The Music Producers´ Role in A Digital Era

"An understanding of a how digitalization and the development of the producers' role over time, has affected the labor practices of the producer and the dynamics between different parts in the industry."
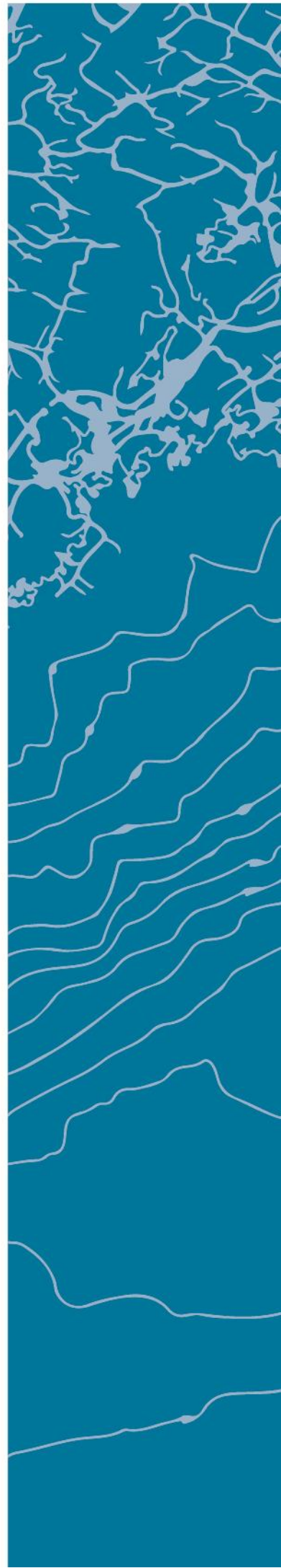
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Abstract

As we all know the Music has been through quite a shift due to the digitalization both in business models and the way it is structured. There has been little research on the way these changes have affected the specific professions within the industry. This paper aims to look at how these changes have affected the Music Producers labor practices, and how the dynamics between the different parts in the industry has changed. It also aims to look at why it has happened, and what it has led to. The paper concludes with the fact that there is a lot of structural changes that has forced the producers to work different in order to stay relevant. Based on semi-structured interviews with informants that work as producers professionally, the paper finishes with a discussion part where the most interesting findings are being linked up to relevant theory within the field.

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1 Introduction

The music industry has gone through a massive upheaval the last few years, due to the development of technology and digitalization. It has led to huge changes in the way the industry is structured, from the business models, to work practice. One of the most important professions in the industry is the Music producer.

They have experienced a huge turnover in their profession, as well as the others in the industry, one way we all can see it is the fact that there are so many producers that has taken the road themselves to become artists. The DJ phenomena is the result of this. But this is for all to see, what I want to do in this thesis is to go underneath all of this, into the roots and figure out what exactly has happened. How is their everyday affected after the digitalization, from what gear they use, to how they interact with the industry, how they keep up, what changes they have made and so on.

In an academic specter, there is not so much research done in this specific topic, but there are more eyes to this every day. It is becoming quite a hot topic.

The first part of this paper takes you through the theory and mechanisms of what I will be discussing later in the paper. I am basing my research on the theory, and four semi-structured interviews with producers in the industry. In chapter four I will present my findings, and in chapter 5, I will discuss the most interesting ones, and link it up with theory from researchers.

2 Theory

In this part, I will take a historical leap back, and give a little insight to what the industry looked like, and how it worked in the "old" days. I will focus on the change that happened through the digitalization of the industry and the emergence of new technology as well as the disruptiveness going on.

There is more and more research done in this field, but there's still a lack of information and insight due to that it is always changing, and the phenomenon of the digitalization in music is "rather" new in terms of a historical picture. What we´ve seen lately is that the topic of the digitalization has become quite a hot topic within the field of research. And we´ve seen a rise on research in the creative industries and new media the past two decades.

It became a shift in the working arrangements when it went from physical to digital, and lead to a change in companies' culture, due to the techs startups in Silicon Valley. This is something that has affected the structures and the work ethics as well as work tasks for the industry and the music producer which is my main focus.

When it comes to the music industry there are a lot of people and professions involved, and to give a brief explanation to what is within the field I use this figure to present. I will mainly focus on the music producer and the work ethics and changes that has happened within their field.

The Music Blueprint, UK - statistics shows; "[...] the music workforce as anyone involved in performing, creating, producing, recording, promoting and selling music [...]" (Creative & Cultural Skills, 2011, p. 13). It is also showing the professional roles within the music business.

A&R: artists & repertoire	Event programmer	Music librarian/archivist
Accompanist	Events manager	Music publisher
Agent	Instrumental teacher	Music therapist
Arts administrator	Licensing and royalties	Programmer
Audio engineer	officer	Press officer
Audio equipment	Lighting technician	Promoter
manufacturer	Live event technical support	Producer
Booking agent	Lyricist (talent scouting)	Remixer
Collection society executive	Manager	Retailer
Community musician	Mixer	Sales staff – distribution
Composer/arranger	Musical director	and retail
Concert promoter	Musical instrument maker	Songwriter (both local
Conductor	Musical instrument	authority and private)
Distributor	distributor	Sound engineer
DJ	Musician/artist (both lead	Sound technician
Education officer/workshop	and	Studio manager
leader	session)/performer	

Example of professional roles in the music sector (Creative & Cultural Skills, 2011, p. 14)

As we can see in this box over, the music industry is put together by everyone from the artist making music, to the ones that sells their music in stores. The roles can also be hard to define, especially now when the digitalization has come to the surface. Because the lines between the different fields tend to blur into one another. The more you are capable to do, the better.

I am going to start off with a historical background to lead into the producer role and what it historically has been. Then dig into the emergence of the new technologies that has had an impact on the producers' work, what has happened within the recording studios with the no time and place phenomenon, then finish off with condition in the industry where I talk about the disruptiveness going on.

2.1 Historical Background
If we look back in time, we saw the 'The Music Producer' as a profession, and a person, that did not use his time to perform music directly, but functioned as someone who 'called the shots', for the recording.

He or she can, in such a case affect the recording process and the songwriting process by giving feedback, and bring out the best possible outcome of a recording. He or she can also have the final decisions, together with the band or artist, on the final sound (Sokanu, 2018).

Historically, the music producers' role, was more considered as an "employee" with a more business oriented mindset then the band or artists. (Sokanu, 2018)

As we will see throughout this thesis, a lot has changed in both people's perception and the producers' perceptions itself, to what exactly the music producers' role is in the industry.

One of the aims of this thesis is to try to map out the various functions a music producer can have, in addition to look at how the music producer role have evolved alongside other changes in the music industry.

2.1.1 The emergence of digital technologies

The emergence of networked digital technologies has opened the possibilities for radical changes in the ways we produce, distribute, consume and otherwise relate to music. (Allen-robertson 2013, Rogers 2013, Andersson Schwartz 2014, Fredriksson and Arvantakis 2014, Mulligan 2016, Wikstrom and DEFillippi 2016).

The appropriation of technologies is often being described as of some sort of negotiation between the actors with the different objectives and powers, within science and technology studies. (Spilker, 2018. P. 5)

One of the most revolutionary audio recording innovations is the [1]'multitrack recorder' (Cunningham 199; Moorefield 2005; Wikström, 2013, p. 123). It changed the whole recording process, where it opened for the possibility for individual recordings, whilst earlier it all had to be recorded simultaneously. - If one in the band was unhappy about a take, the whole band had to re-record everything. The multitrack recorder also made it possible to change a song quite a lot, even though the actual recording process is finish. (Wikström, 2013, p. 123)

The Beach Boys and The Beatles was two bands that were quite groundbreaking when it came to the transition from mono recording to multitrack recording. Common for both bands is that the music producer is recognized for being highly contributory when it comes to

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[1] The multitrack recorder allows for separate recording of multiple sound sources recorded at different times.

shaping their specific sound. Brian Wilson, was the producer of Beach Boys, but he was also a member of the band. George Martin is often recalled as the fifth member of The Beatles, but he was not formally a member of the band. (Wikström, 2013, p. 124)

The reason for these two band being mentioned as successfully in this transition is that they managed to utilize the increased 'playroom' that the multitrack recordings opened for. This specific technology has a huge impact on forming the role of the modern music producer. Today the role of the music producer contains everything from the composition phase to the engineering, but even the [2]A&R work. (Wikström, 2013, p. 124)

This shows that the producer can be quite unlimited. It can be a band member, but not a person who worked with a band, even before digital was the norm. Nonetheless, this existed more in the professional facilities rather than home studios, but was probably not the 'norm'.

The new audio technology increase the possibilities in the recording studio and when one is producing music by enabling activities like sampling, sound editing, and when you are going to process different sounds. So, a recording with a specific instrument, can be altered significantly. The creative work has no limits anymore. (Wikström, 2013, p. 124)

Gradually, this new technology has opened for new possibilities for the music producers, as well as new ways to create music. The producer can perform all roles, he or she can even be the artist. (Wikström, 2013, p. 125)

According to Turner, *"liminal phases are especially interesting objects of study for social scientist because conditions and relations that once were taken for granted become temporarily suspended. It introduces times of moral drift and institutional destabilization. Liminal phases render open new possibilities, but also fears and anxieties, ambiguities and paradoxes."* Following Turner, Pfaffenberger (1992) has coined the term "technological dramas" to describe the productive and performative nature of periods of socioecological change. (Spilker, 2018. P. 4).

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[2] A&R is short for artist and repertoire, and has the responsability for talent scouting and keep track of the artistic development.

As we can see above things happened very drastically. And as Turner says, it happened all over the cultural industries, not just within the music sector. It became an interesting topic for scientists to see how these changes affected relations and possibilities.

2.1.2 Recording Studio

The common workspace for the music producer is usually a recording studio, so parallel with the changes for the producers, these facilities has also noticed the affect by the new technologies. Historically, the recording studio was a crucial and symbolic part of the record company. (Wikström, 2013, p. 126)

From the 1950s and earlier, the music producers were employees at the record labels facilities, and had the role as A&R managers. When independent record producers got established, the word 'producer' became an ordinary term in the industry. The increase of independent producers and studios was real. - and until nowadays the normal structure within a record label has been vertically integrated structure, and an in-house production process. (Kirby, 2015, p. 42-79).

To run such, at the time, was an expensive endeavor. Large investments were necessary to stay on track with the evolution. The artist themselves had no money to own their own studios, therefor they rented studio time. (Cunningham 1999; Wikström, 2013, p. 126-127)

Throughout the years the new technological advancements led to a digitalization of the industry. The financial aspect was drastically reduced. Analog would be replaced with digital equivalents that was a lot cheaper. This is something that continues even today, and all the artist need to produce music fits within a laptop. (Wikström, 2013, p. 127)

There has been, and is, an ongoing discussion about that the emergence of the bedroom producer has led to a threat for the larger professional studios. Wikström (2013) says that both the competition from these actors, and the certain demands has created difficulties for the traditional studios. This is something I will look closer into in the findings and discussion part.

Some of the topics I have talked about in this chapter, will be further discussed in the findings and discussion chapter of this thesis.

2.2 No time and place

The industry has seen a huge turnover in how one another interact in the early days, you had to be where it happened in order to be in the game. Today this has changed drastically, due to the internet and social media. In the paragraphs under Thernberge and Wikström pinpoints some of the most important differences within the recording industry.

There has been a lot of talking about the business or the industry being in a cloud, researchers use this to describe the disconnection from the physical geography. Music producers no longer sees the need to pay a lot of money to rent a recording studio, because they can make high quality recordings at home. (Wikström, 2013, P. 128)

In addition to this, the geographical aspect is no longer a hard nut to crack, entirely because no one needs to be located at the same place. The development of the Internet has made it possible to record the instrumental music in Berlin, then the recordings can be sent to New York for a talented topliner to do vocals, then sent to Brazil for the finishing touches. (Wikström, 2013, P. 128) So the aspect of geography has had a drastic shift, that has led into something that Thernberge coined the powerful notion of [3]*"The Network Studio"* an evolution which he describes as a continuous movement toward "non-space" and "non-Place". (Spilker, 2018, P. 69)

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[3] "The network studio allows for an unprecedented degree of coordination and connectivity at an increased speed and with lower cost. Nonetheless, the emergence of the network studio and the "anywhere/anytime logic" has opened a paradoxical situation, per Theberge: The Network Studio can operate in different ways in different contexts: at time reinforcing the pattern of information "flows" characteristic of the dominant economic order, and at others working outside of it, facilitating a kind of autonomous production practice or, at the very least, a very different pattern of exchange". (Spilker, 2018, P. 70)

He uses the term "Network Studio" to refer to a more common use of home studios facilitated by the development of the internet and other digital innovations, thereby exploiting the possible emergence of the self-governing production and distribution practices which Theberg has forecasted. (Spilker, 2018, P. 70)

Historically the professional recording studio has been related to competence, while it is truer than ever that "anyone" can make records of reasonable quality. (Spilker, 2018, P. 70) Would recording engineers now need extensive training and expertise even to work as an intern in a professional studio?

The value placed on tacit knowledge, experience, and human interaction in professional recording has not diminished. And the flourishing home studios has not driven musicians away from the professional studios. It has given more opportunities, and it has become cheaper for anyone to persuade their dream of being a producer, musician or an artist. And within the music economy one of the three characteristics has become just what being said above, in fact increased amateur creativity. (Wikström, 2013, P. 86)

But with all this being said, there is a clear counter strike by a lot of researchers, and Michael Porter being one in particular. He throws out a point proving that the geographics has a lot to do with success. It does matter where you are located and who you´re with. It's leading down to what he says about the [4]cluster dynamics (Wikström, 2013, P. 129). And one of the most important things he explains is that in order to become better, and learn, it is absolutely necessary to interact with other producers, musicians and artist in real life.

2.3 Disruptiveness in the industry

In this paragraph, I will not be focusing on disruptiveness alone, but the innovations and factors that has had a huge impact on the music industry, but my focus is pointed towards the music producer role.

Given that an innovation could be disruptive it must come from a low-end or a new-end market. The disruptive entrant focuses more on the less demanding customer, or to turn non-

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[4] Cluster Dynamics is being represented as a fast-developing area of cluster physics. (The Toulouse, 2018)

customers into customers. The music industry context has a lot of disruptive innovations, with the developments of new devices and formats.

This was one of the things that the music producers I interviewed had to say, because due to these technical developments it made it some sort of "easier to become a producer", they had different focal points than before, Bjørn Ole explains it like; *"the role of the producer has changed alongside technological development. In a way, it has become easier to produce, because things can go faster. Technical solutions are available…and of course, a digital recording process is more convenient since things are more 'obtainable' […]. »*

When Napster and peer-to-peer file sharing came in 1999, the impact became major, and gave a significant drop in music sales. DeFillippi and Wikström argues that the piracy was of the reason for the beginning of Napster. They also turn to Apple and ITunes, ITunes is not considered a disruptive innovation tough, but it can be argued due to the effect it has had. (Wikström, DeFillippi, 2016, p. 1-5)

When Napster was presented, the perception of music value was created. It became 'free', which made people not willing to pay and this takes some time to change.

The biggest change in the music industry is the internet, if it would not have been for this the music industry would probably still be physical. Due to this change the whole industry has been exposed to change.

Trevor (One of the producers in the interviews) also mentions this as the biggest change for the producers as well in how they could interact with each other; *«The main change is of course the internet. When I started, we didn't have the internet, and it was much harder way to «get on», as we call it, and you had to be much more aggressive, and you had to be places physically.*

Peter Tschmuck amplifies, in *Business innovation and Distribution in The music Industry*, how the leading parts of the industry have been affected by disruption. Businesses that had nothing to do with the music industry has become important puzzle pieces, either directly or indirectly - Apple, Amazon, Google, Youtube, Facebook etc. (Tschmuck, 2016, p. 13)

Record labels and music publisher was the core of the industry, and record sale was the main income unlike today where live shows is the main source of income. (Tschmuck, 2016, p. 13). These roles have in some way or another been affected or disrupted by the digitalization. The artist can basically do everything on their own, with software on a laptop, and aggregator services, that enables consumption through digital services. (Tschmuck, 2016, p. 16).

Christer pinpoints some of these statements when it comes to the financial aspect of the producer role, put up against the artist and the record companies; *«The industry experienced a rather unnatural boost prior to and during the 90s, right? Where both the studios and record labels got paid too much. Then later on it became more leveled out, and hopefully it will reach a point where it becomes more…reasonable. However, I do think the whole industry is more professionalized now. The bands have more knowledge, and everyone is more 'business-oriented', without compromising creativity. And that is good I think, but, it is then important that we pay attention; the ones running the recording studios.»*

This argues that a shift in the positions not only has affected the value chain, but the whole supply chain. Tschmuck (2016) also highlights the transition to digital music distribution, and that revenues from digital download are decreasing in relation to physical sales. - leads to a 'tour is promoting the album instead of the other' (Tschmuck, 2016. p. 20)

Now that I have briefly outlined some of the disruptions and changes to the music industry, I will proceed with discussion and draw from more of the course literature.

2.3.1 Music Recording
Failing budget has made it a struggle for the larger recording studios and on top of that the home recording situations threatening the professional studios. Spilker (2018) argues that the home studio is some sort of a get-away, and that the high competence is still sought after.

The studios that manages to elevate their competence level and knowledge and expands into the new activities will arguably manage them self just fine. (Watson, 2016, p. 101-103)

It was some sort of a unanimous meaning between the producers when it came to the economical point, and they mentioned that a lot of producers had to put on several hats to earn "enough" money, Gary says that *«[…]I suppose what the democratization of music - even though I hate that term - I suppose what the democratization of music technology is meant, is that we tend to perform many roles. We wear many hats. So it's not uncommon now to find the bedroom producer doing all of those roles themselves.»*

The amount of 'bedroom producers' has increased. Wikström (2013) argues that there is a tendency of increased "armature creativity".

When it comes to the point of "armature creativity" they all see a huge shift in a way a session or a process comes together, Trevis says that *«Now, with the internet, all of a sudden one guy with a laptop becomes everything! Someone who never produced a vocal, all of a sudden - they are the producer. A lot of times they make a beat with Fruity Loops that is already pre-made, not even with a keyboard - just drag and drop, and that gets turned into a song along the way, because a lot of times these writers - you send them a song and they do it themselves - so at the end of the day there almost is no producer anymore. But, the guy that made the beat always gets the credit as the producer. And it is like, we are seeing a little change in that, but the internet completely has a lot to do with that. That producer role has completely changed man, over the years. Because, what they are calling producers now used to be called programmers, and you were paid like a musician, back in the day. In the 80s - even up to the early 90s - all you were doing was programming. They had a song already, and you were just the «beat-guy». You got paid like a musician, but now that's completely flipped. So, the biggest change I have seen is the role of the producer, and the way that the internet has almost desensitized the experience of writing a song. […]»*

There seems to be quite a lot of challenges for the recording studios, and questionable if their business models fit the digital market Watson (2016).

Christer is touching up on some interesting points when he talks about the "non existing producer"; *«It seems like there are very few that earn enough money by being only producers. Usually people tend to also incorporate other types of work in addition to be working as producers, such as being a mixing engineer, or a sound-technician, or something else. So that*

pure…or how should I say this?…The role as a producer where you 'only' are a producer, is almost non-existing nowadays.»

A lot of these topics will be further discussed in the 'discussion' chapter in this thesis.

3 Methodology

The music industry has always been bit of a hassle. There has been very little formalized research, but there are more and more people finding the topic of digitalization interesting, and this leads to more proven fact and numbers within the field.

One reason is that in a historical perspective this is still a quite new and ongoing thing, so in some years there will be more research done in this specific field. And within academia there is written more papers about these issues because of the new educational degrees, which is quite exciting.

I made some strategic considerations with choice of method. Denscombe claims that in the search for a method you need to go for the one that would fit into being ethical, suitable and feasible. (Denscombe, 2007, p.5). It all comes down to finding the method that suits the issue or the question in the best way.

Further down I will explain why I chose to use a qualitative methodology approach. And take a closer look on the process with collecting data, the design of the thesis and the interview and interview guide.

3.1 Design

When one is to research on a topic, there are often two different approaches that are being used, one called for a quantitative methodology approach, and the other one qualitative methodological approach. If you use the quantitative method, it is assumed that little information will be obtained, but on many devices, for example, you can use a questionnaire as aids. You usually use this method if you get information through code numbers (Halvorsen, 2008, s. 132). Adapting the qualitative method, this involves more about how people interpret a phenomenon. This is used if you need to go into the depth of the given topic, or to get a more accurate picture of what is. (Hellevik, 2011, s. 196). The main distinction between a qualitative and a quantitative method approach is that the collection take place using text or numbers. (Hellevik, 2011, s. 13)

In my task, I have chosen to use a qualitative methodology, because I am not looking for any specific numbers, or measurable values. I want to get an understanding of a process where I

will find out how the development of the producers' role over time has affected the labor practices of the producer and the dynamics between different parts in the industry. The qualitative method approach gives me qualitative data, which is also called soft data. These are non-measurable values, the goal of this approach is to get an understanding of a process, phenomenon or entity that will ultimately give the answer to what, how and why.

In this task, it will be most relevant to take care of a variety of units so as to see how they have known the development in their sector in the industry. In my study, I have chosen an exploratory approach. I chose this because I did not have much knowledge about the area in advance of the task, and the primary goal was to explore the topic further. For me, it was most relevant to use acquaintance and the internet as a way to collect data and find interesting people to ask questions.

3.2 Range of Devices

I did four interviews with four Music Producers that has made a good living of what they do.

Trevor Lawrence Jr also known as TrevBeats, is one of the worlds most popular session drummers within the field of R&B and hip-hop. He is a multitalented, who has made a mark for himself both in the drummer world and the producer world, he has played along side some of our greatest artists in time. He has also made huge success as a music producers, and have since 2000 been nominated for a Grammy every year.

Trevors dad, is a known saxophone player in the industry. He played with names like Marvin Gaye, B.B King, Ringo Starr and others. His mother was a good vocalist who performed with Stevie Wonder and the legendary Supremes.

Trevor puts two accomplishments in first row, the time he played with Dizzy Gillespie at the age of 13, and when he played with Stevie Wonder.

He has done studio works with acts like Mariah Carey, Lionel Richie, Ashanti, Jenifer Lopez, Taj Mahal, Dr. Dre, Macy Gray, The Temptations and Bruno Mars. And toured with Snoop Dog, and played on Eminems´ new album. He also toured with Herbie Hancock in 2010.

Gary Bromham started his career of in Iceland. Here he worked with Eurovision entries, made an album with Mezzoforte and worked with Björk. He has worked with artist like George Michael, Sheryl Crow, Bow Wow to name a few.

Gary and his band signed a record deal with EMI in 1995, and when they separated he kept on with producing and songwriting. He got a hit single with Dannii Minogue, Lonyo and Sheryl Crowe, and has recently worked on projects with artists like Delta Goodrem & Lulu. Gary is also a PhD student at Queen Mary University London.

Bjørn Ole Rasch is a Norwegian artist, composer, arranger and producer. He runs the studio Kongshavn in Kristiansand. He works a lot with Norwegian folk-music as well as world music. In 1993 he was presented as Olympic musician, something that led to a collaboration with Sissel Kyrkjebø. In 1994 he became a member in the group secret garden. He has been a part of over 250 releases, nine of them has been "Spellemans" nominated. Bjørn Ole has worked with people like Randy Crawford, Hanne Boel, Lisa Nilsson, Sondre Bratland, Elisabeth Andreassen.

Christer-André Cederberg is a Norwegian musician, song-writer, sound engineer and producer. He has also worked with some of the biggest names in Norwegian music like Maria Mena, Eva Wheel Skram, Nora Noor, Frida Amundsen, Honningbarna.

3.3 Collecting Data

When collecting data through qualitative approaches, this usually happens through observation or questioning (Hellevik, 2011, s. 3).

When you start writing a big paper like a Master Thesis, research for literature should be one of the things to do when starting the process. It helps to figure out if the question is suitable or if someone has answered it before, or if it's too complex or too simple.

The starting point for this thesis was an earlier exam within the same field. Then I took the information I had, and dug further into the topic. I used Google Scholar in search for papers written that could be relevant for my issue.

I have achieved the primary data by using the qualitative methodology I have chosen. But in order go deeper, I had to use secondary data in the form of external sources such as public sources and professional literature, as well as the information we got from out interview objects.

3.4 A Qualitative Approach

The main difference between the two methods does not necessarily lie in the way we use the different methods, but rather the way of how we "treat" our data. One direction is more focused on numbers and measurements, the other one has an underlying fundament in words and images as a way to conclude. It is hard to find quantifiable data on this specific topic due that its changing all the time, and is constantly in movement.

I am more interested in how and whys, therefore I figured that the qualitative method was best suitable for my research. But also, because I do not have enough knowledge to use data and analyze within this field.

I chose to go with interview to collect data further than the research already done. I felt like the research did not necessarily give me the exact answers to what I was looking for. Therefor I used the interviews in my own research. And discussed the most interesting findings I came down with.

3.5 A Semi Structured Interview

Conversations are the foundations for how we as human interact. Humans speak with each other, they react, ask questions and answers questions. Through conversations we get to know each other. In an interview setting, the scientist asks questions and listens to what people think about their meanings and views. (Brikman & Kvale, 2008)

It is no wonder why I use the interview as a research method; because it is a conversation with a structure and purpose. This makes it easier for me to enlighten my issue. Reflections on how we explore and analyze interviews are more about what we as researchers want to highlight.

The qualitative research interview tries to understand the world from the views of the interview object, unfold meanings that relates to their experiences and expose their world of life to scientific explanations. (Brikman & Kvale, 2008).

An inexperienced researcher who is methodologically oriented may have questions about the technical and conceptual problems of an interview project. For example; How do I start? How many people should I use? Is it necessary to transcribe the interview? This was some of the questions I started out with, but during the research and guidance I found answers to those questions.

The seven phases are something I have used to structure my thesis, and the interviews especially. The phases are;

1. Thematicizations,
2. Design,
3. The actual Interview,
4. Transcribing,
5. Analysis,
6. Verification,
7. Reporting.

Thematicizations– The purpose of an interview study is to be considered not only in view of the applicant´s scientific value, but also with a view to improving the situation being explored.

Design – Ethical designer questions include the gathering of the interviewee´s informed consent to participate in the survey, ensuring confidentiality and taking into account the possible consequences for the interviewees for the survey.

The actual interview –The interviewing´s personal consequences for the interviewees will be taken into account, such as stress during the interview and changes in self-perception.

Transcription –The confidentiality of the interviewer shall be protected, and there is also a question as to weather a transcription text is loyal to the oral statements of the interviewee.

Analysis –Ethical questions in the analysis include the question of where the in-depth interviews can be analyzed and whether the interviewees should influence hos their statements are interpreted.

Verification –It is the researcher's ethical responsibility to report the result as accurately and safely as possible This involves the question of how critical questions can be asked to an interviewer.

Reporting –This is a matter of confidentiality when publishing private interviews and about the published report consequences for the interviewees and the groups to which they belong.   (Brikman & Kvale, 2008).

When it comes to the way the interviews were conducted, two of them were conducted in-person, and two interviews with a computer via Skype and FaceTime. Prior to the ones in person, I checked and tested the rerecording function on Apple IPhone, to be safe in my interviews. It made it easier for me to keep up with what was said, instead of always asking what was said. When it came to the online one, the iPhone was placed next to the computer. All interviewees agreed to the recording prior to the interviews.

There were four producers interviewed in this thesis, two Norwegian, one from the US and one in the UK. So, two of the interviews was carried out through internet, mainly because of one interviewee being located in London, UK, and the other one in Los Angeles, US. Because of the extent of this thesis, with practical and economic reasons in mind, the interviews were conducted through Skype and FaceTime, rather than a phone call, because with that approach, a significant of the conversational aspect disappears, like body language and other features like nodding, movements etc. (Tjora, 2012, p. 140).

I use depth interviews because I want to study options, attitudes and experiences. "in other words, we are looking for the life of the informant (Kvale, 1997), or world-wide from the informant´s point of view." The depth interview as a method is based on a phenomenological perspective where the researcher wishes to understand the informant´s experiences and how the informant reflects on this.

The interviews were initiated by an introduction of ourselves, the master thesis and the issue. I have created the questions and interviews. Based on my problem, the study would focus on finding out how the development of the music producer's role has had an impact on the labor practices of producers and the dynamics between different parts of the industry. It has therefore been looked at how each producer has handled or adapted to the changes and the effect that this development has had on labor practices.

Since parts of the study deal with the change in work practices, it was natural to ask how much the change from traditional to modern execution has been for the producers.

An important prerequisite for successful in-depth interviews is to create a relaxed mood where the informant feels that it is okay to talk openly, although about very personal experiences, where it is allowed to think high and where digression is allowed. (*Spradley 1979,* s. 110*)*

Digitalization has been one of the pillars for why much of the industry and a lot of work practices have changed. I wanted to hear if the producers have seen a particularly big change in how the role of producers had changed and how communication and dynamics between different parts of the industry are changing. In addition, I have heard about the need to update technical hardware and clean exterior is greater than before.

It was important for me to ask questions that would help to highlight and answer my problem. Therefore, I chose to ask whether development has changed work practices. I also asked questions about the dynamics of the other players to hear if they felt that the development has helped to make it easier for every single producer, due to the not being present at the same time. It would also be important for me to hear something about what "cons" producers felt they had in terms of development so that we could discuss and come forward with any measures and changes that could have been highlighted.

3.5.1 Strengths

It opens up to fully explore opinions and gives the chance to hear people's stories. Body language is also something that can be useful when asking questions whether you can see it's uncomfortable for them, or if the questions are misunderstood. In some form, they can be therapeutic for some, to be able to speak out about things they like, or don't like for that matter.

Tracey argues that non-verbal communication is important, and that conveyed interview approaches, like FaceTime and Skype, can increase the level and engagement of sharing. That is one of the reasons we used medias like Skype or FaceTime, because it transfers both sound and video, unlike a phone or a message. (Tracey, 2013, p. 162-164)

3.5.2 Challenges

The challenge of using internet and recordings can be a struggle in itself. It can become awkward, or some parts can fall out so you don't hear the other part and have to ask several times about the same thing.

Subsequently, the questions made in the interview guide could have been clearer, so the questions may have been interpreted a bit different between the different interviewees. A reason for the question not being identical from interview to interview was because I went for a semi-structured method, and searched for personal perspectives within the topic.

There were also some issues with the fact that I started this research as a group research, but that we ended up delivering separate theses. This went quite smooth though, we are still basing our research on the same interviews but it opens for different interpretations.

3.5.3 Ethical Concerns

Another important aspect is the ethics. Ethics has fundamental importance for interview research; It extends beyond ethical rules also covers broad areas such as ethical and social-political uncertainty in social research. This is also something I have taken in consideration when I talk to people, just to respect the interviewees wishes.

I used some form of audio recording, in the interviews. This gave me the assurance that I would get what was being said, while the interview situation could concentrate more on the participants who speak, to ensure good communication and flow in the interview, and ask for deepening and concretization where needed. (Tjora, 2012, p.137)

Much of the ethics associated with interviews are related to presentation of data, for example, regarding anonymization, which is discussed in the general section on ethics. It is important that the informant is being heard, especially with sensitive topics. (Tjora, 2012, p.159)

I always started with asking for permission to record the conversation, and explained the interviewees how the data would be handled. It is very important to ask for permission when you are recording the interview (Tjora, 2012, p. 138).

The aspect of anonymity was talked about during every interview. Every interviewee is entitled to confidentiality (Tracy, 2013, p. 243). Since there were transcriptions I also talked about not being misquoted, and the interviewees got an overview of the quotations being used. They all agreed on me using their name in the thesis.

The aspect of ethics underlies, or should underlie all research. Common decency is a good road to be able to conduct a good ethical research (Tjora, 2012, p. 39-40).

When transcribing the interviews Tjora´s recommendation, to fully transcribe the material, was followed. (Tjora, 2012, p 143). The reason to transcribe as thoroughly was because of the highly relevant aspect of good coherent data, which made it possible to do a better data analysis.

3.5.4 Interview Guide
I chose to share the interview guide in three parts which consisted of first a personal anchoring work execution and, finally, technical. I specifically focused on how individuals experienced the change of work practices during the interviews.

As we know, a lot of the research being done on the music industry examines how it has changed, and been affected by numerous of factors, such as digitalization through technology.

A part of this thesis is to explore how these circumstances are being perceived by the music producer. The questions being asked was therefore written to try get the most out of the interviewees on this topic.

The exploitation of the in-depth interview sifts to create reflection, which can lead to findings that has not been thought about earlier. (Tjora, 2012. p. 135-136).

The interview guide contains two main questions, but there are a few underlying questions as well. My main focus to explore was 'how the music producer has felt the change in the industry, and in addition to, how the producers have adapted to the change'. The underlying questions was dependent on the specific interviewee. Less structure gives more room to discuss rather than to dictate, it also encourages to be creative, being better shaped to adapt, and permits more control over discussion. (Douglas 1985; Tracy, 2013, p. 139).

The goal was to get as detailed answers as possible, therefore the 'hows and whys' were diligently used. Simplicity and clarity is something Tracy point to being quite important to conduct a good interview. (Tracy, 2013, p. 144)

4 Findings

With the interviews my aim was to explore how the music producers and their work have been affected by the changes happening in the whole music industry, and how they have continued their work practices, and adapted to the changes. And last but not least, I wanted to peek into current status of their work, and see how they fits into the music industry and the possibilities for further producer-practices. Some of it will be in a recording studio context.

The theory and literature that is used will function as a framework and a point of reference for the further discussion, and the interviews will be compared to each other and with the literature being used.

In My findings, I have chosen to include;

- The role of the music producer
- Technology transforming The record Industry
- New Business Models
- Work practice and Adaptability
- Economical aspect
- Bedroom Producers
- Investment Level

As well as account for that some questions in the interviews was interpreted differently and to better understand the changes, I have decided to also emphasize historical aspects of the recorded music industry.

4.1 The Role of the Music Producer

If you say 'producer' this is a word that many finds recognizable in a lot of fields, and maybe most in the film industry. Yet, the descriptions of their work tasks may vary a lot, dependent to what field they are in. Bjørn Ole is describing the producer historically as someone who functioned a lot like an A&R, and makes comparisons to the film-industry.

Bjørn Ole:

«The definition of a producer…[…] If you look at the film industry you will see that there is a producer and a director. I would dare to claim that the music producer we know today - or have known the last 20-30 years - is really the 'director', if using the film industry analogy. […] The music producer today is much more artistically present and artistically responsible than the 'traditional' producer that we know from back in the day. Back then, the producer used to be more of an A&R-man […]».

He suggests that the shift in the work-practice has made the producer more involved in the whole recording, and the artistic outcome, more than when they were conducting the role as an A&R, and functioned more as a scout to find new talent. This description is very similar to the research done by Kirby (2015), that is talked about in the theory chapter of the thesis.

There is a shift towards a more entrepreneurial work-ethic, as we can see with the emergence of the independent producer, and has given them a more outstanding role when it comes to the creativity aspect. (Kirby, 2015, p. 148), Bjørn Ole agrees very much to this;

Bjørn Ole:

«Historically, this has gradually changed, to; the music producer becoming the «main man» […] The producer is highly important, because a given project is dependent on the producers 'sound' and the producers qualities, the musicians the producer hires, the producers working environment, which, in turn, attracts the record labels and artists. So that is very very important.»

This indicates the idea of the music producer as a prominent role in the recording studio, and the fact that they can influence the creative process quite a lot.

The increase of record sales in the 70s, such as UK, and that there was a growth internationally, it had a lot to say for the record studio expansion. (Kirby, 2015, p. 213). The DIY aspect also contributed to growth of the smaller studios in the late 70s. This potentially had an impact on the possibilities for the independent producer. Nor should it be ruled out that the producer gained greater creative freedom. Which is the same parallels as Bjørn Ole implies; earlier the industry had more specific roles, and Trevor Lawrence Jr is arguing that there was a clearer division of labour;

Trevor:

«[…] This is how it was originally: It's like, get a songwriter, that, all they wanna do is write songs, they don't wanna be an artist, they write songs. You can go back in history, there are a lot of duos, right. Music and lyrics, right. 50/50. […]
Then you find a producer, the person that called all the musicians, that actually made the song come to life. The producer was the one that sat there every hour, they were the first to get there and the last to leave. And then, the producer a lot of times would also have an arranger. An arranger would come in and literally be the person that took the producers ideas and made it into physical for the musicians, writing charts a lot of times or doing arrangements on the spot of that said or given song. Meanwhile, the producer still was producing it, but the arranger would arrange it. […] You know, all these roles were there.»

It is more how the traditional recording studio looked like according to Kirby (2105). Another interviewee Gary Bromham agrees with that Trevor is indicating, and gives some examples on how it was before;

Gary:

«When I first came into the industry it was very much…everyone had specific roles within the music making process, so it would be an assistant engineer or tape- op. (tape machine operator), there would be an engineer, a producer, there would be session musicians, even programmers. […]»

4.2 Technology transforming The Recorded Music Industry

With the introduction of the new technology it followed new methods in how to produce music. New innovations like MIDI, that was introduced in the 80s is one of the main innovations that has caused a change in the music industry. The skills became something that became easy to learn because of all the courses and tutorials on 'how to', and it became more widespread. The equipment being used was also cheaper, which made it affordable to a lot more people, which led to an increase in home-studios. (Kirby, 2015, p. 230-233).

Bjørn Ole points to the change in the producer role, and argues that the technology and innovation is the main reasons for this.

Bjørn Ole:

«However, the role of the producer has changed alongside technological development. In a way it has become easier to produce, because things can go faster. Technical solutions are available…and of course, a digital recording process is more convenient since things are more 'obtainable' […].»

In the eyes of a drummer and producer, Trevor understands the evolution. He explains how it used to be, before the internet became the norm.

Trevor:

Back in the day you would just make a whole bunch of beats, as many beats as you could make, and you had them on these little deck cassettes, and this is before CD-ROMs were that easy to just do on your own, and it was still a big process to burn a CD.
First we had decks, and we would show up and you have all these beats, and you figure out where the studio is, you try to figure out how to get in the studio, and if the artist is going to be there. And you had your decks with you all times, and then you played them and sometimes you get lucky and somebody wants to get a beat from you, and you know…[…]»

This points to a new structure in work-practice. Before it was all about being where it happened, and putting yourself out there in another way than now.

He also recognizes the internet as the main reason for the change in the music producer role

Trevor:

«The main change is of course the internet. When I started we didn't have the internet, and it was much harder way to «get on», as we call it, and you had to be much more aggressive, and you had to be places physically.

This does not mean that there was less competition, but it was more centered to one place maybe, in comparison to today's mobile work, because of the laptop and softwares. Trevor argues that today's producer role is very similar to what in they in the early days called a programmer.

Trevor:

«Now, with the internet, all of a sudden one guy with a laptop becomes everything! Someone who never produced a vocal, all of a sudden - they are the producer. A lot of times they make a beat with Fruity Loops that is already pre-made, not even with a keyboard - just drag and drop, and that gets turned into a song along the way, because a lot of times these writers - you send them a song and they do it themselves - so at the end of the day there almost is no producer anymore. But, the guy that made the beat always gets the credit as the producer. And it is like, we are seeing a little change in that, but the internet completely has a lot to do with that. That producer role has completely changed man, over the years. Because, what they are calling producers now used to be called programmers, and you were paid like a musician, back in the day. In the 80s - even up to the early 90s - all you were doing was programming. They had a song already, and you were just the «beat-guy». You got paid like a musician, but now that's completely flipped. So, the biggest change I have seen is the role of the producer, and the way that the internet has almost desensitized the experience of writing a song. […]»

Trevor is also mentioning who gets credited for what has changes as well, and the fact that the producer also can be the artist.

There seems to be unanimity when it comes to the role of the producer is being executed differently today. Gary argues that producers often do a lot of other jobs in the industry as well.

Gary:

«[…] I suppose what the democratization of music - even though I hate that term - I suppose what the democratization of music technology is meant, is that we tend to perform many roles. We wear many hats. So it's not uncommon now to find the bedroom producer doing all of those roles themselves.»

Another dimension is being introduced when Christer is talking about the economical aspect;

Christer:

«It seems like there are very few that earn enough money by being only producers. Usually people tend to also incorporate other types of work in addition to be working as producers, such as being a mixing engineer, or a sound-technician, or something else. So that pure…or how should I say this?…The role as a producer where you 'only' are a producer, is almost non-existing nowadays.»

He also points to the fact that the roles in the industry are very blurred out.

Christer:

«Besides, in this new environment where we 'wear several hats', it is more difficult to perform that traditional producer role where producers used to act more from the 'sideline'.»

4.3 New Business Models

Through technology a lot of the innovations has made the music making a lot easier and approachable for everyone. Trevor is talking about the innovations of pre-made loops, with no copyright or royalties-claim. Software companies develops software like Native Instruments, where you can buy plug-ins and sounds. The majority of the hard-ware that were found in professional recording studios is now available as very good software emulations. (Kirby, 2015, p. 312).

Trevor:

«But now what we are seeing is; content being created that's not on records. Content being created solely for the purpose of using on your songs, right.
Native Instruments (.com), there is Splice (sounds, plugins etc.). There are all these places that are now taking the sample concept and making it something that - you know, when you buy it it's yours, and you can use it as many times as you want…and that's cool, but the only thing about that is now you have all these people with the same stuff, right? So, that takes the creativity even less…right, so, the inherent idea of technology is what? It is to make thing easier for humans, but then what happens; then it starts taking the place of jobs for humans. So on a very small scale we are seeing that now […] So the creativity needs to take hold again, because we're getting so much cookie-cutter stuff…it's unbelievable, right?»
According to Kirby (2015) The combination of digital distribution and very affordable software has led to there being more than, 7,000 releases a week and this only in Beatport,

and 3000 on Juno. So, this makes a very clear picture on how many new releases there is internationally in just a week.

Gary argues that we are living in an instant world, and that we want things right here and now; *«[…] You have to bear in mind that people are very much in the mode where they want things now. it's very instant. Everything is instant. It's about convenience. Not quality, really. Even though with audio files we'll have aspirations to making the best sounding records ever. In reality the consumer doesn't want that. Most of it is consumed with earbuds, and certainly headphones. More than 70 precent of the music now. So it's very much about convenience, and I think technology is very much about convenience, in the recording studio…well, the recording studio being the laptop now. It's very much about instant gratification, and that isn't always the best thing for creativity.»*

The digitalization has also introduced the Mp3 format, and Bjørn Ole has some interesting things to say about that; Bjørn Ole: *«I think it is terrible to work in the studio with 192kHz- and 32-Bit audio, and…there is no better sound quality than that at the moment, and there is a clear audible difference between that and an mp3. But 95 percent of music listeners they listen to mp3! […] It is simply being compressed down to 160kbps…»*

The software has also led into a different business model when it comes to the subscription to music software, like Splice for instance, they are offering a subscription offer, instead of buying a whole package of plugins, loops, instruments or FXs. Gary is talking about these models as something positive; Gary: *«I like the business model by the way. I like the business model of subscription for software. I believe that's the way it will go with everybody. […] Lots of companies now are starting to rent software. […] I think that's the business model. So that you can switch subscription on or off. […]»*

And when it comes to the creativity aspect we live in a 'drag and drop' way of creating music. The aspect of putting a project file into a dropbox-file, then send it to a vocalist or to another producer to keep on working on that specific project, is almost become the way to make music.

4.4 Work Practice and Adaptability

What it comes down to with the change to digital is being relevant and adapt to the change, this is what Trevor experience;

Trevor:

«[…] The other thing about being a producer, the producer-side of me, - anything you do musically or business wise - you can never let your ego lead. I'm not 18 years old, I'm not 20, I'm not in the clubs every night…[…] but that is a necessary pulse that you have to…still have your finger on. So, I have to always make sure I stay relevant, and stay with what…what is going on. […] I don't just sit and lock myself in a room and make beats anymore. I'm more into writing songs, right. So, I've just been lucky enough to be in situations where now - I can write songs, you know. A lot from the drums and everything, and in a group-atmosphere. And when I work with Dre (Dr. Dre (eller fotnote?)), you know, even though that's computers I still bring a lot…you know, I use a lot of drums, and a lot of stuff, so…I don't have to just sit here and be…you know, doing a million tracks just to see if I can get one on, I mean, it is a little bit more exclusive, right? […]»

Trevor brings in the mobility aspect with being able to have anything necessary in a small laptop.

Trevor:

«[…] generally the technology - as far as my workflow - it has definitely allowed me to be mobile, which is great […] and I remember when it first started happening, say in like 2003 - 2004, when I was excited about being mobile, and that was like three or four Pelican cases (Pelican is a company that makes equipment-cases, travel gear and other products. FOTNOTE?), and I was like: «Oh, it's so small now, you can just bring a whole studio in three or four huge Pelican cases!», and now it's a freakin' backpack, and that wasn't a backpack - it was 20 times more powerful than that! So, you know, that's also fun too - using the technology that's available. I'm interested in that, so I'm always trying to see what's the new thing. I'm always trying to stay up with what's…whatever is going on.»

It also has something to do with the creativity, mobility makes it possible to put down an idea fast. It does not kill creativity, which is something that happens when something takes forever to set up. Gary argues that it is very convenient being able to be more mobile than before.

Gary:

«[...] I like the idea of mobility. So for me when I'm purchasing I am also thinking about mobility. If I want to go in to the recording studio I really want to be able to pack up my studio in 20 minutes, and take it with me. [...] Traditionally now, we work «in the box»...I don't think we work in the box because we think it sounds better. I think we work in the box primarily because it's more convenient. So, that's changed for me. [...]»

Christer points out that it is all about renewal, and trying to adapt to changes, and he tries to look at difficulties as a 'challenge' rather than an 'obstacle'.

Christer:

«I have worked a lot on being efficient in the studio, without compromising creativity. [...] It is just the work method that changes. If I feel that I have optimized a certain workflow, I reach a point where I think: «OK, I have to try something different.» So that I always search for improvement. [...] I think that to see 'opportunities' rather than 'limitations' is a key ingredient.»

4.5 Economical Aspect

Streaming services is undergoing a process where they are adapting their service to mention or include credits for songs, singles and albums.

Trevor:

«[...] As far as a producer goes...any range of things can happen, I mean there is plenty of times where people get producer credit, but they don't even have the business to back it up. You know, if you look on a record and it says: «Produced by 'so and so'», it doesn't mean that you actually have a production agreement with the label where you gonna make sure you get X amount of royalties, and you got a producers-advance that's recoupable. It doesn't necessarily mean that. [...]»

Christer acknowledge the struggle the past years when talking about the financial aspect in the business;

Christer:

«It was in year 2000 or 2001 that I started doing this (working as a producer and mixing engineer) fulltime. Kind of at the time when things started to 'unravel'. So the timing

was…[…] The generation before me had larger budgets, and could work within different parameters. Up until last year (2017) I have felt that I have worked in an industry that have been in downturn. The budgets gradually decreased…and one could notice that the business went through quite a long transitional phase. It was not so much about the possibilities, but rather the negative sides with it. And I think many resisted the transition. […]An interesting aspect to this is that the studio I run now, which was initially established in 1978, then had an hourly fee of 750 NOK plus VAT. Today the hourly fee is exactly the same; 750 NOK plus VAT! […] We are at a point were the indexation in society eventually will catch up with you. […] So we have to raise the fees and rates, because 750 NOK an hour…it is very low.»

Bjørn Ole argues that weather you are the producer or have added something creative or something that brings value to a project, you should be compensated in one way or another.

Bjørn Ole:
«I think that if you have added creative or artistic value to a project, you should make sure that you are being compensated for it. […] Often you agree to, or sign, specific deals. Whether you should get a flat fee, or get a percentage as a composer or writer (which in turn means royalties-payment). […] Or, you can get a C-category, which is actually called 'conductor' or 'musical leader' (se GRAMO). It is that distinction if whether or not you have had an 'artistic role'. That is important. […]»

When It comes to the economic aspect it has become better in a way that the producer role is enlightened within [5]GRAMO especially.

4.6 Bedroom Producers

As seen in the theory above, a lot of the new technological innovation has made it easier for everyone to become a producer. There are 1000nds of software programs that is available for download that tries to copy the sound of the real hard-ware. It is uncountable numbers of tutorials on how to do everything from recording a vocal track to mixing and mastering. (Kriby, 2015. P 352)

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[5] Gamo was funded for the artist, musicians and master-owners that invests money, time and talent, so that they get paid when their music is being used on radio or in public.

There are a lot of technology courses available for the for the normal home-producer, that leaves some technical ability, but not the whole other aspect when it comes to the financial realities for the profession. It is difficult both for the new and the established producer to maintain a gainful employment. Another point is the problem in gaining work and low payments, exhausting long hours in studio. So, for many youngsters the only opportunity is to start for themselves in a bedroom-studio. (Kirby, 2015. P 352).

One of the things all the producers agrees on is that the soft-ware and plugins has made it easier for everyone to make their own music, and in fact the home studio opportunity has come with some benefits as well. It is a matter of not having to worry about the time any more, and how many times you press record. There is the possibility to try again, and again.

Bjørn Ole:

«[…] The bedroom producers, as we now call them, have been very important. We know that many artists do very good pre-productions these days. With pre-production I am obviously thinking about composing, but also arranging, and good recording-takes. In Logic or whatever DAW they choose to use.»

He is adding that there is a big advantage in not working within a certain time frame, as often done in a professional studio.

Bjørn Ole:

«What is also positive with home studios, and pre-production, is that you actually got time to think. You got time to look at yourself objectively, and try again, and again, and again, and again. You do not have to be concerned about the clock ticking, - which you maybe would have been concerned about if you payed a fee to record - within a certain timeframe - at a studio facility.»

He also mentions what is being said earlier about the "many hats" producer. Today it is normal that the producer him or herself can be both artist and producer.

Bjørn Ole:

«[…] The artist Moby was one of the first to…He released a fantastic album…[…] He had no need for anyone other than himself…when creating his music. And he considered himself a

producer 'from top to bottom' - as a producer should -, and at the same time as a creative soul with a 'message'. Also, he presented sort of a dogma. Because, the album became a huge success, and it got me and other producers and musicians like: «How did he do it?»

Another aspect of the home-studio is that it does not matter where the recordings happened if a vocal recording is about to be done, because a lot of the other tracks is programmed anyways. Trevor adds on that is does not matter whether it is recorded at home, if it sounds good.

Trevor:
«[…] So home studios now...I mean, listen; If we're just recording vocals and everything else is gonna be programmed it doesn't matter what kind of room you have for drums 'cause you're not using it like that, right? If you're doing all the drums on the keyboard and the plugins, and you just gotta cut a vocal, I mean, man, you can cut a vocal anywhere these days. […] The studio has completely changed, so my philosophy is; I don't care what it is, where it came from, I just care what happens when you press «play».

Trevor:
«On some levels it's given a tremendous amount of leveling of the playing-field, because if you can achieve a sound that's palatable and compares, it doesn't matter where it came from. […]»

The fact that a lot of people saw the digitalization as a threat to the music industry in a known fact, but as it seems on both Trevor and Christer, the new "home producers" is not a direct threat.

Trevor:
«[…] The home studio, I think that that…it's not such a big issue anymore. It's more about…»What are you doing?», «How does it sound?». That's my thing. People can tell me: «I recorded this at Abbey Road» […] «How does it sound? Let me hear it». 'Cause guess what, if it's a shit song, it's not gonna change that, and if you don't know what you're doing - and you went there just because of the name of the studio -, that's not gonna change either, right?[…]»

But Christer adds that for some producers that is mainly doing pre-productions and demos, it might be more difficult.

Christer:

«What I think more and more people are realizing - and I think this is important - is that music production and mixing is an art form in its own. […] I do not feel that I compete directly with bedroom producers really. I do however think that if you are a producer at another point in your career, where you are mainly doing pre-production and demos, it could be a lot more difficulties or challenges with that.»

There seem to be a correlation between the fact that a good studio does not necessarily guarantee a successful hit, but a good producer with a good artist and a great song, that is the key aspect. It all has to do with a certain sound, and what Trevor reputedly says, "it all comes down to what happened when I press play."

Christer also mentions that there is a lot of positive aspects with the "bedroom producers" and one of them being that the bands demos and pre-productions has become significantly of a higher quality than it has been earlier.

Christer:

«I think that the increased prevalence of there being home studios and bedroom producers is positive! Nowadays, the pre-production can be of considerable quality, and I always encourage customers to bring their pre-production audio files. I have noticed that artists or bands is focused upon things being recorded properly and professionally.
Also, it seems to be this 'feeling' about something being done in a professional environment.»
Sometimes when a band comes to me with their pre-production material, and it sounds great, then I could be thinking that there is no point in recording that material once more just because we are in a proper studio. If I then tell this to the band they can almost seem a bit 'disappointed' in a way. They can feel that to use a pre-production-take as the final result is not proper enough.»

Trevor also adds that a hit song is a hit no matter the quality of the recording itself. He guessed that the vocals for the song "*Uptown Funk*" probably was recorded with a [6]SM57 handheld microphone. Then he argues: *«Everything is not this grandiose produced, perfectly recorded, thing. It's a hit! That's a hit if you recorded it on your iPhone that's a hit! See what I'm saying? So, doesn't matter!»*

It might be harsh, but Trevor calls out the "not smart enough" has dug their own grave. They feel the pressure. It is all about being prepared for something to change, we all know everything is changing, and sometimes in high speed. Being up to date is a key element, and make sure to be best equipped for that change to come.

Trevor:
«[…] They feel the pressure. Those that weren't smart enough to move ahead, right? […] you have to be prepared for what's gonna happen. The studios that were smart they're thriving! This is what it is: « Let me build a couple of rooms just with big speakers and for these kids to plug in their laptops so we can stay in business». Meanwhile we'll have our great 'kneeroom' here for the people that need that.»»

Even though some of the big ones has closed, there is more studios than ever, but they are based on digital technology. (Kirby, 2015, P. 323). Christer is adding to what Trevor says about being ready, or equipped for a change. So, he says for his part it has been all about finding new ways to make records.

Christer:
«For me personally, I have usually had a lot of work all the way, so it is not that I have not managed to keep customers. We have had to find new ways of making records, I guess. What I have seen from the sideline is that many studios closed. Many of the big ones, especially. Several producers like me, on my level at the time, also did quit, because the competition for the work that paid got very, very high. »

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[6] The SM57 is a low-impedance, cardioid, dynamic microphone produced by Shure.

4.7 Investment Level

When it comes to the financial aspect of the music industry it is always a struggle, at least in the beginning. There is often so much time and money invested into hours of practicing, or getting in the right customers and clients, being where it happens, and buying all the equipment needed to be able to do the best job possible.

It must be acknowledge that the producers we´ve conducted the interviews with is producers that have made it good for themselves, and are in the position to "choose" the work they want to do.

What it seems like from all of the interviews is that they´re now on a level that they can prioritize what they want to do, instead of being so desperately in need of money, that they take on every request. They invest time and money into things they believe will benefit themselves and the project they are working on. Trevor says he still spend his own money over budget, but it is mostly a time thing, and it is usually for a specific record.

Trevor: «Yeah, you know, I have to prioritize. […] I still spend a lot of my own money above the budgets, because there's a certain record I wanted to make. […] It's mostly a time thing. If I have a writing session with so and so, like say with Dre (Dr. Dre), and I have a friend that wants me to record drums on their project, I gotta prioritize.

"Investment level, it just depends on…it's a certain flow, and for me it's always about what's the bigger overall payoff. What's gonna be the best decision for the long run, not the right now. So I try to make decisions based of that, musically, right?»

Trevor is leading into another aspect of the investment level and that has to do with the artistic expressions, who do they want to be as producers, and is it all about making money from it? The artistic expression has a lot to do with self-expression, and being able to put his or hers' emotions into a project (Moralee, 2018) in this matter, the producer has to "feel" the project, or that something triggers them to feel that they can make it better with their touch.

And the role of sale-identity is important to many. (Kirby, 2015. P, 352) Christer says he does this out of respect, because he does not want to take on something he does not feel he could add on to.

Christer:

«Now I can prioritize which projects I choose to take on, but…that is part of a bigger thought really. Out of respect for those who have created something, I believe that for me to take on a certain project - I must be able to add something to it, and be enthusiastic about it. To not feel that way about a project, and still say 'yes' to work on it - or to say 'yes' just for money's sake…that is so fundamentally wrong I think. »

But he also outlines that there is rarely a situation where he doesn't get excited, and where he doesn't find anything to be enthusiastic.

Christer:

«For instance, if I have been available to take on new projects, and have gotten new requests, I have still decided to recommend someone else to work on the project. Because I thought or believed that another producer or engineer would do a better job, and be more enthusiastic about it. However, for me personally, when considering new projects, it is almost hard to NOT find something that I like about it, or makes me enthusiastic»

It is a known fact that the recording studios, producers and staff contributes to a lot of the national income in the biggest music countries such as the US and the UK. In 2016 this segment contributed with 121 million euros in the UK, and an export revenue on 24 million euros. (Stassen, 2015). The export level in Norwegian music has increased a lot in the past few years as well. But as our interview objects all have in common is that they do not do it for the money. Trevor means that if you do this stuff just for money, it compromises with integrity.

Trevor:

«[…] Everybody has different levels, so for me I try to make sure that I'm not doing stuff just for the money. It should never be 'just for the money' because then you're compromising your integrity man. […]»

Bjørn Ole is absolutely on wave length with Mr. Trevor, he leaves it with "game over" if you are just in it for the money.

Bjørn Ole:

«It should never, from a producer's perspective, be about money! Then it is 'game over'. I will choose to say that it only is the art and the artistic expression that truly matters. And once again, as a producer, it is your responsibility to elevate the whole project to the best it can be.»

It comes down to what you feel comfortable with, and what you actually can give to a certain project. Christer says that he often recommends other producers to project because he feels that they can do a better job than him, not necessary in terms of skills, but the genre, the sound etc. This comes down to the artistic expression again, being aware of what you´re good at and what not.

Christer:

«For instance, if I have been available to take on new projects, and have gotten new requests, I have still decided to recommend someone else to work on the project. Because I thought or believed that another producer or engineer would do a better job, and be more enthusiastic about it. However, for me personally, when considering new projects it is almost hard to NOT find something that I like about it, or makes me enthusiastic»

Bjørn Ole is also sharing the same views as Christer. It is as common for producers as it is for the artist itself to have a strong emotional connection to their work, and the motivation is not necessarily the money but a chance to be involved in making music regularly. (Kirby, 2015, P 352).

Bjørn Ole:

«I can turn down requests if I do not feel that a particular project is not right for me. Maybe another producer is better suited to do that particular project. I recommend several other producers and studios. And that is by no means…that I try to seem… pretentious or anything, but what I mean is; I always enter a project with 100 percent commitment. It is «all in». So, when deciding on a project, I want to make sure if I can add something to it, and to show devotion, and if the things I can add to the project is meaningful to the whole project. And if you do not feel those things I think that to turn down the request -and recommend someone else that I think can do a better job -, is the right choice.»

When it comes to the investments in studio gear and equipment its very different from studio to studio, and as well for the individual producer. Supple outlines that every studio nowadays is a bit [7]'boutique-y', mostly because its necessity to provide something different, like a specific amp or a microphone. (Kirby, 2015, P 353). They all seem to invest in the things that matter to them, and things that will benefit them in the long run. There has been a tendency to going back to the old analogue and hardware for a nostalgia feel, and Gary explains why he feels better with the hardware at the time.

Gary:
«In terms of purchasing equipment for my studio; actually I think a lot more about making small things count a lot. Whereas before I would throw loads of technology at problems. Actually, I'm going through a period at the moment where I'm getting back into analog synthesizers again, and I'm deliberately not using plugins. I feel much better about buying hardware, than I do buying software. Much better. Software to me is like buying a piece of air, and quite often what will happen is I will never use that plugin again.»

Christer is all about the good quality pieces, he wants the best of the best, but waits till he can afford it. I can speak from a personal stand that Christers studio is over the top and looks really nice, the work coming out of the studio is also of the best quality.

Christer:
«I have always been thinking that; I only invest or buy anything if it is of high quality, and I wait until I can afford it. I have not felt that I have taken any significant risks regarding investments. Actually, I took a risk when I bought the studio I now run, because the studio building is funded by a loan. So, investing in the studio I now own and run, is probably the first economic risk I have taken. The reason for doing it is that I have a relatively steady growing group of customers. On the other hand, I would never take up a loan to buy new speakers. For such decisions; the music industry is way to risky.»

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[7] Boutique-y means to resemble a fashionable shop, or a small boutique that is a little different and stands out.

5 Discussion

After exploring and examine the music producers' role after the digitalization, this final chapter will discuss the most interesting aspects based on the findings I have done. Its focus will be to highlight the most interesting findings, and back it up with theory, to figure out how and why as well as what it has led to.

It is very obvious based on my findings, that the work practices for the music producer has gone through a huge overhaul. Tech-fueled earthquakes have stirred the whole music industry, and it is very easy to point finger on whose fault all of this is. But as heard above there is a blame to everyone. Everyone has a duty to stay relevant, it has just become easier to see who has and who has not.

5.1 Music Production in The Hands of the Mass

The emergence of the so called 'bedroom studio' or 'bedroom producer' has increased drastically. Nobody needs a specific budget or anyone's permission to record something, or to make it available for the mass. New scenes and styles have emerged and challenges the saying, 'what it takes' to make something that can build a huge audience. (Vietze, 2016)

Gary: Yeah, so, the bedroom studio now has become the norm. Large recording studios are now becoming increasingly uncommon. People are changing the way that they work; they're working on headphones, they're working with a laptop. […]»

The first wave of independent producers introduced some recording practices that were not found in the corporate studios where there was a strict protocol governing engineering practices. These innovative techniques became integral to popular music recording and production and were quickly adopted by other practitioners in the audio engineering community. (Kirby, 2015)

Gatekeepers that once had safe grounds, must now rethink their role every day. Sometimes they are just not needed anymore, but sometimes people desperately need them due to the

paradox of choice, which I will discuss later, and this is some of the reason for the increased number in curated playlists, as an example. (Vietze, 2016)

A reason for the big studios shutting down was the introduction of MIDI technology, that had a huge impact on the business models within the professional studio. And the adoption of the DAW productions with Pro Tools being the standard equipment in every studio, there was no longer needed to hire studio time to clients. (Kirby, 2015, P. 322)

5.1.1 Emergence of the sound

Diversity of sound and emergence of musical genres threats the idea of mass marketing. Songs and artists tend to come out of nowhere. And imitation is immediately followed, the instrument becomes the product, rather than the actual tool. Amateur create music that is pushed out, instead of using 'professional recordings', and 'professional producers'. (Vietze, 2016).

The aspect of nostalgia is also something that caught my interest, though it seems to be a common denominator of the music sound development. It is not only the idea of nostalgia in the analog aspect, but the idea of finding the retro sound in the digital technology. The early days of digital was often associated with difficulties, and inaccuracies and poor sound quality. But in all of that there was the aspect of charm. The quirky sounds, and few options was some sort of what made them special.

A lot of the new digital tools tries to emulate analogue equipment, but for the new producers that has not experienced the old analog, it can be hard to find a set-up that gives the same vibes. That is one of the reasons that the professional producers do not necessarily feels threatened by the 'bed-room' producer, because it can be quite hard to copy a sound that you have not worked with before. *[…] Many digital tools tries to emulate analogue equipment, and since I have experience working with an analogue setup and know how to use it, I could have a greater advantage than those not familiar with analogue equipment...» (Christer)*

We are walking in memories lanes more than ever, and the fact that cultural innovation is stagnating is a fact (Harvey, 2011). Music makers tends to think that they are making new and innovative things, but if you strip it down and analyze it, it is easy to see that there is a reference to something that is already done, and most likely something that is pretty in the hot

seat at the moment. It does not necessarily mean that this is a conscious move, but we as humans tend to go for the familiar. There is an underlying question though: Is the nostalgia just totally normal? Or is it todays' fixation about it which is 'wrong'? (Harvey, 2011).

I guess there is nothing wrong with being inspired about something, but there has to be an aspect of innovation as well. Especially if the things you are making is sought to be sustainable. Simon Reynold claims that it is nothing new, but it is easier now than ever due to the technological innovations and digital advantages (Harvey, 2011).

The question is, should we be worried about the future? Because if we look back ten years, it seems like nothing but unimaginative retro, and that the next generation has nothing to build on (Harvey, 2011).

A way to look at it is that looking backwards is the only way for us humans to move forward. But this does not necessarily need to happen a certain way. One way is the, [8]'Retromania', culture that is recycled from the past, or the 'future rush', the need to move forward quite fast. But there is a necessity to know what we hear when we hear it, and understand what is a sample from old time being used in newer time. (Harvey, 2011) Kanye's album 'life of Pablo' is overweighed with old classics that he has sampled and re-used in his own songs, with a modern twist on it.

5.1.1.1 Achieving the 'good' sound
To achieve equally as good quality with a digital setup as with the analog set up has been a struggle for many. Christer argues the he likes the sounds coming from the analog-stuff better. *«Because the analogue equipment that I have sounds so much cooler, in my opinion!»*

A lot of the modern music sounds the same, and technology makes it bland. And a lot of the focus can be put in the percussion phase where the technically produced beats has taken over for the live drum. And the ones that is left is sort of expected to play in time with a "click". The 'perfect' sound is so in there that it almost kills the realness of the music, every vocal track is cut and edited where all the breathing is gone, every pitch is top notch, and the lack of dynamics is really a thing.

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[8] Obsession with past things

A study from the Medical University of Vienna in Austria studied 15 genres and 374 subgenres. The genres' complexity was rated over time, measured by timbre and acoustical variations and compared to the sales. They figured out that the more popular a genre was it also became more generic. Music is simplified and made so similar so that our human brains can understand that there is a familiar aspect, but not only that, if the songs being made are to complex, people just don not get it and just shuts off almost (Barnes, 2015).

The findings are somewhat intuitive. The science is proving the now-dominant truth of pop music: The big companies is only comfortable in selling things they already know is going to sell itself, and this can be calculated now better than ever. Because the record companies spend so much money on data analysis tools, so they can predict what songs that becomes the next hit. (Barnes, 2015)

The findings that proves this is that it is pointing toward less variety in pitch transitions, we turn more towards a consistent homogenization of the [9]timbral palette, and the clearest fact, towards a louder, and most definitely, a much poorer volume dynamic' because everything is supposed to be so loud. This is also a reason for the cover-song take-off, this is familiar, right? (Webster, 2012).

This study says it all, and it is clearer now than ever. Some thought that with streaming and digitalization there would be easier for the niche genres to bloom, but instead it has become much more difficult for the low-and mid-popular artists. And very favorable for the top end artists and producers.

The top songs are being played twice as much now than a decade ago. We as humans crave what we know of, we choose what we know. (Barnes, 2015). Another aspect of this, which I find to be very interesting is that all of this can be linked with the fact that we have too many choices, therefore we shut down and play what is given to us, which is the radio and curated playlists. This is will discuss later when I talk about 'The Paradox of choice".

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[9] In music, timbre is known as tone color or tone quality, and is the perceived sound quality of a musical note. (Wikipedia, 2018).

5.1.2 Shift in Academia

Another aspect of internet and innovations is the increasing number of tutorials that are out there. Like Pensado´s place which is a website for learning music production, mixing ext., or Gearslut.

It is a lot of resources out there now, which was not available earlier. So, earlier producers had to learn that stuff, compared to now, where you can google it and find places that shows you. Garry argues that he is worrying about the simplicity in terms of academia. *«In fact, it does worry me in terms of academia. I think, what I'm seeing is a shift in academia where they're less focused on facts in terms of: «Oh, use this EQ». They're more interested in aesthetics, they're more interested in artificial intelligence. They're more focused on those things that you can't really do over the internet. So, actually, there is still some, a sense of…Academia is about collaboration and about interaction, and about interdisciplinary areas, so where you're mixing science with humanities and aesthetics. And I think the focus of academia quite rightly is in that area now. Because… […] You can find out anything you like now, can't you? »*

"It starts with a tidal wave of free or inexpensive educational videos allowing children and others with the will and dedication to learn and master instruments, vocals, and other musical and recording techniques. The explosion of electronic music tools allows an individual to expand their artistic vision onto more instruments and sounds, re-creating entire bands or orchestras" (Vietze, 2016).

The big studios have also picked up the idea of the educational videos to alternate an income outside the actual studio work. Studios like Abbey Roads offers online courses in mixing and mastering. (Kirby, 2015). This is good in a way, cause with a studio like that there is a certain acceptance, or a validation aspect. But again, it is absolutely in its place to argue that it is a superficial approach to the craft. Like some of the producers have mentioned, they worked for years under professional producers to learn whatever would make them a good producer themselves, unlike today, you can google a word like 'how to make a good 808 drum beat', and thousands of videos on how to do it will appear.

And with all these online technology courses, the students will leave with some technical ability, but they do not teach them about the actual world, and how to deal with the financial responsibilities of their chosen profession (Kirby, 2015).

This can both be a good thing and a not so good thing as some of the producers mentions. There is a lot of young, and old, talent out there, so the fact that there are possibilities to work with so much more talent is a good thing. But it has its downside too, because a lot of the quality in the music that comes out, especially in the mix and master part of the songs, are quite bad. This makes the music scene even more noisy than it already is.

5.1.3 'Bedroom' Producers

The fact that it is cheaper to do music today, both in recording phase and production phase, has participated to effectively democratized access to music production (Kirby, 2015, p. 369).

The first rush in the independent producers presented some recording practices that people had not seen in the corporate studios, due to the strict protocol governing the technique. These innovative practices were quickly picked up by the audio engineering community (Kirby, 2015, p. 96).

The 'Bedroom studio' has spread very much and has become very popular both for amateurs and others. Nobody needs anybody's' permission or a significant budget to record music and make it available. Styles and scenes have emerged in unexpected places challenging past notions of "what it takes" to make music that can build an audience (Vietze, 2016).

This makes a structural change in the whole industry and the inadvertent "gatekeepers" of yesterday have to re-think their role every day. Sometimes their value in the market shrinks because they are not needed in the realm of permission to create or distribute. Sometimes their value grows because people are overwhelmed by choice, and they become curators (Vietze, 2016).

Gary takes it to that the bedroom studio is the norm in modern recording or production;
«Yeah, so, the bedroom studio now has become the norm. Large recording studios are now becoming increasingly uncommon. People are changing the way that they work; they're working on headphones, they're working with a laptop. [...]»

This skews us a bit into the [10]'cottage industry' term, which was how they did their work, because the need of the professional studio was decreasing, and people saw the opportunity to

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[10] The 'cottage industry' term means that in 21st century the music production takes place in a variety of different facilities rather than the "professional studio environment" (Kirby, 2015, P. 323).

use other facilities. And the American record companies were undertaken by the growth of independent studios.

5.2 The New Workday

Due to the technological finesse, there has been an increase of technological innovations that has made the work practice of the music producer a bit different. The home studios has taken over in a big way, but there are some things that they never really can compete against, the room feeling for instance, Garry argues that there is a lack of 'real space' *«[…] I feel that the home studio is missing…it usually misses real space. Now, I'm not saying that you need to work in a great recording studio to capture real space. You can work in a great church or you can work in a country house or something like that, and create the same vibe. […] They need to worry about acoustics because they're not perfect. For me, in my room, I have a lot of sound treatment and soundproofing, in my room upstairs in the attic. But it's still not like going into a studio.»*

There is a fixation about having all the plugins and new software, but there might be a lack of appreciation to the things like the acoustic, to be able to hone that perfect vibe. Trevor is also arguing that there has never been or is a real substitute to physics *«[…] So, you know, I'm not gonna say ever that there still yet not been a true substitute for physics, A, …which is the studio, right? […] there's never been a substitute for the right microphone for the right instrument […]. There's never been a substitute for that. We have great derivatives of it, but there's never been a substitute for that because that is science and physics, and what we deemed to be the right sound.»*

So, a lot of their new every day is to deal with all this 'new' things, but still worry about those important things that once and still makes them attractive to work with. Christer also means that the advantage of using an external man or woman (like a producer) in a project is quite important. *«For instance, if you have the opportunity to hire an external person that you trust to produce your music, but you choose not to hire that person, you are maybe not optimizing your music. A producer, external to the band, can be very valuable when it comes to bringing out the best in - and optimize- a particular performance, or recording the best possible take, and so on.»*

Another change that I believe all of the people working in the industry has felt (except from the ones all the way on the top), is that there is a lot less money around in the industry. Garry says for his part that this is maybe the clearest change, and puts it out like; *«So I think for me - the changes I've certainly seen is - there's a lot less money around in the music industry now. There is still people who are making mo…I mean, obviously, Ed Sheeran and Taylor Swift, and One Direction, and all of these…they're still making a lot of money, but predominantly the music industry now has become a 'cottage industry' […] »*

This is quite true, and it is easy to see in a way that the reducing of budgets has made it far less common for a music producer to oversee a project from start to finish, they might do a part of it, like a master or a mix, but not the whole thing (Kirby, 2015, P. 324).

5.2.1 Interpersonal communication with no time and place

The aspect of no time and place is also very interesting, because a lot of the new ways are very interpersonal and with very interpersonal connection and relationship. There is a lot of work happening 'behind the scenes'.

One of the most important jobs for a producer is the part of bringing the best out of the artist, and creating that special environment. This is still present, and important; therefore, a lot of the big act still want to work with a producer in a professional recording studio. The tracks can still be sent around to different producers and mixed by one and mastered by another, but the fact that the recording process happens together with the people you are working with, is still an important thing to bring out the best result.

Christer also has a strong feel on this, and still means that all these parameters are still present, but he argues that to which extent the producer enter the role as the decision-maker, is more varying. This should be entirely up to the band or artist to decide.

It is hard to escape the fact that music is an interaction between musicians, producers and engineers. And when all of these people are together, this creates a certain dynamic. Garry calls it; *an «air» of uncertainty»*, which is something good.

Technology tends to dedicate the way producers should work, so, in other words, when using a piece of software, it some sort of suggests the way you should be working. This makes it very predictable with the certain technology. People are thinking a lot less out of the box,

Garry argues that for him, this is the main way technology has changed the producer role; *«It's become more anti-social»*.

When musicians are working together in a room, they interact, and that interaction creates a dynamic that forces them to go out of that comfort zone, quite often. This is because there is a certain pressure to perform, and this makes the interesting results. So, it is still very important for producers to be able to work with the artist or band to create that magic.

5.3 Emergence of technology – convenient or disruptive?

What it seems like from the research and a lot of the things that came out from the findings I did, is that the focus of the technology companies is very much based on emulation, not innovation. If we take a close look into technological innovation there are quite a few innovations in the music technology. Gary points to that we are very tied to what is familiar, and feels safe with that. "*We're very tied to the studio paradigm, if you understand. We are very much stuck in that mode where 'familiar' is best. And if you're gonna make changes you have to make very small incremental changes, not big changes.*"

And some of the problem might derived from this, in a way that we have a design-philosophy, and that it somewhat limits us in terms of possibilities from equipment and instruments. Furthermore, he argues that; "*We're very much still tied to that tradition, and I find that the idea that tradition and innovation are opposed to each other…quite alien. I think that tradition and innovation will always work together. The way they work best is to work together.*" Brian Eno talks a lot about this new idea aspect, and means that every new idea generally starts from an old idea. This can in a lot of ways be put into the music technology aspect, where we tend to look back, not forward.

There is also an interesting aspect of the relation between creativity and actually making music, versus the idea that something you make is innovative and you come up with crazy ideas, but do not really make any music.

Innovation and creativity are often words that are mentioned in the same settings, but they do have a quite different meaning. Creativity is the capability to act and create something original, while innovation is the creation of something new that can have value to others. So,

Creativity is not innovation or vice versa (Fallon, 2014). The main difference is the focus. Creativity is hard to measure, and is about unleashing the inner potential to create something new. Whilst on the other hand innovation is measurable, it is about conceive something that makes a change. Theodore Levitt argues that *"what is often lacking is not creativity in the idea-creating sense but innovation in the action-producing sense, i.e. putting ideas to work."* (Business Insider, 2013) Just like Gary agues earlier in this paragraph.

Technology companies have become an important part of the music industry, firms like Apple have produced the IPod which led to the production of ITunes, that was not meant as something more than a tool to sell the iPods' (Moreau, 2013, p. 26). Our listening habits are also changing a lot, we tend to want to listen the easiest way possible, and more important 'on the go', so a lot of people are listening through headsets. This is something that is changing a lot for the music producer, the soundscape is way more compressed than before, so the Music Producers must keep this in mind while mixing and mastering. It is also more important that is sounds good on every device, earlier there were one or two places people listened to music, while today there is a lot of opportunities. The compressed sound, were triggered by the volume-wars. People pushed their mixes too much to be heard on nightclubs or wherever they played music. So, to be able to do this the songs are so compressed, that there is a lack of dynamic which you may find more of in the earlier music that was released. So, innovations by non-music companies affects the way we consume music, and the consumer behaviors.

Technology has subjected the traditional business model of recording-studios and the small DAW-facilities has taken over the role of the traditional studios. The combination of digital technologies has somehow proven to be very disruptive for the industry

5.3.1 Improved techs

Years of research, trying and failing has led to huge improvements on software and digital conversion. There has been produced numbers of tools that can perform very complex audio processing tasks. Melodyne DNA is one of them, what this does is that it separates the notes from the chord, that makes it possible to re-pitch the notes. Other well used software is 'Auto Tune', 'Beat detective', and quantizing. The difference between the software and the original hardware becomes smaller and smaller, but the professional producers that have worked with the old claims that it is hard to duplicate with software, because it often lacks the ugly aspect.

When it comes to the presence of the home producing Technology like MIDI and other innovations might lead us or have led us into a democratization of music tech, but questions the fact that is real, or if it is perceived. This technology is huge to a group of amateurs, but outnumbers the professionals.

5.3.2 Lack of innovation, or lack of limitations?

It is being argued that technology has become a 'crutch', and we are striving for something perfect with no soul. Technology can enable, but also constrain (Kirby, 2015, p. 369). New software synth for example, they are only limited by choice, and in many cases that can be ridiculously hard to choose. So, in a session you spend way too long time to figure out a cool sound rather than an old hardware synth that just had three or four (possibly some more) options. Garry says that; *«They have a kind of full spectrum of sounds, they're not limited in bandwidth, but in some cases once again the limitation is the personality of the instrument. So, I'm thinking of the AKAI MPC drum machines. You know, the early ones versus the ones that we have now. In some ways the early ones were very limited sonically, but they sounded - to my ears they sounded better. So I suppose that's one aspect of this to me.»*

This is what brings the discussion into the paradox of choice. This is quite comprehensive field, so I will take a brief moment to talk a bit about 'the paradox of choice'.

The official dogma of all western industrial societies could be explained like this; if we are interested in maximizing the welfare of our citizens, the way to do that is to maximize individual freedom (TEDglobal, 2005). *"The reason is both freedom is in itself good,*

valuable, worthwhile, essential to being human. And because if people have freedom, then each of us can act on our own to do the things that will maximize our welfare, and no one must decide on our behalf" (TEDglobal, 2005).

"If we are going to maximize freedom, we need to maximize choice as well. The more choice we have, the more freedom we have, and the more freedom we have, the more welfare we have. Is this the truth? Are we humans happier with more choice?" (TEDglobal, 2005).

We as humans are very blessed when it comes to our work, we have the technology that makes it possible for us to work anywhere and for every minute we want – this means, that with these humongous amounts of choices related to work, we have to makes decisions, again and again and again, about whether we should or should not be working (TEDglobal, 2005).

Everywhere we look there is a matter of choice! Big, small, material and lifestyle things. Is this good or bad news? YES! We all know about the good stuff, but let us consider the bad. *"The matter of choice has two negative effects on people. One effect, paradoxically, is that it produces paralysis, rather than liberation. When we have so many options it makes it hard to choose anything at all"* (TEDglobal, 2005).

Second, if we overcome paralysis, we would not be happy with our choice anyways. We end up less satisfied with the result of the choice than we would be if we had fewer options to choose from (TEDglobal, 2005). There are a lot of reasons for this, one of them is the fact that it is easy to think that you should have chosen something else, this leads to regret, even if it was a good decision. The more option the easier to regret. Second, what economists call 'opportunity costs.' (TEDglobal, 2005). Third: escalation of expectations. What happens with all of these choices available is that our expectations for something is so high, adding options would not do other than to increase expectations. This makes us less satisfied with our choices, even though are choices are good. (TEDglobal, 2005).

Everybody needs a fish bowl – in the means of everyone needs limitation to be satisfied (TEDglobal, 2005).

5.4 New Business Models

There are a lot of new structural changes, and emerging new business models. Streaming models, subscription models, and so on. Trevor argues that this huge change has to affect the business as well; *«So, the technology is really the biggest change, that I've seen I my whole career, and it affects the business as well, right? Because streaming…streaming…and all these different…what does streaming mean? You know, I've heard so many calculations; 3000 streams is one sale - that is some people's figure. Some other people say it is 9000. It is just all over the place. So, we are starting to get a handle on it. You know, there was some laws recently here in America a few weeks ago, to help the radio royalties and stuff, and that is good. We are starting to get a handle on it, but understand, for the last seven years business has been chasing the technology. A lot of language in agreements that people have signed, - and (that) they are still currently under - in recording agreements and publishing agreements,- still have old language that doesn't even have «streaming» in it. It is very interesting where we are.»*

The overall business plan has changed totally, there is a continually top heavy 'hit-oriented' industry, rather than the Album era (Nordgård, 2016, p. 184-185). And the music producer is always in the chase for hit songs that are going to break an artist, or make a hit to an already established artist. There is not so much focus in the delivery of a story or a common thread.

5.4.1 Subscription for music software

Another interesting aspect is the subscription for software,

"By 2020, more than 80 percent of software vendors will change their business model from traditional licensing and maintenance to subscription" (Pettery, 2015). Pressure from the cloud and open sourcing has changed the way customers behave. There are a lot of different reasons for this, but the main reason is the growth of consumerization and digitalization. The subscription model is more convenient for the consumer, it gives access to updates, and It is affordable. Gary says he likes it because; *«I like the business model by the way. I like the business model of subscription for software. I believe that's the way it will go with everybody. […] Lots of companies now are starting to rent software. […] I think that's the business model. So, that you can switch subscription on or off. […]»*

These models are something we most likely will be seeing more of, and would be very suitable for the home-producers due to a financial aspect, but also, why buy a lot of stuff when you only need one or two of the plug-ins for a one-time use?

6 Conclusion

This paper attempted to get a deeper understanding of the mechanisms and structures that lead to the changes in the Music Producers daily work life, and how it has affected the labor practices of the producer and the dynamics between different parts in the industry. As we see the industry is very based on clear structures, and when these change the followings are quite extensive.

With this knowledge, I then used my findings to highlight the most interesting topic to why and how this has affected the Music Producer in the Industry. And common to the theory put up against the findings from the interviews is that there is still an important asset in the music industry, musicians and artist, are still willing to use money and resources to work with a professional music producer. Even though there are a lot of amateur producers, and cheap software out there, we still need someone that can lead us into the right directions and make things sound the best way possible.

Nevertheless, one should not withhold that they have had to change a lot of their work process, from their usual analogue set ups with hardware to a more digital setup with software. The most challenging part is to stay relevant, and in order to be that, you must keep track of the development, but also have something that makes you unique and stand out from the crowd.

This thesis also has some limitations. The producers whom were interviewed are doing good for themselves, so it would might have been a different outcome if one of them were one who had to retire or quit. Or just someone that struggled a bit more in general, because there are a lot of music producers has decided to quit due to the increased competition from the home-studios.

Another aspect of this is that we are put up against the paradox of choice every day, and so is the Music Producer, with what to choose, who to work with, that to do and what not to do.

Ultimately, there has and is to be a lot of changes in this certain industry – and the change for the music producers would probably never stop. They should always strive to be a part of the

digitalization and the technological development. And the fact that with new technologies emerging, there will be a change in roles, there will open up for new opportunities, and established careers will be lost, industries will experience a huge change, and what comes out of this is that the cultural products are transformed.

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8 Attachments

This was the starting point, some of the questions were altered slightly due to situations, and in some of the interview there were some side questions added.

Interview guide

1. Can you tell a bit about yourself and your background, what was it that made you want to work in the music industry?

2. What kind of changes have you seen and felt as a music producer in the industry? What and how? (How was it before compared to now? Finance/economies, competition, different segment within the industry, change in the role as a music producer, digitalization etc. How did a normal day of work look like today compared to earlier? Which work-tasks do you do today compared to earlier?

3. How have you change or adapted to those changes that has occurred around you?

4. How is the balance (is there is a significant balance condition) between artistic freedom, and the jobs you do to 'pay the bills'? What do you say yes to, and what do you say no to etc., and what affects the yes or no's?

5. Have you noticed the challenges related to the 'home-studio' and 'home-producer' situation?

6. How have you experienced the technological development relative to music production?

7. How is the investment level when it comes to invest in new equipment, expenditure related production etc.? Do you still invest to be able to do productions on your own, or is there a point where you ship the product/production to someone else, for example to bigger studios or other producers? In other words, which financial risks do you take, if it is investing in your own project or someone else's (use of time, economy etc.) Purchase of equipment, mics, software, instruments etc. How has this changed over time?

8. Is it something you want to add that has not been brought up?