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DSC294: Media Editing

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What Is Media Editing?

It is critical to understand what exactly is being edited to receive an accurate definition of “media editing.” In Dictionary.com’s entry of “medium” (which is the singular form of media), the seventh result states that a medium is “One of the means or channels of general communication, information, or entertainment in society...” This seems to be the most simple to apply in the context of DSC294. The fourth definition however states that a medium is “The element that is the natural habitat of an organism.” I believe that taking those two definitions as a pair beautifully describes what “media” is to many of my fellow students. Maybe the compounded definition might be “The means of communication derived from the creator’s natural habitat.” Media is how humans express themselves in a broad sense and is shared through many different “channels” of communication. It can be artificial or organic; it is always natural though because it has a human origin. It can be void of meaning or a complex allegory and it can be vague or specific. How human media artifacts are created is the process called “media editing” and varies in execution. This process though is often as admirable as the final piece.

While the degree may differ, every piece of media is edited. Every piece of media is “edited” because all pieces are created with some intent, and that intent begins as a thought. Turning one’s thought into something tangible and communicable takes significant creativity. The idea must be bent to form. It must be edited to fit the composer’s medium of choice. Those mediums range from text, canvas, objects, sounds, words, and etcetera and each medium as unique characteristics that they contribute to the creator’s original idea.

As an intern at local recording studio Flying Blanket I have had the privilege of spending countless hours with musicians as they record their music. Each client comes in with ideas. Some of those ideas have been composed into complete songs. Other ideas have begun to develop into a musical composition but aren’t complete. Regardless, every experience with a client is unique, even if they are a returning client. Mergence (a local indie-rock band) booked ten days for their first visit and in those ten days ten already well-constructed songs were recorded and mixed. Executing ten songs in ten days is an extremely rare occurrence. The band performed everything live and minimal overdubbing was needed. It was a magical performance

and was easily translated into a finished album. Their most recent experience at Flying Blanket was much different. Over the course of two weeks, Bob Hoag (producer and owner of Flying Blanket Recording) and Mergence reorganized songs' structures and lyrics, overdubbed many extra fills and instruments, and mixed the tracks in a much different manner than previously. Their EP still felt and sounded like Mergence, but the band took a much different creative path to create five new songs instead of ten. Their experiences at Flying Blanket present a perfect view of what media editing is: a varying journey of putting ideas into tangible mediums.

DSC294 has pushed me to experience media editing in a new fashion. As a musician, there are primarily two ways I compose music. Either I sit down and intend to write a song, or (more commonly) a song is randomly written when I sit down and play for no other reason than to play. Rarely do I sit down with the intention to create something and if I do there usually isn't a particular end in sight. DSC294 however required that I go forth and make a composition to a particular standard with specific tools. To make it even more foreign to me I had to use tools that I had never used before.

My first composition for DSC294 is my favorite composition I produced over the course of the class. The composition was originally designed around Kanye West's tweet that said, "I'm sorry Taylor." I began with using Pixelmator, a graphic media editing software. I chose Pixelmator because I could actually afford to run the application on my own machine, and it is a popular alternative to Photoshop. Immediately I knew I wanted to make an image that



depicted the reasoning and lack of sincerity of Kanye's apology. I honestly doubt Kanye's Twitter apology was entirely by choice and assume that his publicity representative requested that he apologize so I went with a background of laughing men in suits. The background came

off of the cover of one of my favorite albums, which happened to be an album recorded and produced at Flying Blanket. I also took a screen shot from his music video “Heartless” to portray Kanye. By the end of the composition, I felt that “I’m sorry Taylor” didn’t fit the image at all. Instead I scrolled through his tweets and found something I felt was suitable for the image. It was a strange turn around, but I felt his kazoo tweet fit the image best.

My process in making the Kanye West image was much different than my process in writing music. I know my instrument well, and I can comfortably navigate and manipulate it to make the sounds and tunes that I desire. I do not however know how to navigate Pixelmator or other photo/video editing software comfortably. This made my media editing process a process I found frustrating, a process in which I had an end in sight but had no experience in getting there. Due to that difficulty, achieving the end result was all the more rewarding and it taught me how to use a new tool. Composing a song can take me months on tools I know so well.

The process of media editing can be appreciated as much as the end product. It is a wonderfully mysterious process in which a creator faces problems and learns to solve them so that the creator can speak to the world in the manner that they desire most. While a creator may find particular methods used to create the media they intend to, the process is always a changing one. Mergence at Flying Blanket was a prime example. They still brought in their beloved instruments and recorded with the preferred producer, but the experience was significantly different than the last. The end product still shined, but in a different way. The process of media editing requires adaptation too. A creator can bend their idea to fit, but at times the creator must bend himself or herself to fit the tools as I did when composing the Kanye West artifact.

The stories of how an artist created a painting or of what a musician experienced that led them to writing a song are stories that are as interesting as the media artifacts themselves. They are the stories of the experiences of editing media. They explain why the creator made the decisions they made. Stories from creators about media editing can originate long before their birth, and can inspire other creators long after their death. Media editing is the process of a creator communicating their idea in light of or in spite of their circumstances or their habitat.