Reflexive Essay

In the past, music could only be recorded on cassette tapes through an ADAT machine, and transferred to vinyl discs. This permanent form of transcription led to many great records, but allowed for only a limited number of takes, and a very inefficient means of playback. These tracks could be manipulated in a select number of ways, but the tape had to be physically altered in order to do so. Instruments, such as guitar, bass, and drums have remained fairly unchanged throughout the decades; however, the way these instruments are recorded has evolved greatly.

The digital era has drastically streamlined this process, and allows for a magnitude of alterations to be made to the sounds. Digital Audio Workstations have become the central hub of the recording studio, along with Virtual Studio Technologies; these revolutionary innovations have drastically improved the efficiency and quality of recordings. Through computers and software, I am able to directly synthesize waveforms, compose an arrangement of sounds into a song, and add various effects.

I’ve always been intrigued by music, but it wasn’t until I picked up a guitar that I truly understood the mastery that was behind it. From music theory to finger dexterity, there was a steep learning curve to laying down a simple four chord progression. As I refined these skills through hours of practice, I began to appreciate music, and the way it was recorded as a whole.

Although I enjoy playing guitar, it was merely an entry into a vast industry of knowledge. I researched everything I could about audio fundamentals, recording, and music production, and quickly discovered electronic music production. The fact that I could create the music I’ve been listening to, with simply a pair of headphones and a laptop, was enough to get me hooked.

I downloaded a DAW on my laptop, spent hours watching YouTube tutorials, experimented with everything that was offered in the program, and created my first drastically underwhelming beat. Much like learning an instrument, it took hours of practice to create a halfway decent tune. Nonetheless, this ability to create and manipulate a song with simply a computer shows how far we’ve come in the matter of a couple decades. Instead of investing in and installing a piece of hardware, I am able to click a couple buttons and instantly have a compressor on the track. It is this ease of use that has revolutionized the music industry.

There are various innovations in technology that have coincided to generate this ability to record and manipulate music digitally. Thirty years ago, I would have a much more difficult time teaching myself to make music. With the availability of computers, software, and the Internet, this process became much easier for me. I have spent countless hours experiment with various knobs and effects, simply for the sake of the enjoyment. These new technologies allow myself, and millions of other bedroom producers, to create beats and instantly release them to the world.

I’ve been able to develop a habit into a passion, and it is with the help of these digital technologies that make it possible. Entry into the industry is much easier than before, and far more efficient. Not only am I able to produce these songs on my computer, but also people connecting to the Internet are able to listen to it in a matter of minutes.