

# Bedroom Producers And the Future of DIY Music

Kendal Beynon

1005012

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Lynda Fitzwater

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## Introduction

*“Electronic bedroom producers are completely revolutionising the music industry”*

**Mind The Gap Magazine, 2012**

The world is littered with DIY personalities, but one of the biggest phenomenons is the rise of the bedroom producer. In today’s thriving musical culture, the rise of the average Joe taking to an easy-to-use set of decks and a laptop is inevitable. With technology at its peak, it’s hardly surprising that people are getting stuck in and attempting to create a musical masterpiece from their bedroom. Whether their intentions are iconoclastic; to be hidden or infamous and purely for the music or if they purely set out to gain fame and recognition, the use of newfound in-home producing studios is climbing rapidly. Many music journalists have written in depth about the downfall of the original music industry route, and with the traditional ways of producing music being severed, aspiring producers are embracing the DIY aspect of making music and taking an entirely independent, and cheap, approach. This has started to shape the new generation of our music culture and I aim to investigate the rise of bedroom production, particularly in bass music, and how these autonomous artists find their place within the musical spectrum. With the use of computer software such as Ableton, Logic, FL Studio and ReCycle, a program Aphex Twin (Richard D James) uses to mix samples, aspiring producers no longer have to have an abundance of income to create high quality music. All you need is a laptop and to download some mixing software and you can be creating music practically anywhere. In a matter of clicks, these artists are putting together tunes in a completely independent way. With the music made, producers need to then promote their music in order to get it heard and gather fans, enter the world of p2p networking. P2P or peer to peer networking is an online phenomenon which allows users to upload and share their music between other producers. Users can share folders of music allowing the recipient to download tracks. Another feature of p2p networking is the colossal use of forums. Artists will take to these forums to offer advice and ask for help in various aspects of music production ranging from which program offers the best service to how to create a certain sort of sound within a track. This creates a whole new musically driven community which is entirely internet based.

In this dissertation, I will split the subject into three chapters. The first chapter will address the hardcore continuum debate looking at both Mark Fisher’s and Simon Reynolds’ arguments as an introduction to the group of artists I am addressing. I will then move on to the physical aspect of music production looking specifically at theories behind DIY culture. My final part of the first chapter will look at the iconoclastic group of producers who create music purely

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for the music rather than to gain fame and fortune. When looking at these artists I will investigate the anonymity of artists such as Burial, SBTRKT, Zomby and Jaguar Skills, and their reasons behind masking their identities. Chapter 2 will focus mainly on the fame aspect of music production. With self-promotion and online presence in mind, I will look at social networking sites and how artists use them to promote their music. I will look at how artists assign themselves to a subculture in order to gather an audience and the sort of attributes that belong to each subculture. I will also look into genres and subgenres as a form of identity. I will look at how music is promoted through pirate radio, and other ways in which an unknown artist can begin to make a name for themselves (i.e. graphic design and remixing.) In this chapter I will focus specifically on artists who are well known such as Shlohmo and XYYXX and how they conduct themselves online to gain a fan base. The final chapter will be a speculative chapter into the future of music. By looking at previous technological advancements, I will attempt to estimate what music will become later down the line. As well as looking at technological futurism, I will also begin to gain an insight into futurism as a musical genre. Hauntology is also a concept I'd like to explore. Hauntology is a term that regards the use of older themes/sounds in present day music, creating an almost haunting vibe. I feel this subject would fit in well with the way the old is mixing with the new to create an even newer sound.

### **Literature Review**

Although the term 'bedroom producer' is relatively new, many journalists and theorists have investigated some of the thoughts behind independent production and promotion in depth. Where specific readings lack focussing on bedroom production specifically, there are countless texts on DIY culture, subcultures and musical theory which together make up the components of a producer. Many academic theories and writings by music journalists have attempted to understand the DIY concept of music and subcultures. Previous studies into DIY culture have said that it is a direct rebellion against the society norms (Steven Duncombe 2002, George McKay 1998). It is also said to be an alternative route for artists to enter the music industry, without direct contact with record company executives, and entirely on their own terms (Patrik Wikstrom 2009, Andrew Whelan 2008, Kate Coyer 2007, Tony Dowmunt 2007, and Alan Fountain 2007). With regard to the new wave of bedroom producers in the past decade, the Hardcore Continuum debate looks at the abundance of new genres and subgenres, and how artists adapt and change with what is happening during that specific time, yet collectively produce music under the same guidelines, the current drugs, technology and social change of the genre's population. This ultimately states that it is a community of artists rather than one radical leader, and more of a subcultural tribe (Simon Reynolds 2010, Mark Fisher 2009). When looking

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at the themes of masquerade with regards to music producers who conceal their identity, the recurring point that appeared in past research is that by hiding or disguising a person, their work is discredited and therefore discounted in the audiences mind (Erving Goffman 1968). Scholars believe the reason behind disguise is down to an uncertainty or ambiguity of the person's identity (Christie Davies 1975, 1982, 1993).

When looking at the fame aspect of musical production, creating a fanbase is a huge part of being successful. This can be gained through artists attaching themselves to a subculture. Many theories have been investigated within the subject of subcultures and it is universally agreed that a subculture is a shared perspective and a collective social world (John Irwin 1970). A subculture is said to be a reaction to social, political and economic changes (Fred Davis 1971, Paul Willis 1990, Dick Hebdige 1979). When specifically looking into the subcultures of music, it is argued that the subculture is assigned by a coming together of new thinking with regards to dance, drugs and music technology (David Hesmondhalgh 1998). Another sure way to secure followers is to remix a previously made track, preferably a classic pop song which has high exposure. It is said that new technology offers the opportunity to manipulate audio and video files to make them more culturally relevant (Aram Simmreich 2006). Fans of the original will flock to hear the update, and will open up new fans to the thought of making a fresh sound, with help from something that already exists. It is said that remixing is a product of innovation and creation (Matt Mason 2008) and inspires listeners to go out and try it themselves. Being an inspiration is a quality that guarantees a positive reception, and gains fame and acknowledgment. Collaborations also create the same effect. Listeners will identify with an artist and will trust their decision to collaborate with a new face, gaining acclaim through contact, as the act of collaboration is said to very intimate thing (Berliner 1994). A musical collaboration is often thought of as a conversation, one artist will have the idea and a beginning of the track, and it takes a second artist to complete it (Ingrid Monson 1996). While creating music and establishing an identity is a vital part of gaining popularity, in today's cultural society, online presence is a massive part of artist to fan interaction. Social networking (specifically the use of twitter) is universally used by any person who wants to establish any sort of name for themselves. To form and maintain any sort of fan synergy, artists must constantly keep a relationship which is personal yet preserves the celebrity and fan bond (Alice Marwick 2011, Danah Boyd 2011).

With many types of new emerging artists, the future of music is uncertain. With laptops described as a staple for any aspiring musician, you can create a range of sounds with one simple computing tool (Abi Grogan 2011, Matthew Derbyshire 2011). No longer are we relying

on the major labels as a route into a successful career in the music industry, we can achieve the same career completely free of a record company's restraints ourselves (Tom Frederikse 2001, Adrien Cook 2001). The term 'new music' is becoming more and more redundant, so we are left with artists struggling to come up with something fresh and exciting (Adam Harper 2011). This can often result in artists using past sounds and styles to incorporate into something new, it is the age of the reunion and retro uses of music in the modern age (Simon Reynolds 2011). He also believes that music is stuck within a loop and will always go back to the past in order to create a future. This theory can also be seen within hauntology, a concept that creates a sense of temporality that underpins our present culture. It makes the listener feel like they've heard something similar before, but cannot understand what it is, hence the feeling of being haunted (Mark Fisher 2006). It was first applied in music journalism regarding the dubstep producer Burial. Other ways to create music is often through failures in production. Even established artists can go wrong, and it's often said to be even more interesting than the initial sound. (David Zicarelli 1999). Failures can be seen to guide evolution, and allows room for bigger and better sounds to be produced (Colson Whitehead 1999). When looking at the future of music, it is also important to look at futurism as a musical genre. Futurism is firmly based on the belief in progress, and looking into the future (Robert Schumann 1835). Russolo, a pioneer in futurism believes it is a desire to create a new musical reality (Luigi Russolo 1917). If you combine these factors, it is easier to predict the future of music.

## **Methodology**

When I was first given the task of finding a dissertation topic, I was always interested in the acceleration of the bedroom producer. As a fan of the main genre and subgenres of bass music, I managed to refine my investigation into the DIY aspect. Primarily, I intended on looking purely at the developments in the online world as a catalyst of the phenomenon, for example looking into 'Web 2.0'. This later changed when contemplating chapter possibilities. Initially I was going to take two different producers as case studies and look at the reasons they were making music in this way. Instead I chose to look at three chapters looking at different aspects of music production and distribution, and finally, the future of music. This was a natural process when researching as it became clear there were some very clear steps and facets to becoming a producer, and how to become universally recognised.

The first of my chapters begins with a look at Simon Reynolds and Mark Fisher's hardcore continuum debate which serves as an introduction to the phenomenon, announcing the arrival of the new type of music artist in today's society. From there I plan to look into the physical creation of music, looking into the advancements in production technology in the past decade.

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The theories of DIY culture will be explored as an attempt to uncover why artists feel the need to stray away from traditional industry routes. As this is a chapter heavily based on the creation of music, I will look into the breed of producers who use disguises to conceal their identity in an attempt to take nothing away from their music, such as Burial, Zomby, SBTRKT and Jaguar Skills. The second chapter will take my original idea about online presence and the advancement of the web to look at how a producer gathers fame in terms of social networking and securing a fan base by attaching themselves to a certain subculture. I will also look at the role of pirate radio, remixing and sampling to gain notoriety. The third and final chapter will take points from both of the earlier chapters in attempt to predict the future of music. It will look at the technological possibilities based on the rapid creation of new production software and whether the typical record industry routes will become redundant due to aspiring artists taking inspiration from current DIY musicians and taking it into their own hands to create music. During this chapter I will also take a lot of points from Simon Reynolds' *Retromania* to look at how music keeps revisiting the past to advance into the future, this chapter will also cover the idea of hauntology (coined by Mark Fisher) and futurism in music.

## **The Birth of the Bedroom Producer**

### **i. Hardcore Continuum**

The rise of the bedroom producer is a very recent phenomenon, predominantly elevating within the past decade. By definition, a bedroom producer, in short, is someone who creates music entirely alone without record label input and usually within the confines of their bedroom via a laptop and music production software. This group of entirely self-reliant musicians are explored within the term 'The Hardcore Continuum'. The Hardcore Continuum, or HCC, is a theory that was coined by journalist Simon Reynolds in 1990. It is "a musical tradition/subcultural tribe that's managed to hold it together for nearly 20 years now, negotiating drastic stylistic shifts and significant changes in technology, drugs, and the social/racial composition of its own population." (Simon Reynolds, *The Wire*, Issue 300, Feb 2009). This suggests that this flock of bedroom producers are part of one movement rather than a singular ground-breaking musician. From Reynolds point we can gather that the new breed of producers is a direct result of the technological change in production techniques. This is the decade of the internet and music software. 1986 saw the first software for musicians created by Laurie Spiegel, from then on we've seen a new market emerge for aspiring musicians. "You can walk into any home electronics superstore and choose from dozens of programs designed for the digital recording, sampling, downloading, editing, playing, and mixing of music." (Thom Holmes, *Electronic and Experimental Music*, Routledge, 2002). This denotes that the path to

becoming a successful musician has been radically changed, through the wealth of products available to anyone who simply wants to experiment with creating music.



Fig 1

When we look back to the HCC, we can see the movement gained additional notoriety when highly acclaimed music journalist Mark Fisher, who is probably most widely known for his work within British music magazine *The Wire*, stated that there was no such thing. In a paper written in 2009, Fisher enters the debate with a highly opposing view to Reynolds. He states that concept could take two forms “(1) there was never such a thing as the hardcore continuum in the first place; and (2) there was such a thing as the hardcore continuum, but is no longer relevant in today’s dance music.” (Mark Fisher, *The Hardcore Continuum Debate*, Goldsmiths University of London, 2009). Although Fisher’s conflicting views are further described as unable to ever reach a conclusion within the paper, he states that he does not agree with a fellow opposing journalist Alex Williams who believes that the HCC is a purely theoretical entity. Instead he argues that it is impossible to reach such a conclusion based on the fact Williams’ point ‘hardly fed back into production at all: its main impact has been upon the consumption and theorisation of music’ and instead it deems it irrelevant to the name is designates. He believes that it is important to contemplate the HCC as it is an example of a collective culture of ‘evolving consistency, but loose enough to enable innovation’. However he also states that he thinks music has been stuck in the same sonic phase since over a decade and a half ago. The conflicting views lead us to think that the HCC leans more towards Fisher’s second form, that it once existed but is no longer feasible within the modern age of music, we are currently in a portal of music that constantly relies on the sample of past styles, so to believe that this is a new age is only partially true. The final part of Fisher’s argument stems from his hostility towards

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theory being used in music; he thinks that within the case of the HCC, theory is 'preventing unreflective enjoyment'. This suggests that the music we listen to today is so bogged down in theory and scholarly thoughts that we are losing a sense of enjoyment in music by constantly trying to work out the connotations behind it.

## ii. DIY Ethic

Whether the Hardcore Continuum is a viable theory or not there is no doubt that from a technological standpoint, this is definitely a new wave of producers, and within this it is beginning to become apparent that there are many types of producers within the collective. However one thing that all these musicians have in common is the willingness to create music within a DIY culture. It is often said that DIY culture stems from a rebellion against the current society norms. This can easily be seen in this new route of musical enlightenment. There are currently thousands of both major and independent record labels in the world, yet more and more musicians are reaching for the DIY mixing software and attempting to release music on their own terms. The culture is made up of people getting together, realising they do not like the current order of society, and instead of sitting back and accepting it, they move forward to do things for themselves, all it takes is imagination and the willpower to do something for yourself. "DIY culture embraces a powerful notion: you can have what you want if you can learn to make it yourself" (Tara Gentile, Scoutiegirl.com, Feb 2011). Gentile is saying that given the tools we have in place to create, we can easily formulate the type of music we wish to create, free from the constraints of a manager or publicist. She goes on to say that our "desire to create" has grown with the advancements and resources made readily available to us. This has inspired a DIY ethic within the mind of these creative personalities and empowered musicians to actualise the music they've always dreamt of making, without having to adhere to society's expectations. This is probably most famously seen in the punk era. The DIY ethic stems from the typical punk's opinions on anti-consumerism. Punks led the way and showed how to rebel away from buying into big corporations and fuel the greed of the big bosses in business. "Publicity turns consumption into a substitute for democracy. The choice of what one eats (or wears or drives) takes the place of significant political choice." (Berger, 1972) Punks saw this as a belief that needed to be altered, and in turn introduced the world to the DIY ethic, to create your own clothes, draw your own concert posters, and to play in your own basements. "Changes tend to begin at the margin of society" (Simon Fairlie, *Meat: A Benign Extravagance*, Permanent 2010). Fairlie is stating that it only takes a small population of people to engineer a change within an industry, and this can be seen in the music business. Much like bedroom producers, punks

openly created music in a way that would guarantee artistic control. “That hostility took three major forms: a challenge to the ‘capital-intensive’ production of music within the orbit of the multi-nationals, a rejection of the ideology of ‘artistic excellence’ which was influential among established musicians, and the aggressive injection of new subject-matter into popular song, much of which (including politics) had previously been taboo.” (Laing, 1978) This is hostility towards the current music industry in its bluntest form. It bears a resemblance with a bedroom producers need to break free from industry traditions, and many producers have managed to do this successfully. The success of pioneering bedroom producers spurs on fellow aspiring musicians and thus, creates a new era of music. “Above all it is a story which stresses collectiveness, no more hierarchies of star performers and of ‘Mr Big’ the organiser.” (George McKay, *DIY Culture*, Verso 1998) McKay offers an insight into the togetherness of the DIY community within this quote which can be traced back to the earlier views of Simon Reynold’s Hardcore Continuum.

### **iii. Introduction to P2P Networks**

This can also be linked to the technological side of the ever changing music industry. As previously mentioned, the internet has played a vital part in any producer’s life through its ability to keep him connected to the latest news and tips within the musical community. Peer to peer (P2P) networks allow ‘computer users who have the appropriate software installed to download and upload files directly from and to other computers on the network, to perform searches, to ‘instant message’ each other and ‘socialise’ in chat rooms” (Andrew Whelan, *Breakcore, Identity and Interaction on Peer-to-Peer*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008). Likeminded producers will share recommended releases and software advice among themselves establishing the group as a viable internet community. This gives the producer a sense of belonging and often enables him to improve his skills through the help of others. Although this seems like an incredible development in the musical community, P2P is said to “kill the music industry” (Katz, 2004). Despite the rapid releases of new music over P2P networks, Katz is argues that music as we’ve traditionally found it will become moot, this is because sharing music over P2P is completely free from copyright policies which would normally be bound with record label releases, forcing the industry to lose money on sales due to the increase in downloads. With that in mind, it seems blindingly obvious that the producers who engage in this online community are purely about the music with various forums asking for help with certain features of computer mixing software, proving that P2P’s main use is to gain insight into producing with easy accessibility.

#### iv. The Anonymous Producers

*"I don't want to know about what the rich are doing,  
I don't want to go where the rich are going."*

**(Joe Strummer and Mick Jones of The Clash,  
Garageland, 1977)**

Within the realm of producing, there are many types of producers. Arguably a person's sole reasons to make music that will be entered in the public domain will be selfish, such as for the fame, money and recognition, but there are a select few out there who create music, purely for the music. South London dubstep producer Burial is one of the most infamous underground producers of the decade. Only five people know his



Fig 2



Fig 7

**4AD** **ZOMBY**  
Photographed by KATE GARNER

identity and he has given less than twenty interviews throughout his musical career. "I like it that way. I've had times when I've had mates sitting next to me and they've put my tunes on without knowing. I would just sit there whispering to myself, 'Please don't put that on - or at least, don't say anything bad about it,'" (Burial, The Guardian, 2007). His presence is arguably reflective of his music; a ghostly figure without a huge commercial input. He is also absent from the live music scene, he goes on the interview to talk about in inability to perform. "I can't step up, I want to be in the dark at the back of a club. I don't read press, I don't go on the internet much, I'm just not into it. It's like the lost art of keeping a secret, but it keeps my tunes closer to me and other people." In Fig 2, we can see that he truly means what he says when it comes to concealing his identity. For the majority of blog posts and articles, the image is used as the artist image. In the picture we can only see the shadow of a man and have no clues to hazard a guess at his true identity. Although this serves as a successful barrier to his personal life, it has also increased his notoriety and in turn, has gathered more fame and recognition. And this isn't the only case either. Melancholic producer Zomby has fallen into the same trap as Burial. The young producer also shields his face from photographs, and conducts interviews over iChat rather than face to face. In Fig 3, we can see a professional photograph of Zomby where he conceals three quarters of his face. This is a clear example of masquerade in music, and many theorists have explored the reasons behind disguising identity.

“It has come to connote disingenuity, artifice and pretence in contrast to original identity which connotes truth and authenticity” (Napier, 1986). Napier is saying that the artist who masks their identity are keeping up pretence, and keeping listeners interested. If fans can’t be part of a musician’s life, they have only the music to cling onto, thus proving that Burial’s method of remaining private to focus on the music is successful. Another explanation for the use of masks and disguises in music can be seen on blog site *The Record*, “social media has made life into a big performance, with no web/life verification. Everyone can talk, but few of us can confirm the walk. We need a demarcation: life over here; performance over there. Masks signify an art zone and elevate performance to something serious.” (Andrew Matson, 2012) This brings us to the use of disguises in live performance. Take for example, SBTRKT, a producer who constantly wears a tribal mask during live sets and interviews. Throughout the past year, SBTRKT has decreased the size of the mask from a full tribal mask worn in 2011 seen in Fig 4, to a reduced sized mask worn in 2012 in Fig 5. This can be down to the fact, that after doing a single interview with Clash Magazine, SBTRKT revealed his name. It can be argued that as an artist grows in popularity, like SBTRKT, it becomes inevitable and seems only right to give away a portion of information. Especially when working in a live music setting. Fans will want to know who they’re seeing in order to pay out for tickets and they will only spend money on artists they trust. This can be seen in a quote by Erving Goffman who believes the use of disguises is discreditable. “an attribute that makes him different from others in the category of persons



available for him to be , and of a less desirable kind...he is thus reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one.” (1968) This seems to be a thought that has passed through SBTRKT’s head, as he has reduced his disguise dramatically, and in doing so has gathered an even bigger fan base. We can tell this by the change in stages the producer played at Reading and Leeds Festival, a British music festival in August. In 2011, the producer played a small tent which coincided with one of the festival’s biggest headliners, and in 2012, SBTRKT managed to secure the headliner spot on the second biggest stage. Despite this, he is still only in it for the music, he is never addressed by his real name, and he conducts all interviews in the later version of his mask. The only difference is that he plays live events. Could

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this be the grey area between the producers strictly in the industry for the music and those simply in it for fame?

### **The Fame Aspect, How Producers Market Themselves to Achieve a Fan Base.**

#### **i. The Subcultures of the Producer**

There is a saying, to get rich or die trying. This can be applied to all types of routes of superstardom, and for now it will be attached to the bedroom producers hungry for fame. One way to secure a fan base is to attach yourself to a subculture. Laclau and Mouffe in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (1985) say that social identities are not fixed, but rather achieved through a structure of social relations. Within a subculture are a certain amount of factors a person must possess, for example the way they dress, speak and act. In order to create an identity for a fan to relate to, the artist must secure themselves within a subculture to give the fan an idea of their views and preferences. For example bass producers would have a lexicon that only fans of the genre and fellow producers would understand. This guarantees them a place within a subcultural community, by letting fans know that they are familiar with the genre and in turn would be able to produce great music. It also instils a sense of belonging within an online community. Previously mentioned producer Zomby recognises the pattern within the electronic subculture “They just think electronic music is kids in sportswear doing drugs.” (Zomby, The Self- Titled Interview by Andrew Parks, 2011) Brake also recognises the need to conform within a subculture; he writes in 1985 that “the scripts being composed in subcultures become highly attractive”. He is saying that for a new face on the scene, the confines of a subculture provide a set of rules and aspects that, if the musician adheres to, will allow a producer to fit into a culture and become highly regarded among their peers. This allows the subculture to flourish and grow. However, subcultures, especially formed of youths, are seen as a threat to people from the outside. This is because people who are not part of the culture will often find the workings of a group incomprehensible and even downright weird. “Youth subcultures have tended to generate ‘moral panics’; successive subcultures have been identified as new ‘folk devils’ and media reaction has further ensured their prominence.” (Sue Widdecombe, *The Language of Youth Subcultures*, 1995) The reaction of the media can often inspire a subcultural community to become tighter knit and elusive, furthering the media’s interest in a group. Although some people attach themselves for the sake of having a title or the popularity of a culture, the main reason is a sense of belonging and sharing similar views and interests. Sara Cohen observes the music scene in Liverpool and concludes that youth subcultures are “divided by cliques, factions, feuds and rivalries, yet at the same time united by age, gender, a common ideology, mythology and gossip grapevine, and a web of interlinking

networks". (Sara Cohen, Popular Music and Urban Regeneration, 1991) The unitisation of fans and artists creates the basis of a successful career by leading the fans to believe that they have something in common with the producers. This can be seen in social media.

## ii. "If I Get 100 Retweets I Will Release A New Track"

*"...the new subcultures that are arising around the evolving Internet appear as wholly mediated and committed to the medium of network communication that they correctly recognise as their foundation."*

**(Richard Kahn and Douglas Kellner, The Post Subcultures Reader, 2003)**

Social media is a huge part of today's society, every man, woman and child seems to own at least one social networking profile and with new social media sites being added to the long list at such a rapid rate, it's hardly surprising that musicians are using the sites for personal gain. Perhaps one of the best examples of self-promotion of an artist is through social networking site Twitter, a website that allows users to post short updates and thoughts to a widely read audience of 'followers'. The 'followers' mentioned are people who choose to subscribe to a user's updates (or tweets), much like subscribing to a channel on the video sharing site, Youtube. "Celebrity is successfully practiced when it provides the illusion of 'backstage', giving the impression of uncensored glimpses into the lives of the very famous." (Alice Marwick and Danah Boyd, To See and Be Seen, 2011)



Fig 6

Through Twitter, a fan can be constantly updated about their favourite artist's whereabouts or just how they are feeling that particular day. This enables the fans to feel a certain type of involvement in the artist's life, and can often lead to fans believing they can be considered part of the artist's 'crew'. As well as short text updates, Twitter also allows users to upload images within their tweets which adds an even bigger closeness from celebrities to fans, much like when two friends send each other images over text message. A further feature of Twitter is the use of 'hashtagging'. A hashtag is a phrase for example, 'album launch' preceded by a hashtag without spaces i.e. #albumlaunch.

Artists ask followers to include the hashtag of the current area they want to promote in the hope that it makes it onto the trending topics board. Trending topics feature the most hashtagged items circulating Twitter in order of popularity. These are then put up on the 'Discover' page of Twitter to create even wider knowledge of the subject or event. In Fig 6 we can see an example of a tweet, including a hashtag from drum and bass newcomers Rudimental who rose to prominence earlier this year. The quartet has used a range of hashtags such as '#feelthelove', a title of their most well-known song, and also '#love'. The use of the second hashtag allows the tweet to be seen by a wider audience, as love is a more likely subject for a user to search within hashtags, giving the group a wider scope in terms of search items. This tweet also directly addresses Australian fans, backing up the point of social media building a relationship with a fan base and brings artists and fans closer together. Fig 7 shows a different type of audience participation through a tweet from up and coming lo-fi beat junkie Shlohmo. This is an example of producers interacting with their fans as peers rather than fans. The colloquial language used in this tweet shows fans that the people they admire are no different from themselves and keeps both the artist and their fan base on the same level. Another feature seen in this tweet is the use of interaction between established artists. Jacques Greene is a well-regarded producer in the industry and the fact that he is conversing with Shlohmo over Twitter shows the audience that, he too, is fan of Shlohmo's music



and in turn should become highly regarded by fans who trust Greene's opinion. This could be described as artist association and shows an active subculture at work.

As well as Twitter, there is a wealth of sites that provide fans with an insight into their favourite artist's lives. "Gossip websites, fan sites, and blogs provide a plethora of new locations for the circulation and creation of celebrity." (Alice Marwick and Danah Boyd, *To See and Be Seen*, 2011) Sites like TMZ pride themselves on their dedication to getting celebrity news out before any other media source and by doing so; have awarded themselves with the title of most trusted gossip source in most people's minds. These sites are committed to breaking star stories and capturing photos of

celebrities during their private time. This creates a further intimacy with fans as they feel they know everything about an artist. Blogs are also an excellent source of celebrity gossip and interviews. Artists will be approached by blogs for interviews which can be essential to boosting a musician's popularity. Take for example the latest teen prodigy, bedroom producer, XXYXX (Marcel Everett). In July 2012, Everett did an interview with online magazine style blog *playgroundmag.net*. The interview is a standard interview which lets fans see the other side of Everett aside from his music. The interviewer asked Everett what he does when he is not creating music from his bedroom to which he replied "Skating, schooling, eating, sleeping, other things-ing. Yeah I go to this adult high school in a community college near where I recently moved, it's pretty cool the kids are nice." (Marcel Everett, XXYXX: "I'm Just A Brat With A Laptop And A MIDI Controller", *Playgroundmag.net*, 2012) This opens up to his fan base and lets them identify with Everett as an average person rather than an unattainable musician. In short, interviews are a great way of keeping fans updated and close to their favourite artist.

### iii. Getting Yourself Known: Remixes and Pirate Radio

Another way to get your music out there, and gain listeners worldwide is through radio, and more specifically, pirate radio. Pirate radio came about in the 1950s and was hugely popular in the mid-1960s. These sea-based broadcasting stations allowed artists to get their music played without going through the legalities of licensing in commercial radio. In order to avoid the law, these stations were placed in boats at sea out of the laws jurisdiction, hence the birth of the term 'Pirate Radio'.

*"Broadcasting in most European countries was a state monopoly. It was, as well, almost exclusively non-commercial, usually supported by the license or subscription fees of listeners and viewers. Programming was generally quite limited, traditional, and slow to adjust to the changing musical tastes of the listening audience, particularly to the young's craze for "pop" or rock music of the era."*

**(Horace B Robertson Jr, The Suppression of Pirate Radio Broadcasting, 1982)**

Commercial radio as it stands, both today and in the past, has a certain set of guidelines and are unable to play music that wouldn't cater for a nationwide audience, this meant

the music played on these stations were typically 'safe' choices leaving no room for musical innovation. Pirate radio stations picked up on this, and the listeners need to hear something new and relevant, and began to broadcast more culturally fresh shows. Unsurprisingly, they were very popular. "As a listener you felt you were part of a secret club, under the bedclothes with your pop stars and your favourite jocks." (Simon Garfield, *When pop pirates ruled Britannia's airwaves*, 2009) This once again, demonstrates the importance of closeness between a musician and his fan; aspiring artists who wish for fame and success would often approach these pirate stations as a way to get their sound heard and as part of an underground, but trusted, subculture. Radio is not the only way for artists to promote their music, throughout this decade, new technologies have made way for a mass of artists creating music via remixing, manipulation and redistribution. "new expression and ideas are rarely (if ever) conjured up from whole cloth; instead they are the result of a vast array of informational inputs." (Wagner, 2003) The remix is a rework of a past song which may take elements of the original such as the beat and melody, and substitute it with the artist's own track, which will ultimately put a new spin on the original. Remixing is an excellent way to harbour new fans, as listeners of the original will be interested to hear a fresh new take on what they see as a classic, so providing the remix artist does a good job of the rework, they will secure a wider fan base. An artist who is well known for his work with remixing is previously mentioned producer Shlohmo. Shlohmo's works include dubstep producer Burial's *Shell of Light* and RnB star Jeremih's *F\*\*k you all the time*. By remixing such well-known songs, Shlohmo creates a bigger fan base by reaching out to fans from different genres that will be exposed to his music through his reworks. The final aspect of acquiring fame is through artist association. It seems inevitable that if a person is friends with a group of celebrities, they will in turn become a celebrity in their own right themselves. This can be seen in music. Many producers interact with each other over social media sites, but it can be taken one step further through artist collaboration. Ingrid Monson, a jazz drummer, once wrote "one person in the group will state an idea or beginning of an idea and another person will complete the idea or their interpretation of the same idea, how they hear it". (Ingrid Monson, *Group Creativity: Musical Performance and Collaboration*, 1996) This introduces a sense of collectiveness and generates interest in a new talent. Collaboration is a sign of trust and faith in an artist from another, possibly better known, musician. Berliner says

that collaboration is an intimate process. (1994) Fans will see the acceptance of the artist through the collaboration and will go and listen to more of their work. All in all, the art of self-promotion is a complex and well thought out process. The use of social media has made it easier for artists and fans to connect and through artist association; new talents are finding it easier and easier to find their place among the production greats.

## **One Day, We Will All Become Musical Robots**

### **i. The Future of Music?**

*“In the past, instruments stood on their own, then computers appeared and they stood on their own. In the future, what has to happen is complete synergy between physical interfaces and computers.”*

**(Matthew Derbyshire, Music Production in the 2010s, 2011)**

In the past three decades, music production has evolved to a point of no return. We are at a point where music can be created easily with a few clicks of a track-pad. But it hasn't always been this way. In the past the only way to record music was through a state of the art studio, recorded in real time. Now all you need is a laptop, and some solitude and you're away. “The new semi-professional studio is now confined within a bedroom. As most of the large expensive studios have collapsed, bedroom studios have blossomed thanks to cheaper technology.” (Abi Grogan, Music Production in the 2010s, 2011) This radical new way of creation has paved the way for aspiring musicians to kick start their career in the industry, but what does the future have in store? As it stands Danny Lewis, a producer in the 1990s and now a lecturer in the leading music production college of the world, Point Blank London, explains that you can create music at home and then put it onto a USB stick to plug into a laptop at your gig. This introduces the transformation of portability in music as opposed to the days where you would have to carry around an extensive amount of equipment when playing in a live setting. The software aspect has also improved significantly throughout the past years. With masses of mixing programs on the market, producers are at no loss of assisting tools. From Logic to Ableton, there is a program for every type of musician, with every type of possible musical effect. At present, there are arguments that the next generation of music software will emerge from the touch screen market. This has been met with a

wealth of criticism. With people suggesting iPads as the next generation of music production, critics have branded the tablet as 'unresponsive' and 'inaccurate'. Lewis says that "producers don't trust the surface of the tablet to make micro-adjustments without physical feedback from the touch screen itself" (Lewis, Music Production of the 2010s, 2011). Jesse Terry, the development manager of DAW software Ableton believes that the key to the future of production software are "intuition, simplicity, portability and integration." (2011) He sees potential in the iPad market for production based apps so maybe it's only a matter of time before we are creating albums from our iPhones.

## ii. Future Sounds

Sometimes the most innovative of sounds can come from a failure when producing music through traditional methods. Colson Whitehead said "It is failure that guides evolution; perfection offers no incentive for improvement." (The Aesthetics of Failure: "Post-Digital" Tendencies in Contemporary Computer Music, 2000) Glitches, bugs and errors are now aspects that composers want to incorporate within their music. It gives a sense of realism and newness that cannot be achieved in highly polished industry driven tracks. Glitch music often features in the work of bedroom producers as they are creating all their own music, independently, without any third party help. Failures often guide the DIY aspect and present fans with a heartfelt and raw piece of music. In terms of themes within music, Simon Reynolds believes that "we live in a pop age gone loco for retro and crazy for commemoration." (Retromania, 2011) With artists sampling and remixing in almost every new track, Reynolds is stating that music has become part of a constant loop. With that in mind, it can be argued that the future of sounds will never fully develop past this point, especially with the abundance of artists revisiting past themes, styles, and samples. Even *Pitchfork's* Tim Finney noted "the curious slowness with which this decade marches forward". On the other end of the spectrum, futurists are bombing forward with attempts to revolutionise music. Famous futurist Luigi Russolo once said "Away! Let us break out since we cannot much longer restrain our desire to create finally a new musical reality, with a generous distribution of resonant slaps in the face, discarding violins, pianos, double basses and plaintive organs. Let us break free!" (The Art of Noises, 1912) Futurists recognise the patterns in musical structure and styling and aim to rectify the problem with total innovation. The futurist belief that innovation is only achievable by escaping the past is

shared with Reynolds in his book *Retromania*. “Could it be that the greatest danger to the future of our music culture is....its past?” (Simon Reynolds, *Retromania*, 2011) Another concept which incorporates both futurist views and Reynolds’ argument is hauntology. The concept, which has been re-coined by Mark Fisher only recently in music, is synonymous with a group of artists working primarily in electronic music who demonstrate a curiously nostalgic, and yet modern approach, to past musical and cultural forms. This term has been frequently paired with previously mentioned, Burial. Bedroom producers often epitomise the concept through excessive use of sampling within their music. “Woven out of looped moments that are each like portals to far-flung times and places, the sample collage creates a musical event that never happened; a mixture of time travel and a séance.” (Simon Reynolds, *Retromania*, 2011) Samples can be thought of as a ghostly presence within a track, especially if the sample is taken from a very old song, or even someone who has passed on. It generates the feeling of being haunted, and in turn, makes the music memorable. Innovation and the need to revolutionise sound is the only way to break the cycle, and hopefully secure the future of music. It has to keep changing and adapting as time and society changes in order to bring the music we hear every day out of the current rut, and bring into the modern.

## **Conclusion**

Bedroom producers are shaping the way we look at music. Through their relentless DIY ethic, artists are rebelling against what we consider the traditional music industry routes to secure a career in music. We are witnessing the birth of a new age of music, littered with independent and true representations of artists who make music the way they want to do it with full artistic control. We have the artists who work purely for the music and go to extreme lengths to preserve their identity and on the other end of the spectrum; the ones who use online self-branding to gain the fame and recognition they crave. Social media is now playing a hugely important role in the attempt to promote and gain a fan base for new talents, and demonstrates, first hand, the relationship artists have with their fans. We are now living in the remix world where artists use samples to create fresh and exciting sounds. The future of music is uncertain, but with the technological boom of production software and computer systems, there is an infinite amount we can create. Whether a whole new concept is created, or simply music is made yet even more accessible and, more importantly, portable, then there is

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no telling where the future of music can go. It is up to today's culture of inventors and innovators that can really provide the answer to the ultimate question. The advancements within the sound and style of music are currently stuck in a cycle, so in order for there to be a definitive future in music, a radical movement will have to be put in place. In order to look at this further, I would conduct interviews and surveys with current aspiring artists who wish to change the way we look at music. Those who wish to create a revolution.

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## Images

Cover Image: Bedroom Studio, <http://clo.buzznet.com/photos/default/?id=37868191>

Fig 1: Logic Mixer, <http://www.musicradar.com/tuition/tech/21-pro-mixing-and-processing-tips-151526>, 2008

Fig 2: Burial, <http://monoaudio.co.uk/blog/burial-prepares-onetwo-hdb069>, 2011

Fig 3: Zomby, Kate Gardner, <http://twitter.com/Zomby>, 2013

Fig 4: SBTRKT, <http://www.themixfeed.com/category/mixes/bbc-essential-mix/2011/>, 2011

Fig 5: SBTRKT, <http://www.pinpointmusic.com/ohm-sweet-ohm-002/>, 2012

Fig 6: Rudimental, <https://twitter.com/RudimentalUk/status/296317008218320896>, 2013

Fig 7 Shlohmo, <https://twitter.com/shlohmo/status/296475151715934209>, 2013