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Selected Sounds: A Collective Investigation Into the Practice of Sample-Based Music

Owen Chapman

A Thesis

Presented to

the Department

of

Communication Studies

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) at Concordia University

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Abstract

Selected Sounds: A Collective Investigation Into the Practice of Sample-based Music

Owen Chapman
Concordia University, 2007

Selected Sounds involves an ethnographic investigation into the sampling and mixing practices of a group of sound artists from Montreal, Canada. Seven composers (in one case, a composing duo) each contributed a single piece of digitized sound to the project. Each was free to submit any sound they liked, with the one requirement that all samples be selected from sources discovered around Montreal. After collecting the audio files, I placed them together on a CD, copies of which were distributed to every participant. Each composer then put together a track drawing on this sample-pool exclusively for source material. The resulting mixes have been compiled into a nationally distributed, independent audio-CD. All were interviewed regarding the evolution of their knowledge of digital audio production methods, as well as their thoughts on audio sampling.

In Chapter, 1 (the Introduction) I present the research project and outline the theoretical framework as well as challenges addressed. In Chapter 2, I discuss various methodological choices made in *Selected Sounds* as a reflexive ethnography that invokes sample-based musical practices of citation, friendship and creative production as mechanisms for highly-engaged research in the arts, humanities and social sciences. Chapter 3 presents a literature review of recent academic accounts of audio sampling and the impacts of digital technology upon the contemporary reception and use of media. Chapter 4 introduces Appendix A--an interactive database developed from out of the *Selected Sounds* interview process. Chapter 5 concludes by taking up conversations contained in Appendix A and organizing them around seven different reconfigurations of the concept "sampling" for 2007: sampling-as-technology, sampling-as-community, sampling-as-memory, sampling-as-collecting, sampling-as-ethics, and sampling-as-recording.

Appendix A is the *Selected Sounds* interview database.

Appendix B contains a brief introduction to "The Lesbians on Ecstasy," a musical performing group of which three of the participants in *Selected Sounds* are members.

Appendix C is a transcript of the final meeting with the *Selected Sounds* research group.

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A thousand thanks to the various members of the *Selected Sounds* project, whom you will soon meet....

Thanks to my mother Janet Bousquet for showing me how to take risks in the pursuit of what we love, and to Yvan Cazabon for showing me how to love learning through teaching. Thanks to my sister Alice Chapman for all the good times spent listening to records around our childhood turntable.

To all the musicians I've ever sampled...what can I say but “Thanks!”.

Lastly, to my wife Sara Teitelbaum and our children Thea and Benny....

> *I go through all this, before you wake up. So I can feel happier--to be safe again with you.* (Bjork, "Hyperballad", 1996)

Table of Contents

- Chapter 1: Introduction.....1
    - A. Presentation of the Research Project.....1
    - B. Theoretical Framework.....11
        - i. Challenges.....19
        - ii. Technology as Practice.....24
- Chapter 2: Methodology.....29
    - A. Statement of Methods.....29
    - B. Participant Observation/Ethnography.....30
    - C. Reflexivity.....34
    - D. Sampling as Citation.....40
    - E. Friendship as Methodology.....42
    - F. Research Creation.....49
- Chapter 3: Literature Review.....54
    - A. Ephemerality and the Population of Sound Studies.....55
    - B. Digital Designs: the production and consumption of sampling..62
    - C. Appropriation and Authenticity.....69
    - D. Sampling and Control.....72
    - E. Sampling and Copyright.....76
    - F. *Rhythm Science*.....81
    - G. Sampling as Techne.....87
    - H. "Is it Live?" (The Question of Aura).....94

- Chapter 4: An Introduction to *Appendix A*--A Sample-Based Exploration of the 'Selected Sounds' Interviews....111
  - A. An Explanation and Justification of Appendix A's Non-Linear Structure....111
  - B. An Analysis of the ten Questions Asked in the Interviews.......118
  - C. A Discussion of the Sample-Based Practices of Each Interview Participant....122
  - D. Reflections on My Interview With Jackie Gallant....130
- Chapter 5: "What is Sampling?": Inclusions, Exclusions and Conclusions....135
  - A. Technology....138
  - B. Community....141
  - C. Memory....144
  - D. Listening....147
  - E. Collecting....152
  - F. Ethics....155
  - G. Recording....158
- Bibliography....162

Appendix A – A Sample-Based Exploration of the *Selected Sounds* Interviews....171

Appendix B - A Brief Introduction to "The Lesbians on Ecstasy"....283

Appendix C - Transcript of the Final Meeting With the *Selected Sounds* Research Group....286

Chapter 1: Introduction

- Presentation of the Research Project
- Theoretical Framework
    1. Challenges
    2. Technology as Practice

Presentation of the Research Project

A rainy day cab ride,

a curse-infused drum break,

the intro to "Autumn Leaves."

Café-latte bound milk,

a two-note guitar riff,

an amp switched on/off.

Radio static...

Sound sources ripe for the plunder? Precious aural jewels? Strict limitations? Infinite possibilities?

What follows is a collective investigation into the practice of audio sampling. *Selected Sounds* is an initiative with a few different identities. It is my PhD thesis--the culmination of almost seven years of questioning concerning what it means to "sample" sounds in the creation of "new" audio works. My convictions have changed remarkably over the course of this period, although a few notions have persisted--such as the belief that "sampling" is a remarkably useful concept for demonstrating the impossibility of separating *practices* from *technologies* of sound production. Chapter 3's literature review of academic approaches to sampling attempts to chart the course of these fluctuating convictions, as well as the history of sample-based music more generally. *Selected Sounds* is also a collection of interviews with seven different "sampling-inclined" sound artists from Montreal, Canada (myself included). These interviews have been organized into a hyper-textual database allowing for a remix of the project's principle contribution to knowledge with every reading (Chapter 4). A reflexive analysis of data gleaned from the interview process is the subject of Chapter 5. The project's third identity is more methodological--as a *research-creation* initiative it incorporates textual analysis with other audio/visual elements such as hyper-textual links, embedded sound examples and interactive remixing opportunities (discussed in Chapter 2). And finally, *Selected Sounds* is also a jointly-authored audio CD featuring a piece of sample based work by each participant. The CD (discussed further below) has been released independently in addition to accompanying this dissertation.

The phenomenon of *sample-based music* (i.e., music that relies on sampling in its composition) brings up a point of strong debate within the contemporary sound production scene--i.e., that digital technologies are the only future for sound storage, mixing and playback. While sampling is a practice with long-standing precedents, its most notorious cultural and historical emergence has undoubtedly been alongside the rise of hip hop, techno and other principally digitally-produced forms of music. While hip hop's sampling history is most appropriately traced back to the analog art of "turntablism" or scratch djing, the sample-based practices it is most renowned for involve the digital copying and looping of recognizable material from older popular recordings (mostly funk and disco 45s). This history is analyzed in greater detail in Chapter 3. Suffice it to say, however, that up until very recently *sampling* and *recording* were perceived as separate initiatives. Initially this made a certain amount of sense, as most recordings throughout the 80s were mixed down to analog tape, even tracks that used samplers. The computer memory available at the time was just not enough to handle all the digital data produceable by a band of playing musicians. Fast forward through the 90s to the contemporary scene (2007)--most sound studios utilize computers and digital components heavily in their production chain [1]. What differs today between those who consider themselves to be "sampling" versus those that are "recording" are attitudes around the "appropriateness" of the practices under question. These attitudes are responsive to a complex arithmetic. How are sounds being treated, before and after their digitization? How much are they being mixed with other sounds? Who is doing this mixing, and for what purpose? Are they sound composers, instrumentalists, engineers, or just plain listeners? How much knowledge of the history of sound recording do they possess? What exactly is being appropriated? Who does it belong to?

> Musical collaboration is generally accepted by legal systems, at least in terms of recording (duets, groups and orchestras) and writing (partnerships). The practice of sampling-taking a snippet of a recording for use in a new work-has, however, changed the nature of collaboration, shaking up the recording industry and causing a legal furor. (Charman and Holloway 2006, para 29)

When I first began writing and thinking about sampling, the practice was defined in relationship to two different groups: professional studio engineers and hip hop producers. The first category generally understood sampling to be a form of cutting costs when working on multi-track recording projects. Samples could be used to create orchestrations without having to hire a great number of studio musicians, or even any at all. Sampling from copyrighted material constituted outright theft for most in this group (Porcello 1992).[2] Using a so-called "sample CD" was alright, and many commercially-available samplers also had libraries (or banks) of "instruments" that could be purchased for subsequent copyright-free use. Hip hop producers, on the other hand, positively embraced sampling from copyrighted sources as a form of paying homage to the past as well as a method for creating "dope" beats with few instruments/tools. The practice became notorious as a form of postmodern resistance to tradition as well as a democratization of music production resources. Most academic authors interested in sampling during the last decade have focused on its theoretical/cultural significance, and in particular its demonstration of new-media trends in regards to authorship and intellectual property.

Starting my PhD in Communication Studies in 2000, I eventually decided that the best way to contribute to this discussion was through the articulation of a "participant observer's" point of view into the world of sample-based musical production, a perspective that I felt had been notoriously absent. Most authors were forced to rely on what I believed were highly subjective statements derived through interviews as a source of general knowledge of sampling practices within the contemporary popular music scene. I found this counter-intuitive, for in my mind sampling practices are not homogenous. They are, in fact, as infinitely variable as snowflakes falling on a Montreal street in January. There are no rules when it comes to sampling; the only limitation a sample-based musician experiences is dictated by her imagination and familiarity with her chosen technologies. To claim that sampling="x", or samplers work in such and such a way is to generalize. Another thing I noticed is that sampling's relationship to DJing was often misunderstood in both popular and academic sources. Indeed the two practices were often conflated--usually with accompanying breathless descriptions of a DJ's capacity to borrow and/or steal ravenously from the annuls of recorded music history to the betterment/detriment of musical creativity across the globe.

The musical instrument most familiar to me before the sampler was the guitar. Although not the first instrument I learned how to play, it became the most influential in terms of my later approach to music and composition. I wanted to be able to accompany myself singing, and after learning enough chords from friends to get the knack of the repetitive patterns used in most pop tunes, I taught myself the rest of what I know through listening to recordings of songs enough times to absorb their lyrics and musical structures.

However, the Grunge era in which I took up these musical interests eventually waned, and the riff-driven melodic ballads that had provoked me to acquire an electric guitar in 1993 were replaced in the popular soundscape with various strains of sample-based music. It become tougher for me to "cover-version" my favourite songs as an increasing number of the groups I discovered eschewed traditional instruments and rock or folk song structures. Excellent music by English trip hop acts like Bjork, Portishead, Tricky, Massive Attack and Everything But The Girl came out, crossing-over into my sonic surroundings as an M.A. student in philosophy of science in the late 90s. I began to feel dissatisfied with the "guitar, three chords, and the truth" ethos that seemed to govern much of the music I had learned to perform. At the same time the figure of the DJ began to (re)emerge as a respected wielder of musical and cultural capital. More and more Canadian venues hired single individuals (or crews of individuals) to entertain, edify and electrify their patrons with an entire night's worth of seamlessly juxtaposed music using only two turntables, a mixer and a crate of vinyl records. These "magic mixers" were using techniques developed by hip hop and dance-music DJs in New York, Chicago, London and other international destinations such as Ibiza, Spain and Goa, India. Moreover, musicians who were "producing" (as opposed to "recording") within these new "electronica" genres were often DJs themselves and were building tracks for live cutting and mixing. Many of these new records were built on grooves that were sampled and mixed via DJ practices like "crate digging" and "scratching", as I later came to realize.

Two things needed to happen, as far as I was concerned. Firstly, I had to start purchasing new musical releases on vinyl instead of CD or tape as I had become accustomed. Secondly, I had to get myself some sort of DJ worthy turntables and a mixer. This proved tough financially--vinyls were expensive, with prices often higher than the same material on CD. And it was hard to learn enough about the multitude of electronica genres available to make informed choices without first purchasing a lot of crap.

Mixing records proved to be another endeavour entirely. The turntables everyone seemed to use (Technics 1200s) were 800$ a piece, not to mention the price of the mixer. I settled for gear I was able to purchase at pawn shops, and before long also found myself sifting through older records I would see at these shops, or at garage sales or thrift stores (other places I would looks for suitable turntables on the cheap). Buying records from these locations was an extremely different experience from going into the independent record stores where I grappled with the new vinyl experience (see Chapman 2001). Records here cost as little as 25 cents a piece. And I recognized many of the artists! Fleetwood Mac, Bob Dylan, Aretha Franklin, Parliament Funkadelic, The Beatles and Bee

Gees. Rock, folk, soul, funk, and disco reigned over the dusty bins I started combing through, not to mention all sorts of "golden oldies", jazz, blues, and "easy listening" records. And then there were the Christmas albums and children's records, along with various other bits of exotica and sound effects compilations. So much more sound, so much cheaper, and with a way in--through my memories of listening to this music while growing up as someone born in 1973.

As my record collection began to grow, so too did my appreciation and knowledge of previously recorded music. I grew more savvy in terms of the records I would select--in an effort to bring home less "junk." I listened to new records in the store before purchasing them whenever possible. I started to see patterns of repetition in the stock of the thrift stores and used-record shops that I frequented. These elements of my developing record collecting practice pushed me to start exploring new genres and artists I knew very little about. This broadening of my tastes resulted in an ever-increasing stream of records entering my apartment, as well as more time spent beside the turntable, listening to music as well as developing skills at mixing and scratching records.

My electric guitar was at this point growing dusty--as had my practice of listening, memorizing and cover-versioning songs. But I couldn't go back. It was at this point (1998) that I decided to sell my guitar and purchase a sampler--an Ensoniq EPS 16+.

As mentioned, *Selected Sounds* involves an ethnographic investigation into the sampling and mixing practices of a group of sound artists from Montreal, Canada. Seven composers (in one case, a composing duo) each contributed a single piece of digitized sound to the project. Each was free to submit any sound they liked, with the one requirement that all samples be selected from sources discovered around Montreal. After collecting the audio files, I placed them together on a CD, copies of which were distributed to every participant. Each composer then put together a track drawing on this sample pool exclusively for source material. The resulting mixes have been compiled into a nationally-distributed, independent audio-CD.[3] The compositions are remarkable in terms of originality--as each artist strove to bring the sample pool into their own mixing practice. All were interviewed regarding the evolution of their knowledge of digital audio production methods, as well as their thoughts on audio sampling.

Beyond a creative demonstration of different practices of sample-based music making, this research counters those who assert increased aural control as paramount to users of digital audio technology. Although extraordinary editing precision is currently possible when compared to the days of magnetic tape, copying, splicing and transforming audio with digital equipment is still very much about responsive listening. Those looking to write about the relationship between digital audio technology and contemporary practices of music making must never overlook the affective dimension of sound--its fleeting presence as vibrations of the ear drum. For recorded audio, no matter how many times it has been copied, must always pass through a singular moment of conversion into moving air molecules in order to be experienced.

Must a recording carry a relationship of consistent identity between it and an original source? A multi-track recording stretches this suggestion through layering such "consistent" elements together (drum beats, bass lines, guitar riffs, vocals, etc.,). Sample-based compositions, on the other hand, often sequence together samples into patterns, working on the development of multiple "tracks" at the same time--allowing serendipitous juxtapositions to determine subsequent choices. This is a skill that has taken some time for me to develop. It is also at the heart, interestingly, of musical improvisation. Composing through sampling has prompted me to engaged with other musicians, choreographers and artists in ways I never imagined when I traded-in my electric guitar.

I have interviewed the participants over the course of this project. This process consisted of one-on-one, open-ended discussions with each composer. These conversations were enabled through the following 10 questions:

- 1. How would you describe yourself in terms of what you do with sound?
- 2. What equipment do you use?
- 3. What kind of sound-sources do you generally work with?
- 4. How long are these sources?
- 5. How long are the pieces that you make from them?
- 6. How did you come to make music in this way?

- 7. How would you distinguish performing live from working in the studio, if at all?
- 8. How does your source material affect your work, if at all?
- 9. Describe the process of choosing your submission to the "Selected Sounds" project.
- 10. Briefly, what is "sampling", in your opinion?

Theoretical Framework

My intent is not to nail down a universal and detailed definition for the practice of sampling. There is no unique semantic formulation or code that provides a means for understanding how the practice will play out in every instance. Instead, I'd like to put forward the perspectives articulated in *Selected Sounds* as a set of "singularities" regarding the practice of sample-based music. Simply put, sampling in 2007 is commonplace in all forms of media, and especially in music and sound design. As Charman and Holloway claim "[c]ontemporary examples of sampling are too common to pick highlights" (Charman and Holloway 2006, para 30). The phenomenon is too multifaceted for meta-narratives. This project should be understood fundamentally as an "example," or perhaps a collection of examples that support and help construct another, larger example which, because of its very constructed-ness and artificiality, is more open to detailed and subtle analysis. Regarding examples, Brian Massumi has claimed:

> An example is neither general (as is a system of concepts) nor particular (as is the material to which a system is applied). It is "singular". It is defined by a disjunctive self-inclusion: a belonging to itself that is simultaneously an extendibility to everything else with which it might be connected. (Massumi 2002, 18)

Massumi uses examples in his writing in order to avoid the "application" of concepts--with an eye towards the very transformation of those concepts. If one wants to help evolve discussion about a cultural phenomenon such as sampling, one must start with some examples--thereby providing singular points of focus for the elaboration of further examples. My task as coordinator of *Selected Sounds* has been to work with the examples provided by the group (musical and interview-based) with the end goal of articulating an open-ended yet focussed perspective on the practices of sample-based music.

There is a pervasive opinion within the literature on sampling that it is a practice that sidesteps a number of musical conventions like copyright, or established rules for studio production and mixing. Sampling is also understood as fundamentally linked to the mechanical/electrical/digital reproduction of sound--a phenomenon as young as the history of devices like Emile Berliner's gramophone, ancestor to the Technics 1200 turntable (the contemporary DJ turntable of choice). Charles Mudede asserts a strong link between the turntable and sampling. Just as early New York DJs such as Grandmaster Flash "repurposed" (Mudede's term) the turntable in order to extend breakbeats (e.g., *The Amazing Adventures of Grandmaster Flash on the Wheels of Steel*), the sampler is "repurposed" by hip hop producers in order to extend and mix previously recorded sound understood as a type of information. Sample-based music is meta music--"music about music" (Mudede 2003, "scratch 7"). Hip hop sampling (the only type of sampling Mudede seems to consider worthy of serious consideration) is distinctly different from playing or performing instrumental music, and all accounts that suggest that a turntable is like a drum or a guitar, or that a sampler should be considered similar to a synthesizer or other electronic instrument are "whack". "Real hip hop", he suggests, "does not sample real sounds, like the toilet flushing in Art of Noise's *Close (to the Edit)* (1984), but samples copyrighted music". (Mudede 2003, "scratch 9")

"Real hip hop." "Real sounds."? I guess a toilet flushing is a real sound, but are drums beats not also similarly real at the moment they are recorded? If someone copyright protects a recording they make, does the sound contained on the record become less real? I believe what Mudede is pointing to has to do with the question of authenticity within hip hop and (by correlation) the practice of sampling and making sample based music. Tricia Rose's book *Black Noise*, in particular, echoes this concern. The book is regarded as an extremely important contribution to the field of hip hop studies, at once for its inclusion of female rappers in its retelling of the history and contemporary status of hip hop, as well as for its welcome incorporation of ethnography into an account of the practice of making beats from samples. Reading quotes from Hank Shocklee and Chuck D (from "Public Enemy") about "deliberately work[ing] in the red" (Rose 1994, 75), or (old school hip hop vocalist) Kurtis Blow describing the 808 kick drum as a "car speaker destroyer...[as] African music" (Rose 1994, 75) provides an extraordinary glimpse into the (largely Afro-American) subcultures of producers, rappers and recording engineers that have brought rap music and sampling into our everyday listening experiences (music on the radio, in car commercials, etc.)

Black Noise situates the history of rap music, and thereby a great deal of sample-based music, firmly in "Afrodiasporic musical priorities. Rap production resonates with black cultural priorities in the age of digital reproduction." (Rose 1994, 75) This remains an extremely important point, and should not be underestimated or forgotten--the history of sample-based music can easily be read as an offshoot of hip hop and other musics with vital and well-established roots in Afro-American rhythmic culture (such as Jazz and early Detroit or Chicago Techno/House). This is not my story to tell, however. It has already been recounted very eloquently by Rose. Her book *is* dated, however, having been published in 1994 and prior to, for instance, the widespread use of software synthesizers and personal-computer-based digital recording programs. This is always a pitfall when it comes to writing about contemporary technological practices and their relationship to particular subcultures, since these practices tend to change at the same pace as technological innovation, and often much faster than the identity politics involved in social hierarchies such as "subcultures". Which is not to say that these hierarchies are somehow more permanent, only slower to shift, as social paradigms are affected by technological change at the same time as they shape they way new technologies are adopted (and eventually cast aside).

Rose focuses exclusively on hip hop production when discussing sampling--and is careful to always refer back to her central thesis regarding "Afrodiasporic musical priorities." For those seeking to widen what the term "sampling" can entail, a more inclusive perspective is needed. Sampling practices in hip hop have continued to evolve since the writing of *Black Noise*, and groups like the Art of Noise were also making music based on samples in ways quite different (although undoubtedly indebted to) the techniques and practices articulated by Rose's interviewees. A contemporary account of sampling needs to be more open ended, and less interested in laying claim to the roots of the revolutionary appropriation that can take place within sample-based music than Rose or Mudede.[4]

Paul Théberge's highly influential work *Any Sound You Can Imagine* opened room for this sort of research in 1997 through its focus on sounds as "objects" of consumption and the corroborating observation that many contemporary producers of music have become digital consumers/connoisseurs/collectors of sounds. Particular samplers, drum machines, and sound libraries are selected by sample-savvy musicians in order to situate their work within certain genres. These devices are sought after as they allow for the manipulation of certain particular sounds, types of sounds or sound modulations. The Roland 808 kick-drum sound (mentioned above by Kurtis Blow) is used by Théberge as an example of such a preference for a particular sample's putative acoustic and psychological qualities (Théberge 1997, 196-198).

Use of the 808 kick drum sound situates one's work within a wider community of users and consumers of sounds. As an old-school hip hop staple, the sound can be understood as conveying an attitude towards musical production that eschews the use of live instrumentation in favour of recognizable (and reproducible) "sound banks". It also supports the claim that sounds are now manipulable as objects or even commodities,

> The ability of digital instruments to both create new timbres and to reproduce older ones has made them an indispensable tool. In the age of electronic reproduction, with recordings and radio disseminating and reinforcing "sound" as an identifying mark of contemporary music-making, individual "sounds" have come to carry the same commercial and aesthetic weight as the melody of the lyric in pop song. (Théberge 1997, 195)

The question must be asked, however, whether or not the capacity of digital instruments to create and contain new timbres makes users of these timbres into consumers of sounds in ways that are different from previous practices of music making. Those who play instruments have always been consumers in one form or another--consumers of instruments and their components, as well as sheet music and the like. Moreover, the way sounds are manipulated by sample-based composers differs remarkably from one instance to the next, and has also evolved since Théberge's book, at the same rapid pace as the technological options for sampling and digital sound manipulation. While many producers load sounds into a computer and copy, paste or program these sounds into musical sequences, just as many opt for commercially-available (MIDI) keyboard-controllers for use in playing back samples. The issue of whether to focus on the political economy of sound objects or the "practical" considerations involved in performing with samples therefore becomes an important question for the would be researcher of sampling in 2007. *Selected Sounds* attempts to address theses options simultaneously.

> I couldn't afford it, a pound an hour for lessons. Well, my dad said 'Well there you are, I can't pay for it, it's too much money.' I thought 'Well blow it, I'll find my own way'...[I taught myself] by sound, and a record player, you used to put the HMV records on it. Seventy-eights...The thing I have never learned to do properly is a [drum] roll.(Finnegan 1998, 103)

The common practice of learning new playing styles through listening to the work of others suggests a fundamental way in which musicians have always been ready to consume on behalf of their art. It is not simply about possession of the right kind of gear, or even music, but more about what *listening to music/sounds* can do to one's own style. I have also started drum lessons in the past year, but have stopped, mostly for reasons of time as well as being resistant to feeling guilty for not practicing. Listening to records as a form of drum lesson, trying to emulate the style of past giants--this has financial incentives, but is also appealing in terms of independence. An interesting displacement takes place--recordings become agents of instruction. Teachers. The important thing on the part of a pupil is a willingness to *copy*. This can be accomplished in many different ways. A technology can be a practice of learning.

I'd like to go further than Théberge in suggesting that sampling is a practice that revels in the capacity for sounds to bring their own requirements to the table in terms of manipulability. Sampling is about dialogue with sounds--dialogue enabled and informed by technology and its intimate relationship to the history of music. In my own practice I find the samples I select carry as much compositional inertia as my own ideas or plans. Certain sounds cry out to be used in unusual ways, and also seem to long for particular types of "collaborators"--bass-lines, drum-machine sounds (like the 808 kick), equalizations, effects and (of course) other samples. Start with a funky drum-break and chop it up as much as you want--it's unlikely that you're going to layer another beat on top of it with its own unique tempo. Vocal samples are also great for grabbing the attention of a listener. However, using too many sounds layered over top of one another creates a sense of competition that one might prefer to avoid. There are ways around this that involve panning and mixing, but these techniques also have their own limits. These and other examples of samples that serve-up their own rules-of-use are a fundamental contribution of the *Selected Sounds* project. But I don't want to insist on these rules. They change with every new composition, with every new genre, with every new listening audience. This is something *Selected Sounds* demonstrates in the collective production contained on our audio CD. One can also begin to feel what is involved in this sort of practice through playing with the seven *Selected Sounds* samples embedded at the top of this introductory chapter.

Challenges

1. "Sampling is about control".

A variety of digital technologies now exist that can transform analog sound waves into binary code. Any sound can be sampled in this way: drum beats, field recordings, even live players using traditional instruments. Samples are then ready to be cut, copied, spliced, pitch-shifted, equalized, turned backwards, and/or passed through a myriad of different effects processors before being multi-tracked and layered into a final stereo mix.

Once completed, tracks are easily converted to MP3 or burnt to CD-R for quick distribution. It is as though sound in the digital age has become "utterly malleable", (Miller 2004, 20), leaving only the sound selector and manipulator as the all-powerful source of creativity, of individual musical genius. To date the majority of academic work on digital sound practices relies upon this suggestion that technology has provided us with almost total control over recorded sound (see (Miller 2004), (Mudede 2003), (Pinch and Bijsterveld 2003), (Lysloff 2003), (Cascone 2002), (Théberge 1997), and (Jones 1992).

This point of view is very common within the literature on audio sampling, and is responsible, I believe, for the tendency to identify the figure behind the mixing console as the absolute center of digitally-assisted musical production. The technology involved in recording has become a tool so sophisticated that its only limit is said to be our imagination. But what is it that limits this imagination, if anything? Do the sounds we mix not require us to attend to their particular shape before we attempt to bring them into alignment with other sources? What techniques must we adopt to accommodate their particularities? What constraints led to the adoption of these techniques over others? And how were these sounds selected in the first place? Were they recorded "live"? If so, what procedures and equipment were employed? Were the sounds "sampled"? If so, how were they collected? What were the archives used?

It is through such questioning that the artistry involved in sampling becomes apparent. The technologies used are not simply tools--they represent an entire family of practices employed in a wide variety of unique scenarios. No two situations will be exactly alike, but there will be resemblances. Such an open-ended perspective is paramount in the development of analyses that accurately reflect the heterogeneity of sampling practices. A more elaborate challenge to the "sampling-as-control" thesis can be found in Chapter 3.

2. **"The experience of using a technology with familiarity is not necessary in order to write about it".**

While recent collections/books such as (Greene and Porcello 2005), (Braun 2002), (Lysloff 2003), (Taylor 2001) and (Sterne 2003), explore the impact of technology upon the political economy of organized sound production (including its history, mechanisms of distribution, gender/ethnic/geographic biases, and social import), very few authors discuss the phenomenological experience of contemporary digital composition.[5] This is because it is difficult to speak in general terms about practices as hyper-personalized and context specific as individual styles of audio production. *Selected Sounds* offers another way into similar issues, focusing on ethnographic accounts of using sampling technology along with my own artistic experience and first-hand knowledge as a sample-based artist. In addition, our collaboratively produced audio CD offers a second way into the questions explored in the interviews, using sounds as opposed to words as a mechanism of communication of ideas about sampling. Lastly, the project begins to scratch the surface as to the nature of the *home studios* used in the construction of much contemporary independent music, through the various interview accounts of the studio spaces and devices used by the participants. These spaces are under-researched in the current literature on digital audio production.

3. "Community must precede ethnography--i.e., 'the field is out there ready to be investigated' approach".

Selected Sounds explores the sampling and mixing practices of a group of collaborating independent sound artists, but artists who were brought together via their invitation to the project (although many, if not all, were known to each other through various interconnections of the Montreal independent music scene). This type of investigation is innovative relative to those described in the existing literature on digital audio technology, as it involves not just the observation but also the construction of community in order to ground the research in a specific time, place and subjective framework. Furthermore, it differs from other aural studies (such as Coldcut's groundbreaking 1998 work "Beats and Pieces") in that the sound sources used in composition all have a relationship to each other established through the process of their selection (i.e., their Montreal-ness). Hence the project allows for creative responses to a place-specific context of sound collection and identity.[6]

4. **"Sampling is primarily used by DJ's and their ilk".**

While many of the anecdotal examples contained in this work come from electronic "dance" music such as Hip Hop or various DJ-related genres like Trip Hop, House, Drum and Bass and Techno, another aim is to challenge the sort of interpretive framework that sets such an activity apart from "non-popular" studio-practices such as those involved in electro-acoustic music, radio art, soundscape composition[7], or interactive audio installations. Moreover, popular music is also discussed, as well as soundtrack design for video and intermedia. Key to this articulation is the observation that the question of sampling has already contributed to the deconstruction of many "important" interpretive dichotomies within the study of media, such as "performer/composer", "producer/consumer", and "recordist/(re)mixer".

5. **"Sampling marks you as a participant in a subculture".**

There are many important precedents in terms of attention to sampling within contemporary culture. Many adhere to a "subcultural-studies" approach (Black Noise (Rose 1994), Rap Attack Vols. 1-3 (Toop 2000) Cut and Mix (Hebdige 1994), More Brilliant than the Sun (Eshun 1998), Clubcultures (Thornton 1996), Generation Ecstasy (Reynolds 1998), and Any Sound You Can Imagine (Théberge 1997). However, in most of these cases, as with much work on sampling, the specific subtleties of studio and performance techniques are left undiscussed, while "spectacular" practices, vocabularies and styles associated with certain forms of subcultural participation are extensively dissected and "decoded".[8] It is through listening, however, both to the first hand accounts of producers, as well as to their works, that one is provided with a taste of the relationship to sound which the practices involved in sample-based music entail. For this is primarily what is required of the sample-based artist--the ability to turn active listening into a type of collective expression with the help of recording technology, cultural memory and musical know-how.

Technology as Practice

Technologies are not easily de-limitable from practices--the two words are in fact almost synonymous. This observation is central to the work of theorists such as Ursula Franklin who argues that technologies involve both tools and mindsets (Franklin 1992), as well as Martin Heidegger who made clear the philosophical link between technology and the human capacity to reveal hidden features of the natural world (Heidegger 1977). It is also a point of departure for much contemporary research on digital audio production.

Selected Sounds, therefore, asks the question : "How can sample-based music demonstrate the human capacity to develop associations between phenomena which exceed any simple reduction to the expression of an individual will to power?" Sample-based music is understood as a practice fundamentally linked to the theme of collecting--"to a relationship to objects which does not emphasize their functional, utilitarian value--that is, their usefulness--but studies and loves them as the scene, the stage, of their fate."(Benjamin 1969a, 160) Sampling technologies are more than black boxes built out of microprocessors, and should be explored as practices that articulate sounds, ideas, intentions, histories, traditions, techniques, digital files and broken beats. As Franklin claims,

> Technology is not the sum of the artifacts, of the wheels and gears, of the rails and electronic transmitters. Technology is a system. It entails far more than its individual material components. Technology involves organization, procedures, symbols, new words, equations, and, most of all, a mindset. (Franklin 1992, 12)

Franklin's view of technology coincides nicely with Heidegger's, discussed in Chapter 3. What is involved in these practical conceptions of technology is the willingness to weigh "things" equally with "subjectivities". Technologies must be understood as incorporating both physical features like computer chips and social elements like procedures, mindsets and user communities. Moreover, articulations concerning the forms and uses of these technologies need to be constantly referred back to the procedures and communities that embody them and by which they are drastically and continually affected. Mudede's notion of "repurposing" here becomes a self-centered fiction. Technologies have no "initial essence" to rob, but are in a constant state of negotiation as practices. For sample-based composers, this negotiation is often reflected in the history and variety of the different pieces of audio equipment assembled in their home studios.

The next chapter of this dissertation (Chapter 2) is focussed on outlining the various methodological considerations behind the *Selected Sounds* project. The question of technology as practice is then returned to in the literature review that makes up Chapter 3. Chapters 4 and 5 present, remix and articulate the specific examples revealed through the *Selected Sounds* interviews.

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Notes

[1] Even those that make a choice to stick with "vintage" analog systems such as Montreal's *Hotel2Tango* understand that their clients have come to depend on the digital realm. "[A]lthough we work solely on tape, digital recording systems can be rented on request for tape transfers, etc." (http://hotel2tango.com/info - visited June 19th, 2007).

[2] An in-depth discussion of Thomas Porcello's work can be found in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

[3] 500 copies of the CD were produced, 100 of which were given back to the participants, and another 100 of which were published in a limited-edition version of Volume 1, Issue 1 of *Pivot: An Interdisciplinary Graduate Journal of Visual Culture* (see Chapman 2007). The remaining 300 copies are being sent out to Canadian independent record stores, radio stations and reviewers with the depositing of this dissertation.

[4] One could also accuse techno, electronica and "glitch"-enthused authors such as Kim Cascone and Achim Szepanski of the same short-sitedness in relation to the breadth of sample-based practices, both contemporary and emergent (or even potential). For a discussion of an alternative point of view vis a vis these and other authors in relationship to the canon of "techno" history, see (Chapman and Friz 2003).

[5](Diamond 2005) stands out as a notable exception to this generalization regarding the contributors to (Greene and Porcello 2005). Apparently Porcello's publication record also "examine[s] the social phenomenology of recorded music" (Greene and Porcello 2005, 284), although I have yet to see where he unpacks this concept in print. And although it is an essay in a peer reviewed journal, as opposed to a book, (Rodgers 2003) stands out as an early and welcome focus on actual production issues encountered by those creating electronic and sample-based music. Her forthcoming book *Pink Noises* with Duke University Press--a collection of interviews with female electronic sound composers and performers--will no doubt help to dismantle even further the stereotype I have developed regarding current scholarship around the practice of sampling.

[6]Feminist precursors working with the concept of constructed community in ethnomusicology such as (Tillmann-Healy 2003), (Diamond and Moisala 2000), (McCartney 2000), and (Pageley and Caputo 1994) are briefly discussed in Chapter 2.

[7]The word "soundscape" has been used by Hildegard Westerkamp, Andra McCartney, R. Murray Schafer and other Canadian composer-theorists to describe our everyday sonic environment. This often-underestimated realm is at once both public and private. We are at the center of our own soundscape in terms of aural perspective, however the perimeter of this zone overlaps with many others--thus constituting a type of community. There are also many potential points of reference within each zone as soundscape studies ask us to

consider relationships to every sound heard (or hear-able). Soundscape composition involves making field recordings of these audio-sensory experiences with portable equipment. These samples are then edited, processed (sometimes) and mixed into evocative new works that communicate the feelings stirred in the recordist (both in the field and the studio) as well as a sense of where these feelings took place. Such an articulation is never simply a matter of allowing the sounds to "speak for themselves". The creative instincts (and skill) of the soundscape composer are present even in seemingly-simple pre-production choices such as deciding where to walk and point the microphone. These constitute the first of many acts of audio mixing for the soundscape composer.

[8] While (Théberge 1997) could be read as a counter-example to this (over?) generalization, the book represents a principally discursive as well as historical study of early sampling technologies and does not delve into many specific examples of sampling practices, other than anecdotally.

Chapter 2: Methodology

- A. Statement of Methods
- B. Participant Observation/Ethnography
- C. Reflexivity
- D. Sampling as Citation
- E. Friendship as Methodology
- F. Research Creation

A. Statement of Methods

The construction of community within the context of this research grounds the work in a specific time, place and network of relations. The ethnographic approach adopted involves both participant observation as well as semi-structured interviews. The creative audio aspect of our undertaking has also allowed for non-verbal explorations of themes raised in our study. These three elements (community, ethnography and audio-creation) have been granted equal weight within the context of the research. The fourth and final axis of inquiry explored in this case is theoretical. Sampling on the part of sound producers in 2007 has burgeoned to the point where the term "sample" is now hard to distinguish from "record." This state of affairs was hardly predicted in the literature. A comparative discussion of academic analyses of sampling, both old and new, is the subject of Chapter 3 of this dissertation. "Sampling as recording" is considered in Chapter 5, along with sampling's relationship to 6 other keywords derived from the interviews with the *Selected Sounds* participants (i.e., *technology, community, memory, listening, collecting, and ethics*).

The current chapter explores the theory and context behind the methodological choices made within *Selected Sounds*--choices stemming from a commitment to a *reflexive* form of ethnography that invokes sample-based practices of *citation*, *friendship* and *creative production* as mechanisms for highly-engaged research in the arts, humanities and social sciences.

B. Participant Observation/Ethnography

What is ethnography?

> We see the term as referring primarily to a particular method or set of methods. In its most characteristic form it involves the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions--in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research. (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995, 1)

Selected Sounds uses methods of qualitative inquiry such as participant observation and semi-structured interviews in developing its account of sample-based music. However, my role as ethnographer in this study differs significantly from the kind of intervention traditionally practiced by those taking up such a moniker.

> The method of participant observation is a way to collect data in naturalistic settings by ethnographers who observe and/or take part in the common and uncommon activities of the people being studied. (Dewalt 2002, 2)

As a participant in the remixing integral to *Selected Sounds*, I have been listening to others and myself at the same time. "Record" of what I see/hear and experience was kept through notes and interview recordings. Attempting to make myself "explicitly aware of things that others take for granted" in their sample-based practices (myself included) has been one the main focuses of the project (Spradley 1980, 58). But fundamentally what I have tried to animate has been the pursuit of our collective goal--the sample-based compilation CD. The experimental/collective approach in this case has more in common with forms of narrative exchange among friends than explicit qualitative systems of data collection, arrangement and conclusion (such as those found in Crabtree 1992). This non-traditional approach to ethnography finds its justification in recent developments within the field, developments loosely definable as "postmodern."

The postmodern sensitivity against subject-centered accounts of social phenomena has had a great impact on the state of ethnography today.

> Ethnography is often said to be a way of "telling it like it is", looking at the social world of the subject as it is seen "from the inside", telling stories as people might tell these stories themselves. But immediately, it is not (and never can be) that. This is a simplified view of the relations between subject-object, self and other. (Pearson 1993, vii)

For an ethnographer's account to be truly "from the inside," this would require the ability to "go native"--an impossible scenario. For the very act of observing or listening for the purpose of writing sets the ethnographer apart from his or her cohort. The suggestion that one could be so well integrated into a community as to go unnoticed in record keeping (thereby providing the ethnographer with an "objective" point of view) obfuscates the locus of ethnography's greatest strength--namely its relaxed, conversational approach towards engaging with the common sense of a person or people. By "common sense" I am referring to the sort of tactical, everyday knowledge taken for granted by different communities of people, the sharing of which constitutes their unity. This naturalist (as opposed to positivist) foundation of much ethnographic inquiry accepts that the way to get closer to discovering social truths is to get closer to the people and contexts that develop those truths in their day to day activities. However, as Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson have claimed, "any hope of discovering 'laws' of human behaviour is misplaced--since human behaviour is continually constructed, and reconstructed, on the basis of people's interpretations of the situations they are in (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995, 8).

Ethnographic research today cannot naively insist that the social facts it uncovers are absolute. This revised model of qualitative inquiry accepts that variation will always displace universality. However, there is a tension here "between the naturalism characteristic of ethnographers' methodological thinking and the constructivism and cultural relativism that shape their understanding of the perspectives and behaviour of the people they study" (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995, 11 my emphasis). By insisting on moving into the social world of the people they observe, ethnographers betray their subscription to the notion that there is something "out there" to study--the "object" of ethnographic inquiry. This belief is made problematic, however, by the commonly held impossibility of truly "going native." Moreover, many ethnographers go further in recognizing their own role in the construction of the social world that they (and others who come after them) seek to interpret. The very selection of a field or object of study itself brings certain questions to the fore and eliminates others, or at least puts them on the back burner.

> The 'field' is not an entity 'out there' that awaits the discovery and exploration of the intrepid explorer. The field is not merely reported in the texts of fieldwork: it is constituted by our writing and reading. I do not mean that there are no social beings or social acts independent of our observations. Clearly there are. Rather, my view is that 'the field' of fieldwork is the outcome of a series of transactions. (Atkinson 1992, 8)

These transactions negotiate the field's boundaries: what is omitted, who are overlooked, how is the ethnographer herself to be represented, what is the perceived reason why she is there, and what themes or issues are highlighted? They occur at many levels--simply by arriving with questions in hand, the ethnographer disturbs the "natural" state of the community he wishes to study. Furthermore, the ethnographer's efforts at inscription and interpretation (research, recording, writing) are bound to feed-back into these communities, causing new reactions and behaviours to appear.

A variety of new ethnographic techniques have arisen over the years in order to help resolve this tension between naturalistic tendencies and constructivist postures. For the purposes of concision and brevity, I will now outline three ethnographic strategies adopted within *Selected Sounds*: 1. the writing of a self-reflexive, narrative based ethnographic text, 2. the presentation of textual quotation as a sample-based endeavour, and 3. the promotion of friendship as a working methodology. While hardly exhaustive, the articulation of these three positions should be read as foundational to my construction of a creative research community/context through ethnography.

C. Reflexivity

If ethnography is not "telling it like it is," then why do we value it? According to postmodern, feminist, and queer theoretical accounts of ethnography, we value ethnographers for the same reasons we value story tellers--narrative provides the means for the expression of articulated, contextualized truths--partial, and yet illustrative, nevertheless. On this point, Ruth Behar has quoted Walter Benjamin, who claimed that storytelling

> is "always the art of repeating stories," without explanation, combining the extraordinary and the ordinary; most important, it is grounded in a community of listeners on whom the story makes a claim to be remembered by virtue of its "chaste compactness," which inspires the listener, in turn, to become the teller of the story. (Behar 1995, 152)

The task at the heart of ethnography has always been a mediation between distance and authority (Pearson 1993, xi). The impossibility of a completely authentic account (going native) forces the negotiation of a double distance on the part of the would-be ethnographic writer; links must be made to both the community she is studying as well as the audience (academic or otherwise) she is trying to reach with her new-found knowledge. Narrative techniques are used to create these links--to tell these stories.

A deeply self-reflexive text provides a means to develop this authority as a story teller without resorting to the promotion of a naïve faith in the ethnographer as neutral scribe (Behar 1995, 152), (Denzin 1997, 217), (Pearson 1993, xii). For Behar, Denzin and others, the ethnographer is a teller of tales. Sometimes these tales are learned through first hand observation, other times through interviews--but in all cases the writing of these tales is partial, subjective, constructed, arbitrary and far from complete. Nevertheless, what is produced still interests us.

Denzin describes "self-reflexive" ethnographies as "messy texts":

> texts that are aware of their own narrative apparatuses, that are sensitive to how reality is socially constructed, and that understand that writing is a way of "framing" reality. Messy texts are many sited, inter-textual, always open ended, and resistant to theoretical holism, but always committed to cultural criticism.(Denzin 1997, 224)

Denzin outlines a variety of modes for the writing of messy ethnographic texts, including the narrative, poetic, autobiographical and performative. Ethnographies that draw upon these various modes operate from an understanding that the construction and communication of knowledge is not a linear affair and that truths, once expressed, are always partial. This postmodern sensitivity, although relativist, does not demand that texts developed according to its parameters be uncritical. On the contrary, what is required is simply a willingness to be open about where one is coming from as a researcher--thus allowing potential readers access to how your memory and critical thinking may have been operating during various moments of interview or observation. Later, as pen is put to paper, experiences encountered in interviews or through first-hand observation are once again filtered through memory in this process of re-narration. A self-reflexive text is conscious of this versioning--this is made explicit throughout the text. Many recent models of ethnographic writing seek to place different pieces into juxtaposition. Sometimes these pieces come from interviews, other times from the ethnographer's own past. This act of articulation is reminiscent of sample-based music. It involves both interpretation and reflection.

> Interpretation comes to the forefront of the research work. This calls for the utmost awareness of theoretical assumptions, the importance of language and pre-understanding, all of which constitute major determinants of the interpretation. The second element, reflection, turns attention 'inwards' towards the person of the researcher, the relevant research community, society as a whole, intellectual and cultural traditions, and the central importance, as well as problematic nature, of language and narrative (the form of presentation) in the research context. Systematic reflection of several different levels can endow the interpretation with a quality that makes empirical research of value. Reflection can, in the context of empirical research, be defined as the *interpretation of interpretation* and the launching of critical self-exploration of one's own interpretations of empirical material (including its construction). (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000, 5-6)

Alvesson and Sköldberg go on to articulate four elements of reflective research that stem from four different philosophical currents: 1. grounded theory, 2. hermeneutics, 3. critical theory and 4. postmodernism. The four principles for reflexive research that flow from these schools: 1. systematic techniques in research procedures, 2. clarification of the primacy of interpretation, 3.

awareness of the political-ideological character of research and 4. reflection in relation to the problem of representation and authority (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000, 5-6). Without going into a description of these four principles (which is beyond the scope of this chapter), I would like nevertheless to take a few minutes to explore the relationship of my doctoral research to this reflexive ideology. First of all, I was fascinated to learn that Alvesson and Sköldberg come from a philosophy of science background, something I share with the authors. Perhaps this is why I find their approach appealing, if somewhat self-righteous. In extracting insights from the above mentioned schools of thoughts, Alvesson and Sköldberg can't help but take pot-shots along the way, including describing as "troublemakers" those post-structuralists, linguistic philosophers, discourse analysts and feminists who disagree with their stubborn insistence that empirical research is of value (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000, 3). Nevertheless, I find myself in basic agreement with many of their statements, especially the claim that transparency in interpretation and reflection are paramount in the construction of "valuable" research. The basic point of view is that research into human behaviour (they focus principally on the social sciences, although equivalent arguments have been developed for the physical sciences) can never result in the construction of objective "facts" due to a host of reasons, including the primacy of our interpretative capacity, which makes it impossible for us to articulate an observation or to extract data from an interview transcript without remixing the material in the process. As opposed to throwing our hands in the air and claiming that research is then pointless, since no facts are ever unquestionable (or asserting in an equivalent, but opposite sort of way, that every point of view is as true as the next)--Alvesson and Sköldberg prefer to work towards developing an *ethics* for research in the social sciences, one which attempts to make room for all the important considerations brought up by theorists and cultural analysts over the past hundred years without "throwing the baby out with the bathwater".

The kernel of this ethics lies in the concept of "reflexivity" or "self-reflection". The concept applies to authors of empirical research in the social sciences as much as it does their audience and subjects of study. Transparency in terms of one's assumptions, vocabularies, systems of classification, hypotheses, relationships and theoretical baggage is the only way to produce a text that is ready for others to embrace into their own remixes as "knowledge." Such transparency enhances "modularity," to borrow from Manovich (2005). Modular texts are texts that are designed so as to enhance their "remixability" into other projects, other contexts. If one's (research, social, personal, etc.) intentions can be articulated and built into the materials one produces as a researcher or creator, this makes it easier for others to later interpret, work with, and ultimately "evolve" this work. Reflexive audiences pick up on purposeful indicators, and will interpret them according to their own set of preconceptions. It's about preparing academic work so that others can digest it in meaningful and personalized ways.

Perhaps most importantly, however, a reflexive methodology is about power, and recognizing that the construction of "knowledge" is often complicit in the construction of an "us" and a "them"--i.e., those that "know" and those that do not. The only way to produce "knowledge" worthy of the name is to be as transparent as possible about where it came from. This does not simply mean publishing an article in a scientific journal and then walking away. Knowledge must be useable within a variety of social planes in order to adhere enough to everyday reality to be considered true. Communication is the key, and a constant re-analysis of one's position as a purveyor of knowledge, with the ambition of sharing that knowledge with as many people as possible, provides a way out of the pitfalls of ivory-tower elitism as well as the hoarding of social capital.

Reflexivity is about acknowledging the power of the reader/audience. For by accepting that all observation, writing, production, etc., is created through interpretation, one recognizes the potential active engagement of a reader. In terms of a text, it is always

> open to different interpretations. In the perspective of postmodernist ideals, authorship is about increasing the opportunities for different readings. The reader becomes significant, not as a consumer of correct results - the right intended meaning from the text and its author(ity) - but in a more active and less predictable position, in which interesting readings may be divorced from the possible intentions of the author. The key concepts and catchwords here include multiple voices, pluralism, multiple reality and ambiguity. The good research text should avoid closure, following a monolithic logic. Instead, inconsistencies, fragmentation, irony, self-reflection and pluralism must pervade the work - writing of the final text as well as the thinking and note-taking that precede it. (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000, 171)

Inconsistencies, fragmentation, etc., can be distracting for a reader. But this is precisely why they are of value, as they open up possibilities for mental journeys and tangents, the very substance of interpretation. Chapter 4 of this dissertation, where I present the results of the *Selected Sounds* interviews, obviously adheres to this "messy text" model, but it is my hope that the entire work resonates with destabilizing, pluralist self-reflection.

D. Sampling as Citation

De Certeau writes:

> Incised into the prose of the passage from day to day, without any possible commentary or translation, the poetic sounds of quoted fragments remain. (de Certeau 1984, 162)

De Certeau understands the practice of quoting "the words of others" as an attempt to recover "voices of the body"--the oral/aural events which occur, for example, in conversations, at specific historical moments and which disappear as soon as they take place. The contexts of these events are imprinted into the quotations one takes the time to record and subsequently introduce into new oral and/or textual discussions. It is in this sense of borrowing or lifting that quotation is reminiscent of sampling in music.

An aural space must be made for these voices. Quoting others treats their words like samples. The fragments we select are used to enhance our own texts, our own articulated contexts, with *les mots justes de l'autre*. These acts of appropriation are an attempt to recover the poetry of an original utterance through cutting and mixing. The quote is snipped from its original context and then framed by the rest of one's analysis so as to suggest that this original context has somehow been translated into the new text. Fragments of narrative are treated as having no vital link with their moments of "birth"--re-articulating them in different ways only makes their poetic sparks shine more brightly--illuminating our own interpretive prose which connects each quote to the next. On the first page of the endnote section of his work *More Brilliant than the Sun*, author Kodwo Eshun tells us that "books sampled are cited by author and date"(Eshun 1998, b[195]).

I'm not the first to suggest that sampling is similar to writing (see Miller 2004, for instance). But the point could use elaboration, at least in terms of how I have come to understand their similarity. There is also at least one very important difference between the two practices. Textual-quotation has a long-standing history and a widely accepted mechanism for paying tribute to the authors one choses to cite--i.e., bibliographic referencing. While plagiarism is obviously not okay, no one can stop me from citing another's work as long as I am prepared to provide a reference as to the original source. The publication of any academic paper, let alone a book, would quickly become prohibitive if one had to pay every time another author's work was referenced. Audio sampling has not been afforded this liberty, in part due to unresolved questions over what constitutes plagiarism in the context of sample-based music. This theme is taken up again in Chapter 3. For the time being I will finish this section on sampling as citation with a quote.

> [T]he life historian/author usually settles for a segregated, often jarring combination of three [voices]: the native voice, the personal "I was there" voice, and the authoritative voice of the ethnographer. The difficulties inherent in making music out of these three "voices" pose the key challenge. (Behar 1995, 149)

The idea of making music out of one's own voice and the voices of others is here presented as a metaphorical concept applied to the writing of literary texts. *Selected Sounds* is an attempt to continue on in this spirit of polyphony. Aural quotations were chosen by each participant before we embarked on separate remixing projects. The final compilation CD brings us back together once again, as do the interviews collected in Chapter 4 of this dissertation and the subsequent themes discussed in the concluding chapter (Chapter 5). Before I get to this original research, however, I will continue in my attempt to weave theoretical music from the thoughts of others, notably in Chapter 3's literature review as well as the following sections on *friendship* as a working methodology for ethnography and research-creation.

E. Friendship as Methodology

> [T]he concept of the CD itself should never be assumed a priori, since it may vary from being an aesthetic object to being a documentation of social processes of several types. (Diamond 2005, 134)

It was in recognition of the value of reflexive, heterogeneous accounts of socio-cultural phenomena that I invited other sample-based musicians into my project as composer/collaborators. The question remains, however, as to how and why I ended up choosing the participants I did. The notion of having seven participants came about fairly haphazardly upon reflection as to how many tracks would work well on a compilation CD, as well as in relation to my ability to put aside time, energy and resources for each participant. Twelve+ artists were invited, in the end only seven (eight including the duo) agreed to participate. It turns out to have been an interesting number to choose, given that "6-8 data sources or sampling units will often suffice for a homogenous sample, while 12-20 commonly are needed when looking for dis-confirming evidence or trying to achieve maximum variation" in qualitative research design (Kuzel 1992, 41). *Selected Sounds* does not attempt to demonstrate anything particularly homogeneous about sample-based composers in general; nor have I sought to provide confirming or dis-confirming evidence of any practices in particular. Instead we have developed a mix of aural/oral narratives about sample-based music, collecting recordings, favourite technologies and our own life histories.

But why these seven and not seven others? There is a short and a long answer to this question. Short answer: because they are all serious sound artists from a variety of different styles and backgrounds, and they are people who I know personally, having met them through our common compositional interests.

The long answer involves a certain amount of personal opinion, practical instinct and theoretical commitment. As a scholar I am not interested in writing the kind of ethnographic work that relies on quoted passages from certain "key" informants that are contextualized so as to represent fountains of untainted, straight-from-the-source wisdom (also discussed in the section on "Ephemerality and the Population of Sound Studies" in Chapter 3). The participants in *Selected Sounds* were all spontaneously interested in the idea of working with other Montreal artists and their chosen samples once the opportunity was presented to them. The list came together progressively, starting with close friends and former musical-collaborators like Anna Friz and Richard Williams, and then growing to include people they or I suggested, but always with an ear towards achieving a balance of approaches and compositional styles. It was also important to me to try to achieve a 50/50 split between male and female sample-based composers, as so much work already done on such artists has focused on male musicians and their achievements.

Fundamentally, though, I have been guided by the notion that friendships make up the best resource network out of which to put together such investigations. Working together on the project will hopefully spin-off into future collaborations for many of the participants, thereby building and strengthening the community of sample-based producers as it already exists in Montreal. Exposing each other to new techniques, resources and ideas will also serve towards expanding each individual's own repertoire of practices. The distribution opportunity for each participant, as contributors to the compilation album, also constitutes another way in which *Selected Sounds* will attempt to give back to its research group.

Lisa Tillmann-Healy's concept of "friendship as method" argues that some of the best techniques available to ethnographers seeking to work with their informant-group in a way that promotes mutual gain and respect are those we use in maintaining friendships.

> Calling for inquiry that is open, multi-voiced, and emotionally rich, friendship as method involves the practices, the pace, the contexts, and the ethics of friendship. Researching with the practices of friendship means that although we employ traditional forms of data gathering (e.g., participant observation, systematic note taking, and informal and formal interviewing), our primary procedures are those we use to build and sustain friendship: conversation, everyday involvement, compassion, giving, and vulnerability. (Tillmann-Healy 2003, 734)

The introduction of note taking and interview recording into the pre-existing friendships I already have with many of the participants in *Selected Sounds* was pursued in the spirit of sharing advocated above. In so doing, the desire was to "move from studying 'them' to studying us."(Tillmann-Healy 2003, 735)

The ethics, methods and outcomes of *constructing* communities for research purposes have also been explored in essays such as Diamond and Moisala (2000), McCartney (2000) and Pegley and Caputo (1994). The quote from Diamond at the start of this section points towards the underlying "insight" at work within such research: that the production of knowledge/texts/records involves a process. What is produced therefore represents this process as much, if not more, than the layers of meaning apparent upon first encounter with the "finished" product.

Friendship as method highlights the possibilities for exchange, engagement and new creative learning that happen when groups of people are "united" under the umbrella of a single research project. In the opening paragraphs of *Music and Gender*, Diamond and Moisala describe the process through which the book was developed. The "circulation of a set of questions inviting the contributors to share stories about their personal and professional perspectives, as well as opinions, theories, or reflections on the themes for the individual sections of the anthology" (Diamond and Moisala 2000, 4) led to a lively email conversation amongst 16+ women, spanning many different languages, countries and musical traditions. These conversations were subsequently developed into quotations and concepts explored in the rest of the introduction as well as other editorial sections of the book. Diamond and Moisala maintain that this conversation guaranteed, in some ways, the relevance of the public/private conversations addressed through its release (Diamond and Moisala 2000, 5).

Drawing on "reception theory" advocated by pedagogical theorist Paulo Freire, combined with a deep respect for her research subjects derived from feminist studies of philosophy of science (such as the work of Evelyn Fox Keller and Barbara McClintock), McCartney has also contributed to an emergent discussion around friendship as a research methodology. Her consistent and active efforts to bring sonically-minded people together in the development of her research projects can be evidenced through the links available at http://andrasound.org. For an in-depth theoretical discussion of the benefits of dialogue within a constructed research community, see McCartney (2000). For a recent compilation of essays developed in the context of *In and Out of the Sound Studio* (a research project on the practices of women sound producers in the studio spearheaded by McCartney), see Volume 26, Issue 2 of *Intersections: Canadian Journal of Music.*

Finally, (Pegley and Caputo 1994) provides a useful point of departure in questioning why women sound producers, researchers and writers on ethnographic methodology are less reluctant to develop "friendships" with research subjects and/or to actively construct connections between those brought together in research/recording projects. It also represents a fabulous precedent for the non-traditional presentation of textual information employed in Chapter 4 of this dissertation. Font and text placement are played with in order to foreground the multiplicity of the opinions invoked in the article. Questions of gender, voice, trust, authority and perspective are asked in relationship to the canons of both musicology and feminism. Asserting a tacitly assumed "male ear" in much musicological critique and theory, Pegley and Caputo are intrigued by the notion of a "female" ear,

> that is itself pluralistic. It is the apparent singularity and homogeneity by which the consumption of musical sound and musical experiences within a context of power relations has been

> articulated that underlies our concerns. (Pegley and Caputo 1994, 299-300)

Pegley and Caputo interview themselves as Informant A and Informant B of their study and develop third person accounts of information gleaned in these interviews. The work stands as a well organized, yet wonderfully messy method for the development of participant observation-based ethnographies focused on shared, yet extremely heterogeneous experiences of cultural prejudice such as sexism within the study of music. The singularity of their own responses to such sexism has an inverse relationship to the widespread applicability of the concepts they raise in discussing their own experiences. Personal details are revealed in writing so that "family resemblances" with one's own experience can be more easily recognized. The "female ear" is not afraid to listen to the stories of a single individual, finding the process of hearing that tale infinitely more valuable than being told "how things are" in a general way by an authoritative voice. There is no such thing as a homogeneous musical experience, female or male. But this does not mean that we should not exchange stories.[1]

Feminist literature on technology, music and ethnography has been instrumental in legitimizing avenues for the production of knowledge that do not reinforce distances between researcher and researched. This is not to suggest that feminist scholarship seeks to subsume difference, quite the contrary. Difference is welcomed with interest and conversational enthusiasm. The methods adopted in *Selected Sounds* have been greatly affected by these considerations. This cannot be understated. From the initial invitation process, to the cooperative sample-selection mechanism, the semi-structured interviews and the html presentation format opted for in Chapter 4, this research project has sought to respect the aversion to *a priori* assumptions exemplified by so many feminist writers on sound, technology and society.

F. Research-Creation

As a final point of methodological reflection, the non-traditional format of this dissertation deserves consideration. To be clear, I understand the results of this thesis research to diverge from traditional PhD dissertations in the following three ways.

1. The production of a collaborative audio CD was an integral component of the research project. It is what brought us together into a research community[2] and provided a constant reference point throughout the interview process.
2. The production of an academic work from the research project was accomplished hyper-textually. The most complete versions of *Selected Sounds* exist on CDR and the Internet (http://selectedsounds.org) as documents incorporating many internal and external "hyperlinks" as well as a significant amount of html code--including the use of colour-coded text as a mechanism for presenting simultaneous remixes of interview material (see Chapter 4).

3. Lastly, a print-based version of this thesis has also been produced, in order to ensure its archive-ability. However, the colour coded data-base central to Chapter 4 remains in the form of an appendix--providing a tactile object with a similar capacity for simultaneous remixing as the same chapter in the html version.

I am fascinated with the affective dimension of time-based forms of communication such as sound and interactive multimedia (or intermedia). My creative production (both within and outside this project) explores mnemonic responses to such media on the part of both audiences and producers. "Listening" to music, for instance, represents an enormously complex process incorporating emotive, sensorial and intellectual judgments. Acoustics of a listening space and/or quality of a playback system dramatically affect reception of music on the part of the listener. The perceived "value" of a given piece in terms of cultural capital also plays a strong role. However, it is in the realm of memory that audio art exerts its strongest influence. We experience what we hear in constant relation to what we have heard before.

Performance is an integral component of my artistic practice as it allows for the construction of affective feedback loops between audiences, spaces and collaborators. Digital projection, physical/theatrical/instrumental interpretation, scratch djing as well as live audio sampling and remixing are all part of my repertoire. I also create stand-alone sound and intermedia work through the use of a portable digital studio, the Internet, field recordings, photographs, as well as many "antiquated" technologies such as vinyl records, vintage electronics and other "lost" media found in thrift shops.

I am deeply committed to interweaving this artistic practice with my academic research and pedagogical pursuits. My approach in working on theory is the same as my methodology for creating projects--i.e., sample-based. In all my work I attempt to leave ample room for the participation of my selected samples when it comes to guiding the writing/mixing process. The paths I follow in these "mixplorations" almost always flow from a desire to bring the multiple media, electronic devices and software applications I use into some sort of relationship with my everyday life. The theoretical questioning involved in this process is often quite complex. Practical applications, however, can be as simple as mixing field recordings from my environment into sound pieces intended for other people's car interiors, concert halls, iPods and/or living rooms.

Research-creation in the humanities celebrates the inter-relationship between media, communication and technology. Communication is a type of craft--a grounding of theory through putting it into practice. This can be a soundtrack to a piece of documentary film as much as a face-to-face conversation. In both cases vibrating air molecules are being used as a medium for the transmission of ideas, thoughts and/or feelings from one person to another. Abstract concepts are made concrete, if only for a fleeting instance, as sounds are subsequently taken up by their audience and transformed into words, thoughts, feelings and memories. Sound is a subtle, powerful medium, and often-times overlooked especially when compared to film and its relationship to culture (see Walter Benjamin 1969b). The first step to becoming proficient at recording and mixing sound is to open one's ears, and start remembering the impact sound has on our lives. This often requires a re-tuning of the ear to pay attention to sounds we have learned to filter out of our everyday sonic environments. The *Selected Sounds* CD and the interactive html version of this dissertation are both intended as devices to help with this retuning.

Research-creation is an emergent field within the humanities, but one that is achieving greater degrees of acceptance. The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada define a program of research-creation as:

> a sustained research enterprise that includes one or more projects or other components, and which is shaped by broad objectives for the advancement of knowledge in the fine arts, through the development or renewal of the field of artistic endeavour concerned.(http://www.sshrc.ca/web/apply/program_descriptions/fine_arts_e.asp)

This statement is extremely broad. But it does point to the necessity of a *project* for research-creation. The importance of this point should not be underestimated. What is significant about research-creation is precisely the fact that questions posed within its arena cannot be considered through text-based means alone. In the case of *Selected Sounds*, my ambition has been to explore questions of practice that could only be asked aurally. To ask "What is sampling?" in face to face conversations can provide one series of answers. Asking participants to help prepare and engage in an aural investigation of audio sampling has provided a very different series of responses. And producing a non-linear dissertation chapter out of these various answers (Chapter 4), as well as a hypertextual academic context for this chapter and the project as a whole (Chapters 1,2,3 and 5) has provided (hopefully) a potential model for the enhanced-textual presentation and dissemination of multi-narrative ethnographic knowledge.

Notes

[1] As a final precedent for friendship-as-method (not explicitly feminist, but related to the current discussion nevertheless) please see (Feld and Keil 1994)--a book-length discussion between two male ethnomusicologists (and friends) on the affective and mechanical concept of "the groove" in music.

[2] A more sustained discussion of constructing communities through sampling is contained in Chapter 5.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

- A. Ephemerality and The Population of Sound Studies
- B. Digital Designs: the production and consumption of sampling
- C. Appropriation and Authenticity
- D. Sampling and Control
- E. Sampling and Copyright
- F. Rhythm Science
- G. Sampling as Techne
- H. "Is it Live?" (The Question of Aura)

As has been stated throughout the introductory and methodological chapters of *Selected Sounds* (Chapters 1 and 2), sampling is a concept that has appealed to many different analyses of musical communities and popular culture for at least the past 20 years. In attempting to develop a context for the interventions represented by *Selected Sounds*, I have developed the following review of literature produced in this field --classifying the various questions asked in articulating these works according to the subject-headings listed above. These questions have been developed through reflection upon the data gleaned through the interview process archived in Chapter 4/Appendix A, but also in response to nearly seven years of questioning concerning what it means to "sample" sounds in the creation of "new" audio works. My convictions have changed remarkably over the course of this period, although a few notions have persisted--such as the belief that "sampling" is a remarkably useful concept for demonstrating the impossibility of separating *practices* from *technologies* of sound production. The following investigations attempt to chart the course of these fluctuating convictions, as well as the history of sample-based music more generally.

A. Ephemerality and the Population of Sound Studies

Alex De Jong and Mark Schuilenburg borrow the term "sonosphere" from R. Murray Schafer. They use it in the claim that "sounds and noises confirm the existence of the city and have a community-establishing quality" (De Jong and Schuilenburg 2006, 27). We are all at the center of our own "sonosphere," but there are just as many sonospheric centers as there are people in a particular soundscape. "Urban" musics like rap or techno participate in the delineation of the modern cityscape as much as do skyscrapers, concrete and commuter-highways. The presence of these musics in different environments, both interior and exterior, helps to extend the breadth of our modern urban experience.

This position is a welcome one, in terms of its serious consideration of the scope of the urban soundscape and how it impacts our everyday experience. It is remarkable that the authors refer to Schafer, however, for as Sophie Arkette has noted,

> the objectivity of Schafer's enquiry [often] breaks down and gives way to what I will call urban prejudice: a point of view whereby industrial, commercial and traffic sounds are deemed sonic pollutants, and subsequently allotted to the garbage heap." (Arkette 2004, 161)

While Schafer's prejudice is *against* urban spaces, De Jong and Schuilenburg have the opposite affliction--a strong affection for the urban. This is well and good. I myself share a similar affection. But the population of this urban plane surprises me. It is not the same as the one I encounter everyday. It is filled with celebrities. "Urban" culture reigns where...

> The street is the source of all wisdom, and the place where realness, trust, authenticity and credibility are still to be found. Not only does the street stand for 'the real', but belonging in this environment is a source of 'street cred'. 'I'm still Jenny from the block...I know where I came from (from the Bronx)!', Jennifer Lopez sings in *Jenny from the Block*. The identity of the star coincides with that of the 'gangstas', 'pimps', 'bitches' and other 'playas' of the cities of the USA. (De Jong and Schuilenburg 2006, 31-33).

For someone to be considered an expert, there must be standards by which to judge that expertise. Celebrities are appealing as subjects of analysis and participants in interviews making their public contributions readily accessible to many, thus suggesting a certain verifiability behind what the say. Such figures become the subject of analyses intended to reveal the hidden truths understood by spectacular musical scenes or subcultures. These analyses rely heavily on public documents for source material, occasionally proffering the odd statement gleaned through interview. These celebrity opinions and postures are accepted *a priori* as representative of the practices underlying the scenes from which they emerge--straight from the source wisdom, as it were. If actual interview opportunities are unavailable, then discursive analyses of the advertising, media and fashion icons associated with musical scenes are deemed sufficient to access the social hierarchies they putatively map out. Many of the authors addressed in the following pages are guilty of this sort of train-spotting.

When De Jong and Schuilenburg quote Snoop "Doggy" Dogg, Russell Simmons, P Diddy, Jay Z and Pharell Williams in their paper, one is supposed to nod one's head in recognition, feeling the authentic vibe along with the authors' obvious familiarity with some of the current kings of pop rap and r'n'b. When they later reference early Detroit techno pioneers Juan Atkins and Rick Davis or "underground" hip hoppers Mobb Deep, they continue to prove their credentials, citing the right names and places. The use of Schafer feels similar. Why not Hildegard Westerkamp, Andra McCartney, Tia DeNora, Sophie Arkette or a host of others who have written about sound, space, place, identity and/or soundscapes?

Tricia Rose does the same thing in *Black Noise*--an extremely important contribution to the analysis of hip hop and its foundation in Afrodiasporic musical priorities and practices (discussed in greater detail below). An early contribution to the field of sound studies more generally, the work is cited by many authors today, especially those interested in sampling. However, one feels the weight of the celebrity of those she quotes most heavily, Hank Shocklee and Chuck D.--the production team behind the hip hop super group "Public Enemy." And the situating of sampling so strongly within the history of black music makes those not of African American background seem a little out of place when sampling--as though we were stealing the technique, just as sample-based artists often "steal" the sounds they use.

The population of "sound studies,"[1], therefore, becomes an important question for those interested in sampling. Who are considered experts in this field, and for what reasons? Where do we draw the lines between producers, musicians, composers, listeners, writers and academics? Who holds the keys to the knowledge we seek to reveal?

Open Sound (the edited volume containing De Jong and Schuilenburg 2006) is a recent and self-consciously canonical contribution to sound studies, drawing together many disparate essays, photo montages and musical works into dialogue around the theme of sound in contemporary culture. Not every essay in *Open Sound* is guilty of the same fetishizing as De Jong and Schuilenburg's article, however. Caroline Bassett's stands out in particular in her use of De Certeau. Perhaps it is the everyday focus that is appealing, but more important, I think, is the applicability of her position to an ethics for research posited on the multifaceted-ness, the essential uniqueness of individual experience. Space, when understood as a phenomenal experience itself as opposed to a container for that experience, becomes extremely multilayered--incorporating all modes of feeling into its architecture. It also unites us in a community of shared, yet individual experience.

> The spaces into which we shift our attention (and those from which we shift our attention) by way of mobiles [a.k.a. cell phones--the subject of Bassett's essay] are not purely technological spaces. To some extent they are imagined. This simple proposition is important. It means that the city streets and the auditory spaces within which we connect are technically achieved spaces, *and as a part of this*, spaces of the collective and individual imaginary. It means that these spaces are, in their technical iterations *and* in their imaginary formations, *and* in their political economy, connected social productions. This is not to say that they are not 'real'. Indeed, these connected productions (among others) help *comprise* everyday life. (Bassett 2006, 44)

I'd like to speak a little bit more about this notion of "connected productions" and how the ephemerality of sound and music add to their social articulation, the improvised composition we create in navigating the world around us everyday. It is this ephemerality that De Jong and Schuilenburg attempt to harness in their expansion of the concept of "urban" to include a cityscape's aural elements. Sound and music provide the soundtrack to our everyday life as a hybrid of the material and the imagined. This hybridity places aural phenomena into a paradoxical position vis a vis the history of Western metaphysics and the separation of the abstract and the concrete (or form and content, cause and effect, ideas and reality, etc.).

These considerations around the ephemerality of sound beg the question--what is the relationship between audio performance versus recordings of such performances, from the point of view of the academy as well as the individual experiencing subject? As Hannah Bosma has said,

> women sound artists often become involved in intermedia projects that are performative and scantily documented. As a result, their work is ephemeral and does not so easily become a significant part

> of the public sphere. The same may be said of many community art projects. (Bosma 2006)

Bosma is speaking about gendered and socially-constructed experiences particular to her own work. However, in my own experience as a sound artist I have also found it, not harder, but simply "less obvious" to achieve recognition for creative/performative work within the academy. I think this has to do with precedent as well as the aforementioned epistemological and metaphysical hurdles set for those interested in studying and communicating through sound in the West. There is a reason why poets and musicians have no place within Plato's Republic. The establishment of the rule of abstract thought and a philosophical monarchy required the splitting of human experience into two ontological categories, "real" and "imagined". Before science displaced philosophy as the "highest" form of culturally-sanctioned inquiry (after Francis Bacon), the "imagined" (or "reasoned") held a loftier place than the "real." In neither instance, however, do we find sound or music privileged as forms of communication that articulate these two categories. On the contrary, sound and music highlight the fact that the separation of these categories is not absolute, requiring that advocates for aurality be dismissed as entertainers, interpreters or performers, as opposed to contributors to knowledge. At best we are granted the order: "If music be the food of love, play on."

Performance is an integral component of my own sample-based artistic practice as it allows for the construction of affective feedback loops between audiences, spaces and collaborators. The challenge as an academic is to create tangible documents that represent, not performances, but the phenomenal experience of these performances, as this is what is unique about what I do--the myriad different ways it is received by active and engaged audiences. *Selected Sounds* represents such a document.

Sound is a subtle, powerful medium, and often-times overlooked (pun intended). The first step to becoming proficient at recording and mixing sound is to open one's ears, and start remembering the impact audio has on our lives. This suggestion, I believe, is at the heart of the awareness-raising articulated in the soundscape/soundwalking research spearheaded by Hildegard Westerkamp, Andra McCartney, Sophie Arkette, Murray Schafer and others. As McCartney states,

> A soundwalker's engagement with the landscape is at once sonic, tactile, and kinaesthetic. It is defined through what is heard of others' sounds, through interactions with the surroundings, and by the recordist's own movements. Amplification translates the subtlety of touch into an audible play with surfaces and textures. In soundscape works, traces of tactility are embedded that help to link distant and everyday places. They explore auditory experiences and memories of natural and urban environments, and attend to and reflect upon the depth of daily rituals. (McCartney 2004, 185)

It is via this attention and reflection paid to daily rituals that the community of sound studies makes its strongest recommendation for the methodologies adopted in other realms of the humanities. This has to do with the recognition that producing media brings us into a much closer contact, connection and affective awareness with everyday life. Not the everyday life of certain privileged celebrities, producers, techno-magicians or even academic scholars, but our own everyday rituals. This has to do with the place of sound in society, a place too often overlooked. It is the capacity of sound to move seamlessly between the foreground and the background of our immediate, phenomenal experience that gives it its mysterious, otherness--but which also lies at the core of its power in terms of opening up new perspectives for critical inquiry into the construction of personal identity (and therefore culture more widely).

B. "Digital Designs": The production and consumption of sampling

Digidesign, the company behind audio editing software *Pro Tools*, was launched in 1984 by Peter Gotcher and Evan Brooks. These days Pro Tools is to digital audio production what Microsoft Word is to word processing. Their first product, however, was a line of EPROM drum chips called Digidrums. These computer chips contained digital "samples" of live drums and allowed musicians to replace the limited factory-installed sounds that came with most contemporary drum machines. Other historical examples abound which connect the phenomenon of sampling with other popular forms of digital audio technology. Just what sampling is, however, depends a great deal on who you're talking to: sound engineer, hip hop producer, music industry executive or average listener.

The same can be said of academic discussions of sampling. Most tend to view it as a production method used in various genres of electronic music such as hip hop or techno. More often than not such accounts end up glossing over the actual techniques, equipment and sound sources employed by musicians who sample. Instead the tendency has been to focus on politically-charged elements of sampling such as violations to established traditions of music making, not to mention copyright. Examples of such work include Rose's *Black Noise* which explores sampling strictly through its relationship to hip hop, or Paul Théberge's often quoted *Any Sound You Can Imagine* which understands the technology principally as a type of musical instrument (i.e., a form of digital keyboard). While these studies were ground breaking, they also tended to treat the phenomenon of sampling deterministically--i.e., where there are "samplers", there is "sampling." Moreover, they fail to address the technology as a multifaceted practice, choosing instead to focus on a limited range of case examples without conspicuously acknowledging them as such.

Sampling has continued to evolve since the 1990s, when much of the writing I am describing was produced. Its influence upon practices of music making and sound editing has been so great that these days one can no longer treat the technology as limited to one or two easily defined user communities. The challenge now involves approaching the question of sampling in a way that does not limit its sphere of influence, but which instead explores as many different uses and conceptions of the technology as possible. What is at issue is the construction of "sites of difference" (Grenier and Guilbault 1992, 213) as opposed to the assertion of identity.

While recent collections/books such as Greene and Porcello (2005), Braun (2002), Lysloff (2003), Taylor (2001) and Sterne (2003), explore the impact of technology upon the political economy of organized sound production (including its history, mechanisms of distribution, gender/ethnic/geographic biases, and social elements), very few authors discuss the phenomenological experience of contemporary digital composition. This is perhaps because it is difficult to speak in general terms about practices as hyper-personalized and context specific as individual styles of audio production. Moreover, digital audio technology has become affordable enough to allow for the development of high-fidelity home studios--sites of increasing significance to the world of independent audio production. These are highly idiosyncratic places, and the styles in which they are "employed" by their users/builders tend to be similarly diverse. The home studio is not a featured focus of any of the aforementioned publications.

Wired for Sound: Engineering and Technologies in Sonic Cultures (Greene and Porcello 2005) provides an interesting point of focus for the claims made in the preceding paragraph. As a recent collection of essays, it represent a broad range of diverse and well-informed perspectives on the impacts of technology upon our cultural reception of sound. These perspectives tend to start with the identification of a specific *community* out of which the inquiry has been developed, principally through ethnographic, anthropological or historical research and writing methods. While some authors reference a specific social, regional, national or ethnic community recognized and situated in terms of sound technology such as Nepali or Native American pop musicians (Greene 2005, Diamond 2005), or Austin's music scene (Porcello 2005), others make do with musical categories such as "heavy metal" (Berger and Fales 2005), or "techno" (Fales 2005) in defining their research field. Participant observation around the use of sound technologies in these communities does not seem to be a conspicuous part of this anthology.

The reference to engineering in the subtitle is interesting, however, as it points to one of Porcello's early interests regarding sound production. Porcello is a former "sound recording engineer and studio musician" (Greene and Porcello 2005, 284) and often focuses on the perspectives of this community in his research. It was not until I read his biography at the end of this volume that I realized this fact, however. Porcello does not speak of his own experience, but focuses on interviews with other engineers in much of his research. While the majority of contributors to *Wired for Sound* do not speak specifically about communities of "sound engineers" per se, much of Porcello's vocabulary is embedded in the assumption that sound mixing expertise is the role of trained professionals who work in commercial studios....

> In many ways,...[the contributors to *Wired for Sound*] argue for a shift in scholarly focus from the examination of the products of sound engineering (for example, musical or other sonic texts) to these processes of engineering as a vital aspect of contemporary cultural life. These processes can be engaged in by industry professionals... (see the chapters by Diamond, Meintjes, Neunfelt, and Porcello) but just as importantly by consumers in their daily listening or reinterpreting practices (see the chapters by Berger and Fales, Fales, Greene, Taylor and Wallach). In this approach, technology is seen not just as a tool but as a critical means of social practice. (Porcello 2006, 269)[2]

This is wonderful, but it is also terribly reductionist. Perhaps this is a pitfall of "Afterwords" to edited volumes. What about the space in between production and consumption of recordings? Moreover, how is technology "seen" as a "critical means of social practice" in the essays? Aren't there as many different means identified as case studies contained in the volume? In what ways are these means social? In what ways are they practices? Are technologies means of achieving practices, or practices in themselves?

These questions in regards to Porcello's work are taken up again below, as he is an important figure in the study of sampling, in part due to his early recognition of its significance in terms of music production and consumption. Two other authors are similarly notable (and were therefore mentioned in Chapter 1)--Paul Théberge and his work *Any Sound You Can Imagine* along with Rose and *Black Noise*. *Black Noise* is concerned with hip hop culture and the need to recognize it as academically and socially significant. Nowadays people don't really debate this point. Rap, r'n'b, crunk--the genres of music that have grown out of hip hop have achieved a type of global dominance in terms of pop music. But in the 1990s it was understood as a counter-cultural activity. Rose's ambition was to bring this fringe activity into the limelight of critical discourse. And she does a remarkable job. The section entitled "Give me a (Break) Beat!: Sampling and Repetition in Rap Production" from Chapter 3 of that book still stands as one of academia's most interesting investigations of the differences between traditional and hip hop styles of studio engineering and music production. This is especially the case in relation to sampling, although the oppositional rhetoric used to distinguish the two styles now feels overly political, especially since the dichotomy between the two camps has been superseded in much of today's pop music production.

Rose relies heavily on interviews with Chuck D and Hank Schocklee of hip hop super group "Public Enemy"--demonstrating how their musical practices were both at once "avant-guard"--pushing the limits--but also reminiscent of other types of musics that can be found within the black diaspora such as rhythm patterns from African drumming practices, little attention to Western, i.e., "white", prescriptions for the formal structure of "good" music, etc. Mixing practices are featured heavily as a site of difference. She points out (with the use of selective quotations from her interview subjects) that hip hop engineers don't pay attention to/are not cognizant of a lot of the rules developed through the 60s, 70s and 80s regarding how multi-track recording should take place, and how "cleanliness" and low signal-to-noise rations should be pursued at all costs. She mentions many examples of hip hop producers pushing things "into the red" and thereby creating noisy collages from the works of others, mixed with apocalyptic pronouncements of the end of observance of musical, political and social limits to the freedom of expression.

Théberge's book, on the other hand, looks at an alternative angle, articulating a position on sampling technology as a practice integrated into an increasing number of studios through conspicuous examples of production and consumption. Théberge focusses on how sampling was constructed discursively in the 80s and 90s within the commercial literature and discussion forums published principally for the work-a-day musician/performer/engineer. His main thesis revolves around the fact that sampling allows one to consume sounds in a way that was formerly unheard of. From the moment Gotcher and Brooks started offering their Digidrums, it became possible for musicians to purchase libraries of various sounds to use in their instruments, their recordings. These sounds might be traditional instrumental sounds like piano sounds or violin sounds. But they could be just about anything else: rocket ships, drum beats, animal noises...you name it. This created a new niche market within the music community--a new economy of digital sound exchange--for those interested. Sampling found-sounds into the hardware, the bread and butter of hip hop and sample-based production, is relegated to an "exceptional" status.

I feel these approaches to sampling, as robust as they might be, are still incomplete. The examples given of sampling-on-the-ground: going to Hank Shocklee of "Public Enemy" and asking about sampling--searching in music engineering magazines for enough proof to determine how sampling is produced and consumed...these approaches limit the practice. For one, they situate it in hip hop geographies such as Brooklyn, N.Y., Compton, C.A. etc., or in professional music studios. However, the practice itself, from what I understand from my own experience, is much wider, vaster, and more grey than the stories told by Rose and Théberge, both historically and contemporarily.

I feel there is a wider story to be told--that these accounts confine sampling. I don't want to put any more limits on sampling. Quite the opposite, I would like to open it up and demonstrate it as a practice that is still developing. However, instead of making my research outrageously broad, I have limited it. This seems to me what sampling is all about--engaging with a form of constraint as a means to stimulate one's own creative ingenuity. "*Any Sound You Can Imagine*"--if this is really what sampling is about, then where does one begin? How do one start to compose if any sound is possible?

The rest of this chapter explores the limitations on the practice, or lack thereof, postulated by a selection of other authors on sampling, with an "eye" towards demonstrating their ultimate heterogeneity and contingency.

C. Appropriation and Authenticity

Justin Clemens and Dominic Pettman assert that "appropriation" combines both an act of violence--"taking or annexing" something--with the notion of motivation, thereby allowing for a softening of the term's pejorative significance. For instance, "I appropriated this loaf of bread from my neighbor in order to feed my children...". Appropriation, they claim, has historically been linked to notions of authorship, uniqueness and private property. However, contemporary aesthetic production (i.e., the art of today) is now operating according to a "cultural logic" which has dissolved this link. It is time, on their account, to get beyond the categories of original and copy.

> There are no materials that guarantee that a particular work is, say, jewelry - which can be made out of literally anything. Many [contemporary aural] works are composed totally of samples that have been taken as is, slowed down or speeded up, inverted or distorted beyond recognition. Sampling not only recomposes different elements, but different ways of recomposing elements; it is a very complex and labile procedure. In a way, sampling totally erases the distinctions between original and copy, artist and thief, the individual and the series - in fact, it renders these distinctions secondary if not irrelevant. (Clemens and Pettman 2004, 26)

Later on...

> Whereas both allusion and appropriation connect to the legacy of genius, incorporating elements that come from both beforehand and elsewhere, sampling threatens to dissolve all distinctions between the work and the environment from which it derives. Tradition no longer holds a central place, and there is no canon which the audience, reader or listener is assumed to be familiar with. Suddenly, every work of art is sucked into the vortex of the public domain. (Clemens and Pettman 2004, 27)

And finally...

> Post-modernity changes things again: there are no longer any ontological distinctions between matter, form, thought, etc. - there are just multiple processes, of no definite or particular value in themselves, and with no definite origin or direction. Hence the new priority accorded sampling, considered as inflection and torsion of multiplicity. 'Design' is the most prestigious name given to the varieties of sampling in the contemporary first world. (Clemens and Pettman 2005, 29-30)

There is a giddiness to these pronouncements that I find disquieting. When I began sampling from records in the late 90s, I assumed that issues around the appropriateness of this sort of appropriation were on the verge of resolution. However, even this book published in 2004 smacks of technological determinism. The historical fact that sampling has become increasingly multifaceted and commonplace does not entail a cultural acceptance of its legitimacy. Postmodern breathlessness aside, it just doesn't make sense to ground one's arguments in a futurist rhetoric pronouncing the end to ontological distinctions between matter, form, thought, etc. Even the madman featured in Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* realized he had come too early with his pronouncement of the death of God. Sampling became more notorious with the arrival of the digital era and it is now quicker and easier to make and copy sound recordings than ever before (for those who own a computer). This does not mean that the cultural, ethical and aesthetic considerations underlying the differences between the terms "production" and "reproduction" have undergone a paradigm shift. To maintain this point of view, one has to ignore (for instance) the overwhelming quantity of ink that has been spilt regarding intellectual property law for media production, consumption and distribution in the 21st century.

> The anxiety of influence has given away to full-blown panic - to what DJ Greyboy calls "dealing with the Archive" - and few artists work outside the pressure of this accumulation. In fact, this pressure may itself be the very condition of the contemporary work, like a fast-forward cartoon of carbon into diamond. Production and appropriation have become confused to the point of fusion, as have design and art. There is no distinction between designer and artists outside the social context of production. [p. 34]

Who feels this "panic of influence"--the pressure to "deal with the archive"? Musicians, DJs, sample-based producers....Or academics? Acts of allusion, appropriation and sampling can only be articulated one from another through detailed and subtle analyses of contexts. The public domain may be a vortex, but it is one in which most of us are strangely free of any feeling of vertigo. This is because we make a myriad of infinitely complex, contingent decisions everyday.

D. Sampling and Control

A variety of digital technologies now exist that can transform analog sound waves into binary code. Any sound can be sampled in this way: drum beats, field recordings, even live players using traditional instruments. Samples are then ready to be cut, copied, spliced, pitch-shifted, equalized, turned backwards, and/or passed through a myriad of different effects processors before being multi-tracked and layered into a final stereo mix. Once completed, tracks are easily converted to MP3 or burnt to CD-R for quick distribution. This "translatability" of audio in the digital era brings us back to the question of the malleability of sound and music (Miller 2004, 20) as well as accompanying issues of control.

While digital audio sampling has been possible for almost 30 years (starting with the Fairlight CMI in 1979), the technology has far from exhausted its potential for opening up new forms of cultural expression, social exchange and compositional practice. One of the major challenges facing communications scholarship in the digital age involves simply keeping abreast of the enormous variety of new forms of interaction that continue to emerge with the increasing availability of computer technology. In the field of audio production this increase has resulted in something that feels close to an irrevocable shift in terms of how recorded sound is produced, consumed and distributed, not to mention the way it is received or "felt" by the listener.

This point of view is very common within the literature on audio sampling, and is responsible, I believe, for the tendency to identify the figure behind the mixing console as the absolute center of digitally-assisted musical production. The technology involved in recording has become a tool so sophisticated that its only limit is said to be our imagination. But what is it that limits this imagination, if anything? Do the sounds we mix not require us to attend to their particular shape before we attempt to bring them into alignment with other sources? What techniques must we adopt to accommodate their particularities? What constraints were involved? And how were these sounds selected in the first place? Were they recorded "live"? If so, what procedures and equipment were employed? Were the sounds "sampled"? If so, how were they collected? What were the archives used?

Today is August 3rd, 2006. I write these lines while on a family vacation in Southern Norway, in a place called Strandfjorden near a town called Grimstad. It's right by a fjord. It's been beautiful here, sunny and hot, and we've been spending lots of time down by the water. Yesterday I bought a kite for my 3 year old daughter, Thea--which was perhaps a bit ambitious. She's had fun with the kite, but I'm actually the one who plays with it the most as I set it up for her before she moves on to another distraction, leaving me most of the time to work the string by myself. And it occurred to me today, while I was down by the dock, flying the kite, that there is something similar between kite flying and composing sample-based music. Simply put, the beauty of flying the kite really has to do with setting up the equipment, and then letting it go. You engage with the kite, as it's up there in the wind, but it's at a distance, and what you do to the kite through your control of the string is rather small compared with what the kite itself is capable of doing in concert with the wind. The kite and the wind are engaged in a duet--a dance, really. And I'm at once the observer of that dance, the audience of that dance, but I participate in it to a small degree in that I set it up. And I'm sort of in control, I suppose, of what the kite does, as I hold on to my string and pull this way and that way. But ultimately that feeling of control never results in a direct one-to-one relationship between what I do and what ends up happening on the other end of the string, with the kite and the wind. I can pull it this way and that, but really it's up to the wind and the kite to decide whether or not the kite falls into the water, or sails up high or not. If the wind dies, then the kite falls, and that's that for that--there's nothing much I can do.

Similarly, when I choose samples with which to start a piece, whether from records, or field recordings or whatever--I can set everything up, I can load them into the sampler, I can start manipulating, moving things around, mixing. But, really, the dance that occurs, the relationship that develops, is between the samples. My impact on this relationship can be heavy or light-handed. But in either case it's not me that decides the fate of the composition. It's the samples themselves that work together to create harmony or disharmony or what have you. You have to give away a certain amount of control if you really want to enjoy the musicality of the experience of playing with samples. It's about keeping yourself open to possibilities, waiting for happy accidents, allowing things to be revealed in their own time, as opposed to forcing or trying to place those samples, those sounds, into a tight structure built to contain them. I've always found that the more open I am to possibilities and experimentation, the more happy I am with the ultimate composition I end up producing. And sometimes it feels almost as though the samples are really guiding the process more than I am myself, and I'm just along for the ride, holding on to the end of the kite string as they dance their merry dance.

Daphne Oram preferred marine metaphors when it came to describing the feeling of working with electronic, recorded and constructed sounds...

> I am hunting for some word which brings a hint of the skillful yachtsman in the fierce mid-Atlantic, guiding and controlling his craft and yet being taken along with it, sensing the best way to manage his vessel, freely changing his mind as unforeseen circumstances evolve, yet always applying his greatest discipline to himself and his seamanship. (Oram 1971, 13)

Andra McCartney's welcome discussion of Oram's work (McCartney 2006) outlines how this ground breaking, but historically-overlooked composer articulated an approach to working with sound (entitled "Oramics") that used graphic techniques to construct complex timbres through the translation of light into audio. McCartney cites Oram in demonstrating a historical willingness to *dialogue* with sound articulated by many female electronic sound producers, in contrast to the male-dominated histories pushed by many contemporary publications on the history of sound recording (see Chapman and McCartney, forthcoming). NB: A compilation of Oram's work entitled "Oramics" has been recently released on Paradigm discs (April 2007) - http://www.stalk.net/paradigm/pd21.html (features MP3 excerpts from the CD).

E. Sampling and Copyright

Examining sample-based music as a practice in which one sacrifices a certain amount of self-control allows one to relate it more easily to other practices that it resembles or incorporates--such as collecting (this discussion is also taken up in the last two chapters of this dissertation). As collectors of recorded sounds and sound recording equipment, sample-based musicians are passionate about bringing studio artifacts into their art. Particular samples and pieces of gear become signature components of one's production style. This epitomizes the need for articulations concerning the forms and uses of these technologies to be constantly referred back to the communities and procedures that embody them and by which they are drastically and continually affected. Such considerations form the body of what I (following Schloss (2004)) would like to call an "ethics" of audio sampling.

Most celebrations of enhanced aural control through digital audio situate the limits of the practice of sampling in the capacity of the technology used--usually understood in terms of computer memory and its corollary: sample length. A lot of this work was written in the 80s and 90s, so it must be added that in today's era of ever-multiplying megabytes, both in terms of RAM and hard drive space, the limitation to sound storage that coloured much early sampling practice has theoretically been overcome--thus providing even more evidence for those who believe that sound has become "utterly malleable." This oversimplification treats sampling as an easily-identified object instead of a fluid and dynamic practice. For instance, sample-based producers habitually seek out older equipment with limited sampling capacities (like the *Akai MPC 60* or *SP 1200*) for the unique low-bit-rate edge or "dirtiness" they can bring to a mix. The limits of the practice of sampling are very different depending upon the perspective one adopts and relate to differing attitudes over what should be stored and transformed in the use of this specialized computer memory.

To return to Thomas Porcello's writing, "The Ethics of Audio Sampling: an engineers' discourse," appeared in 1991--a time during which the affordability of sampling technology did restrict it, somewhat, to the professional audio studio, thereby partially justifying Porcello's exclusive focus on the voices of professionally-trained studio engineers. Rap music being an important counter-example, Porcello is quick to mention its polemic aim towards exploding "the concentration of power and ownership in the [music] industry" (Porcello 1991, 70), but avoids an in-depth analysis of any actual hip-hop sample-based production.

However, these moderately contentious issues aside, Porcello's paper does offer something more than the usual control-obsessed account of sample-based music--i.e., his suggestion that there is an ethics at work in the practice of digital sampling as it is pursued amongst professional audio engineers. Porcello focuses his paper on intellectual property, claiming that "[s]ampling has forced the music industry and the legal profession to ask who--if anyone--owns a sound, and as a logical extension of that question, is it possible to ascribe ownership to a sound?"(Porcello 1991, 69).

Briefly, Porcello goes on to state that among his informants, sampling an "intact phrase" from previously-published material is theft. This is also the reigning opinion in legal circles (Porcello 1991, p. 72). However, taking what Porcello calls "just a sound" from a pre-existing copyrighted sources is less clear, ethically speaking. A broad range of practices is involved here (unlike with rap music, on Porcello's account)--including sampling both previously recorded "sounds" as well as "sounds" made by live players who are paid for their services. The length of samples becomes particularly important, on this account (although this is shaky ground--just think of any micro-second sample of James Brown). Porcello also suggests that differing ethical standards exist at various levels of the music industry hierarchy, and that informal practices of quite-open sharing generally operate among groups of work-a-day musicians and engineers.

In the end, however, Porcello extracts 4 elements from his informants' discourse around the ethics of digital audio sampling: 1. Ethics do count, 2. they're under debate, 3. one should avoid prosecution by paying attention to their mandates , and 4. the fate of the live session musician is important to consider. (Porcello 1991, 71)

Now, what interests me about this research is not so much these four conclusions, but the very fact that sampling-ethics are being considered and debated at all in an academic treatise. Hip hop has a fairly well established oral-ethical tradition--one which allows for the discrimination of "flipped" or authentic uses of samples from derivative or "bitten" practices, even though this music thrives on re-using material that is owned by others. This ethical tradition relies upon "ingenuity" as the locus of originality within hip hop musical production--if I use a sample without adding my own creative twist to how I sequence it--described as "flipping" or "freaking" the sound--I can be guaranteed that my music will attract few "props" from true-school hip hop heads. This attitude has also extended itself into new realms of sample-based music not easily describable as hip hop, but which are nevertheless deeply indebted to the techniques pioneered by early hip hop acts such as Public Enemy or Grandmaster Flash (just think of your favorite "electronic music" group in this instance).[3] This flipping involves a dialogue--samples are played with until the most interesting series of edits and processing is discovered.

I would like to raise a concept that I have been having a certain amount of trouble naming--i.e., the role of "the sampled sounds themselves" in the process of sample-based composition. I will illustrate this concept with a couple of quotes from some well-known sample-based musicians who reside in Montreal, if only to demonstrate that the agency articulated by the *Selected Sounds* participants vis a vis their chosen sound sources in terms of creating sample-based mixes is not particular to this constructed group of Montrealais.[4]

> 'I'm not going to be a rapper, I'm not going to be an old blues guy because I don't come from that time or social situation. I can't do something with any integrity on that level. But what I can do with samples is I can take, not influences but the actual things I love, the

> actual singers, the actual guitarists and I can do something that I feel has some kind of relevance to me and the time and place where I live.' [Montreal-resident and sample-based composer Amon Tobin as interviewed by] (Ostroff 2002)

Tobin recognizes the samples he selects as "the actual singers, the actual guitarists" he loves. He "takes" these sources in order to recontextualize them into his own rhythms. But Tobin himself has already been "taken by" these sources—their notability to him is manifest in his having selected them. Using them to make music has more integrity than simply copying the style they demonstrate since sampling makes no (disingenuous) claim to be original in terms of source material. Tobin's influences are not subsumed into his own style of personal expression, but are instead allowed to collaborate together in his mixes.

Indeed, newly discovered samples can guide a mix as much as or even more than one's own preconceived intentions. Eric San (a.k.a. Kid Koala):

> I found this sample where this elevator operator is yelling 'first floor, second floor' and I used that as a springboard to piece together a little ditty about a guy trying to pick people up in an elevator....[I]f you listen to the track, he's actually only going up and down one floor....That as a concept was funny to me, to have an elevator operator and there's somebody who just hangs out in there with him working on his pick-up lines. Such a stupid idea that I thought, 'Okay, let's go with it.' [Montréal-resident and sample-based composer Kid Koala as interviewed by] (Dix 2003)

Sampling involves an enormous amount of listening. Records (or field recordings) are brought home on the hunch that they will contain a notable sample or two. These excerpts, however, can only be uncovered through patient linear playback and aural note-taking. The moments of revealing that occur while listening bring on compositional flashes or “eurekas”. These moments of elated surprise are what drive many a sample-based composer. One can describe these moments in different ways. But to describe this process of revealing as a "science" effaces the give and take central to sampling's ethical dimensions. This suggestion is discussed in greater detail in the following section.

F. *Rhythm Science*

The turn of the century has seen an interesting evolution in the role of the media-savvy academic. Research-creation is on the rise. Ethnography can now be openly pursued through a participant observation of one's own technological and artistic practices without sacrificing one's research "integrity." An emergent social niche has appeared, that of the media producer/critic/performer. I include myself in this category, along with participants in *Selected Sounds* such as Anna Friz and Bernadette Houde--also graduate students in Communication Studies. One figure in particular, however, has managed to found a career on his credentials as a DJ and critical theorist--Paul D. Miller, a.k.a. DJ Spooky that Subliminal Kid. Miller has been writing on sample-based music and postmodernism since the late 90s, but it is in his first book *Rhythm Science* (Miller 2004) that one finds the most succinct statements of his point of view, if you can call them that.

Rhythm Science is a print-based multi-media work. Formatted as a book, the author cited on the cover is Paul D. Miller. However, the design team *COMA* has had a major role in shaping the experience *Rhythm Science* provides. The physical construction itself entices one's imagination in a way reminiscent of LP album covers. The book is printed on two-sided paper (rough/smooth) and is pierced by a hole running through to the last page where a CD lies waiting for the curious browser. Pages alternate between text and graphic collage, becoming something hybrid in the process. While Miller provides the words, music and many of the incorporated visuals, the success of the mix is due mainly to COMA's deft visual and tactile manipulations. The volume is printed in brown and green ink, however, full use is made of the white paper stock to add a third colour to the designers' palate. Similarly, the work is divided into three parts: an "A side" (pp. 3-106), "B side" (pp. 107-128), and "C side" (the CD). Working in threes is meant to exemplify the spirit in which Miller creates music. To paraphrase his own statement, "all it takes is a DJ and two turntables to create a universe" (Miller 2004, 127). But what does it take to create a DJ?

We learn that "DJ Spooky that Subliminal Kid" began as a conceptual art project for Miller while "floating" in New York after having finished a philosophy and French literature degree in the mid-90s. Miller made it a habit of distributing the question "Who is DJ Spooky?" on stickers accompanying mix-tapes he would record and pass out at parties. As the tapes were copied and redistributed, that question created a space for Paul D. Miller to occupy as a DJ, sample-based composer and writer. Spooky's notoriety preceded him in the true sense of the word.

Miller began publishing academic articles on DJ-ing, sampling and sonic collage during this same period (in venues like *The Village Voice, Artforum and Parkett*). The style employed in these early pieces reappears in *Rhythm Science* and is strongly reminiscent of DJ mixing and sample-based hip hop production. Miller frequently jumps from one theme to the next, often relying on poetic turns of phrase to convey connections difficult to express deductively. At other points these cuts are more jarring and one is left to ponder the meaning of his juxtapositions. Ideas are layered on top of one another as much as they are strung together. Writing is treated as a musical endeavour:

> There's a reflexivity that comes with having to compose and letting language come through you. It's a different speed, there's a slowness there. And I'm attracted to writing's infectiousness, the way you pick up language from other writers and remake it as your own. This stance is not contradictory: Dj-ing is writing, writing is Dj-ing. Writing is music, I cannot explain this any other way. (Miller 2004, 57)

While phrases such as "Check the flow" (p. 8), "Feel the frequencies" (p. 28) and "Do you get my drift?" (p. 92) repeatedly entreat us to accompany him on this text-mixed adventure, it must be admitted that many of Miller's philosophical speculations are difficult to follow. The autobiographical material that makes up the other half of the writing, however, provides insightful commentary on Dj-ing and remixing from an artist who is aware of the social and historical significance of his chosen technology (the turntable and sampler). The CD has also been skillfully constructed and is mostly made up of rare vocal recordings by authors like Antonin Artaud, e.e. cummings, Gertrude Stein, Marcel Duchamps and Gilles

Deleuze mixed with ambient electronic beats (although the CD bears little explicit relationship to the text).

Rhythm Science's multimedia and autobiographical tactics reflect the direction of Miller's recent online and installation work (see http://www.djspooky.com/). The ideas, thinkers and artistic practices he articulates are inevitably discussed from his perspective as a contemporary (and prolific) sound (re)mixer. First person passages are used to contextualize these opinions in an attempt to render them more universal. A case in point:

> [W]hen I first got to New York, I had started Dj-ing in the same spirit as I'd done the Eclectic Jungle [radio] show in college. My style was an experiment with rhythm and clues, rhythm and cues: Drop the needle on the record and see what happens when this sound is applied to this context, or when that sound crashes into that recording. The first impulses I had about Dj culture were taken from that basic idea - play and irreverence toward the found objects that we use as consumers and a sense that something new was right in front of our oh-so-jaded eyes. (Miller 2004, 45)

This is an interesting inversion, as much popular and academic literature on DJ-ing and/or sampling places these practices outside of the realm of everyday experience, limiting their significance to the nightclub or hip hop recording studio. This sort of experimentation sounds far from scientific, however. Nevertheless, Miller develops the metaphor as an heuristic device for understanding our common postmodern condition. In a society saturated with reproduced information (sounds, images, texts), the individual is forced to select from these sources according to her own tastes, beliefs and motivations. DJs and sample-based musicians simply make their choices public. Miller explains,

> A deep sense of fragmentation occurs in the mind of a Dj. When I came to Dj-ing, my surroundings - the dense spectrum of media grounded in advanced capitalism - seemed to have already constructed so many of my aspirations and desires for me; I felt like my nerves extended to all of these images, sounds, other people - that all of them were extensions of myself, just as I was an extension of them....By creating an analogical structure of sounds based on collage, with myself as the only common denominator, the sounds come to represent me. (Miller 2004, 21, 24)

Elsewhere Miller claims that "[s]ampling plays with different perceptions of time" (Miller 2004, 28). The gist is that remixing music from previous recordings employs editing and filtering mechanisms similar to those we unconsciously use when making sense out of the cacophony of reproduced sensory inputs we receive in the course of a regular day. Rapid cuts, incongruous blends and unexpected juxtapositions are as commonplace as a television in a crowded café or a flip through the radio dial.

Broadcast sounds and images shape our private spaces of mental contemplation. We are never passive receivers, however. Sensations are mixed and remixed as our attention flows. It is this process of continuous and shifting interaction that constitutes self-consciousness. DJing and sample-based music celebrate this phenomenon of affect (Chapman 2001, 2005). As such these pursuits exemplify the conception of technology as a fusion of "arte, techne, and logos - a melding of the Greek words for art, craft and word. *Rhythm Science* imposes order upon skill and the ability to deploy them both in electro-modernity's sociographic space" (Miller 2004, 72).

In the end, *Rhythm Science* reads best when approached as a springboard from which to launch one's own mental musings. While the CD and fancy design artfully propel the book into the category of "seductive theoretical fetish object" (Miller 2004, 125), the work's lasting value resides in its capacity to (re)introduce its audience to the phenomenological experience of reading in itself. It is through experiencing the production of others that our own thoughts, memories and feelings are born. This is what *Rhythm Science* makes transparent: "We're in a delirium of saturation. We're never going to remember anything exactly the way it happened. Memories become ever more fragmented and subjective. [The question remains:] Do you want to have a bored delirium or a more exciting one?" (Miller 2004, 29).

To this question, *Selected Sounds* responds with a resounding "Yes!" (thereby sidestepping the liberatory rhetoric) as sometimes it's exciting to feel bored, as this leads one to rattle the cage. There is also another reason to reject such prosthletizing--it feels self-justifying. It's one thing to engage in participant observation around sample-based practices. It's quite another to suggest that sampling is the only way to deal with "electro-modernity's sociographic space." *Selected Sounds* seeks to reveal some of the tactics engaged by sampling without insisting upon their universal applicability. Chapter 4's interview database is especially relevant in this regard. The last two sections of this literature review address the work of Martin Heidegger and Walter Benjamin in relation to sampling. These theorists have been especially formative in my thinking on the subject (in this I am not alone), although of late I have found myself disagreeing with many of their points of view (Benjamin's relationship to sound and music in particular).

G. Sampling as Techne

The question "What is sampling?" has haunted this project since its initial stages. I'd like to begin addressing it now before coming back to this point repeatedly in the next two chapters. Part of the reason I decided to approach other sample-based composers for their input and collaboration was due to my feeling that a single perspective on the practice was insufficient. And while there are numerous academic treatments of sampling already written, the majority suffer due to the limited viewpoints they offer. To be frank, most scholarly writing on sampling packs it in with other discussions, and a researcher looking to focus on the practice in depth is forced to piece together fragments of text that are embedded within treatises on other themes (not unlike the production of sample-based music itself). Some of these perspectives are open-ended and fascinating, asking more questions than they provide answers. Others contain the practice of sampling through speaking to examples that are exclusive to certain genres of music (like hip hop, techno or "electronica"), certain subcultures (DJs, sound engineers) or certain cultural traditions (the African diaspora or the history of the avant-garde).

For instance, Tim Taylor has recently argued that "hip hop musicians sample music of their own past, music they like, music from their parents' record collections", whereas the electronica artists that he is more interesting in (ambient, world beat and goa trance) get their samples from "all-over," irrespective of the "meanings" these samples might hold or be capable of creating--beyond colour and ornamentation for their beats (Taylor 2001, 152-3). This is an interesting point of view. However, the process involved in creating "meaning" through sampling is left unexplored. Taylor's fascination lies in how his research subjects both treat and create "strange sounds"--sounds considered other to them. Following (Feld 1997), Taylor's work charts the thin line that musicians who sample often weave between appropriate use of the sounds they uncover, and appropriation.

Taylor's book also looks at *music concrète*, the lounge-music revival, and the future-oriented "space" music of the 50s along this axis, plotting the position of these "fringe" musics within a history of sound recording technology that professes to be anti-determinist and yet not wholly social-constructivist (Taylor 2001, 32, 37). This is to say that technologies are always caught up in social constructions that determine in part how they are used, and yet these structures are themselves shaped by other technologies upon which we have come to depend. We allow our behaviours to be modified to suit the needs of new technologies that we find useful, but technologies are also regularly used in ways that did not occur to their inventors. "Any music technology, then, both acts on its users and is continually acted on by them; MP3s--or any software or hardware--have designed into them specific uses, which are followed by listeners, but at the same time, listeners through their practices undermine, add to, and modify those uses in a never-ending process." (Taylor 2001, 38)

Taylor advocates a "practice" theory of technology when approaching the history of sound recording, one that he develops from the actor-network theory associated with of Bruno Latour and others. (Taylor 2001, 34). However, while Latour and his colleagues from Science and Technology Studies (STS) focus on the pre-cognitive network of artifacts, institutions, people and practices that structure our experience, concluding that human and non-human entities must both be understood as "acting" within this ever-shifting network, Taylor is reticent to ascribe agency to objects, and concludes that "people and music" are more interesting "than gadgets." Preferring to talk about "structures" over "networks," Taylor follows Sherry B. Ortner and others in claiming that "[a]gency, for my purposes here, refers to an individual actor's or collective capacity to move within a structure, even alter it to some extent" (Taylor 2001, 34). Technologies are structures, on this account, and affect the practices they are associated with by providing frameworks with which to engage. Such structures are never static, however, and are responsive to the agents that put them to work, changing over time as the practices they enable evolve.

Much of the aforementioned sporadic literature on sampling technology (especially work that comes out of cultural studies and ethnomusicological traditions) views the phenomenon in this way. While technical manuals, popular sources and how-to guides abound which treat the practice deterministically as circumscribed by the processing capacities built into the black boxes used to sample, these other more sophisticated accounts acknowledge that technologies can be taken up in unexpected, "revolutionary" pursuits that permanently alter the way in which the very tools used are conceived, consumed and discarded. The social construction of the arenas in which new technologies are introduced must always be accounted for.

Taylor references Martin Heidegger on this account, as have others (see (Sterne 2003), (Mudede 2003), and (Chambers 2001). Heidegger's essay "The Question Concerning Technology" is a notoriously obtuse work, and has confused many who seek to use it to justify alternative conceptions of technological causality. Most, including Taylor, get stuck on Heidegger's claim that "the essence of modern technology lies in Enframing" (Heidegger 1977, 25). Moreover,

> Enframing does not simply endanger man in his relationship to himself and to everything that is. As a destining, it banishes man into that kind of revealing which is an ordering. Where this ordering holds sway, it drives out every other possibility of revealing. (Heidegger 1977, 27)

While Taylor acknowledges that Heidegger advocates understanding technology as "revealing," he does not unpack this claim, and goes on to tie in Heidegger's account with his own view of technology as neither completely socially-constructed, nor entirely determined by its materiality. But Heidegger's position is much more radical, and cuts right to the heart of our Western tendency to place subjectitivies into the "driver's seats" of culture and human civilization.

> The German philosopher Heidegger once wrote that the essence of a tool (like a hammer) is only noticed when it is broken. If a hammer works, then it is nothing more than an extension of your hand, but if it breaks you notice its 'hammerness.' This is close to what I mean by repurposing;...A repurposed turntable brings out a turntables' turntableness. (Mudede 2003)

Often quoted by writers on new media, Heidegger is seen as heralding a new, ethical call to reinvigorate our control over technology, instead of its control over us. We must rediscover the "toolness" of our tools--re-conceive them in a way that guarantees our mastery over them. Repurposing the turntable for scratching records demonstrates how we were formerly Enframed to consider the turntable as a playback device integral to the consumption of recorded music (i.e., gramophone records).

What's strange about these theoretical appropriations is that Heidegger almost never wrote about music(Lacoue-Labarthe 1994). However, he did write about technology. And what he did say was far more subtle than the use of his work cited above suggests:

> Refusing to think technology separately from the question of human destiny, Heidegger's thought always hovers around two conflicting impulses in the technological world picture: first, the tendency towards "enframing" by which the dominating impulse of contemporary technology pirates the human sensorium on behalf of a globally hegemonic technical apparatus; and, second, the tendency toward "poeisis" by which an art of technology, variously expressed in language, poetry, the visual arts, speed writing, an aesthetics of digital dirt, and new media art could draw out of the world picture of technology as destining a different future for techne, a future in which technology once again has something to say, to "unconceal," about the relationship between technology and alethia (truth). (Kroker 2002)

"Technology", claims Heidegger, stems from the Greek word techne, and refers not only to craft, but also to artistic creation. "Techne...belongs to bringing-forth, to poiesis; it is something poietic" (Heidegger 1977, 13). Technology is never simply a thing, or type of thing, it is also a practice. This practice, however, is not defined exclusively by the will of the craft- or artisan. In the notion of "bringing forth" lies an attitude common to all Heideggerian questioning: a fundamental respect for the role of *matter* (for him, this is Nature) in determining the finished product of any crafting. Technology-as-practice involves the juxtaposition or unification of "objects" from different ontological domains (like the material chosen by a sculptor and the ambition or idea she brings to the moment of sculpting) with the intent of revealing.

> This revealing gathers together in advance the aspect and the matter of ship or house [for example], with a view to the finished thing envisioned as completed, and from this gathering determines the manner of its construction. Thus what is decisive in techne does not lie at all in making and manipulating nor in the using of means, but rather in the aforementioned revealing. (Heidegger 1977, 13)

By making choices and gathering certain types of things over others, I show that I am at home in my work. As revealing, however, techne realizes that moments of linking—of unifying what has been gathered—are often unpredictable. Outcomes are rarely exactly how we expect them to be. This older conception of technology combines crafting with a knowing which gathers "objects" together in advance according to an intuition as to what will be brought forth. Control is not the issue. Nor is it simply about using old tools in new ways (as with Mudede's repurposed turntable example). It's about approaching matter--sound, wood, leather, water, stone, ideas--as participant in the greater coming to be of existence itself. "Being" is *always* about "becoming."

It is through such an account that the artistry of sample-based music becomes apparent. Technology, in this case, is not simply a tool. It is the medium in which samples are brought together in order to collaborate. It is the practice by which they are joined. It is the network through which their further revealing is already possible. Sampling technology turns sound into what Heidegger would call "standing reserve." This is what a turntable does when it "turntables".

However, if the technology of the turntable or sampler reveals sound as standing reserve, it equally enframes the sample-based musician as "master" of this reserve. As more powerful effects and methods of sound manipulation are developed alongside the ever-increasing speed of micro-processors, books like *How to Get the Sound You Want* appear, that claim,

> When it comes to music, tomorrow is a deliberate destination and we can quite literally take steps to get there. Thanks to all of the clever and relatively inexpensive digital technology out there, the spatialised musical future is open for inspection and interaction in real time. The very ability to speculate and conceive of implications and their possible resolution, to desire a shape for that which is yet to be, means that thinking about any musical future inherently assumes some form of control. (Prochak 2001, 30)

The future of electronic music is fundamentally up to composers and recording engineers, on this account. The horizon of possibility is about the purposeful development of aural control.

All of this, however, only makes sense when the studio-composer is conceived as the one who gives the orders. The essential act of listening back to experiments within studio-sessions fundamentally disturbs this hierarchy. Moreover, the rhetoric of omnipotent sound manipulation being the desirable future for studio music doesn't ring true. Bacterial cultures remain tied to the laboratory in which they reside. The "aural cultures" of sample-based music extend from the dusty crates of records pulled from countless basements and thrifts shops, to state of the art bedroom studios, to the urban, rural and radiophonic soundscapes of everyday life, to our memories of the music we heard as children. This is not about control, but about coming together. Or better still, becoming together. The interconnectedness of all things--what Heidegger refers to as the *Beingness of beings*--this is what sample-based music helps to reveal. It is through engaging with (and not controlling) their structure, their identity, that matter is revealed to us as purposeful. It is overflowing.

H. "Is It Live?" (The Question of Aura)

The Summer 2006 issue of *Musicworks* magazine features a discussion by editor David McCallum focussed on "the liveness of live," as he calls it, and the challenges that have been presented to contemporary electronic/experimental musics vis a vis the deep integration of recording technologies into their creation. The question really revolves around which is more interesting--the live performance, with all of its contingency, versus perfect studio constructions consigned to "immortal" media such as CDRs or digital file formats such as .wavs, .aiffs or .mp3s.

This question is particularly relevant for sample-based music, since so much of it is studio music. It is often programmed/sequenced/mixed in a studio, not in real-time, without it being necessary to actually record any instruments or even make use of a microphone. Maybe one plays a keyboard a little bit, but often you're just hitting one or two keys in order to "trigger" samples through MIDI, and then recording these new sequences. The studio, often a "home studio," is the place where composition takes place, and where a lot of the experimentation and happy accidents I was just mentioning occur. McCallum quotes a visitor to the *Music Works* office,

> Lamenting the rise of DIY recording [do it yourself recording--i.e., home studio recording], the visitor thought it was wonderful that artists were being empowered with the means to create and disseminate their works easily and cheaply, but that the art of making a recording was dying. The visitor explicitly stated that most of these DIY recordings were technically bad, and, therefore, artistically bad. I thought these complaints particularly strange in light of my own pursuits with improvised electronic music. My whole purpose in pursuing the live realm was to escape the staleness of the studio, and hopefully not agonize for a half-hour over 5 seconds of music. But the escape from studio staleness also meant sacrificing the cleanness and precision afforded by studio production. My interests in DIY, retro, and lo-fi also led to an abandonment of the concept of the "perfect" sound. Cleanliness is an impossible, and possibly ridiculous pursuit. The corollary to that, with the lust for all things retro, is that dirty is good and should be embraced, not avoided. The entire evolution of music in its recorded history has been the embracing of qualities that were previously considered unappealing, be they harmonic or timbral. (McCallum 2006, 4)

I think this is of particular relevance to sample-based composition, because (as I've said before) it is only in the pursuit of new explorations, new possibilities that such music unfolds. For instance, if one loads a bunch of samples up into the sampler (such as the Ensoniq EPS 16+ --the model of hardware sampler I started with--released in the mid 90s) one can easily get overly concerned with trying to control the sounds, placing them into a tight organization and forcing them into the shapes that you want them to be. I've always found such processes to end with much less satisfying results than if you give the samples room to move, so to speak. And this really means embracing chance, mistakes, dirtiness, glitches, all those types of things. I think that the work produced for *Selected Sounds* really embraces such a practice of revealing and demonstrates it as a key feature of sample-based music (along with an accompanying lack of concern over signal-to-noise ratios).

This ties into Rose's thesis--i.e., that hip hop production is about "working in the red" (Rose 1994, 74), causing distortion, using sounds that formerly would have been considered unpleasing to the ear, and making them sound musical, making them work in new contexts, thereby opening up new possibilities for others who want to follow in those footsteps. Not to talk too much about hip hop--the same things could be said about early techno and house music production. The types of machines used during sampling "Golden era" (the 1980s and 1990s) had "mechanical" or "digital" noise integral to them, and that noise ended up becoming a part of the early sounds of electronica. These machines (such as the Roland 808 drum machine--see Chapter 1) are still very much sought after today as a guarantor of authenticity.

All this makes for an interesting segue into Walter Benjamin's work. For instance, his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (Benjamin 1969b) has been quoted by innumerable writers on technology, music and media. And this essay really is an investigation of authenticity and/or "aura" in the face of what (during Benjamin's time) were analog mechanisms for copying images, in particular. Benjamin speaks about the visual--photographs and moving images such as early cinema. The question is posed "What happens to the concept of the original art object when it suddenly can be replicated extremely easily, and made ubiquitously available at great distances from where that object happens to be? Consider a painting such as the Mona Lisa hanging in the Louvre gallery. Formerly the only way to experience this work was to go to Paris and be in the presence of the object itself. These days one can find the Mona Lisa's image on everything from t-shirts to coffee mugs. So what happens to the original Mona Lisa? What happens to the significance of the original art object when it can easily be witnessed anywhere other than where it happens to "really" be? With music you have the added "problem" of a time-based medium. Music happens in a particular time and space, and then it's gone...nothing remains, beyond the memory of having been there in the presence of those sound vibrations. We can *re-member* music, but we can never recreate a musical performance in all its particularities. All we can do is replay it in a new context, and thereby have the experience be slightly different.

> Music, in one form or another, is part of the fundamental human experience of all times and all places, even among people whose language may not include the particular Greek-rooted term *music*. It is irrevocably connected with another most ambiguous phenomenon, time--because music can be experienced only at the moment of the listener's immediate present. One primary human characteristic is the desire to come to know oneself and the world around, and through the known to connect with the enormously vast unknown surrounding us. The known we have learned to put into words. *Art* and *music* (as well as *time, truth, beauty, and love*) belong in the unknown category. The urge to connect with the unknown elevates the human experience to its highest, hence our unspoken connection with art and music. (Kasemets 2006, 11)

The question of aura and authenticity is put into stark relief when dealing with music. I come back to these questions in Chapter 5's conclusions, but at this point I simply want to highlight these issues in relation to live versus recorded music. Kasemets' point above (from another recent issue of *Musicworks*) also supports the significance of these concerns.

> The division between recorded and live music stems from the historic division of composition and performance: the separation of music as a performed experience versus music as a careful set of instructions for performers. (McCallum 2006, 5)

As we've progressed in our technological means for creating music, this issue of live performance versus pre-programmed composition within the studio has become increasingly problematic. More specifically, audiences are now faced with perennial questions such as "Is it live?", "Does live performance matter any more?", "Where does sample-based music fit in terms of live performance?" Given that sample-based music is a studio music, what happens when you bring it onto the stage and try to perform it live. It is commonplace to go to a performance of a famous sample-based producer such as Amon Tobin, DJ

Shadow, Bonobo, etc., and to witness them mixing records (which can be quite disappointing). Their music cannot be created in real-time, it can only be created through sequencing and programming. But this question is becoming increasingly complex, as the aura of the DJ has started to wane in popular music in 2007, in favour of indie-rock stylings. I think we are witnessing a turn away from programmed mechanisms for creating music (i.e., no more "Kraftwerk") towards an embracing of live performativity, or a rekindling of interest in live performance and the musicality and virtuosity that goes with it. And imaginative electronic artists are surviving, it seems to me, through the use of ingenious ways to create "live" sample-based music, whether this is through turntablism, or interesting new software applications such as Ableton Live, two technologies that do allow for real-time manipulation of samples. But fundamentally the question remains, can sample-based music be a live music?...

> Allowing all possible optimism, electronic music might restore to art the authenticity, the loss of which Benjamin traces through increased mechanical reproduction. Precisely because the electronic composition experiences absolute re-realization in each playing of the tape, this authenticity could be of highly positive consequences for the relation of art to society in the technological age. (Blomster 1976, 70)

> With the introduction of the phonograph, the aura of the musical performer had shifted to the record, but through the development of media technology, it now resides in multiple locations simultaneously. Within the pop culture apparatus, these locations are designed to exchange and share energy: a network of aura. For example, when Madonna releases a new CD, a song from the album (the single) is played on the radio, the music video is broadcast on cable television, articles and advertisements appear in print media, music retailers prominently display and sell her CDs and Madonna performs concerts for stadium-capacity crowds. Through the deft interconnection of cross-promotional tie-ins, give-

> aways, sneak previews, advance copies, e-mail lists, websites, and down-loadable MP3 files, this promotional engine is tuned to produce demand. (Cascone 2002, 54)

Benjamin has a hostile relationship to sound and music (as mentioned in Chapter 1). Understood in relation to ideas of uniqueness and authenticity, Benjamin's concept "aura" is *a priori* conceived as standing outside the realm of that which is technically reproducible (Benjamin 1969b, 220). Since sample-based music incorporates technical reproducibility at its heart, one would assume aura to be outside of its dominion. Nevertheless, as is evidenced in both citations above, aura is a concept than many want to continue to be able to associate with music--whether this is based on recorded-music's ability to perfectly re-realize a composers original intent upon playback, or the development of ubiquitous, global rock-star presences via savvy systems of sound and image distribution. In the first case the question of authenticity is raised and answered. In the second it is (apparently) superseded.

According to Benjamin, the modern invention of technologies of mass reproduction has eliminated the necessity that a work of art's mediation between form and content be contained within a unique object and the specific traditions that object happens to have encountered. Reproducibility being integral to the form of works produced via modern technologies such as photography and film, apprehension of their artistic content changes with these mediations from an encounter based in personal, individual experience, to one of mass exposure and potentially ubiquitous contact. This results in a translation of the place of the work of art in modern society from the aura-invested plane of exhibition to the aura-devoid realm of politics (Benjamin 1969b, 225).

As an example of how "authenticity" in art is positively mocked by reproductive technologies, Benjamin describes the studio editing technique of cutting:

> [I]n the studio the mechanical equipment has penetrated so deeply into reality that its pure aspect freed from the foreign substance of equipment is the result of a special procedure, namely, the shooting by the specially adjusted camera and the mounting of the shot together with other similar ones. The equipment-free aspect of reality here has become the height of artifice; the sight of immediate reality has become an orchid in the land of technology. (Benjamin 1969b, 233)

Affecting how we actually perceive our world is put forward as the most interesting accomplishment of film as well as that which guarantees its historical appropriateness since it allows for the representation of the fragmentation which is endemic to modern life—a fragmentation brought about due to "the thoroughgoing permeation of reality with mechanical equipment" (Benjamin 1969b, 234). Reality is no longer what we witness—it is what we watch. Photography and film have changed our relationship to the real by providing us with a source of new perceptions (slow motion and time elapsed film, freeze-frame photography, montage, etc.), but also through changing the type of perceptual experiences we have come to expect. In the land of technology, immediate reality is something we do not see. Authenticity is beyond our concern. The contrived sonic-realities developed through cutting and pasting of waveforms are equally significant, on this account, to "real" listening experiences. Just so long as our dollar can guarantee we get a piece of "Madonna".[5]

Benjamin includes aural recording in his treatise, but unlike photography and film, the practice is attributed no revolutionary potential. While it must be acknowledged that audio recording technology during Benjamin's time did not allow for the same type of cutting and splicing we take for granted today (after the advent of magnetic tape and digital recording), the author claims, nevertheless, that recording technology participates in the creation of reproducible, non-existent (aura-devoid) spaces within sound films, thereby trivializing authenticity and the notion of the original work (Benjamin 1969b, 232). Nevertheless, sound recordings as a source of new perceptions—as active in altering the aural experiences we expect to have—this theme is not developed in Benjamin's texts. Strangely, in his article on electronic music (quoted above), Wes Blomster attempts to overcome this limitation in Benjamin's work, not by focussing on the similarity between studio music and film (which would give electronic music some revolutionary clout), but instead through advocating the electronic composition as an aura-filled artifact susceptible to tests of authenticity:

> In electronic composition, notation is by-passed; the composer in his studio works in the manner of the painter before his [sic] canvas; the compositional intention is realized in the very act of composition. Production and reproduction merge into a single action. This, it seems to me, is the most unique aspect of electronic music. The entire realm of interpretation is eliminated. It is as though Beethoven--rather than committing himself to posterity through the manuscript of his final piano sonata, opus 111, which

> will ever remain the victim of the inadequacy of keyboard performance—had been in a position to offer one single aural realization of this work which would exist for all time, never subject to repeated interpretive performance. Thus, he might have guaranteed the authenticity of his work. The abyss between intention and realization is eliminated; a work is created of which there is only one realization and all who experience the work will encounter it in this single imprint....It would appear that a musical work has now been achieved which is vested with the same authenticity as the original oil painting. (Blomster 1976, 70)

Like Benjamin, Blomster locates in "aura" a spiritual elevation—a guarantee of authenticity which snaps us out of our modern, technologically induced inattention and focuses us on our history, tradition and the place of a given work of art within these spheres. However, music, Blomster admits, presents a problem when it comes to aura because, as Leonardo put it, "Painting is superior to music because, unlike unfortunate music, it does not have to die as soon as it is born....Music which is consumed in the very act of its birth is inferior to painting which the use of varnish has rendered eternal" (Benjamin 1969b, 249--also mentioned in Chapter 1). Musical performances cannot possess aura, claims Benjamin, since the performance itself does not persist through time. But electronic music fixes all that--as a realm antithetical to interpretation. On this account I believe Blomster to have misinterpreted Benjamin, and to have attributed to him too much sympathy with regards to music. Many other writers on sample-based music also fall into this trap, assuming that Benjamin would be equally committed to sound-objects as he was to other dusty historical artifacts like rare books. But, as he says in a letter to T.W. Adorno regarding differences in their points of view, "it is not to be assumed that acoustic and optic perceptions are equally capable of being revolutionized" (Benjamin 1999, 139).

There is, however, an "aura-filled" quality to the experience of watching a good DJ work--especially a scratch DJ. One has the feeling of witnessing the expression of a unique gift, and the product of a dedicated amount of practice as well as a serious investment in equipment and time spent listening to records. The feeling is similar when one is allowed into the studio and musical practices of a sample-based composer. The authenticity of their work comes out of the way they relate to sound samples--as partners in a joint venture. The relationship to tradition is something a sample-based composer develops together with her sample-library (records, .wav files on hard drives, etc.). It is in the double act of revealing and concealing through selection, through gathering, that art is in this case created via bricolage. Sound objects/samples are allowed to maintain their own identity, all the while contributing in their own particular way to the communally-developed mix. This mix becomes more than the conjunction of its parts.

Hannah Arendt's compilation of essays by Benjamin, *Illuminations* (Arendt 1969), has a section in its introduction entitled "The Pearl Diver"--where she characterizes Benjamin as a collector, par excellence...both in terms of his own self-professed bibliophilia and his habit of carrying little black notebooks with him,

> in which he tirelessly entered in the form of quotations what daily living and reading netted him in the way of "pearls" and "coral." On occasion he read from them aloud, showed them around like items from a choice and precious collection. And in this collection, which by then was anything but whimsical, it was easy to find next to an obscure love poem from the eighteenth century the latest newspaper item, next to Goecking's "Der erste Schnee" a report

> from Vienna dated summer 1939, saying that the local gas company had "stopped supplying gas to Jews. (Arendt 1969, 46)

As more or less a series of anecdotes and musings concerning Benjamin's life and work, Arendt's essay reflects Benjamin's own collector's method. There are pearls aplenty in this introduction for someone doing work on Benjamin, not the least of which is Arendt's assertion of a similarity between Benjamin "the collector who gathers his fragments and scraps from the debris of the past" and Martin Heidegger--a thinker of new thoughts with "deadly impact" (Arendt 1969, 46). But it is to Benjamin's own views on collecting that I will turn in concluding this chapter.

In gathering what others have made scraps and debris, the collector is not only indulging a personal fetish, but is also committing a tactical maneuver. For Benjamin,

> Property and possession belong to the tactical sphere. Collectors are people with a tactical instinct; their experience teaches them that when they capture a strange city, the smallest antique shop can be a fortress, the most remote stationery store a key position. How many cities have revealed themselves to me in the marches I undertook in the pursuit of books! (Benjamin 1969a, 63)

I can relate to this notion of discovering a city (I find the use of the word "capturing" a bit disarming here in its suggestion of domination and control) through rummaging through its "stuff depositories"--thrift shops, "used" stores, pawn shops, bazaars, auction-houses and the like. On a recent trip to Fredericton NB, I returned with 40-some used soul records purchased for $1 a piece in the town's only pawn shop. For a sample-based musician like myself, old r+b records are like gold when I'm sifting through my collection for funky drum beats to sample. They also often provide sure-fire dance tracks useful for DJing. Fredericton has less people like me combing through its used record archives than Montreal. I'm aware of this and look forward to each trip there and to other smaller cities like it for the opportunities of acquisition they provide.

As a collector and admirer of quotations, Benjamin's ultimate ambition was to create a work which would consist of nothing but citations--with all need for interpretive, articulating text having been eliminated through judicious selection and arrangement. Reading from his little black notebook, instantiating his personal literary juxtapositions in the time and space of an aural utterance, Benjamin's nerdish pastime in this case demonstrates the truth that each collector knows in his or her heart: that treated simply as recordings of times, thoughts, and moments passed, the objects of a collector's passion are dead. It is in our sharing them--bringing them forth and revealing them to others--that they are brought to life and are transformed from debris into pearls.

In "On Language as Such, and on the Language of Man," Benjamin states,

> it is very conceivable that the language of sculpture or painting is founded on certain kinds of thing languages, that in them we find a translation of the language of things into an infinitely higher language, which may still be of the same sphere. We are concerned here with nameless, non-acoustic languages, languages issuing from matter; here we should recall the material community of things in their communication. (Benjamin 1986, 330)

Material production, far from engaging in the deconstruction of aura, is understood here instead as a mechanism for subjectively-mediated "communiqués" from the secret world of objects. In the role of translator ("revealer"?), the artist attempts to open up a discursive space for the mute language of things. She "canonizes, freezes, an original and shows in the original a mobility, and instability, which at first glance one did not notice."(de Mann 1986, 82) This appreciation of mobility, however, is an ironic discovery. For what the artist "discovers" in translating Being is that ultimate distance which stands between the collector and her chosen object's unspoken essence. A translation can never be an original presentation. Its derivative and secondary nature only highlights the ultimate in-explicitness of its references.

This leaves us with a choice. Either live, breathe, write, create and die in a world of phantasmagoria (reified, fluctuating object-illusions), or continue on at the never-ending task of the translator and/or curiosity/quotation collector in the hope that piling others' thought-fragments one on top of another will eventually allow for the presentation of the "unsayable."

Or perhaps there is a third, musical option...

> Contesting the apartheid of memory, and the agents of oblivion seeking to consign the past to the conspiracy of silence, music sustains an ethical resonance that permits us not so much to fully capture and comprehend the past as to recover fragments of its dispersed body. (Chambers 2001, 119)

Listening to music involves a sort of writing, or rewriting within the realm of memory. One could equally use the sample-based musical term "remixing" here.

The listener is never a "tabula-rasa", unencumbered by previous moments spent listening. Both in rhythm, through which memory is engaged via the use of repetition and suspense, as well as in melody, which references previously heard motifs if only to distinguish itself in some way as different or "new," music allows the past to come forward into the present free from the burden of establishing lineage. A mobility is opened-up which doesn't immediately institute a distance, but instead involves a coming together. Mental links are created in listening that conform to Benjamin's dream of a citation-only text. The record (or sound) collector who *uses* his or her collection puts this ethical dimension of listening to music into effect. The sample-bank understood as a resource base from which a collector, DJ or composer can draw examples via which to punctuate his/her own testament to the nobility of listening, becomes the highly-prized *earth* upon which one builds a *world* of associations. The practice of developing such a library is distinct from Benjamin's book collecting and becomes more like the gathering-revealing we find in Heidegger. The bringing together of world and earth is what defines the work of art according to Heidegger. (Heidegger 1971) To quote Chambers again: "To cite the past is to resite the present and reveal in it the instance of contingent paths that lead us back while taking us forwards." (Chambers 1971, 113). As the source of such potential citations, my sample-archive becomes a work of art, a paradise for time that has passed, a savior of debris. By sharing in the sample-based practices of others, *Selected Sounds* makes its primary contribution to knowledge through its demonstration of the myriad different ways there are to study and love sounds "as the scene[s], the stage[s] of their fate" (Benjamin 1969a, 160).

Notes

[1] --a term used by Jonathan Sterne (Sterne 2003) and others to indicate the disparate, emergent, and yet burgeoning field of literature devoted to studying various elements of our cultural experience of sound, including its historical, technological and ideological dimensions.

[2] For example, Diamond's article (Diamond 2005) focuses on actual studio production practices for four different case examples as well as the various negotiations involved in the selection, development and implementation of these practices. Citing a surge in Native American recordings since the 1990s, Diamond points to intersecting causes such as increased production, marketing and distribution opportunities available to Aboriginal artists (for instance, the Aboriginal Women's Voice program at the Banff centre, internet and satellite communications, as well as new prominent national and international award ceremonies or categories in established "competitions" such as the Junos). Nevertheless, she claims, there has not been a parallel increase in the "visibility" of these recordings--meaning that they are often "positioned ambiguously between traditional, world and popular music genres" and are therefore difficult to locate in many large retail chains such as HMV (Diamond 2005, 120). In examining four Canadian case studies (all recent recordings by Aboriginal

musicians/communities), Diamond muses with the question of what "social action" a recording might be capable of? This position fits extremely well with the perspectives articulated in *Selected Sounds* as it supports the argument that recordings are not passive objects which, once sampled, are rendered "utterly malleable".

[3] These hip hop concepts of flipped and/or bitten practices are similar to a certain aesthetic argument made in electro-acoustic music, where sounds must be manipulated in order to be yours. As Andra McCartney has pointed out, this attitude has a tendency to place soundwalk recordings on the outside, as though one were simply "biting the landscape" (see McCartney 2006). Hildegard Westerkamp has also mentioned similar frustrations with the attitude of electro-acoustic musicians who write-off soundscape composition as a (redundant) subcategory of musique concrète (see Westerkamp 2002).

[4] More information about Kid Koala, Amon Tobin and their record label Ninja Tune can be found at http://ninjatune.com.

[5] (Miller 2004) and (Mudede 2003) also make similar claims around "realness" and our contemporary over-saturation with reproduced media.

Chapter 4: An Introduction to *Appendix A*--A Sample-Based Exploration of the 'Selected Sounds' Interviews

This introduction has been divided into four sections:

A. An Explanation and Justification of the Appendix's Non-Linear Structure

B. An Analysis of the ten Questions Asked in the Interviews

C. A Discussion of the Sample-Based Practices of each Interview Participant

D. Reflections on My Interview With Jackie Gallant

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1. An Explanation and Justification of Appendix A's Non-Linear Structure

This chapter addresses the main substance of this research investigation: the interviews with the 6 participants and myself. The question of how to organize and present the material gleaned (to borrow from Varda 2002) through the process offered some unique *sample-based* opportunities, and these have been explored via the non-linear nature of this segment of the dissertation. Up until now, multimedia components (such as hypertext and audio links) have been added to this work in a way similar to sprinkles on a birthday cake--important to make it special, but not absolutely essential to its "birthday-cakeness." In Appendix A I have adopted a different, more all encompassing option. Reading this "chapter" of *Selected Sounds* involves an interactive construction on the part of the "reader," one reminiscent of sample-based musical production. Moreover, the non-linear structure of the appendix gives it a series of meanings that are constantly flickering. These are the candles on the cake.

The interviews were conducted through a series of 10 questions asked to all the participants. Recordings of these sessions were then transcribed before being converted into html code with a separate "webpage" for each participant's response to each question. These pages were then treated as a sort of database or *sample pool*.

The points of view offered by the participants, as articulate as they are, stem from semi-structured interviews. As such, the conversational flow and the particularities of each interview environment greatly affect the grammatical integrity of the transcripts. The answers have therefore been edited in order to make them more readable. This choice to subtly alter media in remixing is one of the hallmarks of sample-based composition. The degree to which samples are manipulated depends on one's personal code of sampling ethics and the particularities of each scenario. Composition can require substantial "cleaning" of samples before they are sequenced. This starts in the very initial recording and selection, where noisy, overly dense samples are often (but not always) avoided in favour of more minimal starting points for collage. The samples are then trimmed with exact precision so as to fit the various elements of an arrangement as well as shaped through volume control, equalization and other mechanism in order to blend well in a mix. In this case I have attempted only to render our somewhat meandering and grammatically loose discussions into a form more fluid for a reading audience. The participants have all been given the opportunity to exert ultimate editorial authority over these versions of the interviews, and any changes they requested have been duly executed.

The front end of the appendix allows access into the database via two different taxonomies - "By Keyword" and "By Question". The most straightforward, time consuming, and possibly uninteresting way to explore this sample-pool is to go through the answers to the questions one by one according to each participant. Even if this option is chosen, different answers will be juxtaposed against one another in a way conducive to the development of personalized connections in the mind of the reader. The network of concepts that emerges from each reading of the interviews will be unique depending upon how one surfs through the questions and answers.

This phenomenon is enhanced and multiplied through the addition of the second "Keyword" taxonomy. Small segments or "samples" of the answers contained in the database have been colour coded so as to correspond to points of view ascribed to each participant and in relationship to one of seven "keywords" - Technology, Community, Memory, Listening, Collecting, Ethics and Recording. These keywords are also revisited in the concluding chapter of this dissertation (Chapter 5). Hints at the content of each link have been provided in the form of mini-phrases attached to each of the colour-coded keyword entries.

These mini-phrases should also be read as points remixed in the concluding chapter.

By developing this non-linear format, my aim is to make room for "the poetic sounds of quoted fragments" (de Certeau 1984, 162). Removing oral, textual, and/or musical fragments from contexts in which they were parts of wider wholes (i.e., quoting passages from books, recounting remembered bits of conversations, sampling from field recordings, looping drum breaks from funk or disco records, etc.) turns these pieces into poetry. This concept is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, as well as in Chapter 3's discussion of Benjamin.

Segmenting and coding the interviews foundational to the *Selected Sounds* project has not resulted in this data being transformed into one long poem--far from it. It is through the act of reading the Chapter 4/ Appendix A that this begins to take place, as choices made while surfing through the database affect what is retained in the mind and considered during later moments of reflection. It is these future instances of consideration that represent the most poetic form the *Selected Sounds* interviews will take. Thoughtful quotation into other forms of writing and creation (something that can only occur subsequent to moments of consideration) becomes an act where loops are closed and new contexts presented. I can only hope that others will find the material contained in these interviews worthy of such future consideration and sampling.

It is important to note, however, that the process of segmenting and coding the interviews did result in many moments of consideration on my part vis a vis the answers to each question as I divided them into separate html pages. The keyword taxonomy built into Appendix A is the articulated result of these moments of consideration. Traces of my thought processes can be felt in the mini-phrases attached to the keyword entries. The connection of these mini-phrases with certain colour-coded elements of text also represents choices on my part as editor of the interviews, choices that reflect what I would like to draw attention to in their presentation. Some of these mini-phrases should make perfect sense to the reader in terms of how s/he reads the archive. Others will seem entirely arbitrary. "Sampling as community and distribution through independent means" may seem like an illogical jumble of concepts before reading Alex Moskos' answer to my question about the length of sound work that he usually creates. The relationship to community may seem like a stretch when discussing distribution of his compositions over the Internet. But once one realizes that Moskos is speaking about an online mail-order service for 25 copies of a cassette tape of his work ("You've got to find the right nerds"), then hopefully the articulations contained in the mini-phrase will make more sense. If not, then at least a (three-way) conversation has begun in the mind of the reader.

Enabling this conversation is one of the interventions I acknowledge as editor of these interviews. The seven keywords were also of my own construction, as filters through which to interpret the interviews (along with the mini-phrases). Editing decisions were made in the process of developing the framework of this chapter/appendix, as they are in the construction of more linear forms of argumentation. As one half of each conversation contained in database, and the author of the ten questions asked to each participant, my opinions and points of view are embedded throughout Appendix A. My role as editor in this case has been about organizing information to enable the reader to rewrite Chapter 4 of this dissertation with every reading of Appendix A. I do not deny that my presence will be there throughout this process of reading. But my hope is that the experience will ultimately feel more like a conversation with all the members of the *Selected Sounds* group than a lecture by the author of the project.

In his article, "Modernism's Sonic Waiver," Garrett Stewart makes the suggestion that the illusion of continuity produced by the sequencing of individual visual frames within a film or video (i.e., 29.7 frames per sec, NTSC standard) is similar to the rhetorical affect of words placed together in writing.

> [J]ust as the photograms that we register as continuous film images are in fact incremental textual imprints s/tripping over themselves from projected frame to frame, so too is the apparent ribbon of syntax a continual overlap of lexigrams and functional blanks spliced by conventions that exert no absolute control over the disruptive overrun of one word upon the next in the inevitable slippage of subvocal response. (Stewart 1998, 238)

Stewart is the first to admit that film, video and text are silent mediums when compared with everyday experience. This can result in slippages of meaning in our responses to texts that could easily have been overcome by cues of verbal intonation. One might consider, for example, the differences in cognition between reading about an exchange of greetings such as "Hi, how are you?"--"Fine, thanks," versus hearing/seeing that exchange in person or through an audio recording. The same difference can be uncovered between reading interview transcripts versus listening to original recordings of the conversations. These slipages can be understood as productive if one thinks of the affective potential of non-diegetic sound, for instance. The only time that film or video are not silent is when location sound is recorded directly onto the same medium as the image, with the two sources of information locked in sync. Even then, this "real" sound can be muted or substituted with disquieting ease.

Despite this persistent "silence," Stewart nevertheless articulates a position on the sound of the text, what he describes as the "phonotext", or the music composed through the underlying "ring of words" (Stewart 1998, 240). We are so used to speaking language that we cannot help but "hear" it, in some sense, as we construct the text into mental meanings in the act of reading. The same phenomenon occurs with silent film, video and still images. We fill in the sound that is missing, pulling from our own memory banks.

Writing about sensorial/mnemonic phenomena (i.e., media) such as music or conversations with research subjects is therefore a very delicate matter, as one must translate such multifaceted, heterogeneous experiences into sequentially-printed words. The transformation of oral (and aural) information into textual records involves a similar juxtaposition of authenticity and charlatanism as does the task of the translator, as outlined by Walter Benjamin (Benjamin 1969c, 1986 a,c) and others. Weaving together a cohesive narrative out of singular interviews--conversations that meander as interesting vectors were pursued--involves some serious decision-making. On this occasion, I have opted to leave the decision making to the reader through enabling a non-linear, interactive experience of the interview data, through hyper-textualizing the individual responses to my ten core questions.

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2. An Analysis of the Ten Questions Asked in The Interviews

I have interviewed the participants over the course of this project. This process consisted of one-on-one, open-ended discussions with each composer. These conversations were enabled through the following 10 questions:

- 1. How would you describe yourself in terms of what you do with sound?
- 2. What equipment do you use?
- 3. What kind of sound-sources do you generally work with?
- 4. How long are these sources?
- 5. How long are the pieces that you make from them?
- 6. How did you come to make music in this way?
- 7. How would you distinguish performing live from working in the studio, if at all?
- 8. How does your source material affect you work, if at all?

- 9. Describe the process of choosing your submission to the "Selected Sounds" project.
- 10. Briefly, what is "sampling", in your opinion?

The dates of each interview were as follows. All interviews were in person unless otherwise indicated.

- Anna Friz - September 9th, 2004
- Jennifer Morris - December 12th, 2004 and January 17th, 2005 - by email
- Alex Moskos - November 16th, 2004
- Richard Williams - November 16th, 2004
- Bernadette Houde - May 26th, 2005
- Jackie Gallant - July 6th, 2005

I chose the 10 questions before beginning my initial interview with Anna Friz. They were the result of careful consideration of my own sample-based musical practices as well as what I knew of the work of others through casual conversation and the popular press. The questions can be loosely classified according to the four following categories:

Artistic Identity

My hypothesis was that these would be heterogeneous. This turned out to be quite true. Most of the participants had some musical training, but in a way very specific to each individual. Most came to their sample-based explorations post-adolescence. The most commonly shared characteristic is an interest in playful experimentation and problem solving with technology. Questions 1, 6 and 10 were most relevant to this category.

Preferred technologies and practices

These were heterogeneous once again, always incorporating digital components, to be sure, but also substantial analog components as well. Many technologies were shared in common, such as mixers, microphones, turntables and vinyl records. More importantly, however, certain vocabularies, or even perhaps certain nebulous understandings are also shared. These phenomena are highly personalized, hard to put into words, but fun to discuss--a common feature for all the participants, i.e., enjoyment of the process of reaching out and sharing their sampling knowledge. Questions 2, and 7 were most relevant to this category, but discussions around technology and practice were frequent to the point of ubiquity. Ubiquitous, but always hyper-personalized, as is the case with so much technologically-mediated experience.

Length of samples/works/process

The most pressing reason for me to ask questions regarding length of samples stem from the discussions surrounding intellectual property and sampling. These notorious legal debates have historically relied upon quantifiable features such as the length in seconds of sampled material, only to fall short of resolving the issue as to what is stealing versus fair use of recorded sound (see Chapter 3 of this dissertation). Of late these debates have raged somewhat more quietly due to the industry upheavals currently experienced through peer to peer file sharing of copy-written media. In any event, it was my suspicion that many had moved towards using very short samples, very transformed samples (through digital signal processing) or samples created with their own instruments/sound sources in order to avoid copyright issues. This hypothesis proved to be correct, however, starting points that the group came up with tended to be longer than I would have imagined. This was the result, I believe, of many of the participants knowing each other well in advance, and wanting to provide many possibilities with their source material submission. This point of view is supported by the interviews, as are many other fascinating re-configurations of the appropriate length for audio appropriation. Questions 4, 5 and 9 were most relevant to this category.

Affect of source material / mixing environment

Questions about these matters prompted some very long and fascinating answers, as I suspected they would. However, I was quite sure that most would claim that their source material affected their compositional choices a great deal, controlling much of what goes on in the mixing studio. This reflects my practice-based opposition to much academic literature about sampling, which more often than not places the subject at the mixing board in charge of the entire studio process, from original inspiration to final "well-mastered" mix. I have already articulated my position on these matters in Chapter 3 of this dissertation. Questions 3 and 8 provided ample opportunity for me to evaluate and remix this thesis, for in the end things turn out to depend very much on what the individuals perceive themselves to be doing within the context of a given piece and in relation to the particular sound sources chosen. I believe my hypothesis comes out strengthened, although soundly stretched, spliced and remixed into new variations.

3. A Discussion of the Sample-Based Practices of Each Interview Participant

It should be obvious from the content of the interviews, but just to be clear, each participant is known to me personally, with the exception of Jennifer Morris (a.k.a. [sic]), with whom I only corresponded by email). Each considers her/himself to be a composer who works with sampling, if not exclusively. The only universal claim made by all the participants was to say that they were speaking from their own point of view (as opposed to representing a particular genre of electronic music, such as hip hop, minimal techno, etc.) The database of answers (Appendix A) cannot be considered an exhaustive analysis of the possibilities and practices of sampling in contemporary musical culture. It only represents one small network of possibilities, but an *exemplary* one, in that the range of answers is quite diverse, while at that same time consistently recognizable as sampling-related. And even this small network of possibilities represents a vastly wider range of discussion than most of the works cited in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

Recent bios of the participants in this project have been reprinted below. I would also like to go a little further in articulating the work of these sound artists through briefly comparing and contrasting the different members of the group.

ANNA FRIZ AND JENNIFER MORRIS

Bios:

> Anna Friz is a sound and radio artist who divides her time between Montreal and Toronto. For the past eight years she has predominantly created self-reflexive radio for broadcast, installation or performance, where radio is the source, subject, and medium of the work. Anna has broadcast and performed across Canada, and in the US, Mexico, and across Europe. She is working on a Ph.D in Communications and Culture at York University, Toronto.
>
> Deep in the analog cabin, she records and processes the sounds through a variety of ornery effects mechanisms. The final product provides a refreshingly soothing atmosphere in which one can bathe, exercise, or make love. When [sic] hits the road, her eerie soundscapes are accompanied by equally arresting visuals, comprised of digital imprints from her sordid life. The [sic] roadshow has travelled extensively in Europe, from tiny Ilirska Bistrica to bustling Berlin, where she performed at the 2004 and 2005 Transmediale festival. http://www.squirrelgirl.com

Jennifer Morris (a.k.a. [sic]) works mostly with field recordings (such as the one she submitted to the project) as well as sounds that she records by close-micing instruments such as the Japanese koto. Her answers reflect a deep respect for the individual character of the sounds she chooses to work with. At the same time she is not afraid to alter samples in the search of new experimental mixing trajectories. Morris starts with short samples or recordings that she then transforms with the aid of various pieces of sound software and hardware to the point where her original sources are barely recognizable. She will often discard her initial sound selections as new timbres emerge through her experimentation. Nevertheless, Morris claims that this process is guided by her sources completely. In so doing she ascribes to them a type of agency. There is a reverence in her words even in the way she describes the process of collecting sounds for future use. Instead of seeking out samples that fit the musical plans she has in her head, Morris waits for sounds to set off her "sampling radar". A figure quite different from the "Keyboard" magazine-toting consumer of pre-packaged sounds outlined by Théberge, Morris' sort of sample-based musician positively revels in finding sounds for recording that would otherwise have gone unnoticed. The sounds she selects are then treated and mixed according to aesthetic considerations such as sonic density, frequency range and mood.

For Anna Friz, however, the material she starts with when creating sound pieces sometimes end up driving the work, other times not. With very emotive or affective samples, her tendency is to want to protect their indexical nature through the construction of sensitive aural contexts (or mixes) to help these sounds reveal their stories. In the case of this project (*Selected Sounds*), however, Friz maintains that her choice of submission was motivated more by the desire to ensure that a type of sound with which she had developed a certain proficiency at mixing would be a part of the sample-pool--i.e., radio static. This is one of her favourite sound sources, as the sonic density of the material provides many different possibilities for specific manipulations on the part of the savvy radio artist. Friz's comments are also particularly of interest to me as she is someone with whom I have collaborated a great deal, and who is also pursuing a PhD in sound studies. And as the first person I interviewed, her articulate responses to my initial 10 questions became reference points for many of the interviews that followed. Friz also introduced me to many of the other participants, including Jennifer Morris and Richard Williams. Lastly, Friz and I also worked together in 2004 on an audio performance piece entitled "Locking on Popping" which served as a prototype for *Selected Sounds*. Each of us chose 4 samples related to the theme "pop". We then exchanged sounds and each used this common pool of 8 pieces of audio to construct a remix.

ALEX MOSKOS AND RICHARD WILLIAMS

Bios:

> Alexander Moskos, aka O.G. Danglers, is a member of the Unireverse and Thames and performs solo under the name Drainolith. He is presently working on his Great Work, a levitational, exercise/positivity record called Tranquil Heat as well as an epic tone poem for Reel to Reel tapes,

rumbler machine and small bells called “Bendy Princess: Travels in a Jambodian Province”.

Richard Williams is a Saint-Henri gardener, bike mechanic, experimental sound artist, DJ, guitarist and drummer, who approaches all these activities with the same fearless and exploratory mindset. He's also the sometime host of Suburban Soundlab on CKUT 90.3 FM.

Both are currently residents of St. Henri (one of the oldest neighbourhood's in Montreal) and both have at one time been students in the Communication Studies Program at Concordia University (as have Friz and Bernadette Houde). Both have a penchant for field recording and record collecting. Williams has worked extensively with the Ninja Tunes record label, one of the most recognized and successful sample-friendly music labels in the world, with artists on their roster such as Amon Tobin, Kid Koala and Cold Cut (although there is not a single female artist represented by the label, contributing, perhaps, to their declining record sales of late, along with digital file sharing, but I digress...). Williams' insider exposure to the international sample-based musical scene has affected his own personal production in some remarkable ways. Many of the artists on Ninja Tune are known for their hyper-precision when it comes to "chopping" samples, and their attention to detail in terms of layering and sequencing these pieces into complex poly-rhythms of inhuman proportion. Williams' own practice begins, therefore, with a quest for rich and textured samples to then turn into longer musical developments, featuring incremental (as opposed to percussive) feelings of change. This means opting for much longer starting points than many of the Ninja Tunes artists he listens to, many of whom work primarily with short sounds ten seconds or less. Williams is also extremely proficient at both DJing and live drumming. He is currently part of a post-rock group called Triceratreetops and also does solo work under the name SUPERULTRAMEGA.

Alex Moskos plays a variety of instruments and is also involved in many different musical projects in the Montreal area such as the Unireverse, and Goa. The youngest member of the *Selected Sounds* group, Moskos maintains that sampling was always a part of the music he listened to growing up and in his adolescence. Precocious musical tastes led him to begin his compositional trajectory with longer, 20-minute drone-based tracks. An expansion in musical influences fueled by employment at local record shops and indie radio stations has had a remarkable affect on Moskos' work, transforming him into an utter noise enthusiast.

JACKIE GALLANT, CO-ED (BERNADETTE HOUDE/LYNNE TREPANIER) AND THE LESBIANS ON ECSTASY

Bios:

> Jackie Gallant began her musical career as a drummer for several Montreal rock groups. In 1991 she joined La La La Human Steps as percussionist and performed in their production *Infante -C'est Destroy* until

1994. She has since turned her attention to film, video and dance using samples and loops in conjunction with more traditional instruments to create sound scores. Recently, she has been performing improvised pieces using an electronic drum kit programmed to trigger rhythmic loops and samples. She performed some of these works at the St. John's Sound Symposium in 2006. For the past three years she has been recording and touring North America and Europe with the Montreal band *Lesbians on Ecstasy*. She continues to compose for dance, video and film as well as performing her own solo work.

CO-ED is made up of Bernadette Houde and Lynne Trepanier. The duo share a love for strong coffee, open spaces and a desire to make weird and wonderful bass heavy music. You can often find them jumping around as parts of the Lezzies On X and Boyfriend.

The Lezzies On X are a plunder music project, taking inspiration from the lesbian back catalogue by referencing folk artists and punk bands alike, re-writing lesbian history for the dance floor. They use the source material in a musical collage that crosses a wide spectrum of musical styles, all within the dance genre. One of their obsessions has been to develop their own way of playing dance music live, using an electronic drum kit, bass guitar and an array of synths. The insistence on such a strong technological presence in their music serves to highlight the absence of technology in the majority of lesbian music, which privileges acoustic sound as authentic lesbian expression. Bernadette

Houde is the main technological and concept innovator within the group, and is a longtime friend. She is also currently finishing an M.A. in Media Studies at Concordia University. Her answers are very articulate in relation to the history of recording, sampling and the gender dynamics of digital sound manipulation.

For more information on *The Lesbians on Ecstasy* project, please jump to A brief introduction to "The Lesbians on Ecstasy," (Appendix B)

MYSELF (O+ - a.k.a. Owen Chapman)

In my own case I feel as though my habitually-chosen source material (i.e., musical fragments lifted from vinyl records) dramatically affects the work I end up producing. I'll start by sampling a short passage uncovered on one record and, through working with it, be led towards other parts of my collection in search of sounds to mix with it. The process of composition unfolds organically as each new insertion into the mix reveals hidden aspects of the samples already selected. At the same time mimetic relationships between these newly arranged sounds and other records in my collection are called forth, sending me back into the crates to search for the sources of these recollections. I have also recently been drawn to playing live instruments once again, and learning new ones, all the while recording and remixing the new possibilities for sound they offer. This is what sampling "is", for me: a practice of collecting and recollecting sounds in a way that treats them as participants in an ongoing conversation.

D. Reflections On My Interview With Jackie Gallant

The following was edited together from a self-performed interview, August 15th, 2006.

Firstly, a bit more background information on Jackie, beyond what she has said in the interview about herself and how she got into sampling. I recently returned from the International Sound Symposium in St. John's (July 2006). Jackie was also at the Sound Symposium, performing. And she was performing in a style that is quite interesting in relationship to this project. She was playing samples "live" with a touch sensitive drum pad called an Octopad, which you can play with drumsticks and use to trigger samples stored in a sampler (or computer).

This was a practice I knew she had been working on two years ago when she was composing the piece for *Selected Sounds*, the latter being perhaps the first time she had used this technique of non-percussive samples through the Octopad. I guess she's perfected the technique since, because it worked terrifically in the Sound Symposium context. She was extremely well received. Her performance slot followed some more traditional performances, including some Gaelic singing and re-interpretations of traditional Gaelic tunes improvised on keyboards and voice. The Sound Symposium includes a lot of improvisational music, but also a lot of esoteric types of composed music and electronic music. Anything and everything is acceptable to a certain degree at the Sound Symposium, including symphonies written for ships horns present in the St. John's harbour on a particular day, light-sensitive synthesizers playing-back music as shadows are cast onto their surfaces, etc. And then there was Jackie, with a very rhythmic performance--very rock, even though she was triggering samples from a sample-based playback system. Jackie is a great drummer, whether with regular drums or her Octopad, and she plays in different types of projects, not only the "Lesbians on Ecstasy,"(a band which also includes Bernadette Houde and Lynne Trepanier, two other members of the *Selected Sounds* group) but also in other earlier groups/projects, not to mention her work in sound production for documentary films and contemporary dance soundtracks.

Her skill as a drummer really came through in her Sound Symposium performance. She played two tracks, one that used samples stored in her hardware for a long time, as long as she's owned some of the technology. She also composed something quite fresh, based on samples that she had drawn exclusively from the Fleetwood Mac album "Tusk" (although you wouldn't really have know it from the sound of the performance). This is a little-known album when compared to some of the group's super hits, such as every track from “Rumours”, but it's an album that she loves. The performance went down really well; my students loved it (I was in St. John's to teach a graduate music class at Memorial University in conjunction with the Symposium). She also gave a guest presentation in my class, explaining the technology she was using, and provided some insight into her choices as a sample-based musician. The students found Jackie to be extremely open about her practice. This is counter to the norm in hip hop, for instance, and many other music production domains, where technological know-how is carefully guarded as a form of cultural capital.

Participants are always invited to perform short improvised sessions with other artists whom they have met at the Symposium on the last evening of the festival. Even though I knew Jackie from another context, we had certainly never performed or played music together before. We rehearsed in the afternoon, and then performed a "battle" with Jackie playing the Octopad with samples from "Tusk," and me on the turntable scratching from "Rumours." Together we composed something quite hysterical...which ended up closing out the Symposium improv for that night, and was also really well received due to its rhythmic and up-beat nature. The Sound Symposium was particularly mind-expanding. Many of the artists who I met, such as Gayle Young (Editor of *Music Works* magazine, or Warren Burt and Catherine Scheive (Percy Granger scholars and light-controlled synthesizer re-constructionists) were positively inspirational.

But to return to the interview with Jackie. She describes herself as *both* a musician and a sound manipulator. As she says,

> often when I work as a musician it is just that. Just being a musician. And when I work doing projects at home or projects that aren't associated with a band, it's sound manipulation, although I do also play instruments when I'm creating music. I'll play a guitar or bass, so I'll incorporate being a musician, but I put the slash there

> because there is definitely a large separation between the two elements. J. Gallant, Question 1

She has lately been working on bringing these two identities together (she mentions this later in the interview). And in the two years since this interview was conducted, I think her practice has followed this path, although even back then we were simply having very enthusiastic conversations about how to integrate more live playing into one's work as a sample-based musician.

One thing I did notice about my *Selected Sounds* interview with Jackie is that I talk an awful lot. I give my two cents everywhere, and I'm busy trying to talk about this and that piece of gear. Jackie's great to converse about that kind of thing with. She readily admitted to me during a conversation on the way home from the Sound Symposium, she's a real gear nut. She loves talking about gear, and I eat that up as well. So we were talking about all our different pieces of gear and how we acquired them and how we learned about them. And we have very similar stories in terms of having notions about what certain older samplers (such as the Ensoniq EPS) can do. We both acquired such early models and then had our minds blown open in terms of what they were capable of. We then both started to create/craft music using these new tools, with varying degrees of success and for different opportunities as they presented themselves. But of late we have both been noticing how much fun can be had integrating a live playability into sampling. In the two years since we spoke for *Selected Sounds*, I found this very much to be the case, especially in my work with dancers, notably George Stamos (as choreographer), Lucianne Pinto, Sarah Williams, other

Montreal-based dancers. The work that I have done with these dancers has necessitated a live presence. I have been onstage with them, I've been playing music off my laptop, but I've also found a need to respond to the dance in a way that is interactive and dynamic, as it is not always the same. Perhaps this is especially the case in contemporary dance, as how an artist moves changes from performance to performance, even if only in very slight nuances of timing. Good dancers react very strongly to good music, but the best thing that a composer can provide to dance is an interactive presence, both during rehearsals and performances.

I like to lay down a foundation, one that often consists of beats, or various field recordings manipulated into loops so as to be suggestive of beats. In *The Reservoir*, the most recent project I have been working on with Stamos, a lot of the material comes from water-dripping sounds from around my home. I explored and made recordings of the water-dripping sounds in our basement, in our kitchen, and various other places. I then integrated loops of these drips into a broader soundscape. I then add scratches over top of this foundation. I use the turntable to create melodies, narratives, nuances of sounds--a different level of communication, one that is more linear, and less loop-based, less recursive. One could almost say "more melodic". I think as a listener, as an audience, we are really looking for both these kind of things. Especially if we have grown up on Rock and Pop music--and even in Classical there is a strong tradition of adhering to this practice of mixing recursion with surprise.

Chapter 5: "What is Sampling?": Inclusions, Exclusions and Conclusions

- A. Technology
- B. Community
- C. Memory
- D. Listening
- E. Collecting
- F. Ethics
- G. Recording

And now we come to the end of the dissertation--the *conclusion*--the point at which all the loose (loop?) ends are to be tied up. This feels somewhat disingenuous, given what was presented in Chapter 4/Appendix A--i.e., an archive/database of ethnographically-gleaned information regarding practices of sample-based composition and performance. Segueing into a summary conclusion of selections from this contribution vis a vis its relationship to the literature presented in Chapter 3, as important as this is to complete the interventions of *Selected Sounds*, represents, nonetheless, an ego-bound desire for closure.

In order to elude this push towards positivism, I will take refuge, once again, in the practice of sample-based music, as a methodological example for how to end a work that mixes together many different elements, including pieces of others' intellectual "property".

> Although the sampler does indeed offer "infinite possibilities" for resequencing and warping...samples, most dance producers are constrained by the funktionalist [sic] criteria of their specific genre. Tracks are designed as material for the DJ to work into a set and so must conform in tempo and mood. Creativity in dance music involves a balancing act between making your tracks both "music and mixable" (as Goldie put it). Simon Frith points out that one of the defining qualities of digital music is the sense that this music "is never finished and...never really integrated" as a composition. It is precisely this "unfinished" aspect--the sockets, as it were--that enable the DJ to plug tracks into the mixscape. (Reynolds 1998, 48-9)[1]

I quote this text not as a backdrop to my taking refuge in the cliché that no project is every completed, only abandoned (although it would work well for that purpose). I'd like instead to use it in relationship to the format adopted for the rest of this chapter, which revolves around the final question asked in the *Selected Sounds* interviews--"What is sampling?". The seven different answers provided by each of the participants (myself included) are used as jumping off points below in developing an account of the multifaceted *family resemblances* (to quote the linguistic philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (Wittgenstein 2003)) between each of us in terms of practice, as well as the broader culture of sample-based producers more widely. It was from these seven answers that the seven keywords were derived for use in refining the database of answers provided in Appendix A.

The idea is to follow Goldie's suggestion, referred to by Reynolds (Goldie was a fairly well known sample-based producer in the late 90s, in part due to his relationship with Bjork), that one must balance between something that is "music and mixable" in the construction of work intended for DJs. I think this sort of dichotomy applies less and less in 2007, but Reynolds is right to suggest that much sample-based music is intended for listening *and* mixing with other musics. There are many different production practices that can be incorporated into one's compositions in order to help make them mixable for DJs or other producers. Locking tracks into specific four-four tempos throughout their length is one notable constraint followed in many different genres of electronic music, including hip hop, house, techno, drum and bass, etc. Another common trait of many styles of dance music (including "old school" genres like funk and disco) is a focus on layering sounds, riffs, or rhythms vertically at the same time as these "packets of sound" or "loops" are organized into chronological sequence.

Assuming that Chapter 4/Appendix A were successful in allowing the reader to develop her own layered accumulation of interview material, the following chapter should be read as a slow deconstruction of this accumulation, making room for the next mix. Each of the keywords featured in Appendix A will therefore be revisited in the proceeding text, with an ear towards demonstrating the applicability of these terms to wider arenas of academic discussion, debate and creation.

The conclusions contained in the following paragraphs should not be read as a series of pronouncements on the current state of sample-based music. They should instead be understood as starting points for conversations around seven keywords relevant to many different fields of study, namely *technology, community, memory, listening, collecting, ethics and recording* . Points raised below are also more than simply *theoretical* interventions, as they have implications in terms of an emergent *methodology* for research creation, especially where ethnography is concerned. Concepts raised in Chapter 2 of this dissertation such as friendship as method, the construction of community through research and the engagement with technology as practice within research-creation should be kept in mind throughout what follows, with an ear towards possible foreground and background articulations.

A. Technology

> Sampling is an excellent example of "technology as practice".
> Owen Chapman

At the same time that almost all sample-based producers are aficionados of music technologies, old and new, the way each individual employs their gear is unique based upon their own experience with these and other forms of technology. The key to understanding sampling as practice is to be open to how the ways in which we use technologies are partially constitutive of their identities--recognizing these identities as snapshots of moments in a process, since ways for using things often change. Technologies are social constructs, on this account, as opposed to well-determined capacities.

For Ursula Franklin, issues of justice come to the fore most strongly when technologies are employed in ways that dissuade us from considering their real-world impact. Whether we are dealing with weapons of mass destruction assembled by factory workers in Flint Michigan (such as those featured in Michael Moore's 2002 film *Bowling for Colombine*) or Pygmy "whindahoo" vocalizations lifted from jazz and ethnographic recordings by sample-based artists (Feld 1997), the capacity for technology to complicate ethical debates cannot be understated. One could also point to the whole file-sharing/downloading phenomenon that is threatening the stability of media conglomerates such as AOL-TIME-WARNER on this account. Absolute categories of right and wrong are extremely difficult to construct when every situation possesses its own unique circumstances, actors and objects of debate. An understanding of context becomes paramount under these conditions as each instance of practice is situated to some extent in its own moral universe. What is necessary to ensure just practices is a citizenry that can look at new situations of technological deployment in terms of how they relate to other previous contexts that we have judged fair or unfair. Ignorance is not a sufficient defense, in this case, as it is precisely this sort of apathy that leads to the concentration of power within the hands of those who produce and distribute technologies. While some might argue that this has been fine for musicians in the 20th century, thanks to an "invisible hand" at work in the competitive entertainment industry marketplace--creating an equitable relationship of supply and demand between composers/musicians and the industry that records and distributes their work--I find this argument simply untenable in 2007 (a position that finds support in Jones (2002), Charman and Holloway (2006), Clemens and Pettman (2005), Collins (2005), Miller (2004), Rodgers (2003) and many others, to varying degrees). A detailed justification of this point of view, however, falls beyond the scope of this chapter.

The term "techne" comes from Martin Heidegger's "The Question Concerning Technology." It is an ancient Greek word--the root of our term "technology." Heidegger sees the Greek era as a time of balance and proportion when compared with our current race to extend our mastery over all aspects of the modern world.[2] We need to reinvigorate this older conception of technology, he argues, if we want to protect ourselves from the kind of dehumanizing tendencies of modern technology outlined over 50 years later by Franklin--a time lapse that demonstrates the potential intractability of our situation. We need to rediscover the ways in which technologies are more than mysterious mechanisms for control over "natural" forces such as electric, combustive and kinetic energy. The most significant power of technologies such as sampling is their ability to reveal hidden features of our daily lives that we take for granted. Examples of the latter include phenomena such as sounds that go unnoticed by the human ear, the murky soup of radio static, or the mimetic relationships between drum breaks, bass lines and vocal phrases from "lost" vinyl records.

For researchers interested in technology, this suggests a certain push towards research-creation, as outlined in Chapter 2. Friendship-as-method is also an extremely useful approach in such an undertaking, as it can easily lead to a widening of one's own perspectives and array of practices (as has been my own case with *Selected Sounds*).

B. Community

> "...sampling in and of itself is just recycling, reusing an existing sound, but I think what's happened with sampling is that it's really been sort of a gateway to a whole new genre of sound creation."
> Jackie Gallant

Sound enhances community. In the same way that turning on a light in a darkened room enables one to see, sound in an environment piques one's aural senses. This is about the touch of sound. "Hearing is done not only with the ears, but also with every fiber of our beings, as vibrations of sound move into our bodies. Sound touches us inside and out" (McCartney 2004, 179) As vibrating air molecules, sound touches our eardrums, but also our bodies. We feel sound at the same time as we hear it. This physical phenomenon, however, is immediately transformed into subjective experience. "Music...is consumed in the very act of its birth" (Benjamin 1969b, 249).[3] This is not true. Any sound, musical or otherwise, begins with energy causing vibrations in a physical substance (vocal chords, speaker horns, etc.), continuing through the medium of air molecules to our listening bodies, and finishing with those vibrations being translated once again back into energy, this time in the form of firing brain synapses as our nervous systems respond to the received information. This response is then "stored" in memory. This is all cognitive speculation, of course, but so is Benjamin's statement. Visual sensation based in the reception of light through our eyes follows a similar trajectory towards memory, however, physical objects such as paintings appear more durable than music due to the fact that the source of energy stimulating our optic nerves remains steady as long as we leave the light on. Sound works with time and memory with greater subtlety, as do moving images. However, one rarely gazes fixedly at a single object for very long, suggesting that the reception of visual stimuli may work similarly to the translation of sound into memory--in concert with our individual identities and the immediate context of our experience.

But the quote from Gallant above goes beyond sound's relationship to community in the sense of physical proximity, and speaks specifically about a "whole new genre of sound creation." To say that sampling is "*just* recycling, reusing an existing sound" betrays a modern tendency to view a copy as derivative of an "original." However, after effectively apologizing for this aberration from tradition, Gallant immediately makes reference to a threshold, or "gateway" enabled by sampling--a gateway that anyone can ostensibly pass through and thereby enter a playing-field with new horizons for sound creation and creativity. The contemporary arena for this type of creativity involves digital sound technologies, but one could equally point to traditions of lyrical "borrowing" in hip hop, r'n'b, rock, and other pop music vocals, as well as earlier analog recording manipulations by the likes of Pauline Oliveros, Hildegard Westerkamp, John Cage, Pierre Schaeffer, Pierre Henri and others. Schaeffer attempted to unite those interested in working with previously recorded sounds with his

Solfège de l'objet sonore (Schaeffer 1967); however this interesting print/audio recording, while notable for its self-conscious integration of the two media, draws lines in the sand. As a "Solfège" the work smacks of exclusion in a realm that relies upon the multiplicitous well-spring of recorded/recordable sound as its greatest resource.

Gallant's point of view is an inclusive one, informed as it is through her own perspective as a drummer who "discovered" sampling many years after establishing herself as a performing musician. An entire world opened-up for Gallant in terms of *new* sources of inspiration and *new* mixing practices vis a vis her own former experience (see Chapter 4). For other younger collaborators in the group, such as Moskos, sampling is not so much a "new" genre as it is a familiar creative companion. Either way, sampling in 2007 still marks one as participant in a game with slightly different rules in the same way it did in 1997, 1987, and 1967. The significance of the construction of community as a research method is underscored via such examples, as it is only through an articulation of points of difference, identity and neutrality amongst a researched group that meaningful claims can be made about the practices. During the final meeting of the *Selected Sounds* project (the point at which each participant was able to hear what the others had done with the samples), we discussed how each of us had responded to the samples selected by the group. The following statement by Friz summed up the feelings of many.

> I felt like they were really indistinguishable by the end - in everything, a lot of the samples. There were some samples that I

> assumed that other people would take more advantage of--'Oh probably someone who thinks in a certain way will use this drum break or will use this melodic bit. I could see how I would use it even though I'm not going to', etc. But in the end no one actually did this the way I anticipated.

One of the biggest surprises throughout this project for almost everyone has been discovering how a group of their peers, friends and vague acquaintances from Montreal's experimental sound scene react when presented with the same set of constraints. The entire transcript of our final discussion as a group (including our reactions to each other's pieces) has been included in the appendices to this dissertation (Appendix C).

C. Memory

> "I think it's an artistic practice, it's a musical thing, it's an art, it can be done well, it can be done badly." Alex Moskos

The biggest difference between light and sound has to do with our receiving apparatus. The ears are omnidirectional, and are always "on," whereas the eyes are more narrowly focused, and can be turned "off" with the flick of a lid. We understand this difference intuitively, as it has been with us from the moment of our first awareness inside the womb. The mother's heartbeat and other internal "musics" can be described as life's first sensations, along with the physical closeness of the womb and the nourishment provided through the umbilical cord. The intimacy of these shared feelings unite mother and child. I believe that we carry with us the reminiscence of this sonic proximity. We feel it every time we use sound to locate the presence of those around us without the use of our eyes.

We also depend on this primal instinct when we assume that people hear us when we speak, as long as they are in close enough proximity. And lastly, this responsiveness to shared vibration is what draws us together to listen to sound and music.

The introduction to the score of Hildegard Westerkamp's piece "Moments of Laughter" (first composed in 1988)[4] provides a similar articulation of these feelings around sound and motherhood. Performing this piece involves developing a series of vocal improvisations in response to an audio tape prepared by Westerkamp.

> *Moments of Laughter* is dedicated to my daughter Sonja whose voice forms the basis for this piece. Her voice has accompanied my life for many years now and has brought me in touch with an openness of perception, uninhibited expressiveness and physical presence that I had long forgotten. I have made recordings of her voice since she was born and from the age of four on, she has made her own recordings of stories and songs. *Moments of Laughter* utilizes these for the tape portion of the piece, tracing musically/acoustically the emergence of the infant's voice from the oceanic state of the womb: from the soundmakings of the baby to the song and language of the child. According to Julia Kristeva, moments of laughter are those moments in infancy and early childhood in which the baby recognizes the "other" as distinct from the "self". They are the first creative moments that speak of recognition of self and place. The child expresses these moments with laughter. (Westerkamp 1988)

The communities brought together through sound are fascinating, in part since what is experienced is physically fleeting, yet strangely tangible in memory. We experience sound and music in constant relation to what we have heard before. This is how we develop an archive out of which to establish a *practice* of listening. We develop our collections as we develop our own voices, our own identities, from out of the "oceanic state of the womb". Coming together to listen to each other's music brought about many moments of laughter for the *Selected Sounds* group (see (Appendix C), as have private listening sessions before and after.

Tia DeNora writes,

> Music moves through time; it is a temporal medium. This is the first reason why it is a powerful aide-memoire. Like an article of clothing or an aroma, music is part of the material and aesthetic environment in which it was once playing, in which the past, now an artifact of memory and its constitution, was once a present. Unlike material objects, however, music that is associated with past experience was, within that experience, heard over time. And when it is music that is associated with a particular moment and a particular space, music reheard and recalled provides a device for unfolding, for replaying, the temporal structure of that moment, its dynamism as emerging experience. This is why, for so many people, the past 'comes alive' to its soundtrack. (Denora 2006, 144)

The call to notice everyday sounds advocated by acoustic ecologists and soundscape composers such as Westerkamp is simply an extension of the type of attention we pay to musical sounds most of the time (*Muzak* notwithstanding). The development of affective relationships to songs can only happen in the realm of memory, where those songs are compared and contrasted with previously heard material, as well as the innumerable other mental musings that enter into a moment of attentive listening. And this is where Moskos' comment as to sampling being "done well or done badly" comes to the fore. These sorts of judgments are ultimately extremely subjective. Every time someone tries to set up rules or ethical codes for sampling, these barriers are subsequently broken, if they ever applied at all (one could easily criticize (Rose 1994) and (Schloss 2004) on this account, as well as (Miller 2004) for the opposite affliction--claiming the only rule to be "anything is possible"--a statement contradicted during every instance of decision-making in the course of choosing source-files and processing-sequences for a sample-based piece). The only arbiter of determinations such as "done well" or "done badly" is the listening subject--a listener who's past can come alive with every musical experience.

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D. Listening

> "...working with... not over long... pieces of sound, using that as your raw material... prerecorded, whether by you or [whomever]....Then focusing really heavily on the mix." Richard Williams

Sample-based music involves a relationship to sound that is more about attentive listening than control. There is a prevalent tendency in many cultural studies of music to treat listening as the more or less passive reception of sound. It matters not if these sounds come from recordings or live players. What is significant is *who caused* these sounds to be, and why. Henceforth the myriad of writings, both in cultural studies and different types of musicology, that focus on the human agents involved in the rise and fall of various musical movements or genres. One finds authors like Joan Peyser outlining *The Music of My Time* (Peyser 1995) around the life histories of Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Varèse and their respective followers. T.W. Adorno was also infamously attracted to discussing the differences between these first two composers, finding in one the evolution of musical concepts and styles which were historically and dialectically appropriate given the crisis to "tonality" brought about by Wagner, while the other he saw as a despicable return to the Romanticism Schoenberg nobly repudiated (Adorno 1973). In discussions such as these the composer is isolated as the appropriate focus of debate surrounding what has constituted music throughout history. Music-making is equated with the act of inscribing one's mental musings into some sort of "permanent" material form--whether this is through writing a musical score, splicing tape (see (Blomster 1977), (Jones 1992)) or even copying and pasting waveforms via mouse clicks (see (Szepanski May, 2003) The point that such analyses forget is that making music is as much about listening as it is about inscribing. Even the image of the classical composer at work with quill and paper is essentially incomplete without the accompanying figure of the piano upon which possible arrangements are sounded-out.

Sample-based composition has its own purpose for the keyboard: it is a commonly used means for developing sample-playback patterns. These riffs can then be layered over top of one another in a process called sequencing. Sequences of keyboard-coordinated drum beats, bass lines, string and vocal loops are mixed with cut and pasted copies of "wave forms" (visual representations of digitized sounds) in programs such as Cubase, Pro Tools, Soundforge, Ableton Live (plus many others). The sample-based artist selects, effects, and mixes these components together, but without listening to versions of tracks as they are in the process of being composed (through earphones or studio monitors), this practice is next to impossible to pursue.

Listening is central to sample-based music and this becomes apparent upon numerous levels. Another of these is in record collecting, where listening is key to finding potential sample-sources as well as developing a repertoire of "influences." But serendipitous aural moments have also played a central role in the history of the turntable and sampler discussed by authors like Rose, Théberge, Mudede and Eshun (see Chapter 3).

> "One Day in '81 or '82 we was doin' this remix," says DJ Marley Marl in Tricia Rose's book Black Noise (1994), "I wanted to sample a voice from off this song with an Emulator and accidentally, a snare went through. At first I was like 'That's the wrong thing,' but then it was soundin' good. I kept running back and hitting the Emulator. Then I looked at the engineer and said. 'You know what this means?! I could take any drum sound from an old record, put it in here and get the old drummer sound on some shit. No more of that dull DMX shit.' That day I went out and bought a sampler." (Mudede 2003)

Another aural anecdote: in order to save memory on early, limited-RAM samplers, producers in the 80s and 90s would habitually record drum breaks into their machines with record players set at maximum speed (the highest pitch adjustment) on 45 rpm. After fixing a key on the keyboard to play their sample back at this "Alvin and the Chipmunks" speed, any keys lower or higher than that key would cause the sample to play through either slower or faster than the recorded rate, allowing one to move down a few keys to the original pitch as it would have played at 33.3 rpm. The sampled sound-file itself remained saved at the faster speed, making it a shorter, less memory-intensive file. However, it has become the practice in certain sample-based genres, notably drum and bass, to sequence such breaks at the new, faster speed (higher pitch). One break in particular has become infamous for its ubiquitous reception of this treatment: the "Amen break", taken from the "Amen, Brother" track by the Winstons (1969) and now widely downloadable over the Internet. The rhythm of the drum in this case lends itself extremely well to sped up recombination. Knowing drum and bass means knowing this break. Dr. Noh, a Montreal-based live drum and bass group, would mimic the effect of the sped up Amen break with the use of two drummers. Dr. Noh are no longer together, and one of these drummers has moved on to provide the back-beat to the semi-famous Canadian rock group "The Stars" as the evolution of the Amen break continues....

In Richard Williams' case, the sample-based explorations that led me to ask him to be a part of the *Selected Sounds* group have given way to a return to his drum-playing roots. Williams is now a part of the experimental post-rock noise group "Triceratreetops", with fellow former Media Studies students Robyn McFadden and Charlotte Scott. Williams has adopted a "free-jazz" style with his drumming, at once explosive and improvised at the same time as it features virtuosic ability. Williams grew up playing the drums as a youth, something he mentioned in the interview for *Selected Sounds*--although I had no idea as to his level of experience. What is interesting about Triceratreetops is how the drumming, bass and keyboard atmospheres they develop are reminiscent of sample-based musical structures, such as the afore-mentioned focus on vertical layering and the deconstruction of beat-based grooves into component patterns.

Different practices are adopted by different people depending on their backgrounds and the resources they have available to them. Assertions about individual identities being at the center of the selections made within sample-based music misrepresent this process of give and take. So also do claims regarding the perceived authenticity of the use of certain sounds (such as the Roland 808 kick-drum sound discussion in Chapter 1) or techniques that can be traced back to New York and sampling's "genesis" in early turntablism (see Mudede 2003). What is necessary for those looking to analyze the current multifaceted state of sample-based music is a means of access to the dialogue that takes place between sample-selectors and their recording selections. Mixing with records, for instance, involves mingling as much as it does consuming. It is in this sense that listening becomes a means of exploration and interaction. Record collection for many is not simply about possession of the right kind of stuff, but what vinyl and turntable technology can do. This is foremost in the mind of the collector as she finds herself coming home with increasingly esoteric records containing children's songs, linguistic exercises, bizarre sound effects and the voice of elevator operators. It should not surprise us when these affective gems reappear bricolaged into new analog/digital/mnemonic/improvised hybrids during acts of musical creativity and production.

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E. Collecting

> ..."it's capturing a portion of something...out of the context that you found it in and then putting it in either a sympathetic context or a completely radically different context." (Anna Friz)
>
> "[W]hat are the politics of recontextualizing a sound source into a new sonic environment? The initial selecting of source material to be sampled, much like (and often one and the same as) a DJ's practice of 'digging' for vinyl records, entails an ongoing and circuitous archeological process in which the producer hunts and gathers sounds." (Rodgers 2003, 313-320)
>
> "The other day my girlfriend and I went to IKEA. We're having a baby in a month, and are in the process of trying to find ways to organize our impossibly large field of belongings. I bought a new bookshelf for my records. My ever growing collection has overgrown the few crappy shelves I had, thereby rendering the dual-functionality of my studio as a guest room laughably out of the question. As we put together the new possession and started filling it with disks, my girlfriend asked, light-heartedly, if I ever planned to stop coming home with new armfuls of dusty vinyl? How could I ever possibly listen to or use all this music anyway? Didn't I have enough?" (Chapman 2003)

Will Straw has characterized record collecting as a predominantly male pastime. However, the record collector, he suggests, can be understood as conflating both stereotypically masculine and feminine attributes:

> Record collections are seen as both public displays of power/knowledge and private refuges from the sexual or social world; as either structures of control or the by-products of irrational and fetishistic obsession; as material evidence of the homosocial information-mongering which is one underpinning of male power and compensatory undertakings by those unable to wield that power... one might [also] note, for example, that collecting is about the elaboration of a domestic context for consumer goods; that within collecting, the values of consumption come to assume priority over those of production; and that, in the collection, an immediate, affective relationship to the object takes precedence

> over collective, spectacular forms of cultural involvement. (Straw 1997, 4)

Given this dichotomous essence, Straw chooses to understand the record collection as a highly complex site of divers articulations as opposed to a fairly static testimony of subcultural affiliations, identifications or classifications. It is the juxtaposing which occurs upon a record-collector's shelf that is interesting and not so much the individual value (monetary, or otherwise) of each unique element. The record collector's ability to weave a narrative which links these separate essences together becomes the locus of a certain cultural capital. This narrative both stems from and at the same time feeds the particular historical identity of the narrator. Straddling the space between hipster and nerd, master and slave, the record collector's affection for scratched vinyl disks is recognized as a power and a curse. One only has to watch five minutes of the documentary *Vinyl* by Alan Zweig, in which head-case after head-case is interviewed inside their Toronto apartments overflowing with crates, shelves, closets and ovens stuffed with records, to understand how the desire to lay "a template of symbolic differentiation over a potentially infinite range of object domains" (Straw 1997, 6), can lead to madness (or, at least, perpetual singledom).

The image Hannah Arendt evokes of Walter Benjamin is once again called to mind, that of an anxious writer "pearl diving" through his waking life collecting quotations in a little black book. This was a tactical maneuver--Benjamin was saving these quotations as the fundamental substance of the book that was to be his life's work--the book that would be nothing but quotations. But sampling the passages into his own narratives apparently caused Benjamin a certain amount of anxiety. The perfect book would have no exegetical text. However, the problem with this plan is that what strung these pearls together was Benjamin's connection to them, his practice of collecting, his re-membering of their significance through reading and writing. Benjamin could not remove himself entirely from the work without it becoming an empty shell. But he could not simply abandon his collection either. His "magnum opus" was therefore never finished, in part because he could not succeed in sufficiently excising his own presence, his own reflections, from the text. Benjamin's manuscripts were scattered with his suicide, brought about partially, Arendt speculates, due to his having lost his personal library to the Parisian Gestapo in 1940 (Arendt 1969, 17). The compilation of scraps and thought fragments now known as *The Arcades Project* (Benjamin 2002) is the reminder of this attempt at anonymous "remixing." It's as though Benjamin's fascination with varnish in painting extended to his treatment of quotations - the only way to properly respect the aura of the ideas contained within a text was to come as close as possible to their "original" historical "utterance"--i.e., an appearance in a rare book. Collecting was not so much about remixing after all, in this case, as it was about organization.

The record collector who uses a collection in the development of his or her own narratives (or *mixes*) puts this ethical dimension of collecting into effect. Studying or loving "objects as the scene, the stage of their fate" (Benjamin 1969a, 160) should involve setting them free, so to speak, and not fretting about this independence. The quotes from Friz and Rodgers at the top of this section point towards the manifold ways in which samples retain elements of their context of discovery--making their introduction into new contexts a political act. This is not a new observation; however, the recognition that this politics applies to every instance of sampling, even field recording, represents an important step "forward" for those looking to understand the practice more completely. This politics is not simply, or indeed even most significantly affected by the legal structure of copyright and intellectual property law. In the end it is more a politics of identity that is at play wherein samples are highjacked for their affective and aural potential in the telling of one's own stories. "To cite the past is to resite the present and reveal in it the instance of contingent paths that lead us back while taking us forwards" (Chambers 2001, p. 113). As the source of such potential citations, my record collection becomes a work of art, a paradise for time that has passed, a savior of debris. But it's a big pile of heavy, unrecycle-able plastic if I don't listen to it.

F. Ethics

> "Fundamentally I think it's taking something that previously existed and then re-using it, because it can be a lot of things. But, it's funny because I guess the line between sampling and plagiarism, in that context might be "does it have to be transformed"? I don't know."
> Bernadette Houde

Tim Taylor has recently argued that "hip hop musicians sample music of their own past, music they like, music from their parents' record collections", whereas artists from the electronica genres he is more interested in (ambient, world beat and goa trance) get their samples from "all-over," irrespective of the "meanings" these samples might hold or be capable of creating--beyond colour and ornamentation for their beats. (Taylor 2001, 152-3). An interesting point of view. However, the process involved in creating "meaning" through sampling is left unexplored. Taylor's work centers on discourses surrounding "strange sounds"--or sounds considered "other" to their users. Following Steven Feld (Feld 1997) and others, Taylor's work charts the thin line that musicians who sample weave between appropriate use of the sounds they uncover, and appropriation. This debate is taken up with great frequency in academic treatments of sampling. Intellectual property right is an extremely hot topic currently. At the root of this debate lie concerns, I believe, with the power of technology to rob people of essential experiences, variously understood as aura, authenticity, justice, even life itself. This (modern, postmodern?) anxiety has been well documented by too many thinkers to mention. Sampling is not unique, in this regard. Perhaps, in a way, it is our familiarity with this refrain that made it so easy for the public to appreciate how sampling could steal, as opposed to how it pays homage and/or helps in the creation of unique and inspiring works of art--often without "stealing" at all.

Houde's statement is very apt. Sampling can be a lot of things. Rarely in 2007 is it simply a case of grabbing a catchy loop from someone else's past hit record. The question of plagiarism within music will likely continue to concern academics and others for a long time. So long as aural "texts" are compared to written "texts," through the vehicle of recordings or otherwise, the practice of working with these texts in moments of musical performance will remain anathema, as these instances will rarely include legally-rigourous citations and will be so mixed and mashed with other heterogeneous materials as to represent a Gordian knot for the would be un-raveler of violations. This is not to say that ethics never apply. They hold sway in this arena as much as in any other political domain (see Chapter 3). Ethics in sampling boil down to individual beliefs and acts which promote or detract from those beliefs. Plagiarists are rarely innocent of their actions, and most sample-based musicians do not consider themselves plagiarists. "Thief" is a different sort of title, one that I, among others, am happy to adopt. Sample-based producers steal from the void of ignominy. The past is kept alive via a pushing forward of listening into the future through the vehicles of performance, recording and remixing.

To write about ethical sampling is to emphasize the complex decision making processes that underscore each instance of selection in sample-based audio composition. But it also requires reflection upon how sampling as a practice represents an ethical response to the over-saturation one may feel as a denizen of the contemporary mediascape (Miller 2004). Simply insisting on the sanctity of copyright law as the only mechanism for resolving conflicts around what is appropriate in sampling flies in the face of what is a very natural response when one is addressed through sound--i.e., answering back.

G. Recording

> "Recording a sound from a source like, interiors, exteriors, electromagnetic currents, then playing them back in a particular sequence to create something entirely new." Jennifer Morris

In this final section of this concluding chapter, I would like to address the thesis introduced in the introduction to *Selected Sounds*--namely, that "sampling" in 2007 is a term with the same breadth and applicability as "recording". While the two words are often used to connote different, even diametrically-opposed practices, this discrepancy in attitude is rarely distinguishable in the studio. In fact, the original dichotomy introduced in Chapter 1 was really more of a false abstraction (useful rhetorically). What we are speaking about here is more like a vast network of possibilities. Conceiving of sampling as *technology, community, memory, listening, collecting, ethics and recording* represents but one attempt amongst many possible alternatives in terms of mapping out this network.

Morris' quote above exemplifies this reality nicely. When asked to describe what sampling "is", the first word she utters is "recording". Would a "traditional" musician ever describe what they do in the studio as "sampling"? I think the answer today might be "yes" more than one might assume, but there is still a certain semantic hesitation on the part of many to go so far. The choice of analog over digital devices provides an avenue for one type of authenticity for many "indie" bands today. However, more often than not this "choice" simply reflects the nature of the constructed signal chain used in the generation of source material. Recordings are still digitally mastered and produced on CD in these instances, and often touched-up at this stage, if not before (for a slightly dated account of this dynamic, see Jones 1992).

Perhaps it is the notion of "recording a sound from a *source*" (Morris) that distinguishes sampling. Although this argument doesn't feel very strong (what recording doesn't have a "source"?), the focus on the original moment of inspiration to record is indicative, I believe, of a openness to possibility shared by many sample-based musicians. While I might take issue with Morris' suggestion that the goal becomes "to create something entirely new," the discovery of "fresh" sonic possibilities through recording technologies is vital to sampling's history and future.

But what does it *do* to suggest that "sampling" and "recording" have become synonymous? For one thing, it effaces the hierarchy of "originality" that many have tried to assert between the two practices--i.e., that sampling is somehow parasitic upon the archives of recorded history not to mention contemporary practices. And it also points towards the historical intermingling of the two pursuits throughout the 80s and 90s. Finally, stating simply that "sampling=recording" in 2007 tends to get people interested in what one has to say about other matters (such as technology, community, memory, et al.). I have mentioned many contemporary examples throughout this dissertation of technologies/practices that defy tidy determinations in terms of being sample-based or not (such as turntablism and soundscape composition). I used to think that embracing the digital placed an artist into the camp of sample-based musician. I realize now that the truth, if it can be called that, is a more subjective matter. Whether or not I view myself or another artists as "sample-based" has to do with my own self-determined mechanisms for distinguishing sampling from other related practices and concepts.

Not to take a final refuge in relativism, but just what sampling "is" cannot be determined. It is too multifaceted a practice. Perhaps its very nature as a "practice" makes it so. In any event, even if I were to manage to define sampling at this point in time, things would be different next week. As I have suggested above, the only "limitation" to the practice that seems appropriate is the notion that sample-based producers share an admiration for adventure and play with sound. To proclaim that sound, for the sampling musician, is "an utterly malleable material" (Miller 2004, 20), well...that's just a "crock of crap." Technology does not make us omnipotent, as much as many have wished it did. Besides, where is the social creativity in realizing only your own fantasies? Far from being a solipsistic activity, sample-based musical composition articulates technologies, memories, communities, ethics, collections and innumerable moments of listening. It is as social, political and creative an act as speaking a language and has catapulted the history of sound recording into the limelight of contemporary debate over intellectual property in our hyper-mediated age.

Notes

[1] The Frith quote appears to be from *Performing Rites* (1996)--but the page number and other citation details are absent from Reynold's text. Indeed, I'm not even sure the quote is from this book--I'm only assuming so since this is the only Frith text Reynolds lists in his bibliography. It's a fascinating and controversial statement, nonetheless.

[2] One kind of has to accept what Heidegger says about the Greeks in order to proceed with his theory, giving his work a certain "fallen-from-grace-and-looking-for-redemption" feel. But the articulation of this "older" way of thinking regarding technologies works well as a point of comparison with our modern relationship to such phenomena--a relationship that all too often involves the consumption of objects whose inner workings we do not understand (the automobile?), leading to a feeling of powerlessness when they stop working.

[3] Benjamin is actually quoting Leonardo Da Vinci in this footnote.

[4] For an in-depth discussion of the socio-cultural significance of this piece, as well as "stereotyping in musical constructions of motherhood", see (McCartney 2000, Chapter 8). To listen to/read about an online version of the piece, please visit McCartney's "In and Out of the Studio" project website (http://artsandscience.concordia.ca/facstaff/m-o/mccartney/inandout/html_pages/hildegard/hildegard_momentsaugt.html at the time of this writing).

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Appendix A: A Sample-Based Exploration of the *Selected Sounds* Interviews

This dissertation involves an ethnographic investigation into the sampling and mixing practices of a group of Montreal sound artists. Seven composers (in one case, a composing duo) each contributed a single piece of digitized sound to the project. Each was free to submit any sound they liked, with the one requirement that all samples be selected from sources discovered around Montreal (at used or new record shops or thrift stores, recorded from the radio, or in the field, or at home, etc.). Copies of all the audio files were distributed to every participant. Each composer then put together a track drawing on this sample-pool exclusively for source material. The resulting mixes are featured on this page through a playback engine located at the bottom of the screen (html version).

All the artists were interviewed regarding the evolution of their knowledge of digital audio production methods as well as their thoughts on audio sampling. These interviews took place after the samples had been distributed, during the period where each artist was working independently on their composition. While the interviews were open ended, they were based around 10 specific questions asked to each participant.

Interview answers have been formatted into a database that is navigable through two different means, by *KEYWORD* and by *QUESTION*. Each link in the following two lists opens a pop-up window featuring an answer to the question under consideration (html version). In the case of the keyword taxonomy, specific elements of interview answers have been colour-coded so as to correspond with one of the seven selected keywords. Hints at the content of each link have been provided in the form of mini-phrases attached to each of the colour-coded keyword entries. A briefer, *linear* exploration of these keywords and the insights revealed in the interviews can be found in Chapter 5. For a more in-depth introduction to the participants in this project combined with a discussion of the interview questions and the non-linear structure of this chapter, please consult :

Chapter 4: An Introduction to Appendix A--A Sample-Based Exploration of the 'Selected Sounds' Interviews

EXPLORE THE *SELECTED SOUNDS* INTERVIEWS...

BY KEYWORD:

Sampling as "TECHNOLOGY"...
1. and "noodling around" with audio software. (A.Friz)
2. with different technologies enabling different types of creativity. (J.Gallant)
3. including hybrids of analog and digital. (A.Moskos)
4. that changes over time. (J.Morris)
5. and how looping practices affect instrumental playing styles and vice versa. (R.Williams)
6. chosen for reasons beyond the simple fetishizing of the new. (B.Houde)
7. and the practice of mixing analog and digital media. (O.Chapman)

Sampling as COMMUNITY...
1. with RadioLand as a sound source. (A.Friz)
2. and the difference between playing alone or with others. (J.Gallant)
3. and distribution through independent means. (A.Moskos)
4. and overcoming shyness through technology. (J.Morris)
5. and becoming aware of one's sonic environment. (R.Williams)
6. and the surprising reactions of one's audience. (B.Houde)
7. and moments of unanticipated sharing. (O.Chapman)

Sampling as MEMORY...
1. in how it harvests our particular sensitivities. (A.Friz)
2. and how sound sources affect one's production attitude. (J.Gallant)
3. and broadening one's definition of music. (A.Moskos)
4. and a record of personal expression. (J.Morris)
5. and the lingering effects of the work of others. (R.Williams)
6. and a relationship to performance that depends on one's past. (B.Houde)
7. and the exploration of one's own taste in music. (O.Chapman)

Sampling as LISTENING...
1. through radio transmission. (A.Friz)
2. and the [illegible] of association. (J.Gallant)
3. and [illegible] the way it sounds. (A.Moskos)
4. [illegible] (J.Morris)
5. and being affected by what we hear. (R.Williams)
6. [illegible]
7. and the [illegible] (O.Chapman)

Sampling as COLLECTING...
1. through recording unusual sound sources. (A.Friz)
2. old favorite sound sources. (J.Gallant)
3. music and influences. (A.Moskos)
4. through capture and exploration. (J.Morris)

5. and the passing down of influences through record collections. (R.Williams)
6. and working with concepts. (B.Houde)
7. where the line blurs between records and gear. (O.Chapman)

Sampling as ETHICS

1. and the pursuit or obliteration of indexical relationships. (A.Friz)
2. and different levels of purity. (J.Gallant)
3. and how there's no turning back. (A.Moskos)
4. and the intuitiveness of transforming source material. (J.Morris)
5. and the subtleties of making it sound good. (R.Williams)
6. in the face of copyright. (B.Houde)
7. and acknowledging one's limitations. (O.Chapman)

Sampling as RECORDING...

1. with software and hardware. A.Friz
2. live versus programming. (J.Gallant)
3. and making it sound good. (A.Moskos)
4. sounds one likes. (J.Morris)
5. with careful selection of sounds in order to avoid too much density. (R.Williams)
6. with possibilities limited mostly by one's experience. (B.Houde)
7. and other paradigm shifts. (O.Chapman)

BY QUESTION:

1. How would you describe yourself in terms of what you do with sound?
A.Friz J.Gallant A.Moskos J.Morris R.Williams B.Houde

2. What equipment do you use?
A.Friz J.Gallant A.Moskos J.Morris R.Williams B.Houde

3. What kind of sound-sources do you generally work with?
A.Friz J.Gallant A.Moskos J.Morris R.Williams B.Houde

4. How long are these sources?
A.Friz J.Gallant A.Moskos J.Morris R.Williams B.Houde

5. How long are the pieces that you make from them?
A.Friz J.Gallant A.Moskos J.Morris R.Williams B.Houde

6. How did you come to make music in this way?
A.Friz J.Gallant A.Moskos J.Morris R.Williams B.Houde

7. How would you distinguish performing live from working in the studio, if at all?
A.Friz J.Gallant A.Moskos J.Morris R.Williams B.Houde

8. How does your source material affect your work, if at all?
A.Friz J.Gallant A.Moskos J.Morris R.Williams B.Houde

9. Describe the process of choosing your submission to the "Selected Sounds" project.
A.Friz J.Gallant A.Moskos J.Morris R.Williams B.Houde

10. Briefly, what is "sampling", in your opinion?
A.Friz J.Gallant A.Moskos J.Morris R.Williams B.Houde

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ANNA FRIZ

September 9th, 2004

How Would You Describe Yourself In Terms of What You Do With Sound?

OC: This is the first interview I'm conducting for the project-proper, and I guess this is what I might describe as a preliminary interview with a "central subject". Andra [McCartney, my advisor] has suggested that certain subjects in a research project are more forthcoming with information than others. And I'd therefore just like to acknowledge the relationship we have--which is two people that are already talking about these issues a lot. And I'm aware of many of your opinions--although I of course don't know what you might answer to a given question. I'm not going to pretend that I don't know that you already have a lot of really well spoken ideas about this material--in fact I'm hoping that by starting an interview with you this will help me develop how I will go about interviewing some of the rest of the participants.

I've quickly jotted down some questions, we don't necessarily have to get through them all--it's supposed to be an open-ended interview. So you can answer these questions for as long as you want, but I may interject or ask more question as they come to keep the conversation flowing. Alright?

AF: Sounds good.

OC: The first question is: How would you describe yourself in terms of what you do with sound?

AF: What am I doing with sound? Well, I guess at the moment [illegible] radio artist--not just making sound for radio, [illegible] using radio in a performative way [illegible] sound is very much [illegible] receiving end of those.

OC: Sending and receiving of transmissions [illegible] "What do you do?" [illegible]

AF: [illegible] I'm a radio artist. In the past I've been [illegible] kind of electronic music, experimental improv [illegible] radio artist. I'm transmitting to [illegible] sources for sound, etc.

What equipment do you use?

AF: I like to use a combination of analog and digital gear. I often try to gather my material either through field recording or through using instruments or radio as an initial source, and then transforming the sound as much as possible outside of the computer platform.

OC: Outside of the computer?

AF: For that I use things like delay pedals, a vocoder, the "Akai Headrush", for its "faux" tape echo and other looping possibilities. If you build different kind of echo effects on each other you get phasing issues that are quite interesting. Using the vocoder I can take harmonic instruments like an accordion or a harmonica and I can completely alter their pitch or format to get very unrecognizable sounds.

OC: Do you use a microphone?

AF: Yes, I use microphones too.

OC: --to put sounds into your chain of analog gear?

AF: Yes. I have pick-ups in the accordion, and with the radio I can just plug directly from its headphone jackinto the next piece of gear, so I don't really use a microphone for that. For recording I use a microphone--usually a stereo microphone, not binaurals necessarily. But the reason for this is not just because it is enjoyable for me to actually physically work with equipment in a real-time sense, but also because I find that with a lot of software, after a while, because it's so ubiquitous, you can really start to tell who's using what plug-in. So I find by using this other equipment it's a bit more eccentric, it's a little more unpredictable. And the combinations of things can work for or against each other and they're still quite interesting. That would be my preferred method at the moment. Also, I just don't have the money to upgrade, in any case. I kind of work with whatever I can salvage.

What kind of sound-sources do you generally work with?

AF: The radio is a big one. All aspects of radio.

OC: But of course radio--on the one hand you're answering the question, on the other hand, radio...

AF: ...is a whole other realm.

OC: Well, yes. As a source of sound it's...

AF: Do you use the programming, do you use the static, do you use certain kinds of squelch like for short-wave or AM. I know you get very different effects depending on which one you use. But radio, in some factor or another is the right source. And then, recording has turned into another source--especially because I have contact mics in my accordion as a pick-up. They're quite sensitive, and that means I can really use the whole box--the whole resonating box to pick-up sound. I can pick up external sounds through those and because they may have been resonated through the reed structure, then that adds an extra quality to the sound. Like someone talking in the room, or some little bit of feedback, or whatever. The accordion has actually turned out to be a much more rich sound system than you would think. It doesn't need to be melodic in any way at all to be a great little generator of texture.

OC: Would you choose an accordion as opposed to a contact mic or another type of microphone as a means of bringing sound in because it's low tech, or it's different?

AF: It's an instrument. I find it's really pleasurable to work with.

OC: You've played it for a long time?

AF: I played it off and on for a long time. I'm not particularly good at it, but I'm okay at playing. I feel the main thing I like is this reed structure it has inside from which you get this kind of resonance. It's like a resident resonance in the accordion that is added to everything that passes through that pick-up. Some people use an electric guitar in the same way. If you start adding little screws and little magnets and little things to your electric guitar then it just becomes kind of a sounding board. I use the accordion the same way as those guys.

OC: So you're starting with the radio in this case...maybe you use a microphone, or you use the outlet off of the radio to get some sound into your analog chain. You've described the analog chain, but you haven't really described what you would then do with that. For live performance maybe you do one thing, maybe when you're doing studio work you do something else?

AF: For a studio piece I basically just gather a whole bunch of samples with a variety of lengths--they might be minutes long, they might be seconds long.

How long are these sources?

AF: It totally varies. I might find some really great, interesting or improv passage, and then I might use 10 mins of that, as the bedtrack for something. At that point I digitize it, get it into "Protools" and then start working

OC: So "Protools" is what you use?"

AF: "Protools" is my main tool. "Protools free" I should say.

AF: Good old eight mono-tracks "Protools free", and then...

OC: But this is in the studio?

AF: I.e., my desk. On my laptop, my "Macintosh" laptop. I use "Protools free", I use "Peak"...I have used "Digital Performer" when I worked with Annabel Chvostek, just because that's what she has set up.

OC: I don't know "Digital Performer".

AF: It's a "MOTU" product. It's related to "Audio Desk". It has its bonuses, but I prefer "Protools" mainly because it's known. Because it's a happy program...it works fine for me. And, so if I'm working on a studio piece then I would line up all of these samples...sometimes I might only start with a few samples and start mucking around with them, and then I realize what's missing, or what I need to go and generate, or that I need to go out and do some field recording with the microphone, or go back to generating more sound using the theremin, or the accordion, or whatever.

OC: With the delay pedal and...

AF: Right. For instance, when I was working on our "Pop music" sample piece [link to relevant introduction section], you know, I took these samples off the radio, I had your samples as well, and I put them all in the computer. I started noodling around with them, and then I would go take a little sample of something and run it through a reverb, or another kind of plug-in, and just record that out to my minidisk, for instance, just to get it out of the computer so that I could do a semi-real time thing, and then you put it back in, and that would turn into a 4 min bed track, just from playing with some of the plug-ins.

OC: By plug-ins do you mean the chain of gear that you've created?

AF: No, in that case I mean digital plug-ins. Or using a control strip, or something like that. A control strip is something in "Protools" that allows you basically to affect the parameters of your sound sample. For instance, if you take...we'll it's true for really pretty much any plug-in. If you sit down with your little sample, you have it highlighted, it's going to play. Say it's like a minute long, but it keeps looping forever, even if you have just like a little tiny loop, but if it's repeating forever while it's previewing, then you can be doing these slow moves in real time [through changing the parameters of the plugin]. So if you record that, then you get this sort of sweep of sound that begins to build up, right. You can very slowly be eq-ing it, or changing the reverb, or whatever, the brilliance. You know how there are 4 different settings [in Protools], for instance, for reverb. Stereo hall reverb, or whatever.

OC: As a user of "Protools" I would not usually think to play with those parameters as a means of changing sound in a real-time sense, and then recording that change. I would have used those plug-ins to find what I wanted, tried out 4 different kinds of reverb etc...and then moved on to something else.

AF: So the equivalent in the analog world is, say I've got a sample captured captured on a "Headrush". I've got a one minute loop that's seamlessly looping. Let's say that on my mixing board I actually start playing with the eq parameters and I very slowly sweep in different directions, you build this very different quality of sound, and it's very interesting or pleasant, or irritating to listen to over a period of, like, 10 minutes. And that in itself, that's how, one sample becomes the material for an entire 5 minute sequence.

OC: Ah, your secrets are becoming clear!

AF: Actually some of that I learned from I8U. Because that's how she plays...one of the things she does with her laptop is that she plays, I guess, control strips. She'll set up these very minute samples. She'll take a field recording, she'll break them down into minute little samples, and then she'll just, on this one section, she'll have it highlighted, she'll very slowly change the parameters on the control strip. Over the course of a 10 minute stretch of piece.

OC: I still don't quite know what you mean by the "control strip".

AF: It's pretty hard to explain. It's just another kind of "grm" tool--grm plug-in.

OC: "GRM"?

AF: It's just like a subset of plug-ins that you can get that you can use for "Protools".

OC: That I didn't know either. I thought "Protools" plug-ins were "RTAS".

AF: You can also just use GRM tools.

How long are the pieces that you make from them?

So does this process often create pieces that are a certain general length?

AF: I think in 20 minute chunks.

OC: In my own case everything seems to end up happening in 3 or 4 minutes. So the challenge is learning how to make larger pieces, because for whatever reason, the practice that I'm developing really keeps me in these 3 or 4 minute time frames.

AF: Well I was used to beginning with experimenting on a live radio show, so I always had half an hour or an hour--much larger scale. This would mean that I would make mixes and I would break them up with other peoples music. But, when I perform, I definitely take it in 20 minute chunks, and 20 to 25 minute is a very comfortable performance length because, that works well for, like, a festival setting, where there's 5 people on the bill. But now I need to step up to the plate to do 50 minutes on my own, that's a much bigger challenge. You know, I can do 45 with two of us as a performance. That was kind of a trick to get used to. But when doing something with studio pieces, I've made pieces between 20 and 45 or 52 minutes, and a number of pieces that are 45 minutes long. So I kind of have a sense of what that's like, but 20 minutes is sort of my ideal, I think. Also, when I look at my longer pieces, if I want to shorten them, 20 minutes is always easy to do, but anything more or less is a bit more awkward. So, I think I think in 20 minute sweeps, you know, chunks.

OC: This is very curious to me that for you 20 minutes would be very natural, whereas for me--just making that 10 minute piece that I was commissioned to make not long ago, I was desperate for minutes at the end. I had put so much effort into the first 3 minutes.

AF: The kind of things that I'm making, they unfold over a much longer period of time. They demand someone's patience, because not much happens all the time. Some of the pieces for "Pirate Jenny" [her M.A. project] for instance, there are sections that are very dense, that unfold only after a very long period of time. For that thesis project I generated, like, 6 hours [of audio] in the end. Those are based on live mixes, and with live mixes on the air, you have lots of patience because no one's looking at you, so there's time to let things unfold.

OC: It's true that when you've got time, and you feel the freedom to just create a live mix, they always end up being longer than 3 minutes.

AF: Absolutely.

How did you come to make music in this way?

AF: Through radio. Through doing live mixes on the air.

OC: That was what gave you the foundation to your practice, in a sense?

AF: Absolutely. It was using reel-to-reel machines and doing weird loops and mixing other peoples music, but in a kind of non-beat worthy way.

OC: Where was that?

AF: That was at CITR in Vancouver. I had done spoken word programming and music programming there, and eclectic rhythms programming, but it wasn't until I was actually working there and making these little short public service announcements for semi-ridiculous things like "Give blood" and there were little vampires in the back-ground, or whatever. That honed my technical skills on the reel-to-reel players and working with tape loops, and activating two players at once and different things. And cueing up these insane mixes, getting them ready and then being like: "Okay, go!". Unleashing every piece of equipment in the studio to play at certain times, and running about and cueing things, and then 5 minutes later you stop, and wonder "Okay, did I get it?" Because, we didn't have a computer editing situation there at all.

OC: No non-linear editing?

AF: Not at all. We ended up scrambling, and ping-ponging sounds back and forth between two different mini-disk players, for instance, or different tape machines, and so on. So definitely that, and also gradually beginning to do these live mixes for network-based projects. Streaming for other people, and receiving signals from the stream from a semi-remote location and mixing that into your own stream. This was coming from maybe a bit of an indulgent improv aesthetic. Maybe not so interesting to everyone unless you're actually doing it. But definitely interesting as a process to learn about tools and to hone my listening skills for someone else. Hearing when different kinds of abstract tones are in-tune, and what kind of chord is made from that, for instance.

How would you distinguish performing live from working in the studio, if at all?

OC: Would you say the first composition that you created in your own style would have been one of these public service announcements that you've discussed? I'm thinking now about studio work, not live work, because obviously the first live experiences you had were on air at the station.

AF: I guess you could say little public service announcements, little show promos. But, then the first sort of commissioned piece was at the Western Front as part of a group residency.

OC: What year was that.

AF: This was 1999. And that's when I first was introduced to "Protools". I was thrown into the deep end of "Protools" with no previous experience at all, it was very scary. For that project, I made two pieces. There was a 3 minute piece and a 7 minute piece. It was a group work called "Silence Descends." It was released on a CD, and it aired on radio, and so on.

OC: And did that feel like that was a moment for you in terms of becoming the way you are today?

AF: Absolutely. I had been a performer, before, but more in a kind of cabaret sense, whereas this time it was really, like, "Okay, I'm making studio pieces, and pre-composing in this very deliberate way that is being recognized as being 'art work'". I made one of those pieces on "Protools", and it took me forever because I had pretty much no instruction, and there was all this problem with the hard drive that "Protools" was installed, you couldn't actually save your audio files, so you would constantly be importing and exporting things. This was all such a mystery to me at that time, I couldn't figure it out at all. It took me something like 16 hours to make this little 7 minute piece that now is just painfully simplistic when I hear it. But then the other 3 minute piece I made at the station using all my more familiar linear editing tools, and it was very low-fi, and it was all about taking all these radio samples and bits and pieces of things I'd saved up, and it was specifically about radio at the end of the world. I think that piece actually, more than anything, set the tone for later work.

OC: What was it called?

AF: Radio Ragna Rock--as in the Norse apocalypse.

OC: Ragna rock?

AF: Yeah, "ragna rock" [with a Danish pronunciation], you'd say in Danish.

OC: The "Norse apocalypse"?

AF: Yeah...it's when the world ends?

OC: Okay....

AF: All those warriors that are sitting in Valhalla, they all have to go out and fight because now it's the end of the world. That's "Ragna Rock".

OC: Ahhh, okay....really?

AF: So, the premise of "Silence Descends" referred to this book that was about the end of the information age...the crash of it. It's written from the point of view of 500 years in the future. We were all doing pieces from various points in this book, riffing off of different aspects. I did the last 3 minutes of the radio broadcast of the information age that was ending.

OC: Ooohhh, okay.

AF: It has the "Cesium" clock in it, and it has all of these different....This was also made not long before Y2K, and everyone thought the world was going end when the computers shut off. There was plenty of apocalyptic material to talk about.

How does your source material affect your work, if at all?

OC: How would you describe the relationship between the sounds you use in creating a given piece and the character of that piece itself? If I had to put that in other words, I might say "How does your source material affect your work, if at all?" This is a way of trying to get at something which you already know that I'm interesting in, which is "How does the selection of certain sounds over other sounds affect what we create at the end?" I'm asking this from the point of view of somebody who thinks that the sounds have their own kind of role to play, that they in a sense make decisions for you as a composer. And that's part of the process of working with sounds in this way; it's about being open to those limitations or to those creative constraints that the sounds bring with them. Not everything is up to you to decide. I'm being honest about that--I have a suspicion that the sounds we select shape what we do. But I'd like to know your opinion on this.

AF: Right. Well, I think it's both true and untrue for me. I think when we were working on the project, the [Pop] sample project, on the one hand the theme of "Pop" meant something to the final piece, but on the other hand I pretty much obliterated the "poppiness" of the samples by the time I was done.

OC: Absolutely.

AF: I think that sometimes it is the indexical relationship that the samples have with where they came from that you're drawn to and that you want to use, you want to emphasize. And in that case I think that some of the samples do make some decisions for you. Because there are certain things that depending on who you are you would choose not to do to a sample. I have something I recorded at the APEC protest--one of our recorders at CiTR running away from the pepper-spray attack. And he's saying "We're... they're advancing right now. And we're running, we're running..." And it's this really intense moment that we have from his point of view on this phone, so it's got all this crackliness of being on a cell phone. It's such a great sample--it's for real, there's no way you could ever fake it. And so that sample I was always very careful with not wanting to over-use. I didn't want to just plant it into something without a context, because, for me it came from such a political place that I really want to preserve that. In that case the sample may have guided me to do things, but only because I have, first of all endowed the sample with a certain kind of meaning that I then use as my guide as to how I will use it. But other samples I'm totally ruthless with because I don't care about them. I haven't endowed them with anything special, necessarily. One of the good exercises, actually, about working on that "Pop" music sample-thing was that I did realize how arbitrary it is to some extent.

OC: What you start with?

AF: Yeah, depending on what you do with them afterwards, you can take just about anything. Because, you know, before I had never completely obscured the source to the degree that I did with that particular piece.

OC: Which you did to an extraordinary degree. Much more than I did. This is interesting because it gets at some of the differences.

AF: I had done that because I had been hanging out with some of these other sound-producers who I realized were doing just that. They were taking a sample that maybe they really loved and had some really beautiful aspects, and in the end the only thing they preserved was that it had a certain kind of frequency spread within it, until that enabled some other things to happen.

OC: So what happens to the sample, is my question? Does it remain there because of the act of selection which the composer engaged in initially? For instance, I was working on a piece the other day, and I decided to use only records that came from 1973-75. There was a whole reason why I did this. I was born in 1973 and my sister was born in 1975. Thea [my daughter] was born in 2003, and her sibling will be born in 2005. So there's a nice 30 year retrospective there. And I was thinking about what kind of music would have been on the radio when I was born, when my sister was born. I was thinking about differences between being a child, and being and adult and having your own children and being the 1st child, or being the 2nd child and how it makes one different. All of these things were a massive part of my thought processes as I was pulling out like, Isaac Hayes, and you know, the Stylistics, and other records with which I had a certain relationship--you know, like I took a Bob Dylan record as my Dad used to play Dylan all the time. But many of the other records I used, it was only because they were from 73-75, and they happen to be part of my collection right now, and they work with what I was doing. But I still feel like I had an idea, and then that idea kind of became something else because of the records that I happened to have in my collection. Point being that: who knows... You know, I can call the piece 73-75 which is what I've done, and if you just listen to it, well you're never going to necessarily know that all those sounds came from 73-75 unless I tell you that. And, moreover, the narrative of childhood-adulthood, my childhood, my sister's childhood, all of that ...it's not evident in the piece. But it was there in the creation of the piece, so I still feel like those ideas are there in some way as much as they would be in another artistic endeavour.

AF: This is my point. These are questions about art more generally. To what degree do you sublimate all of these influences in your conceptual intent. To what degree are they really obviously on the surface? Do you make one-liner art, or do you make art that has depth, that someone may find resonances with because it has these certain kind of references, or maybe not.

OC. Maybe they won't get the references. But the depth will be there

AF. What makes it interesting as an artist is that we go through this process of having all these thoughts. I mean, for you, as someone making art, being a creative person, I think what's interesting is that you do spend this time choosing samples, that those do become a meaningful process that lead you to think about different things like your childhood. But none of that may be apparent to a person who listens to a three minute piece. You know, they might be close in there, but they might not. I think, especially when working with radio, because I am so interested in these faint traces of other things, I think a lot of things that I put in there that I hear are not there for other people. But it's like traveling over a landscape that you've lived in all your life, versus coming to a country the first time.

OC. The question is, "Are the traces gone when they fall upon deaf ears, so to speak?" That's what I'm fascinated with. What happens there?

AF. Right. Well, in the end it depends on your practice. Do you want there to be an indexical kind of reference, or not? And if you don't care about that, then it doesn't matter where it came from. It doesn't matter what you used. Because no one will ever know.

OC: I had a deadline that I was working with. And I kept finding myself just wishing that I could pull a record out of 1970 or 1976--"NO, but I can't--it has to be 73-75." The difference at the end of the day for the person for whom I was making the composition was completely minimal. She would have had no idea. It was because I had chosen this limitation as a source of inspiration that felt like I had to stick to it. And I'm glad I did in the end, because it took me to something about which I feel like there's a consistency. And a depth. At least in my relationship to it as the one who created it, and not justvwilly-nilly "Oh, I'll take this, I'll take that, and I'll take that".

AF. I think because you do that, because it does become meaningful for you, then it does guide your choices in terms of how you put things together, or it's interesting to you that "Oh, I'm using this bass sound with this other guitar riff. Isn't that interesting--those two guys never would have talked in reality." But they came together in my mind. It becomes part of this whole unique process of you making this work.

OC: Do you feel that way? You're saying "You". I'm not sure if you mean "One", or if you mean "Owen".

AF. I guess at that moment I was meaning "Owen", but I think for myself... I don't know it's a good question.

OC: We'll come back to this for sure.

AF: It's a good question. I think sometimes it doesn't matter where something comes from. I want to take something out of context because it just has a certain feel to it, a texture, or a pitch or tone or something and I just think, "That's a good sound. I could turn that into something else—it will go with these other things." I tend to be thematic, so of course I'm looking for connections—the stuff that fires in your brain, pattern recognition, technically. But I often don't feel people need to know where it comes from. And if I want them to know where it comes from, then I place things where it makes it far more obvious. So for instance, with the "Automated prayer machine" with Annabel [Chvostek], it's very clear where things have come from. It's really easy to recognize the mainstream radio material, it's easy to recognize the kind of informal voices of just people we have phoning in to leave messages. And there are lots of other sounds we used for texture and you'll probably never know where they came from, and that kind of doesn't matter. It adds to an ambiance that we create more generally.

OC: I'm thinking about sound-as-texture. Certainly when I've listened to your pieces before, when we've had discussions before, this is a word that comes up often. And I'm thinking about taking a sound, say a piece of white noise, and turning it into texture upon which to build, which I know is something that you've done before. The choice of the white noise, initially, or of the radio static, or what have you- there is a certain connection between the original sound you choose and what you think you're going to be able to get it to. Even if it is unrecognizable to somebody who hasn't followed that transformation along with you, in your mind as a selector, you probably know "Hey, radio static works pretty well if I pitch it down by an octave, and I...." I don't know what you do to get the texture that you're talking about.

AF: Sometimes it's pretty arbitrary. "Let's try this and see what happens..." But, after a while I start to know... going on a thin piece of static, meaning it doesn't have a lot of, there's not a lot of sub-frequencies mucking around in there. It's pretty clear—one single high tone with a bit of crumbliness at the edge. That's one kind of static, versus a big complex syrupy piece of static, like the one that I put into the current project—which is a pretty... that's what I would say is a dense piece of static. There's a lot of sound information there. You could isolate any number of frequencies, you could do all kinds of things with that. That is a whole different kind of range, versus something that's much more limited in its frequency. I make choices about that kind of thing, also because I know if I'm starting to multi-track things and I have a sample that's really dense, it's very hard to do anything else on top of it, because all the frequency ranges are taken with this one big dense thing. Then you have to start off editing against it.

OC: It's give and take. Once again, from the beginning you're already dealing with a certain amount of limitation with what you have and what you want to do but it's not...

AF: It's not nearly as fun as I'm making it sound. I mean, a lot of it is hit and miss.

"Oh, let's see what happens if I do this." Or "Gee, I've had this sample kicking around for years and I've always liked it. Let's build something with this thing."

Describe the process of choosing your submission to the "Selected Sounds" project.

AF: It was actually kind of hard, because on the one hand....

OC: You can make reference, of course, to the "Pop" experience too, because we've talked about this before.

AF: Yes, well with the "Pop" experience that was a lot more like I was fighting against my radio inclinations, of course, and then I was just thinking, well, "It's true, it would be so simple, I'll just record pop-radio, it doesn't matter. And I don't even listen to AM radio, so I don't have any sense of what's on it. I mean, I have no connection with any of the songs, really, except for the "Dirty Dancing" song, that was pure evil. I was just like, "Here Owen, have this!" But, I realize that the chunks that I took all had little catchy hooks in them somewhere, or an interesting bit of synthesizer. There was always some clear note in there someplace, whether I was able to use it or not. What had attracted me to it in the end was that there were these moments of clarity and that very over-produced material. So, when I was thinking for "Selected Sounds" I had a number of different thoughts. I was partially influenced by knowing the group of people who were submitting, and thinking: "Well, I know certain kinds of samples I'm sure will be amply covered by other members of this group."

OC: Like drumbeats?

AF: Drum beats, little catchy bits of bass things--basic things that could make sounds....I knew that would be pretty well covered. And I thought somebody would go out with a microphone and record something...some sort of weird shifty field recording....

OC: Which someone did.

AF: I figured I was in a good position to provide this piece of wallpaper, basically. If we were all making something I was going to offer-up this kind of quasi-uniform piece of sample that would have a lot of subtle features. I then went and surfed around a good piece of static.

OC: Where did you find it?

AF: It was on short-wave. I don't remember....

OC: It is unbelievably dense. It's just waves of frequencies. Coming up, going down.

AF: I'm almost tuning into a station, so when it really thins out that's right before you hear the station that is on the next frequency. All that other stuff is in between. It's crazy alien-landing-pod sound. That's what radio-land is for. You have to do it at night...you don't get that kind of reception during the day.

Briefly, what is "sampling", in your opinion?

AF: I guess it's capturing....there really is this whole language [issue] there. I guess I would say something along the lines of "capturing a portion of a larger whole of sound, whether that means the whole being daily sound, or....I feel like it's capturing a portion of something, to take it out of the context that you found it in and then putting it in either a sympathetic context or a completely radically different context.

OC: Great, good. I won't ask you to elaborate anymore.

AF: It's a good question though. It is really varied. I don't know, when I say that I feel like I'm kind of using hunter metaphors.

OC: Well, it's hard. The word "capture" is what immediately comes to mind for me as well. I really feel like it is what you're doing.

AF: It's about recording.

OC: Wrenching it out of the context in which it was quite happy.

AF: You're taking a copy, however. You're not breaking up the original.

OC: True.

AF: Maybe it's more of a quoting exercise. I guess it depends on if it's digital capture or not. Were always working off of copies anyways, since you don't have the master. So I guess there's no authenticity here at all.

OC: We're already at the 4th layer of simulacra...

AF: I guess depending how you work with things, you do want to reveal something about a sample too, which is the other thing we've talked about. So I kind of see it as two different practices, if you want to refer to the context in which you found it, either through juxtaposition or using a sympathetic placement of it in your composition, then its indexical relationship to where you got it from is very important, and that does steer compositional intent.

OC: So, it's less "capturing", and more like "opening".

AF: Yes, exactly. But if you're just looking for some, when I'm thinking more in terms of texture and being more abstract and less thematic about things, then I'm a bit more ruthless...."I want that bit because that's perfectly in tune with this other pitch, and now I'm about to mulch them into obliteration....[ha, ha] just like, granulate this thing...

OC: I'm going to squeeze them between a rock and a hard place.

AF: Yeah, pretty much.

OC: Thank you Anna.

AF: Thank you.

JACKIE GALLANT

July 6th, 2005

How would you describe yourself in terms of what you do with sound?

JG: I would describe myself as a musician / sound manipulator.

OC: What's the slash signify then?

JG: Because often when I work as a musician it is just that. Just being a musician. And when I work doing projects at home or projects that aren't associated with a band, it's sound manipulation, although I do also play instruments when I'm creating music. I'll play a guitar or bass, so I'll incorporate being a musician, but I put the slash there because there is definitely a large separation between the two elements.

OC: How would describe being a musician, what does it mean?

JG: Well, I guess the separation is more that as a musician, I work with people, the same people, whereas with the sound manipulation thing I usually work with, well, it's usually myself but I also collaborate with people on specific projects, whereas the band feels like an ongoing thing.

What equipment do you use?

JG: I use instruments because I like to create things with samples and loops, but I also like to play more organic instruments, so I have an electric guitar, an acoustic guitar, a bass guitar, various cheap keyboards that I've picked up. Drum machines...

OC: what kind of drum machines?

JG: there's a yamaha RY20, which is an older one. There's an Electribe, actually the band just started to work with that. I have an Ensoniq ASR 10 keyboard sampler, and an Ensoniq EPS, which is an older model of that. For actual recording, I've got a cassette four track. Also a Williams DS 880 digital multitracker. That's got 8 tracks, but it's got virtual tracks also. For software and computer stuff, I usually will use ProTools with an M-box, but some of the software that I like to use to manipulate source sounds are Peak, and Stark, and MAX MSP a little bit. I use some soft synths like Absynth. I use Rebirth and Reason. I guess the reason I use so many different things is that I've been asked to do so many different things over the years. Independent video stuff has one set of requirements, and then there's dance and something else. I also just do pieces on my own where I've kind of bring all those things together.

OC: The first piece of sampling gear that I bought, the first thing that wasn't a loud instrument like guitar or whatever, was an EPS 16+. It's a little bit advanced over the one you have [henceforth the "+"], but not a keyboard one, a rack mount one which I have to play with a keyboard. That's how I learned about sampling and MIDI and keyboards and a whole world that...

JG: I forgot, one of the biggest pieces of equipment that I use is the K2000. Kurzweil. You can either have it as a keyboard or a rack mount. I have it as a rack mount, and it basically has a hard drive you can put all your samples in and you can call them up relatively easily. It also triggers the octopad that I use with the band. I don't usually use MIDI as a rule, but for this it's kind of like the brain of the operation.

OC: Of your production chain? It's storing the sounds for you, which you're then using other instruments to trigger?

JG: I can also just attach it to a keyboard like that.

OC: So it's kind of like the EPS on steroids?

JG: Exactly, or the ASR 10, right. What I did when I first bought it was I took all the sounds that I had had all over the place, and my loops that I'd created, and the really fun stuff that was all on floppy disks, Zip drives, and I just kind of centralized it in this K2000.

OC: I have the EPS 16+ which I used for quite a while, and I managed to get a little SCSI hard drive thing working with it and a Zip disk. For a while it was floppies. Then a year ago I started using ProTools at school, and I was finding more and more that the basic multitrack functions of the EPS weren't enough. There was all sorts of leak between tracks and it was just impossible, so I started getting into using ProTools in effect as a four track, just to record stuff that I had sequenced on the EPS. And then I found it made more and more sense to do the sequencing directly in Protools.

JG: Exactly. That's exactly what happened to me.

OC: Now the EPS is like gathering dust and I'm all over ProTools.

JG: I've kind of had a reaction now, because I find that when I work with ProTools, and especially if you've got a whack of plug ins, which I did in OS9, but I've just moved over to OSX, and I don't have any plug ins, thank god.

OC: I have hardly any. It stops you from doo-dadding and experimenting.

JG: I kind of thought, ok from now on I'm just going to have a period of time, where I'm going to try and work and do everything outside of the computer, meaning, work with the multitracker more [the Williams DS 880 digital multitracker - see above]. It's a little bit more time consuming, but it forces you to work with your whole brain and it feels a bit more musical, because ultimately you're faced with so many choices and so many options when you're in ProTools or in the computer so I kind of had this moment where I thought "Ok, I'm just going to try to do as much as possible outside of it", and it feels just a bit more creative.

OC: Cool. Interesting. I just acquired a program called EPSM, and it actually only runs on OS9, but what it allows you to do is take aiff files that you have on your computer, and then you can attach an EPS formatted SCSI hard drive to the computer, and then you can control the hard drive from your computer, so you can take all your chopped up files and put them on the EPS drive and have them be all in the right format. You don't have to do any editing on the EPS, you can do all the editing of your sounds in ProTools and then download them to the EPS. So now that I've got that, it's making me excited to get back to the EPS because I won't have to spend so much time with that teeny little interface, tinkering away.

JG: The idea that I had was just to make sure that I got what I wanted during the recording, rather than, "Oh I can always throw on a this or a that in ProTools". I just wanted to make sure that source is what I want, or as close to what I want as possible.

OC: One of the things that Jennifer Morris said, was that in her practice, she uses a lot of digital effects and processing, but she does it all live in effect.

JG: MAX is good for that, MAX MSP

OC: She's not into MAX MSP, she's doing it all with little boxes and plug ins and stuff and mixing it all down and doing it live, and then that mixdown track is something--that's that. So she's doing a lot of effecting, but it's not post-recording.

What kind of sound-sources do you generally work with?

JG: I usually sample little bits from vinyl, or I'll take something that I've created with a guitar or bass or just a sound that I've created in the past. I'll take a section of it and manipulate it to another level, another stage, and often I find that my favorite little sound sources that I turn into loops end up mutating over the years. They're used somehow in almost every project I've done, but they're totally unrecognizable. So I've got a lot of old favorites.

OC: Stored on your K3000?

JG: A lot of them I still use a floppy and the Ensoniq because the Ensoniq was my first real piece of equipment that I used as a sampler, and I just spent so much time with that, and there were so many happy accidents that happened with that machine.

OC: I can totally relate to that. It's funny what happens with that machine. I don't know what it is. If you go online and read about the EPS, people talk about that. They talk about the artifacts of the machine as being an essential component of making music with it. So, from vinyl, and then from your own repertoire, and then...

JG: I haven't done a lot of field recording, that's really not where I get sound sources, although there are some projects where I've done that and I'll take little bits from there. But my own pieces usually have some element of rhythm. It's usually percussive in some way or rhythmic in some way so, it's usually not long ambient loops.

How long are these sources?

JG: Usually pretty short. Because of that there's usually a rhythmic element, so I would...

OC: Like little hits?

JG: I would say, maximum 10 seconds, and 10 seconds is pushing it.

OC: In all the interviews so far, peoples' practices have been so widely divergent from mine, but in my own case it's very similar. It's almost always from records. I sometimes use field recordings, or interview clips or whatever, and then 10 seconds is pushing that. It's probably because we both started with the EPS that you get into that habit of using sounds that are smaller because you don't have a lot of sampling time.

JG: Exactly. Although I bumped up the memory of the ASR 10, but it's still finite.

OC: And the sample quality of course--if you're trying to compromise with extra length, but you get that grittier sound because you've brought the sample up and down [in terms of sample rate].

JG: LoFi

Appendix B: An Introduction to the *Lesbians on Ecstasy*

OC: I'm speaking with Bernadette Houde, one half of the collaborating group [CO-ED] made up of herself and Lynne Trepanier. I wanted to mention that you are currently involved in a project which is a pretty big deal, and Lynne is in that project too, and Jackie Gallant--all part of the "Lesbians on Ecstasy," so if you could just tell me about that project and how, if at all, it's relating to your participation in my thesis project.

BH: Well I'm sure it's relating in the way that it means we're really slow...because it's very busy.

OC: Not a big deal.

BH: Well, it relates on a number of levels, but the project is very time consuming at the moment, although at this exact period and time we're taking a small break. And, it's been a year that it's been a full-time project. I like to refer to it as a project, because I feel like even though it exists as a band ostensibly, it still is to me more of a multimedia or cross-media project. It manifests as a band in public for the most part of the time, but what I'm hoping is going to happen over the next while--we are taking a break from playing shows, which is super-demanding in terms of time--that we're going to explore some other ways that the project can be executed through other means.

OC: For instance?

BH: I think I'm going to make a zine. I already have actually, made a tour zine. What I find is frustrating with the project, a little bit, is that what we've done is created these songs which are weird techno-dance remixes of lesbian anthems, and have put out this album, and everything we've done has been really obtuse. And even our persona on stage--everything has been...it's obtuse, and if you don't get it you don't get it, a little bit. So what I'm kind of interested in exploring next is some kind of other form of communication, like whether it be video or zines or something that can be looking at the same questions, but maybe through a different perspective that has a bit more dialogue with the people who are consuming it. Because I feel like there's no dialogue, I feel right now like we just barf out what we do, and people like it or they don't, and they like it for a whole bunch of weird reasons. Sometimes the right reasons and sometimes it's for reasons I wouldn't have expected.

OC: For instance?

BH: I think the thing that's maybe the weirdest that people really latch onto is a kind of celebration of lesbian culture that I don't know we put into it in the same way that people take it out. I think, especially in the States where the political climate is so repressive, that people often come up to us and say that we're so brave, and that they're so thrilled that we would be so courageous as to be so out and to do this project. And that is something that we did not put in...that is not how I feel about it, and I appreciate and I think it's wonderful people can get that out of it, but I certainly...And anyway I feel like with that interpretation of it, it really doesn't take into consideration the fact that we're actually poking fun on some levels with the lesbian community, and I would say, even, that to different people they would actually see it as a bit insulting.

OC: You're just taking the piss a little bit.

BH: We're taking the piss a little bit...so it's surprising to me when people are like "Oh you guys are so positive..." and I'm just like "No we're not, we're kind of ass holes"...you know what I mean? We're kind of being really mean to some people...

OC: But I guess it's probably more about you being who you are, from what you just articulated anyway, but, you just being comfortable with being who you and taking the piss out of who you feel like taking the piss out of. And other people are inspired by that, especially when you see it on stage, blown up, larger than life. I could imagine it being a big deal. I don't want to interpret too much, but I understand that it could be a little bit...like you wouldn't want to be seen as banner wavers for identity politics.

BH: We need to be able to be irreverent. Because that's what we are, and that's actually what's interesting about it, with certain political movements, and I know more about the lesbian or feminist movements so that's what I can talk about. Sometimes there's a kind of sincerity that is actually, it's difficult to be irreverent, it's difficult to poke fun at itself. We're laughing at ourselves and our community, but we're included in what we're laughing at or poking fun at. If you become too much of a representative of one side of it, then you kind of don't have the opportunity to be dismantling it?

OC: And what about the sound stuff that you were doing? By techno-ing up that sort of stuff was there an underlying transgressive element to what you were doing in the project sonically, as well? Or is it more just a style that you liked or was there a reason to choose the combinations that you did?

BH: I think the reason that we chose the combinations tha...there's a couple of reasons. For one, it's definitely a style of music that I like, that's to begin with. And then, in addition to that, it's like the most unlikely of possibilities. You know, taking the Indigo Girls, and making it into a heavy drum and bass roller, to me is an unlikely choice. It's interesting, but I also feel like one of the aspects of it...to me a downfall in the lesbian community is a bit of a fear of technology, and this relates back to women's relationships with technology in general. Kind of a prioritizing of acoustic music and more related to a kind of organic sensibility, something to do with how that culture is represented. And we've seen in the lesbian community--there's been some rock bands that have succeeded, but in general I feel like there's an underlying fear and distrust of technology, of new technologies. There's not a lot of appreciation for that style, and I think it comes down to more fundamental issues about women's roles in technology, and why there's so much techno and dance/house music made specifically for the gay community, and that's really consumed by that group. There are definitely women that participate in that kind of aspect of gay life, like Clubland, and stuff, but that has never been replicated for women. I'm always like, you know, what's going on? Why are we so afraid of existing in 2005--in the time that we're in? I just don't think that there is anything more inherently kind of genuine about music expressed through acoustic guitar than music made with "Reason"--I don't make that connection. I see it as a stylistic difference, but I don't see that there's any kind of...

OC: Because you're using technology in both cases?

BH: No, I think it's just a perception.

OC: Music is music?

BH: Yeah, I think it's just a perception. And, you know, like I say, at the end of the day I like electronic music, so to me it makes sense. It's rare that you find electronic music that is geared toward women or oriented in that direction, or even for lesbians, even say for women. To me that's really at the heart of the project--is kind of like: "Why not?"--why not lesbians on ecstasy, right? Why not? But like I say, I don't know how much people pick up on that aspect of it, but maybe they do more than I think. Because we've had reactions...like this woman that we met in Cologne, where we played in Germany. She's a dj, lesbian, she plays in all sorts of different scenes. And she was like: "I've been waiting for this. This is the thing I've been waiting for. Like, why don't women?..." You know--and that's definitely a common reaction. "I've been waiting for something like this. Why hasn't anyone done this yet?"

How long are the pieces that you make from them?

JG: When I've worked with dance performances, it's how long the particular part of the performance is, fifteen minutes or whatever. I find when I do my own, when it's just for myself, and I'm not collaborating with anyone and I'm just playing or researching, or having an idea and going through with it, it's usually about 3-5 minutes. Little pieces like that. I come across things that I've done over the last little while, and I really like that they can be developed into something longer. Usually it's about 5 minutes.

OC: Would you hazard a guess as to why?

JG: Well, it might be because when I do things on my own, there's a certain point where I become, kind of, to me the exciting part is the finding something, and getting the sound pallet. There have been times when I've taken what I've done for sound pieces and I've actually done a live performance with it. I like to take the idea that I have, that 3-5 minutes that I've recorded, and take certain basic element of that and maybe make it longer, and then play over it--percussion. Usually percussion, or sometimes what I've done also is I've played a songscape that I've created that's pretty rhythmic and then to play off it on the keyboard, but with rhythmic loops. So, even though the initial pieces are 3-5 minutes long lets say, I like to create a backdrop that I can do something live to and then record that.

OC: I've been thinking lately about these kinds [illegible] something [illegible] with Pro Tools, there's a tendency to go straight [illegible] editing [illegible] the racing and dicing, and end up [illegible] sound happening. If I create a piece, and I get to the three [illegible] loops and [illegible] finding the last part [illegible] as I can also the narrative of that piece, because [illegible] finish which is going to get things together and [illegible] well you [illegible] I'm hearing the same loop for 10 [illegible] about the audience getting bored, or my own [illegible]

JG: I wonder if that's just a natural play [illegible] time for such a piece.

OC: I find the way that I'm discovering [illegible] with something [illegible] even [illegible] playing over top of it. I've been going back to [illegible] synths and stuff and playing keyboard [illegible] just makes a whole lot of other things possible. [illegible] pop music and why pop music is the way [illegible] music on a melody line or a lead guitar or something [illegible]

JG: That's why it's also good when you cut that [illegible] to record that. It's the [illegible] breaking and that [illegible] used, yeah, you can really tell when something is happening, [illegible]

OC: And then the needs of the live playing mean that you need more foundation so you can go back to pieces, bring them together, mix them together, and create more foundations for your inspiration. For me that's been very successful of late. I'm really big into making pieces that are a little bit longer, but like you, 3-5 minutes is usually where I end up.

How did you come to make music in this way?

JG: I've been a musician ever since I was a [illegible] as far as making music I know, making songs [illegible] was kind of an accident. I think about two years ago, [illegible] dancer, was doing a dance piece with which [illegible] particular [illegible] of music, but it had a vocalist [illegible] vocals in it. I had no idea at the time how to do it [illegible] this [illegible] and I rented the ASR-10 for a week and [illegible] on a different key, and then I just played each part of [illegible] part of the song where it was going to have the vocals. [illegible] discovering that this was possible, I thought "Holy [illegible] this machine!" And I was getting up at 8 in the morning [illegible] until 11 at night. My head just couldn't believe [illegible] world of sampling, and resampling...

OC: And seamless edits

JG: And making seemingly unrelated sounds, sounds that you wouldn't associate. Play things, for example, the sound of [illegible] for a snare in a traditional pop song structure. My head just [illegible] that's when I sort of really

OC: Really makes you feel like wow, I've got to keep pursuing this. In my case, it was my partner, also Sara, who knew that I was interested in making music in a different way. She started buying records for me, new records. Square Pusher and Coldcut were the first groups that I had on vinyl, and I took a real pride in having those vinyls and listening to them. I knew the music was constructed with a sampler, to some degree, but I didn't really know how, so I got a record player and started collecting new records to listen to this DJ music and try to figure out what they were doing, and then, instead of getting into mixing, because I could only afford one record player, I started getting more into scratching. That's manipulating the sounds on the vinyl, and then as soon as I could afford it I bought a sampler. I understood there was something there with the turntable and the sampler that would let me make stuff. I didn't quite know how I was going to do it, but I needed a sampler, I was told. And then, after I owned this thing, I spent the first week reading the manual, because that's how I usually approach these things

JG: Me too

OC: That just utterly confused me, because it described something that was entirely not about music. I thought this thing was going to help me make music. All the distinctions between equalization and qualitization and sequencing versus sampling etc., took me a good year to get my head around and to start being able to produce tracks that were more than just noises. It was an amazing process and very all consuming. It's really cool to hear about somebody else having gone through a similar trajectory.

How would you distinguish performing live from working in the studio, if at all?

JG: Because I perform live mostly, with a band, that is mostly prepared and [contains] very little spontaneity.

OC: In the band?

JG: When you're on tour, for example, your playing 19 shows in 22 days, you kind of get into a, you know, you're not really creating anything new at that point, so it's more of a being in the moment, and reacting to things, but just knowing your instrument, and knowing what you have to do. When I perform live to my own backing...I don't think I've really found a situation where I'm quite comfortable with doing that yet. (277)

OC: Is that as a solo artist, per se?

JG: Yes. I've done it a few times. I've done different things. Noises in the dark and things like that. Each time it's been a little bit different but my tendency is to over prepare the backing track, so that what I'm left to do isn't so challenging.

OC: Right, it's just starting sequences in time?

JG: It's playing--playing the loops or playing percussion instruments.

OC: But the complex stuff happens before you reach the live venue?

JG: I don't have enough faith to just let it go and [think]..."oh yeah, it's something magical"! I also feel that in those situations, that it's not a band, and it's more yourself doing stuff that people attach 294 a certain weight to, and it feels like more of a serious thing, which I'm not really comfortable with.

OC: More like an electro acoustic concert?

JG: Yes. Because I do things that are very much based in rhythm, it's quite a bit different. I don't really have a place where it's ambient.

OC: So you can't just scratch your goatee and contemplate the fire and the meaning of it all. It's kind of hitting you in a different place?

JG: Well, because I've tried to just play, as on an instrument. Although it's looped on a keyboard, I'm still playing along. That's how I see it and that's how I try and do it.

OC: And to distinguish that from using a computer?

JG: Like working at home? With working at home you have the luxury of any avenue you want at any given time. Unless I'm working for someone, but even then I find that all the projects I've worked with I've had a lot leeway and freedom.

OC: You're kind of articulating the opposite of what one would assume, which is that live is more about freeform improvisation, and in the studio it's more about precision. It's great to hear.

JG: I guess it depends. I mean, if there's a deadline, hahaha...

How does your source material affect your work, if at all?

JG: My first reaction when reading that question was, well, my source material is my work.

OC: Great!

JG: Because that's the source of it. I was going to ask you if there was something I wasn't getting about that question.

OC: That's a perfectly reasonable response: your source material is your work. Could you elaborate on that a little bit?

JG: The source material is basically the ingredients that you use to make whatever it is that you're making, so I can't really, the word "affect"...

OC: That's a great response. I'm realizing that this question more than any other exposes my own anticipations about what "sampling" means. In relationship to question three, 'what sounds do you work with', you said vinyl samples for instance, and other things.

JG: Right, or reinterpretation of, or remanipulation of.

OC: of other loops and stuff that you already have on hand...The question is: how does what you start with effect what you finish with, in your interpretation? You might say "There is no me in there--I'm taking sounds that are still there at the end of the day, so I don't really get what you're saying." But others, if you read the academic literature that's out there that I'm engaging with, there is a real tendency to suggest that sampling is about subjective control over sampling.

JG: I see. Ok.

OC: You take a bunch of samples and then you kind of have your way with them and at the end of the day, what you've created is yours, and it's beholden to these samples a little bit, but fundamentally, you took them and made them into something new.

JG: exactly

OC: You're the one that's in the driver's seat. One of the things that in my thesis I'm trying to challenge... one of my academic ambitions is to challenge this naïve way of understanding how people work this out. For me it's much more about processes of exploration within the studio that are not driven only by my ideas, in fact, a lot of times it's about my reaction to sounds, taking me up into various areas of exploration with my ear, with the sounds continuing to affect that exploration. At the end of the process, what I've actually created is a combination of me and the sounds. I don't want to influence what you might say, but that's where this question came from.

JG: Well I guess what's interesting about you're saying is that it's a combination of you mixed in with the source material. Interestingly enough, a lot of the samples that I started with were sounds that I really liked from records that I really liked, and the records that I really liked were what defined my musical taste when I was an adolescent and the spirit of punk rock at the time. I don't know that my samples are all from that period, but they come from my taste in music, and what I end up creating, I think, tends to have the energy associate with some of the styles of music that I sample from. Not because the samples are in some way recognizable, but more the energy and the spirit and the aesthetic in a very general way of my taste in music comes through in the end product. More just a level of energy, like a subtle kind of mindset about what the attitude about the music should be, or song.

OC: Well that's brilliant.

JG: But I wouldn't have thought of that based on that question.

OC: This question has provided some of the most fascinating answers, so it's good that I've had to elaborate on it because it's drawn us into some interesting realms. Jen [Morris] said (by email) 'the source material is everything. It's completely definitive of what my final product is and yet I often transform the source material completely and utterly, so it's totally unrecognizable by the end.' There's a strange, not paradox, but tension between her saying that the source material did everything and yet, 'I changed the source material like crazy'. And yet, in her answer it was totally obvious what she was getting at. If you read the academic literature, [there's a tendancy] to try to efface that kind of tension because it's really complicated to talk about. For instance, a lot of people write about techno and they focus on technology as a tool to allow us to create hammering mechanical beats that never stop--however you want to describe techno--and somehow that's what techno is. It's about mostly guys taking sounds and turning them, churning, squeezing them, forcing them into this new post modern kind of framework or structure, and it's about the subject and what the subject does.

JG: That's a relatively limited view of techno I would say.

OC: That's what academics think about it. I don't want to be facetious, I know there are people out there who are much more subtle, but it's probably in the way that sampling has been taken up. Something else I've been noticing lately is that sampling...they kind of stopped talking about it after the 90s. They just decided that sampling was something that hip hop used, obviously, and techno also and dance music, but in ways a little less obvious. [So sampling becomes simply] what DJs and stuff do, and now, oh, it's all about fashion anyway, so who cares about sampling. What I'm trying to show in this thesis is that no, sampling didn't just go away, and in fact, digital recording and ProTools. etc., are as much about sampling as they are about older methods of multitracking. And one needs to understand ProTools as a sampling software as much as a multitracking software in order to have a robust notion about what people are doing with this software.

JG: And not just sampling, but resampling,

OC: Yes, exactly

JG: Total mutation.

Describe the process of choosing your submission to the "Selected Sounds" project.

JG: It's funny that we touched on this before. The difference between manipulating in the studio and performing live.... What I decided to do was to take parts of the sound samplings and create loops and samples of varying lengths, and then sample them into the Electribe, and then programming them via MIDI to the Octopad which I play. It's almost like a full drum kit. It's got a bass drum pedal. It's got eight pads. It's basically taking all of the sounds that I've created and loops that I've created and programming them into various pads, which is the real work, nitty-gritty stuff. That stuff that I'm well on my way to doing, so that's almost done. The next step--I need to find a window of opportunity to record performances where I play these sounds. The difficult thing is to narrow it down into different performances. I just need one day to set up recording to the Mbox and just to play, and then pick the best performance. It's basically that I'm going to play the sounds.

OC: Well now you've already got your plan laid out, I can tell you what I did, because my track is pretty much finished, never finished, but pretty much finished. I built a beat, a foundation in my original style in ProTools, and then I was like, this is beautiful, I really like the beat, but in two minutes, people are going to get bored sick, what am I going to do? So what I did, I took the radio static sample that Anna [Friz] submitted, and I loaded it into a really old sampler I have, a Yamaha SU10. It's a portable one for live playing, but the one thing it's got on it that's really cool besides the pads to trigger the samples, it's got a little ribbon on there, so you can load the sound and scratch it. Meaning you can just "wiki wiki wukka". So I had some performative thing that I could do, so I used that a little bit, and then I took a sound, the "vooouuuu" sound that Richard [Willliams] gave us, and I turned that into a keyboard sound so I could play little keyboard lines and find performative elements. Once I did that the piece just, you know, bang bang bang.

JG: It's interesting, when I first thought about it and approached it, I was going about it in the same usual way, where I started manipulating the sounds and going into ProTools, and then I went, wait a minute, I don't want to do any post production as it were, you know what I mean? I couldn't imagine myself, you know, what I've been talking about before in terms of trying to prepare the choir. So then I thought "Ok, there's got to be a way that I can capture a performance and then not have to manipulate it to much." The thing that I really wanted to do was to make sure it was a performance. What I discovered is it has to be a balance of percussive sounds and sounds that are longer, so that I can pick one of the pads once and it goes for a certain amount of time.

OC: I can't wait to see that.

JG: It involves a little bit of practicing too, you know.

OC: It's almost like you used to hear about John Cage preparing pianos--retuning it and then attaching a bunch of shit to the strings, and turning it into something entirely different, but it had to be prepared just so, for them to have it all right for when the performance came.

Briefly, what is "sampling", in your opinion?

JG: WHOA! Hahaha. And briefly? I like that at the beginning. Briefly what is sampling? Ummmm. Well, I guess just the word sample means, what is sampling? It's... It's... re...recording, it's... wow. Just give me a moment. What is sampling? It's rerecording an existing sound source. That's a very dry definition of it. Ummm... I don't know. How...

OC: That's great as a one-word answer because it leaves a lot of possibilities open.

JG: The way that I use sampling, and the way that other people have used sampling...sampling in and of itself is just recycling, reusing an existing sound, but I think what's happened with sampling is that it's really been sort of a gateway to a whole new genre of sound creation.

OC: I would tend to agree. As also I was saying before, you could say, "Oh sampling, that's what hip hop uses to make the beats to their rap tracks, or that's what jazz musicians do".

JG: It's funny because I very rarely associate sampling with hip hop.

OC: For me, that's all I hear about in school. They think I'm doing a Ph.D. in hip-hop, most people, when I say sampling.

JG: I guess that's the pure form of sampling, where you just take something and you stick it somewhere else and you don't change it really. The way I've always thought of sampling is taking something and making it unrecognizable and putting it somewhere else. Although I guess the pure definition in a lot of ways is just taking something and putting it somewhere else.

OC: Well, it's even inconsistent. If you talk to people like musicians, hip-hop musicians or producers, what they say about sampling is always way more subtle and multifaceted than what you read in a newspaper article or a journal article or academic journal article or whatever. What they talk about are things like, you know, sampling in hip-hop is about paying homage to the music that we love. It's also about using the music that you grew up listening to, probably going into your parents' record collections knowing that most people who are in the community who are going to love your music have also grown up listening to the same music [as you]. Nevertheless, you can't just take, you know, a Parliament Funkadelic bass line and use it anymore. Maybe MC Hammer or whoever can get away with that. But now, if you are any good, you have to keep it recognizable, and flip it and make it so addictive that people obviously know that you've put your own creativity into it.

JG: Exactly

OC: A lot of that is left out of the discussion.

JG: Just to be a little bit cynical, there's also the notion that the reason some people take recognizable things is that "Well, people bought that thing then..." and there's a commercial or suspect motivation for it.

OC: You've got all sorts of modern examples of sampling which come to everyone's minds. Like Puff Daddy sampling the Police or whatever. And it's barely sampling, it's almost like cover versioning. It's money making. It's... but that's just one of the wonderful things that sampling can be. It can also be recording yourself in the bathroom in the morning and then throwing that onto something.

JG: Exactly. It's funny, because like I said, I don't really associate sampling with hip-hop.

OC: Well I don't mean to go on, but in the literature it's almost exclusively associated with that and techno--whatever that means when people say techno. So, the reason that I've been asking this question of everybody, well there's a variety of reasons. It's to try and develop an articulation of all of our opinions which shows their multifacetedness, and also because I realized coming in and before starting these interviews that I was beholden to a notion of sampling which was coming out of what I was reading, which was coming out of hip-hop. I kind of assumed that we'd all be on the same page in a way. That we'd all kind of know what sampling means, and we do, but I'm recognizing in asking people this question that everyone's got a very different take on it, which is great. It's wonderful. So I ask this question to give people a chance to contradict my own opinions.

JG: Well it's interesting. As you were saying that, I was thinking about, now if you are involved in sampling or if you just work with a lot of things, there are certain samples and loops and stuff that we've all heard, that everybody uses. So it's almost like there's a language of appropriation that's creating its own vocabulary. One where you go, "Oh yeah, that loop, and oh yeah that." So the challenge then, if you want to be doing something that's not like that, the challenge is to create things that are not the stock bank. I mean, the reason why these things become so popular is that they're great loops.

OC: You've got to push that, if you're going to use the Amen break again to make it sound jungle, you've got to hack and slash and manipulate it, or everyone's going to think that you're just like the next guy, but if go find a break that hasn't been used before, as difficult as that might be, or make your own...

JG: Or record yourself playing drums, which is a way too.

OC: You're taking it to the next level. It's interesting. Even in hip-hop once again, a very common thing to have are these things called battle records, for DJs. You buy a battle record, and somebody's gone and taken all the breaks and and all the "wow!"s and the "hey!"s and "dynamite!" and whatever, and just laid them down for you so you've got hundreds of sounds [to scratch with]. But all the battle records reproduced the same sounds, and certain sounds on those battle records have become known for their manipulability from the point of view of DJ-ing, to the point where you know the sample "aaawwww, fresh" that combo, most battle DJs, that's all they use now because they want to show that they can take the same sounds as everybody else and blow you away with their skill. You have that kind of variance as well that happens. That's the battle DJs, but then you have people like Kid Koala or whomever who never use those sounds because what they're about is making music that you've never heard before

JG: Exactly. Exactly

ALEX MOSKOS

November 16th, 2004

How would you describe yourself in terms of what you do with sound?

AM: I think if you had asked me that question 4 or 5 years ago, I would have given you a much more specific term. But, I think that recently I've fallen back on more traditionally terms, and I think I'd just say that I'm a musician, now. Whereas before I would say that, I don't know, that I'm a sound manipulator, or some more trendy term. But I think more in terms of music now, and I think that's probably because my definition of what music is has broadened. It's really tough...

OC: It was tough for Anna too, and I would find it tough to answer myself, in a way.

AM: I think "sound artist" is a good one, but I think that no matter what I'm doing I'm bringing a musical background. Even in something really remotely apart from music, like straight up field recordings or talking about acoustic ecology. When I participate in any of that kind of thing, I still always approach it as a musician. So I would still use that term.

OC: Excellent. That's interesting. What did Anna say?...She said "radio artist".

AM: I'd be upset if she said anything different....

OC: Right, exactly.

What equipment do you use?

I'll just talk about it in the context of this project. But, it's changing. Originally, I would be using a sampler, a four-track cassette recorder, an oldish Technics turntable from the 70s, a synthesizer and some guitar pedals, that's about it.

OC: Now, when you say "originally"...

AM: Well, things have changed.

OC: How long ago was that?

AM: That was up until about a month ago. I had a pretty unfortunate accident. I had my sampler stolen.

OC: Ah shit. What kind of sampler was it?

AM: It was a...it's called a KORG S1, sort of like a little square. I don't know if you've seen those. It had a fairly big sampling capacity. You can put samples in and trigger them with a series of pads, and then it also has that kind of sequencing with the 16....

OC: Oh, like a drum machine sequencer?

AM: Yes. You can make "slice" samples, where it cuts the sample up, so that you can trigger individual portions of the sample, as well as having 8 buttons that you can assign 8 diffferent samples to. I was using that in one band, in "Goa", I was actually using that as almost like a....i was just triggering samples. But I can also sequence on it. I was building up layers.

OC: You would sequence and then layer on the 4-track?

AM: Yeah, but you know with that thing I could sample a drum break and sample something else and have that over top...you know up to about 3 or four different...

OC: Right, okay...but then it got stolen.

AM: It got stolen.

OC: Where, at a gig?

AM: No, from my house. It's a long story, a long, tragic story. And a bunch of stuff that I was working on was in there, a bunch of sounds that I'd been using for years with "Goa" were gone so...so I don't exactly know what I'm going...I mean, I still have the Cd of all the stuff I need for this project[Selected Sounds], so that really doesn't matter, I'll figure out something else.

OC: That's pretty lo-fi, even in terms of the sampler that you used. Do you know what date it's from.

AM: It's a recent...you know, it's probably 4 or 5 years old. It's very recent.

OC: It sounds pretty...focused. Would you say that?

AM: That machine, particularly? Yeah, I'm not sure what it's for. They make...it's part of a series with a synth, sampler, and drum machine...and they all look similar, and have similar interfaces. Judging by the preset sounds that came with it, they intended cheesy things. But I'm not sure it's useful as a live tool.

OC: And, the 4-track, was that a question of economy?

AM: I'd also use a computer, and everything. But I used to be all about the reel to reel tape, and I still really love that. I'm even more obsessed with the sound of bigger sounds being compressed onto smaller pieces of tape. In fact, my favorite thing about the Unireverse, the best thing we've ever discovered...We used to do this just because all we had was a tape deck--running everything through a mixer onto a tape deck. When we started we just assumed it was a temporary thing. And then we moved rehersal space for a while and we were rehersing somewhere else and we had a computer setup, and we could hook it straight up to the computer, which was fine...But then, we were like, "It just doesn't sound quite right...". So we go back to just, you know...and that sounds insane.

OC: All squeezed? How would you characterize the sound?

AM: It's huge. It sounds humungous. I mean, it sounds like...all those signals, I don't know what it is.

OC: You just squeeze it down into what the tape can handle...and it just maxes it out? Like a 2 by 4?

AM: Exactly.

OC: I'm using descriptions which you might not use.

AM: No, that's exactly it. I like that, I like that. The 4-track has a different sound.

OC: What 4-track do you use.

AM: The Tascam 4...it's the one that everyone has, you know the mk-24 something.

OC: And the synth?

AM: Realistic...um, the Radio Shack Moog, as they call it, which is my favorite.

OC: Oh really, it's an analog synth?

AM: Yeah, it's a late 70s...there kind of like the cheapest synth you can get, you can usually find them used for $250-300. Radio Shack made them, so it says Realistic on them instead of Moog, but it sounds like a Moog synthesizer and it's much cheaper. But it's very compact.

OC: Is it kind of like the Mini-Moog, like it's all hard-wired. Or, do you have to patch it?

AM: No, it's all hard-wired.

OC: I don't really know much about synths.

AM: Getting a vintage analog synth with a patch-bay is just out of the question. They are super-expensive. And really hard to use.

OC: I'm reading a book right now called Analog Days, I don't know if you've heard of it, it's written by Trevor Pinch, and it's all about the Moog synthesizer. It's a biography of Robert Moog, in a way, and his synthesizer. And he talks about the Buchla Box. And I guess those systems cost 15000$, or something, back in the day. And they probably, I don't know, they must be ....?

AM: I don't want to know.

OC: Really hard to use?

AM: Well, you know, I mean, no they're not if you know what you're doing. But you have to get to know something about synthesis. There's the Korg MS20, which is a famous one that was used a lot because you could patch stuff through it. A lot of like, classic techno records that have that weird [makes an electronic sound] kind of sound, that's always that sythn--it's that filter. But that's the most affordable one that anyone actually has.

OC: A patch synth?

AM: Yeah.

What kind of sound-sources do you generally work with?

AM: I like a lot of different sounds. I do use samples even when I'm not...

OC: Outside of the context of this project?

AM: ...I always sample off records, pretty much. I like that sound. I've used other sound sources too, field recordings, musical instruments, synth, my voice. In the Unireverse I'm using a small portable reel to reel machine which is a really neat sounding thing.

OC: Do you use a loop or something?

AM: Yeah, or I have tapes. Actually, a lot of them are projects that I worked on when I was in Communications. Slowing down sounds, making these long drawn out [makes a whooshing sound].

OC: Did you ever buy reel to reels from the Salvation Army [on Notre Dame], just see what the hell is up on them?

AM: I never bought one from down there, but I certainly bought one...

OC: Did it pan out? I found crazy stuff, I only did that once or twice. Just old tape...you know, radio recordings, people talking about business and things. And mixes, a lot of home mixes.

How long are these sources?

AM: All over the place...all over the place. Actually, pretty short, pretty short. Very short for drums. I've put in drum breaks, and then isolated different hits. I have sampled full on--4 bars of a musical phrase, or whatever. It depends. I really work with trial and error. I put something in there and I go in and chop it up. Sometimes I have a very specific idea of what I want to do, but...

OC: But if you're sampling from records, which you said you do often, does the length of sample you're taking ever enter into your mind in terms the nature of what you're doing at all?

AM: Usually...usually. It's also a space issue, you know? You've got so much space you can store on [i.e., RAM memory]

OC: Would you feel different sampling a kick drum hit versus sampling a 4 bar phrase of Roberta Flack...or Robert Charlebois?

AM: No, either way there's no problem, there's no problem. All the way, I have no qualms with jacking straight up, no qualms. Someday maybe it'll be an issue if... it's kind of a game. I don't care.

OC: I'm pretty much with you. This admission is extremely common, especially for people who are at this emergent stage, figuring out what they're doing with their art. I was just at a panel on intellectual property law in the context of music. There were some really interesting opinions from the industry there, lawyers, union reps and such. From what I could tell, focus has turned so much to file sharing, that the whole issue about sampling and how long it is and who you're sampling and so on, has taken a bit of a back seat.

AM: No one was ever able to convince me of that, just because I'm the age that I am, and of the generation that I come from. It's almost as though my introduction to pop music was through music that used sampling. Like rap music in the 80s.

OC: When were you born?

AM: [1979]. It's just always been there. Early pop music that I listened to didn't have it. But by the time I was 10 years old it was always like that. It was much later that it became an issue. It wasn't until the 90s. It was like "What are you talking about? It's always been like this. Why would we reverse this? So I've never been convinced of that. Although, I can understand the arguments I know that are out there.

OC: Well, I ask the question "how long are your sources" because that is one of the areas in which there has been quite a lot of effort made in terms of trying: well, what is stealing and what is not stealing in this context--and people have made a big deal out of like how long one's samples are. And then even when we were choosing the sounds for this project, I wanted to set a limit on what the length should be. However, I got a whole variety of responses--where some people said "It should be half a second long" and other people "It should be as long as we want". I realized then that it was more of an issue. I never really thought about how long I was sampling material.

How long are the pieces that you make from them?

AM: That ranges too. Recently, more short. I put together a tape of my own music, recently, and for the first time in a while, I was making pieces that were under 3 minutes, which is really great. I also did one that was 20 mins, which is sort of long. When I got into university--the music I got into at that time--I was obsessed with long, slow developing...

OC: Long explorations?

AM: Long and repetitive too. But, recently going back to, you know, punchier, tighter.

OC: Is that because of working at the radio station [CKUT]? Does it have an affect?

AM: No, no on the radio show a [regular track] will be 20 minutes. No, I think it's my interests, the music I'm listening to...I don't know what it is. I think it's a reaction to years of making long pieces.

OC: Anna also said she generally made long pieces, but with some in between. In my case, I have a hard time pushing 10 minutes. Lately I've been commissioned to do longer things, and that's been good, it's been interesting, because it forces me to [evolve]...But you said something interesting. You said you put out a tape, you mean, like, a tape?

AM: Yeah.

OC: How many copies did you make?

AM: Only 25.

OC: Only 25!

AM: Well, I bought 50 blanks, and 25 were mine, and the other 25 are going to be a unireverse release.

OC: How did you distribute them?

AM: I just sold them. I have a friend that runs a mail order--he manages a cassette label, so I gave a bunch to him which he sold, and sold them to CD Esoteric, and I gave some away. In fact, I still have to make the last 10--only 15 are gone, I've got 10 more to make.

OC: That's cool. I made my own CD not long ago. I churned off 300 of those, but they take on a very different kind of identity. They're more like business cards. And then I hear people saying that they didn't work well in their systems--they feel more disposable.

AM: It's a totally specialty thing, you've got to find the right nerds.

How did you come to make music in this way?

AM: I've been making music for a while now, just listening to music and changing my approach, and figuring out what works. I mean, the 4 track thing--I was living with a guy that had 4 track, for 3 years, 4 years. It was around, so that's why I would use it. And I didn't have very good computer at the time, so that's what I was using. I learned how to use it. Trial and error, figuring out what I felt were my strengths and weaknesses. Trying to develop the weaknesses.

OC: Did you start with any instrument in particular?

AM: The earliest instrument I played was recorder as a kid. I started because we happened to have one. Then I played drums for 2 years in junior high school, which was kind of a failure. I wasn't very good at that. I still kind of wish I played drums. And around 9th grade I bought a guitar, I played guitar really seriously up until recently actually. I don't play as much guitar as I would like to....

OC: I sold my electric guitar to buy my sampler. It was a very foolish thing, but on the other hand I never would have bought the sampler, because I couldn't afford it. I kept my acoustic guitar. Did you get involved with a band in particular that drove you to experiment?

AM: Like a band that I played in, or listened to?

OC: Either one, I was thinking a band that you played in, but...

AM: I played in a band in high school, which I played in even after high school. We put out a record. It was just two friends I was really close with and we were all really into music. We were lucky, we had older brothers and older friends, and it just kind of happened that we were able to really bug out on interesting stuff. It was like a really crazy period of discovery, just really, crazy music. We'd order stuff, we were really lucky to find out about it. That really influenced the music we made then.

OC: Like who?

AM: There's so many. Classic stuff like the Talking Heads, the Velvet Underground, the Stooges...but more experimental stuff too--a band from New Zealand called The Dead Sea--a really crazy noisy band. We really got into Brian Eno and that kind of weird groovy 70s stuff. German electronic music from the 70s too.

OC: Kraftwork?

AM: Kraftwork and [Can and Noi]?, Cluster, all those groups. Yeah, the huge German Electronic...actually, it's only a couple of guys but they kind of put out a huge...But it was getting into Brian Eno and trying to dig out all the records he made, and then finding out--this is also kind of when the internet started to take off as an information source--it kind of coincided with it all, and then finding out "Oh, he made records with these two guys" and going and then finding that record. Then these two guys were in this other band...a spiral. I started collecting records when I was about 14 I think. But I was just always a huge nerdy kid into music. I just got so easily obsessed with it. Because, before that I was totally--at the time, I think I was just 11, I got totally obsessed with rap music. I got a paper route delivering The Ottawa Citizen--I spent all my money on rap tapes. I think the biggest influence on me ever was probably Public Enemy.

OC: Public Enemy had a lot of followers in Ottawa. I have to admit when that came out I thought "Oh, what is this?" Maybe it was the folky tradition in which I had been raised. I took me a long time to come around to that...and some of that stuff I really, really dig it now--but there were other friends in Ottawa who got right into it.

AM: Yeah, it's weird, it's weird how--kid's too, man. I was fucking 11, what did I know about anything. It was not until a lot longer that I was able to listen to Public Enemy and be like, "Okay, I understand what they're talking about." I understood it in a sense, but to me it was more the sonic quality of it, it was just so mind blowing.

How would you distinguish performing live from working in the studio, if at all?

AM: Performing live you have a lot less control over what comes out. Just because of the situation you're in. With the Unireverse I find it really tough. Each club has a different sound guy, usually the sound guy hates being there, hates the band, is not very helpful to anybody. There are all these different factors that you can't control. I think for me getting past that was a big mental leap in saying "sorry, out of my hands...I'm just going to let this ride." Whereas in the studio, obviously you have more control. I also like going into the studio just because I find it fun, and I like the process, I like starting and going through the whole thing.

OC: You mentioned that one of the members of the Unireverse has a home studio where you would often go...

AM: A home studio that he's built over the years. We're lucky because we're not paying. That's it. Other people go to the studio and they hate going in, it's just as stressful as playing live, because it's like: "We're here for 8 hours, we're paying for it...you know...shit ain't happening right, or whatever. So, we're lucky.

How does your source material affect your work, if at all?

AM: I think the source material, textures and the way things sound is really important. That's what I seek out when I'm making music. And as I was saying, it worries me in the Unireverse that the fact that we're using analog synthesizers is kind of like...the music just stands because that's what we're using. I've argued in the band, and sometimes I feel like it's falling on deaf ears, that we should almost just stop promoting it as that, and just let our music stand as it is.

OC: Do you only use analog sythesizers....

AM: In the Unireverse? Yes.

OC: No drums?

AM: No drums. Samplers are the only non-analog devices that we [the Unireverse] have used. But I think we'll get away from that. If it sounds good, it is good. That's the Duke Ellington quote, that's kind of how I feel. It doesn't matter what it is, if it sounds good, it is good. And you can make anything sound good, no matter what. Just the shittiest FM synthesizer, or the shittiest little toy synthesizer, or whatever, whether it's a beat-up, fallen apart guitar, there are ways to make it sound good.

OC: What happens when you do that? Say you take a toy synthesizer or something, and you make it "sound good," in your words. What are you doing to that sound--what's happened to that source?

A; You're manipulating it. Putting it into a tape machine. Maybe cranking the tape machine recording levels to full, and then playing that toy synthesizer so it sounds just totally distorted. That can change the sound a lot. You just have to experiment.

OC: And what's left of what you started with?

AM: What's left?

OC: This is what I'm trying to get at. A lot of the academic takes out there on sampling put the artist or the composer or sample-based producer in the driver's seat.

AM: Really?

OC: They are the ones who make all the selections, and then they mangle everything, and they have their way with it, and then the make this thing, which is brand new, and if there are any derivative references to what the material was before, well that was totally on purpose, etc., etc.

AM: Right.

OC: They analyze the music of sampling through old fashioned lenses where composers were the ones who were the geniuses at the center of the sound idea. They had their pen and paper, and everything came out of their head. And I think it's really hard to talk about electronic music that way, especially when discussing samplers and I wonder what other people in the project think about that. This is why I'm asking how your source material affects your work. What happens when you turn the volume up, you know, what's left I guess is the question?

AM: Well, I'm confused. What's left of the original?

OC: Yes. Why choose this thing at all? Is it because you have it in front of you, or because you have chosen to limit yourself only to...

AM: Because you can't get that sound any other way, I don't think. The sound of that toy synthesizer blasted through a cassette deck that's been cranked up, the recording volume...might sound different than something else. I mean, the way I see it, I'm very picky...if that's what it takes to get it to sound right, then that's what needs to be done.

OC: So you start with something because it intrigues you and then you try to take it somewhere?

AM: Or I'm looking around for this kind of sound and I have to go out and figure out how to get it. But it's both, it just depends...it depends....damn, it's hard to say.

OC: Think about it, and we'll come back to it another day. You know, I feel like we can't just say that we're making all the decisions, because we're starting with material that strikes us as interesting, and then you do a lot to it, and that's where the artistry comes in, that's where your own musicianship comes in, but then, the question is...."Why did you start with that in the first place?". But your answer was perfectly fine...

AM: That's a really tough one.

Describe the process of choosing your submission to the "Selected Sounds" project.

AM: Well I wanted something that was specific to [illegible] that I was in, I basically decided that it was going to come from [illegible] somehow specific to Montreal. I went through [illegible] produced by people in Montreal. I had a number of options [illegible] like the way it sounds, I like the way those drums sound [illegible] it's not a studio thing. It has this slightly [illegible] had if that was a studio album.

OC: It's so loud! [Alex Moskos' submitted sample]

AM: Yeah

OC: It's hard to keep it from not being [too loud] when you mix it in. I've tried to mix it in a variety of different ways...

AM: Yeah, good sounds, those drums sound awesome, and that big fuzzy bass, it's amazing.

OC: It's funny, I'll tell you a story about that sound. I had just received the sounds from everybody [in the project], and I went off to British Columbia during the summer and I was staying with a woman who's partner is French Canadian and we were talking about French Canadian music. And I mentioned that I had given [my thesis research group] the task of finding a sound from Montreal, and one of the participants gave me this sample--I think his name was Robert Charlebois, and he was like "Well of course, I mean that's perfect." I didn't know much about Robert Charlebois, being an Anglophone, and he filled me in on a lot. He knew that song...and he told me about that record being like, a really big deal in Quebec. It was kind of like the Quebecois Srgt. Pepper's. So I was working on a track the other day, and I pulled out some Robert Charlebois records that I had in my collection--someone had given them to me, but I had never thought to listen to them, and they were full of funky breaks. I'm learning a lot from this project. Same with Anna, her sound source is really interesting.

Briefly, what is "sampling", in your opinion?

AM: It's basically the...I could give you a fairly technical...

OC: You can give whatever answer you want.

AM: I think it's just digitally reproducing sound. That's all it really is to me. I mean, obviously it's a pretty loaded term too....and I think it's an artistic practice, it's a musical thing, it's an art, it can be done well, it can be done badly....

OC: As you said it's a loaded term, and everyone in the project knows that already, so I feel a bit nasty throwing it at the end, but what I'm interested in at this initial stage is just to get an initial response, a one liner response from people. Because it's fascinating, you know, what people come out with is always varied, but there are definitely similarities in terms of what we're saying about sampling--what I would say, you know what Richard would say. And so it's great just to...even to say "it's digitally reproducing sounds." Is perfect. But thanks a lot Alex, I really appreciate your time...

JENNIFER MORRIS

December 12th, 2004 and January 17th, 2005 - by email

How would you describe yourself in terms of what you do with sound?

JM: Basically I record sounds I like and then modify them. I use these sounds as a base for constructing a soundscape.

What equipment do you use?

JM: The gear I use changes over time. I started by renting sound studios now and again, but with gear becoming less expensive and more accessible to artists, I ended up being able to assemble enough to build my own studio. It pretty much started with a mixer, mics, walkmans and minidisks, and then grew to include analogue samplers, a reglewerk sequencer, and FX. Later on I switched to groove boxes. I'm also drawn to homemade instruments.

OC: Can you tell me a little bit about the sequencer--I'm not familiar with this model. Is it a hardware sequencer?

JM: Yes everything I use is hardware. I've since sold the sequencer, but it was great. It's from a small German company called Doepfer . They design quality gear! Here is a link http://www.doepfer.de/rw_e.htm It is a midi fader box that is also an analog and pattern sequencer.

OC: What FX do you mean--guitar pedals and the like?

JM: It's varied over the years, I normally use reverb guitar pedals, etc. Right now I am using...

-An Alesis airfx. It's gimmicky, but it really comes in handy for a shy person like me while I perform. Since I don't really jump around on stage at least the audience can see that I am controlling the effects of certain sounds with my hands. Since it is controlled by passing my hand over the infrared beam, I have a physical connection with it without actually touching it.
http://www.alesis.com/product.php?id=52

-A Zoom studio 1204 (Rack Mount fx)
http://www.samsontech.com/products/productpage.cfm?prodID=1635

-An Alesis faze (Multi Phaser Effect Unit)
http://www.sweetwater.com/feature/technotes/issue3-modfx/

-An Electro-Harmonix holy grail reverb (guitar pedal)
http://www.ehx.com/ehx2/Default.asp?q=f&f=%2FCatalog%2F09_Reverb_%26_Delay%2F04_Holy_Grail

-A Korg PANDORA PX3
http://www.korg.com/gear/info.asp?a_prod_no=PX3&category_id=6 It has many features, but I never use any factory presets in any of the gear I own, I generally use the PX3 for FX.

OC: What's a groove box--who manufactures it.

JM: The word 'groovebox' comes from Roland, but it has become widely used to describe a "self-contained instrument for the production of live, loop-based electronic music, with a high degree of user control facilitating improvisation" (got that last quote from wikipedia, I couldn't say it better myself!). My 'grooveboxes' are from Korg (Roland) From the electribe series. I believe they are made with the intention to create more danceable music, but I use them because they emulate the analog sound that I love.

OC: By homemade instruments, do you mean homemade electronic instruments?

JM: I have a few circuit bent instruments. I still feel the need to twiddle knobs, but realized that I could do without the cumbersome and expensive gear I was spending my hard earned cash on. The sounds that I use have little to do with gear; it's all about sounds that evoke emotion. 98% of the tracks I make are live.

OC: I don't quite understand this last part...what do you mean by "live".

JM: I play the song live and record it on to a minidisc or a computer. I rarely even save patterns or sequences, I just play them and record it.

What kind of sound-sources do you generally work with?

JM: Right now it's Bass, guitar, koto, and the sounds that I hear inside and outdoors. Even if they are not heard by the human ear, I try to figure out ways to capture them, with a pickup and such.

OC: Could you describe the koto a little more?

JM: It is a traditional stringed instrument from China it looks like a zither (harp). 13 strings on a 6 foot wooden body. It is commonly known as a Japanese instrument because it was brought there so long ago (7th century). There are two sound holes underneath the body.http://www.asahi-net.or.jp/~NP5Y-HRUC/kt-what.htmlI actually left it in Montreal, but I use the sounds I recorded sometimes [*JM currently resides in Europe]. I don't actually know how to play it, I use it to make sounds.

How long are these sources?

JM: From a half second to a half hour.

How long are the pieces that you make from them?

JM: They somehow average out to about 6 minutes in duration. But the pieces I make can also last an hour, it really depends what the feel of the track is and if the flow is right.

How did you come to make music in this way?

JM: I used to record silly sketches when I was a very young child using 2 boom boxes and a mic. They were these strange episodic comedy routines or fake commercials. I think that made me realize that I could record everything I wanted to onto one little tape and give it away. That was very exciting to me and still is now. I can have fun and end up with a small disk or a tiny file that I can send to people. Anyway I guess that's how it started, but sound became much more central to what I do when I would make short films and videos. I wanted to do it all myself from A to Z, so of course I needed to provide my own soundtrack. I fell in love with this process.

How would you distinguish performing live from working in the studio, if at all?

JM: Not at all in terms of technique, but I never bring all of my gear out on the road. This is very limiting at times. One thing that separates my home work from my performances is that I perform live with visuals [illegible] it's more engaging for the audience and [illegible]

OC: Could you describe this technique a little bit [illegible] you use—and what kind of live manipulation [illegible]?

JM: I improvise about [illegible] of the show [illegible] deciding which sounds to play (especially when [illegible]) 303. I load samples in them and then when [illegible] one to play, depending on how I feel at the time [illegible] make sure all or at least most of the sounds work [illegible] the same volume etc. Then of course I have [illegible] monitor, a synth and another [illegible] the mixer where I have one more effect. I spend [illegible] when to add or remove sounds while I manipulate them [illegible]

OC: What do you use to project the visuals? Are they [illegible] work on the visuals and sound together or separately? Do [illegible] [illegible] during performances? If so, how [illegible] doing at the same time with sound?

JM: Depending on the project I am working [illegible] sound being nothing other than a drum track to [illegible] collaborative work between the [illegible] 'Debris' about personal grooming and [illegible] showing the video [illegible]

How does your source material affect your work, if at all?

JM: My work is composed from the source material. It is a very organic process that begins with the selection of a few sounds and usually ends with using none of them and sounding completely different from what I set out to do. That's what I love most, the sources control the work completely.

OC: Can you describe the 'organic' process you mentioned in a little more detail? Maybe an example? I can relate to the idea of the sources controlling the work completely, even though I might start with a few sounds and end up using entirely different stuff by the end. One idea/inspiration based on one sound quickly evolves into a new idea as I work with the sound or try to mix it with others. One makes choices along the way, and these can easily carry you into sonic territory that you weren't expecting.

JM: It is a very natural and intuitive process. I do normally have a theme for every song. Sometimes the theme is as simple as using a single source to compose a track. Other times I am inspired by stories I've heard or personal experiences and I record sounds that will re-enact the scenarios that I visualize in my mind. Sometimes my process is much like filmmaking. I need to do 'reshoots' so to speak. I need to go back and capture the right sound rather than look through my sound bank.

Describe the process of choosing your submission to the "Selected Sounds" project.

JM: It's the sound of the inside of a cab on a rainy day. The cab driver is chewing gum with his mouth wide open. The dispatcher is angry at the slow-witted cab driver who can't understand her. The windshield wipers are roaring from side to side, but only one actually works. It was one of those moments when you are frozen and wet looking for a moment of shelter from the storm and you just walk right into another storm. I had to record it!

Briefly, what is "sampling", in your opinion?

JM: Recording a sound from a source like, interiors, exteriors, electromagnetic currents, then playing them back in a particular sequence to create something entirely new.

RICHARD WILLIAMS

November 16th, 2004

How would you describe yourself in terms of what you do with sound?

RW:I think the only thing that's difficult about that question is saying "I am" this thing. For me, I guess, I consider myself a musician in terms of how I deal with sound. In that these days I find I'm making a lot of music. I'm playing drums a lot. I've sort of returned to what I was doing when I was a bit younger--playing real instruments. And just playing for the pleasure of playing. So, I enjoy it--and not really considering too critically, but more focusing on it, really, in terms of just how it sounds.

OC: As a musician is cool with me.

RW: That's probably it. I don't make music really with any motive.

OC: Play stuff that sounds good.

RW: Trying to make stuff that sounds good. I could go on for a long time about what I think qualifies that.

What equipment do you use?

RW: It's a divided sort of thing for me. Because on one hand, I'm making music more in a traditional rock band in terms of instrumentation. Acoustic drums, electric guitar, me playing, you know, I play acoustic guitar quite a bit, at the moment. My computer was broken and, I just sort of picked it up, and was playing a lot. On that side of things, I've recently been acquiring a basic home studio set up--a Tascam 4 track to cassette machine, some decent microphones, and building up to be able to overdub and record things. In terms of sampling electronic music--on that side of things, my equipment's my home computer with a cheap stocked soundcard.

OC: It's an IBM clone?

RW: It's a Soundblaster 16, or whatever. It's not the stocked soundcard, but it's also not super professional. It's not what I would use if I was designing a home studio based around the computer as a multi-tracking recorder. This is the division. One of them you consider to be using for recording performances, and the other one is for a much more mixed/sampler way of making music, or making sounds.

OC: The computer?

RW: The computer is, yeah.

OC: And the 4-track is more for recording tracks...

RW: Yeah, in a way. But then, that boundary is very blurry. Because multi-tracking is a way of putting...you know--you can still do it all as one person, or with other people.

OC: So there's a home computer, there's a 4-track, and there's a variety of instruments, including the drums and guitar

RW: But with what I'm working on for this project, it's a home computer with a sound card, just software that I'm using.

OC: What software?

RW: Alternating. I'm trying to nail down a sequencer that I'm going to use consistently--either an older version of Cubase, or Ableton Live, which is a new piece of software that I've been learning how to use. And then two pieces of Native Instruments Software--Contact, which is their sampler, and Reactor, which currently I have very little clue of how to use.

OC: Okay. Is that a sequencer, or something? Abit of both?

RW: It's a...music environment. You can design your own instruments, from scratch. So you can build virtual synthesizers, down to the level of oscillators and switches, and routing, and so on. It comes with some free sounds, and pre-loaded things, which are basic sequences. It's really designed, or really oriented at producing an entire environment to your own design...

OC: Can you sample stuff and then have it become the foundation of the sound you make?

RW: Yeah, you can. It has a big manual. And I'm not sure to what degree it's going to play into this [project]. It really depends on how much...

OC: Time you want to put into it?

RW: Exactly.

What kind of sound-sources do you generally work with?

RW: It's really all over the place. I'm kind of a generalist. I'll stick with the computer...just to put some sort of framework on it. In this context, I've been working more with field recording, ...lately. Which partly is due to where I'm living. I don't know if this is another question?

OC: No...bring it on.

RW: In the neighbourhood of St. Henri, it's quiet at night. And it has a lot of really compelling sounds. For example, Charlotte Scott made this wonderful recording just of the freight train going by. And even if it's kind of cliché, at the same time we're at where the trains turn the corner to a yard in St. Henri. The passenger trains are quite silent. But the freight trains--their wheels squeal like nothing else. Sitting just on the back balcony of the house, within the first couple of days when I moved there--I heard this in full stereo, this really broad thing. I was just really moved by it.

OC: Have you gone out to look for sounds like that within the area?

RW: Not really, I don't really have the means to record them. But there's fragments. In terms of other sound sources: a fair amount of sounds produced within the software-synthesizer environment--where you can, you know, set up a single oscillator synthesizer.

OC: Not with sampled sounds?

RW: Exactly. A lot of that is based on resources and economically having to make choices about where I want to spend my music equipment budget. A lot of it's a budget dilemma. Because buying nice sounding cymbals and buying a decent mini-disc recorder aren't really...You make choices.

OC: So you've been buying cymbals and drum equipment and stuff?

RW: Well, no, this is over a fairly long period of time. Buying microphones...

OC: I'm curious about this turn towards...well, re-turn I guess would be more accurate...more instrumentally-based organic music. Are you sampling yourself playing drums, or are you playing full-on drum lines with all the parts and everything?

RW: It's both. Because the [illegible] in which I've [illegible] by what we listen to. I'm [illegible] processed electronic music, and so on. A lot of the time I [illegible] not as though I'm [illegible]. So that's [illegible] towards [illegible] drum [illegible] just for example [illegible] really groovy playing. It's really about just [illegible] someone [illegible] a drum break. [illegible] that is something I do

QC: So will you do the [illegible] drum [illegible] and copy and paste.

RW: No, because I find with [illegible] drums [illegible] a reasonable thing to talk about drums. [illegible] conversation [illegible]. When learning [illegible] lot because there's a lot of good examples. [illegible] that you can [illegible] or this way. Makes for a lot of examples.

QC: So you find [illegible] a lot of different [illegible]?

RW: Rather than [illegible] if I'm trying to [illegible] very rhythmic pattern then I'm thinking, "What would [illegible]" [illegible] play on the drum kit, I might as well just play and [illegible].

QC: Yeah. [illegible] looking for?

RW: Well, [illegible] I think [illegible] studio environment [illegible] just recorded raw sound material [illegible] recording [illegible] there was a [illegible] an instrument according to feel and sound [illegible] with [illegible]

QC: [illegible] trying to engage with the instrument?

RW: [illegible] Literally, that's what it's called, MIDI mapping, run mapping and so on. It's just putting one on the other and then record to 10 bits, typewriter hammering.

How long are these sources?

RW: I won't bother talking about recording live parts and then [remixing them] I do think of it as a separate way of working with sound, very much so.

OC: A separate mode?

RW: I guess you could think about it as spheres overlapping, but with some parts, some of it distinct and classifiable. So the length of sample, for example, the length of the sample I submitted for the project was about 30 seconds, a minute long, and I trimmed it to make it smaller, and then realized that other people [wouldn't], so I was trying to work within a boundary, even though everyone else had ignored it. I guess I follow the rules. The way that I'm working with sounds at the moment within that environment is tending more toward longer sounds, because rather than programming discrete notes, I'm more into that state of letting the sounds out, and letting some qualities come out, maybe shifting them. With this program Live, it's simple...

OC: It's called Live?

RW: Ableton is the company. Originally it was designed for people to perform their electronic music, techno and that kind of thing, live.

OC: I've heard of it.

RW: It works very smoothly in real time, and things like time stretching are very strong on it. It's meant for stretching bits and pieces, it makes the samples very malleable in a very immediate sense....If I want percussion, I make percussion.

OC: Instead of taking a snare here, and a kick drum here, and a hi hat here, and a bass line here, and then repeating them and changing it up or whatever, you're creating breaks, and then you can go in and loop various parts or chop it up.

RW: I do that as well, that makes good grooves, and that's sort of what I actually sit down and do, make rhythmic grooves and feels and so on. I guess I work in a lot of different ways, there's definitely a lot of ways of working with sounds, so you know, there's some stuff, where I will take, you know, the bass drum sound, the snare drum sound, program them here and there. I do it sure. I like that, just letting things run, adjusting them a little bit here and there and trying to establish a feel. When I said before that I don't do that, it's more of a manifesto style: this is my mode.

OC: I've been thinking about limitation a lot. I still have a tendency to stay away from synthesizers and drum machines, and I'm always going back to the samplers, and yet it's always so wide open, you can sample anything, so where do you start? (223)

RW: Trying to find various ways to limit myself is a point of creative expression Because my background isn't very musical, I don't really find it very musical, you know, musically, anyone can debate music, sound, art. I don't find it musically very satisfying pouring over the placement of this and that note and adding layers and layers of detail. And there's certainly a certain point, I just said ok, [I've achieved a]... level of overexposure to really DSP (digital signal processing) heavy stuff where it's complicated, never repeated, layered and layered and there's so much going on, but musically, not very telling. Because of the lack of a physical manipulation aside from the small mechanical motion of your fingers on the mouse, the MIDI controller and so on, it's almost like compensation, because it's so easy to make a note, to really focus so much on the little details, whereas opposed to, you know, because there's nothing to prevent you from so many combinations at this velocity...

OC: It puts almost a handicap on somebody, because the tendency nowadays if you're making sample based or loop based or electronically created, unless you add that level of complexity to it, the kind of pain staking precision for each note placement, you haven't done what Aphex Twin did.. [then...]

RW: I think it's telling, and this is very general, that a lot of [...] electronica, like techno, there's a lot of very minimal music and it's produced at a much higher sound quality, and sounds like with the signal paths much more consideration is being put into the individual sounds. And it may be the lack of manipulation of sounds, it's like degradation of the digital field, resampling too many times. Anyway, the length of the sounds I use tends to be increasing...

How long are the pieces that you make from them?

RW: About ten minutes. It's a good concise sort of range.

OC: Ten minutes. I wouldn't have thought...

RW: It seems to have gone back to that. It's not a rule or anything, part of it is the attention span. About that much time. Beyond that the piece becomes really structured. It's sort of like the length of a long song. I do a radio show, and I've noticed that a lot of the stuff that I play, if you go for the more abstract stuff, it weighs in around 8-12 minutes. I don't know why.

OC: That's curious.

RW: For one thing, the most you can put on one side of an LP if you're pressing vinyl is 17 minutes of you want it to sound decent. It's the same reason pop songs are three minutes. You can put about 5 minutes on a 45 [rpm] before the sound degrades. You can make a 74 minute piece on a CD and it's going to sound fine.

OC: You come in around the middle so far. I'm shorter. I'm 3 minutes.

RW: If it's something programmed on the computer that is more within a pop music vein, 3-5 minutes. Something that I'm playing live, like acoustic instruments, I'll play for 20 minutes on the same groove, make all sorts of wooshing noises on top of it...

How did you come to make music in this way?

RW: I've been playing music since I was about 12, guitar, highschool band, jazz band, and those things. So I learned some theory, this and that. I was very into punk, alternative, pretty varied music I was interested in. I was always into experimental stuff. My brother gave me his Brian Eno records when I was about 17, because he replaced them with CDs, so there's music which is focusing more on textures, moods, and spaces than pop songs, or within the framework of pop songs. I was around 21, I was alienated, not really as interested in guitar rock, hip hop, started hearing people using samplers or beat box[ing], and kind of got into it from there.

OC: Had you tried some software?

RW: I didn't start making music on computers for quite a while after that, mostly because software is hard to come by. This was before easy internet access to demo versions, limited demo versions of software

OC: Did you start [your sample-based musical pursuits] with Djing then?

RW: It was definitely through Djing. At the same time I was playing drums in rock bands that were trying to experiment.

OC: Was the job at NinjaTune a particularly important moment?

RW: Yes and no. I was already making stuff, sampling, making mix tapes, trying to loop things off turntables, which I kind of realized I just wasn't that good at. I can mix records till the cows come home, but actually building something?...My daily work environment for the past 4 years has opened my, like, we listen to music all the time. It's really open minded. Probably just being involved in the industry has influenced me, just as a listener, which I think I probably would have been anyways, really always wanting to hear something new and increasingly less tainted by commercial constraints. I've melded a lot of different influences in terms of listening, in terms of playing, spending six months being fascinated by a genre, going off on a tangent here, there, trying to amalgamate them in a way. In terms of performance, I took it seriously, thought about what it meant as a musical practice and then struck out. I think the setting of tone in a room, the fact that you can alter or work with a musical landscape or work with music without the physical performance part of it seem like important things, with careful selection and that kind of thing. But considering listening, good DJs listen, just as good musicians listen, and that's a form of improvising, to draw a parallel to music performance. Sometimes you'll see a group performing a live improvised jam, a kind of base session. Or other times someone may be able to sit down and simply play one note drawn out, kind of a reduction of a really technical type of performance.

OC: Proficiency or virtuosity?

RW: Virtuosity. Obviously Djing has the scratch DJ side of things, but in terms of just playing music for people to listen to, dance to, that can actually be taken away from

OC: ...with too much scratching...

How would you distinguish performing live from working in the studio, if at all?

RW: I'm actually trying to make them less distinguished. Part of something that I'm not fond of with working in the studio is focusing in too much on minute processes, or concentrating on small details in the mix. But with my studio practice, I'm really working on trying to get things like a clean signal path. Making things sound good, that's what it comes down to, which is where we started, right? How do you work? Try and make it sound good. What it all comes down to, with the DJ thing, it's not whether the performance is stellar or impressive, it's whether it's subtle. It's subtle painting with a feather and not a fire hose, kind of thing.

OC: I'm right there with you

RW: It's tough because in that environment, it's easy to have that, intensity, that unnecessary intensity.

OC: Intensity is often a substitute for whatever it is about a minimal track that makes you feel like, "Oh they've got something there."

RW: A lot of my mode, with any instrument I'm finding, there's something of a rediscovering. In playing drums for 15 years, but I've stopped for about 6 years. Same thing, I didn't play really any acoustic or electric live instruments for quite a while, but I'm coming back to it. I don't really have the skill of practicing the ideas, and this is still very much related to this studio practice, that is, I find that mode in which I play will be things like punk--not entirely formulaic, or with rhythmic patterns. Polyrhythmic and so on. What I do is I'll be somewhat uncomfortably but through repitition, without too much limitation, [sound] will actually become this naturalized thing. I really learned from layered samples, and loopy, loop based tracks, sample-based stuff and synthesized stuff. (052)

OC: Someone like Madlib, he samples a drum

RW: One part comes first, and another part later on, and the way in which they work together, what makes it groove, and what gives it feel is that the first few repetitions of that play, the first few times through the resolution of it takes a little while to get, to feel, and then once you do, you get sucked into it because you have to pay attention. A lot of it's based on feel, seeing music, as well as knowing what I like, or what feelings I enjoy at live performances.

OC: Live performances?

RW: Yeah. I've watched a lot of concerts.

OC: You go to a lot, it's true. More than the rest of us.

RW: Not that much these days, but I like seeing live music a lot.

OC: You find you learn from that?

RW: It's not really conscious, but it definitely impacts on the way I listen to, what I see and what I hear. It's been an impact heavily, and I really try and let that in, as opposed to letting my technical ability or lack thereof get in the way of the idea I'm actually hoping to get across.

How does your source material affect your work, if at all?

RW: What is my relation to the source?

OC: Whether it's yourself playing drums, or sampling off a record, or a recording you do, what is your relationship to those sound objects?

RW: We've been talking about different types and ways of playing, but I try to have a unified, consistent approach among them fundamentally, even though the practices differ. Really listening, trying to make it sound the way I want it to sound, as opposed to putting the arrangement first, and doing the overall sound [after]? I would rather hear music that I'm not as fond of being played well, and with great consideration taken to what it sounds like. You know, I want musicians, DJs, performers, any of these people, to put themselves, not just on the other side of the stage gallery or computer or the speakers, but in the position of the person at the mixing desk. You just want it to sound so good that you don't even notice the technical side of it. And then you realize, you know, you pick up the guitar, or try to program the EPS and you realize the arrangement is actually fucking hard.

OC: But the source material...if you start from a record or a field recording, do you treat the sound differently? Or from yourself playing drums?

RW: Not really because it's just something I'm starting to learn. It's really difficult on the computer for me, because I do not have a very great soundcard for example, I can't have a very clean signal path, so I can't get a really hot initial sample with which to work very easily. I have a tendency, working in the digital environment, to bury things. To process to the point where the initial sample is barely recognizable, by spatializing it or distortion or whatever. Turning everything up to 10 and hearing it go wrong.

OC: Do you think the digital realm is more conducive to that?

RW: Well it is in that you can hit undo. You're not committing to tape, you're not working with the limitations of saturated tape. There's no way I can economically put together a studio with that kind of multi-effects in an analog environment, and a lot of the time they don't exist anyway.

OC: right right

RW: It's make believe, but it's not, it is real...so that's different for sure.

OC: It depends on the context maybe?

RW: Simply trying to move away from saying, you know, "This single sample which will repeat, I don't really like the way it sounds, but it do like how it sounds when it's soaked in reverb and distortion, and with the effects inserted this way on this route". [I'm looking to make] the initial sound itself really good, or lending itself to something unique and distinct. Part of it is what it sounds like on its own, and another part is how it lends itself to some sort of manipulation. I try and remind myself all the time, drawing a comparison from recording to painting, if you take all of the colours and paint with them at once, you get brown, and you know, that's interesting once, but after that, everything, if you just turn everything up to full on every track it's always going to sound the same.

OC: How do you find the sounds that you use? Do you go to your record collection and think, "I need an organ sound, I'll just take this record, there's probably an organ sound in here". Is is it more like "I need an organ sound, oh I remember that organ sound from over there, I'll try it in here"?

RW: It's definitely more ad hoc than that. I listen to records, put them on. In the case of records especially, I'm sort of moved quite strongly away from just sampling other people's live playing. Not that I don't think it's musically valid, it's just not for me.

OC: So what would you do?

RW: But that doesn't necessarily apply because if there's some interesting artifact or interesting piece of something they did in the studio or with the live playing, that I couldn't replicate or [I] just think is amazing, I may sample that, for example. I'm trying to think of an example.

OC: It's tough sometimes.

RW: [I'll] mix records and listen for that kind of thing. Like the phrase where the song breaks down. It's the sort of thing that you might not actually remember, but if you hear it..."Oh yeah, that thing, which I didn't really notice, but when I did notice, I realized that that's what makes this song". It's almost like getting rid of the song, and using the in between stuff that you don't think of when you actually make the song.

OC: And that's the stuff you like to use?

RW: Yeah, or some phrase the sound quality of which I really like. I don't work on things where I lay down a certain part and then I think "Oh I need a loop, a guitar part." In terms of sampling from records, it's much more about listening to a record and hearing something and thinking, "Oh I could do something neat with that". Record it, and start doing something. A lot of the time not necessarily layering, I've got a lot of just started stuff in there, that sometimes I accumulate and think, "Hey wait, these two things I've already worked on, if I put them together they will sound good. Or using a stock single shot, like a bass, or reusing a bass line with several notes in it because then you can rearrange them to make a new part.

Describe the process of choosing your submission to the "Selected Sounds" project.

RW: It's a close mic recording of my friend Gordon's bass amp. He brought up [to the practice space] this giant bass guitar amp, a 1970s model I think. When you turn it on, there's a big fan in it that goes [makes sound]. Turn it off and it goes [makes reverse sound].

OC: Why did you choose that sound, what brought you too it? I thought it was a piece of industrial machinery.

RW: That's why I liked it. It was that kind of thing, but it was accessible. And again, like I was saying earlier, I don't think if I had moved to St.-Henri at that point--down there it's quiet and you can hear that stuff if you walk around at night, and I probably would have taken a field recording, more literally from the city, had that been the case., But that sound [I chose was nevertheless] associated with that kind of sound, associated with the space of the city. I recognize that in the project locality, and geography figures in to some degree.

OC: You accommodated the limitation.

RW: It's a live recording, and it could be anywhere. I had a friend with this particular thing. But actually that's not necessarily the case because [it pertains to] certain conditions around how people make music in this city and what kind of things they think sound good in the particular musical circles that Gordon [moves through]so on and so forth. I mean, that amp is pretty widely considered to be a wonderful stage amp, pretty much across the whole Montreal area. It's not. It's big and it's loud and you turn it up to 2, and you'll never need to play louder to play over the guitar player, and it sounds great, it sounds beautiful. Very warm. So on the one hand it's very much tied in and also it was recorded at my practice space in this crusty old building in downtown Montreal. Really gross. It's been a rehearsal space for bands in Montreal for at least a decade. It's a space near the Bell Centre that will eventually be shut down I think due to condos filling in the land behind it which was at one point set aside for a baseball field I think. But the quality of the sound, the industrialness, like the fact that it's a machine noise, but somehow warm and welcoming in a way, something about it...

OC: It's a great sound

RW: I think it's very associative to here, and the really low frequency range. I was taking into consideration people working in a few different ways of using it, and when I took it home from there, I realized that you could roll off the frequencies on it anywhere very easily and get clean tone without it sounding filtered or anything.

OC: It's one of the best sounds in the collection. I shouldn't say that. They're all great.

Briefly, what is "sampling", in your opinion?

RW: I could go on and on about it for a long time, again my life is very involved in music, the making, I think about it a lot. As far as the legality question, I really don't give a damn. I could not care less about whether it's legal or not, but there is a certain point...The people who do the [obvious] and make a lot of money off it, off the ideas, aren't sampling discretely at all. And new legislation has been passed that any sample, no matter how discrete, is copyright infringement.

OC: Oh really?

RW: It's very recent. It carries over with publishing. It's ridiculous and I don't care.

OC: So for you sampling is a question of copyright?

RW: In the material sense. I would not say I was working within a sampling realm if I was taking old recordings, but I would refer to them as samples within the program, once I'm handling them.

OC: So you see a difference between sampling and what a sample is?

RW: Because it's been assigned to a certain plan.

OC: A certain style for pop or whatever?

RW: So what is sampling? That's... working with... not over long... pieces of sound, using that as your raw material... prerecorded, whether by you or....Then focusing really heavily on the mix.

BERNADETTE HOUDE

May 26th, 2005

How would you describe yourself in terms of what you do with sound?

BH: I would never describe myself as a musician--is one of the differences between the role I play in the band [Lesbians on Ecstasy] and the other people. Because, they're musicians, they have a background like that. But I'm coming at it from a media perspective. I came to making music from doing other media applications. I was doing video editing and websites and then through that became more interested in sound recording and sound production. I started to work with sound by making karaoke videos. Mia Martin and I have this project called "The Karaoke Lady". We made karaoke videos for unconventional karaoke songs indie bands Slater Kinnie, or heavy metal like Iron Maiden, and stuff like that. As we were working on the karaoke videos, we were using midi files to provide the background or rerecording some elements, and as a duo we became more interested in the songs than we were in the videos. And so that's where "Boyfriend" was born. We transformed this one project and then we thought "Actually, it's more fun to be working on these songs". The videos are fun too, but we were really getting into making music.

OC: Were the videos for people or a company, or were they just for yourself...?

BH: No, no, they were just for fun. They were just for us.

OC: You would be lip-syncing in these?

BH: No, no, like karaoke videos that you would sing along to. You know when you go sing karaoke there's a video with the words...so there's the music which is the bed track, and then...

OC: The video is a little narrative that's supposed to accompany your singing?

BH: Yes. When most of the karaoke videos were coming out of Asia--and it's actually really changed now because they usually just have graphics now--say five or ten years ago, they always had these amazing videos that were completely incongruous with the songs because they were being made by people who weren't necessarily understanding [the words], so there would be a weird...

OC: Car chase, or something.

BH: Car chase, or people at the beach, or eating ice cream, and there's never any words so it was always just these confusing videos, so we made videos like that. They had obscure romantic narratives, and a lot of people standing around looking off into the distance. But the main aspect of it was that we would record these bed tracks and then put the words up so you could sing karaoke.

OC: Then you got more into the music making...

BH: Into the music making. We formed this group called "Boyfriend". And the idea behind Boyfriend was that, for a while when we were living in Vancouver, everytime we were going out to see shows or going out to do stuff, everyone that we would go with would say to us that they were going because their boyfriend was playing tonight, and we decided that we wanted to be the boyfriend. So how I actually feel about working with sound...I feel like I work with it as a medium the same way that I work with video, or even with...do you know what I mean? I feel like my relationship with it is really digital. I try to get out of that some times, but that's the kind of relationship that I feel I have with it.

What equipment do you use?

BH: At home what I started using was Digital Performer. And Protools now, more.

OC: Was Digital Performer--Digital Performer is like Protools, it's audio hardware recording and midi sequencing?

BH: Yep, but it doesn't require an interface. You don't need the equivalent of an M-Box--you can just go direct in--even to use the full version. Part of the reason I started using that is because a friend of Mia's that had helped us with Boyfriend had a good crack of it, and that's what he used. It's been a big part of the Boyfriend project, and then a little bit with the Lesbians on Ecstasy well. I've tried to employ what I would call a sort of punk rock approach to using technology, meaning that I use what I have. In the beginning of the Lesbians on Ecstasy, I played with my Imac on stage, because I didn't have a laptop, so I'm like, "I have an Imac", and with Boyfriend we use a lot of random equipment, we use a lot of one string guitars, and kind of semi-functional keyboards, and pre-amps, and hand held tape recorders. Tools to get sound in and out of the computer.

OC: Is that where you mix it all is in a computer environment. Either Digital Performer or Protools?

BH: Yes, although this is sort of more for my own projects. But with the Lesbians, we did a bit more mixing in a real studio.

OC: But for Selected Sounds which is the title of my thesis, it will all be done on computer?

BH: Yeah. But that's something that I like to use. I think that people kind of underestimate a little bit the tools that they have available to them in terms of technology. I think that there's ways to manipulate simple equipment in conjunction of other pieces of more sophisticated equipment to get interesting sounds and to make things happen and sometimes I think...it's again relating back to a sort of women's role with technology. People perceive needing a high level of gear in order to get started and I think that's kind of bull shit. It really drives me crazy when people don't see that there's ways to just make things happen that are super inexpensive. You know, things like using Imacs as opposed to having fancy Powerbooks. It can really fascillitate just starting up. And maybe when you get to a certain point where you start to have a deeper appreciation or a need for more sophisticated ways of manipulating sounds, okay you might want to take it further. But I don't think that should ever prevent anyone from starting. There's so much easy software out there and free software, and available tools. That's always been my approach. I like to use household items...

What kind of sound-sources do you generally work with?

BH: I'm not like a sample-based artist in the way of...in barely any of my work have I ever used recorded samples.

OC: Like a record or a CD or something like that?

BH: I mean, minorly, with Boyfried a very little bit. In almost all of my projects I tend to sample peoples' written material, and then replay it.

OC: Oh really?! Like written music?

BH: Well, like say the Lesbians album is like...we take a riff and we replay it. We don't actually use their recording of it, we take the notes and then we put them into our composition. And it's the same with Boyfriend with the way that we are working. With Boyfriend with the original material that we recorded we were generating all the sounds ourselves. So, maybe it's sample-based in the way that people understand sampling to mean recorded material--it's like sampling words and lyrics--well it's sampling words, lyrics and written arranged material.

OC: Would you take the "samples" and create your own versions of them as short sound files and then manipulate and edit those sound files further, or would you just incorporate the lyrics and/or riffs into musical tracks that you play? As in someone plays the entire bass line from a Melissa Etheridge song....

BH: It's different for every song. But for the Lesbians, we're a band. So we play live. Veronique plays the bass line beginning to end.

OC: There's no freaking the sample, and flipping it around and making the bass line some kind of wacky variation?

BH: No, I mean we could do that and I think that would be an interesting direction to take the band. But one of the original intentions with the Lesbians band is that we wanted to be a band. Jackie plays the drums. She hits the drums. They're electronic drums--the sounds that we generate are electronic. Veronique plays through a crazy digital effects pedal--you know what I mean? You don't hear it and hear an indie rock band, but what we're doing on stage more closely resembles that than any kind of electronic music set up in a general sense. We use very few sequences.

OC: When you play the laptop, you're not triggering sequences?

BH: It's like different kinds of sample set-ups. Sometimes it's sequences, like we have three songs now where we have some drum patterns that we use that loop.

But we've actually really tried to stay away from that because what we try and achieve on stage is the possibility for absolute failure as much as we can--in that, you know, we like to have the energy and we want to be a band.

OC: Right, gotcha. It's not just about pushing the buttons at the right time and hoping that everything works.

BH: Yeah, but the laptop...the one thing that we've run into in terms of sound...it's hard to get the full drum sound that we're used to hearing in dance music, in terms of the 16th notes happening all the way through etc. That's kind of impossible for Jackie to do and play another beat...There's just some aspects that we've had to fill out with sequencing.

OC: In answer to question number one--How would you describe yourself in terms of what you do with sound?...Some people have been giving titles like: "I'm a radio artist," or "I do this or that..." but you're a multiplicity of things. So in your own practice, then, would you habitually--instead of recording through sampling from a record, would get someone to play something that came from a song that you liked, and then sample it and take that and cut and splice it and change it?

BH: Yeah, I've done that a lot--have people replay things.

OC: And this is a copyright issue for you, as a practice?

BH: No. I think it's more... again, because of the goals of the project I think it is more interesting to work in this way for what we want to do, because it allows us so much more flexibility.

OC: For the Lesbians on Ecstasy

BH: Yes. And then in other projects I think, again--it's sort of like what I was saying before about what the band is. To me, it's my sense of humour, I find it's funnier. I think it's more interesting to take things, to take something that's familiar and then drastically pull it out of context and then replay it with the wrong instrumentation. To me, that kind of distorting of context, but yet maintaining the familiarity or maintaining the integrity...

OC: It's a very different way of interpreting "sampling"--one that I haven't really encountered yet. One does hear of the odd rap artist who borrows lyrics and lines from other famous rappers. And that makes me think of other ways of sampling. But this is a different way of thinking about the idea of sampling in the first place. There's a tendency to think of sampling as like what we did in this project. You know, people taking short snippets of previously recorded material. Sometimes people blow that open and they say "Okay, well instead of taking stuff that's copyrighted, well, I'll get someone to play a sample, but it's just like the James Brown "Funky Drummer" beat, I just don't want to have to pay for." And I' sample it, I'll loop it and cut it and do what I would normally do, but the original source file was something else. That's another variation on "sampling". But you're talking about something very different, which is a combination of all those things, if you don't mind...it's like sampling is more about incorporating your influences, but in a variety of ways.

BH: Yeah

OC: Sometimes through rock and roll or band-like mechanisms that don't involve cutting and pasting and looping and that kind of thing. But other times you would be drawn to previously recorded material, or getting people to playing stuff in a style that is reminiscent of disco, or whatever...

BH: Yeah. I mean, the copyright issue...I don't even know if having someone replay something actually gets around the copyright issue.

OC: Yeah, it didn't for MC Hammer, for instance. He said originally: "No, I just, somebody played that--I don't know what you're talking about--I don't know any Rick James bass line, no, it's just...who's this Rick James guy? I don't know who he is". And then later on some said: "No, no, it's identical...it must be a sample from the record." I guess they settled out of court. But you do hear about people....I remember Portishead did that on their second album. Now they weren't necessarily sampling, playing back riffs, they were playing their own instruments in their own style, and sampling themselves, in order to basically to get the kind of "sampled" sound...

BH: But I mean, it's a different type of license. Like, talking about hip hop artists and stuff, it's called an interpolation license, which is technically the kind of licensing which we should have for our album, which we don't.

OC: Interpolation meaning like...

BH: Say what Missy [Eliot] did with whatever that song it is with the "push it" part...she probably got an interpolation license, because you're taking it, you're using the melody line, but you're resinging it and you're incorporating it in a new composition.

OC: Oh, like, Sting and Puff Daddy--probably the same kind of deal. They're doing a cover version, in a way, of a song that's quite different...

BH: You're not covering the song...

OC: I've never even heard of that. That must be a fairly recent addition to the copyright legislation?

BH: I think it's the newest...not the newest, but it's like another mechanism.

Because for people like us, or when artists do that, what is the legal situation really like? And, I mean, for us the licensing for our album is impossible. It's insane, it's non-existant. We just paid a lot of the artists, all the major label artists we paid mechanical royalities to do covers. But we're totally not doing covers.

OC: Did you have to even pay that, since you could be filing under, what do they call it....

BH: Fair use.

OC: Not even, yeah, fair use, but it's more specific what I'm thinking of. Parody...

BH: But in Canada that doesn't apply.

OC: Yeah, in Canada it doesn't work. You're right.

BH: I mean, I know, I know.

OC: Does it cost a lot of money to do that?

BH: It doesn't cost...it's like 8 cents per record. To do a cover song on your album you pay 8 cents per copy that you print up, per song. So what we paid, we paid the major label artists--I think we paid 5 cents per, or something like that. I'm not sure. And the reason that we did it, even though it's not legally...it's totally not accurately legal, it's not what we should have done. But, the lawyer for ALIEN8 felt, and we kind of agreed, that it showed some amount of good faith on our part. If it were to ever go anywhere...

OC: Which it's not...

BH: Which it's not, but it was sort of more like, okay, for the 40 cents, or whatever, it would maybe indicate on our part that we had some kind of thought process about it.

OC: Right. It's a difficult question, though.

BH: I mean, I just wanted to say "Fuck it" and release it all under the Creative Commons, but obviously we can't do that...That's like totally not...We'll steal it, and then we'll give it away!

How long are these sources?

OC: Just to contextualize...in this project, everything ended up being quite short, except for Anna's, which was about a minute. It stands out as a minute or a minute and a half, I can't remember. But the rest of us were all at 7-10 seconds. Surprisingly, even though it was fairly open. Is that common or uncommon in what you would normally do?

BH: I think there's two aspects to it. I do take very short, maybe not like 7-10 secs, maybe up to 30 secs, bits. Even with the Lezzies we don't usually take a whole progression or anything, we'll just take a riff and then, even though we're playing it live, we're looping it. But then in terms of lyrics, in some of our songs when we sample people's lyrics we use two words, and other ones we use every word from beginning to end, and then put it over new music. So, that one varies. But musically, generally, I would say that it is rare that we are actually taking anything more than a very small bit and then reworking it--the source material being relatively short.

OC: The question of a loop is another way that this question, these two questions are a bit difficult. Because, you know, if you loop a drum beat, you're using something that's 3 seconds long, but you can turn it into as long as you want it to be. It's infinitely long, and in a way it's reminiscent of the bed drum track to that song that you sampled. So, how long is what you're sampling? But this is really interesting, I hadn't anticipated this new perspective on sampling because I have been thinking about it for a while. Not to say that I've thought of all the angles, but I'm continually surprised at the different ways that people have come to understand what sampling can be, or what it is in their own practice. I assumed that more commonality would occur--but everyone has answered in drastically different ways.

How long are the pieces that you make from them?

BH: I wish they varied more than they did, actually. But, I would say that we, in almost every project I've done, it's so pop oriented at the end of the day: it's between 3-5 minutes. One of them is 2.5 and one might be 6, but generally speaking, probably pop song kind of length. That's for Boyfriend and the Lesbians.

OC: Why would you describe it as pop song length? Because you're not really writing pop songs.

BH: No, not really.

OC: But the length is the same.

BH: It just feels like a length that's an expectation for radio playable music. We didn't go into it with that kind of intention, but that's sort of what's happened.

OC: Are you getting a lot of radio play?

BH: In some places. We did for a while, we got a lot. And that's kind of tapered off, you know.

OC: Well the album's not as brand-spanking new.

BH: Yeah, exactly. But, with Boyfriend we've done more experimentation in that we've definitely made some compositions that are, you know, in the 20 minute range. But I would describe them more as experiments.

OC: I ask that pointed question because I'm in the same situation. I don't make what I consider to be pop music at all. But it always ends up being 3, 4, 5 minutes...and it's a real stretch for me to get it up to 10 and beyond. I have to think of all these elaborate mechanisms. And I know that's not unusual, Andra [McCartney] talks about students having the same problems getting past 3-5 minutes. "Problem" is one way to put it. Maybe there's a variety of reasons why you might adopt that. In my case I think it's a question of the way I put the music together and the attention span that I expect the listener will have for what I'm doing and the loops that I'm creating. But anyway that's more where I'm coming from. But for the same reason it ends up being 3-5 minutes long.

BH: I know, it's weird. For [illegible] I know that [illegible] we're making techno music, it's actually not [illegible] and we play live, it's really hard to [illegible] sometimes [illegible] minutes.

OC: [illegible]

BH: It's not interesting if you do that everyone--the [illegible] everyone--you have to release your expectations of any kind of tip [illegible] say pop songs, they learn it, follow a lot of [illegible] exciting moment at the 75% mark, and there would [illegible] that happens. Secondly the sounds are different but [illegible] appear in the majority of the compositions that [illegible] with [illegible] and there's a lot more experimenting.

OC: Did you guys make a record?

BH: We've made two records worth of material--we've never put it out. But Mia's maybe going to come here this summer and we're going to finish that--just putting it out on CDR.

How did you come to make music in this way?

OC: What drew you to music out of the design--if you want to call it that--work that you were doing? What video or graphic oriented stuff...or was it all part and parcel of the same thing?

BH: Well, it's funny. It is and it isn't. My background is in theatre. I studied that for my undergrad. I'm really interested in performance. And I sometimes think that...okay there's the music aspect of it which is more purist or something. But being in a band is an excellent vehicle for doing shows. People don't go to see theatre. People do go to see bands. It's like you can just trick people into coming to see your play, because they think it's a band. It's true! Peoples' expectations are so much broader. You can get away with whatever you want. And this is what I love about my band. It's just a vehicle for doing whatever you want. We're on this idie label that puts no pressure on us to adhere to any kind of standards. They encourage us to experiment. I love doing shows--and a band is a perfect vehicle for that. I like the music, and I enjoy it. But definitely I feel like the performance aspect is important to me

OC: Once again, different answer...

BH: I know, I imagine a lot of the artists that you're dealing with wouldn't have that answer.

OC: A lot of us are homebodies, you know.

BH: Exactly, it's rarely performed.

How would you distinguish performing live from working in the studio, if at all?

BH: Boyfriend, actually, is a studio-based project. We've only done two shows, we haven't really performed. Largely because she's in Vancouver, and I'm here--and we don't have the time. But the Lesbians--we're a big show. A big show kind of band--intros, outros, costumes--do you know what I mean? Audience manipulation. The music is a vehicle for the show, for sure. We practice our show--we practice our stage antics in the jam space--we work on doing things. And, I mean, because I think that electronic music can be live and exciting. I don't think that it needs to be limited, but I know--even from having a computer on stage. In the beginning we never wanted to have a computer on stage--and then we kind of said "Okay, we can have the Imac..." And then now because we toured so much I bought the laptop...and I actually hate having a laptop because I feel we're so used to seeing people with laptops on stage, and there's all these expectations, and it freaks me out. And I don't want to be associated with that, whereas before when we had the big, blue Imac--people are --"I can't believe they have a big, blue Imac on stage--it's so stupid". And I would rather people respond like that. It's impossible to carry and Imac around all the time, even though we did it for over a year.

OC: So, are you doing things to the laptop to make it less conspicuous?

BH: No--I work with an external keyboard. I don't even look at the laptop--, I know what's on there. I'm facing out with my sampler keyboard, and then I Velcro my laptop keyboard on the side, here. And then my laptop's behind me.

OC: What are you using the laptop for?

BH: I use this program called Mixman--and then all my samples are mapped to letters on my keyboard. And so, I just play it like a keyboard.

OC: You know where the samples are?

BH: Yes.

OC: But you're not playing melodies on the keyboard?

BH: No. I have a keyboard sample. And I play melody on that, and my MicroKorg.

OC: What kind of sounds are you playing on each instrument?

BH: The sampler keyboard tends to be vocal samples.

OC: Okay, actual vocal samples from records...

BH: No, no, it will be Lynne singing backup for herself.

OC: Oh, really! And you just hold the key down, or something.

BH: Yes. Or I have it across a bunch of keys so I can pitch it up and down. I have sirensand then synth sounds I only use my MicroKorg, because it sounds so awesome.

OC: And then on the keyboard, what are you triggering--that's where you're triggering the loops and such?

BH: The loops and such, and also things like stabs and one hits--lazer shots, bells, I don't know, all that kind of stuff that can be manipulated in that way. Little vocals like "yess"--that kind of thing is always on my laptop keyboard. And the program that I use functions like Ableton live, even though it's a dumbed down version of it. And so I can either drop things into a looping sequence in time, or I can just hit them.

OC: Without even looking at it...you can just make that?

BH: Yes, well I just know where it all is now...and I've aligned, you know, I've built certain macros where some things will come together. Or I can--there's just key commands that either say, play it once, play it in time, you know...So you just use those key commands.

OC: Right, okay, got it. Wow.

BH: And so with the laptop on stage, I'm not even looking at the laptop when we're playing. It's not necessary.

OC: I've adopted a laptop and a dj mixer, and a turntable--that's my favorite combination. I'll spend time on the laptop—and then switch to scratching live on the turntable.

BH: Yeah.

OC: Although, that's still a little bit, it's hard to...[scratchy scratch]

BH: Yes, the nature of it is sort of small, you know.

OC: In the studio then. You went into the studio, dropped down tracks on analog tape. What was that ? Were you playing through [your material] like you would have played through it in a show?

BH: Yes.

OC: Were you all together?

BH: Not for all of it. On some songs we needed more separation...., it was weird. It was not my, it was not...we ended up taking a lot of that, re-putting it into Protools, and then re-editing some stuff.

OC: It didn't end up sounding like you?

BH: You can't deny the fact that when you're doing a show, and you're there, and..., Lynne is an amazing front-person. She's really energetic and we're all super-hype on stage. And so, certain flaws or more simple aspects of the music can pass...

OC: I see what you mean.

BH: And then so you go into the studio, and we lay down our tracks and recorded them straight up, and then we listen back and we were just : "Well..." We were , "Well, why would we do this we can easily go and edit it and make some things a bit more exactly what we wanted them to be. We kind of went to analogue tape for the sound quality of it came through on some songs, and on some songs it just didn't make a difference at all. That was a bit of a disappointment.

OC: Do you have a hypothesis what it was about the tracks, or was it a bit of a mystery why it sounded not so great...

BH: I think it was a lack of experience, on our part, and lack of understanding about how to use some of the pre-amps for tape, and some of the outboard effects units, because...

OC: Because you were driving those decisions?

BH: No, there was an engineer, but the thing about working with an engineer--if you don't know what you want, then they just do what they know how to do. And so in terms of getting them to execute, more...

OC: Without a producer, or whatever...or doing it yourself...

BH: Ephram--you know, from Godspeed. He helped out just in the end, and he was the one who showed us a bit more how to push the quality of the tape. He hits everything on the tape super, super hard. And he runs everything through, you know, crazy compressors and all these outboard units. That was what made the sound that we were looking for.

OC: That came at the end of your studio time?

BH: That came at the end...Whereas the engineer we were working with previously was sort of more working in the way that I think is a more classic engineer kind of approach--they want it to be clean. And we have no interest in clean. We're here because we want to get away from clean because we're in a computer environment all the time.

OC: You want that compression. A rock and roll musician described it to me one day--the difference for him between analog and digital was not so much about warmth as it was about the analog tape compressing everything in a way that sounds just right. And that's maybe what you call warmth. But on a digital tape, that cymbal, when you hit it it goes infinitely wide. Whereas on tape it gets kind of squeezed a little bit, and that's what we're looking for--it's not this sort of ethereal "warmth". And the more you squeeze it--, Alex Moscos talks about slamming as much sound as he can onto a cassette tape. Using that and bringing that sound into the computer and getting HUGE sound off of a mini Casio keyboard by shoving it into the compression that's just naturally built into a piece of tape.

BH: That's what Boyfriend did, The first songs we did we ran everything through Mia's old tape deck. Because we couldn't get the sound right, so we'd just cram it in and then take it back out again.

OC: There's a tendency to be--analog warm, digital cold--but there's so many more facets. Or analog old, digital new...it's so much more interesting if you're not working with those dichotomies. And it's too bad that you ran into that, I guess....or just someone who wasn't hip to the sound that you wanted.

BH: Yes, but also that we weren't hip to it ourselves. It was about us not even knowing the difference. Or knowing...especially outboard gear...because, you know, when you learn music in a digital realm, outboard gear--how to use combinations of outboard gear and how you can manipulate the combination and the order, how it can change a sound--that was the kind of thing that we learned a lot about, but certainly didn't know in the beginning. You need to build a relationship with someone. I think when you work with a paid engineer by the hour, they're going to make it clean. That's what they're there to do.

OC: Well, it's easy to point the finger at stuff that's not clean and say: "You didn't do a good job." If it's clean, no one can say that.

BH: And we also recorded live drums. Jackie played a drum kit for part of it, and that was also a challenge. Because we were like: "Oh, fuck--, how do we make the live drums sound the way...Her playing style is so much more dynamic on the live drum kit than it is on the octopad. And so we wanted to get that aspect of it, which was exciting. But then the sound quality was not always what we wanted. We kind of sacrificed it. You'll listen to the album and hear. There's some things we won, some things we lost.

How does your source material affect your work, if at all?

BH: I'll just talk about the Lesbians [on Ecstasy] again, because that's the easiest one to refer to. It's what the project is. It's a sample-based project. I mean, it wouldn't exist without that. Sonically, I don't know that it affects the outcome as much as it does conceptually. Definitely we're sampling concepts. We're sampling ideas and then turning them into a musical thing. It's actually pretty rare that the way [one of our] songs sound hasn't been influence by the nature of the previously recorded material. Interpretations. It's been described in a number of ways. It's difficult to describe. I'm not sure what it is either. It's mash-ups. It has that in it, taking aspects of one thing and then just mixing them somewhere else. It's also in the tradition of making diva house remixes of popular songs, but we've taken it way further. So the source material--it totally wouldn't exist without the source material, but it also what sets the ball rolling and then it's influence fades away.

OC: But it comes back in that you are who you are because of some of those influences. And they are affecting your performative style--which is then affecting the final product.

Describe the process of choosing your submission to the "Selected Sounds" project.

BH: I'm big into concepts. And so it's a sample--did I tell you where it's from? Do you hear it?

OC: I hear that it's a live recording. I think it's off a record but I can't remember what record.

BH: It's off Frank Marino, Mahogany Rush--Do you know that band?

OC: No. Frank Marino, Mahogany Rush is the band name?

BH: Mahogany Rush is the band, and Frank Marino is the lead guy in Mahogany Rush. And he's a famous Quebecois rock dude. I guess Mahogany Rush had some success outside in the 70s big rock era. But part of the reason that we actually took that sample is because one of the studios--we recorded at the Hotel [2tango] and then the place where we mixed down from analog to digital is a studio in NDG that was actually built by Frank Marino of Mahogany Rush. It's this old crazy 70s studio that has an old 24 track tape machine, but they also have this amazing Protools set up. And so they can take in real time 24 tracks at once and put them into Protools. And that was the place we went. And that was at the time we were going back and listening to some of the material that he had recorded, having been in his studio. That piece was part of a much longer one. When you listen to the album, that moment is also in the album a little bit. Obviously not in the same way...But that little guitar solo bit.

Briefly, what is "sampling", in your opinion?

BH: That's a tricky question. Fundamentally I think it's taking something that previously existed and then re-using it, because it can be a lot of things. But, it's funny because I guess the line between sampling and plagerism, in that context might be "does it have to be transformed"? I don't know. But I think that's what sampling is.

OC: But that's a hiccup for you, what happens in the process is interesting and/or relevant?

BH: Yeah.

Appendix C: Transcript of the Final Meeting With the *Selected Sounds* Research Group, November 12, 2005.

Group-members present: Owen Chapman, Bernadette Houde, Anna Friz, Lynne Trepanier and Richard Williams

Transcript begins here...

OC: The mastering session, in brief.... I think Harris [Newman--a Montreal-based mastering engineer http://greymarketmastering.com] was actually impressed because compilations are apparently the most notoriously difficult thing to master, which I hadn't appreciated at first, but of course it made a lot of sense. I think that it was professional enough--we gave him a quality of mix that was actually half decent, so he was able to work with it. Although he worked with everyone's quite differently, it only took him 3 or 4 hours to do all 7 tracks, so that's pretty rad. With Anna's piece he said, "there's not much I can do with yours" cause there was already a lot of dynamic fluctuation already so he didn't want to screw with that by compressing it. With Richard's he said it was a bit hard to contain, same with Alex's. When he threw them up on the spectrograph they were mostly pretty contained, but Alex's was like rarararararahrarhaa. Clipping in the computer. Same with yours, he said it wasn't clipping but it was hard to really push it too much, you'll understand why. Mine I think he did quite a bit with. Richard's he brought out a lot of bottom.

Listening session begins

Some random quotes from the following 20 mins...

"Ta da."
"Wow."
"That was nice."
"Alex's is like an emotional journey."
"I can't believe how fast he did that."
"He was like, 'Oh yeah...I've been working on it'."
"He had all the parts in his sampler, cheap little sampler, and he pulls out a 4-track.... He borrowed that 4-track for 2 days and then borrowed it again for one night to mix it down. He did it so fast."

More listening ensues...

OC: So what did you think?

AF: Great

RW: Somehow they all worked out kind of somber--they're all really focused.

OC: Jen Morris' track was...gosh they're so hard to describe in a word.

AF: Jen has her sort of signiture sound, she has that nice modulation that she'll build on for a long time.

OC: She had some guitars slowed way down, and those crazy organ washing thing I thought there was a similarity between your two pieces and some between mine and Jackie's because the rhythm and....

AF: And you guys both used the reverse.

OC: They're all so distinct but nevertheless they have a melancholy sound.

BH: I was surprised that they're all as somber as they are.

RW: The textures, all the samples were pretty gritty.

AF: The samples were really dense, all the samples were like blocks of sound and so when I was first playing around with them and trying to see if I could grab little bits to do something with I found I was often encountering these huge blocks.

RW: It was kind of hard to mix because there was a bunch of stuff in the same frequency range.

AF: I have every frequency in one sample- I'm guilty of that, my sample was hell for that. Just like a wall of radio

RW: If you're going to take the whole path of using a sample, that's what's going to happen right.

OC: people wanted to put the most content possible?

RW: --can't help but think in terms of the first sample I will build something on, right? It's got to be something pretty that will [occupy] a certain space.

AF: Neither you nor I used our own samples, really. Your sample was not really prominent in your piece and mine was pretty sublimated in mine.

RW: Yeah, everything was pretty indistinguishable.

AF: I felt like they were really indistinguishable by the end--in everything, a lot of the samples. There were some samples that I assumed that other people would take more advantage of, like, 'Oh, probably someone who thinks in a certain way will use this drum break or will use this melodic bit. I could see how would use it even though I'm not going to', but then in the end no one did actually do that the way I would have anticipated.

BH: Maybe everyone thought the same way, like, I'm not going to use the song's break, cause everyone's going to use the songs break, so forget it.

AF: Yeah, stay away from the obvious.

OC: Well, how do they compare? Maybe each person could take a turn saying how it compared with what you would have done in the past, like what would have been part of your own practice versus this slightly artificial experiment? How did it change the overall process--being forced to work with samples not of your own selection?

RW: I did something really different than what I've done before. Previously I would have taken a chunk and chopped it up and made it into something, and then gone looking for other stuff afterwards. So starting off with a whole set of them was a different thing, because instead of, 'I'll start with this and build on it' it was, 'How do these, or a couple of these work together?' There was a whole lot of going back, you know.

OC: How did you make that guitar sound? The strumming, the [cling-cling-cling]?

RW: That's the espresso machine, just in Audio Mulch with a ring modulator and filter thing.

OC: So what about the [wayayayayaya]?

AF: There's that signature Audio Mulch sound

OC: What's Audio Mulch?

RW: a free mac or free PC software. It has this kind of distinct- everything. Well there's....

AF: Flutter.

RW: [It's all granulator]

OC: Is that where you started, with Audio Mulch? Or did you start sequencing some kind of beat?

RW: It took me forever to get to. I fiddled with stuff for a long time. In the beginning I was messing around in Cubase, and then thought 'Ah, forget this'. Initially I was just in a sequencer kind of mode and got frustrated with it, chucked it out and loaded it into the composting device.

BH: Yeah, I tried initially to approach it more like sequence sampling in the keyboard sampler. I couldn't find a way to make it work so then went and kind of ripped everything apart a bit more and went down to like, what are the sounds, and more basic elements rather than the melodic bits?

OC: Ok. Yeah, you constructed it more out of Richard's sample in particular right?

BH: The main part is actually the rev, but it's also mixed with the taxi sample, Jen's sample. Is that what yours is as well? The at the end?

AF: Yup, it's the windshield wipers. That was part of that sample as well, they were both mixed in there. I like they way that you used it because in the beginning it almost sounded like a weird tribal drumbeat.

BH: Oh really?

AF: You know what I mean? Like at first because it came in a bit louder then you brought it in a bit lower in the mix toward the end I felt, or maybe that was my perception but in the beginning it almost sounded like something really different than what it was, even thought I knew what it was.

BH: It was a lot of I was trying to learn how to use the [Korg] Electribe drum machine, so I put stuff in there and was just playing around and that's when kind of happy accidents would happen or new sounds would....

OC: You can load sounds up into the Electribe?

BH: Yeah, it's just like a sampler. Either play them in a sequence or play them by hand, and then they would get kind of chopped up to, and then I would hear things that maybe I hadn't expected or planned on.

AF: I think normally in my own practice I normally make the sounds that I want to do something with, so I play instruments or go out and field record or I make sounds with other things. I have different little techniques from playing live that I know that I like, so I say ok, I'm going to work on that and then I kind of get raw materials and work from there. So this time definitely, it was--I'm not really sort of scrounging around working with samples as much these days, so it was a bit of a challenge for that too, I wasn't really sure what I wanted to do with them, how they fit together, like 'I don't want to use all of these'. My sneaky trick was all the ones I didn't end up using, because I made the whole piece basically out of three samples and I didn't need any of the others. I thought to myself "Oh damn, now I have these other samples to deal with, so I just threw them in the granulator and just took miniscule little microseconds and buried them in the bass line so they pretty much aren't there. Technically they were in the ProTools session but they were totally sublimated.

RW: It's not the same as in yours.

BH: Woah!

OC: At the end I didn't know what to do with that. I tried and tried and tried to find a break that would work, or a drum hit or anything. It was so dense that...yeah, I just put it at the end.

AF: Yeah, I was trying to break it up a little bit [ta-ka-ma!]

BH: Yeah, I tried that as well at first. It was like, trying to break up that....Everything was just so dense.

OC: Yeah, it was very dense, but there were certain sounds that I was drawn to--my own in particular I used heavily.

AF: Yeah, I loved yours. I could have made the whole piece just out of your sample. In fact, at first I had made the whole piece out of your sample. Then I thought, "Oh damn, I should really work in all these others way more" so....

RW: Especially the first part of it, just the guitar.

OC: Yeah, it's a nice record. It's a funny record. What did I do? I started with that and then I knew that I had this little box, this little Yamaha SU10. It's a tiny sampler that has a control ribbon on it so you can actually scratch sounds. So I figured I'd make a beat and then I would take the static sample, as I didn't know how to work with it, and I would scratch it, and so the beat was supposed to initially just be a beat and I was going to do a whole lot more scratching, but the beat became more interesting the more I ended up working on it, and I ended up staying there and using the scratch only as a kind of an attention grabber in the middle and at the end, but yeah, that's what that crazy is.

BH: Yeah, I like how you did that.

OC: It's on this little ribbon thing, and it doesn't actually sound like a scratch because it turns the sound into these weird granulated bits, and you're just running your finger over top of it. It was cool to use that. I wanted to make a bass line and I tried to make it out of your sound [Richard]. It was really tough, but I think I got something, and I got Harris to really boost the bass end a lot because I found it hard to keep the sound under control and still give it presence, so I kind of relied on the mastering to bring that out. I wonder, did you hear any sub-frequencies come out in the master version?

RW: I heard less of the bass actually because the speakers that I'm monitoring at home are just like...

OC: But there was a breathing kind of [whoooooooooo].

RW: That's from Alex's sample, it's one of the bass drum things slowed down like a thousand percent.

OC: And what about in your case, did you hear artifacts that you didn't hear before? There was stuff that I heard in the session that I didn't hear before, especially when the organ goes [wee-oouu-wrrrr] part comes in. You obviously very subtly put in some [ch-ch-ch] little bit of white noise in places that I didn't hear.

AF: Those were all from at the beginning when I granulated that whole thing. I used Thonk, that little freeware granulator, and I granulated some of the record scratches from the beginning of the samples, so those are little bits of the record scratches that are stuck in there. There were lots of little really low volume things. I was a little influenced from hanging out with Howard [Bilerman, from the Montreal's mighty Hotel2tango reocording studio, where the L.O.E. record, along with the Arcade Fire], who used to say 'more dynamic range in recording!' Fine idea. That's a fine idea, cause I do really like the super quiet little bits. I find the end is a bit more whoa, but maybe that's ok because I know it is a little more crispy now and my version was a bit muffled. I feel like the mastering has made it a bit more crispy.

OC: Well you can listen to it a few more times and see. He tried to bring it all into line with the other tracks without cutting too much of the dynamic range that was there. And Jen's too, the second half of Jen's was much softer and he really had to bring that up a lot.

AF: There's a lot of line noise you can hear in hers.

OC: Well, I think it got brought up as he compressed it. Do you think it was distracting?

AF: Little bit.

OC: Ok, like a hiss?

AF: I just felt like I really could hear her pedals and so on. I felt like I could just hear her setup somehow.

OC: I'll have to see what she thinks too. The problem is getting it to her and not having it be MP3. I guess I'll have to mail it to her.

BH: When I heard it though, I felt like it was not displeasing--the line noise. I felt like there was a lot of that texture and that it was more of it, but I did hear it.

AF: It just made it feel like it was far away.

BH: Yeah, I could hear that too.

OC: So what about her sound? Like, her sample? It was really interesting but it was very soft. It was the taxi cab ride.

BH: I did like that sample. I always had that little loop of the windshield wipers because I always liked that.

OC: I took it and I chopped it up into tiny sixteenth note parts, and then I rearranged it to try to turn it into some sort of Akufen-like, [ge-ga-ke-ke-ga-ga-po-ta-po] then I played it and it sounded almost the same as the original. When you listen to the two together they sound really different but when you hear it the effect is pretty much exactly the same. The windshield wipers are still there. They're still on rhythm. The voice, you can't understand it, but you couldn't really understand it before anyway. Sort of a failed attempt at experimentation. I just let it be.

AF: If anything I'd say there's a mood of her sample translated into the mood of the pieces more than anyone else's.

Yeah.

Mm-hmm.

That's true.

OC: a bit rainy, a bit lonely.

RW: It had the most mood.

BH: It had the most mood?

AF: Well, Jackie's sample had a lot of mood too. It had the sort of chipper coffee making, poking around. I'm sort of surprised that more of that crunchiness didn't end up in peoples' [work].

Yeah.

BH: It was hard to use that sample for very long though--the coffee one. I felt like it really was best as a little hi-hat.

OC: That was my snare [sound] pretty much throughout. Your sound and Jackie's sound was pretty much there throughout because yours became the kick drum, and....

[cassette tape is flipped over]

OC: In terms of all the interviews I did with everybody, a couple of fascinating things came out. First of all, what is sampling? That question was probably the most rich in terms of answers because people had really divergent points of view but nevertheless they all resonated really well together. I wonder, what is this process [I proposed initially], because it was really a sample based experiment in a way that I think is, I'm realizing now, it was akin to my own practice a couple years ago, but even now I'm much more into playing live instruments and adding in other elements that are not purely sample based. This was purely a sample-based endeavor. I wonder how it felt in terms of your attitudes towards sampling, if it opened them up or if it changed them, or if it made you think, "This is something like 'Been there, done that'." Where does it fit now?

AF: Well, actually, this was my excuse to start using Thonk so I got a bit hung up on it for a while. I'd always be doing some kind of droney granulation thing, but I'd done it with other tools, not with a piece of software. I got into a very particular aspect of the software. Otherwise the software is quite unremarkable but if you put exactly the right things into it, it does [great] things. It was your guitar sample that I loved so much going through Thonk with a Bob Mooger-Fooger filter slapped on afterwards, so it was something like "Yeah ok, Thonk it is". It turned [out to be] a good...bed track creator.

OC: You found something in it that you've continued to use?

AF: Yes. I had this little piece of freeware lying around and I had never been so excited about what I put through it but throwing in an actual melodic instrument sound into a particular feature of and running it for a particular length of time just yielded awesome results.

BH: Personally, just because I've been playing in a band, where in some sense that everything is done live--it really humbled me in terms of hearing well crafted sample based music. Because I haven't done a whole lot of it, just on my own, kind of thing, cause we record most things live, so it made me appreciate what goes into it.

OC: Because the live band brings a certain playability or something to the composition of music?

BH: I think so. Just being able to play off of each other.... [To] get that feeling out of...just emptying stuff into the computer, straight up samples, I think is a challenge.

OC: My thinking would be that you can find a groove with other people and it's a very human sort of interaction, especially with friends. And then, when you're dealing with samples you have to find the groove in relationship to the sample itself, which is not always as obvious.

Yeah

RW: If you're playing music and you want separate parts in a song, play them on the same instrument, whereas with pure sampling you either need to find the other part, which obviously you can't do if you're given the initial set. Or, program stuff, you know, map it onto the keys and play it, but the samples that were part of this [i.e.,] didn't lend themselves to that as much. There wasn't so much of a, like, [bhoouuum - eeeeng] you know, it was all really busy. This made it really hard to make [something] totally that you can play melodically. For me it was interesting because I was also moving away from working, I'd started to shun working on the computer, and I don't have a sampler. I kind of started moving away from that, and was really focused on playing drums and whatever, guitar. So it was kind of challenging to make the sounds that I wanted on a setup that wasn't capable of doing it in the same way. Really kind of shifted off into discovering the noise music, weird walls of sound...

OC: It reminded me of certain sample-based experiments that I've, well, not even experiments, but it reminded me a lot of Massive Attack and I hope you appreciate that as a compliment. Because certain tracks that they've produced manage to give a really heavy feel too [the music]. Anyway it reminded me of a lot of that. I think it was funny, because when I asked people to get on board, first of all, I was under a bit of a misassumption as to what sample based music was and what it required of artists who would consider themselves sample-based musicians. I think I assumed, somewhat naively, that the people who I asked were working pretty much exclusively with samples already. I kind of thought the Lesbians on Ecstasy, for instance, I mean, I know that you were a live band, but I thought a lot of what you did was about bringing in samples, remixing stuff, mashing stuff together, and I know that....

BH: We don't use any samples.

OC: You don't use samples? You use a sampler, but more for effects than for actual....

BH: Well, we don't use any samples in the way that you're thinking. We use noises that play as melodic elements, but there's nothing that's sample based. Everything is live.

OC: Well a couple things happened to me anyway. I think my interpretation of what sampling was became broader from exposure to different ways of working.

BH: We like to say we sample peoples' written material, not their recorded material. We sample people's words, and sample a lot of the melodic ideas, but we don't actually sample their recorded song. Lynne will sing backup vocals with herself through the sampler, but we don't actually, like, in the way that we are remixing Melissa Ethridge, we don't have any Melissa Ethridge recording anywhere in anything we play.

OC: Like Anna, for instance, pointed out to me that a lot of the sounds she used would start with instruments, and then they would go into effects or plugins or whatever and be sampled and tweaked. Anyway, I went through a variety of transitions, and where I'm at now, is a feeling that "sampling" is almost akin to the term "recording". I mean, there's not a heck of a lot of distinction to be made anymore, although there is, well, I wonder what you guys think about this, especially after having gone through the project. How would you distinguish...not just what sampling is, but how would you distinguish sampling from recording?

RW: Within recording, that word is pretty broad as well, and if you ask Howard [Bilerman] what he does, he's recording a performance, and adding tonal things but he's not processing it in the studio. He's not doing the dub thing, like hitting the tape really hard to get a certain effect. So there's variation in there as well.

OC: What of your own experience and practice?

RW: It seems like one of those things that if you try to nail it down, then you end up talking about one specific... If you say sampling is..., ok like Madlib [a contemporary hip hop producer], or like, taking chunks of samples from other records and... The technology is not only here for doing that, right, so....

AF: Yeah, I think I rarely sample just from someone else's record. I do once in a while. For a recent piece, I needed a little particular drone and actually from working with Thonk, I'd figured out how to get the right drone out of melodic instruments. I heard this guy talking on CBC about playing violins in Spanish churches and I really liked the tone that he had, so I tracked down his website and downloaded a couple MP3s and grabbed one note and granulated it because it was the perfect thing that I needed in this other piece. So I sampled from him, but other than that it's all recordings of instruments, recordings of live things, or recordings of, you know I have those little cheap shitty microphones, those little piezo microphones that you use to record off the telephone--it has a little suction cup on it. But if you put that near a computer hard drive or an older CD player you just pick up the oscillation of the actual mechanism, so I'll record that and then run it though a bunch of pedals and then be dumping that into ProTools.

OC: So is that sampling or recording or is it neither?

AF: I don't know. I call it sampling, but... yeah.

OC: I don't mean to belabor the distinction too greatly, but I think that after all of this, this is what kind of percolated to the top for me--that I began with an assumption that sampling was fairly easily definable. This was blown out of the water, and now I'm at a point where I'm thinking that the major theoretical contribution of the thesis and of this work will be, first of all, demonstrating that a project understood as sampling can have very diverse results. Secondly, just problematizing the notion that sampling is somehow very distinct from the history of recording per se, throughout the last century. If you look at the literature, there's a real tendency to see it as something distinct, something digital, something that, you know, especially hip-hoppers and techno DJs or whatever use. They [academic authors] kind of get limited to fixing it in a certain genre and then not talking about it anymore. I think that what will be interesting about the thesis is first of all to say well, it's not just A,B and C genres, it can be part of many genres, and second of all, it no longer makes any sense to distinguish sampling from other types of practices that studio engineers are using all the time. And maybe Howard would say, 'No, I'm not sampling at all' but somebody else with more of a hybrid studio with ProTools and some tape and some other stuff might claim, 'Sure, we do sampling here all the time'. A lot more depends on attitude and how you want to present yourself than it does the actual technology you're using or how you're using it.

BH: It seems to me within that though, that a sample is something like, you make a segment of sound that you are then going to compose with, whereas with Howard, if he's recording a band, even if he's recording it in multitracks and taking chunks of it, he's not composing per se.

OC: No, but then when the bass player screws up a bunch of notes and doesn't want to pay for time to come in and do the punches, and then they copy and paste a bunch of stuff....I don't know if they can do that at Hotel2tango.

BH: What I think is interesting about it is that you approach sampling as a compositional tool, that this is an element in a composition and a way that you approach musical notes or drum patterns that you're creating yourself. What I think becomes really blurry is the difference between things that are derivative and things that are sampled, and the way that you find inspiration for creation. To me, the difference between bands that are so directly derivative that they sounds exactly like other bands in that style, to the point that you can practically not even differentiate between them--that wouldn't be considered sampling if they're recording an original selection of notes that are put in a pattern, even though it's obviously completely derivative in a lot of other ways. And then you can have a style of composition where you're using either a prerecorded or a previously existing work, and then reinterpreting that through other filters, and then I think the compositional work...the creative work is about the choice of the pre-existing material. It's not even necessarily about the way, I mean it obviously is about the way that you decide to interpret that material, but also the choice of that material and how do you select what you're going to work with out of the mass of produced sound. How do you decide what's interesting and relevant, what's the criteria, and is it about sound quality, is it about context? Obviously with our band [Lesbians on Ecstacy - a.k.a. L.O.E.] we wrestle a lot with the difference between, for instance, "Are we more interested in the context in which this music was produced or are we more interested in the way that it sounds as a musical piece?" And how do those two things communicate with each other, and which has more relevance? You talked about things like the Beastie Boys, and the way they use samples and the way that people have put so much value on the context in which those samples were produced, and a lot of the ways in which the artists that have been sampled haven't received any kind of acclaim, acknowledgement, cash. I feel like derivative bands are way less interesting.

AF: It's more of a rip-off.

BH: It's more of a rip-off. It really is less of a creative process, even if those four people played all of those sounds together in a room and Howard recorded them onto a magnetic tape or whatever. There's just no qualitative creative difference between those two processes, and in fact, I feel like working with other material in a reinterpretive way can be more challenging creatively, but there definitely is a priority between those two ways of working.

RW: In my mind I'm thinking that almost exactly half of the pieces were probably made using technology that says sampler on it. I didn't use a sampler.

OC: I used a sampler, but I mostly used ProTools, which is like, an audio recording environment, but I did do the scratching....

RW: I know Alex used the Electribe.

OC: I think what happened, and maybe you can tell me what you think about this...there is a history of recording technology and it started with the turntable and quickly moved to tape in the 40s, and then multitrack tape, well ok, is this recording? Are we recording or are we mixing? Well ok, it's all still recording. We'll just call it recording, even though what people are doing in the studio was no longer representative of what people could do live. And then samplers came along, and they were called samplers because that was the name that the technology had associated with it, especially on a very fundamental level--the conversion of analog signals to digital, it's called sampling, right? So that phrase got associated with the technology. At a certain point in the 80s or 90s though, hardware samplers were made obsolete by software recording environments like ProTools, and Cubase and all these other things, which not only offered "sampling-like" interfaces--they also offered multitrack recording interfaces. So these were sampling technologies, but they were presented in a way that was more familiar to people used to multitrack tape. They called these recording systems [or Digital Audio Workstations (D.A.W.s)], even though they were still sampling technologies. Then you had this distinction between samplers as what hip-hop, techno DJs and, experimental electronic artists use, and then recording environments, which were what serious studios were using.

BH: Right, where you'd have a little separate window you could load in your samples and then do stuff.

OC: A student told me a story. The lead guitarist from Our Lady Peace recently opened up a studio in Toronto and the student is now interning there, and he went down, he was working on a recording for a band named Push from New Brunswick, and Push had a demo that got them on the radio which apparently sucked, but anyway...New Brunswick...they were like pretty good. They got $20,000 together to put this recording together, and they went into the studio, and they'd never really been in a studio before, and they couldn't figure out how to make their songs work in the studio, and what my student said was that they pretty much sucked, they couldn't really play. They didn't have a drummer and they couldn't really play their guitars. They couldn't do the multitracking and have it all work, and so first of all, they got a session musician in for the drumming, and then for the two guitarists, they tried for a while and it wasn't working and they were wasting a lot of money, so they got session musicians for the two guitarists, and then the bass player managed to play enough riffs that they could cobble something together, cut and paste together all the bass lines that they needed for the song, but this record is going to come out, and the only thing that is Push is the vocalist and the bass line that has been cobbled together. Everything else is studio musicians that were brought in and the whole thing was constructed--in a very sample-based kind of way, but this was still a recording endeavor. Anyway, I found that kind of amusing.

AF: Isn't there something about a sample as being a piece of a sound that you could potentially repeat, but you may or may not choose to repeat as part of your composition?

OC: I don't know that it really matters ultimately to try to, I mean I think I'm going to try to be nuanced about it when I write about, to say, we need to have better definitions, but at the same time we don't want to be to extreme.

AF: I think that when I think of a sample, it just means like, I recorded a bunch of other stuff, but now I took a smaller bit of it. To me, the sample part is in a selected piece of something else, something that was potentially larger. Because when I load samples into the pedal, or if I load up samples to perform, then they generally come from much larger recording sessions, or recording things or pieces, or whatever, but then I've taken a small select bit that I like that either loops really well, or...

BH: So you know we're talking about maybe a sampling?

AF: Literally a selected thing. In my mind it's because it came from something bigger, and it might be, "I listened to the short wave for four and a half hours, and now I've taken this 15 minutes that I like from it" or something like that.

OC: So the selection process is pretty important.

AF: I think that's the main thing for me.

RW: With the technology, it's definitely complicated... There's this weird boundary between finding it as a music practice, and then the technological part. Software wise, Native Instruments, Kontact, whatever their software sampler is, basically does the same stuff as like, the old Akai rackmount samplers, but times a thousand, because there's so much processing power, and there's a big screen. There's no arranging on. It's all "take the sound, chop it up into discreet pieces and map it into zones and overlap it and things". The thing is, most people I can think of don't do stuff I would consider sample heavy music, that's more soundtracking, composition type of stuff, you can make the orchestra and compose your own pieces, but that almost seems like less about the sample part.

OC: Yeah, I agree, it's more like using the technology to allow you to bring an orchestra of instruments into your studio without having to pay your musicians.

RW: Yeah, but you'll be using it in different ways.

OC: It's too bad Jackie isn't here, because I'd like to hear about her opinion on this, but a student in my class...I played all of these [pieces] for some of my sound students, and I was talking about the different ways that people put stuff together and Jackie said that she took all the sounds and chopped them up and loaded them up into her sampler and then plugged her Octapads in, and then played on them. She's told me that one of the hardest things about playing those drums is that they're not drums, they're pieces of plastic so when you hit them it just goes bump. There's no bounce to it, there's no elasticity to it to give it that drum like feel, and...

BH: They're very small. You have to be really precise with you hands.

OC: Then one of these students of mine who's mother was a producer for the Cirque de Soleil ended up saying [that for one of their shows they had acquired] these drums and they called them GIDI, or GigaMIDI or whatever. They had some other kind of name, but basically it was a full drum kit that looked just like drums, but all the drum hits were individual sounds, and the drum skins were these MIDI sensitive surfaces, and depending on where you hit the skins, it would send different kinds of velocity touch messages out to the sampler, and you could just load in different drum kits, and they could be playing any drumkit or samples too, you could do whatever you wanted.

BH: Well that's what our set up is, we scroll through different drum kits for every song and then two of her pads blew on the Octapad, and so we have those MIDI triggers that you just put all in, and they can go on a drum kit, and so when you hit it just sends the MIDI.

OC: Oh, ok, onto a drum kit?

BH: Yeah, they're just a little thing you know, you hit them, and they make noise. They're just little tiny triggers, and they're really cheap, and so when the pads blew, she always blows the pads because she hits them way too hard, because she's a drummer and they're not a drum kit. We've totally gone through so many pads on that thing, we could have fixed like two. Garfield at the Hotel, he fixes it. He uses a garage door opener things on them that he replaces Jackie's...he's fixed it I don't know how many times now. We blow through that thing. She nails the shit out of it. It is tricky with the velocity, like, when we've played with her, we've played with her playing a real drum kit sometimes and obviously the dynamic range that she can get out of the drum kit is so much more exciting, like, "bring it down, bring it back up, quiet bit, hit it really hard".... The Octapad, it either goes or it doesn't go. It's either on or off. Those are the two things that MIDI understands: go, don't go. There's some velocity range, but it's very limited.

RW: They had the brains for [something like that] at a pawnshop in St. Henri for a long time. It's an old analog drum triggers, so instead of sending MIDI messages, it sends an electric pulse, and you could feasibly plug anything into it and trigger it. You could use contact mics, or anything that sends a signal. It's Duran duran basically, but it's supposed to go with the pentagon things, but it's an analog synth, it's not a sample based.

BH: The thing that's so interesting about this sampling question...,I really feel like we're sample based, I feel like that's really clear, but it's totally about working with other people's pre-existing materials in a really broad way. And that material exists in a lot of ways, it doesn't necessarily exist as a recorded piece of sound that we then manipulate, it's like everyone knows how to whistle Rough Trade or something or it's like...

AF:Yeah, sampling is a lot like that.

BH: Yeah, sampling... I feel like, if you had the written material of what they've done, cause we're not replaying it true to the original by any stretch, we're not sampling their recorded material, but we're referencing what they've done. We are sampling bits of their words, sometimes bits of the melodies. We're rewriting them in the same way that someone uses a prerecorded sample, it's just we're not using the sample, we're using...

AF: It's more like citations.

RW: Are you sampling other stuff to make the sounds? Like bass drum sounds or anything like that?

BH: That's the thing, we play it all live. In Jackie's drum kits there have been a couple of

LT: There was an Iggy pop sample I think [on the L.O.E.'s first record].

BH: There's like an Iggy Pop sample, and...

LT: I think there's one of the earlier tunes, I just remember there being a little

BH: Yeah, there may have been some...

LT: Some little bits that made it onto the drum kit

BH: One of those 1001 guitar riffs.

LT: But for the most part, all the music is played live.

BH: I'm sure it's inspired by lots.

OC: For this piece, you put the stuff into a keyboard sampler and were like , what is it, is it pads?

BH: Yeah, like a drum machine

OC: Ok, like an MPC kind of interface?

BH: I feel like technically, just to add on, I think what we're doing is technically called "interpolation", which is the word for what it is, but that's a word people use to say you're referencing people's intellectual ideas rather than their physical material. If we were to get a license, it would have to be an interpolation license, not a sampling...

OC: But interpolation, that's a tricky, like what does that mean, you know, really? Where do you draw the line between sampling and interpolation, and cover versioning, and...

AF: Like you say, derivative bands, Hawksley Workman sings just like Bono, is that a rip off or not. I can't tell the difference sometimes if I turn on the radio. And all the Sum41, Greenday, pop, all those bands I find are particularly...

BH: Nickleback and their ilk.

RW: They mix them afterward so they're all sort of the same song. It's like somewhere in Southern California, washing it all the same way.

AF: But the song structure, that's an interesting thing to me. People adhere to an incredibly strict song structure as well, like a lot of those bands, a lot of bands in general, but in particular I think of that, what is it called again, pop punk? Post punk? Post pop post punk? What's that Sum41, greenday...

RW: Pop punk. Shit.

AF: No, there's a name for that genre.

BH: Power pop?

AF: Power pop? Maybe. Anyway, the songs that I hear on the radio, I can barely distinguish between them, because the intonation of the voice, the place where it gets more intense, the place where...

RW: None of those pieces [on the *Selected Sounds* CD] have a traditional structure. I mean, beyond the not traditional, but it happens a lot in kind of experimental stuff that you've got a quiet part with build up in, something happens, and then it becomes clear, and then it ends.

OC: We all definitely followed that a little--transitions into different movements and stuff like that. But I think each piece really stands on its own as a nice little gem, I just need to ask some practical questions I guess. First of all, the CD is mastered now. Do you think there needs to be any changes made, or can I just go to Harris [Newman] and say "It's pretty good", or "That's great, lets go"? Do you like the order? Really, the order we just put together. I was thinking --"ok we'll start with...there are less rhythmic tracks than non-rhythmic tracks. We don't want to have all the like tracks together, so I tried to mix it up by putting non-rhythmic, rhythmic, non-rhythmic, rhythmic, and then a couple that were still left over. Do you feel the flow works well? Do you think that there's places it isn't as good? Do you like Alex's at the end? Do you like Jen's at the beginning?

AF: I think Alex's was appropriate at the end in some ways as well because of its length. In the middle it might be like whoa.

RW: I think the track order is good.

OC: Well you can think about it more too and get back to me.

RW: The mastering, I don't know if it's because I was sitting sort of the opposite side, but I couldn't hear a lot of lows. I did hear way lows a bit, but a lot of the low range I was having trouble making out.

OC: Maybe it's because your eardrums have been blown to bits.

RW: Nah, my eardrums are blown at the high end. I can hear bass.

OC: What did you guys think in terms of the sound quality?

BH: I would like to say that I know the system, but we just pulled these speakers out of a box right before you got here. In the system we had previously which was the same system but used, it always pushed the bass a lot and I was surprised to not hear more bass. The EQs on this are completely flat. I was surprised to not hear more bass.

OC: What do you think Anna?

AF: I don't know I'd have to take it home and listen.

OC: Maybe if we can all just do that and get back to me.

AF: I've only heard it on headphones or flat field monitors, although I feel that maybe the end of my piece feels a little louder than I recall it.

OC: Maybe he compressed it a bit to try to make it...I don't know. I know he brought down a certain point of your piece. Like when the the washers come in right away, that part was peaking a bit, so he brought that down a bit, or maybe he compressed that and thereby ended up bringing stuff out at the end. I don't know.

AF: The last note just seems a bit blah.

OC: Well I'll remember that and mention it to him. I guess I'll go see him in a week or two and if you guys can think about it a bit and get back to me with anything that you want to change and we'll change it. The bass, I'll tell him that maybe there could have been a bit more presence on the bottom end.

RW: Maybe have him compress it, like really compress it overall. Except for like, all of a sudden these little tinkley breaks. A lot of that was from samples too. A lot of it was mini disk recorded. It has that recording...

AF: They're very dense too.

RW: Midrange sound.

BH: Recordings off records, sometimes they're already so compressed, and then you bring them...[they can be] hard to recompress. You don't get the original range back. And then you compress it again, it doesn't always help it.

LT: Sometimes it does

OC: It gives it a bit of bright shine that just kind of stays there.

RW: It does sound really even though.

OC: Yeah, and the volume of the tracks, and the spaces in between the tracks and stuff? I guess the biggest question is what do we do with it? I guess a lot of that falls upon my shoulders. My plan, my ambition, doesn't extend much beyond taking this master copy, getting some graphic design done, getting something put together that represents it well. We need a better title than selected sounds. That's sort of my thesis title. We need to brainstorm some kind of title, and then make you know, a thousand copies or whatever, whatever we think is...

AF: I know a guy in Toronto who will undercut everybody in Montreal.

OC: Wicked. Ok. Well that would be good.

AF: He did our Harvey Christ CD and it was almost $200 cheaper than anybody in Montreal.

OC: Ok. Sweet. Of course I'll pay for all of this, and then give everybody some CDs to have or sell or do whatever you want with.

(end of transcript)