

The future: a world of musicians

From a creative perspective, where I see all this going is that music becomes like language. Just as no one owns the English language, no one will own what music will become. The reason no one can own the English language is because of the number of people that have contributed to it, molded it, and made it grow and adapt--it's either owned by everyone or no one at all. It's a continuous and complex dynamic system, evolving in a non-linear manner, and growing from the previous changes created by feedback loops. The same will apply to music in the future: a song you write may involve so many contributions and meta-contributions that to claim exclusive rights to it would be a joke. Like a language, music will be a collage of ideas, notes, chords, and sounds from many many different creative minds. The term "collage music" already exists to describe such a phenomenon, pioneered, in part, by the views of artists like Negativland and John Oswald and embraced by genres like Techno. Music will be the communication that begins where conventional language ends.

There is a large proliferation of hard disk multitrack recorders in the music scene today. Consider a scenario where you can not only make your songs available mixed down in MP3 format, but also each of the tracks in MP3 format such that software and hardware-based MP3 players can handle data track by track. Imagine the possibilities: Don't like a guitar solo in the middle of the track? Edit it out, or record your own solo! Want to change the drum kit in the drum track? Given the sound to MIDI converters, this will be doable in real-time, so you can assign drum patches to a real drummer. Even the smallest tweak in the mix may result in a new song for the person listening it.

Another method by which I think creative cross-fertilisation will occur is by coupling appreciation of musicians (i.e., payment) with creativity. For example, in one of the FMAs (Free Music Archives or FMAs), if the artists get a percentage of advertising revenues based on song downloads, then rather than just having the option of receiving actual cash, they may also receive hard copies of music by other bands. This way, an incestuous relationship between the artists will be developed. Given a large population of musicians, which will grow if the above multitrack models are implemented, this will result in a self-sustaining complex system with unimaginable creative dynamic. We're all musicians as well as listeners. The potential for breeding creativity is even greater if other creative ventures such as software, visual art, and literary art are coupled with music.

In conclusion, I don't like how music will evolve. In a final, it will self-destroy.