Billy Baxter

DSC 294: Media Editing

The Media Editing Process

Before delving into what media editing means personally, it would be beneficial to spell out a more generalized and overarching definition. It would be helpful if, in fact, there was one. As it stands, finding a widely accepted definition of what media editing is and what it entails is actually somewhat difficult. A search on Wikipedia comes up short, with suggestions for loosely related terms. One suggestion, "Editing", shows up, but some would argue that the term 'Editing' is much too general. Looking at the page on Wikipedia would even suggest that, with sections on reviewing technical text and making necessary provisions, editing for search engine optimization, proofreading, editing scholarly books and journals, periodicals, and so on. While it can be argued that these all fall under the term Media Editing, I would counter by saying that the types of editing just listed are outside the realm of what media editing actually means.

Based on my perception of media editing before this course started and from what I learned during the course, my personal definition of media editing is as follows: The creation and editing of digital media with respect to form, pattern, and structure to communicate a message through a spatial, dynamic process. Admittedly, some of that definition comes from loose descriptions discussed with others and explained at the beginning of the course. However, that definition is the best way I can describe the notion of modern media editing.

The most important part of media editing is not simply the tools used to make a final product, or the effectiveness of a final product. Those are small parts of a bigger picture. I believe the most important aspect of media editing is the process one goes through to create and edit a final product. This process is not set in stone, which leaves it open to interpretation, for the most part. However, much like the scientific process, there is a general guideline one should follow to achieve a successful outcome. This guideline can be loosely followed,

but I believe it involves first, finding inspiration. Without inspiration, it is unlikely that the editor will end up with a successful piece. The creator/editor must believe in what he or she is trying to make.

After inspiration comes vision. A person must have a vision for the piece. Will it be something personal that represents an important aspect in the maker's life? Or is it something that will be displayed to the world that many can relate to? Perhaps it is something that will try to persuade people of some opinion or cause. Whatever it is, the vision is very important. A product without an initial vision will not go very far. For example, in Module 2, we were instructed to mash together a spoken word piece with a musical piece and make them flow together nicely. I immediately knew what spoken word piece I was going to use. One of my favorite monologues of all time, Liam Neeson's threatening phone call in the movie "Taken". It has a very dark tone, accompanied by a cloud of despair and vengeance. I initially had a hard time trying to find a musical piece that would work with the monologue. I considered using a cheery, upbeat piece of music to starkly contrast the speech, but I quickly realized nothing would work. I decided to go with an equally disheartening song to further enhance the feeling of dread one might feel during their first encounter with the movie. The piece I chose was the theme song to the Saw series called Hello Zepp, a very popular and memorable song written by Charlie Clouser. The main melody alone sets a bleak mood almost instantly. Along with the accompanying instruments that almost have an atmosphere of their own, the song becomes an audible representation of fear and despair. No song could have paired together better with Neeson's speech than Hello Zepp. I had acquired my vision, and it was to make a speech/song mashup that would send chills down the spine of a listener due to its eerie, dark tone.

Once the vision is established, it is important to have access to and be familiar with the necessary tools to make the vision a reality. This could be any type of digital media editing tools such as GIMP and Photoshop for images, Adobe Premiere Pro, Adobe After Effects, and iMovie for film, Apple Logic

Express, Ableton Live, and Audacity for music, etcetera. Honestly, there are countless tools to use for any type of media editing. It all comes down to finding the ones that work for the user, because everyone has different tastes and uses. The primary tools I have used for years are Photoshop, Audacity, iMovie, and FL Studio. Just recently I have been introduced to Ableton Live, Logic Express, Orison, CMAP, and others. These are the types of tools that a media editor must be familiar with in order to create a successful product. I used Audacity to put together my speech/music mashup, and I believe it turned out pretty well. Using effects to add a bit more atmosphere to the background music and inserting a clip of bloodcurdling screams during the last bit, both of which could not be easily achieved without at least a basic understanding of the program.

The last important part of the media editing process, in my opinion, is knowledge of the audience. There is always a certain demographic that the editor is thinking about when making the piece. Whether it is a very large demographic like, say, fans of hip-hop, or a small audience like a classroom, there is always an audience that the editor is keeping in mind. It is very important too, because the audience plays a large part in the success of the product. A creator/editor of the beats in mainstream hip-hop songs would not insert metalcore guitar riffs. The audience would be confused and probably react negatively. However, it is also important for a media creator/editor to know the audience well enough to shape their preferences. One who understands the demographic well enough will be able to introduce something brand new to the scene, and have a positive reception from his audience. Dubstep is a good example of this. It's been credited as the fastest growing genre of music of the 21st century, and it's all because artists like Skrillex, Benga, and Bassnectar know their audience very well. They know what they want to hear, what they will expect to hear on the next album, and what new styles of music they will appreciate. Knowing your audience is a very crucial part of the media editing process.

Media editing is such a vague term; it is hard to define it in once sentence. It is such an overarching concept that can include so many various aspects of

daily life that it would almost take, say, a three-paged essay to describe. However, the process of media editing can be described in simple terms, as it is a basic guideline that anyone can follow. The idea is up to the editor, the process is straightforward, and the result will speak for itself (with some help from the audience).