden på en måte med sånn som det fungerte tidligere med plateselskap var at det var noen filter som alle måtte gjennom. Om det var et stort eller lite plateselskap og hvilken sjanger og sånn er ikke så jævlig nøye, men det var noen filter man måtte gjennom uansett. Der det var noen som sa 'ja, det her liker vi. Det er kult. Det går vi for', eller 'Nei gutter, her må det jobbes mer. Det her er ikke der enda'. 'Det... dere har fine sanger, men det er for dårlig spilt', 'det er bra spilt, men sangene er for dårlige', 'det er bra spilt og det er bra sanger, men produksjonen er for dårlig', 'alt er bra, men vi aner ikke hvordan vi skal selge det her'. Type sånne ting som gjorde at man som artist eller musiker var nødt til å vær bevisst hva man driver på med. Nå er det jo sånn i prinsippet sånn at hvis du lager noe som ordentlig på trynet. Noe som alle, sånn i teorien, alle i hele verden sier til deg 'men det her er ordentlig på trynet', så kan man faktisk fremdeles velge å si at 'ja, men alle andre tar feil, jeg gir det ut allikevel'. Sant? Og det er jo for så vidt greit, men da har du igjen det der jævla rommet da med alle de post-it lappene, sant? Hvor mye... hvor mange sånne unødvendige ting er det som ligger der som egentlig ikke gjør noe annet enn å ta opp plass for ting som kunne fortjent litt mer oppmerksomhet. Det er ingen filter lenger. Alle skal være sitt eget filter. Alt skal være tilgjengelig for alle hele tiden.

(49:46)

R: Hvis... hvis... hvis det ikke var for noe annet enn utstyret så kan jo alle kjøpe seg en preamp og en bra mikk. Det er jo et spørsmål om penger det. Det er ikke det... det er ikke derfor du går i studio til meg, heller ikke... ikke nede heller. Det er jo kompetansen man trenger. Og det... det mange ikke har skjont på grunn av at man har aldri gått den der, sant, bakenforliggende kunnskaps biten. Man har bare lastet opp et preset og så låter det fint. Kjøper fx-prosessor til gitar og så laster man inn en lyd og så låter det fint. Sant? Man har ikke den bakenforliggende kunnskapen til hvorfor blir det sånn, hvorfor ender det opp

sånn. Og så sitter man der og klør seg i hodet av det, men... men det var ikke... det var ikke sånn det skulle låte. Nei. Og hvis man får høre det, sant, så kan man plukke det fra hverandre ganske kjapt og si at men det er derfor det ikke funker. Men det er fordi at man har kunnskap, det er kunnskapen man betaler for. Eller... men den er ikke gratis. Så derfor når folk begynner å velge å spille inn selv, og mange gjør det jo jævlig bra og lærer i prosessen, det er ikke noe med det, men, men, men... men man kutter kostnader da. Sant? Når man skal gi ut musikk. For man får ikke 'recoupa' det på platesalg eller streaming eller sånt noe og det er klart at det å skulle bruke fem og sånn... fem og tjue tusen på en sang, for noen som ikke har fem og tjue tusen kroner med visshet om de pengene får du aldri tilbake... kan være drøyt. Og da velger man å kutte noen hjørner, noe som kan gjøres uten at det går utover kvaliteten, men det kan fort gå utover kvaliteten og. Ja. Og da... da får du på en måte mange slike utgivelser som kanskje med fordel ikke burde vært (chuckles), stygt å si det, burde vært utgitt.

(53:04)

J: Dette her med hvordan det virker ut som plateselskapene er motvillige til å spytte inn penger i nye artister og utvikle nye artister. Men det er jo klart at... jeg vet ikke om det er bare det at de ikke vil, men jeg tror kanskje og det at de ikke kan. Fordi at de skal jo... det er jo en butikk...

R: Jo, men, men du kan jo si at i prinsippet så kan de jo.

J: Ja?

R: Men... hvis du ser... hvis du ikke bruker den der bruktbilselger tanken, sant? Altså hvis jeg kjøper den bilen her til 25 000, så må jeg selge den for 35 000. Sant? Hvis jeg putter 25 000,- i det bandet her nå så må jeg få inn minst 35 000 på dem. Hvis ikke så er det ikke verdt det. Hvis man tenker sånn så går det selvfølgelig ikke. Men hvis man ser det i forhold til hvor mye penger de drar inn på bak-katalog og på andre ting, så sitter dem jo faktisk på en god del kapital. Sant? Dem sitter jo fremdeles og tar samme cut av skivene de gir ut som de

gjorde tilbake på åttitallet for eksempel. Men da var de og ansvarlig for å få trykt opp skiven. Kanskje få noen til å designe coveret. Og få shippet det ut fysisk. En helt annen kostnad enn det er å legge det ut på nett. Men de tar fremdeles samme prosentdelen nå. Sant? Så, så, så... dem får da inn penger... masse penger. Penger som de kunne ha skutt i artistene for å skape nye artister for å bygge opp nye... nye profiler, en ny katalog da av nye ting. Men det gjør de ikke. De sitter heller på en måte som Onkel Skrue og... og... men det her er jo gamle penger. Det har ikke noe med det nye å gjør. Der kjører vi en mot en, sant? Utgift mot inntekt. Kryssjekker de to postene. Sant? Men de pengene, den haugen med penger som ligger her, det er noe annet. Sant? Hvis man hadde dratt den inn, altså investert det i fremtidig inntekt for å si det sånn nå, i stedet for å måtte legge det på siden av og tenke at det her er penger som... som vi må ha her. Så kun... da kunne man jo lett ha skutt ut noen hundre tusen kroner på å gjort ordentlig skive med et... et talentfullt band, en talentfull artist. Og det er noen få som får det, men altfor få.

(63:06)

J: Vi... vi er jo ekstremt eksponert for musikk nå i en mye større grad enn hva folk var tidligere. Så hva tror du... hva tror du det gjør med innovasjon i populær musikk som egentlig er en kultur som hele tiden har vært litt på hugget, litt frempå og brutt med konvensjoner?

R (3,5 minutes later): Hvis det kommer til det at det... at det (å gi ut musikk) ikke er noe man ikke tjener penger på i det hele tatt, så er det klart at det vil gå utover kvaliteten i forhold til at man gjør litt dårligere håndverk når man vet at man er nødt til å ha det litt travelt for man får dårlig betalt. Og så... men da blir publikum og lei av dårlig musikk for å sei det sånn, og så blir det noen få... sånn som det er nå, at noen få som dominerer. Sant? Det er ikke så veldig mange. Justin Bieber og Rihanna og sånt... det er noen få. Sånne som får dominere... fremdeles nå. Akkurat samme som når det var... paradoksalt nok akkurat samme som det var når det var CD-hylle. Ja. Det er jo dem som var tapetsert oppov... Micheal Jackson eller Madonna eller hva det var for noe, det er akkurat

det samme som skjer nå bare at nå er de på... på... på laptop-skjermen vår. Dataskjermen. Akkurat samme greien. Det sto masser av plater i butikken og vi kikket ikke nødvendigvis på dem som så dann. Det er masse andre artister på Spotify og vi kikker ikke nødvendigvis på dem. Det er der. Og de hadde jo kataloger så hvis det var noe spesielt man var ute etter... hvis noen kunne bestille opp til deg... Sant? Tok litt lengre tid, men vi har jo blitt bortskjemt på det der med tidsbruk som sagt. Men det var jo der da og. Men vi bruker det jo ikke. Bruker det ikke nå heller. 99 prosent av de som bruker Spotify eller Tidal og sånn bruker det jo ikke. Med mindre det er noe spesifikt man har sett på TV-en eller på YouTube eller snublet over eller noen har postet en link på Facebook, et eller annet sånn og man oppdager noe nytt. Man sitter jo ikke å leter og på måfå hører gjennom hele plater med folk man aldri har hørt eller hørt om. Så det er jo de der greiene som blir spennende å se nå, hvordan... Hvordan etablerer man seg som artist fra 2016 og utover, sant? Sånn... ikke sånn en låt som blir lagt merke til, men sånn etablerer seg som artist over lengre tid.

J: Karriere?

R: Ja. Uten... Altså når man tar utgangspunkt i at plateselskap ikke er en del av ball-teamet lenger. For eksempel. Det blir det spennende å se. Jeg tror det fint lar seg mulig. Jeg tror at over tid så vil artister bli flinkere til å ta tilbake kontrollen selv og. Men det er ikke riktig der enda for det er så innarbeidet i oss det der med platekontrakt og hele den greien der. Det er liksom sånn som man har vokst opp med. Den der illusjonen om at hvis man lager en ordentlig, ordentlig fin sang og man blir ordentlig, ordentlig flink så kan man få platekontrakt. Det er jo ikke sånn det funker. Ikke litt en gang. Altså, et visst talent ja. Men å lage sanger trenger du ikke å kunne for det er det jo folk som kan gjøre for deg. Og du trenger ikke kunne spille noen ting heller for det er og folk som gjør for deg hvis det var det. Hvis du ikke... Og hvis du absolutt vil spille selv så kan du fikse det etterpå. Det er bare klipp og lim. Så det er ikke noe med det. Så hele den... den der romantiske ideen der er jo dessverre... Den er

ikke... Altså, det er mulig enda, men i praksis så er... så... Du trenger ikke å kunne noe annet enn å se sånn relativt hyggelig ut på bilder. I verste fall.

Part 2

[20:20] J: Det har jo vært litt sånn at vi har... vi assosierer bestemte sjangrer og sounds med ulike tiår i populær musikk historien. Altså, alt fra Led Zeppelin på begynnelse av syttitallet, Beatles på sekstitallet, trash metal på åttitallet og grunge på nitti og så videre og så videre og så videre. Hva synes du definerer nittitallet? Nei, ikke nittitallet, men 2000-tallet, de siste femten årene i musikk?

R: Ja, si det. Nå er jeg fryktelig dårlig til å oppdage nye ting som så dann, men... men... Det har nok mye med den der digitale verden å gjøre det og, men det er mer enn at det... Sånn som jeg opplever eller sånn jeg husker det... Nå var jo jeg... jeg var født i åtti (1980), sant, så jeg var jo tjue i 2000. Det er et helt annet mangfold kanskje på et vis i forhold til hva... Altså hva slags musikk man faktisk blir eksponert for. Det er klart at før det så hørte ikke jeg noe mye på radio og sånne ting og MTV var jo heller ikke noe som... Men, men... Det er et jævlig vanskelig spørsmål. Nå skulle jeg til å si at mer sånne... sånne... hva heter det? Fabrikerte, for å kalle det det, artister på sett og vis. Altså der man på en måte har funnet noen som selvfølgelig er flink i utgangspunktet, men så har man på en måte laget en artist utav det så det være seg sånn N'Sync eller et eller sånne ting... type, sant... Eller Justin Bieber der man på en måte har laget en greie rundt dem. Ikke folk som i utgangspunktet hadde et sound eller et uttrykk. Men det er jo heller ikke noe nytt.

J: Nei.

R: Sant?

J: Nei, det går jo tilbake til Motown og lenge før det.

R: Ja, ja. Sant. Men der hadde man jo på en måte et sound som var Motown sitt, kan du si. Motown-soundet og så artister innenfor det. Sånn... sånn... sånn plate-politisk så har jeg jo kanskje inntrykk av at det... Det er jævlig vanskelig. At kanskje det med den der hit-iveren kanskje... Men det er jo ikke noe nytt det heller. Det er et jævlig vanskelig spørsmål. Drit vanskelig.

J: I know.

R: Men... men... men jo det! Det er vel kanskje... det er vel kanskje en ting som er... kan være litt vesentlig at, sånn tilbake til altså hvor mye... hvor mange husker du av de som var svære i fjor? Altså hvor mye fortere ting har gått og hvor lite ting har stått seg. Kanskje.

J: Og litt med lengden på karrieren.

R: Ja, det er det jeg mener. Altså om artisten forsvinner eller legger opp så er det ikke særlig mange låter eller sånn som har blitt stående igjen. Det er noen få. Men hvis du sammenligner med for eksempel nittitallet eller åttitallet eller syttitallet for den del, sant? Altså, de aller fleste kan lett nevnt ti låter fra sekstitallet, syttitallet, åttitallet. Kanskje til og med femtitallet. Og nittitallet og, delvis. Men 2000-tallet så, sant, så er det... Altså 2000 til 2010, du må tenke deg om da. For å ha noen sånne ordentlige... med mindre... Altså, sett bort i fra selvfølgelig da hvis man er fan av en artist som på en måte har hatt sin tid på nittitallet som så dann.

J: Som har blødd over på et vis.

K: Jo, jo. Nei, men jeg kunne ha nevnt deg ti låter med John Mayer som så dann, men ikke alle av de ti låtene er hiter. Hvis du skjønner. Sant? Altså, det er låter som jeg har hørt på, men altså, låter som har vært hiter, som har vært svære og som har breaket en artist eller sånne ting, der får jeg plutselig mye vanskeligere.

Og, hvis det er noen jeg husker så er det ikke sikkert du vet hvem det er en gang. Sant? Men hvis du tenker tilbake til ting fra sytti og åtti og nitti og sekstitallet for så vidt og, fra før vi var født, så har vi ikke så problem med å nevne både låter og artister fra da og som... der du mest sannsynligvis sier at 'ja! Stemmer. Han ja, eller hu ja eller de ja!' Sant? Så det er kanskje det som... hvis det er noen ting som kanskje preget 2000-tallet er liksom den der farten og hastigheten på ting. Og jeg tror ikke det nødvendigvis skal tas til inntekt for at kvaliteten er dårligere.

J: Nei da, nei da. Absolutt ikke.

R: Det er jo... det er jo heller det at, som nevnt... Altså, når man ga ut en låt så fikk den låten... ble den låten brukt og så kom det en skive og så var det den skiven man jobbet med i et halvår eller et år. Nå er det jo sånn at hvis det ikke har skjedd noe rundt i løpet av en måneds tid så er det for sent. Maks en måned liksom. Og hvis ikke det catcher eller blir gjort noe med innen rimelig tid så er det faktisk pure 50-200.000 kroner i prinsippet bortkastet, sant, hvis man ikke kommer gjennom nåløyet i løpet av veldig, veldig kort tid etter release. Så... Nei, noe spesielt sound eller noe spesielt uttrykk som er toneangivende for 2000-tallet for min del kommer ikke jeg på. Men det der med... som kanskje slår meg nå er litt påfallende det der med at jeg må tenke meg om for å finne noen artister som jeg synes... som var sv... eller er svære.

J: Det er jo... Altså, jeg skriver jo en god del om dette retromania fenomenet i ny populær kultur og det er en kar som heter Simon Reynolds som ga ut en bok i 2011 som heter Retromania og han påstår der, eller har en teori om at 2000-tallet er det tiåret der alle tiår før skjer på nytt igjen samtidig.

R: Jo, men det er noe med. Altså, det har forskjellige sånne parallelle bevegelser på en måte som tar for... tar for seg kan du si sytti, seksti, åttitallet, ja. Absolutt. Det er det jeg tenker på med det der med mangfoldet på en måte, altså, sånn som jeg husker det i hvert fall, men jeg var jo tenåring frem til 2000 da. Men... men

det har sjeldent vært så kort vei fra... skal si... Henning Kvitnes til Cannibal Corpse type. Hvis du skjønner? I forhold til musikk. Altså, det er veldig mangfoldig, det som man blir eksponert for. På godt og vondt igjen det der med mengden. Altså, det er mengden... Massen er så tett og det er så mange at det er vanskelig å komme igjennom og det var å på en måte stå ut lenger enn i tre og et halvt minutt som er den lengden låten er hvis du skjønner. Det er noen få som får det til, altså, man hører en låt på radio og tenker... det har jo skjedd mange ganger og... og tenker 'fy faen, det var kult. Det må jeg sjekke ut'. Men... men det er påfallende sjeldent. Dessverre.

Appendix C: Selected extracts from interview with Jostein Ansnes

The interview with Jostein Ansnes was conducted on 1 February 2016 at Øra Studio. The interview is divided into part 1 and part 2. Part 1 concerns different aspects of music production culture and industry such as creativity, streaming services, the development of technology and retro aesthetics. Part 2 is a discussion on the recording equipment in the studio as well as how the equipment is used. In part 2, some additional commentary is provided by Jo Ranheim who also works at Øra Studio. The time that the different extracts appear in the recording of the interview is noted in the transcription in minutes and seconds. Additionally, at times the transcript will not include everything that has been said after a question. This is noted with how much time in approximately minutes has gone by before the transcript start again.

Part 1.

(24:59) Jostein Ansnes: Det der analoge stæsjet har jo en verdi, men nesten like stor verdi, så har det den der wow-effekten på kundene som kommer.

Anders Jordbrekk: Komme inn i studio og forvente at det står, eh, ting rundt....

A: Ja. Altså det er klart det. Det er bare å se fortsatt. Hvert eneste bilde som gjøres nesten, hvis det er en som skal intervjues om et eller annet, 'ja, kan vi ta bilde med miksebordet'. Så bare sånn, legg den der hånden på miksebordet. Hva er det vi ser på TV-en, en eller annen sånn sliten, gammel gubbe som sitter og spiller opp spor, sant? Altså det, det er den der mystikken rundt det der miksebordet og det analoge. Det er der i høyeste grad. Det er en verden som veldig få... alle... det er veldig... folk er så interessert i musikk, men den der mystikken rundt kontrollrommet, den er fortsatt en sånn mystikk da. Så... så det tror jeg liksom... Alfa og omega... skal du...skal du liksom bli tatt på ordentlig

alvor som et studio så er det i hvert fall en fordel at det står den konsollen der fortsatt. Det er ikke tvil om. Rett og slett.

(28:24) A: Ja! Musikere bryr seg om lyd. Kanskje litt for mye. Fordi at alle kan sitte og skru på dette her hjemme. Å sitte og lage sine egne mastere etter det. Mastre og løfte litt. 'Åh! Det var finere'. Skjønner du? Og det er nå en, det er jo en kjempeutfordring spør du meg. Sånn som for musikkbransjen at... at i dag så... er det virkelig sånn at... det er kjempebra at, at kontrollen er, på en måte, sluppet litt ut, men det har kanskje gått for langt det der liksom, alle kan påberope seg å mikse selv sant. Og kan sitte i timevis og skru på sin egen vokal, etter at det er mastret og gitt ut! Og komme med sånne tips... noe, ikke sant? Altså det... Og det er noe usunt med det. For det er sånt nerderi... sånn som er... kan bli litt sånn introvert, og som kan bli liksom bare en sånn ... puh... amme lam i stedet for som Ulf Risnes liksom. Skriv en låt og bli ferdig med låten og gå videre. Det er alltid en ny låt! Og det savner jeg med artister. At de blir litt sånn... to måneder etterpå så kan de komme tilbake og begynne å prate om en miks. Gå videre! Lag en ny plate!

(29:25) A: ... Og det savner jeg litt i dag. At det har blitt litt sånn kultur der alt skal være rett. Så blir det liksom vannet ut til slutt, for det er så lett å gjøre de rette tingene. Så det er liksom... prøver jeg i hvert fall da... sånn å ta tilbake litt sånn i måten å jobbe med lydproduksjon. Det der intuitive. Det er liksom det der, 'å du tråkket på fuzz-pedal', sant? Og du har pedalbrettet foran deg på en live-jobb så er det jo... Det... det er kick i er jo det der intuitive at man slår inn delayen der. 'Oi! Det ble feil, men det var litt tøft likevel!'. Og det har jeg liksom prøvd i miks også da. Men problemet er at det blir vanskeligere og vanskeligere å gjøre det fordi at folk kan gå tilbake og høre og høre og høre og kontrollere og spille det opp for kompiser og ditten og så får man 'Nei, men det var alt for høy delay', sant? Og så blir delayen lavere og riktigere og riktigere og riktigere, men så blir kanskje uttrykket kjedeligere og kjedeligere. Så synes jeg liksom... kanskje at musikkproduksjon har blitt litt kjedeligere på grunn av det. Har blitt litt

sånn... At det har blitt litt for 'alt rett'. Og musikk er ikke alt rett. Det må være noen feil her og der.

(31:10) A: Det er en utfordring med hele bransjen. Det er det at litt av den galskapen er borte. Fordi at autoriteten til produsentene, til teknikeren er... er ramlet litt fra hverandre da. Da blir det veldig demokratisert. Sant? Og det kan være bra, men det kan også føre til at litt av den brodden detter ut av ting.

(45:45) J: Vi har liksom kommet inn i en tid der alle kan lage musikk. Altså du trenger ikke en laptop en gang. Du kan gjøre det på mobilen, på bussen, og du... alle har tilgang til vanvittig dyrt utstyr i plug-in-form da. Så kan de jo diskuteres de formene der da, i fem år, men på toppen av dette så kan også alle gi ut musikk gjennom for eksempel CD-baby og slike tjenester og det koster 300 kroner så får du albumet ditt på iTunes og Spotify.

Hva gjør det med hele denne her platebransjen og produsentrollen?

(Half a minute later) A: Det er en demokratisering vi snakka om her som er helt grenseløs. I forhold til både tilgang på stæsj, ikke sant. I forhold til geografi. Du kan sitte på... i Suldal eller på Smøla eller i Selbu og kommunisere med hele verden. Du kan på en måte skrelle bort utrolig mange ledd da. Sant? Så da er det jo det at... det er en sånn... for... det er jo også veldig mulig i dag for, med veldig lavt budsjett å få til veldig bra kvalitet. Og det er jo også... er jo en helt ny ting. Bare de siste ti årene. Så, så i bunn og grunn så åpnet det jo opp for det du ser. Altså det er jo en interesse for musikk og lydproduksjon og lyd i dag som man aldri har sett maken til. Samtidig så har du en bransje som delvis, nesten har kollapset, og det er jo det, kanskje det negative med det der er at... kanskje har det blitt for lett, sant? Kanskje utgis det for mye? Kanskje blir det... kanskje blir rett og slett skogen av det som kommer ut så stort at vi blir, altså vi blir rett og slett, larmen på Facebook blir så stor at vi blir passiv. Vi gidder rett og slett ikke å ta inn alt. Så jeg tror at i dag så er det som er en utfordring for musikere i dag, den største utfordringen i dag det er ikke tap av inntekter og sånn. Det er rett og slett mangel på oppmerksomhet. Det å få oppmerksomhet, å få lov til å bli spilt

på radioen, eller få noen til å skrive og få noen til å komme på konsert. Det er så veldig mye fokus på det der inntektsgrunnlaget, og, sant? Jeg tror at de fleste artistene vil drite i det! Til syvende og sist, altså, gjerne vil du ha penger, men det du først og fremst ønsker det er å få oppmerksomhet. Og det er utrolig vanskelig å få i denne her larmen av band og utgivelser. For det er så... mengden er så stor da! Det er en kjempeutfordring. Og det er klart at der er teknologien og den der studioutviklingen en viktig årsak til det. Nettopp som du sier; det er utrolig lett å spille inn. Det er lett å distribuere. Og så spør det... Så er det mye av den... Man må huske på at så mye av den der silingen er borte. For hvis du går tilbake til 2000, så, for det første så fikk du en slags siling i kraft av demoer, det er bare å spille inn, men så får du en siling i kraft av å få de demoene videre. Så er det en siling i produsenter ikke sant? Siling i A&R. Så du fikk på en måte... hvis du kom deg gjennom det der nåløyet der så har du passert veldig mange hinder da, allerede. De hindrene er ikke der i dag. Det er bra, men det har også en bakside. Det er at det selvfølgelig... antageligvis i dag også blir gitt ut litt for mye musikk som kanskje ikke hadde kommet gjennom for femten år siden. Filteret er borte!

(55:10) A: Men så har vi jo en annen ting som er interessant med dagens musikk, og det er jo... det er klart at det er jo... Vi er altså i ferd med å gå mot en musikkverden der kanskje populærmusikken er i ferd med å bli mer en for av et... en tjeneste, eller et produkt da. Knut Schreiner skriver jo mye, skriver jo mye rart om det, men av og til så har han nå noen poeng. Jeg synes det er en litt sånn interessant greier, der når, devicen blir viktigere enn det som kommer ut av devicen. Og det, kanskje er vi litt der. Ikke sant? Den her... jeg tenker Kygo er jo det beste eksempelet. Det er en artist som egentlig ikke er en artist. Det er bare en... det er en ting som er perfekt for vår tids teknologi da. Der du ser bare at folk er opptatt av de her låtene og, og har ikke noe forhold til artister lenger. Har ikke noe forhold, har ikke noe kontrakt i forhold... når vi... når jeg vokste opp så likte du Kiss, så holdt du med Kiss. Jeg holdt med Liverpool og Kiss, jeg. De var likestilt, og jeg holdt på med begge to. Og kjøpte alt som Kiss gav ut, og innrømmet ikke at det var skit hvis det var skit, sant? Den tingen der tror jeg er

litt, hvert fall for en periode da, litt over. Noe tenker jeg mainstream... Du vil jo finn... den er jo definitivt ikke over i nisje-ting og i undergrunnsverden. Men sånn mainstream er nå over. Hvert fall for en periode. Og da blir det ganske flatt mye. Jeg vet ikke om du tenker over det, men er ikke mye av det som blir produsert i dag, jeg vet ikke jeg, litt sånn feigt produsert? Rett og slett at det er ingen som tør å ta noen sjanser for da vet du at da blir det ikke spilt.

(58:18) A: Vi vil ha det gjort. Vi vil ha det servert, sant. Og sånn er det. Vi vil ha, liksom, treningsprogrammet når vi skal bli fit. Vi vil ha det sånn, vi vil ha det her. Vi vil ha appen for... vi vil leve jævlig sunt, vi vil leve jævlig trivelig, men vi vil ikke stå og forske på kjøkkenet. Vi vil ha oppskrifta på den. Sånn er det med musikk også. Vi vil ikke drive på å søke ut og finne ut; 'Oi! Det var en kul ting!' Vi vil ha; 'Det her er kult!', 'Ja, det var kult!'.

J: Og det er mye av det der jeg føler har preget musikkteknologien de siste femten årene. At det har handlet i mye større grad om å få ting tilgjengelig, og at det skal være enkelt å bruke, det skal være lettvin.

A: Det skal bli et produkt... nei, altså det skal en tjeneste... mer enn et produkt! Tror jeg. Og det henger veldig sammen med hvordan vi har blitt som samfunn selvfølgelig. Hvordan det henger sammen med teknologi. Og så henger det sammen med, kanskje, med litt sånn kunstige forventninger fra begge sider, at man er inne i en spiral der man tror, musikkbransjen tror at publikum vil ha sånn, og publikum tror at musikken er sånn. Det kan også være noen sånne... Og derfor så ser du også... Det blir veldig formatert da. Ikke bare på radio. Det blir veldig formatert, musikken som kommer i dag altså. Du hadde en periode, liksom, nå rundt 2000 som man kalte for Pro-Tools-rock, sant? Sånn utrolig, sånn 'riktig'. Alt var klipt veldig. Det går jo i bølger, men fortsatt så er det ikke veldig mange ting i mainstream som utfordrer noe særlig, er det det? Du kan finne noen ting som går fra, som kommer fra undergrunnen som, som Bon Iver for eksempel, eller et eller annet, sant? Men det er jo ikke mainstream i det store og hele det heller!

J: Og det er jo det som er litt rart med populærmusikk, for opp gjennom tiårene så har på en måte, populærmusikken har alltid vært med og utfordret og speilet samfunnet og prøvd å pushe litt grenser. Tror... føler du at det er noe vi har mistet i dag?

A: Nei, altså, jeg føler at populærmusikken utfordrer, eller speiler samfunnet i dag også jeg. Det er akkurat det den gjør. Den speiler et samfunn som leter etter å være perfekt! Som... som i veldig liten grad tørr, altså... Hvis du ser på, liksom, jeg har en sønn på 9 år. Den største redselen av alt, enten det er klær eller... det er å stikke seg ut. Å være annerledes enn alle andre! Det er den største angsten! At noen skal plutselig se at; 'Jammen, du gjør noe annet!', ikke sant? Og jeg leste i dag at det har aldri vært så mye tenåringer med, som lider av depresjon. Det er en sånn utrolig tanke om at alle... vi skal være så perfekt! Men vi skal ikke være så perfekt at vi stikker oss ut heller! Vi skal være sånn akkurat passe perfekt! Og sånn føler jeg at musikken er. Den skal være akkurat passe perfekt! Den skal ikke være kjedelig, men man skal hvert fall ikke trekke det for langt! Det skal ikke være en gitarsolo! For det detter jo folk av! Men så skal det ikke være liksom for... ikke sant? Og det der... og da blir det litt sånn... Ja. Det blir liksom akkurat passe perfekt. Og det synes jeg er et veldig speil på samfunnet, men hvis du tenker liksom musikken på, på 80-tallet så har du den... Den også speilet nå et samfunn, ikke sant? Man satt og hørte på Scorpions 'Wings of chain'... nei, 'Winds of Change', og så slo det meg faktisk at det var en litt sånn rørende tekst! Fordi at den er jo skrevet i Tyskland, sant? Tysk band, rett før muren falt og den kalde krigen. Så bare slår det meg at vi har ledd av den der teksten der og det uttrykket der i så mange år, men så bare skjønner jeg liksom, det er jo bare... det speiler jo så utrolig godt det her bildet på det her... De som får lov til å følge drømmene sine da!

Og det er jo da... og så er det det her ønsket om frihet og den her drømmen, sant? 80-tallet har nå det, og så har du nå punke-bevegelsen på tidlig 80-tallet.

(63:42) A: Så jeg tror det alltid har speilet... og det er klart at, ser du enda lenger historisk på det så kan du si at vi kanskje lever musikkteknologisk og musikkmessig i en periode der det er låtbasert. Der det er veldig hit-basert, stemmer ikke det? Man kan godt si det. Du skal jo... Hvis du tenker slutten av 50-tallet så var det jo akkurat likt.

J: Og til dels også på 80-tallet da var det Vanilla Ice som solgte 100 millioner...

A: Men legger veldig band-fokus da, men hvis du tenker slutten av 50-tallet så hadde du jo rock'n'roll, sant? Og den her rock'n'roll-revolusjonen som man snakker om, som egentlig bare er en to-tre år før det dør ut før Elvis i militæret til Jerry Lee Lewis som giftet seg med søskenbarnet sitt, til godeste Chuck Berry som blir tatt på grensen. Altså, det bare flyr noe... så blir de jo tatt over av sånn kommersielle låtskrivere igjen. Og slutten av 50-tallet er ekstra ekstremt kommersielt! Så begynner bandene på 60-tallet igjen når vi flytter oss over til England å ta tak. Så at ting går i bølger, det tror jeg på. Og du skal jo ikke se bort ifra at vi ender opp, før eller senere, at vi blir pisselei av den musikkverden. Men jeg tror vi er nødt til å begynne å komme i en verden der musikken betyr litt mer for oss enn det gjør nå. For publikum. For den jevne. At vi faktisk... Det er jo en logikk... Jeg husker ikke hvem som prater om det, en svensk forsker som sier at vi forholder oss til musikk som vi forholder oss til vann. Det er noe som bare strømmer. Som vi tar for gitt, men den dagen det vannet er borte kommer vi virkelig til å kjenne det. Kanskje forhåpentligvis så er det sånn. Eller det blir veldig usmak på vannet, så begynner vi å lengte til rent vann. Forhåpentligvis så vil det der snu etterhvert. Men jeg tror... det er stygt å si det, men jeg tror at vi må, det er litt vet du som, som kommersielt studio så høres det kanskje litt dumt ut å si det, men det er for mange som holder på med musikk. Vi må ned litt med mengden. Det er for lett i Norge i dag å kanskje kalle seg profesjonell musiker. Det utgis for mange plater. Og hvordan vi skal få til det... ikke sant, jeg tror at det... Og kanskje må bransjen bli litt mer profesjonalisert igjen. At folk søker studio, søker produsenter, som kan være med og sette et stempel på produksjonen da.

(66:24) J: Det er jo litt sånn... altså du snakker om rock'n'roll-revolusjonen og du snakker om punk og alle disse sjangerne som har skjedd opp gjennom årene og det er jo for veldig mange slik at om man nevner 70-tallet så tenker de, den og de uttrykkene og de sjangerne og de artistene, og det samme med 80 og 90 og 60 og 50-tallet. Hva føler du har definert populærmusikken i de siste... fra 2000-tallet og frem til nå i form av sjangere og sound.

A: Av sound?

J: Ja. Hva er det som er nytt de siste femten årene.

A: Det er et godt spørsmål. Det er liksom litt vanskelig å... det er faktisk litt vanskelig å f... Altså Robert Fripp sier jo at det dukker opp ny musikk sjanger hvert syvende år. Jeg føler egentlig at de siste femten årene egentlig har vært ganske fritt for nyskapninger. Det er sjangere som har utviklet seg, men, altså, kanskje slutten av 90-tallet så... så du den her, for alvor, elektronika, ambient-bølga som også har røtter tilbake, ikke sant? Men på et vis så følte jeg at der skjedde det veldig mange nye ting da. Det her store...sant? Det var utrolig mange ting som dukket opp på slutten av 90-tallet som pekte fremover i forhold til elektronika...kan vi kalle det sjangere det vet jeg ikke, men hvis du tenker på...hvis du tenker på nye ting på 2000-tallet. Har vi ikke egentlig bare drevet å trø vannet på gamle sjangere? Er det liksom... Jeg spør liksom tilbake jeg. Altså, hva kan du... finnes det noen nye sjangere? Altså hip-hopen er jo ikke ny, men den er liksom... har nå i hvert fall utviklet seg. Men det er jo ingenting som har oppstått på 2000-tallet. Det er jo kanskje det vi ser nå med EDM, er det det heter? Det er kanskje det ene... Altså det er jo kanskje en ny ting vi ser. Fordi at det speiler så vanvittig den teknologiske utviklinga. Ikke sant? Men det... Jeg føler at liksom, 2000-tallet har vært mer preget av nyvinninger i musikkbransjen på andre felt. Altså det er jo... på et vis så kan du jo si at alt rundt musikken er jo mer ulikt de siste ti årene enn det har vært på de 200, eller hvert fall 100-åra før. Så har det jo skjedd mere. Det har jo skjedd mer i musikkteknologien de siste

ti enn de forrige 100. Men har det utspeilet seg i nye kunstneriske uttrykk? Jeg føler bare at det har mer utspeilet seg på hvordan vi angriper og hvordan vi produserer og hvordan vi spiller inn og hvordan vi gjør ting og tang. Men de musikalske... musikalske idéene og musikalske... på en måte kjernen i låtskriving og kjernen i populærmusikalske uttrykk, er fordømt ganske lik. Jeg har aldri tenkt over det før, men det er jo egentlig litt skummelt. Men det betyr at vi kanskje de siste femten årene har hatt mer fokus på prosess og hvordan ting gjøres. Ta kontroll, få kontroll på teknologien, bruk nye teknologiske ting, enn vi faktisk har hatt fokus på. Bring populærmusikk sjangeren videre da.

Kanskje er populærmusikken død? Kanskje er den steindød? Kanskje er rock og pop... altså kanskje er det... kom vi dit og så er det kanskje nye sjangere, kanskje i løpet av de neste ti årene så dukker det opp en sjanger. Det må jo skje! Vi kan ikke sitte her, jeg og du, og tro at vi vet den neste musikalske sjangeren. Det var ingen som kunne spå hip-hop i 1974, var det det?

Kanskje er de en slags... hvert fall noen... Det er folk som kan mer enn meg om det er, men det er hvert fall et nytt konsept da, føler jeg. På ett eller annet vis. Men hvis du tenker liksom nye rockeband eller nye pop-band eller nye ting. Det er jo... det er jo ideer, det er jo bare... det er jo egentlig strengt tatt å røre i samme grøten. Og da er den kanskje død. Da må vi kanskje bare innrømme at populærmusikken, altså pop og rock som, som... eller, den er jo ikke død, men det er jo ikke nyskapende lenger da. Den lever jo i beste velgående. Det gjør jo jazzen også. Og klassisk musikk. Og gammeldansen. Men da er... da er på en måte rock akkurat på samme måte som gammeldans. Det er en museumsgjenstand, og det er noe som folk holder på med. Men det er ikke en musikk sjanger som lager noe nytt. Og da får vi håpe at det kommer snart.

(71:40) J: Det er en musikkforsker som heter Simon Reynolds, som ga ut en bok i 2011, kalt Retromania, og det er jo det store deler av masteren min er basert på. Det han har skrevet. Og det han har skrevet der er at 2000-tallet var det tiåret der alle tidligere tiår skjedde på nytt igjen samtidig. Hva tenker du om det?

A: Ja, det er sikkert logisk det, selv om 90-tallet også er ganske retro.

J: Ja, det begynner jo der og så blør det over...

A: For det er jo en logikk i at man tenker... hvis du tenker, liksom kunst da, ofte før så, så er det en logikk i at, det siste tiåret i et hundreår vil summere opp. Hvis du tenker, hvis du tenker liksom, kan hende jeg er litt på dypt vann nå, men jeg tror ikke det. Jeg tenker 1880 og 1890 så har du... altså det begynner på 1890-tallet, det er jo, men hvis du tenker starten av nittende århundre, eller 1900-tallet, er jo ekstremt preget av nye ting. Tolvtonemusikken, ikke sant? Ekspresjonismen i kunsten. Så ofte så har man jo tenkt at et nytt århundre åpner opp, mens på slutten så får du litt panikk, ikke sant? Og så... Og det kan man jo tenke, liksom på 1990-tallet, men samtidig så hadde du den elektronika-greiene der som eksploderte utover da. Men jeg skjønner hva han mener. At vi egentlig... men jeg tror det har litt med å gjør at... det spørs på hvilket perspektiv du har på musikken. For det går jo også an å si at de siste tiårene har... har tatt musikken helt andre veien. I form av komposisjonsverktøy, måten studio blir brukt, altså, men... selv om det speiler av de ulike tingene så har jo... så er det jo ting som har endret seg fullstendig. Men det er kanskje ikke lyd... det er kanskje ikke, liksom, kompositoriske eller låtskrivingen, eller kanskje ikke til og med lydbildet. Men det er mer på hvordan det skapes. Det er det ikke tvil om. Og ikke minst spredning av musikk da. Så det spørs jo bare hvor man legger fokuset hen. Og kanskje har det vært så store omveltninger at man ikke har, ja kanskje ligger det litt i det vi har snakket om. At kanskje har artistene blitt 'fanget' av alle de endringene. Og blitt egentlig bare opptatt av å... av å reprodusere historien inn i de nye formene. Det tror jeg. At vi driver bare å reproduserer kunstneriske uttrykk i nye spredningsformer. Og at for mange så... det er liksom det nok. De klarte ikke mer enn det. Og så får vi jo håpe da, når den bransjen nå etablerer seg så blir det grobunn for å lage noe nytt. For å komme med noe nytt. En ny musikalsk sjanger, men jeg vet ikke hva det skal være.

(75:06) J: Litt tilbake til musikkteknologi de siste tyve årene da egentlig, så... det har jo vært en ganske stor retrobølge i utstyrsverden. At vi vil spille på Stratocastere fra 70-tallet og vi vil ha den gamle Marshall-ampnen, eller den gamle Twin-reverben, og så er det jo folk som meg, som sitter hjemme med API-plugs eller Neve-plugs og skulle ønske vi hadde hardware-unitene, men det har vi hverken råd eller plass til så vi har det nest beste. Det er jo noe som er litt rart da, at folk i min generasjon og egentlig også folk på din alder, går tilbake til ting som ikke fantes, eller som fantes lenge før vi var født. Hva tror du det gjør med musikken?

A: Det er jo sammensatt. Jeg tror det er en veldig sammensatt problemstilling. En enkel ting er jo at ting går i bølger, punktum. Altså, 70-talls utstyr... så skal rørene ut, og så hele 80-tallet er liksom bare nye duppedingser og så, og så kommer liksom... Altså egentlig så har jo den retrobølgen der vart siden 92, 93. Når jeg kjøpte Straten min jeg av Frode Alnæs så, som jeg elsker [unintelligible] for i dag, en -66 strat. Betalte 6000,- for den på 345 i 1993. Det var rett før det begynte å snu. Fire år senere, fem år senere så var den liksom verdt 100.000,- nesten, sant? Slutten av 90-tallet, sånn 96...95-96 da drev vi jo å tok med sånne store plastikkposer fra 345 med fuzz-bokser. Da var vi jo 'all' retro. 60-talls Fuzz. Hendrix igjen. Bar... altså retro, retro, retro. Så det som er litt sånn fascinerende når det gjelder liksom gitarting da, eller bandting da, det er jo at den retrobølgen der har vart snart i, altså, hvor lenge blir det da... Den har vart i tyve år. Sant? Det er vanskelig å finne en særlig god forklaring på. Og det er jo ære være Aalberg Audio som prøver, ikke sant, å finne på nytt, men det skal ikke være lett å selge inn de tingene der. Og det er jo... Og kanskje er det et problem? Kanskje er det det som gjør at pop og rock-tingen... altså kanskje er det bare en bekreftelse på at pop og rock er død? Altså vi driver bare og trør med samme type måtene å spille på. Og de referansene som... liksom i byen her har Motorpsycho styrt alle referanser som har vært i tyve år. Og de har jo egentlig... alt de har gjort er jo ære være altså, men de har jo egentlig bare stjålet gamle uttrykk fra plate til plate til plate. De har jo egentlig bare beveget seg i historieboken de. Og det har på en måte blitt en sånn greie. Alle holder på med det. Så det har liksom

ikke vært rom... men det skjer jo egentlig i hele verden også. Det har ikke vært rom for nye tekniske duppeditter. Det har vært prøvd Fractal Audio og de greiene der, ikke sant?

J: Ja, men der igjen så er det jo... det er jo en amp-emulering som gjerne er basert på en haug med gamle vintage amper og sånn.

A: Ja det er det jeg mener. Det er akkurat som om tingene er liksom funnet opp, så driver vi bare og reproducerer det. Og så ...når det gjelder bandutstyr så blir jeg fascinert. Men det sier jo også selvfølgelig at det er vanvittig kvalitet. Ikke sant? Men det er klart at det er veldig mange kopier som er bedre enn originalene. Det er jo det. Men det er brand. Fender ser bedre ut enn Tokai, fortsatt. Selv om de der Tokai-gitarene fra slutten av 70-tallet er tusen ganger bedre enn de Fender-gitarene fra samme periode, de går for veldig dyre... Både Greco og Tokai er mye bedre gitarer enn Gibson og Fender, sånn seint 70-tallet. De holdt jo på å kollapse begge de to, men så gjorde de... så kjøpte de bare Tokai da. Da hadde de vært farlige. Og Squire sant? Så ble de jo liksom Fender. Da kom de jo på løp igjen på 80-tallet.

(79:40) J: Det er jo litt det samme her, og egentlig alle de andre plassene jeg har besøkt også... Altså, dere sitter på en Neve-konsoll. Hvorfor sitter dere på det og ikke en helt topp moderne konsoll som er produsert i 2015 for eksempel?

A: Altså det er jo... Å få en topp moderne konsoll som er produsert i 2015 som er bra, er jo en million, sant? Eller to... Eller kontrollflate...

Jeg tror det er to aspekter her som er veldig viktige å skille, i hvert fall i en sånn oppgave som du skriver. Det ene er rett og slett kvaliteten. Altså lydkvaliteten. Jeg tror den er, av og til, fryktelig vanskelig å skille. En kompressor som plugin og en kompressor som hardware, det er ikke så godt å si hva forskjellen er av og til. Jeg tror at det er veldig mange som jeg har kranget mye med folk som 'Åh! Jeg hører forskjell'. Jeg er nokså sikker på... gjør en del blindtester, så ville du ha bommet så det kostet etter deg. For mye av musikken i dag er så

overkomprimert, sant? Det er like teit, sant? Leste du den testen, en sånn Coldplay-ting mellom MP3 og .wav-filer for eksempel? Alle bommet jo. For det er jo så ødelagt og så komprimert, sant? Så en ting er det der kvaliteten. Og der tror jeg det er umulig å finne en fasit. For det er fortsatt sånn at en god gammel Fender-amp låter bedre enn moderne, digitale. Det er det ikke tvil om. Den er på en måte helt obvious, ikke sant? Det er ikke like overbevisende at API-pluginsene dine låter dårligere enn API hardware kompressor. Det er ikke obvious i det hele tatt. Så, så, så den er veldig relativ den forskjellen der, som går på lydkvalitet. Den som ikke er relativ, som er veldig... men som kanskje jeg tror er viktigere enn det.... Pluss, altså, det er lydprosessen. Altså hvordan du jobber med ting. Og for meg så er den største forskjellen på å ha en Neve-konsoll og en kontroller og plugin det intuitive. Altså hvordan du jobber med lyd.

J: Det snakket Thomas Henriksen om også. Det å jobbe med to hender og skru knotter samtidig.

A: Ja! Og det at du kan gjøre feil. Det at du kan faktisk, og det... sånn som gitarist da, så kommer du tilbake til det at du trækker på fuzz-pedal. Og det hadde jeg... det var mitt største savn når jeg satt med plugins. Men det er jo fortsatt sånn her at vi... det er 50/50 jobbing. Alt kirurgisk arbeid foregår jo 'in the box'. Og vi har jo recall på mikseren. Alt er jo recall på lydbordet. Hundre prosent hvis man vil det. Men de intuitive tingene som å bare gå bort og skru opp faderen, og så blir det jo at du skrur jo ikke 1db, du skrur opp 10db. Det er noe annet. Og for meg så er det jo det som er det viktigste. Mye... for å være helt ærlig, mer enn det der nødvendigvis kvalitetsforskjellen.

Så kan vi kanskje høre, som lydtekniker og produsent, og det diskuterer jeg og Jo mye. Jeg synes jeg hører en annen 3D-verden i produksjoner som ligger oppe i et miksebord versus 'in the box'. Jeg synes mye av de 'in the box'-miksene, og da har jeg gjort noen proffe også, de kan være mer 'rett' og bed...altså bedre, men jeg synes de har, de er liksom, blir litt endimensjonal. Jeg synes en analog miks som er gjort gjennom en analog sluttring, litt analoge kompressorer, analoge EQ-er, akkurat som om det liksom *phu*, syns det har liksom, større rom i seg. Det er

det som jeg synes er den største forskjellen. Men det er jo ikke sikkert det er folk vil ha, sant?

Part 2

(107:16) J: Men er det verdt det? Å ha en Neve-mikser med alt det vedlikeholdet som følger med og alt det styret rundt?

A: Det spørers hvem du spør. Spør du oss?

J: Ja, jeg spør dere.

A: Ja, altså jeg mener soleklart ja.

Jo Ranheim: Jeg er helt enig.

A: Og det er som jeg snakket om før, det har to... det har to... det har tre aspekt. Det ene er selvfølgelig; i et stort studio som oss, så forventer folk at det står en konsoll her. Det har et... altså det har noe for seg. Ok, det er den som *OK Computer* er mikset på. Akkurat den mikseren her. Det fungerer, salgsmessig. En Command 8 her, sant? Det er ikke det samme. Håkon Gullvåg på Verdalen, Command 8. Sier seg selv. Det går ikke an det, ikke sant? Andre ting er jo det som vi snakket om med prosessen. Det er en annen måte å mikse på, å kunne... du ser at skjermen her er borte fra høyttalerene. Det betyr at vi kan jobbe intuitivt på mikseren, og ikke se den skjermen. Skru på EQ. Og det som jeg sa til deg, at du skrur opp og så ender du opp med å skru 10db. Det hadde du aldri villet gjort inni boksen. Du ville ha ført musa såvidt der og så ble det 0.8db og da er det nesten slik at du tror at det eksploderer inni der. sant? EQ er det samme. Sånn. To forskjellige måter å jobbe på.

Lydmessig, Jo, så er det jo... det er jo kanskje det mest subtile aspektet på et vis.

R: Ja, kanskje ikke for oss.

A: Nei, men for en utenifra.

R: Ja, det er ganske merkelig hvordan en helt annen verden åpner seg når du kjøre gjennom mikseren.

A: Jeg har snakket litt om den 3D-følelsen her. Og oppløsningen. Det er akkurat som om det oppløser seg annerledes. Men det... men... men... men igjen da, så opplever vi jo også kunder som da, hvis det skal ekstremt radio-formatert så vil man ikke ha den oppløsningen, sant? For alt skal være helt endimensjonalt, og det er jo det vi snakket om med det der endimensjonaliteten i mye av musikkproduksjonen i dag for alt... Det er liksom fem elementer og alt er like viktige.

J: Alt skal komprimeres til helvete og...

A: Ja, ja, ja, ja. Det er klart, driver du på med... driver du på med listepop, så er jeg ikke helst sikker på om du trenger en Neve-mikser. Selv om når det er sagt; hvis du tenker sånn type Stargate og sånn sitter jo med SSL-mikser, sant?

R: Så er det noe med at når det er folk her og spiller, og de kan komme inn hit og høre... og finne seg selv på en spake her istedenfor å dukke inn i en dataskjerm. Så det er noe...

J: Finne pekeren på skjermen.

A: Det er jo... det er nesten det viktigste spør du meg.

R: Ja.

A: For det som vi snakket om, og det... det tror jeg... det er så undervurdert. Den der Jan Erik Kongshaug tanken som vi har prøvd å adoptere her; at folk... altså

band sitter time etter time etter time og musikkteknikeren driver å flytter på mikken og flytter på mikken og flytter på mikken. Til slutt så er det energidødt! Og så kommer du inn da etter det der, og så skal du høre på en miks. Og vi var jo sånn selv vi når vi satt inne i boksen... 'Ja, men det blir fint når det blir mikset!' Men folk høre det man høre, og hvis det høres ut som et takras så går du ut av studioet og tenker at dette her blir et takras.

Våre kunder er ikke unge band først og fremst, det er folk med lang erfaring, og som gjerne har holdt på i mange tiår, som forventer at når de kommer inn og har spilt og gitt sitt, kommer inn og skal høre på taket her, så må det låte 70% av det som skal ut på skiva, må låte 80 nesten. Sant? Det får du ikke til hvis du ikke har en konsoll. Det er kanskje den aller viktigste tingen med denne her, for det gjør at de går tilbake igjen. Det unner jeg flere unge band å oppleve for det er dessverre noe som har gått av moten. Band finner seg i at under hele studioprosessen så låter det dritt. Lyttingen låter dritt. Altså det er akseptert å spille inn en plate med dritt-lyd og så blir det fint. To måneder senere.

J: Reparasjonsjobben etterpå.

A: Ja. Bare en blir ferdig med bandet nå og får komt seg hjem, så begynner det å bli musikk her. Mens med en konsoll så tenker du veldig ofte motsatt. At miksen er satt mer. Du har hvert fall mulighet til det. Det er jo et spørsmål litt på musikkstil her også.

Appendix D: Selected extracts from interview with Magnus Kofoed

The interview with Magnus Kofoed was conducted on the 20 February 2016 at Brygga Studio. The interview is divided into part 1 and part 2. Part 1 concerns different aspects of music production culture and industry such as creativity, streaming services, the development of technology and retro aesthetics. Part 2 is a run down of the recording equipment in the studio as well as how the equipment is used. The time that the different extracts appear in the recording of the interview is noted in the transcription in minutes and seconds.

(2:22) Anders Jordbrekk: Tenkte det kunne være litt interessant å høre hvordan du angriper hele den der produksjonsbiten, når du har en klient.

Magnus Kofoed: Hvordan spiller man inn musikk da eller?

J: Ja, ikke linjegangen kanskje, men hva estetikken din eller tilnærmingen til det å skulle produsere et band da, og hva som er viktig i din mening når du skal få lydfestet noe.

K: Live! Å spille inn live! Det er noe du aldri får tilbake igjen hvis man spiller inn lag for lag og på klikk-track. Det er noe med energien og råskapen som kommer frem i... I musikken og det å tillate... Og du tillater at på en måte tempoet kan få lov til å forte litt. Altså la låten bære seg selv. Det er jo ikke noen uting at man øker på refrengene. Det på... Det har man jo alltid gjort. Det er naturlig at man skal skyve låten videre. Og da synes jeg det er veldig rart at man skal låse fast til et fast tempo og ikke la låten få lov til å bevege seg. Få lov til å svinge.

Så jeg er mest opptatt av at bare bandet skal få lov til å bevare uttrykket sitt, og så skal vi heller bare fremheve det.

(4:24) J: I hvert fall før i gamle dager så hadde jo gjerne de ulike studiene... Studioene en... En litt sånn klar profil. Tenker du at Brygga har det?

Altså jeg tenker sånn type, Motown var jo... Det var Motown soundet og...

K: Ja du får... Du får på en måte det fordi... altså... alle... alle teknikere og alle produsenter for den saks skyld vil... prøver jo på en måte å være... å tenke... å ha et åpent sinn og tenke bredt og sånn ting, men man har som regel med at man får et sound uansett. Selv om at man er veldig allsidig så vil du på en måte kjenne igjen visse biter av produksjonen. Det tror jeg på.

At du kjenner igjen mye av Brygga-tingene på grunn av de som jobber her og rommet er jo det rommet er, men jeg... Vi har på en måte ikke gått ut med at... på en måte... at 'Brygga-soundet', altså det er på en måte bare til internt bruk, men jeg velger jo å tro at vi leverer produkter som låter bra og som låter kult. Og at på en måte det får være godt nok.

Altså det er jo... Vi har jo ikke på... i nærheten på samme måte linjer som for eksempel Bror Forsgren da, i Oslo. Det han mikser er jo veldig, veldig typete. Det er jo kjempekult, men ikke til all... Men du... du har på en måte en veldig tydelig sound der da. Som du enten vil ha og like, eller du ikke vil ha. Og den linja har ikke Brygga. Vi har ikke, på en måte lagt oss på en sånn typete linje. Det skal være allsidig nok til at alle får det de vil ha.

J: Altså det er jo litt artig at du nevner det der med at alle skal få det som de vil ha... skal vi se, jeg må formulere dette her på...

K: Ja, eller altså det er jo egentlig noen [unintelligible] for altså det er jo... Man vil jo aldri være... Være i stand til å gi på en måte... Dekke alle sjangere, alle typer musikere og ønsker. Det kan man jo ikke, men... Jeg vet det er vanskelig å forklare det på en annen måte enn at hvis du på en måte... Vi er ikke sånn super typete når vi ikke selv slipper seg løs med et eller annet prosjekt da. Og det er på en måte greia. Og da prøver man jo å være så kreativ som man... Og prøver å bidra positivt da, men det er ikke... Vi har ikke en typete sound.

J: For det jeg vil frem til er at før i... Før så var det en del studioer som var kjent for enkelte sjangere og typer musikk for eksempel. Er det... Hvordan opplever du at kundemassen...

K: Det er... Brygga er jo... Det er mye rockeband og en del pop produksjoner. Så det er klart... Og brygga er jo kjent for rockeband også... Når du... Det er jo sånt som Motorpsycho på CV'en og... også fra både gammelt av og i ny tid. Så legger du på en måte litt... litt lista, føringene for kundene kanskje. For det blir referanselista. Da er det mer naturlig at rockebandene ringer og spør om de kan spille her og kommer og spiller, enn trondheimsolistene.

(7:40) J: Altså en del av det jeg skriver om er jo dette her med resirkulering av sjangertrekk og sounds og også der da utstyr, og nå... Hvis du går oppover gjennom populærmusikkhistorien så er det... Nå har i hvert fall jeg et veldig sterkt inntrykk av at det er litt slik at, kommer det inn en ny teknologi så blir den kjørt så hardt som det går an, for å skape noe nytt og så skjer det ting som folk kanskje ikke trodde skulle gå an med den teknologien. Og så kommer det noe nytt som de kan bygge enda videre på. Hva tenker du om den tekno... Den musikkteknologiske utviklingen på... Fra midten av 90-tallet, eller seint 90-tallet og frem til i dag?

K: Ja, altså fra digital-teknologien kom egentlig da, og frem til nå?

J: Ja. Ja, altså digital recording greia var...

K: Digitale så hadde du jo... Da var jo digitale på full tur, på vei inn. Og der har jo utviklingen vært helt enorm. For så vidt. Der har det jo gått i fra å være et produkt som... Altså når digital... eller... På... Når den nye teknologien på 90-tallet kom da, så var den lyden på mange måter mye dårligere enn den gamle med båndspillere og analoge mikserne, fordi at det var en teknologi som var da, på det tidspunktet, perfektionert i fra det var utviklet fra 40-tallet og opp til da 80-tallet da de siste maskinene ble laget. Så i starten så var det nok et mye

dårligere produkt med tidligere teknologi, men det har jo bare vært en enorm utvikling hele veien frem til i dag hvor du har Pro Tools HDX som er en bra plattform. Jeg tror ikke... Jeg tror ikke at... Og det her er jo et veldig sånt sårt tema da for veldig, veldig mange, men jeg tror nok egentlig ikke at det låter noe dårligere fra Pro Tools enn fra... Altså at Pro Tools er noe dårligere enn en båndspiller. Men samtidig, heller ikke andre veien da. Men grunnen til at folk foretrekker det analoge det er et helt annet tema, men... det går mer på hva vi ønsker å høre.

(10:31) K: Pro Tools i seg selv er jo mye av årsaken til at det er mye vanskeligere å drive et lydstudio i dag fordi at folk tar med seg lydkortet og spiller inn en viseplate på hytta. Tar mesteparten av jobben hjemme. Mikser det hjemme selv. Noen får til fantastisk fine resultat, noen får det kanskje ikke til, men de trenger ikke gå i et studio lenger for å spille inn musikk eller lage musikk. Prisene på digitale ting var noe helt annet enn en båndspiller som kostet 350.000,- Det var ganske naturlig at folk hadde ikke råd til det.

(11:10) J: Du har allerede vært litt inne på det at folk kan spille inn selv og de kan sitte og få til mer eller mindre fine ting på laptopen hjemme. Hva gjør det... Altså det er jo en side av det, men det... Så er det jo den sida der alle kan gi ut musikken sin veldig lett gjennom for eksempel CD-baby som sørger for at hva som helst...

K: Ikke sant. En digital distribu... Alt, bare ferdig...

J: Det er jo til og med fysisk distribusjon nå og det koster 350,- så har du lastet opp platen din på iTunes og alle streaming servicer og slikt. Så... Alt det der i kombinasjon med at alle sitter med, altså opptaksmuligheter på iPhone sin, hva gjør det med produsentrollen i dagens samfunn?

K: Det er veldig mye mer visket ut, og veldig mye mer mindre en rolle tror jeg. Det er noe fantastisk bra med at alle kan bare spille inn musikk og gi ut

musikken sin fordi at alle p... Alle fortjener det. Alle bør egentlig få ut det...
Altså har du... Har du noe inni deg så må du få det ut. Ulempen er at, altså
mengden utgitt må jo ha vært... Økt noe helt enormt kontra hva den gjorde... Må
ha vært på 70- og 80-tallet. Og det tror jeg kan gjøre at både... Altså forbrukere
kan gå seg veldig vill i... Altså både all tilgjengeligheten, altså jeg kjenner jo bare
igjen... Altså Netflix og Spotify... Altså det er jo... Altså det er jo det samme som
å åpne kjøleskapet og du har lyst på noe, men du vet ikke hva fordi alt er så
tilgjengelig.

Det er ikke lenger å gå enn å kjøpe en skive. Og i tillegg så opererer dem jo med
ingenting budsjett og de gjør jo alt selv, men der hvor de egentlig skulle hatt
kanskje produsenten som ikke nødvendigvis skal gå inn og arrangere eller noen
ting, men bare dytte det i riktig retning. Gi et lite løft i et lite... En liten
veiledning. Sånn at du på en måte får strøm... Får fullført produktet.

Noe av største grunnen til at jeg mener at folk bør gå i et studio i tillegg til altså
det utstyret og rom og sånne ting... Kvaliteten bør jo være der. Det har jo med
erfaringen til teknikerne som er der. Ikke at de nødvendigvis produserer det,
men fordi man har spilt inn mange skiver, man har jobbet med mange skiver, at
man får på en måte et mye større innblikk i prosessen frem til et ferdig produkt
enn hvis du ikke har spilt inn en plate før. Og kan hjelpe til og få det til å bli
raskere og et ferdig resultat på det.

J: Hva tenker du at det sier om verdien til musikk, dette her med at...

K: Mindre verdsatt i dag enn den var før. Det er den jo... Det er den jo også sånn
i fysiske kroner også. Jeg tror folk... Jeg tror folk tar det litt for gitt. Det er jo et
forbrukerproblem mer enn et musikerproblem.

J: Ja det blir jo et musikerproblem også for folk tjener jo ikke penger.

K: Ja det blir jo egentlig det. Altså musikeren har ikke råd til å gå i studio fordi
forbrukeren ikke betaler for det, men forbrukeren betaler jo ikke fordi at
musikeren ikke har hatt utgiftene med studio igjen. Og så har du nå en tett

sammensatt ball der. Og det er ikke noe sikkert at hvis båndspilleren hadde overlevd og Pro Tools aldri hadde kommet at det hadde vært samme priser, så det er ikke sikkert... Folk hadde måttet gå i studio, men kanskje færre hadde gått i studio i 2016 på grunn av andre økonomiske faktorer og det hele, så det er vanskelig å skyldte på datamaskinen. Selv om det er fristende.

J: Altså en stor del av oppgaven min er jo dette her med populærmusikk de siste femten årene og jeg har jo mine tanker om den da, men jeg har en opple... Eller jeg opplever at opp gjennom alle tiårene før 2000, og egentlig fra begynnelsen av, eller slutten av 90-tallet så e... var det slik av vi forbandt visse tiår med visse sjangere og stilarter og artister. Altså 60-tallet så er det Beatles med en gang, og Led Zeppelin eller hva det nå enn måtte være, og funk på 70-tallet, ikke sant?

K: Veldig dårlig å tenk 70-tallet bare med funk da, det er ikke noen bra stil.

J: Hva forbinder du med, altså hva for noen typer sounds forbinder du med de siste 15 årene?

K: Oi, det er mye forskjellig.

J: Ja. Som er nytt, som er... som representerer vår tid.

K: Som er nytt?! Nei! Det eneste som på en måte alltid har utviklet seg det er jo pop, altså pop-sjangeren. Den... altså det... Pop-musikk på 60-tallet høres... Hørtes jo helt annerledes enn pop-musikk i dag. Altså Highasakite for eksempel. Det er jo moderne pop sound sånn som jeg ser det. Og veldig mange andre pop-band rundt omkring i verden også. Men så... Vet ikke om vi har noe... Altså det må på en måte bli en sånn... Som det alltid har vært så må det være egentlig de største... Altså det vi forbinder med 60 og 70-tallet også, det er jo Billboard hitene, som på en måte der... Den og den låten som er jævlig bra låter, og det og det soundet. Og soundet har jo vært påvirket av teknologien og utviklingen til musikere og utstyr. Og nå har du det, det svære pop-landskapet som vi har i dag

da som er vår tids sound. Av og til så er det jo retro, men jeg tror ikke vi kan definere at de er utgitt med retro... Retro sånn som Lana Del Rey eller hva hun nå heter, hun... Det er jo veldig retro sound, og... Men det er jo pop-musikk som det holder. Men jeg vet ikke om jeg kan si at det i seg selv er beskrivende for hele de siste femten årene.

J: Nei.

K: I forhold til hva vi har hatt med Scooter og sånne artister da. Det var veldig populært en periode.

J: Ja, sent nittital.

K: Så hvor er... hvor er på en måte grensen?

J: Nei, altså det er vanskelig å sette en dag selvfølgelig.

K: Ja. Ja det er akkurat det, men det har jo skjedd en enorm utvikling i fra 2000-tallet og over til 2005 og 2016 også. Så, det er litt... jeg vet ikke helt hva jeg skal svare [laughs].

J: Når jeg intervjuet Rhys Marsh så snakket han om at sjangrer liksom har eksplodert opp gjennom tiårene og at plutselig så var punken der, plutselig var grungen og plutselig var hva nå enn det måtte være.

K: Scooter.

J: Scooter, ja ikke sant?

K: Det var jo sånn som plutselig...

J: Hva opplever du har eksplodert av nye sjangrer på 2000-tallet?

K: Dubstep da.

J: Dubstep?

K: Det er liksom kanskje noe... altså det er jo ikke en sjanger som jeg kan i det hele tatt da. Men det er jo... det er jo nytt for... nytt for verden. Altså, måten de bygger opp låter på er i hvert fall ikke noe jeg har hørt tidligere. Jeg vet ikke om det muligens har kommet noen metal-sjangere som har utviklet seg opp i gjennom tidene og da. Der er jeg veldig, veldig på tynn is. Så det må jo være innenfor elektronisk musikk. Tenker jeg. Fordi jeg har sett... Og sånne ting som Kygo som på en måte... jeg vet ikke hva slags sjanger han spiller, men det er en veldig annerledes type sound det og da. Enn for eksempel... Det er jo ikke dubstep eller elektronika. Det er en sånn soft electronica [laughs]. Nærmeste ordet jeg kommer. Tar det på en rolig bølge. Men det er ikke noe jeg på en måte... sjanger jeg kan i det hele tatt, for jeg jobber jo ikke med... med den typen musikk. Jeg er bedre på rockeband.

J: Skal vi se. Siste ting på dette her. En stor del av oppgaven min er basert på en bok gitt ut i 2011 av en musikkforsker som heter Simon Reynolds som skriver om akkurat dette her... det han kaller for retromania, som er hele populær kulturen om begynner å bli tilbakeskuende og han skriver at 2000-tallet har vært alle tidligere tiår som skjer igjen på nytt samtidig. Hva tenker du om den påstanden eller det utsagnet?

K: Det er veldig mye sannhet i det at... med mine observasjoner også i forhold til det at... det er på en måte... det er ingen regler lenger. Altså det er lov å vær så retro... du går tilbake til alle mulige sjangrer du vil. Drev å tenkte på det når du snakket om liksom hva definerer vår tids musikk da. Altså, det som er nytt er jo pop musikken, men det er jo utrolig mange band som spiller... som er utrolig 60-talls inspirert, 70-talls inspirert. Noen er jo åtti-talls inspirert og. Og... og... eller, tilbake til 90-talls indie... amerikansk indie-stil. Det er alt... Du har et

kjempe bredt spekter på den som spenner hele veien. Det vet... det tror jeg vel ingen vet om hvordan det var tidligere. Det kan jo ha vært samme bredden da, men at du hører jo ikke om alt.

J: Ja, det... det er jo et av... en av tingene nå at alt blir dokumentert på et eller annet vis...

K: Ja, det er akkurat det.

J: Og alt ligger i fleisen på deg hele tiden.

K: Det [unintelligible] hele tiden.

J: Gjennom Facebook eller hva det nå enn måtte være.

K: Vi er nok i... vi er jo i en veldig retro periode. Bare sånn som i studio at nå er det jo... Vi vil ha båndspillere, vi vil ha gammel mikser. Gamle instrumenter hele veien.

J: Hva tror du det har å bety for innovasjon i populær musikk? Det at... Altså, jeg ser jo utstyret her, ikke sant, og jeg ser også utstyret i ganske mange andre studioer og jeg vet veldig godt hva utstyr jeg selv har lyst til å ha. [Both laughs] Så... men det er jo noen implikasjoner der om... dette her med at man skal skape innovasjon i musikk da.

K: Tenker du [unintelligible] i musikken?

J: For eksempel.

K: Hvorfor begrenser det gamle utstyret deg?

J: Ja, ikke meg personlig. Jeg spør hva du tenker om...

K: Ja, fordi at... fordi at... altså det... Det er jo ikke nødvendigvis i utstyret det er begrensninger og av og til så kan det være en stor fordel å ha det gamle utstyret i tillegg fordi... Altså man jobber med en hybrid-prosess med Pro Tools'n på maskinen, men så har vi båndspilleren. Med båndspilleren kan vi gjøre ting som vi aldri i livet kan få til å oppnå i Pro Tools'n, for vi kan bruke det, eller vi kan misbruke det om vi vil. Og bare pushe ting for langt og for hardt. For å få en helt egen lyd, om vi vil ha vreng eller hva vi vil ha. Samme kan vi gjøre med mikseren og pushe det for hardt. Send alt for mye lyd gjennom det og så bare på grensen... Da har du skapt en ny lyd. Da har du ikke lagt noen begrensninger der, du utvider hele horisonten. Så det er ikke noe som påvirker musikk produksjonen i det hele tatt at man er retro i utstyrsmaken altså.

J: Men, jeg tenker sånn... når du sier dette så tenker jeg jo litt at sitter du og jobber på en mikser fra 80-tallet for eksempel, så vil den mikseren ha det soundet som har vært på alle de platene opp gjennom årene som har blitt produsert på en... den modellen for eksempel. Vil ikke det være med å bidra til at ting kanskje kan føles ut som det er står litt i stå?

K: Jeg synes det er... Den tanken blir veldig overdrevet fordi det er ikke sånn at du kan sitte å høre på en skive og si 'det der er mikset på en SSL'. For at fortsatt har du teknikeren som sitter bak det, men så har du det viktigste som er musikken. Altså musikk låter forskjellig. Folk låter forskjellig. Folk høres totalt forskjellig ut. Det er jo det som du... det er det du bare... Mikseren skal bare få litt balanse på det. Det er jo ikke jobben til... det er ikke jobben til mikseren å skape soundet. Det er et... bare et arbeidsverktøy. Så det er teknikeren som skaper på en måte... bidrar til å endre sound da, hvis at du skal ha et typete sound. Da er det bare... da er det bare et verktøy og da er det bare om å gjøre å ha en sånn på en måte... som du... som tekniker er kompatibel med da. Som responderer på samme måten.

J: Yes. Ok, da tror jeg vi gir oss der med mindre du har noen siste ord?

K: Det er jo eneste... kanskje som kan være min observasjon i forhold til det med gammelt utstyr og hvorfor det har blitt så populært da. Om det er noe interessant?

J: Ja, ja, det er kjempe interessant!

K: Fordi at det er... i dag så har ting blitt så perfekt, altså... Pro Tools'n er jo... eller... er jo altfor perfekt for oss tror jeg. For det... jeg tror veldig av det handler om at man går tilbake til det gamle og det gamle utstyret det handler om det vi liker å høre som ikke er det perfekte bestandig. Det at støyer litt, at det vrenger litt, at det skjer rare ting. At du hele tiden har den små x-faktorene som du ikke nødvendigvis kan sette fingeren på, men det, det... du bare vet når du hører det at det her låter bra. Du vet ikke nødvendigvis hvorfor, for du... du kan jo kopiere settingen fra EQ'n her... Jeg har jo plugin varianten av det bordet her og. Men det låter ikke på samme måten. Og en ting er at emuleringer vil alltid være emuleringer, men det er det lille ekstra du får som du ikke kan sette fingeren på. Så jeg tror den store... som har påvirket studio til å gå inn i at... er mer enn at det bare er mote. Jeg velger i hvert fall å tro at det er mer enn det, med mindre jeg lurer meg selv kraftig med det jeg hører. Og det i forhold til båndspiller og i forhold til at du får den komprimeringen og den påvirkningen som bare limer ting litt mer sammen som gjør at ting låter litt bedre. Om det gjør jobben min litt lettere eller om det sørger for at alt havner et hakk høyere er egentlig ikke så farlig, men du får en god følelse av å bruke det. Da... Det er liksom en viktig bit å få med i det hele synes jeg. Det er ikke bare jåleri.

Part 2

[1:32] J: Hvordan opplever du det å jobbe 'in-the-box' kontra det å faktisk stå ved bordet og skru på fadere og vri på brytere?

K: Det er en helt annen arbeidsflyt å jobbe med mikseren. Når du mikser på mikseren så... så får du en... du får mye mer direkte... du... ærlig tilbakemelding, pluss at du har fader knapper og du skrur EQ så går... Skrur du fysisk på en knott. Det er utrolig behagelig. Så veldig mye går på arbeidsflyten i tillegg til at det... Jeg føler jeg må jobbe litt mindre for å få det til å låte lydmessig der jeg vil ha det. Nå er det jo ikke... nå er det jo sånn at jeg mikser jo veldig mye begge deler, altså for det er ikke alt du kan ta på bordet enten på grunn av tid eller at du... du er avhengig av å ha full recall på ting, for at det er jo klart du kan jo ta mange bilder av mikseren, men har du skrudd på alle de knottene der så skal det litt til for å få det helt likt tilbake. Pluss at det ikke minst er en enorm jobb å prøve å recalle det. Så da må man skille veldig... Man må nesten skille mellom hvilke prosjekter som man kan gjøre det med på grunn av tidsbruk og en del forskjellige x-faktorer i forhold til hvordan bandene responderer og. Det er jo enkelte band som gir tilbakemelding tre uker etter miksen er ferdig. Da er veldig dumt å revurdere den. For å dytte opp vokalen 1dB.

J: Hvis det er det og så blir noe annet feil i prosessen.

K: Ja, ja. Så plutselig er det jo en gitar som har blitt for lav eller et eller annet, så har du det gående.

[4:00] J: Føler du at det er lettere for at du kjører ting litt hardere med en gang du er på en mikser kontra det å sitte...

K: Nei, jeg føler faktisk det at jeg tar i mye hardere når jeg mikser i boksen for å få tilnærmet samme resultatet da. På gitar og på el-gitar for eksempel, så... I boksen så er det... EQ'er ganske hardt og legger veldig ofte på litt sånn plugins som vintage... litt saturering og litt sånn distortion og sånne ting og for å få nok energi i lyden. Og det trenger jeg ikke når jeg er ute på bordet. Da holder det med den EQ'n og så legger jeg til litt og så er det bra. Ofte.

[13:07] J: Jeg tenker jo litt... nå sitter du med API 560 og 550A både i hardware og i...

K: Plugins versjon.

J: plugin versjon, så når velger du å bruke analogt i stedet for digitalt eller omvendt?

K: Jeg mikser på tre måter. Det ene er full analogt og så den andre er sånn semi for at man bruker litt outboard, enten... det vi har nedover der og plugins eller bare plugins. Og det er veldig avhengig av prosjektet. Kunden. Tiden jeg har og hvor... hvor man skal [unintelligible]... For det er en måte man må... Det er greit at man får en egen opplevelse til å låte bedre, men samtidig så er friheten og tryggheten veldig viktig også. At man på en måte vet at man kan komme tilbake til det. Og det er jo litt avhengig av prosjektet og. Hva jeg føler det trenger. Det er ikke alltid at man skal skru så jævlig hardt heller. Da er det ikke så mye poeng.

J: Så... Altså nå likevel har begge to så har du vel en følelse av om det er forskjell på...

K: Hardwaren er... hardwaren er... tror jeg er mye bedre.

J: Ja?

K: Jeg synes lydmessig at den låter annerledes. Jeg har aldri A-B testet samme settingene, men jeg får en annen opplevelse når jeg skrur på den. Så om det er lydmessig forskjell på dem eller om det bare er fysisk fordi at jeg skrur knotten, det er ikke så farlig.

J: Nei. Men, altså du sier at du tror du merker forskjell på det.

K: Ja, jeg synes jeg merker stor forskjell på det.

J: I rett og slett lyd kvalitet eller?

K: Jeg synes den låter finere. Det er jo det som er så fantastisk med lyd er det at man kan bruke sånne vage begreper for man har ikke noen annen måte å forklare det på. Jeg kan ikke si hva det er som er finere med den. Det er bare at den føles finere enn plugin-varianten.

[19:00] J: Rhys (Marsh) snakket jo veldig mye om det (the unpredictability of analogue gear), han jobbe jo nesten bare outboard og gjør egentlig så lite mulig... han gjør alt... helst alt på vei inn. Så han snakket om ene... hva var det da... Jeg tror det var en synth han har som han kjører... En analog synth som gjerne kjører andre instrumenter gjennom for å få filtrene fra synthen.

K: Mhm. Riktig.

J: Men den låter forskjellig hver gang han skrur den på. Det er noe av det feteste i hele verden fordi at det blir uforutsigbart. Du vet aldri helt hva som kommer ut i andre enden.

K: Jeg er egentlig helt enig. Det er jo samme at... Jeg er jo fortaapt uten analoge ekkoer, altså space ekko, tape ekko. Tube-tech. Ekko fulltones [unintelligible] eller Moog analog delay. For det svinge, det gjør forskjellige, det er ikke det samme statiske signalet som kommer hver jævla gang. Det gir en dybde i miksen. Det gir på en måte... det gir det lille som vi snakket om i forhold til å gjøre det interessant for det er interessant å høre på. Man er... Jeg elsker det at det er så... så skakt. Jeg elsker det spesielt nå som båndet er utslitt i space ekkoen.³³ Det har aldri hørtet så dårlig som i dag.

³³ Kofoed is referring to the Roland Space Echo effect unit in Brygga Studio.

J: Det er... En liten del av det jeg skriver om handler om retro-markedet og reintroduksjoner av gamle synther som egentlig var flopper når de kom ut på 80-tallet som nå plutselig...

K: Det der er rart.

J: Ja, det synes jeg og. Men... [both laughs] men, i... det er en produsent... en som produserer elektronisk musikk som sier det at hele poenget med en synth er at den skal være tjue år gammel for da er komponentene blitt så pass mye dårligere at den synthen låter som noe helt annet.

K: Totalt uenig.

J: Totalt uenig?

K: Når en synth er tjue år gammel så bør man serve den, altså fordi at det er en ting... eller det er to ting som egentlig kan være issuet med synther. Det er jo kontaktfelt, dårlig kontakt i tangenter, pottes og switcher. Da bytter man det med en helt lik del så den fungerer som den skal igjen. Det andre er kondensatorer... elektrolyttkondensatorer. De har begrenset levetid så de tørker ut etter ti til femten år og det er det han sikter til da sikkert. Og det skal skiftes fordi at da fungerer den sånn som den gjorde når den var ny. Og det låter bra. Det kan låte bra når den er dårlig, men da vil du ha en kontinuerlig prosess som blir bare dårligere og dårligere. Til slutt så er det ikke lyd i instrumentet. Det er enden på visen. Eller mye brom eller chop eller kommer det røyk ut av det. Så det er ikke noe artig. Så man kan på en måte ikke påstå det at det er fordi komponentene er defekte at man fortrekker det eller at det låter bra. Jeg tror det har mye mer... Altså, mye mer grunnen til at gamle instrumenter eller synther låter bedre enn nye er jo på grunn av hvor mye mer det kostet å produsere det den gangen. Det er dyrere komponenter i det, det ble brukt kanskje lengre tid på researchen før de pumpet ut et nytt et. De hadde ikke noe valg der de kunne ha satt seg ned med datamaskinen og modeller en synth. Som du kan i dag. De

måtte fysisk designe den og utvikle prototyper. I dag så... Forbrukerne, vi har ødelagt markedet for elektronikk. Vi forventer å få alt for ingen penger. Som gjør at de produsere det da for ingen penger og da får vi ikke samme høye kvaliteten. Det er det som jeg tror gjør det. Det er jo... den mini-Moogen der er fra 1974. Det er ikke byttet en switch eller pott på det. Men jeg har en synth som er et år gammel hvor et par potter allerede er defekt. Og den har bare vært brukt, den har ikke blitt herjet med eller fraktet noen ting, den har bare... Det er bare dårlig kvalitet. Du kjenner det når du løfter det og. Det er ikke bra.

[36:03] J: Det som slår meg litt når jeg er ute i diverse studioer og sånn er at er det ikke litt rart at det ikke har kommet noe som vi synes er bedre (than older, vintage equipment)? At vi ikke bare fyller opp med ting som er helt nytt?

K: Joda. Det er det, men for det første så har du litt marked og etterspørsel, altså hvis at folk har på en måte... bruker noe... har brukt noe gammelt noe, så får det den der hypen og så går det opp i verdi. Da er det veldig lønnsomt å reproducere det for at du har på en måte... halve markedsføringen er allerede gjort for deg.

J: Joda, det er sant.

K: Og det finnes jo vanvittig mye bra ting som blir laget i dag og. Men noe av det koster veldig mye. Kanskje koster mer enn å kjøpe en del av tingene og bare... Hvis det er andre så... Så lages det jo utrolig mye dritt i dag nettopp på grunn av den der forbruker problematikken vi har da med at folk betaler ikke for det. Du kjenner på kvaliteten at det er ikke bra.

J: Og markedet har jo ekspandert veldig fordi at alle kan sitte hjemme og sånne ting.

K: Det er akkurat det.

J: Men fortsatt så er det... det er en liksom... Jeg opplever jo det at folk vil enten ha de originale tingene eller i hvert fall den samme serien eller noe som er klonet etter noe. Så, det slår meg jo at det er litt rart at det liksom ingenting som ble produsert i fjor som er så fett at alle de som sitter og jobber med lyd og lydproduksjon til daglig tenker dette her skal jeg ha i studioet mitt. Hvis du følger tanken.

K: Ja, jeg er med. Jeg skjønner hva du tenker på og jeg er egentlig ganske enig med deg. Og jeg liker jo en del av det som er nytt og. For eksempel Millennia preampen er jo en av favoritt preampene mine, den er bare clean. Men... Jeg vet ikke hvorfor jeg. Er det det at det ikke er lønnsomt for de som lager preamper og skal på en måte utvikle en preamp og så prøve å markedsføre den når alle vil ha Neve for at det er det som ble brukt da og da. Jeg er jo litt irritert over det at... akkurat det at skal være sånn hype akkurat rundt den og den preampen som ble brukt. Altså, det låt bra fordi at de spilte bra. Det er jo så enkelt som det. Kunne ha mikket det opp med hva som helst. Det hadde fortsatt vært bra. Folk fokuserer litt for mye på utstyret, litt for lite på musikken.

Appendix E: Selected extracts from interview with Thomas Henriksen

The interview with Thomas Henriksen was conducted on the 4 March 2016 at NTNU's locales at Fjordgata 1. The interview concerns different aspects of music production culture and industry such as creativity, streaming services, the development of technology, nostalgia and retro aesthetics. The time that the different extracts appear in the recording of the interview is noted in the transcription in minutes and seconds.

(30:54)

Anders Jordbrekk: Det som er litt interessant da med både deg og flere av de andre jeg har intervjuet er at dere har begynt i en periode der DAWet og digitalisering av... altså digitale plugins og sånn virkelig begynte å bli en greie. Hva tenker du at den... altså vi har jo gått fra syv meter lange konsoller til laptopen i løpet av tjue år, kanskje. Hva tenker du at den utviklingen der har gjort med produsentrollen og med musikkproduksjons bransjen?

Thomas Henriksen: Nei altså, ehm... Vi snakket jo litt om autoritet i sted. Det er klart det at å låse opp døren inn til studio B eller... som jeg hadde, eller A, slå på lysene og fyre opp stæsjet, bare der er det jo... har du jo massevis... du er på plussiden.

J: Hva mener du med plussiden?

H: Fordi at stemningen blir god og dem... dem føler... dem er liksom i Nidarosdomen da.³⁴ Når etter hvert... når jeg bygget mitt første studio som jo var før det da (before he ran Nidaros Studio), så var det jo... det var jo... (laughs) det var ikke noen mikser en gang, det var... ja, det var egentlig ganske mye som det er i dag. Tastatur, mac, et par høytalere, lydkort. Ja, en liten digital mikser bare for preampene. Så det var ikke noe... det var ikke noe... og jeg hadde ofte kunder som faktisk ble litt bekymret når dem kom inn og så at 'men det her er jo ikke et

³⁴ Nidarosdomen is the landmark chatedral of Trondheim.

studio. Går det her bra liksom?’ Så måtte jeg egentlig litt sånn avvæpne situasjonen og fortelle ’jo, men det... bare vent litt og så skjønner du’. Og alle ble jo fornøyd selvfølgelig, men... men... så det er faktisk en veldig stor forskjell som du sier på en svær konsoll og på et kontrollrom som er... bare rommet koster en million å bygge, ikke sant? Og kontra det å finne seg (laughs) et lokale og så... I dag er det jo veldig få som blir overrasket nesten uansett hva slags rom man kommer inn i og skal jobbe med musikk. Jeg har ikke den oppfatningen lenger at... Alle, alle skjønner at ja, det kan bli bra. Så det... det er jo et... på en måte et tap, men når det gjelder... når det gjelder plugins... Det er en av de... jeg husker en av største... Det... synes var nesten mest fantastisk med plugins, det var ikke plugin i seg selv, men at du faktisk kunne ha de på ti spor da (laughs), så du kunne liksom... Åh, jeg har liksom en kompressor på ti spor samtidig. Må ikke re-recorde med en eller to kompressorer du har outboard flere ganger for å på en måte... Så det, det var en de store tingene. Men det er klart siden... siden man på en måte hadde et SSL konsoll og at etter hvert at faktisk SSL pluginet kom, så var det jo litt sånn pussig å sitte og høre alle andre som ikke har sittet på konsollen vurdere den SSL-plugen da, og da, og da skjønte jeg litt, ikke det at noen tok feil eller noe, men jeg skjønte bare at okay, du kan egentlig aldri vurdere en plugin hvis du ikke har sittet på konsollen.³⁵ For jeg likte også SSL-pluginen, men den låter helt annerledes enn konsollen.

J: For i Nidaros så er det SSL-bord?

H: Det er et SSL-bord ja. 64-kanalers bord. Så, ja, kort og godt, det lærte jeg litt av. Egentlig hele den hybrid-verden jeg har levd i har gitt meg en del innfalsvinkler som jeg ser at ikke på en måte, kunne fått på en annen måte. Altså, om du snakker med de som på en måte nesten slutter karrieren sin under det inntoget med DAW, altså den gamle garden, og du snakker med de som studerer her i dag på Mustek, første året, så er det ingen av de som egentlig forstår hele greia. Hvis du skjønner. Den gamle generasjonen kan du knapt

³⁵ The console Henriksen is referring to is the in-house SSL 64-channel G4000 series of Nidaros Studio.

snakke til, for de er på... 'Nei. Det er bare krøll'. Eller så er de faktisk død. Altså de har begynt å forsvinne. Mens de nye studentene er jo interessert, men blir blass i øynene når du skal snakke om hardware som de skjønner at de aldri kommer til å bruke, eller, så... Så min generasjon er på en måte en... litt sånn rar. Mellom-generasjons, generasjon. Så, det er en del kunnskap som du bare får mellom generasjoner for du kan liksom bruke begge, hvis det sier deg noen ting. Bare en sånn vurdering. Men vi var fortsatt på hvordan DAW-et hadde innvirkning på...

J: Ja. Altså den ekstreme utviklingen vi har hatt. Hvordan det produ... påvirker produsentrollen.

H: Ja. Altså for det første var det ingen ekstrem overgang. Det var ikke det. For det var så vidt du kunne snurre rundt noe særlig lyd inni der. Først to spor, og så kom det fire spor og åtte og seksten og tjuefire. Og til og med med med tjuefire spor så var det masse jobb, for du kunne liksom ikke ha så mange plugins, så du måtte alltid... du brukte DAW-et for å editere, mainly. For å... den implementerer lyd, sånne ting som ikke var mulig å spille. Synther og...med MIDI. Og editere og klipper ting i hjel, sånn at det skulle bli så tight som det bare gikk an, altså, snakker Dance With a Stranger, ikke sant? Og så skulle det overføres tilbake til SSL på tape og mikses. Så det var veldig separate... så det... så sånt sett, når DAW-et kom så kom det ikke i form av at... det var ikke egentlig et DAW. Det var en editeringsmulighet. Det var ingen som kalte det DAW heller når det kom. Så det var på en måte... det første inntoget var rett og slett en mulighet for å ta produksjonen ut av hovedstudioet og så sitte og pirke og editere. Med noen få plugins og kanskje tune litt også få tilbake... og det hadde jo veldig stor impact på det totale resultatet. Da var det virkelig noe som, sånn som Ronny Wikmark eller jeg, som vi satt og editerte og samplet og hadde hele MIDI-verdenen i en krok. Mens Bjørn Nessjø på en måte, tok det videre. Jeg jobbet aldri med Dance With a Stranger. Ronny Wikmark gjorde det. Men bare som et eksempel på det. Men etter hvert så kom jo DAW-et slik at det faktisk fikk lov å bo i studio. Inni storstudio. Og erstattet tapemaskinen. På det tidspunktet når du ikke var

avhengig av tapemaskinen for å... for å bruke SSL-mikseren, eller... da var det på en måte komplett, men da hadde vi på en måte... da synes vi det var fett, men det var liksom... Ja. Så det var trinnvis, det var ikke noe sjokk. Det var ikke noen sånn... bombe. Og etter det så har det på en måte blitt litt sånn at... Pussig ting er at jeg husker når jeg fikk auto-tune og tunet vokalen til noen. Jeg husker ikke hvem det var. Og vedkommende var så happy og så glad! Fantastisk! Ikke sant? Du fikk liksom bare, så mye skryt. Og så, noen år etterpå så, så er det ingen som reagerer på at du har gjort det. Og noen år etterpå det så får du bare kjeft hvis du har gjort det. Så... En annen stor impact egentlig, med DAW var at plutselig så kunne musikerne kjøpe seg DAW. Og til tider komme og fortelle deg hvordan du skulle... hvordan du skulle gjøre det. Fordi at selv om vi ikke hadde noen hvit frakk, så var det egentlig praktisk talt mulig å ha på seg en hvit frakk frem til... ja... hvert fall 2005 kanskje. For det var ingen... det var ingen som søkte etter å fortelle deg, eller klarte å følge med på hva du gjorde. Men så kom jo på en måte de første mulighetene for å kunne... for å kunne sitte hjemme. Og mange var interessert i det, og gjorde det. Det var jo litt problematisk syntes jeg, men det var også litt greit, for da kunne jeg stikke ut litt, og noen kunne overlate recordingen til noen andre. Sånn at... Det var egentlig starten på, på det at jeg skjønnte at 'Hei. Det er egentlig fett å ikke bare sitte foran mikseren, men komme seg litt vekk'. Så når DAW-et ble på en måte... så det ble veldig demokratisert, egentlig. Hele opptakssystemet ble veldig sånn... Magien forsvant vel. Ikke i den grad at jeg har på en måte søkt etter den, men det har vært en slags magi eller en distanse til de som har drevet med recording. Den autoriteten om du vil. Mye av den forsvant.

(57:01) J: Når vi likevel er inne på temaet med utgivelser og sånn, så har det jo vært en veldig stor forandring i tilgjengeligheten på musikk de siste 10-15 årene. Fra piratkopiering og ulovlig nedlasting til streamingtjenester. Hva tror du det gjør med kreativiteten til folk. Det... for før så hadde du platesamlingen din, og det du lånte av venner og kjente. Mens nå så har du platesamlingen din pluss 30 millioner låter på Spotify. Hvordan tror du det påvirker musikeren i den kreative prosessen?

H: Nei, altså... Jeg har kanskje opplevd at musikerne og artistene som jeg har jobbet med har vært, etter hvert, har egentlig blitt mer åpen for å tilte lydbildet. Kanskje utenfor det de hadde tenkt. Mer enn det var før. Før så var det vel... føler at det var veldig sånn sjanger-aktig... eller det var... det var mer skarpe kontraster mellom sjangerne som vi ikke har i dag. Og den litt åpne holdningen til at man kan liksom, i samarbeid pushe et lydbilde til å bli det ene eller det andre er det mye større aksept for, blant musikere i dag. Føler jeg. Snakkes ikke så mye om sjanger før. Og den sjanger... sjanger-tapet har jo, på en måte... ja... Du kan jo prøve å ramse opp alle sjangerne som er i dag, men det er nesten ingen som kan få det til. Så jeg tror folk bare har gitt opp det og overlater det til kritikerne, men jeg tror at det har vært... Jeg tror ikke det har vært... Jeg kan ikke se at det ville vært negativt for en miks eller produksjonsprosess. Men i utgangspunktet så er det jo mange typer produsenter. Altså en... et band eller en artist, la oss si i teorien, bør jo oppsøke en produsent som står inne for et slags design eller lydbilde eller estetikk som de ønsker. Sånn var det jo før. Men det er jo mange som kaller seg produsenter i dag egentlig, som kanskje ikke, egentlig har noe signatur eller... Og det... En liten vurdering; for noen år siden så så jeg at det var veldig mange som, som skulle bli produsenter. Jeg skjønnte aldri helt hva.. hva du... bare... bli... ønske om å bli produsenter. Jeg skjønnte ikke. Og de fikk inn band og det gikk, nesten uten unntak, ikke så veldig bra. Det stoppet opp på et eller annet rart tema eller noe sånn.

(63:00) J: Det er litt interessant akkurat det der, for jeg har jo... Etter å ha gjort noen intervjuer nå så har jeg jo et inntrykk av at de som ender opp med å produsere musikk er, er ikke folk som har tenkt å bli produsenter, men de har hatt en interesse for lydproduksjon, og så plutselig så har resten bare kompt som en følge av det. Men når vi er inne på dette med kortere produsentkarrierer så er det jo også... altså jeg har en veldig subjektiv følelse av at artistkarrierene har blitt kortere og kortere i forhold til før, og samtidig så er det jo... du ser jo også det, de bandene som selger ut stadioner er jo de som solgte ut stadioner på 80-tallet, liksom.

H: Ja, faktisk.

J: Fortsatt. Og det samme på alt av internett-forum og slikt, så er det de gamle produsentene som dukker opp på nytt og nytt og nytt.

H: Mhm. Som man går til og lytter på og ser på Youtube.

J: Så, altså... er det virkelig ingen nye folk som er banebrytende nok til at fokuset blir satt på dem?

(64:12) H: Altså jeg tror for det første at det som er grunnen til at man ser disse ikonene enda er at de på grunn av segregering, dette er bare min teori, i gjennom sjangere, kunne holde på i kanskje ti, tolv, fjorten år i én sjanger. Mens i dag så er, så har vi ikke den... du aner liksom ikke hvem den neste du jobber med er. Du basically tar den jobben for det er så mange andre å konkurrere med, men jeg tror det er vanskeligere å holde en profil. Men de som faktisk klarer det, som for eksempel Stargate eller mange andre som er mye mindre, men som allikevel har, har en veldig sånn selektiv måte å jobbe på, de føler jeg klarer det. De klarer faktisk å... Altså jeg føler ikke at det er borte! Det er ikke noe... Det er ikke slik at vi ikke har det i dag, som det var før. Det er her i dag også, men vi tenker ikke på det på samme måte nødvendigvis. Jeg vet ikke hva jeg skal si.

For det første er jo produsenten i dag også tekniker og DAW-kontrollør, sånn at... Den personen er ikke så synlig eller så tilgjengelig, nødvendigvis, som en tradisjonell, gammeldags produsent. Som på en måte hadde mye tid mellom platene kanskje til å... I dag er det mye mer hektisk, men det er grunnen.... Hva som er grunnen til at vi har de ikonene... Nei altså det...

Jeg tror jo veldig at... at man, man... det er vanskelig å ikonisere samtiden. Den tilhører fortiden. For den er liksom... pynter på ting og... du finner vel nesten ikke nostalgier representert så mye i andre felt som vi gjør i musikkbransjen. Så det er jo også en del... På grunn av at utstyr som har vært brukt før er utilgjengelig rett og slett. Punktum. For det er ingen som kan lage det lenger. Så,

så det... og det er alt sånn, det du ikke kan få, det er jo det du vil ha. Da følger liksom de her gamle ikonene med på kjøpet da. Inn i samme greia. Og blir enda større ikoner enn de strengt tatt egentlig fortjener da. Men jeg tror også, jeg tror det er en sammenheng mellom nostalgi og at man må forstå samtiden til disse folkene som bygde seg opp. At de fikk lov til å holde på innenfor en sjanger i mye større grad enn det som er vanlig i dag. Så jeg tror at det... det er... Hvis du skulle liksom på en måte gjøre grunge så før du dit, og skulle du gjøre country så før du dit, eller litt mer. Du før til Nashville hvis du skulle gjøre blues eller sånne type ting. Så, så jeg tror at det har, det har nok skjerpet dem enda mer. Og studioene var jo også til dels veldig bygd opp rundt de forskjellige sjangerne. For å forstå det så må man ta høyde for nostalgier som jo er veldig u håndterlig materie. Hva er det? Det er jo det psykologiske i oss. Vi vil alltid ha det som vi ikke kan få, men også det å forstå at de hadde et helt annet tempo før.

(68:56) H: Nostalgi er jo... herregud... det er jo så stor del av... å... på så mange. Jeg har dealet med så mye nostalgi at det aner du ikke. Jeg har liksom... Jeg har rett og slett hatt band som vil recorde på tape, i Nidaros, ikke sant? Ok. Jeg setter på tape på båndmaskinen, men så vet jeg jo at det bandet her trenger å editeres kraftig. Ikke sant? Og jeg har ikke et år på denne plata her. Jeg har en og en halv uke. Så faktisk så har jeg satt på tape, trykt på play og så har jeg bare recordet gjennom ProTools. Og de kommer inn og lytter og 'Ja! Det her låter kjempebra! Det er akkurat sånn lyd vi ville ha!'

Så... så... ja... det er nostalgi, ja. Og så... det er jo en hvit løgn da. Det er jo en ganske kraftig hvit løgn også, for jeg sier jo 'Ja. Det her har vært på tape før det kommer inn i Pro Tools'. Det har jo overhode ikke vært innom tapen. Og det var jo hovedsakelig mest fordi jeg ikke visste hvordan jeg skulle patche det! Men jeg visste jo at den lyden av SSL-en og outboard som gjorde at alt lyste rødt overalt og varmt godt, var det de egentlig var ute etter.

Så det å på en måte ta noen slike snarveier og det å på en måte... ok. Akseptere, ikke snakke ned nostalgi, men på en måte, jobbe litt rundt det har vært min måte å... For at, greit nok, jeg vet at her må det editeres. Det henger ikke

sammen så mye, og da er det håpløst med tape, så man må klippe og lime. Så.. ja...

(70:42) J: Når vi er inne på nostalgi her så, det er jo... det har jo vært noen trender innenfor teknologien og innenfor plugins som er veldig sånn, tilbakepek... eller emuleringer av gamle SSL- eller API- eller Neve-konsoller, eller striper og sånn Kramer Master Tape, og tape saturation plugins og produsenter som Korg og Moog som relanserer gamle synther og slik fordi folk plutselig vil ha det igjen. Er det ikke noe der som skurrer litt? At.. Altså i 2016, burde vi ikke ha funnet et eller annet helt nytt nå som er så fantastisk at alle ville ha brukt det, i stedet for å gå tilbake 30 år?

H: Altså det som er så fantastisk som aldri blir brukt, det er jo her. Det finnes jo. Men, men jeg tror at latent eller bevisst så ligger det ønske i å flørte med nostalgier også innenfor, i samme, altså på en måte... Ikke bare være i samtid eller i fremtid, men at på en måte flørte litt med fortida i, i hvert fall i deler av lydbildet. Sånn har det jo egentlig alltid vært så vidt jeg kan se, uansett epoke. I Wienerklassisismen også finner du barokk-elementer fordi at de kunne gjøre det. Fordi at det var gøy å flørte med de tingene der. Så jeg tror at det å på en måte gå tilbake og... Det gir en dimensjon til... det gir en dybde. En slags sånn, tre-dimensjonalitet til musikken i form av, av det rent kompositoriske eller lyd. Så det å på en måte låne ting makes sense for at vi, vi vil tydeligvis har det på et vis. Så det å på en måte... Jeg merker jo bare på meg selv, at, jeg er jo interessert i de s... jeg er jo keyboardist, sant? Så jeg er jo interessert i de synthene som var generasjonen synther før de fikk det til. Før de fikk til liksom 20 til 20Hz, altså... Jeg er interessert i de litt odde tingene som ikke er for odd, men... og ikke krever for mye, men som på en måte har en signatur som dessverre ble som det ble da, men som vi ser i dag i kombinasjon med alt det, la oss kalle det 'det perfekte', gir en nostalgi eller en inkling. Du kan ikke skru deg til den sounden, den bare finnes i den boksen eller etter hvert kanskje kan man si i det plagget, eller... som de lager.

Men det er jo en veldig stor debatt rundt akkurat det. Det skrives jo PhD'er om det her akkurat nå. Nostalgie og det er... Sett i... Altså jeg tenker at den generasjonen før meg er jo totalt hoderystende på ting til... til den greia. De ville bare ha best mulig lyd, fordi at de hadde ikke det. I dag ser vi at vi har sannsynligvis den beste lyden vi kan ha i form av hva øret faktisk kan... kan... Det neste blir å begynne å modifisere øret.

Men vi har pusha litt grensen, eller, så langt at vi kan kanskje si at 'Ok. Vi har en mulighet for å produsere lyd som matcher det som vi faktisk kan høre'. Slik var det ikke før. Så det å på en måte... du finner ikke noe spesielt mye retro tankegang på 80- eller 90-tallet. Det var veldig lite. Å se seg tilbake. Så, du finner ikke... Du finner den ikke så hyppig. Retrotankegangen finner du ikke hvert tiår, tror jeg ikke. Jeg tror du må ha minst 20 eller 30 år mellom for at man begynner å se seg tilbake da. Men det... Kanskje det er feil også? Men jeg tror at det her uperfekte eller... har en signifikant... Ja, vi lytter på det, og selv om vi ikke tenker over det så blir den i referanse til, tilbake til noen ting. Og det kan også kanskje gi låten din autoritet på et vis. Kan jo rett og slett være sånn at man klarer å snakke med... klarer å appellere til en lytt... En ubevisst lytter. Selv om man ikke tenker på Beatles, eller tenker ikke på Rolling Stones, men når man hører noe som på en måte er... representerer det området en, la oss kalle det en vanlig ubevisst lytter, så kan det hende at, ja. De har lyttet. Men han eller hun vet ikke helt hvorfor. Men det er noe gjenkjenning der som, som... Det kan jo kanskje være det at de som er på en måte på min alder eller eldre egentlig er ganske ignorant til... EDM i dag, ikke sant? Det er absolutt ingenting i EDM som sonisk kan knyttes til deres fortid eller oppvekst, eller... Det er null, ikke sant? Så de parameterne finnes ikke der.

Så jeg tror, ja... Jeg tror absolutt at du ikke kan lytte på musikk kun i samtid. Du vil alltid ha et eller annet retroperspektiv ubevisst eller bevisst når du lytter på musikk. Du vil alltid knytte det til noe du har hørt før, vil alltid knytte det til... Bevisst eller ubevisst. Det er min tese. At du... Ok du hører, men... du hører musikken, men du skjønner den... Du kompilerer den gjennom den erfaringen du har. Og det tror jeg er ingen som skjønner bedre enn musikere selv, og derfor bruker de faktisk det trikset. Ikke for at de tror det er et triks, men latent så blir

det brukt fordi det makes sense. Det blir en connection til deres egen fortid. Eller faktisk ikke deres egen fortid, men flere generasjoner bak sin fortid. Fordi at du er jo... Du levde ikke da, men du har jo hørt på den musikken.

(77:51) J: Men er det ikke... Altså hvis vi går tilbake i populærmusikkhistorien så er det jo band og artister som dukker opp som selv om de for all del kommer jo fra... Alt kommer jo fra noe, men det er fortsatt ting som kommer som opplevdes som helt nytt. Som helt ferskt, som ingen hadde hørt noe som lignet på før. Føler du at vi har mistet noe av det nå i vår egentid?

H: Spørsmålet er vel: 'Er det noe å gå på i fremtiden?'

J: Ja, en del av det hvert fall.

H: Er det, eller... Er det noe... Kan man liksom... Er det her endestasjonen på en måte? Eller om... Ja... Jeg har jo holdt på med musikk i ganske mange år, og jeg har flere ganger spekulert på 'Nei. Nå er det så mye. Nå er det så mye energi i den her musikken at det går ikke... Jeg kan ikke tenke meg at det er mulig å lage mer energi!'

Og så kommer jo side-chain-verden igjen, ikke sant? Wow! Da har du jo mer energi i EDM-musikken enn du har i rock n roll liksom. Så... så... det er. Jeg vil ikke tørre å påstå at vi er ved noe slags form for ends... eller veis ende her. Det går videre. Det er rett og slett ikke... Og teknologien vil fortsatt være... fortsette å demokratisere ting. Slik at til slutt så kan egentlig nesten alle gjøre hva de vil. Det som skiller oss er egentlig bare de kreative delene.

(81:35) J: Men når du sier indie-bølgen, tenker du den som har foregått nå de siste... med Highasakite og sånne ting, eller?

H: Ja, de siste tre, fire fem årene. Susanne Sundfør og...

J: Men det er jo heller ikke noe sånn... Det er jo ikke nytt det heller. For indie, det går jo tilbake til 90-tallet.

H: Nei, men det som er nytt, føler jeg, gjennom den her indie-bølgen som kommer nå, spesielt synes jeg at sangerne har funnet en annen stemme. Det er noe annet... Det er noe annet... Altså spesielt de kvinnelige sangerne og vokalistene har funnet stemmen sin liksom på en måte. Den ikke-skolerte stemmen, men den rene råe stemmen. Vi snakker ikke Janis Joplin her, men vi snakker om det her... det her... Ja... Den rene råe stemmen som bare får så stor plass i lydbildet. Det virker så... Det er jo produsert ut av det hvite øyet, men når det kommer til sangen så føles det naturlig. Det føles bare sånn... Det er ikke... Det føles allikevel uprodusert ut på et vis. Og det synes jeg er nytt med denne her indie-bølgen. Det er jo ingen indie-bølger som har vært like altså, sånn... Men det her... Det som har oppstått i mangel på plateselskap 'Vi kommer aldri til å få platedeal uansett, så vi kan bare gjøre hva vi vil'- tankegangen. Der har det oppstått noenting! Og så har de jo selvfølgelig blitt plukket opp av nye plateselskap, men... Så de vil jo også alltid eksistere, men det synes jeg... Det synes jeg er veldig spennende fordi viser bare at, faktisk på musikersiden så er vi overhode ikke på plass med potensiale. Og det synes jeg er noe av det mest spennende med musikk for tiden at det spilte er... Det er mye å gå på der altså. I form av sang eller spill. Og kanskje er det rett og slett det vi skal ha fremover nå, rett og slett. Med det her litt sånn... Det er rett og slett punken som kommer tilbake. Den attituden.

Nå er jo for så vidt forskjellen på de skolerte i dag, som Highasakite er et skolert band. I absolutt aller høyeste grad, men at de klarer å forvalte utdanningen sin på en annen måte enn for tjue år siden. For tro meg, de som var skolert for tjue år siden de, de hadde langt igjen inn, inn her for å egentlig... For da var det så stor respekt for institusjonen at alle bare adopterte den institusjonelle måten å gjøre ting på. Så mange som studerte og ble flink, ikke sant? Men det var ingen indre voice. Det var ikke noe indre stemme. Og det er forskjellen på i dag. At den indre stemmen kommer først.

Og det kan jo være gjennom at kanskje har institusjonene blitt bedre i dag? Når jeg snakker med dem på jazzlinja så sier dem... Jeg spør 'Hvorfor er dere så bra?' Og da får jeg svar at 'Det er jo fordi vi lar dem være i fred. Vi lar dem bare være i fred så mye vi kan'.

Så.... Ja... Det er noen vektprinsipp her som gjør at ekvilibriumet er kanskje bra. Og kanskje det er bra at det svinger i perioder, men... Men respekten for institusjonen er jo definitivt degradert. Det er jo ikke noe respekt for institusjon lenger i Skandinavia som gjør at, kanskje det er en stretch å si det, men jeg tror at mye av uttrykket blir friere. Og det er det som for meg, hvert fall for meg, er indie-bølgen i dag. At Susanne Sundfør faktisk kan stå der og synge, synge for full hals. Hvis du reiser til Storbritannia så er det jo helt motsatt. Der har du respekten for institusjonen på en helt annen måte. Hierarki.

(86:02) En stor del av oppgaven min er basert på en bok som er av en kar som heter Simon Reynolds, som heter Retromania. Der skriver han om hvordan populærmusikken på 2000-tallet mangler innovasjon. At innovasjonen har stagnert og at det i stadig større grad resirkulerer tidligere tiår. Så... Og resultatet av det er at vi får et tiår, og nå egentlig femten år, der populærmusikken mangler nye retninger. Det er på en måte et oppkok av alle de tidligere tiårene på nytt igjen. Hva tenker du om den påstanden.

H: Han sier at på spesielt 2000-tallet så er det resirkulering?

J: Ja.

H: Sier han noe om hvorfor det er resirkulering? Har han teorier på det eller?

J: Ja. Altså det henger... Han tar jo for seg... Først så tar han jo for seg hele populærkulturen, alt fra filmer, og det ser vi jo med reboots av, og remakes og TV-serier, mote og retrokulturen. Folk som begynner å samle på gamle spillkonsoller fra 80-tallet. 80 eller 90-tallet. Alt sånn som det der.

H: Jeg tror at det er litt sånn som jeg sa i stad at vi har behov for, på et eller annet nivå i oss selv til å... til å... ja... det kan være en autoritet gjennom nostalgi eller at man kan på en måte behandle fortida også i nåtida. Det viser jo kraft. Men jeg tenker for musikken sin del, så tenker jeg jo at det er jo... når man går retro så er det fordi... Også fordi at man kan det. Rent teknologisk så kan man faktisk mye lettere få til. Altså hadde det ikke vært nydelig å fått til? Hadde det vært stengt teknologisk for å på en måte få til den gamle sounden, eller så ville det jo ikke ha oppstått selvfølgelig. Men fordi at man kan det så... Det er litt sånn på en måte... Hvis du heller vann utover gulvet så vil det liksom alltid renne der det har mulighet for. Og jeg tenker at vi er så mange som holder på at, at det er alltid noen som på en måte finner... Det er så uregulert, markedet. Det er sånn... Det er så mange som holder på at, også de som har retromania, som er... Rett og slett er retro, de finner faktisk en kanal for sitt eget... Men man kan jo spekulere langt mye mer i det, og det er jo på en måte det å...

Man kan jo kanskje si at det er en eksellent måte å få en større publikum... altså så enkelt som det. Du får større publikum hvis du klarer å... Du kan doble publikummet ditt med musikken. Gjennom noen enkle grep kanskje. Bytter du ut en trommis med den DJ så har du mista, har du mista kanskje 95% av publikummerne dine. Men hvis du har med en trommis og kanskje en fuzz-gitar så har du på en måte, selv om du holder på med, la oss kalle det hip-hop, eller... Jeg tenker at for eksempel hip-hop segmentet som jo nå har mer og mer gått akustisk, har rett og slett blitt til dels stuerent på grunn av musiker-rollen i det. Så mer eller mindre bevisst eller ubevisst grep gjør at du... Altså, alle vil på en måte ha publikum. Og noen er smart, noen bare treffer, men i dag så står det jo 50.000 og hopper foran én enkel DJ.

(90:47) H: Det kan være at vi som lyttere klare faktisk å, i større grad... jo, kanskje det... I større grad enn før så vil på en måte en 16 år gammel jente klare å stå og hoppe opp og ned til David Guetta og så gå hjem og sette på en vinyl med the Beatles som faren har, eller... Bestefaren. Så jeg tror at... jeg tror at mangf... altså varietet... variasjonen i musikkoppl... eller ... er mye større enn før, samtidig som at det du hører på av musikk i dag ikke nødvendigvis definerer

hvem du er. Og det var jo helt uhørt før. Altså du hørte på... Du definerte deg selv gjennom det du hørte på før. Det var mye mer knyttet opp i mot opprør eller rett og slett, altså det var mye mer identitetskapende. Og det tror jeg ingen tenåringer i dag skjønner noen ting av.

Så jeg vet ikke, det er jo absolutt... Det der var nå bare en greie for seg selv, men jeg tror uansett for å forstå det som var spørsmålet ditt som egentlig var på den retrobølgen. Det kan man ikke svare på uten å forstå det politiske eller det sosial mønsteret som er... Men det er mange, det er mange parameter som slår inn tror jeg. Så ikke ett spesifikt, men... Men jeg tror at det er en... Det ligger i oss noe... En tidslinje som vi liker og refererer og støtter oss til tilbake, til dels fordi at alt var bedre før. Også fordi at vi tilgir veldig mye og husker bare det beste, kanskje, men... Så det er noen ting vi har latent i oss som mennesker og, men ... Men sammen med det at det på 2000-tallet virkelig var mulig å sample ting og fjerne vokal og, eller trekke ut vokal og spille inn kompet på nytt. Man begynte å remikse seriøst, liksom, gamle sanger. Nye akkorder, det begynte jo da. Så teknologien gjorde det mulig på en måte å, å flørte, rett og slett med... Fysisk, rett og slett fra en gammel tape.

Appendix F: Interview with Gary Bromham

The interview with Thomas Henriksen was conducted on the 14 March 2016 at NTNU's locales at Fjordgata 1. The interview concerns different aspects of music production culture and industry such as creativity, nostalgia, retro aesthetics.

Anders Jordbrekk: So, I have to actually present you in my thesis, explain who you are and why I'm quoting you.

Gary Bromham: Why we're here.

J: Yeah. So I thought we could just start off with a short version of your background and how you ended up in, in music production.

B: In music production. Yeah, of course. So, um, I took a Bachelors degree, English literature, and I pretty much knew before I even took the degree that I wanted to go into music, but I was trying to be nice to my father. Figured that my education, and particularly my University education would be put to good use. So maybe a lawyer or a journalist or something rather than a mus... rather than a musician. Even though I knew exactly what I wanted to do. So I left University and I went to work as a tape op, or as an assistant engineer in a studio. Just assisting producers and engineers on an analogue console with analogue tape. This was around about 1988, when I went into the music industry. There were lots of studios of course. Something we talk about now. We lament the fact that there are way less studios to go and work in. It was great for me because it allowed me to see how people use analogue technology. Specifically how they misuse analogue technology. And they misappropriate technology. And one of... An interesting thing for me has been the... As I mentioned to you in the lecture the other day I'm interested that people still misappropriate technology in the digital domain, but maybe they don't do it in the same way that they do it in the analogue domain.

So I worked at Trident studios and I also... I think I shared with you before that I got to program in the Fairlight computer. The Fairlight was the... One of the first commercially available samplers. The interesting thing about the Fairlight was that it didn't sound very good. It was an 8-bit sampler, and it brings into question, now in terms of context now as, we're very obsessed with hi-fi. We're very obsessed with hi-fi in a very lo-fi world, 'cause actually with most of the music we consume, is incredibly lo-fi. And samplers, we're very obsessed with 24, is it 24-bit 96k and actually... for example 24-bit, 96k, not specifically. The interesting part for me is that the samplers that I used in the late 80's and early 90's had more personality than the samplers I use now. Because the Fairlight had analogue filters on a digital sampler, it was only 8-bit, and also there was a maximum sample time available of around about two and a half to three seconds. So it forced you to rethink the way you used the sampling technology. Because you had to work within severe limitations, you didn't have lots of sample time available. I then subsequently threw up... I've a very good friend who recommended me for a gig, or a job. A production gig up in Reykjavik in Iceland, and I spent probably almost a year in Reykjavik. Which was good. Some of the people I worked with included Björk, I think I shared with you. Although I should say, very early in her career and only two or three songs, so not loa... I don't want to paint the picture that I was a big part of Björk's career, 'cause I wasn't.

I also did some songs with Mezzoforte, which I know have great association here in Norway as well. Subsequent to my time spent in Iceland I came back to the UK and I worked with two guys, George Michael and Andrew Richie, from a band called Wham! Very much a pastiche of Earth, Wind and Fire, and that was great. Sort of sat a lot of those great funk records from the 60's and 70's. It was a great experience because working with George Michael was an inspiration. Great songwriter. Had a great concept of how to store ideas in his head, and if you didn't remember them, well then they weren't good enough. And that was always his criteria for hit records.

Subsequent to working with Andrew Ritchie and George Michael I then worked in Los Angeles for two years. I signed a publishing deal from the back of my time

spent working with Andrew and George. I worked with lots of different writers in Los Angeles.

So I worked in Los Angeles. One of the artists I worked with, I told you, was Sheryl Crowe, which was great. Also a songwriter. I then had a brief flirtation with being an artist. I did what all good songwriters do. Thought; 'Hey! I can do what they do. I'm gonna try my hand at being an artist'. And maybe actually I wasn't so good at it. And I think I shared with you the other day that it was the least creative period of my career. Probably the most interesting part was going to exotic locations to make videos, rather than making music. That was part of the excesses of the '80s and '90s record industry, which doesn't exist anymore I'm happy to say.

Subsequent to that I really... I actually... I quit music for a little whilst, 'cause I didn't really enjoy making music. I quit for about a year, and I then came back in and I started making a lot of programmed music. But the important thing is, I started mixing peoples records. So I didn't really mix any records until about 1999. Someone else always mixed them for me. And I developed my skills as a mix engineer and along that path I was approached by a company you may have heard of called Apple. Which, I shouldn't say... when I say Apple I mean the music division in the UK, who said: 'Can we interest you in going and doing some public speaking for us?' Which terrified me because I'd never spoken in public in my life before, in that way. And it would prove to be quite successful and along around about the same time Trond Engum was accepted for his PhD. Part of the artistic research program. And he approached me whilst on a mixing course that I was running in the UK, whether I'd be interested in supervising his PhD, a co-supervisor with Carl Haakon. And initially I was quite shocked, because I said I'm not academic. I would be of no use to you whatsoever. I probably don't reflect on my practices and you probably need to think about that. But actually, the strange thing is, he persuaded me to accept, and I started reflecting on my practices.

That was really the beginning for me of theorizing and maybe putting things into some boxes where I started to question workflow particularly, and specifically of interest to you, most likely, or likely, is the role of retro technologies in my work

process. At that point I was interested in early digital technology. So it was very interesting to me in the naughties, so 2000 onwards, why we obsessed about technology from the late 80's.

Specifically I talked to you about sampling, sorry, why we were interested in lo-fi technologies. The TR808, the SP12, the Lindrum, the Fairlight, the AKAI-samplers, the X7 became quite, I'm deliberately trying not to use the word nostalgic, 'cause I don't think we were really in that mode where we'd started to be obsessive about it at that point.

I subsequently... subsequent to supervising Trond's PhD. I decided that I would make it a focus for me and that I would do... So I started to do some teaching here. I teach at three Universities in the UK as well, and a few people said to me 'Why don't you do your PhD, you're in a great position to reflect on some of your practices and some of your experience'. And probably for about a year I didn't know what I wanted to talk about. I knew that I was very interested in the context of hardware being remodeled by software. So compressors, EQ's, reverbs, preamps, all of those things. And just whether the reproduction that was made in the digital domain... Whether it was authentic. So it was a question of authenticity.

And that probably brings me up to where I am in my career, so I'm going to stop there and let you ask me a subsequent question.

(10:02) J: Throughout your career you've experienced the digital revolution and the democratization of music production, and we'll touch upon some of the other stuff you've mentioned as well, but what do you think that... You know, everyone has access to these tools now. I have more stuff on my laptop than the biggest studios in the 90's had. And you know that's actually quite insane when you start to think about it. But what does that do with the role of the producer and the value of the producer, in a world where everyone can produce music?

B: So the interesting thing about what you have on your laptop, is you have a version of what we had in the studio in the 90's. Obviously I know, I know you appreciate that, but I think it's important because it brings in to question where

you would have one compressor in the studio in the 90's, all of a sudden you can have 70 compressors. Digital recreations and there's a notion that, with technology, if you have it available then you'll use it. Rather... It's not so good... We're not so good at saying 'Actually, we'll leave it. We won't use it'. Because it's there, so therefore we'll use it. So my role as a producer I suppose, from the pre-digital era, in a way is to, what's the word I'm looking for... The word I'm looking for is, kind of being arbiter of that and... and try and work out whether it's useful to my work process and not just use it for the sake of using it.

(12:01) ...on limiting your options. Because as you say we have ten different compressors or ten different EQ's all modeled after old API-hardware or Neve or SSL. But we have all these options suddenly that we didn't have before and just so that I have it on tape; what do you think that does to the creative process of music making?

B: It does several things. I think I mentioned to you about 'Revenge of the Intuitive', the Brian Eno... the Wired article where he uses that phrase quite flippantly, but actually it's very relevant. That familiarity breeds content. And he talks a lot about, when we use familiar tools, that we're not just... We're drawing on a whole kind of cultural learning process where we... For instance the car comes mainly from the carriage with the horse and we didn't move the steering wheel from where the reins were because it's familiar. If we suddenly did this... I know that that doesn't really translate but you know what I mean. If we did something completely different, even though it might be brave, and a better way of doing it, it... So innovating forces you to educate. Emulation doesn't in the same way. There is still some notion of you having to learn, but if that makes sense I think that when you... When you do something new you have to teach everyone how to do it. So subsequently what you do is you do things very slowly, and we talked about the 1176, how the attack and the release are the wrong way around and they modeled that in the digital domain. And it was very interesting that the Swedish company Soft-tube, who I think maybe you're familiar with... Soft-tube, do you...?

J: Yeah.

B: Yep. They turned it around and put it the right way, and I went... Initially it really threw me! But then I suddenly went 'Man, why wasn't it always this way?' There's a great software company called Air Windows, I don't know if you've heard of it.

J: No. I'm not familiar with it.

B: Just... You should check it out, and you should read the stuff on their website because the GUI is just shockingly bad.

J: Air Window?

B: Air Window. And they make plugins and the guy is very much into the idea that you should think about sound. Not about what they look like. So I think the interesting part really for me with the digital technology is the role of the graphic user interface, the GUI. So going back to the... To the question you asked, about familiarity and creativity, I think the only impact on creativity is that as soon as you let the thinking get in the way, as soon as you have to start thinking about something, then it delays the creativity maybe. I don't think it prevents the creativity, but I think it delays it to an extent. Versus the other comment you made, the options... the... having lots of options, the impact of that on creativity, that's interesting because as a guitarist, if I have three effects-pedals, just a... let's say a simple distortion and a chorus pedal and maybe a delay pedal. And they're all very simple; maybe they have two or three knobs on them. It will force me to really explore the limitations of what I can achieve with that. Whereas if I buy the Line 6 box that has 500 presets and it has just so many effects in there, I'm probably less likely to... to... to get anywhere near the limit of using that technology... ..Options versus creativity is an interesting one. I don't think it prevents creativity in any way. I think it forces you to re-evaluate it.

(18:00) B: The interesting thing from the analogue domain versus the digital domain is the role of the patch bay. Which is very relevant to plugin in guitar pedals and plugging, and actually plugging them in wrongly. And you know the Wah-wah pedal, if you plug it in the wrong way you get that... you can get that kind of screaming high-pitched sound. It sounds like a seagull by the water. So the interesting thing is a patch bay was a big part of the creativity in the studio. And it plays a similar role, but you kind of know what you're going to get with a plugin. So of course you can plug the wrong plugin in to the chain but the plugins don't really talk to each other. And it's interesting the project that Ivan is working on, Ivan (Øyvind) Brandstægg. So it's cross-adaptive, the idea of plugins talking to each other within a DAW. Now I'm specifically interested in how that... the impact of that unmasking. So when we're mixing, how can one plugin affect the outcome of another plugin? So if you have A and C, what happens in the middle here to affect the outcome? That has... That's very relevant in, if you think of the metaphor of the patch bay because, actually part of what the patch bay represented to me was the opportunity to create new and exciting sounds, and always not know what was going to happen if you plug things in wrongly. The interesting DAW here for me is Reason. Which is... always has the stigma of being the worst DAW. The great thing with Reason is you can plug anything into anything else in Reason. It's...

J: Yeah. Because that has the virtual patch bay.

B: Yeah. It's like Max. It's like using Max in the; if I want to take the LFO from the synthesizer and route that to the panning in the mixer, and then the panning subsequently affects the EQ, because everything has inputs for CV and Gate. Which is very nostalgic and very kind of, I suppose... No it's not counter-productive, I can't think of the word but it's... It's embracing a very old way of working. I mean CV and Gate hasn't been around for ages. Ironically it has come back in the last five years because of Moog and because of all of these Eurorack synths, which you've probably seen. Do you know the modular synths?

J: Yeah.

B: And it's interesting that we're going back to that, because mainly people have thought; 'Actually, You know what? I think I might... I might be more likely for something accidental to happen here that I didn't intend to happen.

(20:51) J: You know we have all these plugin emulations of old analogue gear and I've... You know if you go on to Wave's website and you read the product information you'll often find interviews and videos of old recording engineers and producers saying that, you know, they're blown away by how close this is to the real thing. And then I've spoken to certain people who have actually A-B tested them because they have the SSL console or they have the API 550 EQ both in plugin form and in hardware. So what do you think about this whole emulation business?

(21:42) B: What? Emulation culture?

J: Yeah.

B: I think it's really... It worries me because it's... It's based on marketing primarily in my experience. So it's there to sell products and I would take what a lot of these celebrity mix engineers say with a pinch of salt, 'cause they're obviously getting paid to say these things. So I don't believe for one moment that they think that it sounds exactly the same. And I mentioned to you the other day, the problem with digital emulation of analogue technology is it's based upon the fact that you're trying to... The analogue magic is in the errors. It's in all the things that are wrong with the analogue gear. That's where the personality is! Otherwise. Of course! You can model anything. But trying to model the things that are wrong with something rather than the things that are right with it, that's the interesting part for me.

And I had a great Skype with Fabrice Gabriel from... Who does all the Steven Slates software? And he talked about this. He said 'The problem is, all the things that are shitty about the analogue gear are the things that you're trying to model. That they are the things that give you the personality'.

So I think a lot of it is... A lot of it is to do with marketing. I think there's a... there's a huge amount of it is to do with the... The GUI. The graphic user interface. So I think when you look at something like a Pultec EQ, probably if it just had some sliders on it, even if you were told that it was modeling the Pul tec EQ... If you added the GUI to the equation that would probably effect you're perception of it.

So I think the difference between how you perceive something and how it actually is, is quite an interesting area in here. And quite often a lot of it is to do with the visual aspect. It's... It's... And... And... And often quite little bit to do with the sound. So for me the interesting part is probably how do we do the random bit?

Do... Or: Do we want to bother to do the random bit? Maybe we're over that. Maybe what we should do is, we should take the approach of someone like... Do you know Sony Oxford? Sonnox plugins?

J: Yeah.

B: So Sonnox actually don't really... the don't really try and be too retro. They don't really try... What they're doing is, they're trying to make... And similarly Fabfilter as well... They're trying to mo... They're trying to have a new business model of looking forward and it's just a great EQ. It does what it says on the box so to speak. It's not interested in adding air to a sound with some fuzziness that might associated but... It's just simply interested in being precise about what it adds.

One of the interesting things Fabrice Gabriel shared with me was one of the areas in his experience that people get wrong when they code plugins for s... So when they're trying to make analogue emu... Or digital emulations of analogue technology is the low and the high-pass filters. He said: 'We have this idea that

they're linear and they're not linear. They kind of do this so there's a, just for the purpose of... There are spikes in there. So there are peaks and troughs in the filters. And because... And when the components heat up or they get cool or they'll behave slightly differently and these peaks and troughs will move. So that's interesting and... along with the fact that if we have two channels the phase shift you will get between those two in analogue technology, I mean... There's... There's a... There's an idea... But I often hear people say: 'Oh! It sounds wider. Or it has more kind of three dimensional... a more three dimensional...'

Probably it's just sounding like that because there's some weird phase shift going on somewhere. And I'm sure you can simulate that. In fact you can simulate it in the digital domain. You can use delays. You can do all kinds of things. But once again that's... That's almost an error with the analogue technology. You could see that maybe if you sat down with Rupert Neve or George Massenberg they'd say 'Yeah! That's the downside of analogue technology'. But we still are interested in more than that.

J: And that's kind of the weird thing about it... All that... you know as I've been researching my thesis I find that what we want from analogue technology is what studio engineers have struggled for years on end to get rid of.

B: To get rid of! Hundred percent!

J: So suddenly we have stuff like the Kramer master tape plugin, which have the wow and flutter and noise and flux as parameters. And that's selling points for that plugin. So I... I get the sense that analogue recording is all about being unpredictable in a way. Whilst digital recording, which is so much cleaner is a lot more predictable and you know... It's... When we then go back to unpredictable technology, is that really nostalgia or is it a reaction to the cleanness of digital recording.

(27:29) B: Yeah. I think... I think it's several things, but I think as soon as you give someone the ability to clean everything up in the DAW... I'm thinking... I'm thinking more of Pro Tools here. Pro Tools is a great post-production tool. You can tidy everything up. But what we're starting to realise with the aesthetics of record production now is that some of those noises and those... You know the scratchiness of the acoustic guitar and the hiss from the guitar amplifier, and maybe the spill from the tomtom. All of that is... That's part of the sound. So actually the silence... The idea of where the silence is... 'Cause it's not really s... It's noise. Is... We've cleaned that up and that's part of the sound. So I think there's maybe a shift back towards leaving errors in ther... Actually one of the interesting things for me is... If I think back to my favorite records, they're all full of not errors... But they're full of where people get things wrong or they play a bum note, or they... Someone bends a note on the guitar and they don't quite hit the note. And I remember that more than the Joe Satriani-esque school of guitar where they play perfect notes. All the notes are perfect but it just goes right over my head because I... I'm waiting for them to fuck it up and get something wrong rather than get everything right.

J: Sound human.

B: Yeah. Absolutely. So I think that applies. A lot of that applies to... to studio technology. As you say, there's all of those things that were wrong with it. That you're trying to model all of those things that were wrong. Or get rid of, as you say. Now people are trying to... So tape is a great example. I do not have a romantic memory of tape.

J: And that's interesting for... Because most of the people who have been working on tape are very much done with working on tape. And a lot of people are saying that they would never go back to working on tape.

B: No! Never! No!

J: But still we get bands that... And there's actually one studio in Trondheim who... I think there's two studios left who has... Who records on tape if the client ask for it. And it's... There's something weird about bands where every member are in their early twenties and they go into the studio and they want to record on tape. That was kind of the 'must have' of the recording...

B: I wish they could have had my job for even six months! And then they wouldn't say that 'cause it was a fucking nightmare! I just remember it as being a nightmare. Because you come back to something one year after you recorded it and it sounded completely different. So I don't share any of... And if the azimuth was wrong or if you didn't have... If the test tones were even... All of those... It used to take hours to get a tape machine to sound any good! And then people would... We... We... People are always going about how critical it is getting levels right for digital. It was more critical for analogue because if you slammed the tape machine it would... It could sound horrible. So I really don't share any of that. That romance. I like tape delays! I think they sound great! But I don't really want to record on tape anymore. Unless it's a special effect you know. You can... You can simulate that digitally I think now.

J: Yeah, of course. With... With, you know, the JP 37 plugin or the Kramer Master Tape and any number of products really. So if we can move a little bit back to the marketing of plugins. You know, why are people from my generation buying plugins that are emulated after hardware that we've never...

B: They have no context.

J: We've never seen the plugin in real life but we still buy these old plugi... Well not an old plugin but...

B: Emulations.

J: Emulations.

B: I think there's definitely an idea that you have thrust down your throat that music was better then. It was from that golden age of music and there were certain producers who were using those technologies and you will get to have a small part of their sound. Which of course you won't... Have a part of their sound. I think that the most important part for me is the recording stage and the idea of capturing real spaces when you're... When you're recording. Is... Is far more important than... I... I'm definitely adamant that I haven't heard a plugin reverb yet sound like a real space. It's always very static. I don't get the idea that it's... It's moving around and I'm getting the randomness. So I suppose there's a... I suppose there's a... There's a... There's an attachment to something that they have no part of. Maybe they've read about it in magazines. They read all of the... The marketing literature: 'This will... This will give you the hit sound of...' I don't know... Pink Floyd or something like that and they think 'Yeah! Well I've really... Dark side of the moon; that was cool' and you know. But... But the reality of Dark side of the moon is that all of the limitations were part of that sound. So what happens is you give someone an emulation of a... of an EMT plate 140, so what do they do? They use it twenty times on their track. And actually the whole idea of Dark side of the moon was that they only had one plate. 140. So you still need to use those technologies in the context of their original context. And the i... And the original context was that there was a limitation there, whereas of course now you can use... I saw somebody's Ableton session here the other day and in one plugin chain they had an SSL bus compressor then some processing, then another SSL bus compressor, some more processing and then another SSL bus compressor right on the end. Actually I quite liked the sound, but it was interesting to me how they... Actually there's... There's less respect for it, which I think is actually probably quite good. I'm starting to see there... There's always... There's this kind of false iconicity attached to a lot of those pieces of equipment. But when you put them into plugin form there's less respect for them because you can use as many as you like of them.

J: And you haven't paid, you know, three months wages for them.

B: Yeah! It's like 'It HAS to work! It HAS to be sound here! It HAS to sound good!' And actually an interesting thing happened to me where I was discussing with some students that I had 700 plugins in my plugin folder and what was very pertinent to me was that I didn't pay for the Universal audio ones. They gave them to me. I didn't pay for the Steven slate ones, but I paid for all the Waves ones. And I said to them 'Which ones do you think that I use the most?' And they said 'Oh, well...' You know, various answers. And I said 'The ones that I use the most are the Waves ones'. I've got to wondering recently; Am I using the Waves ones because I paid for them? Do they actually sound any better than the other ones? I don't know! I need to investigate that!

J: So I think it was Samantha Bennett who wrote in one of her Journal of the art of record production-articles that, you know, the whole music industry has to become increasingly tech focused and that people have been starting to look more on the technology than on the processes behind recordings. They can all... What producers actually did back in the good old days. So, you know... And some of the other people I've interviewed have also mentioned this kind of preset culture that we... We just want it handed to us. And I was looking at... at Waves page on the Eddie Kramer signature series where, you know, they're... They're pretty simple plugins. So you have Eddie Kramer base plugin with four parameters I think, or something. And he's done an interview when they started marketing this bundle where he says that the most important thing was to make it in a package that was easy to use. Where you could just turn one knob and get the sound of Eddie Kramer. And do you feel that, you know, in meeting students and... and through your work that people are increasingly moving towards this kind of culture where we just want to...

B: Yeah! Absolutely!

J: Strap on something and they expect it to sound great at once.

B: Yeah! Yeah! Yes. It's... It's all about convenience. There's definitely a sense that people want to achieve... The mini.... So maximum output, minimum effort to get it. The problem with that... The problem with that philosophy is that you... If you don't interrogate the technology then invariably what happens is you get similar outcomes all the time. So if you use a preset without knowing how to interrogate it you'll probably get similar sonic output from using that technology. So what will happen is you'll alw... If you always use that rhythm guitar preset that you have in the Waves SSL-bundle, which I do by the way, I use that. But I know... I know what I want from it. It's a great starting point. It's almost like it saves me having to make those initial settings. But then I probably... Where I maybe differ from an eighteen-year-old coming to this is that I know how to change it to make it work for me, whereas maybe they don't even question it? They just will use that preset without questioning the context. And I think there's definitely a... a sense of celebrity mix engineer presets making you believe that you can get their sound. Which of course, you won't get their sound. You get an approximation. A distorted... Very distorted vision of what their sound is. And you still won't sound like them.

J: Well, you can never sound like them because they've recorded it in a studio with THOSE musicians so it's not going to sound like 'Whole Lotta Love' anyways. But what you're saying about convenience is actually quite interesting because a lot of my writing on this subject is about how we've made a move from... towards convenience.

B: Instead of qua... Versus quality.

J: Yeah, in a sense. Those two doesn't have to be opposed to each other necessarily but, you know, we... Having my studio on my laptop, that's convenient. It's two kilograms. I can carry it with me anywhere and record where ever I want. So, you know, this... This convenience has also bled into the labels and, and distribu... Distribution industry because now we've got companies like CD-baby, if you're familiar with them?

B: Yeah, yeah.

J: So, you know, I can get this interview out on iTunes and Spotify and anything within a week for a very small sum of money. So what does that do with the value of music? The fact that everyone can release whatever they want at any time.

(40:27) B: I think it's... I think what it's done, to an extent it has devalued music but actually, all it's done is it's just changed the means of production. If you look at the production chain we'll call it, concept to consumer. It's really about giving the consumer JUST enough of the sound. It's not talking a... We're not interested in giving them more than they need. We'll give the, just enough to get by, if you like. And I think if you look at some... If you look at the... The kind of lossy formats like MP3 and AAC various codex that we use now to compress audio. They're very... Still the focus is to get as much of the sound without... So in other words you're removing the bits that you don't need, everything that you don't need and giving someone just enough so that they can understand what's happening with... With the music. The interesting thing is if you use an MS processor, a Middle and Side processor where you can isolate the sides of the audio from the middle and you listen to an MP3. An MP3 does the most horrendous things! Even a high bandwidth MP3 to the sides. So actually it completely screws up the stereo image. It gives a... It gives a very distorted view of... Of the overall EQ of the piece. Because you're removing... You're doing very, very weird things to the middle of...

J: Masking frequency.

B: Yeah! Absolutely! So I think the interesting thing for me is... The audio.... Predominantly your mainstream user doesn't care about that. Also bear in mind, people listen on headphones. And also the other thing we shouldn't forget is we're subjected to loads of peripheral or incidental noise. There's noise everywhere, ok?

So when... We're not... We're not really listening to music in a quiet environment. People are consuming music where there's cars and aero planes and all kinds of noise that we're up against and people shouting and... You know when you go to a bar and how... And there's all that kind of shouting and you can't really hear exactly what the music is doing. So I think, particularly as we consume via headphones now predominantly there's... There's definitely an idea that we really are just trying to isolate the bit that cuts through in terms of, you know, our... Our every day usage.

I don't know if people have time anymore to sit and listen to records. I would hope they do, but I don't think they do. I don't think people sit and listen to music in the same way that they did thirty years ago.

I think for me it was kind of quite a... Almost like a kind of religious experience where I would go buy the album and sit... And, and almost like. I'd have to mop myself up, if you'd sit down it was like a ritual, whereas I don't think people have time for that anymore. So I think that the convenience versus quality argument went out the window years ago.

(44:13) J: So, you know, as you've mentioned before, you know, the musical aesthetics of newer bands of the North-East like Arcade Fire and such.

B: Jack White and...

J: Yeah, yeah! In particular Jack White!

B: Particularly Jack White.

J: You know, why do you think that so many bands and artists are making a move backwards in music? You know, they're borrowing aesthetics... Musical aesthetics from the 60's, 70's and 80's. Why is that happening to such a large degree now?

B: They must think it's better. They must think it was better then even though, as we say, they don't have any context of it. They weren't there. The best person to sit in a room with is someone like Ken Scott, that made the *White Album* or the David Bowie albums, the Ziggy Stardust albums, and if you sit and... It's interesting to... When he was making records they were only ever interested in looking forward and looking to the future, whereas the idea is that... Of Arcade fire and Jack White, is that we've tried all of these digital technologies and that they're... They don't sound better. They're actually... The music or the... Or the... The... The sonics are worse in their opinion. It's very subjective this area. It's very subjective.

Also it's very specific to genre for me. If you were making... If I was making a dance record then the limiting that people sum... The loudness wall. It's part of the aesthetic of dance music. You want to make people dance, and you want to make it punch, and you want to make it loud so therefore that aesthetic... It interests me here... Steve Albini. He is very critical of a lot of record... You probably already read some stuff with Steve Albini. Incredibly critical of... Of the way that records are made now and saying 'Oh I don't have to...' And I find him really, really narrow minded. He's very stuck in, as you just mentioned, an aesthetic of, well, 'Songs were better then'. But if you're making a dance record then it doesn't work. So I think it only applies to certain genres. In terms of Arcade fire and Jack White I wish I knew what... I mean I talked about this a little in my PhD application, about Jack White and his obsession with tape and... and... and retro aesthetics in the studio. I don't know if his records actually sell that much better, to me, as a result of embracing that aesthetic. I mean, I suppose his statement is that noise is very much part of the... The sound of his recordings and that's... You know, that's... That's a good thing in his eyes. I don't know! I can't... I probably can't give you a great answer. I... In reality and as I sat down with Arcade fire for an hour, and they actually explained to me what they were hearing, I don't really know... I don't really know why, why they're looking. But I think there's an element of... There's a cultural element to it, isn't it. The security. The world is quite an uncertain kind of place and in a sense you're kind of looking back to maybe... Falsely by the way... To a time where

things were better, 'cause they weren't better in the 70's. They were definitely pretty shitty. We were all worried we were gonna get blown to pieces by nuclear weapons and, you know we... I don't rememb... And in America you had, kind of Watergate and in, you know, between east and west in Europe you had the whole idea that a wall was separating two groups of people in Berlin. I think... So I think there's a... There's an element of... Of nostalgia attached to that, quite falsely. That things were better.

J: A kind of romanticism of the past.

B: Yeah, romanticism. Yeah. And if you go back to it, it probably wasn't better at all, it was probably much worse. But the longer the time period that elapses, the more you'll convince yourself that it was better. In my opinion.

(48:41) J: So, you know, it's not only Jack White and Arcade fire but the whole popular music culture from around 2000 and up till now are kind of embracing all of these very different musical aesthetics. So, what do you... Do you experience that there are certain aesthetics that are, you know, they are from our period of time? Or is everything borrowed from the past?

B. No. I think particularly I mentioned to you about limiters in dubstep music. So if we take a really modern... I... I... I... I think you don't have clearly defined genres anymore. I think what you have is a lot of sub-genres. And those sub-genres are all... Probably have a reference point to something in the past. For me the last genre that I can identify, where I thought 'Well yeah. That was a... That has a culture'. Was probably Trip-hop. So Massive Attack and Portishead. I think since then, we've had a lot of subgenres, but I don't think anything has happe... So maybe we've... We... We... We've done everything! Maybe we don't have anything... Anything new to create. I don't know where the next... 'Cause the technology has given us ways of recreating it so easily. In a sense a lot of the sub... A lot of the genres that we... That we talk about, they came from... Maybe people were poor and they didn't have all of that access to

technology so therefore it was four guys in a room and that was the sound of the... Given the choice, if you went back and interviewed bands that were maybe doing it... Maybe they would rather have been doing it the way we are doing it now? I don't know. I don't know.

J: It's kind of like this... Them crooked vultures.

B: Yeah.

J: Where John Paul Jones is playing the bass and Josh Homme was preparing the studio for him to arrive and he had brought with him all of his old, vintage bass amplifiers and all this vintage gear and John Paul Jones walks in and, you know, 'What is this shit? This is what we hated when we grew up!'

So he had a top of... State of the art, modern equipment with him; 'This is what I'm playing on!'

So it's kind of this gap between the generations where we who have come after are looking back and thinking that the stuff was a lot better before, whilst the guys who was actually in that time was...

B: Yeah! Think of vintage guitars! A Stratocaster which now costs you 10,000 english, or 100,000 norwegian kroner. Is it really better than a guitar that costs you, I don't know, £300 or £400? Or is it just different?

But there's a... There's an association, still, with the guitar that 'Ok, well, that's the guitar that Eric Clapton played of that's the guitar that Jimi Page played, so therefore...' Les Paul's of the late 50's... Les Pauls now costs as much as a house?! It's ridiculous!

I've played some really great, cheap, modern guitars, and I've played some really shitty... I had a Les Paul that belonged to one of the Everly Brothers, ok? 'Cause my manager used to manage... And it was a piece of shit! It was horrible! It was one of the worst guitars I've ever... And if it wasn't for the association and probably the value, I would've just thrown it in the dustbin. It was a horrible guitar.

So just because it belonged to, you know... That... 'Cause it had that association there was a notion that 'Oh well, you know, it MUST be better'.

So... So there's something going on here, isn't there? There's a sort of maybe we might have to draw this to... To some kind of conclusion here now. But there's a notion that separating... It's interesting for me that my generation is still more interested in looking forward than looking back and maybe we're more liable to embrace newer technologies than some of the younger producers who are still interested in doing things the old way. And as you say, when John Paul Jones walks in a studio and he says 'Actually, I don't wanna go back to that... I reckon...' He remembers all the nightmares associated to that. Same with me with tape! I don't wanna go back to working with tape. But somebody does.

Jack White, he's obviously younger than m... I mean, they are! They are kind of a generation younger than me. I mean, I don't know, Jack White. What is he? Forty? Thirty-five?

J: Something around that.

B: Arcade Fire, so they're fifteen, sixteen years younger than me. So what might be interesting for us to do is to identify this point where we think the shift happened, and I think you identified it. It's when music technology was democratized and basically the studio became a mobile entity, where instead of you going to the studio, the studio could come to you. So as soon as everyone had access to mainstream technology, maybe that's where the shift happened? Maybe. Possibly.

And I think... It's interesting that... Probably people like Jack White and Arcade fire, they would have seen this shift happen in technology... Maybe in a different way to me, because I was there in the late 80's. Probably be really interesting if you interviewed somebody from the late 70's, 'cause they'd have an even more interesting context on this. Yeah.

There's so many things we could say about this. So many things.

(55:16) J: The reappearance of analogue gear and the reissue of old synthesizers, like Korg is doing.

B: Yeah! So... So not even software! Hardware reissue!

J: Yeah! Hardware is coming back as well, and...

B: Cheaper!

J: Cheaper. With all the implications that brings along. But, you know... People... There are a few people buying old, old, analogue gear from the 70's or 60's or even the 50's, and using them and they're from my generation or around my age. And, you know, is that purely driven by nostalgia, or is there something else to it?

B: Actually... So this is... Yeah that's a great question, because I'm about to go into the studio now and take Trond Hustads Jupiter 8 into the studio and without a doubt it definitely... I don't know if it sounds better, but it sounds different. It's a fantastic sounding synth! So it has voltage-controlled oscillators, not analogue... Not digitally controlled oscillators, so it drifts a lot more. And I absolutely adore that sound. I like the randomness of it.

So no! I don't think a lot... I don't think it is all smoke and mirrors. I think a lot of it is... There is... There is definitely a sense that... I mean, same with me, for... If I pick a piece of hardware like an LA2 or something... I was up at Tone Aases and Ståle. He's got loads of analogue gear. I mean he's right there in that kind of...

J: Ståle Kleiberg?

B: Yeah. He's a genius. That is interesting to go... He's working on a new album and he's really embracing digital technology in combination with analogue and I

think, maybe when we all kind of get over it and settle down, maybe the future is a mixture of the two.

I definitely think there is something with those analogue synths like, where maybe... The problem is you've got a lot of very cheap analogue synths that don't really embrace... So the authenticity is pulled into question.

And Warm audio make... You saw my slide during the presentation... Warm audio make a version of an 1176 and they're not using the same components. The same solder.

J: Because they're cheaper. Because the market is bigger, so it has to be cheaper so that more people will buy it. And one of the things that has come up during my interviews have been the build quality or rather the decline in build quality compared with the past. So ...

B: So point to point wiring with a soldering ironing versus printed circuit boards.

J: And cheaper components.

B: And cheaper components, yeah.