

Getting Out of the Box: Tangible Music Production in the Age of Virtual Technological Abundance

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Abstract : This paper seeks to explore the different ways in which music producers choose to embrace various levels of technology based on musical values, objectives, affordability, access and workflow benefits. Current digital audio production workflow is questioned. Engineers and music producers of today are increasingly divorced from the tangibility of music production. Making music no longer requires you to reach over and turn a knob. Ideas of authenticity in music production are being redefined. Calculations from the mathematical algorithm with the pretty pictures are increasingly being chosen over hardware containing transformers and tubes. Are mouse clicks and movements equivalent or inferior to the master brush strokes we are seeking to conjure? We are making audio production decisions visually by constantly looking at a screen rather than listening. Have we compromised our music objectives and values by removing the 'hands-on' nature of music making? DAW interfaces are making our musical decisions for us not necessarily in our best interests. Technological innovation has presented opportunities as well as challenges for education. What do music production students actually need to learn in a formalised education environment, and to what extent do they need to know it? In this brave new world of omnipresent music creation tools, do we still need tangibility in music production? Interviews with prominent Australian music producers that work in a variety of fields will be featured in this paper, and will provide insight in answering these questions and move towards developing an understanding how tangibility can be rediscovered in the next generation of music production.

Keywords : analogue, digital, digital audio workstation, music production, plugins, tangibility, technology, workflow

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