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Virtual Garage Bands: Collaborative Cybercommunities of Internet Musicians

Trevor S. Harvey

THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF MUSIC

VIRTUAL GARAGE BANDS:

COLLABORATIVE CYBERCOMMUNITIES OF INTERNET MUSICIANS

By

TREVOR S. HARVEY

A Dissertation submitted to the
College of Music
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Degree Awarded:
Fall Semester, 2009

The members of the committee approve the dissertation of Trevor S. Harvey, defended on Thursday, October 15, 2009.

_____
Frank Gunderson
Professor Directing Dissertation

_____
Gary Burnett
University Representative

_____
Michael B. Bakan
Committee Member

_____
Stephen McDowell
Committee Member

The Graduate School has verified and approved the above-named committee members.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Like the many songs discussed within these pages, this dissertation is the result of a large collaborative effort. This research was only possible because of the kindness and warmth of the many members of iCompositions who have taken the time to respond to my many questions on chat, in email, and over Skype and who have given me permission to use their works in this research project. As with any musical collaboration, remix, or cover song, I am merely adding my voice to those that have already been expressed in text and song in hopes that I might somehow enhance what has already been said.

First, I am grateful to powermac99 for his support of my research on his website over the past several years. He has been kind and supportive in answering questions and providing me with information and data about the site. There have been many iCompers who have been eager to share their music, experiences, and love of the community, and without whose help this dissertation would not be possible. I would like to specifically acknowledge the help of anDroidfrisBee, ashelybeanhead, becwil, ciheins, EvilFactman, IcePack, jlgerk, lummie, lupiroz, ponkey, PowerMatt, soulima, Trilobite2, zallaz, and 8monthmalfaction, who have taken the time to share their thoughts and experiences on iCompositions, and more importantly, their passion for music. I would also like to acknowledge the following musicians for granting me permission to include their musical creations in this dissertation: Abstractvision, alanatomic, anDroidfrisBee, artist08, ashelybeanhead, Baboon, Bebe3x, cicero19, ciheins, ckrohm, deputydoofy, dirigent, DoubleOughtJethro, Dylan, enicholsIC, etgilles, Euphoria, EvilFactman, gcooke, itiswotitis, jolofsson, j0j0, jolofsson, jtkattner, KDMan, liquid, lilichi, lupiroz, macmidiot, MrBajen, MissRedd, mkepler, pete, ponkey, PowerMatt, RAMZAR, RiGee, rfwilmut, thenownows, Trilobite2, wal4u, woodguy32, woofer3, yosL, zallaz, and 8monthmalfaction.

I am honored to have a brilliant and supportive dissertation committee, including Frank Gunderson, Michael Bakan, Gary Burnett, and Stephen McDowell. Each of them have brought unique perspectives to this project and their diverse insights have served to strengthen my understanding of the social and cultural environment of Internet musicians. I am grateful to Frank Gunderson, my advisor, for his constant support, creativity, and ability to conceptualize this project with me. His expression of faith in my abilities has often helped me overcome my own lack of confidence and, thus, enabling me to write this dissertation. Michael Bakan has stood in my corner since before I arrived at Florida State University. His thoroughness and attention to details encourages me to always try harder and his unwavering commitment to my success at FSU and beyond is greatly appreciated. Gary Burnett has contributed vital insights into the social practices of online communities and his thorough understanding of the setting for my field research has been a tremendous support. Stephen McDowell has been helpful in directing me to consider connections to communication and media studies and has also provided helpful insights concerning issues of copyright and ownership.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF AUDIO EXAMPLES

This PDF includes audio samples of many of the songs discussed in the dissertation. Listening to the audio and video samples requires Adobe Reader 9 or greater. If you do not see a play button below each song title, please download the most recent version of Adobe Reader. It is available for free from http://get.adobe.com/reader/.

Excerpts from *The Infinite Campus*

All musical selections from *The Infinite Campus* are used by permission of EVILFACTMAN, except where noted.

Other Musical Excerpts

xvi

NOTE ON STYLE AND ABBREVIATIONS

Many of the quotations in this dissertation originated in the context of online communication: discussion forums, chat sessions, instant messaging, email, blogs, etc. Additionally, for many of the participants in the conversations that have been included here, English is a secondary or somewhat foreign language. As a result, many quotes contain misspellings, grammatical errors, and conventions typical for their original context, but less accepted in academic writing. For the most part, I have chosen not to alter the text nor note misspellings with [sic], except in the cases where the misspelling would present a significantly altered meaning than what was intended.

Below are a few abbreviations with short definitions that are used in the text:

Collab	Collaboration project on iCompositions.com
CMC	Computer-mediated communication
DAW	Digital Audio Workstation (computer software that enables recording and editing of audio files)
GB	GarageBand
iC	iCompositions.com
iComper	Artist or participant on iCompositions.com
MIDI	Musical Instrument Digital Interface (a computer language that allows controllers, such as keyboards and software, to send instructions to sequencers and sound banks for playback)
OSS	Open-source software (software developed collaboratively and offered as a free download)
pm	powermac99 (founder, owner, and chief administrator of iCompositions.com)
RSS	Really Simple Syndication (an Internet-based delivery model for frequently-updated websites, such as blogs, news sites, and social networking user pages)
SL	Second Life (an Internet-based, 3-D virtual world)

Internet musicians communicate and create within a world of hypertext and multimedia. I have tried to extend that form of interactivity into this dissertation by including cross-references within the text and URLs for reference to the Web. Many such references are also hyperlinked in the PDF document. Musical transcriptions and song lyrics, as well as song titles in footnotes, are also clickable, linking back to the List of Audio Examples (page xiii), where the audio examples can be played.

ABSTRACT

The rapid development and adoption of personal computers and the Internet at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century have brought significant changes to popular musical culture and amateur music-making. In the era of Web 2.0, recreational sociomusical activity in cyberspace has intensified and online social networking has merged with home-based musical practices, creating cultures of Internet musicians.

In this dissertation, I present an ethnography of one particular culture of Internet musicians. These musicians use digital music production software on personal computers to compose, record and realize their musical ideas. They then leverage Internet technologies in order to perform, communicate, and collaborate with other musicians from around the world. Through the sociomusical processes in which these musicians engage, musical cyberplaces are established, meaningful relationships are formed, and communities are constructed. This dissertation deals primarily with one such community: iCompositions.com. Created in 2004 as a repository for musical creations by users of Apple, Inc.'s GarageBand software, iCompositions has grown into a large, world-wide community of musicians with diverse musical and cultural backgrounds, who work not only in isolated home studios, but also collaborate with each other with the help of the Internet.

This dissertation provides insights into the experience of musical life online. Through an investigation of both textual and musical interaction, I consider the shared authorship of music and the intersubjective experiences of the participant musicians within iCompositions. I focus particularly on the force of digital technology on musical knowledge and experience, the centrality of shared musical experiences in the construction of community, and processes of musical transformation through the collaborations resulting in the shared authorship of constantly evolving virtual music. Finally, this research provides a valuable case study that extends ethnomusicological inquiry into Internet-based, participatory musical cultures.

OVERTURE

STUPID WARS: THE BATTLE AGAINST *THE INFINITE CAMPUS*

Images are the raw material of the story. They are drawn from two sources, the contemporary world, which produces realistic images, and the ancient tradition from which fantasy mythic images are taken. The storyteller brings these two kinds of imagery into relationship during a story performance…

When the storyteller, using rhythmical patterning, unites these two kinds of imagery, metaphor is created. This is the music of the story.

– Harold Scheub, *The Poem in the Story*[1]

Intro[2]
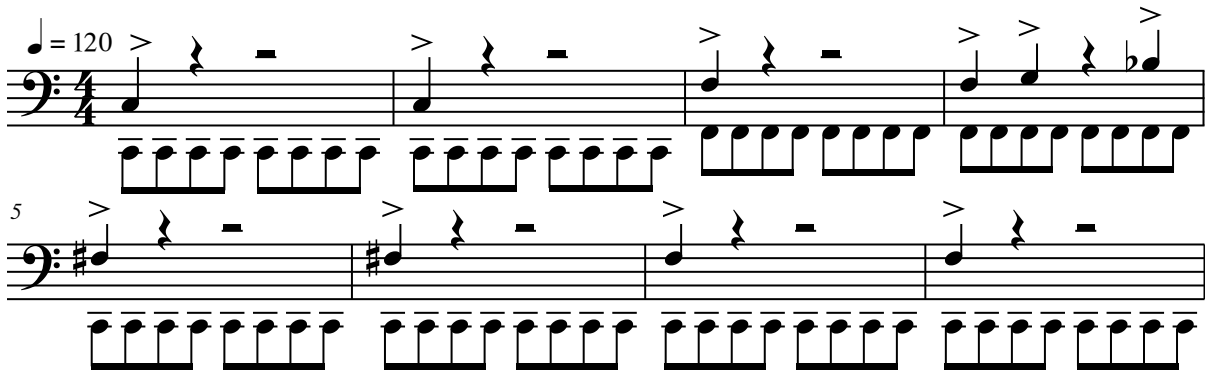
Figure 1: Opening statement of *The Infinite Campus*[3]

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[1] Scheub 2000, 5.

[2] "It Starts Here" was posted to iCompositions.com by EVILFACTMAN on October 29, 2006 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=48678).

[3] Musical transcriptions throughout this dissertation are representative reductions of musical moments under discussion in the prose and are not intended as full descriptions of the musical work, but rather as references to notable musical elements.

The Infinite Campus, *a 70-minute musical drama, was posted to iCompositions.com by EvilFactman on July 7, 2007.[4] This drama encapsulates important themes that I will address in this dissertation on Internet musicians and the sociomusical worlds in which they interact. Set in the future,* The Infinite Campus *reveals key values held among many musicians within this study, including the vitality of virtual communities, the celebration of "outsiderness" through artistic independence from commercial constraints on musical creativity, and the social force of music and the power of collaborative action. This Overture, an abridgement of* The Infinite Campus, *contains essential scenes from EvilFactman's drama.*

NARRATOR:[5]   Hello and welcome to *The Infinite Campus*.[6]

What is this all about, you say? Well, what its all about really is something that frustrated me at work and made me want to react.

Well, what have I got? Well…I thought, I got music and I got GarageBand. And I've also got some people I know on this great iComp website.[7] So, last summer and early fall the call went out: "I need help."

A lot of people believed that I need help, because twelve artists from three continents answered my plea and said, "Somebody's got to help this guy." What I needed help with was the fight. The fight against the Infinite Campus.

…if you just hold on and follow along you will be rewarded with the knowledge of what it takes to overthrow the evil Emperor and Darci Vader. And to keep us away from The Dumb Side, even though The Farce is very strong and is supported by most governments at this time. But we have a pretty strong community here and you can just see this in how they help me fight The Farce.

So…this is really only part one of the call to battle against the evil Infinite Campus and The Farce. So let's all raise our voices and put our efforts together. And the next time I put out the call, you answer the call and come with me to fight

---

[4] http://www.icompositions.com/music/podcasts/episode.php?eid=157. The Infinite Campus is the third part of a larger work titled Stupid Wars, a musical drama trilogy conceived by EASYESTEEMER/ EVILFACTMAN. After completing *The Infinite Campus*, EVILFACTMAN released its prequel, "The Rise of the Farce" on June 23, 2008 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/podcasts/ episode.php?eid=256). While *The Infinite Campus* is set in the future, "The Rise of the Farce" is set in the past. The middle part of the trilogy, which is set to take place in the present, is expected to be completed sometime in 2009 or 2010.

[5] The narrator is played by EASYESTEEMER (http://www.icompositions.com/artists/easyesteemer) and EVILFACTMAN (http://www.icompositions.com/artists/EvilFactman), the "alter ego of a split personality." Both EASYESTEEMER and EVILFACTMAN are online personae of the same offline person.

[6] The Infinite Campus refers to the flagship product of Infinite Campus, Inc., a company that provides information technology solutions to the K-12 education system. See http://www.infinitecampus.com/ for more information on the company and its product.

[7] http://www.icompositions.com

the evil Infinite Campus. Do I hear your voices? […] Come on. Take a deep breath. Get up there to the high notes and sing!

Figure 2: Vox theme for *The Infinite Campus*

A clearly articulated melodic theme enters, played by a breathy, synthesized vox sound.

NARRATOR: Yes. That's it! Together we can bring down the Infinite Campus and eliminate the Dumb Side, no matter how strong the Farce might be. It is not as strong as music. As funk. Yes, funk will save the universe. Along with Distorted Fingerbass 01,[8] as you see now, as you listen o *The Infinite Campus*.

Here you go boys and girls. Here you have one of the best Farce fighters in the world, straight out of the jungles of Australia: It is what it is. She lays out the challenges ahead.

Figure 3: Distorted Finger Bass 01 loop

Distorted Finger Bass 01 enters softly into the mix and grows, increasing in amplitude until it becomes a prominent theme in the musical accompaniment.

ITISWOTITIS:[9]   Every being was now a data slave to the evil Emperor who controlled the Infinite Campus. And it got worse. The Emperor had a side kick Darci Vader who loved to torment the data slaves for her own pleasure. Worse still was the Borg queen who was determined that all data slaves be assimilated and live lives of total compliance.

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[8] Distorted Fingered Bass 01 is the name of a MIDI loop that comes packaged with the GarageBand application. MIDI, loops, and GarageBand are discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

[9] http://www.icompositions.com/artists/itiswotitis
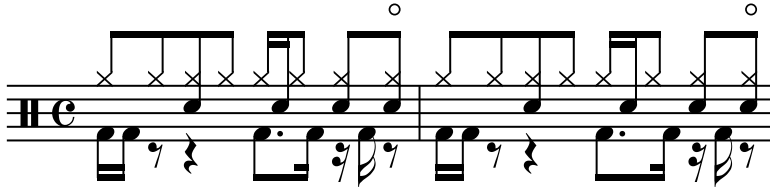
Figure 4: Funk drum 1

A funk groove is established by a drum loop.

ITISWOTITIS: But there was hope. As the years went on, resistance grew lead by Yoda, the only being now alive who was born before the great assimilation. Yoda had a vision and in that vision appeared the FACTMAN and EASYESTEEMER. Two brave warriors who were chosen to fight the Infinite Campus and its great power "The Farce." The Farce was a power that brought all who encountered it into "the Dumb Side" where they would follow their leaders blindly and disregard their own powers of Logic and Reason.[10] But The Farce had a weakness and that was music. Not mainstream music but funky independent music like that once found on the iComp website! Follow the story of Yoda and Factman as they battle the Infinite Campus!

The Jedi Left Behind[11]

Figure 5: Edgy Modern Rock Bass 02 loop

Accompanied by Edgy Modern Rock Bass 02,[12] Yoda meets EVILFACTMAN, the hero, and instructs him on the dangers of the Evil Farce. EVILFACTMAN is then exposed to The Emperor, (a bad guy, clueless and powerful at the same time), Darci Vader (The Emperor's evil sidekick and Yes-man), and The Borg Queen (played by the Macintosh VoiceOver text-to-speech program).

---

[10] Logic and Reason are the names of two popular digital music applications: Logic is made by Apple, Inc. (http://www.apple.com/logicstudio/) and Reason is made by Propellerhead Software (http://www.propellerheads.se/products/reason/).

[11] "The Jedi Left Behind" was posted to iCompositions.com by EVILFACTMAN on September 27, 2006 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=46616).

[12] Edgy Modern Rock Bass 02 is the name of the loop used in this section.

In this futuristic setting, music has been banned from planet Earth by the evil Emperor. In order to fight the evil Farce, Yoda and EVILFACTMAN head back to Earth to extract the remnants of its musical past, with the plan to use music as a weapon against the Emperor and bring down The Infinite Campus.

EVILFACTMAN: Well, anyway, we're out there looking around and I think, "Whoa, I remember that iComp site. There must be something left of that somewhere."

Figure 6: Variation on the vox theme

The breathy, synthesized vox theme reemerges.

EVILFACTMAN is beamed down to Earth where he discovers a computer containing an iTunes database titled The iComp Library." EVILFACTMAN is captured by the Dumb Side, but not before he uploads the songs from the iTunes library to Yoda's ship.

Escape to the Funk Zone[13]

DOUBLEOUGHTJETHRO:[14] When we last saw our hero the EVILFACTMAN he had been captured by the Borg and he was being brutally tortured by The Emperor and his sidekick Darci Vader at the borg queen's hideout. Yoda appeared and created a diversion just long enough for the EVILFACTMAN to escape.

Figure 7: Escape D Tubular Bells loop

---

[13] http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=43206

[14] DOUBLEOUGHTJETHRO is played by an anonymous iComper, who, according to EVILFACTMAN "is a rather serious musician and did not want to be directly linked to my endeavor but wanted to help out" (http://www.icompositions.com/artists/DoubleOughtJethro).

Escape D Tubular Bells[15] sounds repeatedly as timpani fade in slowly

YODA: Seek the funk zone we must.

Figure 8: Distorted Finger Bass 01 loop

The Distorted Finger Bass 01 theme returns unaccompanied.

EVILFACTMAN: Will do Yoda. Hold on here we go. I'm going to take us into the asteroid belt.

BORG QUEEN: If he gets in that asteroid belt he will get away.

EMPEROR: You fools he is taking us into the Funk zone. You have failed the Infinite Campus. We must return to the Dumb side.

Figure 9: Funk drum 2

A funky drum rhythm fades in, supporting Distorted Finger Bass 01.

YODA: Feel the funk zone I do.

BORG QUEEN: We can't stay in this place, it is too funky.

YODA: The Farce and the Dumb side screwed they will be.

DARCI VADER: Oh No! The Farce, the Farce is not with us in the funk zone. We are Funked.

DOUBLEOUGHTJETHRO: So the EVILFACTMAN has discovered the one thing in the universe that will stop the Farce and that is funk! Yes, children, the Infinite Campus is about to be funkified and the universe will again be safe for the powers of Logic and Reason!

    As the Farce was regrouping back at their Dumbstar, EVILFACTMAN and Yoda celebrated their victory and get carried away discussing the awesome technology of their spaceship.

---

[15] Escape D Tubular Bells is the name of the loop used in this section.

The Skirmish[16]

EVILFACTMAN: Hey Yoda. This is one of those new iShips isn't it? Pretty cool.

YODA: iShip it is. But I wish I would have waited another month. 'Cause then the new model came out. Twice as fast, same price.

EVILFACTMAN: Well, you know, that's the way it always is. What OS you runnin' on this anyway?

YODA: OS two million and four point two it is EVILFACTMAN.

Something on the widget sensor there is! It's Darci and the Emperor! Somehow they've been able to penetrate the Funk Zone!

EVILFACTMAN: Oh no! They must have developed an anti-funk weapon that cuts through the funk zone!

YODA: It's worse than that FACTMAN! Here comes the Borg Queen. An anti-funk weapon also she has.
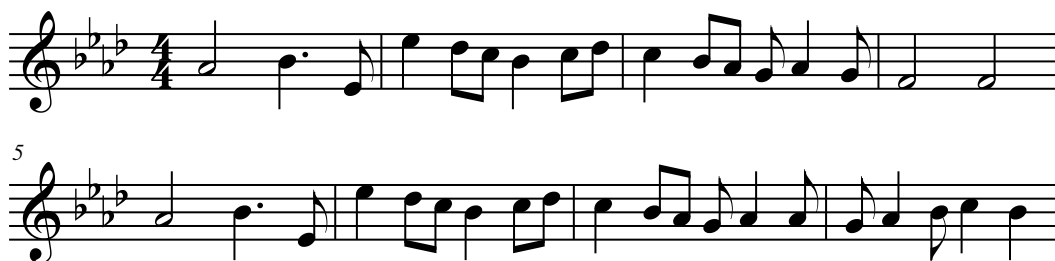
Figure 10: "My Heart Will Go On"

The Emperor, Darci Vader, and the Borg Queen approach Yoda and EVILFACTMAN's iShip, blasting through the funk zone with their anti-funk rendition of "My Heart Will Go On," the theme from the 1997 blockbuster film, Titanic.

EVILFACTMAN: Oh, no, Yoda this is a powerful anti-funk weapon. They are going to gang up on us. We are going to have to retreat and ask for some help.

YODA: Retreat we must.

EVILFACTMAN: Boy, that was really a close call. We're going to have to hide behind this dark matter until we get some help…Send out a special code.

---

[16] "The Skirmish" was posted to iCompositions.com by EVILFACTMAN on October 5, 2006 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=47146).

Help Us UFO[17]

Help us.___ Please help ___ us.___ We must not die by the

hands of e– - vil in-fin-ite-Cam - pus. ___ Please help us now.
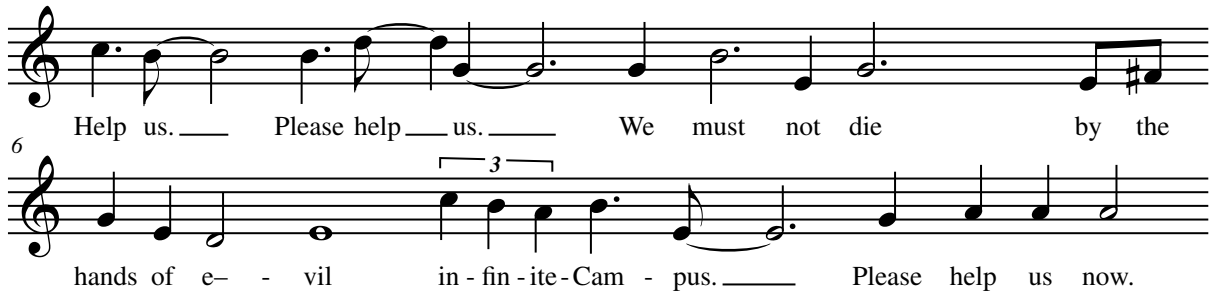
Figure 11: General call for help

Figure 12: Indonesian Chi Gamelan 25 loop
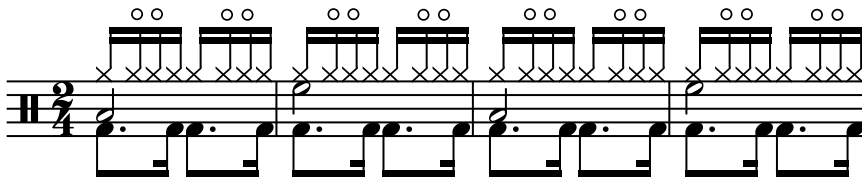
Figure 13: Brazilian Sun Zambuma 01 loop (triangle) with samba rhythm

EVILFACTMAN begins singing a call for help, accompanied by a synthesizer, creating a multi-vocal, heterophonic texture in the melody. The call for help is supported by several layers of mixed-genre loops, including a pentatonic gamelan loop. and a samba rhythm, played by triangle and drums. Various other synthesized sounds (including a theremin-sounding instrument) provide color and context for the space theme.

NARRATOR: So out through space, their plea had traveled…and they came to help us and to make us free. And out in space there were still all of the iCompers who had escaped from the Earth during the occupation by the evil Infinite Campus. And when the word went out, they came and they fought, and they fought, and the fought, and they defeated the Infinite Campus.

---

[17] "Help Us UFO" was posted to iCompositions.com by EVILFACTMAN on August 6, 2006 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=43333). The instrumental tracks for "Help Us UFO" were done by RIGEE. Vocal tracks were added by EVILFACTMAN.

The Final Battle[18]

Figure 14: Distorted Finger Bass 01 Loop

The Distorted Finger Bass 01 loop returns, softly in the background.

DARCI VADER: That's right, Emperor. They won't be bothering us. Its a good thing we banned music way back at the beginning when The Farce took over. That way they can't come up with any more stuff to fight us. And funk, you know that one thing that got away? Well, know we got that Céline Dion thing? Yeah, that's fighting them off really good. How'd that ever get though the music filter anyway?

EMPEROR: Well, Darci. It's not really music, that's how it got itself through.

BORG QUEEN: Remember, Emperor, there is just one more thing. That iComp library, we never did locate it. Or that PM, the mastermind behind it all. It is the most dangerous enemy of the Dumb Side. We must find it and destroy it before the EVILFACTMAN uses it do destroy our neat little world with only music approved by the Infinite Campus advisory board.

YODA: Well Factman it looks like we got a lot of help.

EVILFACTMAN: Yes Yoda it looks like we got a lot of people that want to fight the Farce. Man we got people here from all parts of the world that want to take up arms against the Dumb Side. Well, it looks like we're ready to go.

YODA: We're being hailed by the Swedish ship.

EVILFACTMAN and Yoda are joined by spaceship captains from across space. Armed with musical compositions, they boldly take on the Dumb Side in collaboration with each other.

---

[18] "The Final Battle" was posted to iCompositions.com by EVILFACTMAN on October 29, 2006 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=48650).

Do it. Do__ it. Do it. Do it. Do__ it. Let's do__ it.

Figure 15: Beginning of "Let's Do It"

Captain Jolofsson,[19] Commander of the Swedish ship, responds to the call for help.[20]

EMPEROR: Drat Darci, I think what they must have done is get into that iComp.…oh no, what's this? Its a ship from Sweden.

Figure 16: Electric guitar riff in "Let's Do It"

Captain Jolofsson fires off "Let's Do It" with a funky electric guitar riff.

DARCI VADER: Sweden! I thought those guys were supposed to stay neutral in stuff like this!

EMPEROR: That's Switzerland, Darci. Switzerland…oh, what a moron.

Figure 17: Downtempo Funk Clav 06 loop

Captain Deputy Doofy,[21] Commander of the Doofinator, leverages Downtempo Funk Clav 06 as the central theme to "Sock It To Me."[22]

---

[19] http://www.icompositions.com/artists/jolofsson

[20] "Let's Do It" was posted to iCompositions.com by JOLOFSSON on September 18, 2006 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=46077).

[21] http://www.icompositions.com/artists/deputydoofy

[22] "Sock It To Me" was posted to iCompositions.com by DEPUTYDOOFY on August 25, 2006 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=44349).

BORG QUEEN: Here comes another ship from the past. How many more do they have?

EMPEROR: Darci, this one has been around for a while. This was in our database. I thought you would have taken care of this one by now.

DARCI VADER: I did Emperor. I shot the sherif.

BORG QUEEN: But you did not shoot the deputy. You humans are so doofy. I don't know if we can survive much more of this. How many tunes were on this iComp site?

DARCI VADER: Oh my god, Emperor. Here comes another one! Look at the colors!
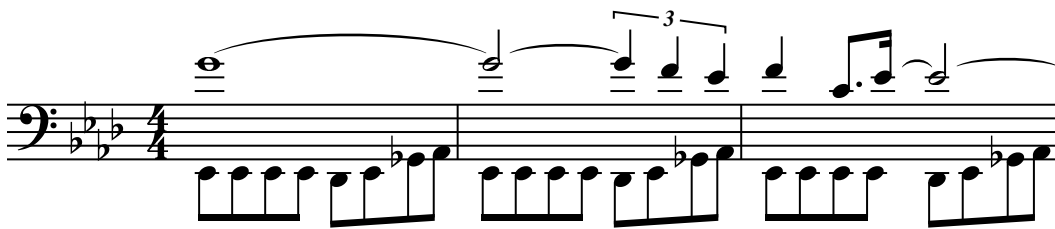
Figure 18: Bass guitar line and lead guitar solo in "PHX"

Captain Ramzar51,[23] *Commander of the Experience spaceship, fights the evil Farce with "PHX," a nod to Jimi Hendrix.*[24]

DARK SIDE CREW MEMBER: We've taken a direct hit!

EMPEROR: Nothing will save us from this. I really don't like this guy he keeps sending the same message over and over again. Are you experienced, are you experienced? The Farce is not experienced with this kind of music! Oh, oh that hurt! Damage report.

---

[23] http://www.icompositions.com/artists/RAMZAR

[24] "PHX" is a cover (or reworking) of "Third Stone From the Sun" from *Are You Experienced?* by The Jimi Hendrix Experience. It was posted to iCompositions.com by RAMZAR on August 13, 2006 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=43525).

Figure 19: Bass guitar line and lead guitar solo for "Songplug…rawhide…song no. 308"

Captain Woody,[25] Commander of Spruce Duce spaceship (invisible to sensors because of its unique construction), emits "Songplug...rawhide..song no.308," a surf rock instrumental featuring heavy reverb on the lead guitar.[26]

BORG QUEEN: Wait a minute! There is a ship and there is nothing on the sensors. How can there be a ship with nothing on the sensors? How can that be?

DARCI VADER: Well queenie, it looks like that ship is made of wood. Now who's going to make a spaceship out of wood?

EMPEROR: Well Darc , I don't know who that is but I guess we'll just have to call him wood guy. Yea woodguy.

BORG QUEEN: Oh no! It's going to get much worse. I recognize that ship its the Zarvoxs.

Figure 20: Funky Pop Bass 02 loop

Captain Richard Geiger,[27] provides the Zarvox with more funky ammo to fight the Farce by sending "U.F.O. 2.," with its Hammond organ solo and Funky Pop Bass 02 loop.[28]

ZARVOX CAPTAIN: We are here to help you destroy the Infinite Campus. We bring the funk of Mister Richard Geiger funk master of our galaxy. The Farce will be funked and the Dumb Side will be eliminated…we're doing the funk de funk. Play it Richie!

---

[25] http://www.icompositions.com/artists/woodguy32

[26] "Songplug...rawhide..song no.308" was posted to iCompositions.com by WOODGUY32 on August 27, 2006 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=44463).

[27] http://www.icompositions.com/artists/RiGee

[28] "U.F.O. 2" was posted to iCompositions.com by RIGEE on Aug 9, 2006 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=43319).

Figure 21: Figure played by Blue Jazz Organ MIDI instrument

EASYESTEEMER joins his alter-ego/twin brother, EVILFACTMAN, in the fight against the evil Farce with "Hand That Seeds."[29]

Darci Vader: Oh no Emperor. Oh no, this is what we feared. That ship, that ship, its the EASYESTEEMER! Noooooo.

EMPEROR: Yes, Darci. I'm afraid it is. This is just too much. The Farce is funked. Nooo. Noooo. Cursed be that PM and that iComp website with all that funky music to destroy the Farce.

Figure 22: Distorted Finger Bass 01 loop

The Distorted Finger Bass 01 loop returns, one last time.

All Hail! The Great P - M!   He de-stroyed the dark - side.   By the pow-er of the tunes.

Figure 23: "All Hail, the Great PM!"

A phantom voice sings the praises of PM over the top of Distorted Finger Bass 01.

---

[29] "Hand That Seeds" was posted to iCompositions.com by EASYESTEEMER on March 12, 2006 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=33309).

The Great PM[30]

ITISWOTITIS: Well there you have it. The Dumb Side was destroyed and again the world was made safe for the practitioners of Logic and Reason. But there was more. A new hero emerged to rule over the world and to be praised and revered throughout the universe. You see it was not EVILFACTMAN, EASYESTEEMER, or Yoda who saved the universe but it was the great coder, the keeper of the tunes, the new Musesiah. We can not even speak his name. We can not even imagine his power, but he is now known throughout the universe as the great and all powerful PM! From this point forward g eat cathedrals will be built in his honor and every Saturday night, or early Sunday morning, depending on the time zone, all will gather in the great cybercommunity to give praise and to upload songs to honor his glorious creation.
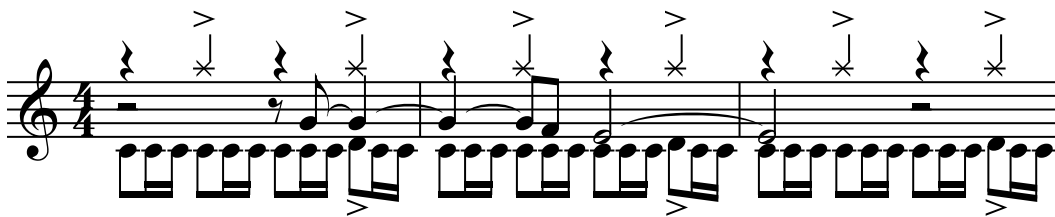
Figure 24: "The Great PM"

DOUBLEOUGHTJETHRO: Children of the universe we are gathered here this Sunday morning as we do every Sunday to upload our tunes in honor of the great PM. Please repeat after me:

DOUBLEOUGHTJETHRO & Chorus: Great PM, coder of all things, we humble ourselves in your presence.

DOUBLEOUGHTJETHRO & Chorus: We know we have sinned and you have saved our butts from the evil Emperor and Darci Vader.

DOUBLEOUGHTJETHRO & Chorus: We are all goddarned sorry if we have disappointed you in either chat or tune.

    PM

    Who art on the on the Internet

    Hallowed be thy name

    Thy iComp has come

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[30] "The Great PM" was posted to iCompositions.com by EVILFACTMAN on October 29, 2006 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=48682). PM, or POWERMAC99, is the owner and senior administrator of iCompositions.com (http://www.icompositions.com/artists/powermac99).

And tunes will be done

Some come from the earth and some from heaven

And forgive us this day our daily plug

And forgive those who plug tunes against ours

And lead us not into aggravation

For thine is the website with the tunes that fight the Dumbside forever and ever

We say this in Lɪʟɪ's name, Amen.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

When EVILFACTMAN posted a blog entry on the music-oriented website iCompositions.com to announce an ambitious project under the working title *Stupid Wars*, he hoped to recruit other musicians to help him with both the musical soundtrack and, perhaps more importantly, the fight against the "Dumb Side." EVILFACTMAN had only been a registered member of iCompositions for a few months before embarking upon this large-scale, collaborative project, but his offline, real-world persona, a nearly-retired public school teacher in Pennsylvania, had been involved with the Internet-based community since its inception two-and-a-half years earlier as EASYESTEEMER, EVILFACTMAN's alter-ego.[31] In recent months, EASYESTEEMER had begun to be an active collaborator on iCompositions, leading EVILFACTMAN to initiate a larger collaborative effort in the creation of *The Infinite Campus*, the first installment of the long-term *Stupid Wars* project.

In *The Infinite Campus*, EVILFACTMAN relates fundamental values that underlie the musical culture of iCompositions.com. On its surface, *The Infinite Campus* is a story about a public school teachers' resistance to administration-required use of a standardized database for tracking student progress.[32] EVILFACTMAN wrote concerning his position regarding his school district's adoption of the Infinite Campus database:

> I have a philosophical problem with the whole idea of putting all the little grades out there and making the parent aware of every little thing. Kids need help and nurturing but they also need to learn to deal with the world on the worlds own terms not through the filter of hovering parents. It is a hard but necessary thing that kids learn to stand on their own without mommy and/or daddy smoothing out every little bump in the road. Mom and dad should know how the kid did in the marking period, they do not need to know how little Jimmy did on every little 10 point quiz. I do not need to have some poor misguided parent sending me tearful emails because Jane got her first C on a major test. I personally know of a whole group of teachers who fudge the grades on final exams so that the evil Darci doesn't get mad that their kids averages are below district and parent expectations. This is only one aspect of the "FARCE".[33]

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[31] EVILFACTMAN was created as an alter-ego to EASYESTEEMER for posting more subversive musical material to iCompositions than was typical for EASYESTEEMER's repertoire.

[32] See page xxi for an explanation of the Infinite Campus.

[33] http://www.icompositions.com/music/podcasts/episode.php?eid=157. For quotes from publicly accessible discussions (e.g. forum posts, blog entires, and comments on songs), I will reference the URL. Quotes with no footnote citation are from personal communication with the artist.

But, as EVILFACTMAN declares, this "mostly true" narrative about school teachers, superintendents, and the Infinite Campus database is only one aspect of what he calls the "Farce." *The Infinite Campus* is a metaphor, a musical expression of a much larger story. Relying upon familiar, mythical stories from (ancient) pop-culture tradition, such as *Star Wars*,[34] and merging them together with contemporary, everyday struggles, EVILFACTMAN's allegory highlights themes central to sociomusical life on iCompositions.com: emancipation via music technology, independent music and musicians, and musical collaboration.

The technocultural context of *The Infinite Campus* is readily apparent in the music and dialog of the drama. From the borrowing of *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* characters and themes to the extra-terrestrial setting, the story depicts iCompers (participants in the iCompositions.com community) as spaceship captains using the latest technology (preferably the latest "iProduct" developed by Apple, Inc.) to deliver funky, independent music in the final battle against music-allergic cyborgs. Greedy and jealous, this conglomerate of members of the Evil Farce engages in nefarious activities with the aim to destroy individuality and independent musical expression. Their global control of music and technology is exhibited in their mainstream weaponry of multi-national number-one hits by pop music superstars, such as Céline Dion. But EVILFACTMAN knew that taking on such powerful corporations—the music industry—alone would yield little result. Ultimately, the survival of independent music-making would require cooperation and collaboration among musicians across (cyber)space.

Although set in the future, *The Infinite Campus* is a tale of our time, a retelling of the story of iCompositions.com and the user-generated, social-networking World Wide Web which makes a community, such as iCompositions, possible.

Purpose

This dissertation is an ethnographic presentation of collaborative, Internet-based musicians with a primary focus on the participants of one particular musical cybercommunity: iCompositions.com. Considering both social and musical interaction among iCompers, I examine the role of technology in the musical activity of twenty-first-century recreational musicians, the process of constructing an independently-minded musical cybercommunity, and the shared authorship of musical collaboration among Internet musicians. My hope is to illuminate the significance of amateur musical communities within the broader context of popular music and Internet cultures by focusing on the sociomusical practices and intersubjective experiences of Internet musicians within iCompositions.

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[34] Within the context of pop-culture, we may consider George Lucas' *Star Wars* to be "ancient," due to both its classic good-versus-evil storytelling and its previous-generation, last-century status as a sci-fi film.

I use term "Internet musician" to refer to individuals under consideration in this study because of the crucial role the Internet plays as a public space for the performance of music and self within cyber-musical communities. Alternatively, I use "personal-computer musician" to highlight the creative activities of Internet musicians, which largely takes place offline with a dependence on computers and computer software for composing, performing, and/or recording.[35] I employ these terms not as a categorical definition of the musicians considered within this study, but rather as a descriptor of the socio-technological context in which varied musical activity takes place on iCompositions and similar online music sites. Many of the musicians active within the iCompositions community participate in musical activity in a variety of settings, online and offline, professional and amateur, (electro-)acoustic and electronic, live and recorded, in-person and mediated. Thus, electronic musicians, pianists, guitarists, karaoke singers, orchestral composers, DJs, remix artists, and poets (or spoken-word artists) are all considered personal-computer or Internet musicians because of the context in which their music is conceived, composed, performed, recorded, and/or distributed. For personal-computer musicians, the computer acts as both a musical instrument used by the musician to create (or record) music and, together with the Internet, the performance space within which the music is transmitted and consumed. While some participants record original songs by overdubbing live (in-time) performances using multi-track digital audio software, others cover previously composed songs (often using software-based MIDI instruments), and still others compose new songs by manipulating pre-recorded samples and off-the-shelf loops.[36]

Regardless of experience or musical expertise, the musicians within these cybercommunities can be generally described as enthusiasts who seek to share musical experiences and extend sociality through a variety of collaborative relationships with geographically-dispersed individuals. These interactive musical experiences and interpersonal relationships result from processes of digital sampling and remixing, as well as more intentional collaborative efforts in which individuals form bands and co-author songs within the realm of Internet-based social networks. Throughout this investigation of musical collaboration within iCompositions.com, I will endeavor to provide answers to the following questions: (1) How is computer technology configured and conceptualized by Internet musicians, some of whom have never consciously engaged in non-digital musicking,[37] and how do these musicians use digital technology to extend their own technical abilities as musicians? (2) From their geographically disparate and isolated

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[35] Other possible classifications for the musicians in this study could include "computer musician" or "digital musician" (Roads 1989; Hugill 2008). These terms, however, have mostly been applied within the context of "high art" composers and music technology research centers within academia—a decidedly different context than the comparatively informal, or even "low-art," approach taken by the Internet musicians to which this dissertation is dedicated.

[36] Further discussion of specific technologies, computer software, and techniques will be discussed in "iCompositions and GarageBand: A Primer" on page 20.

[37] I use the term "musicking" (Small 1998) here because of its grammatical classification as a verb, thereby emphasizing the social and processual approach to music that is fundamental to the experience of Internet musicians. See page 12 for further discussion of the term musicking.

home-studio locations, how are Internet musicians able to develop a community within cyberspace and how does musicking enable the social interactions necessary to form these cybercommunities? (3) How does collaborative musicking help create a more immediate sociomusical experience for these musicians in the disembodied realm of computer-mediated communication (CMC)? (4) How is the concept of a social network of Internet musicians actualized through the extension of the iCompositions community beyond the website domain into other sociomusical contexts on the Internet and in "real life"? (5) How is our conception of music redefined and "virtualized" through intertextual processes of collaboration?[38] These questions, and others, will be explored through my experiences and interactions with several Internet musicians, their music, conversations, and social activities, within iCompositions.com and other musical locations on the Internet.

Background and Significance

At the close of each year, *Time* magazine publishes its "Person of the Year" issue, the renowned annual cover story that purportedly recognizes the individual who has most impacted society in the previous year. When the "Person of the Year" issue hit the news stands toward the end of December 2006, the magazine drew much attention for its unconventional nomination. Rather than featuring the typical head-shot of a famed politician, scientist, or media celebrity, the cover of the 2006 edition pictured a computer with a reflective, mirror-like screen, under which is printed, in big, bold letters, "You." (see Figure 25 on the following page). "Yes, you," reads the subtitle, "You control the Information Age. Welcome to your world."

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[38] William Duckworth defines virtual music as "online interactive music" (Duckworth and Farrell 2005, xi).

Figure 25: Front cover for *Time* Magazine's Person of the Year in 2006

Web 2.0 and the Rise of User-Generated Content

Many technology pundits have heralded Web 2.0—a World Wide Web of information controlled and manipulated by the masses and that adapts to individual interests and practices—as a new generation in the development of the Internet.[39] Typical examples of Web 2.0 include the growing popularity of social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook, user-provided information and media sites such as Wikipedia and YouTube, and the rapidly-growing blogosphere. Participants in Web 2.0 technology share resources with an expanding network of friends, relatives, and colleagues as they use database-driven, server-side applications for the creation, modification, and dissemination of content.

This changing face of the Internet, a place now dominated by user-generated content, has followed an ongoing movement in software development, which is exemplified by the rise of Linux (an Unix-like operating system) and other open-source (i.e. collaborative) programming

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[39] The term "Web 2.0" came into common usage following the Web 2.0 Conference hosted by O'Reilly Media in 2004 (O'Reilly 2005).

initiatives that spread in conjunction with Internet adoption throughout the 1990's.[40] This open-source culture was introduced to a wider consumer public in 2001, when Apple, Inc., well-known for its development of user-friendly Macintosh graphical operating system, released Mac OS X, a Unix-like operating system. More important than the spread of Unix-like software, however, was the adoption of a tradition of open-source software (OSS) development. Following the release of Mac OS X, Apple began a new development and marketing trend toward the support of, what Steve Jobs, Apple's co-founder and CEO called, the "digital lifestyle." The convergence of the social ideals of OSS development and a personal-computer-centric "digital lifestyle" set the stage for the rise of twenty-first-century cyberculture as noted by the editors of *Time*.

GarageBand and the Digital Lifestyle

In January 2004, Apple Computer announced GarageBand, the latest addition to their consumer-oriented software suite, iLife. From a technological standpoint, GarageBand was based on the same non-destructive, non-linear digital recording technologies that had been behind all major digital audio/sequencing software packages for years.[41] But previously, consumers had to shell out hundreds of dollars for even entry-level digital audio software applications that, with their rich feature-sets, often required training for even the most computer-literate digital musicians. However, Apple's suggested retail price of $49 for the iLife suite (and free pre-installation of the software package on all new Apple computers) challenged the notion that digital recording was only available to serious hobbyists and prosumers who were willing to pay the price. Additionally, Apple's long-standing reputation as an industry leader in interface design promised an accessible application with a simple, user-friendly interface.

A year-and-a-half earlier, in July 2002, Apple had acquired Emagic, a German company whose flagship product, Logic, was a leader in the digital audio and music production software industry. GarageBand, while certainly a continuation of the Logic product-line into the consumer market, was marketed as more than a mere tool at a reduced price-point. Including GarageBand within the "digital lifestyle" applications suite was a boon to an emerging culture of digital music-makers among personal-computer users who had not previously engaged in non-digital music-making activities. Indeed, within a week of Apple's announcement of GarageBand in 2004, and weeks before the first shipments to end-users, several new user-oriented websites aimed at GarageBand users were launched, the most notable being MacJams and

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[40] See Ducheneaut (2003) for a discussion of social processes within open-source software communities.

[41] "Non-destructive" refers to the ability of the application to mark changes to the data without actually changing the original file. Thus, one may splice, cut, and merge audio files while keeping the original files intact. "Non-linear" refers to the concept of random access, that is the ability to instantly access the music at any point in the song file. This is in opposition to tape recording (even if digital), which requires fast-forwarding or rewinding to locate a specific point in the song.

iCompositions.[42] These websites offer forums for discussing GarageBand or related topics, as well as space for uploading songs, not only for showcasing users' compositional products, but to engender collaborative processes between users.[43]

The primary focus of this dissertation, iCompositions, is just one of these GarageBand user-oriented websites. Like the many social networking, user-generated websites cited in *Time* magazine's Person of the Year cover story, iCompositions consists of user-submitted music. While its tag-line, "Empowering the Independent Musician," may suggest commercial aspirations, a way for musicians to work their way into the Indie music scene, iCompositions is decidedly non-commercial and does not offer integrated e-commerce opportunities for member artists. Members of the community consist primarily of home-based Internet musicians who create songs by recording live takes of instrumental or vocal performances or by using pre-fabricated loops (or, as in most cases, using a combination of both techniques). They then upload their songs to the iCompositions website where others may listen to and/or download the song. Additionally, users may bookmark their favorite songs, post to a number of forums on the discussion boards, and rate and comment on each other's songs. While the majority of members work alone in composing and recording their music, the community also includes many collaborative projects that combine the efforts of two or more iCompers in the production of a musical composition/recording. Collabs, as collaborative projects are typically called within iCompositions, form the basis from which virtual bands, musical games, and remix projects of each other's works emerge.

Review of Literature

iCompers' usage of GarageBand or other home-studio recording software exemplifies the increasing manipulation of digital technology by recreational musicians for the production and distribution of non-commercial, community-oriented musical performances (Lysloff 2003a; Giese 2004; Sinnreich 2007). Indeed, the rapid ascent of Web 2.0 technologies in the practices of Internet participants has drawn attention to what some have called the "rise of the amateur" (Leadbeater and Miller 2004; Howe 2008). This "rise of the amateur" in the twenty-first century represents a re-emergence of a nineteenth-century ideology of amateurism in the arts and sciences (Stone 1957; Kohlstedt 1976; Levine 1986). Amid encroaching mass-mediated forms of professional musical performances in the first half of the twentieth century, scholars (Schauffler 1911; Clarke 1935) and musicians (Gordon et al. 1933) noted the turning of the public's attention to musical recordings and commercial radio broadcasts in lieu of participation in home- and community-based performance practices (see also, Philip 2004; Wald 2009).

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[42] MacJams is available at http://www.macjams.com.

[43] Both of these sites continue to be active, and independently owned and operated, more than five years after their initial launch. While neither site is exclusively oriented towards GarageBand, iCompositions maintains a strong connection to GarageBand, specifically promoting the circulation of news relating to and music produced with GarageBand.

Seen as a threat to the creative activity of musical amateurs, recording technology drew the attention of critics, such as the popular band leader, John Philip Sousa, who famously coined the term "canned music" in reference to the disembodied (and perhaps stale) sounds emanating from the cylindrically-shaped Edison phonograph record. Later criticisms of recording technology have come from social critics such as Theodore Adorno (1990) and Jacques Attali (1985), who both find fault in the "rigidity of [a recording's] repetitions" (Adorno 1990, 59). For many critics of recording technology, the instant gratification of on-demand playback of recordings objectifies the musical experience, distances audiences from performers, and reduces amateur participation in the creation of music. Ultimately, critics argue, music will be stripped of its aesthetic and social functions of music within society. The re-emergence of amateurism within the context of twenty-first century digital technologies as indicated by iCompositions, however, suggests that recording technology may be viewed as an enabler of recreational musical expression within social networks of collaborators, rather than voiding musical sociality in the production of static music objects.[44]

Music and Technology

Research on music and technology has generally emphasized the application of electronic machines in the production of experimental and popular musics.[45] Over the past decade, this research has been joined by historians and musicologists who have given much attention to the reproduction and distribution of music via recording technologies. These studies include investigations focused on the historical development of recording devices and technology, the rise of a music industry centered around the commodification of music recordings, and the effects of recording technology on the conception of musical performance and performance practices.[46] While these studies provide a general background for the history of computer music and recording technologies, a more contextual history of the development and application of GarageBand in relation to iCompositions is explored in Chapter 2, "iCompositions and GarageBand: A Primer."

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[44] The suggestion of a re-emergence of amateurism in the twenty-first century does not mean that musical amateurism disappeared for the greater part of the twentieth century, only that journalists, cultural critics, and scholars have become more attentive to amateur activities in recent years.

[45] For references on electronic and computer music, see Holmes (1985), Chadabe (1997), Théberge (1997), Dodge & Jerse (1997), Lee, Shapiro, & Reynolds (2000), Prendergast (2000), Braun (2002), Manning (2004), and Doyle (2005) .

[46] For studies focused on the history of recording technology, see Symes (2004), Millard (2005), and Morton (2000; 2006). Works focused on the relationship between recording technology and the music industry include Heylin (1996), Day (2000), and Coleman (2005). Examples of research concerning the effects of recording technology on musical style and performers include Chanan (1995), Katz (2004), Philip (2004), and Jan (2005).

Along with the above publications, recent research by ethnomusicologists has also included detailed studies of emerging electronic technologies within an array of musical cultures. In his introduction to *Wired for Sound: Engineering and Technologies in Sonic Cultures* (Greene and Porcello 2005), Paul Greene suggests that ethnomusicologists have historically favored "organic" technologies (such as acoustical musical instruments) in their field research and analyses over electronic or digital technologies (Greene 2005). Recent edited volumes, such as *Wired for Sound* and *Music and Technoculture* (Lysloff and Gay 2003) indicate a growing interest in technological processes among ethnomusicologists (aside from the "organic" technologies that are typically included in ethnomusicological studies). Several such studies focus specifically on performance, engineering, and mixing practices within recording studios, processes that are integral to the musical activities of Internet musicians.[47]

Dependent upon personal computers and home-studio recording equipment, Internet musicians are invested in a culture of music technology consumption and the technology they utilize shapes the musical practices and social behaviors of the musicians (Théberge 1997). Computer network technologies, including the Internet and the World Wide Web, are critical to the sociomusical lives of participants within iCompositions and other Internet-based communities.

Music, Community, and the Internet

Musical activity on the Internet has attracted the attention of scholars from a wide variety of fields and disciplines. Much of the research in this area has focused on the practices of music file-sharers on peer-to-peer networks and the adoption of new distribution methods within the music industry.[48] Consequently, a significant number of related studies has been conducted on issues of ownership, copyright, and music piracy on the Internet.[49] Other research has focused more specifically on the social relationships that develop between music enthusiasts on fan sites and other cybercommunities of affinity.[50] These various studies provide an important backdrop for considering the larger cultural milieu within which Internet musicians engage in creative

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[47] See, for example, Fikentscher (2003), Porcello (2003), Porcello (2005), and Wallach (2005).

[48] For examples of research focused on file-sharing on peer-to-peer (P2P) networks, see Brown, Sellen, & Geelhoed (2001), Bhattacharjee, Gopal, & Sanders (2003), Giesler & Pohlmann (2003), and Ebare (2005). Studies regarding the adoption of Internet-based distribution of commercial music recordings include Garofalo (1999), Haring (2000), Kasaras (2005), McLeod (2005), and Pfahl (2005).

[49] Studies regarding music piracy on the Internet are numerous, many of which are related to file-sharing on peer-to-peer networks. A few examples of such research are Ginsburg (2001), Ku (2002), Bowrey & Rimmer (2005), Gantz & Rochester (2005), McLeod (2005), O'Brien & Fitzgerald (2006), Gillespie (2007), and Lessig (2004; 2008).

[50] See, for example, Watson (1997), Kibby (2000), Weisberg (2005), Jenkins (2006), Beer (2008), and Baym & Burnett (2009).

musicking. As a community designed to support the creative activities of musicians, iCompositions is similar to other music production-oriented websites discussed in Timothy Taylor's book, *Strange Sounds: Music, Technology & Culture* (2001).

Perhaps the most notable contribution to the study of Internet-based communities within the field of ethnomusicology is Rene Lysloff's ethnographic research of the "mod" scene (Lysloff 2003a, 2003b). Mod musicians (so named because of the digital music modules that are created by the musicians) interact with each other through the social practices of musical composition, techno-performance, and swapping of mods over the Internet. The theoretical questions posed by Lysloff, some of which he takes from Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, are concerned with issues of "presence" and disembodiment in virtual space, the individual experience of being "online," and the force of technology on musical knowledge and experience. Lysloff concludes that the mod scene constitutes a genuine community, whose members have built a complex social structure through musical action, commodity exchange, and bureaucratic governing.

The positioning of iCompositions as a community, like the mod scene investigated by Lysloff, presupposes an understanding of community that moves beyond the physically bounded notions established by nineteenth-century anthropologists and sociologists—such as Comte, Le Play, Tönnies, and Weber[51]—toward a conception of community that is neither geographically situated nor teleologically progressive. These cybercommunities, which are built upon disembodied relationships sustained through CMC, generally fall under the rubric of "virtual" communities. Lysloff points out, however, that the term "virtual" describes not the value of the social relationships under investigation (these are very much "real"), but the context of the social interactions, which happen in virtual places or via technological mediation.

The concept of community, or virtual community, has been a topic of much debate among Internet scholars. Gerard Delanty (2003) identifies three significant theoretical positions concerning virtual communities, as represented by three influential scholars: Howard Rheingold, Manuel Castells, and Craig Calhoun. Rheingold's book (2000), *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*, first published in 1993, is significant for its early discussion of community-making on the Internet. Rheingold sees virtual communities as places where social relationships may exist independently of "real-life" relationships, creating a virtually real experience. Castells (1997; 1998; 2000), on the other hand, suggests the concept of "real virtuality," as opposed to the virtual reality espoused by Rheingold. In other words, according to Castells, technologically mediated interaction is not so much about a virtual connection between real people, as it is about real experiences, immersed in a virtual setting. As opposed to the generally positive perspective of Rheingold and Castells, Calhoun (1992; 1998; 1991) expresses a more cautious tone concerning virtual communities. Online relationships, for Calhoun, are merely an extension of pre-existing, pre-mediated relationships, situating virtual communities firmly within the context of modernism, as opposed to more common post-modern

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[51] Nisbet (1967) provides a thorough historical overview and discussion of the contributions of Comte, Le Play, Tönnies, and Weber toward an understanding of community in relation to the human experience.

approaches. Calhoun argues that social relationships within modern nation-states are already so abstracted and alienated that virtual communities are a natural continuation, rather than an extreme shift, of that process. Recent anthropological research has rejected strict distinctions between online and offline communities, suggesting that the "anthropological approach is well suited to investigate the continuum of communities, identities, and networks that exist…regardless of the ways in which community members interact" (Wilson and Peterson 2002, 456–457).

While some scholars are critical of the term "virtual community," emphasizing instead the demise of community in the Information Age,[52] others continue to argue that the notion of community is a cultural construction, and can therefore be imagined in virtual as well as in embodied ways.[53] As anthropologist Marietta Baba explains, "humans construct their environments, and these environments do not need to be embodied in a physical surround" (2005, 163). In considering the disembodied nature of virtual community, many scholars have conceptualized community as the result of communicative interaction, thus opening the door to CMC as a valid building block for the construction of community.[54] Privileging communication allows for a more fluid concept of community that escapes the merely philosophical or categorical definitions of community, focusing instead toward understanding human relations at a basic level of interaction. In this sense, as suggested by the work of Durkheim, community becomes a "framework for analysis" (Nisbet 1967, 82), an approach to the investigation of social interactions between human actors. This methodological and interactional notion of community is reflected in the term "social networking," where community becomes evident within the "networks of interpersonal ties that provide sociability" (Wellman 2001, 228).

Community and Music as Social Action

As an alternative to what he terms the "Cartesian" community espoused by Comte, Le Play, and Tönnies—a bifurcated perspective that separates the subjective experience of the individual from the objective existence of the structures formed by human groups—sociologist David Studdert (2005) proposes a "common sense view of community," which focuses on the act of

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[52] Among those who see technology, or modern applications of technology, as a threat to the health and existence of communities are Putnam (2000), Bugeja (2005), and Day (2006). This concern is typically based on a belief that face-to-face communication is requisite for the establishment of community. Suzanne Keller (2003), takes this even further, arguing that community requires not only face-to-face communication, but full sensory contact, life-long commitment, and intense, personal investment, none of which, she argues, can be met by online, computer-mediated communities.

[53] Hence, Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined communities" (2006) is commonly applied in investigating virtual communities. For example, see Constable (2003), Lysloff (2003b), Mall (2003), Hayot & Wesp (2004), and Axel (2006).

[54] For example, see Dutton & Peltu (1996), McLaughlin, Osborne, & Ellison (1997), Purcell (1997), Jones (1997; 1998), Smith & Kollock (1999), Shepherd & Rothenbuhler (2001), and Axel (2006).

sociality as defining community.[55] Rather than the single-faceted and static Cartesian model of community, which limits the investigation of human agency and social action to objective causality, Studdert suggests that the multiplicitous and hybridic nature of "lived" communities is the unconscious result of social being-ness. According to Studdert, "community is never a fixed state, rightly it should be a verb not a noun, and it is always the outcome of sociality as an action…" (2005, 2).

Like Studdart's notion of community as a social action, a verb, Christopher Small's concept of musicking provides a process-centered approach to musical scholarship. Small's basic premise is that "music is not a thing at all but an activity, something that people do" (1998, 2) placing our focus on human activity, rather than a musical product. Similarly, John Blacking suggests a processual stance toward music research. In his work among the Venda of South Africa, Blacking discovered the value of investigating musical process, rather than focusing on the musical object. Indeed, the significance of musical interaction as social process within a community is evident in Blacking's assertion that "art lives in men and women, to be brought out into the open by special processes of interaction. Thus the signs have no meaning until that meaning is shared, so that the processes of sharing become as crucial to the semiotics of music as the sonic product which provides the focus of analysis" (1995, 225).

Mediating Social Life through Music Technology

While Small's notion of musicking (music as process) and Studdert's concept of action-centered community (community as process) inform methodological and theoretical considerations for this study, it is important to acknowledge how technological mediation has documented musical and social interaction. Actions taken by members of social networks become fixed in time, as it were, in the archives and distributed databases of the World Wide Web. Musical performances and virtual conversations are recorded as digital information enabling on-demand playback, much the same way as many listeners have experienced music following the invention of Thomas Edison's "talking machine" in 1877. With the wide-spread adoption of the phonograph and the radio in the early twentieth century, the music industry became centered around and maintained by these pervasive broadcast technologies. By documenting, or stabilizing, particular performances, recording technology creates a sound commodity. This resultant sound-object then becomes the primary referent of the previously live performance. Sousa's term, "canned music," suggests a firm delineation between live music and objectified, commodified music.

Within the recording and audio industries, "fidelity" has been a marketing buzz word for decades, as engineers have worked to reproduce clones of the original, live performances. But regardless of the quality of the sound produced, for the purposes of this study, the concern with

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[55] This process-oriented approach to understanding community espoused by Studdert follows a long history of sociological interest in social action as the focus of community research. For example, see Park (1915), Bernard (1951), and Kaufman (1959).

recordings and radio is not the fidelity of the recording, but the issue of mediation—the abstraction of the audience from the performer, as well as the performer from the resultant sonic phenomenon. Indeed, musical technology has always inserted increasing mediation into musical relationships, particularly through the development of broadcast technologies (I use the term "broadcast technologies" to highlight the unidirectional application of the technologies—disseminating music from producer to consumer along a unilinear path). But technological mediation does not necessarily impede social interaction, rather, as Georgina Born (2005) argues, mediation can be a process whereby sociality is extended. In her article "On Musical Mediation," Born takes an "approach to mediation that incorporates understandings of music's social, technological and temporal dimensions" (2005, 7).

The nature of music as a commodifiable product created and distributed through broadcast technologies is a common theme in popular music studies, leading some scholars to focus on the social implications of the materiality of music.[56] Peter Manuel (1993), in his book on the material manifestations of music in North Indian cassette culture, extends the study of musical materiality beyond static recordings toward the democratic-participatory application of technology. Through the use of "democratic-participant media," mediation processes are challenged and undermined by receptors, or consumers, who exert an active, participatory role in the composition and performance of music.[57]

If a more participant role in the creation and distribution of music was made possible with cassette technology, as Manuel suggests, then digital technology has had an even greater impact as a democratic-participant medium.[58] Digital technology has enabled the virtualization of the recorded commodity, which has liberated recordings from their position as a static object of the culture industry to becoming processual. Additionally, the advent of digital technology, coupled with the Internet, has led to the development of intentionally participatory musical projects in cyberspace. In his book, *Virtual Music*, William Duckworth (2005) surveys a variety of both real-time and asynchronous computer-mediated musical performance projects, such as *The Hub, NetJam*, and *The Cathedral*. He provides four elements that define virtual music: it is decentralized, it is participatory, it is inclusive, and it is accessible (i.e. non-linear).[59] Citing Marcus Novak (1997), Duckworth suggests that we "stop seeing music as singular and begin to see it as multiple" (2005, 169). Musical activity on iCompositions meets Duckworth's criteria for virtual music; it also represents the multiplicitous nature of music discussed by Novak.

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[56] For studies that focus on material technologies used in the dissemination of music, see du Gay (1997), Garofalo (1992), and Gitelman (2004).

[57] For other sources concerning the democratizing effect of music technology, see Hesmondhalgh (1997), Saco (2002), and Goodwin (2005).

[58] See du Gay (1997), Karpf (2003), and Jan (2005).

[59] For a further discussion of "virtual music," see Duckworth (1999), Young (2002), McCarthy (2003), Bødker (2004), Helmuth (2005), and Ayers (2006).

The Social Process of Musical Composition

An investigation of the collaborative development of virtual music on iCompositions requires a discussion of the compositional process undertaken by Internet musicians. Carol Muller's (2004) discussion of the creation of Paul Simon's *Graceland* album is noteworthy for its perspective on collaborative compositional processes.[60] Out of the *Graceland* case emerges themes concerning the economy and politics of ownership and authorship, disembodiment and agency, globalization and appropriation, and technology, all of which have relevance to the iCompositions community and other collaborative musical processes in cyberspace. Like the *Graceland* project, iCompositions collaborations are "the result of numerous studio recordings creating multiple tracks of sound that [are] then combined" in yet another studio location—a global process with participant musicians located in various parts of the world (2004, 44). Thus, Muller's investigation of the "fine lines…between inspiration and collaboration, between influence and appropriation, between writing and recording, and between jamming and composing" (2004, 46) proves useful in understanding the collaborative relationships in which cybermusicians engage as they compose, record, and remix digital music.

Thomas Turino's (1989) detailed account of the compositional process of the Ayamara in Peru provides a contrasting approach to understanding the social aspects of musical collaboration. Consistent with notions of communal musicking, as opposed to the commercial aspirations of Paul Simon's *Graceland* project (which Turino (2008) would probably refer to as a "presentational," rather than participatory, performance), compositional and performance practices among the Ayamara are open to all members of the community, with particular emphasis on consensus and cooperation. Like the Ayamara, iCompers engage in "ad hoc" compositional projects, as Turino describes it, and this approach shapes both the social relationships and the musical sound within iCompositions.

Similarly, sociomusical constructions of remix cultures and other so-called "bastard pop" collaborative processes are defined by the shared authorship created when musicians inscribe their own artistic interpretations onto a constantly evolving sonic phenomenon.[61] As Richard Bauman (2004) explains concerning social life, musical life for collaborative artists is "discursively constituted, produced and reproduced in situated acts of speaking and other signifying practices [such as musicking] that are simultaneously anchored in their situational contexts of use and transcendent of them, linked by interdiscoursive ties to other situations, other

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[60] Earlier publications on the *Graceland* project by Steven Feld (1988) and Louise Meintjes (1990) greatly informed Muller's discussion cited here.

[61] Bastard pop is a broad umbrella term that refers to a variety of underground musical processes, such as remixing, mashups, and bootlegs—all of which are created in part by reconfiguring previously recorded music and is generally viewed as illicit due to the disregard of copyright restrictions in the production and distribution of bastard pop (see McLeod 2005b; O'Brien and Fitzgerald 2006). That remix artists' disregard for copyright and ownership of music is sometimes blatant is illustrated by John Oswald's notion of "plunderphonics" (1985).

acts, other utterances" (2004, 2).[62] Through ripping, cutting, and remixing, music undergoes a process in which it is decontextualized from its "original" setting and subsequently (or more accurately, simultaneously) recontextualized, adding new layers of authorship, distribution, intended audience, and interpretive meanings. Such processes create intertextual relationships that not only link sonic phenomena together, but also establish technologically-mediated intersubjective relationships between participants. As Michael Jackson explains, "intersubjectivity is a site of constructive, deconstructive, and reconstructive interaction" (Jackson 1998, 8).

Nonetheless, within the compositional frame of remix culture and virtual music is an intentional search for new sonic experiences. The concepts of "new" and "original" hold particular value among cybermusicians, as does the perceived creativity of the artist. However, standard Western ideas of authorship and ownership, particularly in regards to copyright policy, are at odds with the practice of remixing, potentially dismissing compositional processes dependent upon pre-fabricated loops or previously recorded material. Non-Western perspectives concerning compositional issues of shared authorship (Turino 1989) and reuse of previously composed musical material are helpful in this investigation of remixing practices. In his description of *kreasi beleganjur* compositions in Balinese society, Michael Bakan explains that Balinese composers are consciously aware of the practice of adapting existing musical material for new compositions. The Balinese perspective of composing as a "process of putting things in order to make what is old new" (Bakan 1999, 138) could just as easily describe the practice of composing with audio samples and pre-fabricated loops. In this sense, Donna Haraway's (1992) discussion of "non-endings"—open systems in which nothing is in a fixed state—might be useful to examining the polymorphism of virtual music. Similar to Haraway's notion of "non-endings," Charles Leadbeater warns against the idea of a "moment of creation," instead arguing that "creativity is cumulative and collaborative [and] it develops over a long period of time" (Leadbeater 2005). Attempts to continuously stretch musical expression toward potential non-endings through the frequent reuse and reinterpretation of previously recorded musical material is a common theme in many of the vignettes discussed in this study.

Methodology

As this study is oriented toward an examination of the collaborative creation and exchange of music composed by recreational musicians on their personal computers, I approached this topic in collaboration with other Internet musicians through participant-observation within iCompositions.com. Because of the hypertextual nature of cyberculture, my field research at iCompositions lead me to many other cyberplaces, including other Internet-musician-oriented

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[62] Donna Haraway (1992) prefers the concept of regeneration as opposed to reproduction, arguing that nothing is really ever reproduced (unless it is cloned), but rather rearticulated by social actors through social relationships in order to create meaningful relationships.

websites, such as MacJams.com,[63] as well as virtual worlds with active musical communities, such as Second Life.[64] In addition to these communities, I also frequented sites specifically dedicated to remixes of commercially-released popular music. These websites are typically launched and maintained by professional musicians with an explicit interest in connecting with their fan-base through open-source remix projects.[65]

While many scholars from a variety of fields and disciplines have employed ethnographic methodologies and fieldwork techniques to Internet research since the early 1990s (Rosenberg 1992; Baym 1993; Escobar et al. 1994; Reid 1994), virtual fieldwork has only recently gained recognition within the field of ethnomusicology.[66] Lysloff's chapter "Musical Life in Softcity: An Internet Ethnography" in *Music and Technoculture* (2003a) is significant as an early ethnomusicological study of Internet-based, musical communities. In his ethnography of the mod scene, Lysloff employed "classical field methods," including participant-observation, interviews, documentation, and musical training with a teacher, TrackZ, the master-musician, as it were, of his virtual music culture.

As with Lysloff's research, my fieldwork was based on participation and observation within the communities I have studied. All of the communities included in this study are "open" communities, that is, anyone may observe and participation is free and open to anyone online (i.e. access is not determined by "real world" conditions, such as limiting membership to certain geosocial criteria).[67] Observation within these communities includes listening to music that has been posted by users, reading user comments in response to song postings, following discussion board conversations, viewing user profiles, and following hyperlinks to sites outside the

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[63] See Appendix A on page 204 for a list of websites oriented toward musical collaboration.

[64] See "A Second Life for Internet Musicians" on page 151 for a discussion musicians and musical culture in Second Life.

[65] Three examples of such artists (with their respective websites) are Nine Inch Nails (http://remix.nin.com), Duncan Sheik (http://www.whitelimoremix.com), and Barenaked Ladies (http://remix.bnl.com).

[66] Early ethnographic research on the Internet includes Rosenberg (1992), Baym (1993), Escobar, Hess, Licha, Sibley, Strathern, & Sutz (1994), and Reid (1994). For important examples of virtual fieldwork in other disciplines, see Hine (2000), Howard (2003), Markham (1998), Mason (1996), and Miller and Slater (2000). Recent interest in virtual fieldwork among ethnomusicologists is evident in the inclusion of a chapter on the subject in the second edition of the ethnomusicological fieldwork-oriented text, *Shadows in the Field* (Barz and Cooley 2008). I will discuss this contribution in further detail in "The 'Place' for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology" on page 67.

[67] The degree to which one may participate typically depends upon whether the participant is registered with the site. Almost all of the communities I investigated require no payment for registration. Participation in chat, forums, and posting songs all typically require registration. However, non-registered users may read, listen to, and download songs. Once registered, the participant is usually granted a profile page, or home page, within the site where other member of the community may view information on that participant's activity within the site.

community with relation to the community and/or its members (what may be called "surfing"). In addition to these observational activities, I joined many of these communities (i.e. I registered a username) so that I could have full participatory access, allowing me to post my own songs, rate other's songs, join discussion groups, and contact other members directly through email or instant messenger (the most common approach through which interviews were conducted).[68] My fieldwork took place exclusively in cyberspace, without any face-to-face contact with the physical bodies behind the usernames that populate the cybercommunities in this study. Thus, the subjects are not necessarily the persona of "real-world" individuals, whose communications are technologically mediated, but rather cyberpersona, whose primary mode of communication is computer-network based.[69]

While many ethnographic and theoretical studies of virtual communities distinguish between "real-world," embodied individuals and the virtuality of their online experiences, the ethnographic approach of this project considers life online as a totality of cultural experience.[70] Of particular interest for this approach is Annette Markham's classic Internet ethnography, *Life Online: Researching Real Experience in Virtual Space* (1998). Markham provides an engaging narrative of the online experiences of people she met in Internet Relay Chat rooms (IRCs) and Multi-User Dimensions (MUDs), while simultaneously raising important ethical and methodological issues concerning online fieldwork. Markham's overtly reflexive approach to her ethnography of synchronous computer-mediated communication highlights the unavoidable reflexivity of observing one's own actions through text and avatars displayed on the computer screen. Like the cover of the 2006 Person of the Year issue of *Time* magazine, in which I see my own reflection staring back at me from inside the virtual computer, the Internet is self-reflective, reproducing for us (as well as others) what we have created. Our conversations, thoughts, and actions are recorded and re-presented to us on discussion boards, so-called carbon-copied emails,

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[68] Methodological considerations concerning interviews conducted via synchronous and asynchronous communication technologies has been undertaken by Gauntlett (2000), Mann & Stewart (2003), Crichton & Kinash (2003), and Kivits (2005).

[69] Recent research on Internet cultures has argued for mixed-methods research, incorporating both online and offline interaction between the researcher and research subjects. In a paper titled, "Internet Ethnography: Online and Offline," Liav Sade-Beck (2004) argues that such an approach allows for "thick description" (Geertz 1973) within Internet ethnographies. Shani Orgad's essay, "From Online to Offline and Back: Moving From Online to Offline Relationships With Research Informants" (2005) provides methodological insights for engaging online and offline with the research subjects.

[70] This is not to suggest that the biologically embodied offline world is of no relevance to online experience. There are many ways in which iCompers, and other Internet musicians, bring their offline environment into the virtual world. Some of these practices are explored in Chapter 5, "Extending Community Beyond the Site."

personal websites, and history tracking.[71] The consideration and representation of this self-reflectivity through reflexive ethnography has been a common trait of sociological studies of cyberspace.[72]

While virtual fieldwork raises some important questions regarding my understanding of the "field," and my relationship as an ethnographer to that field, I am not sure that these issues are at all unique to online fieldwork. To what extent do the geographically-dislodged or multi-sited fields of our contemporary, networked society render the Malinowskian vision of immersive and compartmentalized fieldwork irrelevant? By renegotiating our understanding of concepts such as "home" and "abroad," "here" and "there," "immediate" and "mediated," "disembodied" and "real," online fieldwork raises questions that must be addressed in "on the ground" research as well. As the cultures we study become more and more attached to cyber-living and the borders between online and offline become less pronounced in the lives of our ethnomusicological subjects, participatory field research no longer necessarily means leaving home behind or leaving home at all.

Chapter Outline

The following chapter, Chapter 2, "iCompositions and GarageBand: A Primer," will provide an introduction to the primary digital spaces occupied by the Internet musicians that serve as the focus of this dissertation: iCompositions and GarageBand. A survey of these technological spaces will highlight the relationship between music and technology and the democratization of music-making acknowledged by many participants of the iCompositions community. In Chapter 3, "The Musical Construction of a Cyber-place," I will consider the notion of place as explored by ethnomusicologists and applied by Internet researchers studying virtual communities. Through an examination of several songs recorded by iCompers, I investigate how Internet musicians have re-imagined the concept of place and perceive of iCompositions as a real place to gather and come together as friends and musicians. Chapter 4, "Composing a Musical Community," focuses on the extension of sociality and musicality into cyberspace through interaction among iCompers. In this chapter we discover how participant musicians create and build upon shared experiences and the resultant community that is formed through common musical bonds. An understanding of community and social ties created by iCompers is extended beyond iCompositions.com in Chapter 5, "Extending Community Beyond the Site." In this chapter we investigate the use of Internet radio and live video broadcasts for iCompers, offline

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[71] There are many devices, programs, and technologies that track our virtual movements, including browser histories (which record the date, time, and URL of every website we visit), cookies (information that websites leave on our personal computers about our visit to that site so that our next visit may be acknowledged by more personalized information), Google's "recent search" tool (which records every search we make through Google), and many others.

[72] For examples of reflexivity in cyber-ethnographies, see Lysloff (2003), Markham (1998), Turkle (1995), Turkle (2005), and Turkle (2007).

interaction among iCompers, and the experiences of Internet musicians in the virtual world of Second Life. Following a brief Interlude, in which iCompers share their thoughts and experiences within the iCompositions community, the focus of Chapter 6, "Virtual Bands, Remixes, and Cadavres: Musical Collaboration on iCompositions," is placed on social interactivity through musical collaboration. I argue that through collective sociomusical activities, Internet musicians experience an intersubjective phenomenon that is the source of the social and musical bonds that establish community and maintain an atmosphere of collectivity among the disembodied personae that populate iCompositions.com.

CHAPTER 2

iCOMPOSITIONS AND GARAGEBAND: A PRIMER

I've got far more songs I've written or recorded than appear on iComp…If it wasn't for Macintosh and GarageBand those things would never be recorded. And if it wasn't for iComp those things would never be shared.

−TRILOBITE2

I joined iCompositions in February 2004, less than a month after its launch. Having watched Steve Jobs' announcement of GarageBand at the 2004 MacWorld Expo, I was eager to learn more about the application and its adoption among Mac users and amateur musicians. Over the past five years I have watched the growth and development of iCompositions as a significant social networking site for both amateur and professional GarageBand users. Although GarageBand is just one of many digital music computer applications used by iCompers for recording and creating audio files to distribute on the Web, GarageBand served as the impetus for the founding of iCompositions.com. POWERMAC99 explained to me that the idea for launching iCompositions was a direct response to Apple's announcement of the consumer-oriented music application:

> Prior to GarageBand's announcement, I had been thinking of creating a social networking site of some kind for a while. I had seen rumors about GarageBand, but I wasn't really struck with the concrete idea for the site until Steve Jobs announced it at Macworld. I remember watching the keynote…and thinking something to the effect of, "Hey, this is going to create a huge number of amatuer musicians and they're not just going to want to share their music with friends and family." I thought that they may be interested in a wider audience.
>
> So after the announcement, but before GarageBand's release, I put together a very rough site with news and forums. At that point, I had very little experience with web development or design, so I started recruiting volunteers to help run the site. We held a contest offering a $30 iTunes Music Store gift card to the person who designed a real version 1.0 for us.…We received three entries and the winning entrant has been working with me on the site for the past five [years], handling the more complex parts of the custom software that runs the site.
>
> As for my own musical endeavors, they're virtually nonexistent. I do not consider myself a musician, I merely saw a program that I thought would make music composition easier and more accessible to the masses. With GarageBand, anyone

with creativity and a little ambition could create music of near-professional quality. I saw iCompositions as a logical next step for new musicians: share music with peers and, through constructive criticism, improve as an artist.

The purpose of this chapter is to gain familiarity with the two primary sites of sociomusical activity pertinent to this dissertation: iCompositions and GarageBand. I begin by describing the main features of iCompositions.com, exploring the layout and design of the site as the visual environment within which iCompers interact with each other. Following this discussion of iCompositions, I provide an introduction to the history, design, and process of music production with GarageBand. Together iCompositions.com and GarageBand (or other digital music software) comprise the two main contexts for the musical and social action of iCompers. They also present a controversial reality of technologically-dependent, amateur music-making and distribution in the twenty-first century.

Introduction to iCompositions

Figure 26: Acoustic Double Bass Groove 26 loop

[*rapping*]
now icompositions is the place to be
its got all the things that i need to see
news, reviews, links galore
good god, ooh child, they got their own store
top ten songs of the week
icompositions has hit its peak
if you're a mac user like you should be....
icompositions is the place to be.

though my mac is new, my skills are not
and i like to know when my songs are hot
so i post em up for all to rate n see,
hopin for fives, usually get threes.
tell all the folks in ya neighborhood
why icompositions is oh so good
well...if ya lookin for loops that are so so free
icomps is the best, got 783

now just who knows what the future will bring
with new mac/intels our computers get bling
apple is gettin crazy
all the new technology makes my vision hazy
ilife 06 with garageband three
and podcast support for you and me
but i wanna stay with the icomps way,
using their new podcasts to hear my music play

– "iCompositions, Don't Funk With Me" by CICERO19[73]

Just as POWERMAC99 hoped, many musicians who adopt GarageBand join iCompositions in order to share their creations with others, get feedback on their songs, listen to others' music, and download new loops for inclusion in future compositions. Many artists who join iCompositions become eagerly engaged in introducing the website and the features it offers to other personal-computer musicians.

There are five main sections to iCompositions.com: Home, Music, Artists, Forums, and Backstage. The first four areas are available to all visitors to the site. Links to the Backstage are only visible when a registered user is logged in to the site.

iCompositions: Home Page

All visitors to www.icompositions.com are taken directly to the Home page (see Figure 27 on the following page). The iCompositions Home page consists of an "Artist Spotlight" section followed by lists of recently uploaded content (music, videos, and podcasts). The prominent position of the Artist Spotlight indicates the focus of iCompositions as a social network. It displays an artist's banner image and a brief self-description of, or comment by, the artist. Artists are represented throughout the site via their avatars, graphical representations or images (sometimes animated graphics) associated with the artist. Below the banner image are five avatars that can be selected to bring that particular artists' banner image and description into view in the Artist Spotlight (see Figure 28 on the following page).

Like the music and videos on the site, all other content, such as banner images, avatars, and artist descriptions are created and uploaded to the site by the artists themselves. The owner and chief administrator of iCompositions, POWERMAC99, does not create any content (with the exception of help pages and occasional forum posts).

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[73] "iCompositions, Don't Funk With Me" was posted to iCompositions.com by CICERO19 on 13 January, 2006 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=29113).

22
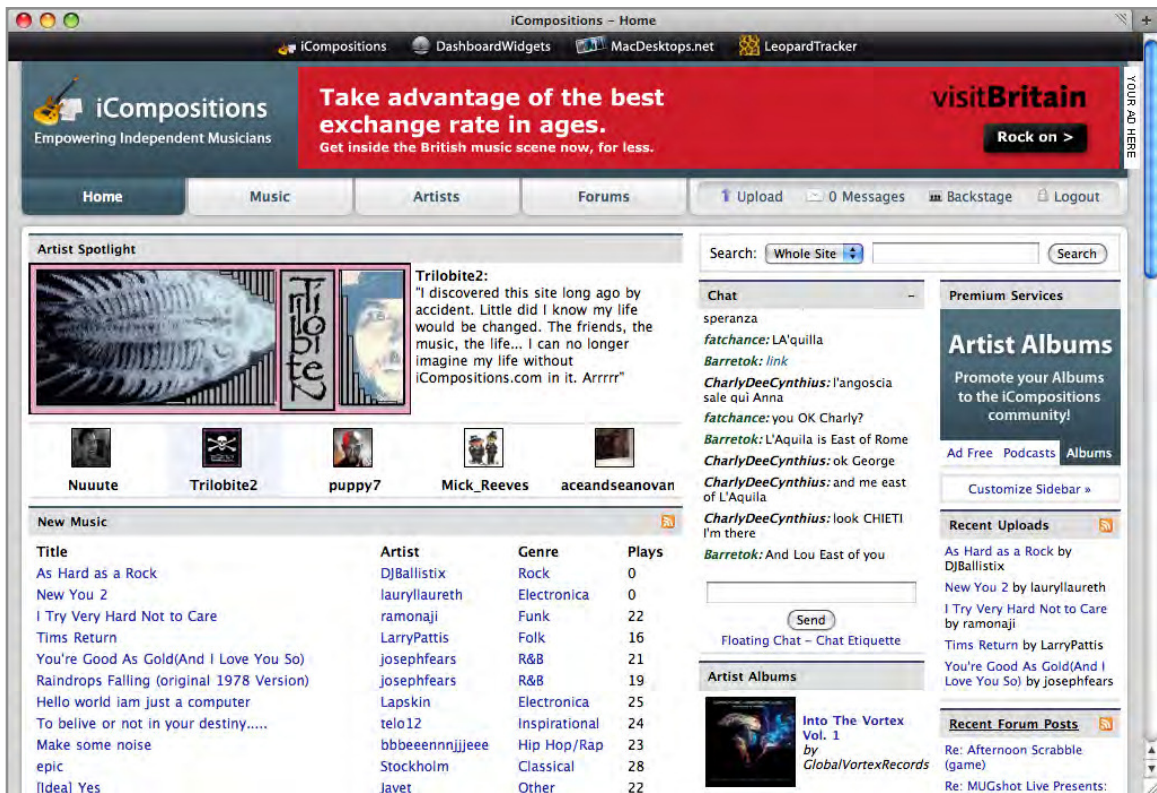
Figure 27: iCompositions Home page
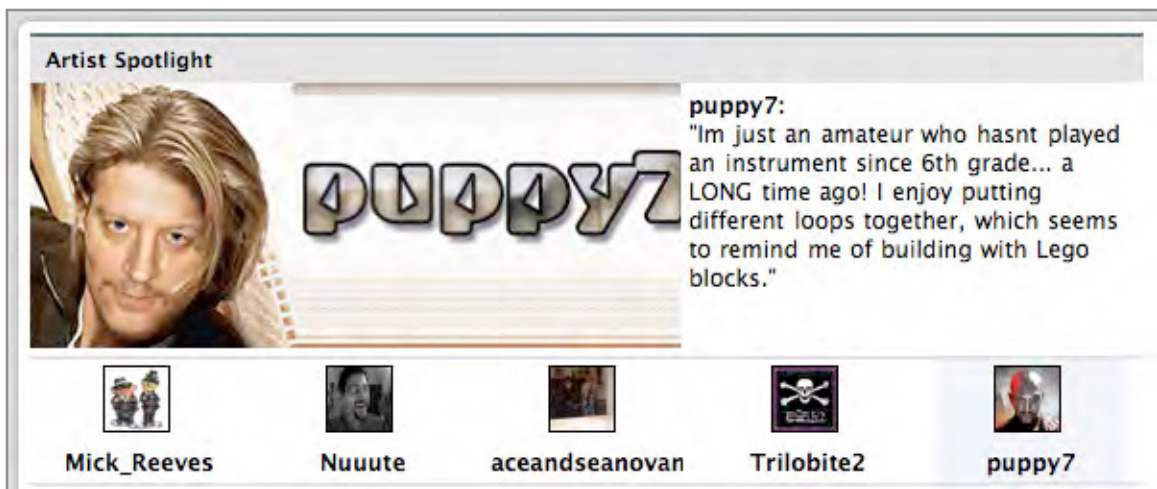
Figure 28: Artist Spotlight

Below the Artist Spotlight are lists of newly uploaded content (see Figure 29 below). An RSS feed button in the upper-right corner of the New Music section allows the user to track newly uploaded content in an RSS reader without having to visit the website in an Internet browser.[74] Below the New Music section are similar lists of New Videos and New Podcast Episodes.

Title	Artist	Genre	Plays
In & Out (of mind)	lauryllaureth	Dance	2
King of the Golden Hall (LOTR Cover – CCC version)	elfdaughter	Classical	2
Sawe Me 2	ibobx	Rock	11
I Want To Sing For You	josephfears	R&B	18
Flight of the Dragon (WIP)	Brewmaster626	Classical	13
Forth Eorlingas (LOTR Cover)	elfdaughter	Classical	16
Sweet Love	Bass2x [+2]	Dance	38
Learn to Listen [Final]	gregbaird	Folk	13
On a Slow Boat to China	Uncle_Moe	Jazz	42
radio emergency (from the 80's)	stiv1	Rock	20

Figure 29: New Music, a list of recently uploaded songs

The right-hand side of the homepage contains a search bar, which searches song titles, artist names, and forum posts (see Figure 30 below). Detailed searching allows for querying song lyrics, specific genres, the date the song or forum message was posted, and other criteria.

Figure 30: Search bar with search results

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[74] Really Simple Syndication (RSS) is a technology that uses specially-formatted, text-based documents (called a "feed") for delivering frequently updated content, such as blogs, news sites, and changes to social networking user pages.

iCompositions: Chat

Below the search bar is the site-wide "chat" (see Figure 31 below), a synchronous, text-based messaging system that functions somewhat like the water cooler or lunchroom—a casual gathering space for real-time conversations, which may or may not be topically related to the purpose of the community. The chat is visible across the entire site, no matter what page the user visits (except in a few cases). The user must be registered and logged in to the site in order to see and post to the chat. The chat may also be opened into a separate floating window. This allows iCompers to continuously interact within the chat window while browsing within iCompositions or away from the site entirely. In other words, the interactivity enabled through the chat system can be decontextualized from the site itself, thus extending iComp sociability beyond the iCompositions domain. As iCompers visit other websites, check their email, watch online movies, etc., they can still maintain a social connection to iCompositions via the discreet, floating chat window. The chat is also noteworthy in that it is the only synchronous tool available within iCompositions allowing iCompers to interact with each other in "real time." All other social and musical interaction within the iCompositions domain is asynchronous.
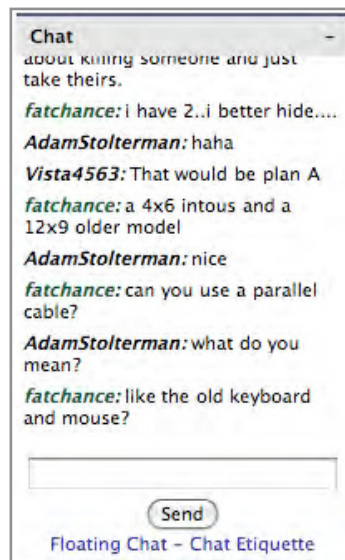
Figure 31: Site-wide chat

Textual conversations in the chat can be accompanied by hyperlinks and emoticons, such as smiley faces (😃). Besides being used to express emotions, emoticons are also used to communicate actions not observable online, such as lurking (📦), listening to songs on iCompositions (🎧), or composing (🧑‍🎨). Emoticons are created by inserting textual codes into the chat field, which the server replaces with the associated image.

The chat is governed by moderators who help enforce the rules of the chat as listed in the Chat Etiquette guidelines.[75] The rules address use of vulgar language, rude or inflammatory behavior, and out-of-context plugging. The act of announcing a song that has been uploaded to the site in an attempt to direct listeners to the song, or what is called plugging, is forbidden on the chat (although this rule is frequently broken by newer members of the site). Hyperlinked text in the chat to songs on iCompositions are automatically altered to read "song plug," bringing attention to the potential violation and iCompers who plug their songs on chat are immediately reminded of the rule by other iCompers, moderators, or POWERMAC99, if he happens to be online at the time. Typically, pluggers are politely redirected to the Lounge forum, which contains the "Official Song Plugging Thread" where iCompers may solicit listeners without violating chat rules (see "iCompositions: Forums Page" on page 32).

iCompositions: Music Page

In addition to the Home page, there are three other public content areas of the site: Music, Artists, and Forums. These areas are easily accessible from the navigation bar above the Artist Spotlight (see Figure 32).

Figure 32: Main navigation bar

The Music page (see Figure 33 on the following page) contains several lists of user-provided content: Recent Uploads of songs, Weekly Top Songs, Random Songs, and Undiscovered Songs, which are songs posted more than a day ago and less than a week, with few plays (plays are counted by how many times the song has been played).[76] Below the chat on the Music page is a list of thirty-one different genres under which a song may be categorized by the artist who uploads it.

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[75] See "Governing iCompositions" on page 111 for further discussion of the role of moderators. The Chat Etiquette guidelines are available at http://www.icompositions.com/site/help/index.php?tid=25.

[76] For a further discussion of issues regarding the ranking of songs, see "Community Competitions" on page 105.

The Music page also hosts a small section called Other Media, which contains links to additional user-generated content, such as videos, loops, sound effects, and setups (pictures iCompers post of their workspace: computers, musical instruments, and recording gear).

Figure 33: Music main page

All content, including each audio or video file is given its own page. Song titles on the Music page link directly to a page for that particular song. The song page contains three main areas: a song header, song information section, and comments. The header on the song page contains an optional cover image, title and artist(s), a play/pause button with a timeline bar, a Download button, a Report button (for reporting inappropriate content to the moderators), an Add to Favorites button, and a ShareThis button[77] for sending a song link to other Web 2.0 social networking tools/sites, such as email, Facebook, Twitter, Delicious, mobile phone text messaging, etc. (see Figure 34 on the following page).

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[77] ShareThis is a tool that enables connectivity between Web-based content and social networking technologies. See http://sharethis.com for more information on ShareThis.
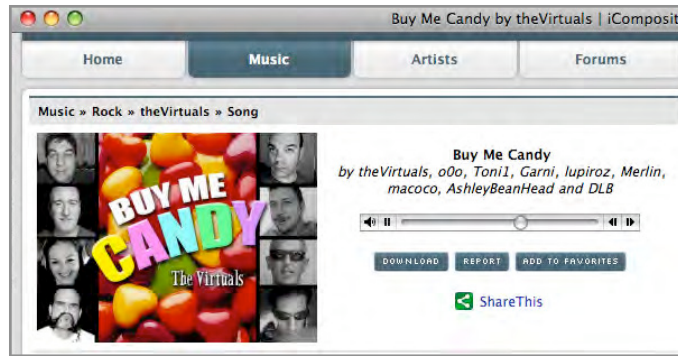
Figure 34: Song header on Song page

Below the song header is an information section for the song. This section contains an area for a description of the song as well as metadata pertaining to the song, such as release date, genre, production software, use of loops, file size, number of plays and downloads, and licensing restrictions. At the bottom of the song information section is a link to display the lyrics, if provided by the artist (see Figure 35 below).
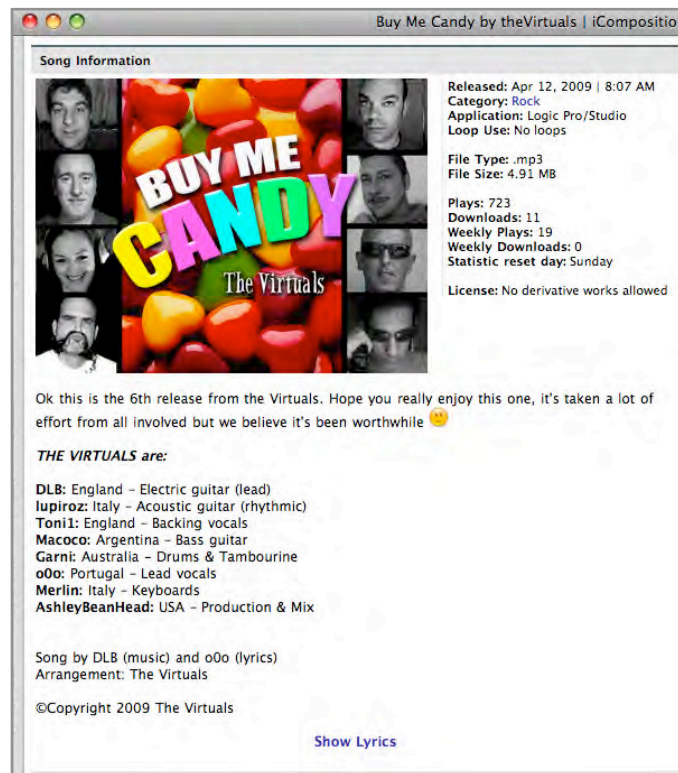
Figure 35: Song information section on Song page

Following the song information section are comments and ratings by listeners (artists may also post a comment to their own song, which is often done in order to respond to other comments). Song comments on iCompositions are typically very positive and encouraging, although constructive criticism is occasionally offered. For example, in response to the song shown in Figure 36 (below), only four comments out of forty-five provide critical feedback in suggesting improvements to the composition, performance, or production of the song. As can be seen in Figure 36, the majority of iCompers do not rate songs, and those who do almost exclusively assign four of five stars.
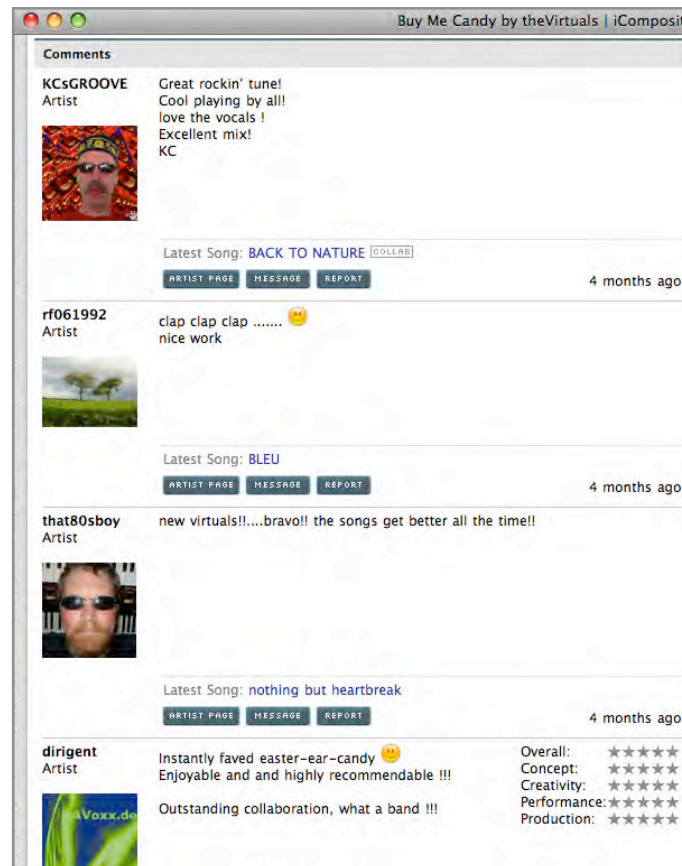
Figure 36: Comments section on Song page

iCompositions: Artists Page

    The Artists page features the same Artist Spotlight section that is visible on the home page (see Figure 37 below). Under the Artist Spotlight is a list of recently posted blog entries. The page also lists new artists (who have recently posted their first song) and a list of the most active commenters of the day, that is, the iCompers who have posted the most comments on others' songs. This focus on recent activity in blog posts and comments helps direct iCompers and visitors toward the social interaction of the website that goes on beyond posting songs.
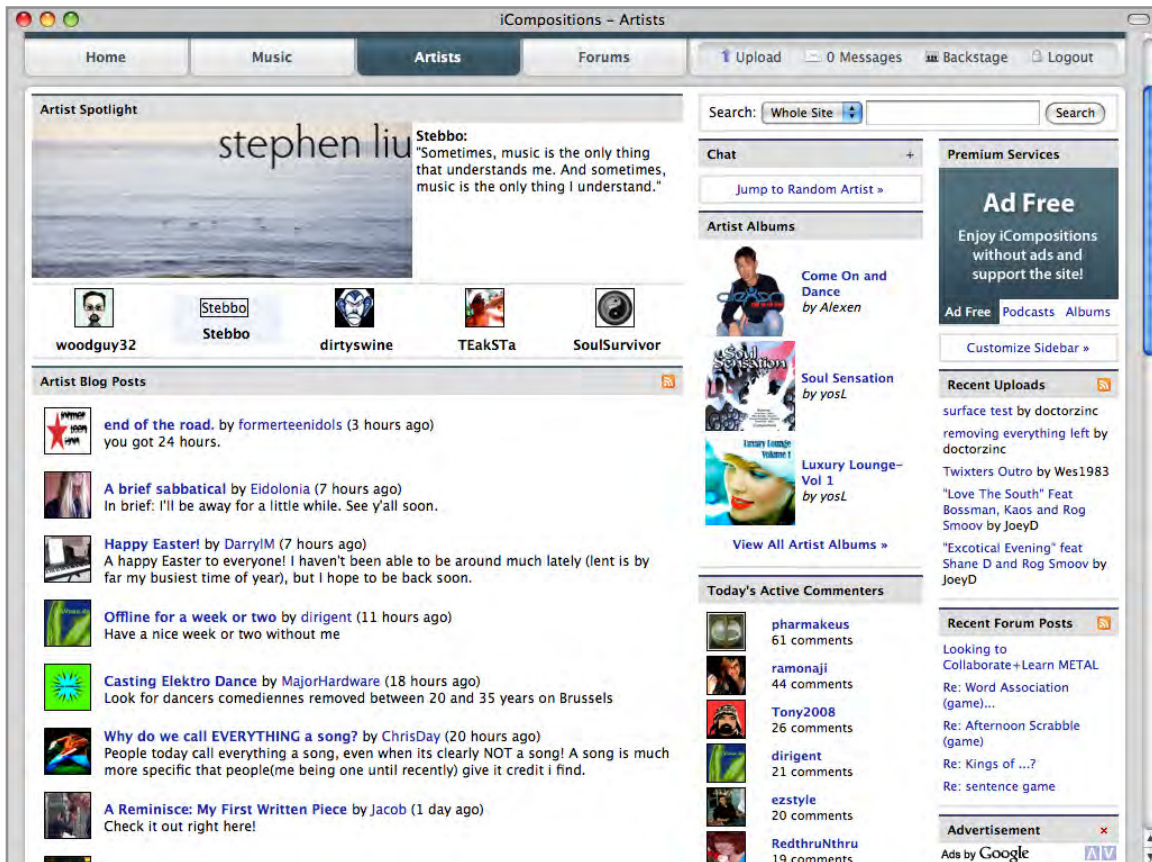
Figure 37: Artist main page

Within the Artists section is a page for each registered member of iCompositions (see Figure 38 below). Each artist page is customizable by the artist and consists mostly of content generated by that artist (or content generated in collaboration with other artists in the community). Most artists include a biographical section, which range from the very brief to the extremely lengthy; from text-only to text, graphics, and hyperlinks; from personally revealing of real-life experiences to vague and fictional. In addition to the biography, each artist's page may also include lists of blog entries, songs posted (separated into solo works and collaborations), and favorited songs (a method of tagging other artist's songs). Under the chat is the artist's avatar, contact information (email, website, instant messenger ID), and other brief statistical and biographical information about the artist, including number of posted songs, comments, forum messages, and blog entires, location, interests, computer, musical instruments, favorite genre, occupation, date of last visit to the site, and date registered. Like the biography section, the quality of this information varies from imaginative to actual.

Figure 38: Artist page for EvilFactman

iCompositions: Forums Page

The Forums page contains a number of discussion boards (see Figure 39 below). These discussion boards are grouped into three topical areas: music (technical help with GarageBand or other applications), community (the "lounge" for "off-topic" discussions, classifieds, and collaborations), and iCompositions (site support and suggestions). Within each forum are various topic threads, both persistent or "sticky" (threads that are started by a moderator or administrator and marked as "sticky," thus maintaining a place of prominence at the top of the forum page) and ad-hoc (threads started by any registered member). Like the chat, the terms of service pertaining to the forums are enforced by volunteer moderators and the site administrators.
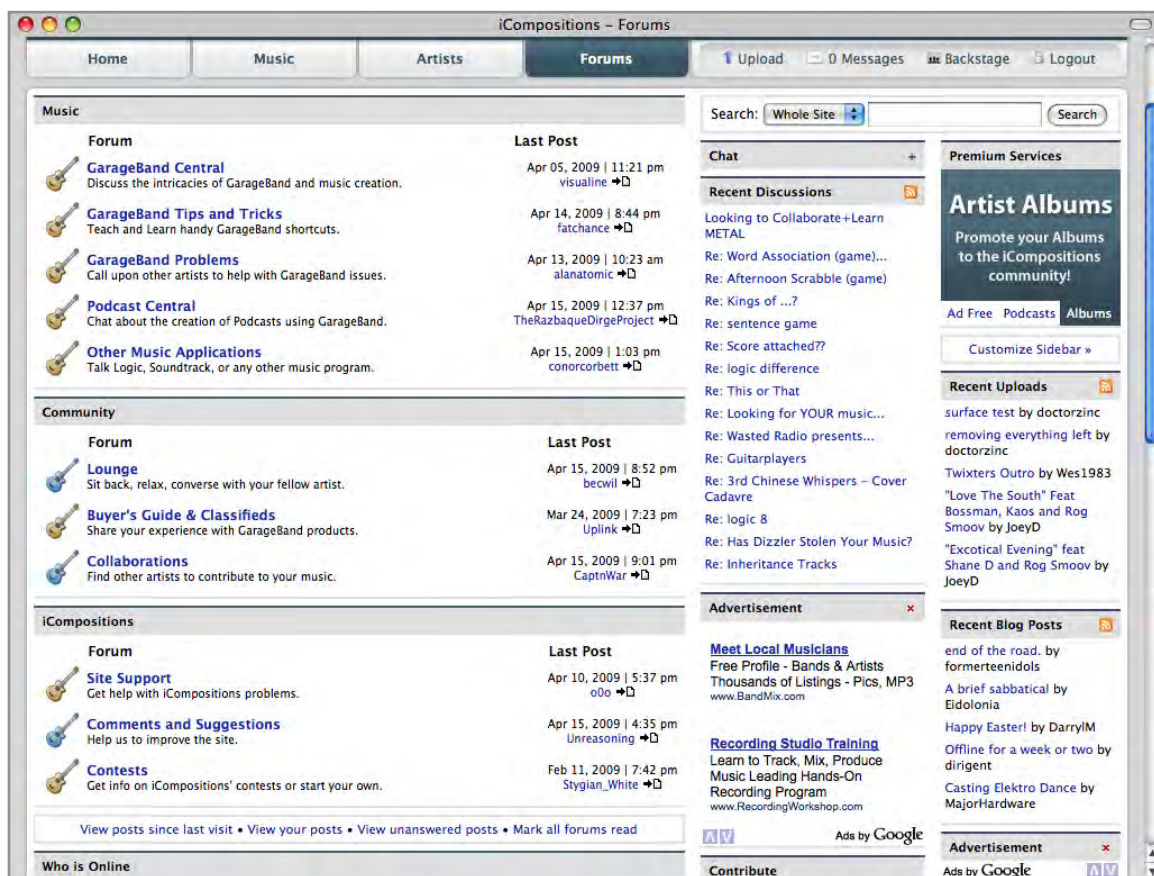
Figure 39: Forums main page

iCompositions: Backstage

Besides these publicly accessible areas of the iCompositions site, registered members have access to the Backstage. An additional navigation bar for registered users allows access to the Backstage (see Figure 40 below), as well as direct links to two areas within the Backstage: an Upload page for uploading songs, videos, and setups, and the Message Center, the site's internal email system.
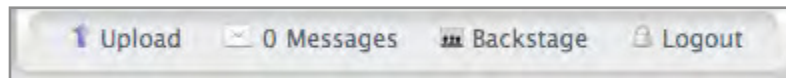
Figure 40: Navigation bar for registered users

The Backstage contains a Members Only page. Members have access to free loops, tutorials, book excerpts, discounts from software developers and music retailers, and video-based guitar lessons (see Figure 41 below).

Figure 41: Members Only content

The Backstage is also the place where iCompers can set preferences for site content, edit their artist page, and upload content to the iCompositions database. iCompositions allows for five different types of content to be uploaded by registered users: songs, loops, music videos, sound effects, and setups (setups are for uploading photographs of iCompers studio space). Uploading is done through a web form, which is adjusted for each type of content (see Figure 42 on the following page). The form provides an interface for selecting the file to upload and entering in metadata that will be associated with the content (see Figure 35 on page 28).

Among the metadata associated with content are options for restricting the access to and use of artists' works. iCompers have the option of hiding the download button, thus only allowing listeners to stream the song to their computers, rather than save the file to their local hard drive. According to the Terms of Service, artists must also tag their content as "explicit" if the words or subject matter or the lyrics are "adult" oriented (listeners may report songs that do not comply with this requirement, although this is rarely a problem, as most iCompers are responsible in fulfilling this commitment). Finally, artists may select from four levels of licensing offered on iCompositions. These licensing restrictions make explicit the artists' desire in terms of how their

work may be used by others in collaborations, compilations, or remixes. The default setting is the most liberal of the settings: "commercial derivatives allowed, contact artist for permission." Other settings restrict the use of the content to non-commercial purposes, iCompositions-only derivatives, or "no derivative works allowed" (see Figure 43 below).

Figure 42: Content upload form with song type selected

Figure 43: Options for restrictions on posted songs

Registered members may also setup a personally customized page for tracking activity on the site. This page consists of a grid of content notification modules. Modules can display comments, forum posts, favorites, and songs by genre or favorite artists (see Figure 44 below). Thus, at a glance, iCompers can keep track of content and areas which interest them the most.
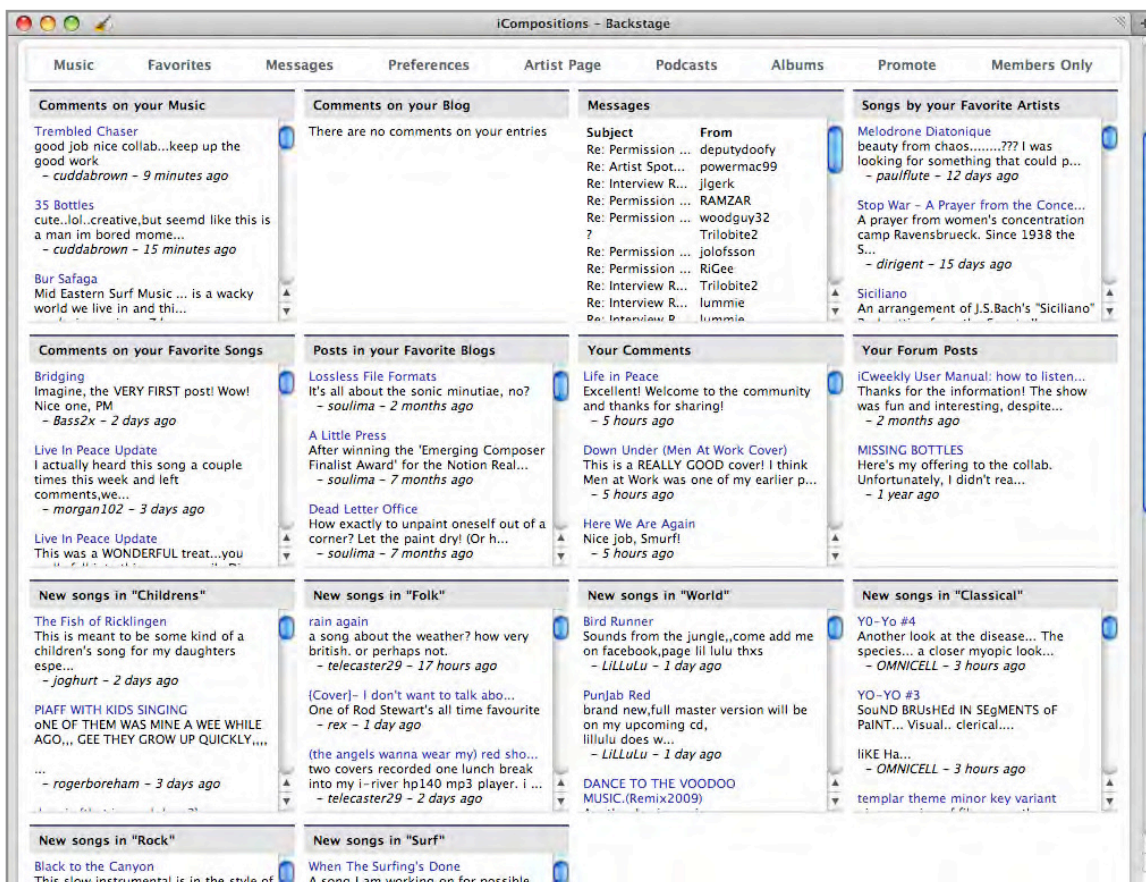
Figure 44: Customized Backstage page

With over 90,000 registered users who have produced and uploaded more than 80,000 songs, iCompositions has become a substantial site in terms of membership and hosted content.[78] Maintaining a sense of community is a challenge for iCompers who remember a time when it was possible to listen to every new song each day. But with typically 50-100 new songs posted to the site each day, it is impossible for any one participant to be aware and involved in all activities within the community. Tools such as the Backstage help iCompers keep up with existing friendships and the activities of associates, while features such as Random Songs and Undiscovered Songs on the Songs page, as well as recent blog posts on the Artists page, help iCompers discover new artists with which to develop new relationships.

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[78] These statistics were valid as of April 2009.

Navigating the Site

In a conversation with Lummie, I asked him what it was about iCompositions that drew him to the site and why he stayed with this particular site rather than committing to a similar cybercommunity (such as MacJams). He told me about how he came across the site and what kept him coming back:

> It's your typical "new to GarageBand" search. You go out to Google and you search for "Apple loops" or "GarageBand loops." And, generally, the first two things that are going to pop up are going to be iCompositions or MacJams or GarageBand.com, or whatever. Those are going to be among the top five or ten in that list, besides Apple. And you already know Apple. At that time, you already know they're charging $100 for a DVD of loops, so you're looking for free loops. So you hit those sites. You hit those top sites on there. In fact, I venture to say that probably conducted that search, like the majority of iComp members and MacJams members, and everybody else do, they probably hit every site looking for those free loops. And whichever site gives those loops up the easiest is the one you tend to hang out at the most. And so I hung out at iComp and I hung out there because everything was straight forward, it was easy to find what you were looking for, and it was great music without having to go through a lot of hoops and whatnot to get to the music.

A focus on the music and the artists who compose, perform, and produce the music is vital to the success of iCompositions as a website. Like Lummie, many iCompers cite the ease of navigation of the website as one of the primary reasons they initially got involved with iCompositions over other music social networking websites.

Although most iCompers perceive the site as easy to navigate, its growth and constant activity make it challenging for them to keep up with each others' activities. As a result, iCompers sometimes seek suggestions from each other on how to navigate and work within the site. Additionally, the asynchronous nature of iCompers interactions with the site (and each other) creates a gap in shared experiences. Although iCompers may be aware of each others' presence on the site (through chat or looking at currently logged-on users in the Backstage), they are not usually *with* each other as they navigate through content posted to the site. In an effort to bridge this gap and create shared experiences in working within the site, Zallaz started a discussion board thread about how iCompers "read" iCompositions.com.

Zallaz: Do you use RSS or just go through the front page or use your 'Backstage' settings to follow what's happening?

Illuminator: I don't use RSS (Really Simple Syndication). I manually go through the pages. I like looking at the music page, the Artist blogs and the like.

Lapskin: a bit of reading of the rss feeds a bit of searching and looking on the site and search engine too at times.

8MONTHMALFUNCTION:I use my eyes and the ability to read english that I was taught at school... I also use my mouse to scroll through the pages

SAHKTIMAN: Ignore the rss I'm afraid

I usually go straight to backstage & see how my tunes are doing... if people are listening.

"Pasty boy" has been on 99 listens for about 4 days... grrrrr I want it at 100!

DAVE: Haha .. love it ... Nice one 8MM .. LMAO !

ROBOSCOTT: I just click on my iComp link in the toolbar and I'm here. Then I flick around finding items of interest like this post here. I rarely use RSS cos' I always forget it's there.

SURAK: from bottom to top in the original klingon

CIHEINS: A little reading in my backstage and feeds. Chat, forums, and looking at pages. I used to use iconversations...but, that is another story .

POWERMATT: FRONT AND BACK PAGES BABY!!! ...and chatbox!

EIDOLONIA: I have my backstage music page bookmarked; that immediately lets me see how many plays and downloads I have (because I'm an attention whore), plus gives me a detailed look at the last few comments I've received. From there I can also see whether I have any messages waiting. At that point, if nothing has arrested my attention, I'll hit Backstage to check out the recent Metal uploads, and sometimes the Rock uploads if nothing's happening in Metal. Then I'll hit the big Artists button to see if there are any interesting-looking blogs up, and then the Forums button to check out the Recent Discussions window.

At that point, sadly, I've usually run out of time these days. Sometimes I'll hit up the Music page and look at the last few uploads, plus the undiscovered songs list. I don't look at the top songs very often, unless I know someone on the list.

ZALLAZ: One cool thing is if you use RSS you can read the last 30 blogs on 'Artists' page rather than just see the heading for the 10 on display, more I use RSS more i like it!

MUNGO: Backstage>look at Comments on Your Music>listen to music of persons who have commented>go to Forums>read interesting threads>back to backstage>Songs by your Favorite Artists>listen to some music.

MACOCO: My iComp link leads me to my backstage.

Then I check comments on my music, because you know, that's why we are here. Afterwards, I check songs by my favorite artists (I have a lot of them, and I listen each and every one). If I feel I'm in a comment-mood, I do comment. If I don't, I just enjoy, I learn and I feel a proud witness of his evolution.

Sometimes I download without being noticed ("save as source" in the QT bar). I mostly put downloaded songs in my iPod, and when I feel touched by the song, then come back to the song and I comment (if not done instantly).

From the Backstage page I go to Forums page.

There I can see who is online, and if some knowns are there, I'll chat for five minutes or for a whole day, who knows.

I often randomly click on connected names to listen to his music, thinking that... "If he/she is online, he sure does have something good to show". That's how I've discovered mostly of my favs.

Generally I don't listen song-plugs in the chat unless I'm invited to.

Then I check the Music page to see recent uploads. I mostly aims to collabs (+1 or more icompers).

Album arts and song descriptions have a huge influence on my listening there.

After that, I check Weekly top songs, just for curiosity, and then I randomly click on Undiscovered songs. (I still think that a "Random Song" button in this page would be great).

Then... if I'm in the mood... I chat. If not.

POWERMAC99:   MACOCO wrote: "(I still think that a "Random Song" button in this page would be great)."

Just click on a song in the Random Songs box (you may need to enable it at the bottom of the page)

MACOCO: Settled!

As always... Gracias PM!

EDDIEFRANKLIN: Recently, I go straight to the forums page to whose online. Then I spend way to much time hanging around the chat room. Ill meet different people and see people Im familiar with. Ill listen to their music if I can work it in. Most of the music I listen to is from folks I see in the chat, but I occasionally browse through other songs to see what else I can find. Ill skip through the blogs see if there's anything that catches me there. I check the forums occasionally to see what is being posted there. Of course, this is while Im here. I come to post some new music, catch up with things a bit, then I move on to other things I need to do.[79]

Such discussions concerning different iCompers approach to features and tools on the site not only help create shared experiences among iCompers, but also help build consensus and community by providing useful feedback to POWERMAC99, who at times will respond to ideas or concerns regarding the site. Such an exchange is seen between POWERMAC99 and MACOCO in the

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[79] http://www.icompositions.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=6303

above thread. In this particular case, it was unnecessary for POWERMAC99 to add any new features since MACOCO's request already existed (only in a different location than where he initially was looking). In other cases, POWERMAC99 will see fit to add a feature requested by members of the community.

Introduction to GarageBand

TSHARVEY: Had you done anything like this—online collaboration, or online distribution of your music—before iComps?

ZALLAZ: nope i hated puters then a buddy gave me a G3 Mac and it changed my life. i used to play in local bands bass, just thought 'how difficult is to write a song?'

ZALLAZ: garageband i got day it came out, i was like a kid in a candy store, the ability to record, no going into a studio, bla bla

TSHARVEY: so you never wrote a song before GB?

ZALLAZ: i'd co wrote in bands but not for over ten years and recording on tape was never very hot quality wise

TSHARVEY: so did you do some 4-track recording with your bands? on tape?

ZALLAZ: i had a 4 track and a drum machine, with bands we'd go into proper studios, but it wasn't cheap. and your against the clock in a studio. i'd just want to get my bass down quick, so i could relax

TSHARVEY: But with GB you felt more encouraged to record at home and write your own songs?

ZALLAZ: oh yes GB was a revelation. if it was good enuff for sheryl crow (the adverts apple used) it was good enuff for me

TSHARVEY: What about GB encouraged you to write songs by yourself?

ZALLAZ: just limitless time to learn experiment. and a heap of encouragement from icompers. the two things icomp and the music bounced off each other

ZALLAZ: there was a time of 'white hot' creativity. initially i'd post instrumentals and folk would run with them, add vox and stuff would go in a zillion directions

ZALLAZ: 2 secs i'll link u to the same song done two very diff ways

TSHARVEY: ok

When I ask iCompers about how they came to be involved with iCompositions, many of them begin with talking about GarageBand. Having adopted GarageBand as a tool for making music on the computer, many musicians then begin searching for loops, software instruments, plug-ins, or tutorials on the Internet, leading them to discover iCompositions through an Internet search engine. As ZALLAZ explains in the conversation above, GarageBand, for many, is an

invaluable tool—a "revelation"—that allows them to engage in musical composition and performance (recording) practices, while iCompositions provides the feedback and social interaction needed to encourage iCompers to continue their creative explorations in GarageBand.

Launching GarageBand

When Steve Jobs, Apple's CEO, introduced GarageBand at the annual MacWorld Expo in San Francisco in 2004, he touted it as "a major new Pro music app…for everyone." On one hand, GarageBand seemed like a natural fit for the "digital lifestyle" promoted by the iLife suite—creating digital music belongs comfortably among and runs complementary to managing digital photographs (iPhoto) and editing digital video (iMovie). iLife, of course, already had a digital music application, the first application to be distributed by Apple before the creation of the iLife suite: iTunes. But iTunes is strictly a content manager and music player—a digital jukebox—for listening to pre-recorded, commercially-released music. iTunes imports and catalogs MP3 files (and other audio file formats) by converting audio from an audio CD or downloading songs from the iTunes Music Store. With the introduction of iTunes in 2000, the iPod in 2002, and the iTunes Music Store in 2003, Apple was responding to the Napster phenomenon, which came to an abrupt end in 2000 when it was bought out by BMI after the loss of a $200 million-dollar copyright infringement lawsuit. Apple's iTunes-oriented product releases provided consumers of music recordings with an end-to-end solution, from the legal distribution of music files to the software and hardware necessary for listening to the purchased music at home (in iTunes) or on the go (on the iPod), thus positioning Apple as the leading distributor of digital music products. iTunes was integrated into the iLife creative applications, iPhoto, iMovie, and iDVD, assisting users in providing a musical backdrop to a slideshow of family photographs or a home video by importing MP3 files directly from iTunes. So while music was understood to be an integral part of the "digital lifestyle" it existed not alongside the creative applications in which home users created and stored their own content, but rather as a separate product created and owned by someone else and purchased for the purpose of enhancing the home users own creations. Music was not an area for the amateur, as was photography and video, but the realm of the specialist, the professional, upon whom the consumers were dependent.

Figure 45: Steve Jobs introducing GarageBand at MacWorld Expo in January
2004

From this perspective, the introduction of GarageBand at MacWorld in 2004 was a significant departure, or sideshow, at least, to Apple's increasing role as a major distributor in the music recording industry. Given a cultural tendency to relegate musical creativity to specialists, Jobs acknowledged that many consumers and analysts would view the digital production of music as a niche market and unfitting for the populist iLife suite. Jobs bolstered his argument for GarageBand by citing a Gallup survey from 2000, which found that "over half of U.S. households have at least one member who currently plays a musical instrument." Following Jobs' keynote address during which he announced GarageBand, Apple released the following press release announcing iLife '04 with the newly included GarageBand application:

> MACWORLD EXPO, SAN FRANCISCO. 6 January, 2004. Apple has announced iLife '04, the next generation of Apple's award-winning suite of digital lifestyle applications. iLife '04 features major new versions of iPhoto, iMovie and iDVD and introduces GarageBand, a revolutionary new music application that turns a Mac into a professional-quality musical instrument and recording studio for musicians and aspiring musicians alike. iLife '04 also features the recently-released iTunes 4.2, the world's best digital music jukebox software. iLife '04 leads the industry in allowing consumers to easily organise their photos, manage their music collection, create movies, author DVDs and now create music.

> With iLife '04, Apple is taking another leap far ahead of its PC competitors in offering the most innovative software for organising and creating digital music, photos and movies," said Steve Jobs, Apple's CEO. "And now GarageBand does

41

for music creation what iMovie did for video and iPhoto did for photos—makes the creative process easy and affordable for everyone. Over half of U.S. households have at least one member who currently plays a musical instrument, so we think GarageBand is going to find a very receptive audience."

GarageBand turns the Mac into a complete recording studio, allowing both novice and seasoned musicians alike to easily play, record and create amazing music using a remarkably simple interface. With GarageBand, recorded performances, digital audio and looping tracks can easily be arranged and edited like building blocks to create a song. GarageBand comes with more than 50 software instruments, including a premium-quality grand piano,that can be played and recorded with any USB or MIDI music keyboard. Over 1,000 professionally pre-recorded audio loops can be combined to make complete songs or backing tracks. Vocals and live instruments such as guitars can be recorded digitally via microphone or analogue input. All these tracks can be edited and mixed together with over 200 pro-quality effects presets, including pro-quality effects such as reverb and echo, and the built-in expertise of professional recording engineers. With GarageBand's advanced modelling technology, guitar players have access to some of the most revered vintage amplifier sounds with six guitar amps, including clean jazz, arena rock and British invasion. GarageBand can also export completed songs to iTunes for burning to CD, encoding in MP3 or high quality AAC, transfer to iPod or for use in the other iLife applications. (Apple, Inc. 2004)

While calling GarageBand "revolutionary" was no doubt marketing hyperbole, Apple's announcement generated much excitement within both the Macintosh and home musician communities, because of its promise to make "the creative process easy and affordable for everyone" (Apple 2004). Apple's long-standing reputation for good interface design promised an accessible application, reducing the time investment needed for learning how to use it and visitors to Apple's GarageBand website were met with promises regarding the software's ability to transform the "non-musician's" desire for musical creation into a reality:

You don't have to play the piano. You don't have to read music. You don't even have to have rhythm. If you know what you like when you hear it, you can make your own kind of music. With GarageBand.

The easiest way for anyone – pro or novice alike – to perform, record and create music, GarageBand turns your Mac into a digital recording studio – complete with instruments, pre-recorded loops, amps, effects and editing tools. Why, you'll even find virtual recording engineers in the mix to help you out. You'll be spinning the music of the spheres in no time. (quoted in Gouzouasis 2005)

The accessibility and simplicity of GarageBand interface was key for making it "the easiest way for anyone – pro or novice alike" to create and share music. As LUMMIE explained to me:

GarageBand is much easier to navigate than was Acid, in any way, shape, or form. The fact is Acid has…you know, you gotta go into to too many submenus and subscreens to get going what you want going on. GarageBand—it's all right there. You click a button—there's your levels. You click another button—there's your panning. And everything was straight up front. So it was much easier interface to work with which made it much more enjoyable.

The usability of GarageBand, particularly in comparison to other DAWs, was celebrated among Mac fans and personal-computer musicians and many early examples of songs created by GarageBand and posted to the Internet demonstrated the simplicity of the software.

Accessibility and Simplicity in GarageBand

Figure 46: Acoustic Slide 09 loop

"Klickin' & Grinnin'"[80] by MACMIDIOT opens with a laid-back, four-measure slide guitar introduction, setting the down home country blues feel that is so important for this "countryfied" song. Following this brief introduction, the "Down Home banjo 02" loop sets an upbeat tempo, accompanied by a four-beat hi-hat and an acoustic guitar strum accenting each down beat.

Figure 47: Down Home banjo 02 loop

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[80] "Klickin' & Grinnin'" was posted to iCompositions.com by MACMIDIOT on 1 February, 2004 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=539).

With the "Acoustic Slide 09" and "Down Home banjo 02" loops, this "hillybilly's ode to GarageBand" successfully establishes a rural country setting upon which MACMIDIOT's over-the-top, Larry-the-Cable-Guy-esque vocals tell the story of a farmer's transformation from a non-musical simpleton to a GarageBand addict:

> Well, I just met the FedEx man
> Came to my door with a box in hand
> Ripped 'er open just as fast as ya can
> 'Cause I knew inside was GarageBand
>
> Apple you made my day
> I barely sing and sure can't play
> GarageBand - so much fun
> I'm never gonna get my dern chores done
>
> The crops need tendin' - cows need hay
> My wife is 'bout to run away
> Really gotta get things done
> But I'm just havin' too much fun
>
> Apple now I spend all day
> Making songs - the G'rageBand way
> GarageBand - so much fun
> I'm never gonna get my dern chores done
>
> Cows and chickens ran off today
> The crops dried up and blew away
> Wife ran off with the hired hand
> But, I still got my GarageBand
>
> Apple, you wrecked my life
> I lost my farm, I lost my wife
> GarageBand - so much fun
> I never did get my dern chores done

The image of the hillbilly embodied by MACMIDIOT in "Klickin' & Grinnin'" signifies the ease-of-use and simplicity of GarageBand's graphical user interface (GUI). The hillbilly stereotype—one who lacks proper musical education and technological sophistication—helps MACMIDIOT further the perception of GarageBand as a democratizing tool for the production of music. With GarageBand, the musical luddite who can "barely sing and sure can't play," experiences transformation as he finds joy in the process of "making songs the G'rageBand way." The plainness and grammatical style of the song's title, "Klickin' & Grinnin'" promotes the simplicity of music-making offered through the GarageBand interface and the bliss found through interacting with the personal-computer software. MACMIDIOT tells us that by merely "clicking" our mouse we, too, can finds joy in making music with GarageBand. The possibility

for personal transformation through the use of GarageBand, as expressed in "Klickin' & Grinnin'" is a common narrative among iCompers. As ZALLAZ explained, "i hated puters then a buddy gave me a G3 Mac and it changed my life…GB was a revelation" (see page 39).

Inside GarageBand

The image of the hillbilly used in "Klickin' & Grinnin'" is also appropriated by RFWILMUT in his song, "The GarageBand Song (a redneck's manual)." The song begins with MIDI-rendered guitar and bass playing a country waltz. A MIDI violin harmonizes with the vocal melody and an occasional steel pedal accentuates the down home quality of the song. RFWILMUT conjures the hillbilly through his vocal style, in which he performs the melody in a semi-yodeling, vaudevillian voice. The lyrics walk the listener through using the major features of GarageBand in order to produce a song and upload it to iCompositions.com.

Figure 48: Opening figure by computer-generated acoustic guitar

If you want to make music with the GarageBand pack
You start a new project and you'll find just one track[81]
It's always a piano but you change it to suit,
Like a trumpet or a clarinet or a gee-tar or a flute[82]

There are two sorts of tracks you can choose to reveal
With instruments from software or ones that are real[83]
The first you use MIDI and sounds that you like
The second you record with a mixer and mic

And when your song's ready and made MP3
You can upload it to the Internet for others to see.

With the keyboard or microphone you just play along[84]

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[81] See Figure 49 on page 47

[82] See Figure 50 on page 48

[83] See Figure 51 on page 48

[84] See Figure 54 on page 49

Add a track at a time and you build up your song[85]
You can turn on a metronome to act as a guide[86]
Then you play your nice music and you do it with pride

If the notes aren't quite right then click next to the eye[87]
You can see all the notes as the music goes by
Then click with the mouse and you move them around[88]
But only with MIDI and not with real sound[89]

And when your song's ready and made MP3
You can upload it to the Internet for others to see.

You can keep adding tracks until you've got enough
Though an older computer might not play all that stuff
You can use each track's pan knob to put things in place[90]
And add reverberation to give it some space[91]

Then drag the little slider to balance the mix[92]
And look at the help file to learn some new tricks
Export it to iTunes as an AIF file[93]
And then you convert it to MP3 style

And now your song's ready and made MP3
You can upload it to the Internet for others to see.

– "The GarageBand Song (a redneck's manual)" by RFWILMUT[94]

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[85] See Figure 51 on page 48

[86] See Figure 55 on page 50

[87] See Figure 56 on page 50

[88] See Figure 57 on page 51

[89] See Figure 58 on page 51

[90] See Figure 53 on page 49

[91] See Figure 59 on page 51

[92] See Figure 53 on page 49

[93] See Figure 60 on page 52

[94] "The GarageBand Song (a redneck's manual)" was posted to iCompositions.com by RFWILMUT on 13 February, 2007 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=56249). This song was posted when GarageBand was at version 4. Most of the images that follow were taken from GarageBand 5, which shipped with iLife 09 in January 2009. Discrepancies between the images and the descriptions in the song are due to changes made in GarageBand 5 and are noted in the text.

The main window in GarageBand displays tracks in the center column of the window (see Figure 49 below). To the left of the tracks are track-specific controls. On the right, the artist selects MIDI instruments or track-specific effects. At the bottom of the interface are the general controls for playing, recording, reverse and fast-forward, as well as a virtual LCD displaying a time counter. Immediately above this control bar is an editing region, which displays a section of the selected track in greater detail for more fine control and editing of the audio or MIDI data.

Figure 49: GarageBand main window

When a new project (song) is started, the main window opens with one software instrument track. The Grand Piano software instrument is preassigned to that track (see Figure 50 on the following page). A different instrument may be assigned to the track from a catalog of software instruments which ship with GarageBand. These electronically synthesized sounds are modeled after acoustic instruments (such as guitar, piano, bass, drums, and orchestral instruments), synthesizers (including classic analog synthesizer sounds), and non-Western musical instruments (such as Indian sitar, Middle Eastern 'ud, or Chinese dizi). Additional software instruments can be purchased from Apple or third-party companies.
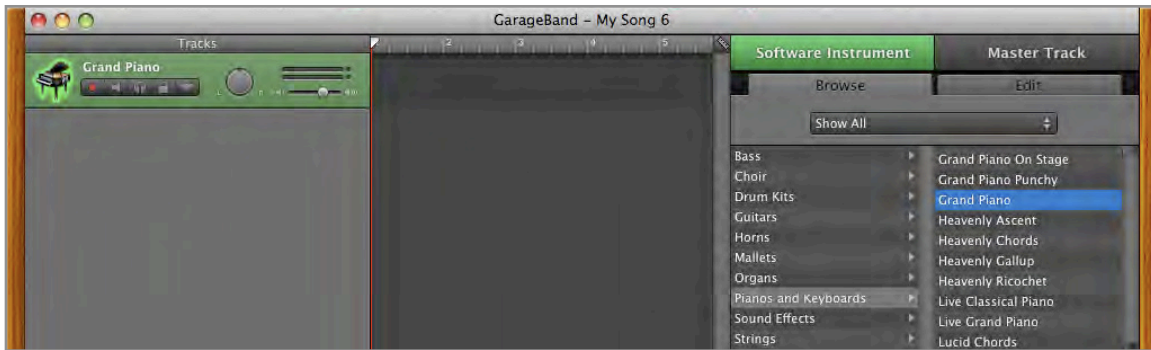
Figure 50: Grand Piano track with MIDI instrument browser in right column

New tracks may be added to the project by clicking the button with the plus sign in the lower-left corner of the main window (see Figure 49 on the previous page). Before the new track is added, the artist must select what kind of track to add: a "software instrument," where the sounds are defined by digitally-generated, software-based instruments and controlled by MIDI commands, or a "real instrument," where the sounds are recorded by a microphone or an instrument connected directly to the computer (see Figure 51 below). In GarageBand 5, a third track option was added, named "Electric Guitar." This track type is the same as the Real Instrument track type, only it gives the artist access to amp-modeling and stomp box effects designed specifically for guitars.

Figure 51: New track type selector dialog

Audio or MIDI regions can be added to track either by recording directly to the track or by dragging a loop to the track. Recording is controlled by the red record Transport button (see Figure 52 on the following page). After clicking the record and play buttons, GarageBand will begin recording from the position of the locator bar. Only tracks that record enabled will record, as indicated by a red dot in the left-most position on the track controls (see Figure 53 on the following page).

48
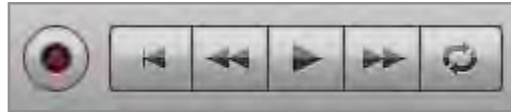
Figure 52: Transport buttons

To the left of each track are the controls for the track (see Figure 53 below). Here the artist can enable or disable recording, mute or solo, or lock the track. Other controls for mixing, including a virtual knob for panning (relative signal strength in left or right speaker) and a slider for track volume (in the lower-right corner of the track control area).
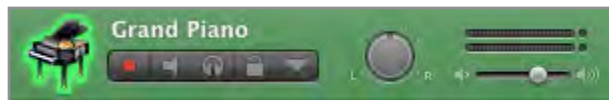
Figure 53: Track controls

In addition to recording projects built from adding tracks, as explained above, GarageBand offers a real-time performance-oriented mode called Magic GarageBand (see Figure 54 below). Selecting from nine different pre-defined genres (Country, Rock, Blues, Jazz, etc.) offered by Magic GarageBand, the artist performs along with a GarageBand-created ensemble. The artist may save this virtual jam session to a GarageBand project and subsequently continue to edit and refine the Magic GarageBand session by adding tracks and effects, adjusting volumes, etc.
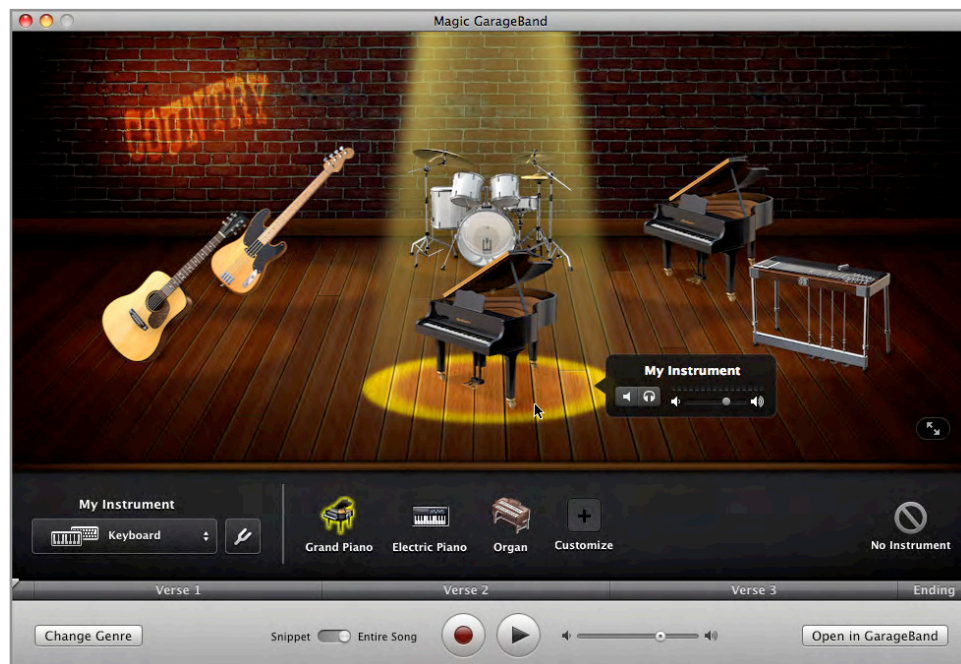
Figure 54: Magic GarageBand

The virtual LCD on the main window of GarageBand can be switched from displaying the time counter to showing global project settings, including the key, tempo, and time signature (see Figure 55 below). The artist can record to a metronome (often referred to as a "click track"), which obtains its settings from the virtual LCD.

Figure 55: Virtual LCD displaying global project settings

Detailed editing of tracks is accomplished in the bottom half of the GarageBand window. The Track Editor is revealed by clicking the button "next to the eye," as RFWILMUT sings in "The GarageBand Song" (see Figure 56 below). (The Loop Browser, the "eye," has been moved in GarageBand 5 to the right side of the window, as shown in Figure 49 on page 47).
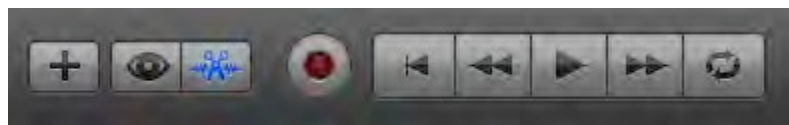
Figure 56: View buttons and Transport controls (Track Editor button highlighted) in GarageBand 4

The Track Editor allows for note-by-note editing of software instrument tracks using a standard Piano Scroll view (see Figure 57 on the following page). Modeled on nineteenth-century technology of perforated scrolls for player pianos, the Piano Scroll view displays bars on a grid, allowing the artist to adjust pitch and duration of notes. Notes can also be "drawn" directly onto the scroll using the cursor, bypassing the need to record in real-time. Although not available in earlier versions of GarageBand, later versions added the ability to add, delete, or adjust specific notes using the Score view, which displays notation on a staff, instead of bars on a grid. When a Real Instrument track is selected, the Track Editor displays the Audio Region view (see Figure 58 on the following page). Digital audio, unlike MIDI commands, cannot be manipulated on a note-by-note basis, thus the Audio Region view displays a graphical rendering of the audio waveform. This view gives the artist finer control for cutting, copying, pasting, and deleting section of an Audio Region in a Real Instrument track.
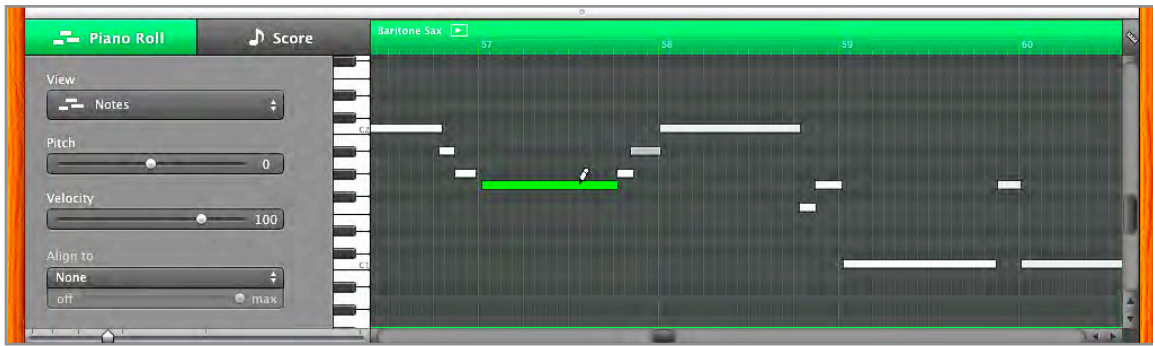
Figure 57: Piano Roll view in Track Editor
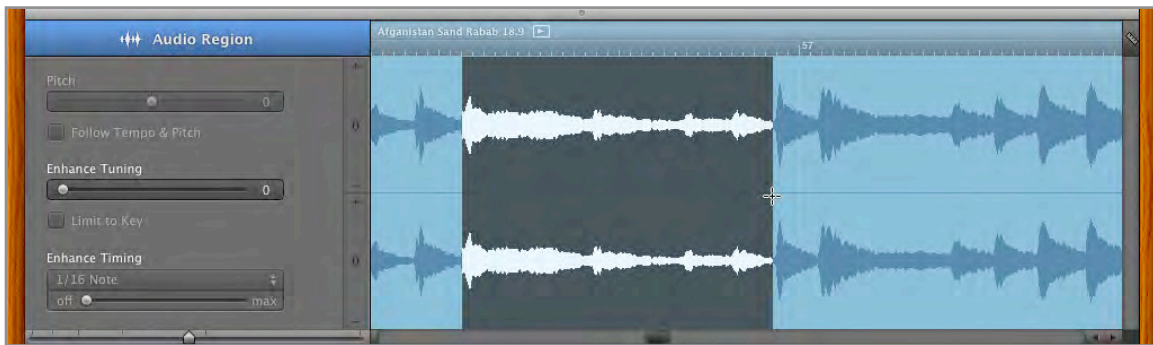
Figure 58: Audio Region view in Track Editor

In addition to editing MIDI commands or audio regions to alter the sound of each track, digital-signal processing (DSP) may be applied to individual tracks via effects (see Figure 59 below). GarageBand ships with many effects, but others can be purchased or downloaded for use within GarageBand. These effects include amp simulation, distortion, compression, delay, echo, and reverb, as well as many others.

Figure 59: Track effects, including Reverb slider in lower-right corner

Effects offer significant possibilities for the manipulation of audio. Besides being able to adjust the sound of an electric guitar, for example. on the fly (switching from a heavy metal sound to a 1960's British Invasion sound to a contemporary Nashville country sound with the click of a button) effects can be used to significantly alter the sound of built-in loops. By applying effects to loops, GarageBand users are able to render commonly heard sounds unrecognizable, individualizing them for their own particular use and personal expression.

Once a song is complete, the artist can send the song directly to iTunes, upload it to the Web as a podcast, or burn the song to a CD. The artist can also save the song as an MP3 directly to disk in order to upload the song to iCompositions or any other online service (see Figure 60 below).
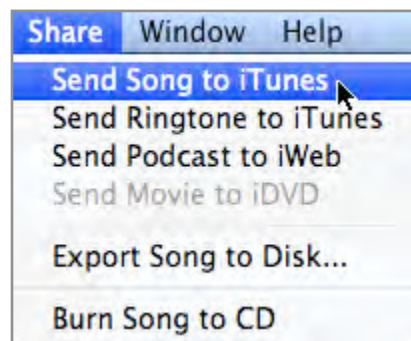
Figure 60: Send Song to iTunes option in Share menu

Loops and the Production of "Bad Music"

The release and eventual success of GarageBand as an entry point into the world of music-making for many recreational musicians was the subject of much debate on Internet discussion boards in the months following its announcement. While many praised Apple for enabling casual musicians and democratizing home-studio, personal computer recording, others were concerned about the release of novice, home-produced, loop-based songs "flooding" the Internet. Pre-recorded loops were, and still are, a point of contentious debate concerning definitions of "musical creation," "composition," or "musician," both within iCompositions and Computer and Internet musical culture at large. The full spectrum of opinions regarding loops can be found on iCompositions: there are some who post songs by layering a few loops without any manipulation to the loops (making their use of the loops obvious and rather simplistic sounding) and there are others who vehemently oppose any use of loops (although most make an exception for drum tracks). Nonetheless, loops remain a significant factor in the works of many iCompers and their prevalence is in part explained by the repetitious nature of loops. As Thomas Turino (2008) explains, "one of the most common stylistic features of participatory music is the heightened repetition of musical material…which is then repeated over and over again for a relatively long period" (2008, 38).

Regardless of where an artist stands on the loops debate, there seems to be a general consensus that one's own musical progression is reflected in the use of loops, whether the artist moves away from loops completely or develops greater skill in working with and manipulating loops to create a more unique song. ANGELAHOPE opened up a discussion on the use of loops on her blog with the following comment:

Using loops

Didn't want to go there but here it is---

I would like to address the issue of loops usage. Using loops does not make you any less of a musician than people who mix them or use none at all. Loops teach you how to sculpt things when you don't play an instrument. Even if you do play one or several instruments, loops are fun to play with. Many talented musicians create loops for you to use any way you like. Your creativity should not be stifled by loops snobs. They use them too. Don't be afraid of that button when you upload your music. Whatever you are doing should be judged solely on your own unique usage of loops.

People I am not a trouble maker nor am I an enabler. My intent is to be empowered and to empower others. I am getting off my soap box now which I didn't want to get on in the first place and will not be posting anymore blogs. thanks for reading. one love[95]

ANGELAHOPE's blog post initiated a discussion—one of many held on iCompositions forums, chat, and blogs—on the artistic merit (or lack thereof) of using loops:

MLPBADARAK: A Canon or a round is little more than a well-composed loop.

Even Beethoven used loops - he called them "motives"

Where would the minimalists, like John Adams, Terry Riley or Steve Reich, be without loops?

Where would electronic music be without loops?

Check out Hofstadter's "Godel, Esher and Bach".

I love looping! To wit: http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=111647 and http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=89279

ANGELAHOPE: thanks for the education!!! wonderful wonderful

UNCLEMOE: It's all creative...I think that's the reason this site exists! And having played Bach and those boys many a time on the piano, well, in their essence, those were loops, just like the man says there! I very much agree ANGELA, and believe me, I've

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[95] http://www.icompositions.com/artists/angelahope/entries.php?pid=5913

received some flak from time to time as being that "karaoke" singer, although when PEDRO ROBERTO and I recently teamed up to work on a song, he sent me a prerecorded track, my accompaniment, to sing from. Same thing as "karaoke" I would say, if people wish to get technical about it! A point well made, thank you!

ZAMZAM: Life is a loop.

SOUNDHOUND: There is nothing wrong with loops it's how you

use them, if you drop them in the time line verbatim

and do nothing to them....

But if you chop them up turn them around, change the

sound grind and pound them down, into something you want

if you know what that is, then your being creative....

ANGELA that is the intent of artist making loops

for us to use, for us to take them to the next level......

And MOE anytime PEDRO sends you something it's a working

track not a loop, really don't think he needs them, but I'm

sure he mess's with them every now and then.......

BARRETOK: To me loops are like colors for a painter. You can use them straight from the tube or you can learn how to mix them in an endless variety of tones and shades. Just like with any other tool or instrument, you can be creative or dull and boring.

It is not the media you choose what makes the artist.

Thanks for your blog Angie.

UNCLEMOE: SOUNDHOUND, I did not say PEDRO uses loops (I was speaking on another subject above if you read it again)--but that his song and arrangement that he performed and recorded for to me to work on was just the same as me using a "karaoke" track to sing from--prerecorded music. Just wanted to clarify. Thanks again.

RAMONAJI: Ah! I just LOVE what BARRETOK said (as a painter myself). I feel the same way about loops! And sometimes, I do like to use paint straight from the tube! A big blue canvas can sometimes be all I want to look at! As ZAMZAM said to me, once, "All art is perfect". I love "life is a loop", too. He's a great teacher!

I love loops, because I feel like I'm collaborating with these great artists, musicians, singers... and I know that they were paid for their time, so I feel good about that too! And every loop, to my ears, is a song waiting to be born...

HIPHOPMOSES: I say whatever gets you there is fine but as a painter I disagree with the tube theory. Paint is paint [whether] it's mixed or not by itself it is not art, what you paint is the art even the colors you choose imo. With loops someone has already painted something. I think loops are more like using tracing paper, or painting by

numbers or even using other drawings, magazine pictures and pasting them to make a collage. And Angela no need to get off your soap box as long as you have something to say. Disagreements will always be, so open dialogue should never be shut down lest we silence truth and point of views. (Which would be silencing growth)

Soundhound: Moe.... Thats just how it sounded to me, when I read it in my head....

But thats OK don't worry about it.......

Moses........ Your right, but painting by the numbers has been around

for a long time, it's a tool like a book in school, you can learn something

from it and move on to do your own thing, or you get lazy and let

others do your thing for you..... this stagnates growth.......

hiphopmoses: Yeah Tony I understand where you are coming from and I felt and still as a musician can relate to that reasoning. But what changes my mind is that there was a guy here named Petergreene (I believe) that could dismantle any loop and turn it into a symphony he would compose as well with the GB pencil. So if they give Mozart and Bach all these accolades then why not people who can do these things with loops Then I tried to do what Peter did with the loops and the pencil and it was so time consuming and temperamental that since I could play it I said I could never have the patients to do all my songs this way. So just like being a DJ takes skill those who use loops correctly are using skill as well. So then I'll relate it back to art, we give photographers credit as being artistic for taking pictures of pre made art because of the skill they use to get you to see the art from their perspective. To me then I can give credit to the skill of Dj's and loopers. Now where I agree with you is that you should always want to grow in your craft and learn as much as you can... but on your journey to that I don't think if you are using a skill (loops) that you should be excluded from being considered Artistic. Eventually yeah we might hope that all could learn to play the loops but here's the thing Peter's end result was amazing because he was at the top of his game with the loop and pencil in GB now no matter how good he got learning to play he might not ever reach the heights that his loop pencil way would reach. As a listener I would be deprived of his greatness by demanding his musicianship, which is why I say at the end of the day it doesn't matter how you get there just get there. Besides you and I both know that Pro's cheat sometimes to get those great moments in music that we're thinking they are some type of musical genesis, which there are some but some also use multiple passes

MIR: to loop or not to loop, that is the question...

loops are a tremendous tool indeed - i won't compare them to any specific tool, though, for fear somebody might question the correctness of the comaprison LOL

as any other tool, they're not, imo, good or bad in themselves (though some may be better than others); rather, it's the use one makes of them that can be good or

55

bad. is a knife a good or a bad tool? i would say it is fantstic to slice bread, but if you try to press its sharp end onto my belly i might not be of the same opinion...

i'm not a musician, in the strict sense of the word -- i mean, i can't play any instrument, i have never learnt that, for one reason or another. and i know very little of music theory. so, i will never compare myself to those artists that have worked hard, and still do, to practice their playing technique and can do great music by constantly improving their skill. i'm not saying i'm sure none of them ever uses loops - that is another story. what i'm saying is they OWN a language, and would be able to speak it without those tools, while i wouldn't (i normally use only percussive or drum loops, and build up my music with the help of a midi keyboard, but that makes no difference).

this DOESN'T by any means mean that all of them do good music just because they own the language. this is the real point, imho, when we talk about loops we tend to mix two different aspects that are connected, but are not the same thing.

and there's one last thing i'd like to say about loops, and it's, just because they are great tools that make it easier to make music, in the long run they might tend to bring the level down, just like the difference between objects made by hand and those manufactured by machines.

you can edit, EQ, put effect, and do many other things to a loop - but you'll always be constrained within a fixed limit, you're not building up something that wasn't there at all, you're taking soemone else's idea and adapting it to your purpose - but it remains someone else's idea.

what is my conclusion, then? do whatever you like, and if it's good for me i'll listen and enjoy

GARYLESTER: Interesting comments for sure but in my opinion there are frequently things said regarding the sounds many of us generally refer to as "loops" that I disagree with.

My personal feelings on the subject are not brief enough to elaborate here but I will say simply in summary that the variety of sounds that can be created using the real and software instruments that are standard on one of the favorite Mac applications number in the hundreds even before one considers the changing and customization of individual notes.

There are many reasons people might wish to create and make use of music and it need not be perceived in any way as a substitute for the creative music made by talented musicians. Nevertheless using "loops" is a viable tool that I would encourage people to explore.

Music Loop on Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_loop

SHADOWOFNINE: My use of loops is because of the following:
I don't play guitar
I don't play drums

I don't play bass
loops allow me to fashion a complete song.

If I can't play it from my keyboard then I am going to miss out, yes I can play drums from my keys and Bass to, and sometimes do, but I like to move fast so I usually don't.

The other reason I use loops is to get sounds that I can get no other way, I use a controller with no internal sounds, so I need soft ware instruments or loops..

Finally I could give a rat's butt if someone uses loops or not, it's the music that counts, it's either good or not so good, how you get there is of no interest to me.

JAMESJRN: I used loops sparing now-- however, when I started I was a loop machine. Just as you said ANGELA, they really taught me how to put together compositions and music and it was only after using loops for months to a noticable degree that I felt like I could start playing things on my keyboard. Its certainly not any less. Honestly it doesn't matter how it is put together if it sounds good. As a listener, I just want something that sounds good. We all like sometimes the most simple sounding beats or patterns, and sometimes those are not hard to put together. It is not about how hard it is to play something, honestly, its about how much you enjoy the sound. At least that is how I feel.

In her original post, ANGELAHOPE comments on the potential of loops to "empower" her and other iCompers. For some, this empowerment comes via the borrowed "skill" (i.e. technique) inherent in applying loops. By extending one's own limited musical technique through the application of technology, iCompers are able to transcend their self-described musical ineptitude. Thus, for artists like MIR or SHADOWOFNINE, GarageBand is a musical instrument that, like any other musical instrument, acts as a tool and, as such, empowers them to create music that would not be possible without the aid of that (or a similar) tool.

Whether or not an artist uses loops or MIDI-instruments or applies DSP effects to self-recorded audio, many iCompers view GarageBand as liberating technology, which helps them transcend the limitations of their own musicianship. For active musicians, GarageBand acts as a gateway into digital recording and Web 2.0-oriented social networks. For others, who often describe themselves as non-musicians or without musical background, GarageBand introduces them to a world of musical creativity that, for lack of musical education and technical experience in instrumental performance, previously seemed unavailable to them. From this subjective perspective of iCompers, GarageBand is a technological breakthrough, breaking barriers that blocked access to musical creativity and musical sociality. Due to the simplicity and accessibility of the software, many users "instantly click with it," as TRILOBITE2 says in the following conversation I had with him:

TSHARVEY: Tell me how you came upon iComp. How did that happen?

TRILOBITE2:   Very easy. I discovered GarageBand on the latest Mac I bought back then. And I went in search of new instruments and somehow found iComp. By mistake, of course.

TSHARVEY:	Just by doing a Google search for GarageBand?
TRILOBITE2:	Yeah, definately. Yup.
TSHARVEY:	Had you heard about GarageBand before?
TRILOBITE2:	Never heard of it. It just came with the computer.
TSHARVEY:	And had you done much home studio recording stuff before?
TRILOBITE2:	Never.
TSHARVEY:	You said you played in various bands in high school and in college and played in bars and gigs around town type of thing, right?
TRILOBITE2:	Exactly.
TSHARVEY:	At this time that you discovered GarageBand were you actively playing anymore?
TRILOBITE2:	No. It had been about ten years since my last gig or band.
TSHARVEY:	And were you playing at home by yourself much, or more or less hung up your instrument?
TRILOBITE2:	It was hung.
TSHARVEY:	Tell me about opening up GarageBand. What was it that grabbed you and how did that work when you first started playing with it?
TRILOBITE2:	I would say it was like a ray of light shining through the clouds the moment it hit me. It was exactly designed to meet my thoughts. It was…uh…I instantly clicked with it. I understood it perfectly as soon as I opened it and within an hour I had things recorded. In fact, I misunderstood the program at first and I was just playing the keyboard for the first couple days. I didn't understand that I could go back and adjust things and change things. That came later. There's actually a more recent post of mine that's up that is based off of one of those first one or two days of playing with GarageBand.

Alternatives to GarageBand

Although GarageBand holds a very prominent and visible position within iCompositions, it is only one of many DAWs and other music computer applications used by iCompers, and Internet musicians in general. Regardless of the particular application used, however, most iCompers record and create music in an environment similar to GarageBand and the same general concepts and tools available within GarageBand are found across most DAWs on the market.[96]

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[96] In this section I take a brief look at only three other applications (besides GarageBand).

Logic by Apple

When Apple bought out Emagic in 2002, they were purchasing one of the leading DAWs in the music industry: Logic. Apple has since spun Logic into three separate products: the professional-level Logic Pro, the prosumer-level Logic Express, and the consumer-oriented GarageBand. Due to this three-tier product development plan by Apple, many iCompers have followed an upgrade path from GarageBand to Logic Express to Logic Pro. The question of upgrading from GarageBand to Logic has generated some heated debates among some iCompers.[97] The debate primarily centers around the need for professional production tools found in Logic Express and Logic Pro at the cost of added complexity and cost. For RICHIEEASTSIDE, the choice

> depends on your level of experience and the amount of time you're willing to spend reading documentation. Logic can be very very confusing and there are things in it that are more easily done in Garageband. If at the end of the day you want to feel like you've produced something in a complicated intricate studio, then go Logic. If you want a simple way to get out your ideas and are willing to compromise a couple of bells and whistles in the name of simplicity, then stick with Garageband…[98]

RICHIEEASTSIDE's view on the question of upgrading to Logic highlights a view shared by many iCompers: GarageBand is the tool for "get[ting] out your ideas," while Logic will tend to draw your attention away from musical process and toward the technological process of working in "a complicated intricate studio." NEALBOWEN summarized this prospective when he argued that "at the end of the day, I want to have fun and make music. Garageband makes that easy for me. I wish Apple would 'Apple-ize' Logic so that it'd be a little more intuitive and less nerdy."

Over the five years of iCompositions' existence, however, Apple has continued to refine the Logic interface, bringing it closer in-line with GarageBand's interface. The price of Logic Studio, which includes Logic Pro, along with several other applications, has also dropped from $1200 to $500 in that same time period (Logic Express has also dropped—from $300 to $179—in the same time period). The simplified interface and lower cost, as well as increased familiarity with digital recording processes, has lead to more and more iCompers moving to Logic from GarageBand in recent years.

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[97] For example, see forum posts "GB to LOGIC ???" (http://www.icompositions.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=3388) and "logic express vs garageband" (http://www.icompositions.com/forums/viewtopic.php?p=29301)

[98] http://www.icompositions.com/forums/viewtopic.php?p=29962

ACID by Sony

ACID, which hit the marketplace in 1998, holds the distinguished position of being the first DAW developed specifically as a loop-based sequencer. Referred to as "acidized" files, ACID loops can be pulled into the sequencer and layered for quickly creating new musical content, much like GarageBand. In 1999, Sonic Foundry (who originally developed ACID before Sony bought it in 2005) launched ACIDPlanet, an online community of ACID users. Helping to provide support and opportunities for sharing musical creations, ACIDPlanet established a model that would later lead to the development of GarageBand and iCompositions. Although some iCompers moved over to GarageBand from ACID (often as a result of moving from a Windows PC to a Macintosh), ACID is a common application used by many iCompers. Usability, that is, the relative ease of use of a particular software package, is commonly cited as a reason that some iCompers have moved to GarageBand from ACID. As LUMMIE explained to me:

> GarageBand is much easier to navigate than was Acid, in any way, shape, or form. The fact is Acid has…you know, you gotta go into to too many submenus and subscreens to get going what you want going on. GarageBand—it's all right there. You click a button—there's your levels. You click another button—there's your panning. And everything was straight up front. So it was much easier interface to work with which made it much more enjoyable.

Songsmith by Microsoft

Apple's chief rival, Microsoft, entered the amateur music-making software market in January 2009 when they unveiled Songsmith at the annual Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas (see Figure 61 on the following page). The media and music technology bloggers immediately compared Songsmith to GarageBand, going so far as to refer to Songsmith as a "GarageBand Killer."[99] But such comparisons are most likely due to the long-standing rivalry between Microsoft and Apple, and have little to do with the particular technologies upon which the two software programs are built. Although GarageBand and Songsmith share the same broad goal— providing a digital music production tool for "everyone" (compare the introduction of GarageBand, as shown in Figure 45 on page 41, with the website for Songsmith, as shown in Figure 61 on the following page)—Songsmith actually shares little in common with GarageBand. In response to the "GarageBand Killer" comments, MacJams user, JIM BOUCHARD, rebuts, "I don't think it's a GB killer at all. It's Apples and Oranges. GB is a portal learning about how to make music, Songsmith plays the music for you."[100]

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[99] For example, see "Microsoft launches 'GarageBand Killer'" (http://www.logicstudioblog.com/ 2009/01/microsoft-launches-garageband-killer.html) and "Microsoft launches Songsmith, its GarageBand killer, with lame ad" (http://www.networkworld.com/community/node/37239).

[100] http://www.macjams.com/forum/viewtopic.php?forum=6;showtopic=154375
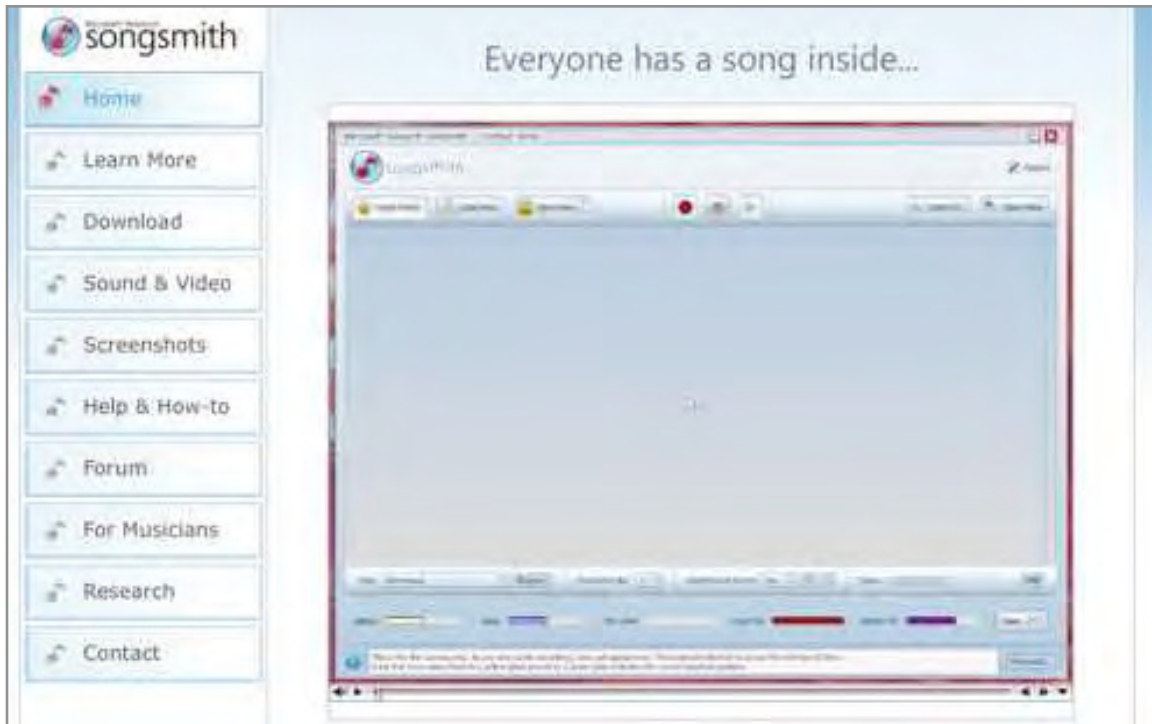
Figure 61: Microsoft's homepage for Songsmith

Upon the launch of Songsmith, the Microsoft Research group posted a four-and-a-half minute commercial explaining the process of working with the fledgling music application.[101] Presented as a musical with little spoken dialog, the soundtrack appears to be generated completely from Songsmith with the use of low-end software instruments (i.e. clearly computer-generated sounds that most listeners describe as either "cheesy" or "awful"). Near the beginning of the commercial, a pre-teenage girl explains to her father how Songsmith works:

> You sing into a microphone
> while the drummer plays along.
> And then when Songsmith makes the music,
> you're on your way to a song.
>
> You can choose the style, you can set the mood,
> and the chords will match what you sing.
> You can change the music as much as you like,
> so it really is your thing.

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[101] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dTXG2uKNLIw

The commercial seems to hang somewhere between an absurd parody and legitimate advertising as it presents three case studies of Songsmith users (from the credible to the ridiculous): a pre-teen girl singing songs at home, a 20-something year-old male who needs a creative boost for writing songs with his band, and an advertising professional who has to compose a commercial jingle for a client's glow-in-the-dark towels. These case studies cover the gamut of what appears to be Microsoft's intended market for Songsmith. The homepage for Songsmith targets both non-musicians and trained musicians:

> What if I don't know how to write music?
>
> Songsmith is for you. Get your first taste of songwriting just by singing into a microphone, then explore different styles and arrangements, even if you don't know the first thing about music theory.
>
> What if I do know how to write music?
>
> Songsmith is for you too. Songwriters can use Songsmith as an "intelligent scratchpad" to work with new melodies, quickly turning your scratch recordings of new ideas into richer, deeper explorations. Musicians can also play instruments right into Songsmith, instead of singing.[102]

Despite. or perhaps due to, Microsoft's claim that Songsmith is a valuable tool for novice and professional alike, the general reaction to Songsmith has been highly critical of the results it produces. On iCompositions, BIGDADDYCEE equated Songsmith with "karaoke for the terminally soulless,"[103] while MACOCO complained of having "fewer brain cells because some of them committed suicide while watching the ad."[104] Over at MacJams, on a discussion board thread titled "For Lazy Songwriters,"[105] DAMIENGH commented on Songsmith by posting a string of links to music video clips on YouTube: "It's the Same Old Song" by Four Tops,[106] "Song Sung Blue" by Neil Diamond,[107] and "Same Old Song" by Pain.[108]

Such disparaging remarks were not uncommon when GarageBand was first announced. With GarageBand, however, oppositional comments centered around the possibility that too many "non-musicians" would flood the Internet with "crappy music."[109] The concern with GarageBand

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[102] http://research.microsoft.com/en-us/um/redmond/projects/songsmith/index.html

[103] http://www.icompositions.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=7132

[104] http://www.icompositions.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=7051

[105] http://www.macjams.com/forum/viewtopic.php?forum=6;showtopic=153352

[106] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=juqtcsHlKzs

[107] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X_rCiY3SgRQ

[108] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZirNZ8QJWns

[109] See "Loops and the Production of "Bad Music"" on page 52 for further discussion of the reaction to the accessibility of GarageBand for so-called "non-musicians."

was not the application itself—the technology as developed by Apple—but rather the capability of GarageBand users to use it properly (i.e. to make good music with it). GarageBand users have been quick to point out the use of the software by "legitimate" professional musicianS—while retelling his first encounter with GarageBand, ᴢᴀʟʟᴀᴢ said, "if it was good enuff for sheryl crow…it was good enuff for me" (see page 39).

Criticisms of Songsmith, however, differ with those launched at GarageBand: they are almost exclusively focused on the implementation of the technology by the software engineers—particularly the software's inability to render instrumental accompaniment appropriate for even the best of singing. This argument is demonstrated by a series of YouTube videos called "Classic Hits by Microsoft Songsmith." In these videos, YouTube user, ᴀᴢᴢ100ᴄ, takes the original vocal tracks from well-known rock songs and feeds them through Songsmith to generate entertaining and unexpected—and, according to many listeners, disturbing—results. These Songsmith "mashups" are then dubbed over the original music videos for the popular songs.[110] ᴀᴢᴢ100ᴄ's and other YouTube contributors' creations include a bluegrass version of Billy Idol's "White Wedding," a calypso version of The Police's "Roxanne," and a techno rendition of Oasis' "Wonderwall." iCompositions artist, ʀᴀɴᴅᴏʟғ, posted his own series of similar experiments with Songsmith. Instead of using original vocal tracks, however, ʀᴀɴᴅᴏʟғ sung the melodies of well-know rock songs, as well as his own previously-posted songs, into Songsmith.

ᴀᴢᴢ100ᴄ's "Classic Hits by Microsoft Songsmith" has helped promote the perception of Songsmith as gag software, useful for pop cultural parodies (which, incidentally, makes Songsmith a subject of the parodies it helps generate) and silly entertainment. Thus, Songsmith does not really belong among DAWs, such as GarageBand, but rather it seems to fit more comfortably along side of interactive music video games, such as Guitar Hero, Rock Band, and SingStar. In these games, participants can sing along with pre-recorded popular songs—karaoke style—following a scrolling pitch meter on the screen and earning points for their accuracy to the original recording of the song. Like these games, Songsmith raises again questions concerning who is a "musician" and what is legitimately "musical" behavior. The song in the commercial delineates between the act of singing and the creation of music or a song. A non-musician, it seems, can "sing into a microphone," but it is "Songsmith [that] makes the music." Only with the help of Songsmith is the singer "on [their] way to a song." Ultimately, the irony in Songsmith that has turned it into a running joke among Internet musicians is the suggestion that music is an "instrumental" rendition generated by a computer, but singing by a self-described non-musician is not music.

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[110] http://www.youtube.com/view_play_list?p=33C9533F899548DD

Conclusion

The story of Microsoft's Songsmith highlights critical debates concerning the amateurism and technological dependence of personal-computer musicians, whether they use GarageBand, Songsmith, Logic, ACID, or any other computer music application. The availability of low-cost music production software combined with Web 2.0 technologies, as demonstrated by iCompositions and GarageBand, has caused some critics to bemoan the proliferation of "bad music."[111] While futurists and technologists herald the democratization of music-making, in which, as Apple promised, "you can make your own kind of music," critics, such as Andrew Keen, author of *The Cult of the Amateur: How Today's Internet is Killing Our Culture,* warn that this participatory model is "threatening the very future of our cultural institutions" by "transforming culture into cacophony" (2007, 15)—a symphony of inexperienced and untalented composers with no clearly-delineated, non-participatory audience. In *Machine Musicianship*, Robert Rowe acknowledges that a dependence on computers has "caused upheaval in the social and cultural practice of music making" (2001, 3), but in defense of computers and amateur applications of music software, Rowe explains:

> If interactive music systems are sufficiently engaging as partners, they may encourage people to make music at whatever level they can. I believe that it is critical to the vitality and viability of music in our culture that significant numbers of people continue (or begin) to engage in active music making, rather than simply absorbing reproduced music bombarding them from loudspeakers on every side. (2001, 5)

The definition of "reproduced music," however, is not a simple task within the context of twenty-first-century digital musicking. The concern for the production of bad music rests not only with the issue of technical incompetence being masked by inexpensive computer software and digital technology, but also with the pre-recorded loops that are integrated into consumer-level DAWs, such as GarageBand. As mass-distributed musical segments, the use of loops raise questions regarding the authenticity and value of the musical experience into which they are embedded, leading critics to dismiss such musical expressions as "bad" and their creators as simply non-musical and uncreative. As Washburne and Derno explain in *Bad Music*:

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[111]Compelling studies of "bad music" are undertaken by the various contributing authors in *Bad Music: The Music We Love to Hate* (Washburne and Derno 2004). While there are some common issues between the perspectives and theories presented in *Bad Music* and those found in this study, Christopher Washburne and Maiken Derno exclude from their volume music that "is obviously bad or lacking in terms of competence in relation to individual performances" (2004, 5). This description, according to many scholars, critiques, and other listeners, however, might accurately describe much of the music I have encountered at iCompositions and elsewhere on the Internet.

Cultural critics from Walter Benjamin to Susan Sontag have reminded us that the traditional divide between low and high culture was based primarily on the difference between unique and mass-produced objects, and that anything with mass appeal has typically been regarded as culturally suspect. (Washburne and Derno 2004, 5)

Aesthetic judgements based upon the provenance of the musical material used in compositional and recording processes, however, misses the point for iCompers and other Internet musicians, whose subjectivities are intrinsically tied to the process of collective musicking and other "musical pleasures that are social pleasures (and therefore not subject to the same sort of aesthetic judgement [placed on non-participatory musical productions])" (Frith 2004, 34).

Besides this fear of an overproduction of bad music and loss of consumers of high culture, critics have also argued that the virtual one-man bands made possible with multi-track recording software only leads to the isolation of musicians and music consumers, which in Blacking's terms strips music of its meaning. As Andy Edelstein, associate professor of music production and engineering at the Berklee College of Music, put it:

Garage bands are more of a social thing. It's about hanging out; it's about playing music. The magic is what happens when you get a bunch of people together to collaborate. Technology is removing the necessity for collaboration because [one person] can play one instrument and then another and then another. (Young 2006)

Although amateur digital musicians (such as GarageBand users) work in home-bound isolation, iCompositions has provided a cybersocial context in which these geographically disparate musicians have built a musical community. By utilizing the communication tools within the iCompositions website, iCompers work together to develop their musical skills and creativity—for some, this means overcoming their previous lack of musical training—to engage in what William Duckworth refers to as "virtual music" (2005). Duckworth views virtual music as interactive musical processes within the digital domain. According to Duckworth, virtual music encompasses three key points: (1) it is decentralized, meaning it is hosted on the Internet and therefore accessible from geographically distanced users; (2) it is participatory, anyone can assume a creative role in music-making processes; and (3) it is inclusive, meaning there are no structural rules governing what is acceptable as "music" and what is not. Like traditional garage bands, the focus for many iCompers is less on the resulting sonic product, than it is on the intersubjective experience of collective musicking. The communication tools provided by iCompositions ensures a feedback mechanism that allows the home-bound amateur musician to transcend the isolation of their own personal computer and interact with other musicians in cyberspace.

CHAPTER 3

THE MUSICAL CONSTRUCTION OF A CYBER-PLACE

As I sit in the music library at Florida State University, typing away on my laptop computer, my focus is constantly shifting between the several open windows on my computer screen. My eyes take occasional breaks from the screen looking up and out the "real" windows just in front of me through which I can view the trees and sky. I don't always conduct my fieldwork in the music library; I typically work from home where I have a small desk tucked into the closet of the bedroom I share with my wife. On my desk in the closet is a large monitor, computer keyboard and mouse, a digital audio interface (into which I connect microphones and a guitar for recording into the computer) and a MIDI keyboard that connects to my laptop via a USB cable. This is my field—I guess.

I wrote the above paragraph in my journal one day while wondering how I might begin my dissertation. I knew from the beginning, of course, that an ethnomusicological dissertation on musical cybercommunities had little precedent and that my research would most likely be viewed as unconventional within my field. But what I hadn't put much thought into was how seemingly simple tasks (such as how to begin an ethnographic story about a group of musicians in cyberspace) would prove to be awkward and difficult given my research experience. A quick survey of ethnographic monographs on my bookshelf reveals a clear pattern: ethnographies begin with the "arrival scene" (Pratt 1986). The ethnographer and the ethnography come into existence through exposure to the "field," a site geographically located and clearly bounded from the everyday life of the researcher (and the reader).

Music ethnographers have long been concerned with the relationship between sociomusical activity and place, and geographically-specific places play a central role, whether implicitly or explicitly, in the vast majority of ethnographic literature produced by ethnomusicologists today. But as I look at the computer screen (the site of my fieldwork?), my focus is constantly shifting between the multiple open windows and applications. Some of these windows and applications (the live chat in iCompositions or my bibliography database, for example) seem to delineate sites of fieldwork and research from non-research oriented computer activity. But the field and my everyday life are not really all that separate. The difference between research-focused cyber-experiences and personal web-browsing is only the click of a hyperlink away. In the course of my fieldwork, without clear separation from or physical travel to the "field," I often struggled to clearly articulate how what I was doing was unquestionably ethnographic fieldwork. The notion of a virtual or cybercommunity dislodged from physical space, such as iCompositions.com, presents a potential problem within the discipline of ethnomusicology, and the broader field of anthropology, given historical notions of geographical space and fieldwork practices and theory.

The "Place" for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology

The ethnomusicological treatment of place as static and geographically bounded emerged alongside the establishment of fieldwork as a "hallmark" of ethnomusicology (Nettl 1983, 250).[112] As the fledgling discipline began to gain legitimacy within the academy, mid-twentieth-century scholars sought to shift the "armchair" analysis of musical artifacts (most famously associated with Carl Stumpf and Erich von Hornbostel of the Berliner Phonogramm-Archiv) toward a culturally-contextualized (i.e. place-based) study of music and musical activity. Establishing fieldwork as "the most critical stage of ethnomusicological research" (Myers 1992, 21) was crucial to the development of the discipline and its close relationship to anthropology. This emphasis on fieldwork is evident in writings by founders of the Society for Ethnomusicology such as Alan Merriam, who proclaimed in *The Anthropology of Music* that "ethnomusicology originates in field study" (1964). This perspective of fieldwork as vital to both the discipline of ethnomusicology and the validity of ethnomusicological research as a social science is shared by many contemporary ethnomusicologists, who continue to uphold the position that fieldwork "constitutes ethnomusicology" (Titon 1997, 87). For ethnomusicologists, geographically-located places, the sites where fieldwork is deployed, ground ethnomusicological research and ethnographic representation within the context of specific cultural systems and ethnomusicologists and musical anthropologists have frequently depended upon such connections in developing an understanding of social activity through musical structure. Over time, this emphasis on fieldwork has promulgated a concept of "place" (the "field" in which one conducts research) as "permanent, stable, and usually localized" (Malkki 1997, 90).

Following anthropologists' rethinking of ethnographic representation in the 1980s (lead by Clifford and Marcus' seminal work, *Writing Culture* [1986]), the concept of place underwent critical examination in the latter-half of the 1990s with Gupta and Ferguson's *Anthropological Locations* (1997) and a resurgence in cultural geography. By the end of the twentieth century, anthropologists started to recognize that the standard trope of the ethnographer as immersed in "observable, face-to-face regularities" (Malkki 1997, 90) is "a rendering of ethnographic fieldwork that in one respect or another no longer suffices even as a serviceable fiction for many contemporary ethnographers" (Amit 2000, 2).

Ethnomusicologists, however, have tended to hold fast to constructions of geographically-bounded place as the location of cultural practices. While the second edition of *Shadows in the Field* (Barz and Cooley 2008) dedicates an entire chapter to "virtual fieldwork," suggesting an increased interest in online ethnomusicological research, Internet-based fieldwork among ethnomusicologists continues to remain grounded in geographic areas and physical localities that help provide a clear sense of the "field." Most virtual fieldwork in ethnomusicology falls into one of two categories: (1) as a supplement to face-to-face interaction with informants who reside "in the field," or (2) as a consideration of the relationship between technology and cultural practices within specific geographically-bounded places. A quick glance at the opening sentences

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[112] Although my focus here is on concepts of place and fieldwork in ethnomusicology, this history differs from anthropology only in the details.

for each of the three case studies in *Shadows in the Field*, demonstrates the continued focus on geographical location within "virtual fieldwork." Both Katherine Meizel ("By the time I drove to Los Angeles to interview communications major Bao Viet Nguyen…") (Cooley et al. 2008, 92) and Timothy J. Cooley ("I was in paradise—and in a tight spot…What had me stuck in an expensive hotel room overlooking the legendary surfing beaches of Waikiki…") (2008, 96) begin their ethnographic stories with scenes of arrival in physical places. Nasir Syed's case study is an example of the second category I listed above ("My involvement with the Internet as a source of knowledge about Hindustani music is indicative of who I am, and the place and time in which I live. A first-generation American-born man of Indian/Pakistani heritage" [2008, 102]). While Syed is less concerned with the location of the ethnographer vis-à-vis a clearly defined field, Syed nonetheless depends on geographically-related markers of identity for the fieldworker, the research subject, and the field.

Although Cooley, Meizel, and Syed cite Timothy Rice (2008) in proposing that "the 'field' in which we work is a metaphor" and therefore, "there is no 'there' to which we must go" (2008, 90), all three case studies clearly articulate a physical "there" as a location for the "field." In my experience with iCompers, however, the coming-together of people to a particular cyber-location, without any face-to-face grounding nor shared interest in a specific national or ethnic identity, constitutes— on its own terms—a viable field for ethnomusicological inquiry.[113] This phenomenon warrants an investigation of musical and social expressions of iCompositions as a place.

Conveying Place in "The Old iComp Twang"

> Well, the workday's done and the weekend's here
> Just pull up your computer and an ice cold beer
> And come to iCompositions (here at iCompositions)
> Yeah, iCompositions (here at iCompositions)
> Here at iCompositions we're having us a real good time
>
> – "The Old iComp Twang" by POWERMATT[114]

In January 2006, site administrators announced a contest to celebrate the third anniversary of iCompositions.com. The goal for the contestants was to compose and record a theme song for the site:

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[113] My suggestion that iCompers are not concerned with "a specific national or ethnic identity" does not mean that people's geographic and ethnic origins are perceived as irrelevant or ignored. Further discussion of geographic location of community members is discussed in "Geography Matters" on page 77.

[114] "The Old iComp Twang" was posted to iCompositions.com by POWERMATT on 13 January, 2006 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=29171).

iC Theme Song Contest

To complete our iCompositions Birthday Celebration, we're holding a contest in which members will create an iCompositions Theme Song that describes your experience with the site, our community, or site features themselves. The song should be in the style of a TV show Theme Song or something of that nature. And the grand prize? An iPod with video.[115]

POWERMATT (formerly known as THEGRANZ) was one of many composer/musicians who set off to record a musical entry for the competition. In his recording of "The Old iComp Twang," a honky-tonk country song with a heavy western swing in a twelve-bar blues form, POWERMATT sculpted a sonic environment that suggests a musical experience beyond the home-studio setting in which it was recorded.

> Well if you play a geetar then just come right in
> if ya only wanna lissen well that ain't no sin
> 'Cause here at iCompositions (here at iCompositions)
> Yeah, here at iCompositions (here at iCompositions)
> Here at iCompositions we're having us a real good time
>
> Kick your shoes off at old iComp
> And have yourself a reeel good time

POWERMATT explained his intent and the process behind recording and submitting the song to the iCompositions contest:

> I had two submissions [for the competition]. I wound up not using this one, but still liked it enough to post to the site.[…]"The Old iComp Twang" [is] more or less done in the style of an old Hank Williams song. I just liked the honkey tonk feel that I came up with.

POWERMATT's choice of Hank Williams as an inspiration for this song reveals significance within the socio-musical context of iCompositions. In this song, POWERMATT draws a connection between a "virtual community" (iCompositions) and a "real world" place (the local bar on a Friday night). Few musical genres rely on the notion of place as a marker of authentic expression more so than does country music and the music of Hank Williams, a pioneer in the honky-tonk genre of American country music, is generally associated with notions of the local, as expressed through the term of "honky-tonk" itself.[116] In their book, *Sound Tracks: Popular Music, Identity, and Place*, Connell and Gibson argue that "places give credibility to music" (2003), but for his

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[115] This announcement was distributed with the iCompositions newsletter on January 6, 2006 (http://www.icompositions.com/site/newsletter/archives/6.html). All of the songs entered in the contest can be heard on the "iC Theme Song" MUGshots podcast posted by JLGERK on January 25, 2006 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/podcasts/episode.php?eid=98).

[116] See, for example, Carney (1974), Connell & Gibson (2003), Gibson & Davidson (2004), and Peterson (1997).

part, PowerMatt leans on markers of musical style in "The Old iComp Twang" to lend a sense of authenticity to a virtual place. Adding handclaps on the backbeat, a variety of hoots and hollers to the background, and a multi-voice, group response ("here at iCompositions") to the lead vocals—all of which is performed by PowerMatt with the help of multi-track recording in GarageBand—PowerMatt simulates a local bar or honky-tonk, transporting the listener beyond the computer screen, subsequently lending credibility to iCompositions as a place for music, drinking, and socializing. Responses to "The Old iComp Twang" confirm the success of the song in creating that sense of place for the listener:[117]

SMKrause: Very original piece, enjoyed it very much. I felt like I was back @ the bar. An excellent song.

Sloparts: It's a good think [sic] Hank Jr didn't hear this, he'd be rollin his daddy over in the grave and putting Bose noise canceling headphones on the body. But hell, I don't care, I love it. Pass me another beer Martha and let's get ta two steppin'.

jtkattner: love the jam! you should do some more of that country twang stuff. that guitar just calls out to twist off another lone star and have one more scoot and spin around the floor.

Ethnographic Descriptions of Cyberspace

The connection PowerMatt establishes between iCompositions and place is not unexpected nor unusual. Both academic and popular discourse pertaining to the Internet are saturated with what social geographer Paul Adams calls "virtual-place metaphors" (1998; Adams 1997). Virtual-place metaphors are especially tempting to ethnographers who conventionally rely on descriptions of place for establishing their methodological commitment to fieldwork. For example, in the opening paragraph to his 2003 publication, "Musical Life in Softcity," René Lysloff relies on a conventional ethnographic description of place to situate himself, the ethnographer, within the field:

> For me, the Internet is one gigantic ghost town…where I always seem to arrive the moment everybody else has left. It is a deserted metropolis where I find traces of life everywhere, but no people, no living bodies.… Its suburbs are countless homepages—an immense neighborhood of haunted houses… (2003a, 23)

In this introductory portrait, the Internet is equated with a massive urban space, and networks of personal webpages are equated with single-family homes that line suburbial streets. Such descriptions of a vast urban space, inviting us to "design and construct [a] City of Bits" (Mitchell 1995), is commonplace among ethnographic narratives of the Internet. These metaphors are familiar and easily accepted by computer users who have long been accustomed to mapping virtual experiences onto previously familiar, everyday tasks—such as moving documents into folders on the desktop. Through the windows of a networked computer, however, the otherwise

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[117] http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=29171

task-oriented computer user is offered not only a glimpse beyond her desktop, but is provided with a portal through which she may navigate along the information super-highway and, being routed through gateways, finds herself an explorer of various sites in "Softcity." Suggesting a sense of travel away from home to distant places, these metaphors provide convenient terminology for ethnographers, whose tales of "entry into and exit from 'the field'" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997, 12) help fulfill the methodological requirement of fieldwork and reaffirm what Coleman and Collins refer to as the "tropes of place [which construct a] sense of a 'there' to 'be' in" (1986, 1).

Indeed, many ethnographers describe the Internet as a place to which they have gone, justifying their right to representation through standard accounts of their time spent in the field.[118] Like Lysloff's account of the field site as different, unusual, and foreign, for Markham going online was just as new and strange as any anthropological research project involving travel to a remote and unknown land. In the first chapter (titled "Going Online") of her ethnography, *Life Online*, she recalls her own arrival in the "field":

> It took three years. I had to overcome my trepidation. I feel comfortable in most online spaces now, but I suspect I will never be convinced I am truly an insider…

> Going online took a long time and involved far more than turning on the computer, tapping out words on the keyboard, and pressing the send/enter button. It was more like entering a strange new world where the very metaphysics defied my comprehension of how worlds should work. To even begin to understand what was happening online, or to communicate with other users, I had to learn how to move, see, and talk. (1998, 23)

Markham, like millions of other Americans in the mid-1990s, was indeed experiencing a "strange new world" by logging into the World Wide Web. But the "field" has changed considerably since Markham's research in the mid-1990s, or more importantly, the ethnographer's relationship to the field site has changed. As I embarked on my fieldwork, a decade or more after Markham's, computer-mediated communication is embedded in every aspect of my life, both personal and professional, and is thus anything but strange or distant. A sense of the exotic is mostly absent due to the mundaneness of email, Skype, Google Maps, and the rest of the World Wide Web. In reflecting on my fieldwork, I found comfort in Gupta and Ferguson's critique of the "traditional" field as "a highly overdetermined setting for the discovery of difference" which ethnographers stumble upon "by chance" (1997, 5).

Nevertheless, some of the strangeness and discomfort expressed by Markham remains, even after more than two decades of online experiences. As Internet-based environments become more immersive and multi-sensory, the greater the existential crisis due to disembodied (or digitally-

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[118] Examples of the treatment of online space as a place to which we travel include Escobar, Hess, Licha, Sibley, Strathern, & Sutz (1994), and Rushkoff (1994). Additionally, the following include an accounting of their time spent in the virtual field: Markham (1998), Hakken (1999), Miller & Slater (2000), and Lysloff (2003).

embodied) communicative and experiential practices. In terms of fieldwork, this raises questions regarding face-to-face communication, which has been a basic assumption of ethnographic research. The question arises as to whether Internet-based communication is too heavily mediated to be valid for ethnographic research. If "in fieldwork we unveil the human face of ethnomusicology" (Myers 1992, 21), how do we deal with non-face-to-face, computer-mediated fieldwork? More specifically, the disembodied nature of computer-mediated communication generally lacks the associative physical gestures and temporal contextualization required for the proper interpretation of the communication among research subjects and between research subjects and the researcher. For some scholars, such deficiencies are acceptable if the Internet is only used as a supplementary communicative tool in "real life" ethnographic research, that is, at some point ethnographic research is conducted during which the researcher and informant meet face-to-face. Miyako Inoue, however, points out that "such a distinction [between "virtual" communication and face-to-face communication] miss[es] the point that face-to-face interaction is just as mediated as other forms of communication—what, after all, could possibly be 'natural' about 'naturally-occuring speech'?—and that the supposedly mediated and reflexive is always present in every face-to-face encounter" (2003, 11).[119] And Axel rhetorically asks "to what extent does physical proximity insure direct, if any, access between two speaking subjects?" (2006, 374). In other words, Inoue and Axel would argue that all communication is culturally construed, and as such must be considered within the particular cultural context in which it is emitted and received.[120]

Nonetheless, the lack of face-to-face interaction in cyberspace is highlighted in Lysloff's introduction, in which he describes cyberspace as filled with places void of human activity. This portrayal bears a similarity with another common metaphor for cyberspace—that of the electronic frontier (Mitchell 1995; Healy 1997; Rheingold 2000). Vast, open, and empty, the frontier lacks options for unmediated sociality, offering only opportunities for the rugged individualist, isolated behind the computer screen. Toward this anti-social portrait of the Internet we may add yet another richly descriptive, virtual-place-metaphoric label used in anthropological analyses of the Internet, that of "Cyberia" (Escobar et al. 1994).

At the same time, the Internet is often viewed as a space where "intensely social" interaction takes place within virtual communities, a point Lysloff makes later in his account (2003a, 25). Within this more socially-oriented narrative of cyber-places is the utopian perspective that the Internet has revived what sociologist Ray Oldenburg (1997) calls "third places" or "great good places" (see Soukup 2006). Neither one's home nor workplace, third places exist in public spaces where community members gather for informal conversation and social interaction—such as the local honky-tonk we experience in "The Old iComp Twang," when POWERMATT sings, "the weekend's here…come to iCompositions…and have yourself a reeel good time."

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[119] See Axel (2006) for a more in-depth discussion of communication technology.

[120] In some respects, Inoue's argument is similar to Calhoun's approach to virtual community, in that online relationships are not drastically different from those offline, only that they may be mediated in different ways.

For Internet theorist Sherry Turkle (1995), such virtual-third place metaphors are indicative of a postmodern "culture of simulation," that is, third places—or place, in general—cannot actually exist in cyberspace, but rather are merely simulated through digital technology. In his criticism of what some have referred to as "virtual third places," Charles Soukup, borrowing from Turkle's theory of simulation, argues:

> In a sense, people are merely 'pretending' to be in a 'real' place while they sit at their computer screens, much like people pretend to be at a 'real' French café when dining in Disneyland. (2006, 7)

Although there may certainly be an element of simulation in "The Old iComp Twang," further investigation of this, and other songs on iCompositions, will reveal a sense of place that goes beyond mere simulation. It is at this point that we can make a distinction between the simulation of place and place-as-metaphor. In "The Old iComp Twang," POWERMATT uses his music not in an attempt to replicate a "real world" pub, but rather to metaphorically relate his experiences within iCompositions to a familiar "real world" setting:

> I wanted to equate the *feeling* of hanging with your friends at a pub with the song. …In my days of playing out in San Francisco all of my friends were people I was meeting at the clubs I played at. I have made a few friends [at iCompositions] and made many acquaintances and though we only "virtually" hang out, there are *real* connections that are often made. I wanted to give the song that feeling with the hoots and hollers in the background. (emphasis added)

For many within the iCompositions community, however, the sense of place experienced within this parcel of cyberspace extends beyond metaphor. This is evident in LILICHI's response to "The Old iComp Twang," in which she expresses not that the metaphorical honky-tonk of POWERMATT's song is something like iCompositions, but rather: "THIS IS IT!!!!!!! that's exactly what it is!!! yep! yep! yep!"

There are two vital aspects to the establishment of iCompositions as a genuine place (i.e. not merely simulated nor metaphoric) within the musical expression of the community members: (1) the significance of place-name "iCompositions" itself and (2) the sociomusical interactivity experienced within the boundaries of that place. Both of these aspects are central elements of the song "iComp Blues" by ANDROIDFRISBEE.

Narratives of Place

Well, it's iCompositions (iCompositions)
Yeah, this is iCompositions (iCompositions)
Said this is iCompositions (iCompositions)
Welcome to iCompositions (iCompositions)
It's a place, if you bring a song, well then you're gonna belong.

– "iComp Blues" by ANDROIDFRISBEE[121]

An important aspect to place-making is place-naming. According to the existential anthropologist, Michael Jackson, "there is something foreign and forbidding about landscape that has not been named" (1998, 175). The vastness of the electronic frontier is made familiar through place names, Universal Resource Locators (URLs), which serve not only as identifiers of cyber-location, but can help create familiarity between the subject and her position within cyberspace. Increased familiarity with particular place-names leads to an increased sense of belonging and agency within that space. Personal-computer musicians come to feel "at home" at iCompositions.com as they recognize the significance of the name and make references to it, whether as bookmarks in their web browsers or as the subject their songs. In "iComp Blues" by ANDROIDFRISBEE, familiarity with the name of the online community is encouraged through incessant repetition of the name, "iCompositions," and the call-and-response structure through which the name not only gets reinforced but is shared as it is passed between two separate voices.

"iComp (A Love Story)": The Subjectivity of Place

Jackson explains that "in giving a name to a hill, a ridge, a bay, [or, in this case, a site within cyberspace] we bring it, an external object, into our own immediate experience" (1998, 175). While places may be perceived as always external to ourselves—outside of our human bodies—cyber-places are especially distant because our physical bodies can never be located *within* them. We are always looking *at* the computer screen where places in cyberspace seem to exist. But within the process of naming—a social action that serves to circumscribe place—a place comes into existence and is made more immediate within the social world of human actors.

While histories of how places come to be named are common in narratives of place, so too are stories of our relationships with specific places. As we bring places "into our own immediate experience" through storytelling, we lend subjectivity to places—they become personified through our retelling of meaningful experiences in relation to those places. This process is

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[121] "iComp Blues" was posted to iCompositions.com by ANDROIDFRISBEE on 27 January, 2006 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=29692).

exemplified in a tribute song to iCompositions by LIQUID, called "iComp (A Love Story)".[122] Backed by an electric piano playing a lightly arpeggiated chord progression (C-Am-Em-G) in 4/4, LIQUID prefaces his story with a softly-spoken plea to the website:

> Well, iCompositions, you and I have been through a lot together since 4/27/04
> And lately, I've been feeling like it's time to tell you how I feel about you
> Please listen:

As a drum-machine driven, R&B rhythm underscores the slow-tempo, harmonic progression of the electric piano, LIQUID delivers the melody with his light, pop vocals, reminiscing of his 1-year relationship with iCompositions:

> My first visit to your home found me in your auditorium alone
> There was no one else inside, just you and I (you and I)
> So I started scrolling page after page in hopes of hearing every song you play
> but day after day they just piled up too high (up too high)
>
> iComp, you're the only site for me (I don't even use GarageBand)
> iComp, where all my music's free (I don't even have a support this artist button)

Although I previously suggested that we cannot be physically located within cyberspace, LIQUID clearly articulates an intimacy and immediacy in his relationship with iCompositions that transcends the existential crisis of life online. This narrative of place expresses an extension of subjectivity and immediacy of social experience with iCompositions that cannot be simulated, and, therefore, is neither a simulation.

Social experience and expression of social relationships through music is central to the continual reaffirmation of iCompositions as a place of significance and meaning in the lives of iCompers. Names reinforce and verify the identity of place, just as they do for people. Contained within names are stories of how places came to be—and came to be named—and these stories serve to reaffirm cultural values that operate within that shared space. (Jackson 1998). Like all places, iCompositions has a story about how its name came to be, and a trace of that story is retold in the songs created by the musicians who inhabit that place. POWERMAC99 (aka PM), the website owner and administrator, explained how iCompositions came to be named:

> I started the community on the day GarageBand was announced (January 6, 2004) as GarageBandCreations.com. Shortly after we launched our music uploading functionality, we received a cease and desist order from GarageBand.com,[123] the company from which Apple had licensed the GarageBand trademark.

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[122] "iComp (A Love Story)" was posted to iCompositions.com by LIQUID on 23 March, 2005 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=12625).

[123] GarageBand.com (http://www.garageband.com) is (self-proclaimed) "the web's largest independent music community and home to the definitive charts of the best emerging artists."

After consulting a lawyer, we determined that we were indeed infringing on their trademark, sold them our original slate of domain names (we also owned GarageBandNetwork.com and a few other GB-related names) and held a community contest to choose a new name for the site.

In telling the story of how the name "iCompositions" came to be, PM communicates a central tenet of iCompositions: the value of community involvement and interactivity. Initially named by its creators, the site was renamed by members of the community, who have come to recreate the site through the music they share and the social relationships they develop with and within that space. iCompositions, which POWERMATT described as a gathering point for various musicians to "hang out" and make "real connections," is constituted by the social interactions and musical processes mediated by computer and Internet technologies.

"iComp Blues": Place and Musical Sociality

For participants within the iCompositions community, the concept of place is closely associated with the primary social activity of the site, which is the sharing of one's musical activity with others within the community. ANDROIDFRISBEE welcomes new participants by explaining this basic mode of social interaction. As he sings the instructive words in his song "iComp Blues," over-dubbed background vocals continue to reassert the importance of the place name and its relation to social interactivity:

> (iCompositions) I guess I ought to tell you how it works around here:
> (iCompositions) well, you bring a song and we'll lend an ear

I suggest that it is within this very process of sociomusical activity—sharing musical creativity by uploading one's songs and listening to songs created by other members of the community—that the sense of place arises. iCompositions, for ANDROIDFRISBEE, is a place where people from all over the world come together to create, and listen to, music. This same sensibility is expressed in EVILFACTMAN's "General call for help" (page xxvii), in which the help (music) of friends across (cyber)space was solicited to fight against the evil Farce and the Infinite Campus (see Chapter 7). As ANDROIDFRISBEE explains in a later verse of "iComp Blues":

> (iCompositions) Next I'd like to tell you 'bout the folks around here
> (iCompositions) they come from all over, from far and near

Like POWERMATT, ANDROIDFRISBEE emphasizes the social connections made among participants of the community. The concept of simulation, however, is rejected by highlighting differences between a "real world" third place, and the Internet-based iCompositions:

> (iCompositions) and though they're real nice for a peer to peer
> (iCompositions) I'll warn you right now man, they never bring any beer.

Like POWERMATT, who turned to Hank Williams-style country for "The Old iComp Twang," ANDROIDFRISBEE draws upon blues, another musical genre which "evokes a deep sense of place among its fans" (Grazian 2003, 7). "iComp Blues" may be interpreted as an anthem, intended to

evoke that same "deep sense of place" by focusing on the musical sociality at the heart of the community. Perhaps it is for this reason that ANDROIDFRISBEE chooses to emphasize the importance of social relationships among members of the community throughout the remainder of the song by presenting a long list of "shout outs" to the musicians he has met and interacted with at iCompositions.

> There's PONKEY from England and DYLAN from France
> NOTHING from all over, DRUGON from Japan!
> There's LONGSHOT from way down Tucson way, ZALLAZ and HAYLEY DEAKIN are outta UK.
> […]PHARMAKEUS down under, BLACKLILY up north. FORTUNATO's Italian, JOLOFFSON's
> > Norse.

These shared narratives of place, as demonstrated in "The Old iComp Twang" and "iComp Blues," indicate that iCompositions is not merely a repository for user-generated content, but rather a gathering place for a community, which arises from the social interaction emergent within the process of musical collaboration.

Geography Matters

"Today I find it is magic to be in touch with people all around the globe."

– MACOCO

None of this is to suggest that geography is irrelevant to iCompers. While the nodes of intersection between musical and social actions are realized within cyberspace, their physical bodies, the site in which the aural and emotional experiences that connect them to other iCompers materialize, are located in a specific geospatial place. Many artists on iCompositions recognize that their geographical location is a vital aspect in informing their musical expression and personal identities. Additionally, an awareness of the geographical distribution of fellow iCompers heightens the awe of the diversity of this particular cybercommunity. Therefore, the geographic location of participants is a common topic of interest and discussion on iCompositions.[124] Some members of iCompositions have added a marker to a collaborative Google map, marking their geographic place of residence (see Figure 62). Although the map offers only a small sample of iCompositions' membership, it does give a sense of the geographic concentration of active members in North America and Western Europe. While the map reveals the European-American dominance of iCompositions, many iCompers see it as an indicator of the universality and strong global presence of the community.

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[124] This is not a unique trait of iCompositions. Discussions regarding the geographical location of participants in social networks and online communities have been very common in my experience, whether in iCompositions or in Second Life.
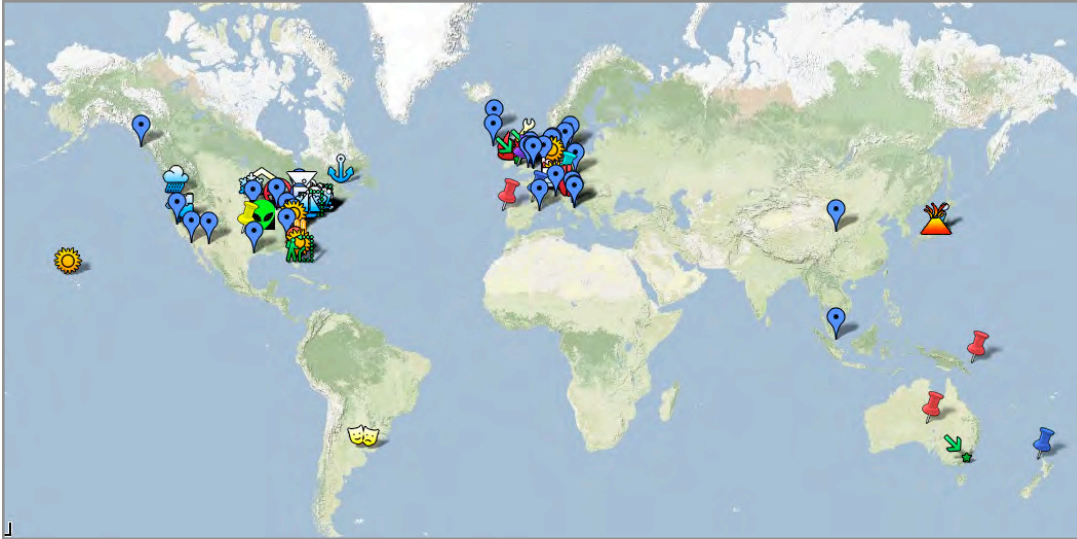
Figure 62: iCompositions collaborative Google map

The Global Identity of iCompositions

Participants see iCompositions as having a global identity, and iCompers' ability to work together across geographic distance and cultural difference is a point of pride for many members of the community. For example, EVILFACTMAN's universal call for help in *The Infinite Campus* was immediately responded to by JOLOFSSON, an iComper from Sweden. At the same time, Darci Vader's ignorance of European geography and his subsequent conflation of Sweden and Switzerland was a clear point of mockery for EVILFACTMAN to lodge at Darci (see page xxix). In EVILFACTMAN's epic, knowledge of geography and the embracing of cultural diversity is a signifier of the enlightened status of iCompers as opposed to those who have given in to the Dumb Side. In another example, ANDROIDFRISBEE's list of iCompers' names in "iComp Blues" (see page 77) is as much about the varied nationalities represented among community members as it is about the individual iCompers featured in his song. This cultural diversity of iCompers is also evident in the variety of languages used not only in songs, but also in chat. While English is the primary language used on the site, it is not unusual for discussions on the chat to be conducted in Spanish or, to a lesser extent, Italian or German.

The connection between specific iCompers and their geographic place of residence plays an important role in the education and enlightenment of members of the community. By developing friendships with other members of the community, an iComper sees the world as a globally interconnected set or relationships, which brings significance and meaning to otherwise foreign places and distant events. TRIBOLITE2, an iComper who resides in Maryland, and has never travelled outside of the United States, explained to me what it means to him to get to know musicians from around the world:

TRILOBITE2:   I've had members here send me geological samples from their region, because
                I'm an amateur paleontologist. That was wonderful. I've sent gifts to people when

they've had children born. I know people all over the world, which formerly I didn't know anyone outside of the United States. That's a major effect the site's had on me—a much more global view of the world.

TSHARVEY: People you've met through iCompositions have sent you geological samples from where they live?

TRILOBITE2: Yes. Fossil trilobites, in fact.[…]I had no access to that before.

TSHARVEY: I think it's really interesting in how [geographical] place still matters here.

TRILOBITE2: Well, it matters too…when I watch the news now, unlike before, if there's an earthquake in Italy, I'm now worried about individual people, not just Italian people. If there's a fire raging in Canada, I'm concerned about people—individuals. It illuminates the other nations, I would say for myself. It makes it personal where before it was just hearing stories, I guess. It gives them more significance[…]

TRILOBITE2: […]It also puts a face on a nation. I can read about China in the news, but if I know artists in China, I see it completely different. It's the opposite of a filter. It doesn't focus things, it broadens things.

Through personal relationships with other iCompers, augmented by the tangible evidence of trilobite fossils and other geological samples, TRILOBITE2 has broadened his awareness and sensitivity to events that shape the lives of others outside his country of residence. Although he explains this new-found awareness as "the opposite of a filter," which doesn't focus but rather broadens his worldview, there seems to be, at some level, a process of focusing, as if he is now able to view the world through a finely focused lens. His perspective is broadened such that there is an increase in his sensitivity and awareness of the world, but his capacity for concern is enabled by focusing on particular individuals. His experience, in this regard, is not singular to the iCompositions community. As "citizens of the world" (a phrase iCompers sometimes use to refer to themselves) they are generally concerned with tragic events that cause suffering around the globe. iCompers react to tragic events in music and text, and I have read and listened to many reactions to events such as the 2004 Asian Tsunami in Indonesia, hurricane Katrina in 2005, and wildfires in Australia in February 2009, not to mention the many songs and discussions about war in general and in Iraq, in particular. Following the L'Aquila Earthquake in Central Italy in April 2009, DDBALL posted an article about the event on his blog.[125] He also mentioned CHARLYDEECYNTHIUS, an active member of iCompositions who lives in the area. Immediately, other iCompers posted replies to DDBALL's blog, expressing their concern for or news from CHARLY and others:

BASS2X: I understand the city has been destroyed twice before by earthquakes. I hope all our iComp brothers and sisters are safe.

THAT80SBOY: my best wishes to CHARLY and others affected too!

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[125] http://www.icompositions.com/artists/ddball/entries.php?pid=5774

DIRIGENT: All the best for CDC [CHARLYDEECYNTHIUS] and his family!

DR_ELVIS01:   sent a pm [private message] to CHARLY at around 11:00 cet yesterday as i heard about the tragedy and asked if he and his family is okay! he wrote back a few hours later:

"...OK for me and my family and my home fortunately. The center of earthquake is 90km away from here. Abruzzo my region east from Rome. my home made like a washing machine last night...this is sad..."

are there any other icompers in that region?

CHARLYDEECYNTHIUS: There are many iCompers from Abruzzi (Central Italy):

-CHARLYDEECYNTHIUS
-LUPIROZ
-CAMOMILLA
-PENTAGONO
-GIANKYDRUMS (listener)
-STEVE TORTO (listener)
-GENIAL DRY
-GHIGNOMA77
-RADIO
-GIANFRANCOTREPPIEDI
-GALADRIEL(listener)
-STEVENDRUMS96(Listener)
-ICHARLOTTE

thanx for supporting us in this hard time

CONORCORBETT:my prayers are with all those affected.

BARRETOK: Much love to my Italian friends that are just like family to me.

In response to the geographical differences of their individual residencies, and the realities of their embodied presence in particular geographic space, iCompers come together in cyberspace at iCompositions to share those experiences and the emotions that accompany such tragedy. Thus, they form a unified community, which embodies a global identity that transcends geographic distance.

Geographical Place and Musical Identity

While geographic location and ethnic identity is recognized by iCompers as a vital element that informs musical creativity, the disembodied realm of musical cyberspace becomes a place to transcend the expectations of geographic origin. The following conversation between UNCLE_MOE and PHARMAKEUS, which took place on the iCompositions chat, exemplifies this interest in iCompers' regional and national origins and their ability to embody distant geographic locations:

UNCLE_MOE: now she [RAVENS] has a REAL brooklyn accent let me tell you!

UNCLE_MOE: But when she sings, you don't hear a trace of it

PHARMAKEUS: No I don't hear it on her vox.

PHARMAKEUS: I would have thought california

UNCLE_MOE: not at all. but her speaking voice definitely has an accent.

UNCLE_MOE: yeah a more neutral kind of accent.

UNCLE_MOE: have you heard ROSALINDA on this site?

PHARMAKEUS: you bet. what a great voice

UNCLE_MOE: now she's Swedish and yet she sings country music and you would swear she was from Nashville

UNCLE_MOE: that just amazes me

PHARMAKEUS: LOL

UNCLE_MOE: it's amazing!

UNCLE_MOE: she's a very nice gal too--I've known her from other sites for quite a long time now.

PHARMAKEUS: That's great! she seems very noce [nice], yes

UNCLE_MOE: her whole family is musical..her brother plays guitar and her sister is a singer too.

PHARMAKEUS: wow! ... she's very musical herself

UNCLE_MOE: I think CLAYPOTTS has done some work on this site with her brother KRILLE

UNCLE_MOE: some blues numbers

PHARMAKEUS: yes. KRILLE is ROSALINDA's brother? I am amazed

PHARMAKEUS: KRILLE is a good axeman

UNCLE_MOE: yup!

UNCLE_MOE: he does some great stuff! some excellent instrumentals and boogie stuff

PHARMAKEUS: it's a small world

UNCLE_MOE: it really is

UNCLE_MOE: it's amazing with the internet now

UNCLE_MOE: like GARNI sending me something from australia and I get in 3 seconds

PHARMAKEUS: that's cool, yes

UNCLE_MOE: you can be collaborating on songs with people all over the world...just fascinating

UNCLE_MOE: my mom and dad would never believe this stuff if they were here today

PHARMAKEUS: I'm in ongoing collab with MIR (Italy) and with the Werewolves Prague and SA ... it's very global

PHARMAKEUS: sorry to hear your folks have passed away

UNCLE_MOE: you know, it shows that music IS the universal language

PHARMAKEUS: music certainly speaks across cultures?

UNCLE_MOE: oh it's okay...thanks. they died a long time ago--

UNCLE_MOE: it sure does

PHARMAKEUS: It is just a matter of opening your ears?

UNCLE_MOE: that's all it takes.

UNCLE_MOE: you know, I've met people on here that will say, "oh, that--that's not something I listen to" so they never do

UNCLE_MOE: they limit themselves that way

PHARMAKEUS: I can get into very exotic musical traditions like hawaiian chants or indian raga

UNCLE_MOE: I take in a little of everything, even genres or types of music I would not ordinarily listen to for leisure because there is good stuff in all music and you can learn from it

PHARMAKEUS: well. that's not me. I love to listen

UNCLE_MOE: I LOVE Hawaiian music

UNCLE_MOE: i know you do!

UNCLE_MOE: I can tell when the person is really doing their best and working hard, regardless of what it is

UNCLE_MOE: and that's what matters most

PHARMAKEUS: there's a huge pan pacific culture of chanting?

UNCLE_MOE: really?

PHARMAKEUS: I think so. From Taiwan into Hawaii

UNCLE_MOE: sort of a spiritual type sound?

PHARMAKEUS: everything is spiritual?

UNCLE_MOE: in some way I would say yes

PHARMAKEUS: well.... the chanting is associated with tribal identities

PHARMAKEUS: no two tribes chant the same

UNCLE_MOE: sort of their theme song

PHARMAKEUS: there's a tribe in Taiwan that sings 16 part harmonies

UNCLE_MOE: sheesh...that's very complex

UNCLE_MOE: and how

PHARMAKEUS: it sure is. each member of the tribe finds their own part in the tribal chant

UNCLE_MOE: that is very interesting

PHARMAKEUS: they live in a high echo valley

UNCLE_MOE: i bet that sounds beautiful

PHARMAKEUS: I wish I'd heard it. I never have .... I learned this at a concert by Taiwanese folk singers/dancers

UNCLE_MOE: wow

UNCLE_MOE: that's great

UNCLE_MOE: We have concerts given by troupes from other countries that we often go to see

At the beginning of their conversation, UNCLE_MOE and PHARMAKEUS discuss how RAVENS, ROSALINDA, and KRILLE transcend geoculturally-informed notions of how they should sound or the style of music they should play, placing these iCompers within the enlightened realm of "citizens of the world." Their perspective of these three iCompers stands in contrast to the latter-part of their conversation, in which Hawaiian music is Hawaiian and Taiwanese music is Taiwanese. Although they discuss relationships between these two places by connecting them to a broader "pan pacific culture of chanting," they clearly express a sense of musical distinction between the two cultures, as exemplified by unique tribal chanting in Taiwan in "16 part harmonies."

Despite their diverse geographic places of origin, iCompositions is a place in which these personal-computer musicians come together in one place to participate in musical sociality that both reifies a sense of place and belonging in cyberspace and affirms the primacy of that communal place in their collective lives. As a socially-defined place, iCompositions is not a static, bounded entity into which one may travel, reside, study, and then depart. It is constantly shifting and moving with its participants. Thus, my research in iCompositions extends beyond the URL-specified boundaries and across a broader spectrum of cyberspace wherever the social and musical activity of iCompers can be found.

Steering a Course through Cyberspace

When William Gibson coined the term "cyberspace" in his 1982 short story "Burning Chrome," he merged "cybernetics" and "space" to create something "evocative and essentially meaningless," a word without a "real semantic meaning."[126] When Netscape Communications

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[126] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyberspace

Corporation launched the dominant web browser of the mid-1990s, however, they looked back to the Greek root of cyber—Κυβερνήτης (or kubernetes)—meaning steersman, pilot, or rudder. The ubiquitous web application, Netscape Navigator, helped steer the first generation of Web users into and within cyberspace. This image of navigating seemingly infinite space was articulated by the splash screen for Netscape Navigator, which depicted the helm of a ship with a starry sky above the helm.

Figure 63: Netscape Navigator 2 splash screen

Netscape's splash screen, an image that appears on the computer screen while the program is loading, puts the computer user at the helm of the ship. With the sky as the limit, the helmsman controls their own path through cyberspace—an ultimate expression of individuality. When Netscape broadened their Internet offerings to a suite of applications, called Netscape Communicator, the splash screen, and subsequent journey for the user, was re-conceptualized around the image of a lighthouse.

Figure 64: Netscape Communicator 4.5 splash screen

In many ways, this latter image better captures the way in which iCompers conceptualize their own journey and experience in cyberspace. From this perspective, the web browser is not a vehicle steered by an individual user to distant places, but rather a tool, a technology, which helps guide the sailor toward the place(s) they seek.

"Bless the Good Ship iComp Lord"

In "Bless the Good Ship iComp Lord," the iCompositions community is expressed not as a place grounded on rock and soil, but rather as the ship moving through cyberspace. The community is a journey embarked upon together, the captain is PM, EVILFACTMAN's messiah. Instead of independent ships travelling alone through cyberspace, iCompers work together in collaboration with each other. THENOWNOWS wrote the following introduction to "Bless the Good Ship iComp":

> A most joyous and silly celebration of all things iComp set on the high seas and dedicated to all of you out there who have made my life so much more musical over the past few months. It's been an absolute pleasure listening, chatting and collaborating with you, so thank you all and sundry…Turn it up loud and most of all Enjoy!!![127]

The spirit of individuality, however, still lives on in the pirate theme of the song.

Figure 65: Cover image for "Bless the Good Ship iComp"

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[127] "Bless the Good Ship iComp Lord" was posted to iCompositions.com by THENOWNOWS on 17 December, 2008 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=102430). The "cast and crew" includes TRILOBITE2 as "Drunken Sailors and Parrot," ABSTRACTVISION as "More Drunken Sailors and Arse," DYLAN as the "Only Sober One Aboard and Guitarist," GARNI as the "Drunken Drummer," and THENOWNOWS as the "Drunken Composer." THENOWNOWS also credits "those wonderful folks over at Freesound.org" for audio samples included in the song.

"Bless the Good Ship iComp Lord" begins with the sound of seagulls and lapping waves. Soon after a melody is played on an accordion (or a software sampler imitating an accordion) and the sound of drunken sailors. "Alright crew," we hear one of them say, "this is our favorite number. Watch me for the cues. And pay attention to the beats!" A second accordion-like instrument enters playing a counter melody. Then a flute-like instrument, bass, and guitar.

Welcome aboard all – the good ship iComper!
The gangplank is that way and the bar never closes
She's seaworthy – trust me – grab a free life-preserver
When the booze is aboard we'll be a'weighing the anchor
Our mission, like our crew, could not be any simpler
With cap'n PM at the helm we'll a'wander
The seas and oceans a'searching for plunder
(There's no song too poxy that someone won't cover …)

Chorus:
Bless the good ship iComp Lord and all who sail with her
For we know not what we do – but we're doing it together
We're likely to sink in the fairest of weathers
For we don't know our port from our starboard or rudder

You're welcome to board whether seadog or lubber
(Tho there's a hearty Yo-Ho! If you're a good female singer)
But there's no time for scurvy here or sea-sickness either
On the good ship iComp you're either drunk or hungover
The crew Lord! Its motley we come from all corners
Alaska, Peru, Singapore and Down Under
There's Brits, Cowboys, Indians and those Euro's are bonkers
Then there's the ghosts that rise up known as Davy Jones' Lurkers

Chorus:
Bless the good ship iComp Lord and all who sail with her
For we know not what we do – but we're doing it together
We're likely to wreck in the calmest of harbours
For we can't tell our poopdeck from our (Aaaarrrsse) Sea monsters

Leave a bad comment and we will shiver your timbers
No quarter is given to unsolicited pluggers
The C.O. is a map to lost buries old treasures
And the chart is the Head there you'll find all the old buggers
So come all ye faithful old fiddlers and ravers
There's a home for ye here right by the old rockers
And what did we do with the last drunken sailor …?
We promoted him sir made him chief moderator

Chorus:
Bless the good ship iComp Lord and all who sail with her
For we know not what we do – but we doing it together
And as there's no chance in hell we'll make decent sailors
Let's stick to what we all do best – annoying the neighbours
Have mercy on the the neighbours Lord ...

Conclusion

Over the course of my research on iCompositions and other musical cybercommunities, I've often found the field to be elusive and constantly shifting—ebbing and flowing in unpredictable ways—hence the metaphor of the ship upon the seas in describing a communal place in cyberspace (see "Steering a Course through Cyberspace" on page 83). This sense of instability became most apparent during my futile attempts at seeking constancy in a community that is always in motion.[128] iCompers, like other Internet users, are always negotiating between their real-world responsibilities and their activity in cyberspace. Cybercommunity participants oscillate between online and offline at varying rates (by the minute, hour, day, week, month, or sometimes, by the year) depending on the demands of their offline lives and access to the Internet. Many participants in this study move between various sites and communities, inhabiting various virtual persona, while taking on new usernames and identities. Likewise, my own identity as participant and ethnographer, graduate student and college instructor, father, son, and husband is always shifting with my focus on the various contexts visible on my computer screen. Being "in the field," as it were, also makes me available to those at home—interviews via instant messenger are sometimes interrupted by my mother, who, seeing me online, wants to chat with her grandchildren about their day.

In the seemingly infinite, hyperlinked realm of cyberspace, I often wondered how I might determine where the field begins and ends. This issue of defining the boundaries between the field and home (or field research and web surfing) was a big challenge for me throughout my fieldwork and the writing of this dissertation. Most often, I questioned whether or not those lines should, or even could, exist. All of the digital tools that are part of my everyday personal and professional life—laptop, email, Web browser, cell phone, iPod, Skype, Facebook—are the same tools that allow me to construct my field and to bring my own online ethnographic persona into existence.

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[128] By instability, I don't mean that the iCompositions community is necessarily at risk, but rather it is more mobile and fluid than the typical ethnomusicological subject. On the other hand, I am not suggesting that iCompositions is extremely stable. As an independently owned and operated website, its existence is subject to the continued support of its administrator, POWERMAC99. However, it is important to keep in mind that the community is not entirely dependent upon the continued existence of the website see Chapter 5 on page 118.

While I frequently found myself immersed within the music and sociality of the virtual communities and websites I studied, my actions and experiences were never constrained to any given place, since the disembodied realm of cyberspace allows for a simultaneity of being insofar as I could multi-task/multi-exist—giving due attention to multiple sites online, as well as both offline and online environments. But regardless of where in the world I might be physically located or how many computer-mediated conversations I might be participating in at any particular moment, being online means that, within the context of cyberspace, I am "there." Online activity makes me available to others, it establishes my presence within its space, and provides a social space for constructing places.

CHAPTER 4

COMPOSING A MUSICAL COMMUNITY

The iCompositions community is one of the most friendly and welcoming on the 'net. Members not only help each other, but they engage in entertaining and constructive conversations, and continuously work to make iCompositions a great community for musicians and non-musicians alike.

— POWERMAC99[129]

I've been on this site for just a little [over] three months now. It already feels like family. I joined because I was looking for this kind of "iCompradery."

— JACKFANCY[130]

Hello and Welcome to the best online community.

— KNQULEARSHIFT[131]

More than any other word, "community" is the term most often used by iCompers when I ask them to describe iCompositions. Over the course of my fieldwork, many iCompers expressed their excitement regarding my research, assuring me that iCompositions was a special community and one worthy of study. This focus on the concept of community in describing iCompositions is not surprising given the abundant use of online/virtual/cyber- (or any other similarly prefaced versions of) community used in both popular media and academic references to CMC. As previously mentioned (see "Music, Community, and the Internet" on page 9), interest in the possibility for community on the Internet was established in the early stages of a publicly available Internet with the publication of *The Virtual Community* by Howard Rheingold (1993). Recent research on online communities has overwhelmingly tended toward ethnographic studies of specific communities of interest (Studdert 2008). Although this dissertation falls into

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[129] http://www.icompositions.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=1012

[130] http://www.icompositions.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=7064

[131] http://www.icompositions.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=7435

this category in some respects (iCompositions consists of participants who share an interest in composing, performing, recording, and listening to independently-produced music), I suggest that iCompositions is not merely a collective of individuals with a shared interest in a particular topic or hobby, but rather a socially-constructed community that provides deep significance through "communal being-ness" (Studdert 2008) for its participants.

In this chapter, I investigate how iCompositions is conceived by its participants as a community and how that community is socially and musically constructed. In order to understand how iCompositions exists as a community, I first discuss issues regarding the ways in which social interaction and presence play out within the context of iCompositions. Because the social atmosphere of iCompositions is inextricably tied to the process of composing, recording, and listening to music, I then investigate particular compositions as a foundation for social interaction.

Investigating the Musical Cybercommunity

In his article, "Community and CMC: The Virtual Absence of Online Communal Being-ness," David Studdert (2008) argues that recent research on online communities has revealed a propensity for commonality of offline experiences among participants in CMC, rather than communal being-ness derived from online social action. He points to the types of communities investigated by Internet ethnographers, including fan sites, political topics, health and illness issues, same-sex attraction, etc., and concludes that all of these communities of interests both exist and are made meaningful because of experiences participants engage in offline, individually and independently of the online community. Studdert explains:

> …these ethnographic accounts show two overwhelming tendencies within CMC practice: offline communal being-ness dominates the construction of online identities and online meanings, and there is virtually no sociality derived specifically from online settings. (Studdert 2008, 5)

I suggest that iCompositions, however, provides a meaningful online space for specifically computer-mediated sociality and online communal being-ness. The possibility for developing such a meaningful community online stems from the type of interaction available within a music-making oriented community. The sociomusical practices of iCompers provides a hybrid interaction that helps explain the persistence of the community despite an ever shifting dynamic of membership in which participants come and go. As with all communities, social interaction is a key element to understanding the formation of iCompositions.

90

Hybrid Interaction

In his research on open-source software (OSS) communities, Nicolas Ducheneaut argues that "communities are reproduced, transformed and extended over time through the progressive integration of new members, as these members interact with both the social and material components of a project" (2003, 10). Ducheneaut's focus on the concept of hybrid interactions is similar to the interactive process found among iCompers and reinforces Studdert's (2005) description of an action-based community. According to Ducheneaut, social hybridity is found within communities of OSS programmers in that their interactions do not only take place via textual communication, but also through shared actions upon "material components." In the case of software, "material" is a relative descriptor of particular virtual phenomena (i.e. digital data)—we might consider music (i.e. sound waves) to be material in the same sense, rendering Ducheneaut's point concerning hybrid interactions useful for an understanding of musical communities. Like the community of software engineers, Internet musicians engage in hybrid interactions: (1) they interact textually through synchronous chat, discussion forums, email, blogs, etc., and (2) they interact through the collaborative music projects that they share. As Ducheneaut argues, "it is crucial to take the hybrid nature of [online communities] seriously, and to make both people and material resources the focus of our studies in order to really understand how these online spaces function" (2003, 10). Similarly, I endeavor to understand the significance of the iCompositions community by focusing on the social interaction of iCompers through both textual communication and musical compositions.

Material components of musical communities, as outlined above, are an important aspect of sociocultural research because they mediate the interactions between the various participants. René Lysloff described this type of hybrid sociality among participants of the mod scene:

> The community members not only exchange information but also engage in trading "products." Since, broadly speaking, this simply involves bytes of computer data, it is important to make a distinction here: by information, I mean textualized forms of knowledge—that is, they are engaged in textually based communication (such as email, chat systems, discussion groups, and so forth); by products, I mean programs, images, and data files that, when they are processed, have functions analogous to three-dimensional objects…[which] are also collectible, like recordings on disk or cassette tape. (Lysloff 2003b, 43)

As with the OSS and mod communities, sociality within iCompositions depends upon a "simulated materiality" (2003a). Musical creativity is the purpose of the community, a point that MACOCO made when talking about his process of "reading" the site—"That's why we are here," he said (see page 37)—and as such it is central to social action within the site. iCompers come to know each other through listening and collaborating on each other's music as much as they do by reading forum posts, blogs, and other textual interactions.

Social Presence

Part of what makes blogs and social networking sites so powerful in creating social bonds and forming communities is the embedded feedback loop, where readers become participants in a conversation by responding to the original post. Commenting on blog posts, discussion threads, or songs, not only brings the commenter out of obscurity (where they otherwise existed as an invisible lurker), but also heightens the presence of the original poster by building social interaction around their shared text or music. A video on YouTube, for example, that has dozens of comments can create a sense of active sociality in which the presence of commenting participants is felt, regardless of whether or not they are currently online. Conversely, a blog posting or video that has not garnered a single comment or rating has a sense of absence—of a lack of presence—and the author who has not garnered feedback via comments or downloads feels a sense of disconnectedness, or absence, from the community. Presence, then, is directly connected to social interaction, both textual and material, within online communities.

When discussing how iCompers "read" the iCompositions website (see "Navigating the Site" on page 36), several artists mentioned that the first thing they do when logging on to the site is to go to the Backstage area and check the number of listens, downloads, and comments on their songs. While there is perhaps an element of vanity in this process of first and foremost checking the listenership and comments on one's own songs, this action may also be understood as an effort to establish one's own existential validity within the cybercommunity. According to Studdert, "membership of a community depends on something beyond myself—it depends on others recognizing and allowing me—just as I recognize and allow them" (2005, 3). Verifying that others within the community notice, listen, and respond to your songs helps provide a sense of connectedness with the community; knowing your presence is noticed and recognized by others in a virtual community is equated with knowing you exist.

Social presence might also be considered in terms of bodily presence. Although cyberspace is frequently thought of as a disembodied realm (Alessi 2001; Ajana 2004; Kang 2007), some scholars have argued that, rather than leaving the physical world behind, our bodies extend into cyberspace as we interact online (Stanley 2001; De Mul 2003; Tanasyuk 2008). This transference of embodied experience and social presence on the Internet is evident in the reproduction of bodies, or the construction of virtual bodies, in digital spaces (Murray and Sixsmith 1999; Cruikshank 2001). These virtual bodies, like our physical ones, accompany our communications and interactions with other people and our bodies affect greatly how others view us. Thus, we become known not only for what we say, but also for how we present our bodies within various social contexts. Our bodies are used to communicate things about us that we want to reveal to others, becoming a means for creating our persona and expressing our identity. Within the context of cyberspace, the user pages of social networking sites become virtual bodies upon which users inscribe meaning and through which they communicate to others. The meanings they communicate may be an effort to express their individuality or, in some cases, these bodies may be virtual representations of users' physical bodies (this is often done through self-portraits taken by digital cameras or webcams, but also may be accomplished through other icons, many of which include animated graphics or digitally-manipulated photos). Comments posted to discussion boards on iCompositions are not text-only messages, but rather these messages are

92

embodied with images, emoticons, quotes, and hyperlinks, all of which communicate certain things about the user beyond what is explicitly stated in the text of the message. These additional iconic gestures give a sense of bodily presence to what would otherwise be only textual communication.

Figure 66: Examples of avatars on iCompositions (left to right: JLGERK, TRILOBITE2, BECWIL, AND LUMMIE)

As Kurt Lindemann explains, these images and signatures are vital to online presence in that they add to the communicative competence of user posts:

> The inclusion of icons and pictures of users problematizes ways of thinking about bodily presence in performance. In the absence of a physical body, I argue, audiences come to read such icons and pictures as "real." This reading reinforces traditional notions of the body in performance even as presence is infinitely deferred by specific technological features. (Lindemann 2005, 355)

Additionally, Lindemann points out that when we sit down at our computers to engage in online activities we do not leave our physical bodies behind. Therefore, the inscriptions that form our virtual bodies are made and controlled by our physical bodies, so that our virtual bodies act as extensions of our physical ones. From this perspective, technology is less an issue of mediating disembodied communication than it is a technique for extending bodily presence into virtual spaces. This process of embodying "virtual" experience is clearly manifested in the musical practices of virtual communities, such as iCompositions. As Tia DeNora reminds us, "music is a physical medium, that…consists of sound waves, vibrations" and "the aural is never distinct from the tactile as a sensuous domain" (2000, 86). So, while iCompers may access the social and musical world of iCompositions through their virtual bodies, their experience with the community is ultimately an embodied one as they listen and physically respond to the musical creations of other iCompers. Although the computer network that allows iCompers to connect to the cybercommunity transfers only packets of digital data that constitute songs, and not actual sound waves, iCompers perceive the sound within the same "mode of 'as if'" that, as Burnett (2002) proposes, serves as the basis for virtual communities in which readers interact via textual communication. Musical action, whether listening or recording, invites a phenomenological

perception of physical immediacy that, to some extent, negates technological mediation of physical separation between iCompers. Musical interaction creates shared experiences upon which participants within iCompositions build in constructing a sociomusical community.

Community Identity: Empowering the Independent Musician

Figure 67: Song intro performed on toy piano

It's just me and the rejects here
and we're thinking out of the box
We are what you fear
And we're getting down from our shelf
You didn't see it coming,
You better keep on running,
there's nothing you can do

Out of sight is out of mind,
But please don't disregard,
the ones you've left behind
they have a rhythm that is beating like a drum
and their rejected voice will join and sing as one

Chorus: It's just me and the rejects here…

Batteries not included for their art,
although they gather dust it doesn't steal their heart,
they have a rhythm that will stand the test of time,
and their rejected souls will break your boundary lines

Chorus: It's just me and the rejects here…

Out of sight is out of mind,
But please don't disregard,
the ones you've left behind
they have a rhythm that is beating like a drum
and their rejected voice will join and sing as one

Chorus: It's just me and the rejects here…

– "Me and the Rejects" by 8MonthMalfaction and Toni1[132]

8MonthMalfaction had just bought himself a Mahalo Flying-V Ukulele for Christmas and was eager to record a song with it. Upon posting the resulting song on iCompositions, he shared his thoughts and intentions in recording "Me and the Rejects":

8MonthMalfaction: Sometimes when you buy an instrument like a Ukulele, it ends up as pure novelty and sits gathering dust in a corner or a drawer, so in an attempt to not let that happen, I sat down for a couple of hours on New Years Eve and learnt some chords for it from the internet and ended up writing a little tune. So what better way to test my new microphone and new found ukelele skills? I sat down and recorded it.

I got to thinking about all the other rejected instruments I have owned over the year... My bongos which were a present from Toni that I have hardly played, a harmonica that has been sat in my laptop bag for years and the recorder that I vaguely learnt to play at school about 25 years ago... I searched the four corners of my humble abode and came across said rejects, along with Morgan's Toy Piano we had bought him for Xmas, my old faithful acoustic guitar, a couple of Tambourines, the rice shaker I made for a song about a year ago and a Wok with a wooden spoon... 😊

There we all were, me and the rejects, together again... I decided that these would be the only instruments I could use on this song, no loops and no midi and all HAD to be recorded with my new mic to put it through a good test! And this was the result!

This has been nothing but fun to do... I have tried to keep edits to a minimum and capture a live feel to this... There are a few dodgy timing issues in places, but seeing as I consider myself below beginner level in most of the instruments played on here, I am pleased with the final result!

In context of the iCompositions community, "Me and the Rejects" reveals a particular identity widely shared among iCompers: an identity as outsiders—rejects—of the wider world of popular music culture. Following a two-bar intro played on the toy piano (see Figure 67 on the previous page), the 12-bar blues-based chorus begins with the call-and-response vocals of 8MonthMalfaction and Toni1, supported by the ukulele and homemade rice shaker. The use of the toy piano, ukulele and other "novelty" instruments stands as a marker of independent music production, an expression of the home-grown, DIY (do-it-yourself) approach of musicians who situate themselves as alternatives to the multi-national corporate control of the popular music industry.

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[132] "Me And The Rejects" was posted to iCompositions.com by 8MonthMalfunction and Toni1 on 1 January, 2009 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=103364). "Me And The Rejects" written and performed by 8 Month Malfunction and Toni Husbands, Copyright 2009. Used by permission.

Within the discourse of popular music studies, independent musicians are generally considered to be unsigned artists, that is, they are unrepresented by one of the four major, multi-national record companies, differentiating them from the mainstream music industry. In this dichotomized perspective of the mainstream superculture on one hand and the "indie" subculture on the other, popular music scholars have sought to understand these insider/outsider dynamics and associated hegemonic forces through subcultural theory (Hebdige 1988, 232; Kruse 1993, 232; Slobin 1992; Thornton 1996). More recent scholarship, however, has drawn attention to the problems inherent in this simple dichotomy, criticizing subcultural identification as a means of differentiation within the oppositional mainstream/alternative approach. Hence, other conceptual models, such as "tribe" (Rushkoff 1994; Maffesoli 1996; Bennett 2005), "scene" (Kahn-Harris 2005; Matranga 2005; Tsitsos 2005), and "social network" (Castells 2000; O'Hara and Brown 2006) have been employed in the analysis of less rigid, more pluralistic musical communities.

iCompositions, as an Internet-based social network, has not only provided the infrastructure for the creation and distribution of music by independent artists, but has also helped establish a community of outsiders to the Indie market. With the help of GarageBand, and other consumer-oriented music production software packages, many iCompers have fashioned themselves as do-it-yourself, independent musicians who share a mutual predilection to outsiderness—outsiders because of their sometimes lack of musical training, home-bound isolation, and technological dependance. In a conversation with EASYESTEEMER, he emphasized his own musical outsider qualities and the role that music technology, specifically GarageBand, plays in the realization of his musical creativity:

EASYESTEEMER: My first experience with GB was really cool. I threw some loops together and came out with something that sounded cool.

Before playing with GB I had no real musical background unless you count playing trumpet for one year in sixth grade.

I guess my only unpleasent experience with icomp is sometimes collaborators not following through and not being taken seriously because I really can't play an instrument. My instrument is my brain and GB is my tool to exercise it if that makes any sense. My wife and kids think I'm crazy to bother with all this. It amuses me because they can all play instruments but very rarely do. Don't know how this helps you but that's the story with me.

It is important to distinguish my use of "outsider" to describe musicians such as EASYESTEEMER from how Irwin Chusid uses the term in his book *Songs in the Key of Z: The Curious Universe of Outsider Music* (2000). Chusid profiles artists that are seen as outsiders to the music industry because "autonomy is often the prevailing modus, [and] the process intrinsically solipsistic…partly attributable to…their inability to trust anyone but themselves" (2000, 234). iCompers, on the other hand, generally sit even further outside the musical mainstream, not only in their markedly non-commercial aspirations, but in their atypical approach to amateur music-making, as explicated above by EASYESTEEMER. While independence and indiviuality is highly valued among iCompers, as with other musical outsiders, their

participation in a community of Internet musicians and collaborative compositions with others whom they have never met face-to-face demonstrates a high level of trust and desire for sociomusical interactivity.

As a place for displaying iCompers' individual musical expressions, iCompositions has become host to this non-conformist, DIY mentality while reinforcing certain collectivist ideals, thus formulating a shared identity of what it means to be an iComper. The identity of the iComper as an independent musician has emerged through shared practices of textual and musical expressions. POWERMAC99 has sought to leverage the shared identity of iCompers to promote a unified understanding of the purpose of iCompositions.com. In June 2006, POWERMAC99 announced a competition for coming up with a slogan for the website:

> Over the years, iCompositions has sported several versions of our "Share your Creations slogan" before it was removed in iC3. We've now decided that it's time to once again put a slogan at the top of the site to provide newcomers with a better understanding of this community's purpose. And we need your help to create it.

> Create a relatively short phrase or sentence that explains the purpose of this site (to provide musicians with a venue for exposing their music to the world and for receiving feedback). We'd rather it not specifically mention GarageBand as the site has grown to encompass so many more ways of making music. The slogan should be short and to the point... it should get the message across quickly.

> …If we really like it, it will grace the header of every page on iCompositions.com![133]

Submissions included one-liners, such as: "iCompositions, where no riff is a bad riff" by SALIV, "At iCompositions we're bringing the world together through music one kilobyte at a time." by ANDREWHAND, and "iComp, therefore iAm" by JGURNER. The suggested slogans each divulge shared values of DIY amateurism, the power of music and the Internet in creating social bonds, and a deep sense of personal identity related not only to the process of composing, but specifically relating to the iCompositions community. POWERMAC99 chose a submission by SHRED: "Unleashing the independent music," but choosing to alter it to "Empowering the Independent Musician." Upon notification that his submission had won the iCompositions slogan contest, SHRED responded:

> Thank you POWERMAC99 and everyone else that took part in the slogan selecting process! I really appreciate the honor of giving something back to such an awesome community of musicians! I congratulate everyone else who entered the contest, there were so many wonderful slogan ideas! Again, thank you so much for selecting my slogan, and a second congrats to everyone else who entered the contest![134]

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[133] http://www.icompositions.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=3514

[134] http://www.icompositions.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=3634

Other iCompers quickly embraced the slogan for its accuracy in representing the interests and goals of the community and its membership. Bob6stringer commented, "It's a good slogan... nothing tricky or trendy, just tells it like it is."[135]

Figure 68: iCompositions logo with the slogan inspired by shred's entry for the slogan competition

That iCompers place a high value on the notions of independence and individuality is clearly articulated in the song "iComp Puts the I,"[136] by enicholsIC. enicholsIC posted his iCompositions theme song in January 2006 for the second anniversary of iCompositions. Perhaps inspired by the website's tag line, "Empowering the Independent Musician," enicholsIC declares in his song that "iCompositions puts the 'I' in independent [and] in individual." The emphasis on these two points is what, in the view of many iCompers, differentiates this community of DIYers from the mainstream and indie music industries. For enicholsIC, what makes the music produced within the iCompositions community good is the independent and varied voices of the individual musicians, who need not conform to any particular market niche:

> See, we don't need the same old garbage on the stereos
> Tellin' us just what we should like
> 'Round here we mix our own and upload so you can download
> Stuff that's gonna make you feel alright
> So if you're lookin' for music that's truly splendid
> iComp puts the I in Independent (Yeah!)
>
> We're not climbin' ladders
> We're tearing down walls
> Spreadin' love and pasting stars
> All over these iComp halls
> So you're lookin' for stuff that's truly original?
> iComp puts the I in individual (Yeah!)

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[135] ibid.

[136] "iComp Puts the I" was posted to iCompositions.com by enicholsIC on 16 January, 2006 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=29328).

But if you care too much for slick productions
Maybe all the indy flavor around here is too spicy, you need a little taste reduction
Gotta make sure all your singers are botoxed and liposuctioned
You better log out now, we don't support that art destruction

("So, have you like heard the new Britney, it's really great")
("She's got nothin' on Celine Dion")

Somebody said that now that GarageBand's here
Anybody can make music
Lot of us wanna know what's wrong with that
I say let the whole world use it
They keep on adding server space
Man, our tunes are gonna be all over the place

iComp puts the I in independent
iComp puts the I in individual

Maybe they're afraid that people will stop watching MTV
Sit down at their computers and listen to you and me

But if you care too much for slick productions
Maybe all the indy flavor around here is too spicy, you need a little taste reduction
Gotta make sure all your singers are botoxed and liposuctioned
You better log out now, we don't support that art destruction

Despite shared ideological characteristics with the independent music industry, iCompers view themselves as outsiders not only in opposition to the mainstream music industry, but in regards to so called independent music as well. The "independent musician" empowered by iCompositions is not oriented toward the commercial aspirations of typical independent artists; iCompositions is not a tool to help musicians work their way into the Indie music scene, although there are certainly some iCompers who aspire for such and some who have indeed signed on with independent record companies. But, by and large, "the iCompositions community primarily caters to non-professionals," as POWERMAC99 explained. This positioning is central to the formation of the identity of the community, which ENICHOLSIC supports by devaluing commercial pop music (and well-known pop divas) in favor of POWERMAC99's promotion of a "democratic-participant" (Manuel 1993) model of music-making and distribution. Exclaiming that "now that GarageBand's here, anybody can make music…let the whole world use it," ENICHOLSIC turns the tables on the claim that computer-assisted, amateur participation results in "bad music" (Washburne and Derno 2004).[137]

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[137] See "Loops and the Production of 'Bad Music'" on page 52.

The aesthetics of "slick productions" in which musicians are "botoxed and liposuctioned" This particular conception of the independent musician serves as a foundation for the construction of a shared identity among iCompers. As iCompers engage in community and collaborative musical practices, they create meaningful, shared experiences that serve to strengthen the identity of the community while simultaneously enhancing sociomusical bonds between individuals.

Musical Constructions of Shared Experience

Within iCompositions, musical activity helps to create and reflect shared experiences among community participants. By focusing their compositional efforts around shared themes and experiences, iCompers build affinity within the community. Some of these themes and activities include the experience of life on the Internet, celebrations of special occasions, and community-oriented competitions.

Musical Life and Technological Mediation: "the modem song"

Earlier in this chapter I discussed how hybrid interactions and social presence minimize an awareness of computer-mediation in the sociomusical activities of iCompers. By emphasizing a shared sense of immediacy between iCompers, I am not suggesting, however, that the technological mediation of interpersonal communications on iCompositions is irrelevant or that iCompers are somehow unaware that computers mediate their musical and social interactions. Although an awareness of technological mediation may dissipate with consistent cybersociality, failures in technology, or even minor interruptions in the constant stream of data between the personal computers and iCompositions servers that carries social action in cyberspace, rudely awakens the participant to the sometimes fragile connections of the cybersocial world. LILICHI, in "the modem song," sings about the effects of local hardware failure on the social life of an iComper:[138]

> Virtual days
> we can be friends even though we are away
> we met on the net and we talk every day
> but we depend on a screwy IPS

There is a sense of tenuousness in the word "virtual" with which LILICHI opens "the modem song" and this meaning is intensified by the soft whisper of her voice and sparse percussive sounds in the background. The role of technology in the production of the song is immediately apparent in that LILICHI's opening statement is echoed by a digitally altered version of her voice, lowering the pitch an octave. This initial statement, spoken first by LILICHI and then echoed by her

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[138] "the modem song" was posted to iCompositions.com by LILICHI on 22 February, 2006 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=31933).

digitally-manipulated counterpart, is followed by a series of "industrial" percussive hits, reinforcing not only the presence of technology, but the power of machinery over the human as the next three lines of the song are drowned out by these hits. Acknowledging her dependancy on technology, LILICHI begins to list the activities which depend upon the proper functioning of her modem.

Figure 69: Cello and viola loop

> I depend on you to pay my bills
> and see my friends to check the weather
> and read the news to buy my books
> and get CDs and order some pizza
> or rent a movie make reservations
> and get plane tickets

The embedded nature of CMC devices in the mundane practices of everyday life is suggested by the repetition of the cello and viola loop. The mechanistic exactitude of the loop highlights the predictability of our contemporary, wired world—a predictability that iCompers have come to depend upon for sustaining their social lives. At this point in the song, however, the loop is abruptly interrupted and the industrial percussive hits are replaced by a noise that sounds something like the release of steam—the breaking down and failure of the industrial machine. As the modem runs out of steam, LILICHI cries "No!" After a brief moment, the cello and viola loop re-enters and the listener is reminded of the monotony of this all-too-familiar failure in Internet connectivity.

> you failed on me again
> I'll get someone new
> you failed on me again
> you are such a pain
> you failed on me again
> I'll get someone new
> you failed on me again
> now, I will upgrade

Following the upgrade, the monotonous loop disappears, as does the industrial sound that reminded the listener of the technological mediation at hand, and a synth pad (a synthesized tone with a slow attack and decay) in the upper register takes over, heralding in the new-found connection to the Internet.

101

it's here
the new modem
it's cool
it's black
has lights
they are steady
they are green
they blink
they are gone!!

"I love this!" exclaimed MYSTIFIED in response to "the modem song." "Isn't technology wonderful? ....And our love affair with it. (Or is that our codependency?)," she quipped. The success of the "the modem song" can be partially attributed LILICHI's effort to build upon a commonly shared experience: alternating feelings of elation and frustration via technological dependancy. The song highlights the tension between social immediacy in cybersociety and technological mediation of online relationships. "The Modem Song" also reinforces the identity of iCompers as outsiders who are firmly situated within the realm of computer geekdom. When LILICHI's modem fails, when things go awry, she takes care of the problem. In perfect geek form, she upgrades her modem and installs it herself. Her status as a geek is also expressed through her song, "Corporate Geek,"[139] in which she highlights her geekiness through the use of buzz words associated with corporate culture: SOP [Standard Operating Procedure], upstream projects, multifunctional, multitasker, etc. Her detachment from mainstream society is reinforced by the increasing hours of her work day: from 8 to 10 to 12 to 16. LILICHI is thus moving further away from mainstream society—removing herself from social life (no TV, eating lunch at her desk, always on business trips). "Corporate Geek," as described by LILICHI herself, is an autobiography. In these two songs, LILICHI manifests the shared identity of iCompers: an independent outsider with a DIY approach to music and technology and a resistance to hierarchical structures and valuation.

Occasional Songs

If my memory serves me correctly
(and I can't recall a case where it has not)
It's two years to the day since I joined up
Two years can change a man a lot

This is not a song, this is not a song
This is just a piece of pop gone wrong

In two years I've made a lot of music
I've had a few moments that felt a lot like pop

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[139] "Corporate Geek" was posted to iCompositions.com by LILICHI, ZALLAZ, and BLACKLILY on 17 April, 2005 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=14255).

But I've never made a perfect record
And I hope I never do, I hope I never stop

In my head there are no songs today
That is all I feel the need to say

So don't feed the ponkey
It ain't good for him
He'll become complacent
If you indulge his every whim

–"this is not a song (iComp anniversary edition)" by ponkey[140]

"I got home from work to find a message from KDMan congratulating me on my second anniversary at iComp," explains ponkey in the description to his song titled "this is not a song." Having received this congratulatory message from KDMan, ponkey decided that his two years of participation in the iCompositions community was worthy of a song and so he reworked a tune that he had recorded years earlier, before iCompositions or GarageBand existed, to celebrate his second "iCersary."

Celebrations of special events (anniversaries, holidays, etc.) are an important aspect to the iCompositions community. Such celebrations include both anniversaries that mark events relevant only within the context of the iCompositions community and holidays and events external to iCompositions. Both types of occasions are important in the social life of the community and are therefore reflected in the creative output of iCompers.

As discussed above in reference to ponkey's "this is not a song," personal anniversaries that mark the date an iComper registered as a member of the site are also celebrated in chat, discussion forums, blogs, and in song. By acknowledging the sustained presence of another iComper over long periods of time, members of iCompositions strengthen the sense of belonging to the community, as demonstrated in the following post by Dee1962z to the iCompositions forums:

Dee1962z: I have just read - e-mail from Icompositions

(a really pleasant surprise) Wow !! Wishing me a happy anniversary one year on Icompositions. I registered 9th March 2008.

And I still say that- -----------

This place here is where , I really feel that I shone and grew in leaps and bounds in confidence- Thanks to all the wonderful artist's here, and is a really great place to be. I think it's the best place on earth.

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[140] "this is not a song (iComp anniversary edition)" was posted to iCompositions.com by ponkey on 4 June, 2006 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=39180).

And I want to thank each and everyone of you, for all the fun times I have had so far. And for all the great music and to my collaborator's

I have indeed been very fortunate enough to work with..

Wow!!

Thank you for all the support.[141]

Anniversaries provide occasions for looking back and reviewing one's own accomplishments over a particular period of time. But just as they serve to celebrate what has been done, they also provide opportunities for looking ahead. iCompers use such occasions to acknowledge gratitude to other members of the community (particularly collaborators with whom they have worked) and to express hope for continuance of collaborative musical exploration. For his one year anniversary as a participant in iCompositions.com, LUPRIOZ posted a song, "Anniversary Medley," with the following description:[142]

On the third of March 2006 I took my first step on iComp! At that time I couldn't realize the impact of this move (both social and artistic), but now I'm everyday in touch with so many amazing artists/friends all over the world and looking at the "official statistics" see that as artist I'm played over 3.000 times a month, not including the songs uploaded in the last week…and can understand that something's happened, so I prepared a "medley" picking some of preferred harmonies and melodies from this first year, linked together by the main theme of the last release, "Never stop the music" (C/D/Em).........an year long medley.

Finger-picking arpeggiated chords (C/D/Em) on an acoustic guitar, LUPRIOZ opens "Anniversary Medley" exactly as the song "Never Stop the Music!" a collab with BARRETOK and EMILIA8, which LUPRIOZ posted just a month earlier.[143] This chord progression, along with the lyrics, "never stop the music," which LUPRIOZ pulled from EMILIA8's vocal line from the end of the "Never Stop the Music!" track, provides a the foundation upon which he layers six other songs:

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[141] http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=57580

[142] "Anniversary Medley" was posted to iCompositions.com by LUPRIOZ on 3 March, 2007 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=57580).

[143] "Never Stop the Music!" was posted to iCompositions.com by LUPRIOZ, BARRETOK and EMILIA8 on 11 February, 2007 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=56089#).

"Il primo bacio,"[144] "Sorriso di una miss,"[145] "I thought I was being cool,"[146] "The best dream,"[147] "Pescara,"[148] and "Hey lou."[149] In "Anniversary Medley," LUPRIOZ celebrates his anniversary on iCompositions by "remixing" several different collaborations, and in the process, bringing various collaborators together through the medley. Through "Anniversary Medley," LUPRIOZ enacts the essence of the community—drawing upon the collaborative spirit of iCompers—while bringing the song into musical self-fulfillment; by remixing seven songs together into a medley he ensures that the songs take on new life and the music will "never stop." The continuation of the music is synonymous with the continuance of the community. PONKEY expressed a similar concern in "this is not a song" when he sings, "But I've never made a perfect record / And I hope I never do, I hope I never stop."

In celebrating their own anniversaries on iCompositions, LUPRIOZ and PONKEY invite other iCompers to participate in the persistence of the community by building on their past experiences through new musical expressions. Thus, in addition to sharing memories of past experiences, special occasions provide new opportunities for engaging in sociomusical activities. This forming of new shared experiences is also encouraged in administrator-driven, community-wide events, such as contests and competitions.

Community Competitions

iCompers frequently pay tribute to widely observed holidays with musical competitions or other collaborative activities. For example, Halloween has commonly been celebrated with a variety of collaborative musical projects, including a "Halloween Cadavre" in 2006 and thirteen episodes of a special edition Halloween podcast in 2007.[150] In addition to holidays, special occasions are also observed, such as the 2008 Olympics in Beijing. In August 2008, POWERMAC99 announced an "Olympic Spirit Contest":

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[144] "Il primo bacio" was posted to iCompositions.com by LUPIROZ on 3 March, 2006 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=32475).

[145] "Sorriso di una miss" was posted to iCompositions.com by LUPIROZ on 3 March, 2006 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=32767).

[146] "I Thought I Was Being Cool" was posted to iCompositions.com by LUPIROZ and AMANDACHAPMAN on 30 April, 2006 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=36835).

[147] "My Best Dream" was posted to iCompositions.com by LUPIROZ and MUSICLEFT on 5 June, 2006 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=39248).

[148] "Pescara" was posted to iCompositions.com by BAMPOT and LUPIROZ on 3 September, 2006 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=44965#).

[149] "Hey lou" was posted to iCompositions.com by LUPIROZ and FROMANO on 21 December, 2006 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=52229#).

[150] "Happy Halloween Podcast Collaboration" was posted to iCompositions.com on 13 October, 2007 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=75278).

Today, as the world turns its attention to Beijing to celebrate the opening of the Games of the XXIX Olympiad, iCompositions celebrates an integral component of the modern Olympic Games: music. From Spyros Samaras' "Olympic Hymn" to John Williams' "Summon the Heroes," the music of the Games intensifies the excitement and inspirational nature of the competition.

For iCompositions' latest contest, we ask users to compose a song that conveys their own idea of the Olympic Spirit. But that's all the direction we're going to provide; the rest is entirely up to you.

(Like any long-running custom, the Olympics have not been immune to controversy. With that in mind, your contest submission does not necessarily need to be positive in tone.)

We only ask that you use the song description field to explain your compositional thought process. In other words, tell us how your composition represents your perception of the Olympics.[151]

Much of the existing research on musical contests focuses either on competition as the antithesis of collaboration (Miller 1994) or the value of individual accomplishment earned through participation in contests (Austin 1988). However, competitions on iCompositions, such as the Olympic Spirit Contest, provide an opportunity for iCompers to build upon and create shared social and musical experiences that neither detract from the culture of collaboration nor focus on the achievement of individual iCompers. Contests have frequently been employed by POWERMAC99 for encouraging involvement in the development and operations of the website and winning entries are generally adopted as representative by the community. In this way contests serve to build the sense of community within iCompositions. This process is exemplified by a competition held to rename the site shortly after it launched:

POWERMAC99: iCompositions has gone through a number of transformations, the first pertaining to its name. iCompositions was originally GarageBandCreations, but GarageBand.com compelled us to change it. We held another contest to come up with a new name and the community settled on iCompositions. We're currently on the 4th generation of iCompositions (excluding the first temporary design that I created) and I'm extremely proud of the level of involvement members of the community have had in the evolution of the site. All members of the team are volunteers (although we have contracted out some design work) and every site redesign has been the result of extensive community discussion.

By participating in iCompositions.com-centered contests, iCompers become invested in the website; they become collaborators in the development of the community. Such contests have involved non-musical submissions, such as choosing a name and slogan for the site, as well as

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[151] http://www.icompositions.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=6527

music-based competitions.[152] Contests involving the submission of compositions of occasional music have been held on iCompositions from time to time over the years. One of the more common occasions for which competitions have been held is for the annual "birthday" for iCompositions.com.[153] In "iCompositions Theme Song,"[154] a song GCOOKE recorded for the second anniversary of the launch of iCompositions.com, he sings about iCompositions as a place where independent artists have absolute control over their own musical activity:

> I'm going to tell you about a place
> where artists have the say
> a promised land
> and all the walls are broke
> it's a win for the common folk
> and now its time to be like POWERMAC99
> and go with the vision of a new age
> where iCompositions has your web page
> now you're not beholden to the man for the green
> because you control the means of production
> you get to set the music free
> a community where you get to make your own art
> but you have to say it from the heart
> if you want a comment or a couple of stars
> yes, you have to give it back now
> iCompositions is the place
> but you have a mandate
> you have to create
> you have to produce
> now you got no excuse
> […] so don't be a pawn
> be like THEGRANZ
> the old hierarchies are gone
> get into iCompositions.com

In "iCompositions Theme Song," GCOOKE expresses a similar sentiment regarding the site that ENICHOLSIC shared in "iComp Puts the I": an idealized democratic-participant community with a unique identity that sets it apart from mainstream popular music culture. In GCOOKE's vision of iCompositions, the musicians are empowered by the technology and the community to produce

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[152] See "Community Identity: Empowering the Independent Musician" on page 94 for a discussion of the iCompositions slogan contest.

[153] See "The Old iComp Twang" on page 68 and "iComp Puts the I" on page 98 for other examples pertaining to iCompositions.com birthday contests.

[154] "iCompositions Theme Song" was posted to iCompositions.com by GCOOKE on 17 January, 2006 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=29467).

music that is more pure and authentic in its representation of the "common folk" and individual expression. While individual freedom of artistic expression is a vital benefit of technology, musical emancipation is only realized through creative involvement in the community. This perspective expressed in "iCompositions Theme Song" was shared by PAULHENRYS, another contestant:

PAULHENRYS: You are a consistently good and also varied writer. So I have a lot of fun listening to your stuff. I've been staying out of commenting because I'm in the contest, too. But today, I thought, f*** it, there's a lot of great stuff here, and I want to say so.

It's really interesting the different approaches we all have taken. I've heard several that touch on different aspects of what brings me to this site. You speak well of the notion that iComp (and sites like it) are creating a new way to bring music into the world that has nothing, nothing to do with a bunch of businesspeople sitting around a conference room trying to be cool and figuring out what artist/performer they can wring the most money out of. Any artist can be a listener. Any listener can be an artist. And there's no middleman!

This song says that really well. Thanks, and good luck![155]

GCOOKE: PAULHENRYS,

As usual, you provide insightful comments. Your comments show that you not only listen carefully, but you will take the time to post well-considered thoughts. Thanks for taking the time.

I distinctly remember about 8-9 years ago that I felt that the web and compression algorithms would allow a site like iComp to deliver on the promise of breaking down access to distribution channels. This is not to say that I am a man of any vision. I do believe that one needs actions to back-up such a claim, and I have none.

While the idea of a competition brings up uneasy memories of fighting for record company attention, band battles, and grappling with the sense that the standards by which I am being judged are highly subjective, iComp is an important site for me (and I am sure for others as well) due to the sense that it delivers on the benefits of technology. This competition became, therefore, an opportunity to show support for the site.

It sounds like a small part of those feelings came through in my song, and for that, I am grateful.

In his response to PAULHENRYS, GCOOKE emphasized the importance of contests as an exercise in building a sense of community among participants. While contests are generally approached from the perspective of enhancing community spirit among iCompers, however, other competitive elements of the site are often the subject of debate, such as the list of Weekly Top

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[155] http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=29467

Songs. For some iCompers, exposure to and validation of their musical efforts is very important, and Weekly Top Songs is an important means of determining success in these areas. Others, too, view the Weekly Top Songs as useful in getting to know the community in terms of who and what is popular among iCompers. Still others, however, view the Weekly Top Songs as a reproduction of the hierarchical structures of valuation that drive the commercial music industry and, therefore, oppositional to the independence from mainstream musical culture that iCompositions represents. In response to these concerns, POWERMAC99 developed an undisclosed formula for calculating the Top Ten and moved the list off the front page of the website to the Music page, where it is not as prominent. In a help topic, entitled "How is the Weekly Top Songs list calculated?" POWERMAC99 gave further explanation and details about the feature:

> iCompositions' Weekly Top Songs list showcases some of the most popular songs on the site in the past week. However, it's not calculated in the most obvious way.
>
> In the past, the iCompositions Weekly Top Songs list was determined exclusively by plays. The song with the most plays in a week would be at the top of the list. Unfortunately, a small number of less-than-honorable users decided to artificially raise their own play counts and achieved a place in the Top Songs list when they didn't deserve it.
>
> The current version of the Weekly Top Songs list is determined by a formula that weighs the number of weekly comments, favorites (a word we're using incorrectly to mean the number of times a song as been added to a member's list of favorite songs), downloads, and plays. We are not disclosing the actual formula for security reasons (we don't want to make it too easy to exploit) but downloads and plays are worth significantly less than comments and favorites in the calculations because they are the easiest to falsify.[156]

iCompers continue to cast the Weekly Top Songs list in an ambiguous light, shifting between excitement and disinterest in songs that make the list. For example, after "I didn't want to do it,"[157] a collaboration between LILICHI and ZALLAZ, appeared on iCompositions' Weekly Top Songs list BARRETOK, whose songs appear on the list more frequently than perhaps any other iComper, sought a response from LILICHI:

BARRETOK: Hey Lili

LILICHI: yes, bernardo?

BARRETOK: How does it feel to be on the list?

LILICHI: which list?

BARRETOK: Honestly

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[156] http://www.icompositions.com/site/help/index.php?tid=13

[157] http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=57054

BARRETOK: Top Ten

BABOON: jajaja she loves and hates it in the same breath!

LILICHI: hahaha, bernardo, you have no idea about how little I care

LILICHI: not even hate

BABOON: ooooooh

BABOON: disdain?

BARRETOK: Interesting

BABOON: remote flicker of annoyance

BARRETOK: 😊

LILICHI: honestly

BABOON: 😊

BARRETOK: I believe you

BARRETOK: 😊

LILICHI: I believe me

BARRETOK: I do

BABOON: :0

BARRETOK: 😊

BARRETOK: hihihihi

BABOON: t h e l i s t....

BARRETOK: The infamous list

LILICHI: jesus christ

LILICHI: you care too much about it

BABOON: !

BARRETOK: ?

BABOON: (we've hit a nerve...backs away slowly)

LILICHI: hahaha

BARRETOK: yeah

LILICHI: not at all

BABOON: put the hammer down, lili

LILICHI: I have no nerves

BABOON: do not smash things

BARRETOK:	sorry Lili
BABOON:	it's a hotel
BABOON:	you have to pay for things you break
BABOON:	jajaja
BARRETOK:	How's the weather in India?

On one hand, LILICHI's disinterest in her position on "The List" may be just what it seems, a sincere expression of humility. But on another level, LILICHI's downplaying of her own popularity within the community helps maintain her own outsiderness, her independence from the structures that might otherwise constrain musical expression.

Governing iCompositions

The conception of iCompositions as a democratic-participant community conjures a common trope of the Internet as a redeemer of traditional community values. Indeed, early studies of virtual communities revealed tendencies on the part of both participants and researchers to cast online sociality as democratized and egalitarian (Graham 1994; Kollock and Smith 1994; Matei 2005). While promoting principles of democracy and egalitarianism, however, iCompositions is not free of hierarchical power structures. iCompositions is governed by the website owner, POWERMAC99, and a group of volunteer moderators. As the owner and chief administrator of iCompositions, POWERMAC99 plays a significant role in building up and sustaining the community, and has absolute control over the site and membership access to site features. This absolute control does not seem to be an issue to many iCompers, however, and POWERMAC99's generally subtle presence and positive reception toward member's suggestions have earned him the respect of iCompers, who not only hold him in high regard but praise him in many of their songs. The deification of POWERMAC99 expressed in "All Hail, the Great PM!" on page xxxii, for example, is intensified by his anonymity—there is no disclosure of his "real life" identity on the iCompositions site. His presence and personal attention to the community, however, is noticed by active iCompers and POWERMAC99 himself describes his commitment to the site as deeply personal and his efforts as a "labor of love":

POWERMAC99: I absolutely get involved with the community on a personal level. I've put a lot into the creation of the site, creatively and emotionally. This feeling is amplified by the fact that iCompositions is almost entirely a labor of love. What I mean is that it makes enough money to cover our operating costs and that's about it. It's certainly not a full-time business.

There are, of course, many unexploited ways available to generate more revenue from iCompositions, but that's not really what I'm interested in. Just like the other members of the iCompositions team, I volunteer my time here on the site, trying to make things better and helping users when they need it. I just want to make the best community we can.

And that contributes to my personal connection to the site. It's difficult to separate criticism of the site from criticism directed at me. In the chat the other day, when iCompositions was experiencing some slowness, someone comments that "icomp sucks right now." I wince when I see things like that because I can't help but take it personally. To be feverishly working to fix the problem for free while users complain about something they're receiving for free can be demoralizing.

Of course, the opposite is true: compliments directed at the site are in a way directed at me and users' appreciation for the service we provide definitely goes a long way towards validating all the work I've put into the site. But like anything else, the good outweighs the bad, psychologically. And as the community has grown larger, there's been a lot more of the bad.

Thankfully, we've got a great team of moderators who allow me to stay away from the nitty gritty of user disputes most of the time. Those are the most emotionally trying, because we try hard to be fair and enforce the Terms of Service evenly, but there's no way to please everyone and even the most well-justified decisions are often publicly lambasted.

While POWERMAC99 tends to get all of the credit in songs and forum posts praising the site, he quickly acknowledges the work of the volunteer moderators in keeping the site operating smoothly. One of the volunteer moderators, BECWIL, used to run a small, independent recording company. Upon discovering GarageBand and iCompositions she rediscovered making music within a community of independently-minded musicians. Having heard about my research, she eagerly shared her iCompositions story and experience as a moderator with me:

BECWIL: I found iC in December of 2005. Instantly, I fell in love with the simple no-nonsense layout of its appearance and the wonderful talent I found on its pages. I appreciated the eagerness of the participants to share their musical creations. I wanted to do the same. It's infectious. It's addictive.

Part of what I loved and miss from my Indy label days was hearing homemade music. Listening to the tapes that would come in to my office back then was a joy for me. Now, with the multitude of DAWs available, making demos has become much easier, increasing the production of homemade music and I get to hear it, via iC, without the expense of maintaining a label. It is a win-win situation. Makes me happy.

As I continued to hang out with iC, getting to know various artists, posting my own music, and collaborating with folks from around the world (who knew!), my enjoyment of iC grew. Learning the site's ins and outs came naturally to me, as I am one whom likes to poke and prod the digital world, and I am quite willing to share my knowledge of the site with others in my enthusiasm for all the site offers. I had, also, over time, written a few Criminally Overlooked forums, which speaks to my on-going involvement with iC's community.

BECWIL's commitment to iCompositions as a community grew as she came to know the other participants on the site through chatting, listening, and collaborating. She could frequently be found on the chat asking questions about software, answering questions about the site, suggesting interesting songs recently posted to the site, and taking part in casual conversations on a variety of musical and non-musical topics. She also became a frequent contributor to forum posts. Her presence on the site, combined with her eagerness to help people, made her a good candidate for moderator:

BECWIL: I believe PM saw these traits in me. Plus, I had stepped up several times during hard situations and contacted PM directly with questions and/or a helping hand. After the Big Crash,[158] he must have been in a reorganizing mode and asked some folks to become moderators, of which, I was one. I accepted.

As a new moderator, PM sent a Moderators Guide to help me. He, in his ever so genuine way, gives some great suggestions in the Guide as to what to look for and how to handle it. I have high regard for PM. He is always gentlemanly and professional in his demeanor…

The Guide opens with this statement:

"First and foremost, thank you for volunteering to aid in maintaining iCompositions' friendly community focus and keep the site clear of content that may be inappropriate for our younger members. The following guidelines outline what to look out for when you're browsing the site and how to handle any problems that might arise. Of course, if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask."

Points covered:

- Copyright Infringement
- Personal Attacks
- Profanity in Titles
- Improper Categorization
- Lack of Explicit Tag
- Nudity or otherwise explicit Album Art
- Nudity in music video
- Song Plugging
- Heated Discussions

So, by following the other moderators' and PM's guidance, I've grown my understanding and implementation of moderation tasks. There is an art to it. I continue to learn, sometimes by making some terrible mistakes. I've put myself in the position of having to apologize to members more than once. Each time, I gain a deeper appreciation for the magnitude of the site, its community, and the role PM plays in it.

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[158] See "The Crash of '08" on page 124.

Like POWERMAC99, BECWIL seems in awe of the success of the iCompositions community. Her efforts are personal and are borne of her admiration for the community and the effect it has had on her life:

BECWIL: I donate my time because I love iC. To me, iC is a beautifully applied concept-action that helps people from around the world share themselves in an immediate way that reaches right into our homes and connects all whom wish to participate. It is the Star Trek of my world. I am a dreamer. iC fulfills a certain part of my hope for mankind. And I love music! iC makes me feel good on many levels. To give my time to such a thing is joyful. I, also, feel a certain amount of motherly protectiveness. I care for the continuing health of the applied concept. I want it to succeed.

Some moderators express that their eagerness burns out. Each month there are typically one or two tougher than usual situations to moderate. We are called upon to mediate many kinds of issues. People, with English as a second language, do sometimes misunderstand English words in both writing and reading, which can lead to confrontations between members. Some members can hold long term grudges towards other members and/or iC and express their dissatisfaction at every opportunity they see. And then there are the plain irate, authority-bucking members whom just want to argue about everything. With the help of a few determined moderators and administrators, including PM, we always seek a consensus backstage on these issues, resolving them with iC's Terms of Service as our ultimate guide.

The Report button on songs, comments, forum posts, etc., when clicked, opens a thread in the Moderator's section behind the scenes of iC. Each Report is reviewed and commented on by those of the iC Team that are available at the time. A report can take many days to resolve. Sometimes it entails collecting information from those members involved. Sometimes it just takes a while to get enough input from the Team to form a consensus. Sometimes it is a situation in which PM needs to make the final call.

The burn-out experienced by moderators, as mentioned by BECWIL, is a common occurrence in virtual communities similar to iCompositions (Sternberg 2001, 288–292). In addition to the time commitment necessitated by rule-enforcement on asynchronous forums and synchronous chat (which takes away from time composing and recording music), the special status and power bestowed on moderators can alter their relationship with average iCompers, placing moderators in more unpleasant or hostile social situations. As EIDOLONIA, one of the moderators on iCompositions, explained, "One of the double-edged swords of being a moderator is that you immediately become a different type of user to the others."[159] Moderators on iCompositions,

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[159] http://www.icompositions.com/forums/viewtopic.php?p=58266

114

however, express a desire to continue their normal sociomusical activities, despite their authoritative position on chat and the forums. Power held by moderators and administrators of the site is thus checked by a doctrine of equity held by iCompers:

BECWIL: Participating within iC as a moderator has changed some of my habits and the angle of my approach to iC and its members, though I still find I can be myself for the most part and enjoy iC for what it's intended. It is amazing that iC can actually remain the family-friendly community that I found over 3 years ago, given that it is a public site that costs nothing to join. I believe it is mainly due to the type of people who are attracted to iC to begin with, for they are mostly level-headed musicians who want to only hear others' music and share their own, and then it is the tenuousness [sic] of PM, followed by the support Team PM has in place to help keep a watchful eye on the site.

While the government of iCompositions relies on a hierarchical structure consisting of volunteer moderators, site administrators, and an autocratic owner, BECWIL does not view this system as threatening to the principles of independence and individuality expressed by iCompers in chat, forum posts, and music. Administrative power, according to BECWIL is to be used in order to maintain the openness of the site and the friendliness of the community. When chat etiquette or terms of service are violated in chat, POWERMAC99 is quick to respond. For example, one time, before BECWIL became a moderator, I witnessed a newly-registered member of the site making perverse statements toward BECWIL on chat. BECWIL politely responded that such comments were unkind and unnecessary. After the second offensive statement, POWERMAC99 posted a warning on the chat that sexually explicit and threatening comments were unacceptable and grounds for banishment from the site. After a third perverted comment was made the user was immediately blocked from chat and the user account was promptly deleted from the site.

Such swift action in banishing this particular member was only possible because of the lack of history and activity the user had with the site. If the iComper had posted songs or been active in the forums, POWERMAC99 and the moderators would have taken more time to discuss the situation to make sure it was managed properly. And there have been situations where some iCompers protested the banishment of another member, but such situations are rare. Typically, iCompers are active in enforcing chat etiquette and terms of service, even if they are not officially in a moderator role:

NUZIC: If you are an artist you need to check this out. link it's the next hottest thing!!! Every night is Open Mic Night - Upload your music and share it with others - Allow others to purchase, download and rate your music - Upload your songs to

LUMMIE: NUZIC, have you actually read the ToS here?

LUMMIE: link

FATCHANCE: Way to catch em LUMMIE

LUMMIE: I just happened to log on.

LUMMIE: NUZIC, take a look at the paragraph that starts with this...

LUMMIE: "You may not use iCompositions messaging services for the promotion of products, offers, services, music, or for any other form of solicitation."

LUMMIE: New account just registered today too.

FATCHANCE: Prolly JUST for the plug

LUMMIE: It is always nice to have new community members, but solicitation is out of ToS bounds.

FATCHANCE: prolly wants to leach members

FATCHANCE: or members music

LUMMIE: Well, there are better ways of accomplishing that.

FATCHANCE: da

FATCHANCE: off to grab some food

LUMMIE: Have a good lunch, Fatty.

FATCHANCE: k

The support that regular members of the site offer in upholding the rules helps mitigate the stress of those serving as moderators. This type of community action also demonstrates that iCompers generally feel uninhibited by rules and unoppressed by moderators and administrators. And moderators generally see themselves as regular iCompers providing a service to their community comrades.

Conclusion

The issue of outsiderness is of prime importance to the members of iCompositions. As I previously mentioned, they are not Independent musicians, in the sense that the word is generally used within popular music culture, rather as home-based personal computer musicians they sit outside the Independent-Mainstream dichotomy. So, although the administrators hold competitions and post rankings (such as the infamous Weekly Top Songs list so vehemently rejected by LILICHI) members of the community continue to represent their own outsiderness through musical expressions of independence and individuality. Additionally, as personal computer musicians, outsiderness is in part maintained through their reliance upon the computer. The musicians' familiarity and comfort with computer technology and their generally technophiliaic position grounds them firmly within "geek culture," by many accounts the most outside of outsiders. For LILICHI, in particular, her outsider position as geek is compounded by her sex—women geeks sit particularly far outside the mainstream (Margolis and Fisher 2002).

The concern for individual expression and independence represented by the notion of the outsider also serves to form a shared identity around which iCompers have formed social bonds and communal being-ness. In chronicling her involvement with iCompositions, BECWIL concludes that the success of the iCompositions community is largely the result of an exchange process

among iCompers: musicians come to hear (receive) others' musical activities and share (give) their musicality with others. Like the OSS communities investigated by Ducheneaut, the hybrid interactions established through textual communication and musical creativity form an exchange system of gifting among iCompers—the giving and receiving of information, camaraderie, and musical expression.

Although the community contains hierarchical structures that suggest differentiation in value among iCompers and their songs (such as moderators and the Weekly Top Song list), iCompers advocate an ideological bias toward democratic-participation and egalitarianism. It is this dichotomous tension between the ideal and practice of community that authenticates iCompositions function as the location for a sociomusical community. Within iCompositions, iCompers maintain an idealized sense of communal being-ness, while engaging in sociomusical interaction that defines the lived experience of being together, with all its difficulties and problems. Music plays a central role in both aspects of community: promoting the ideal conception of communal being-ness while providing the social interaction that forms communal bonds.

CHAPTER 5

EXTENDING COMMUNITY BEYOND THE SITE

In Chapter 3, I discussed the existential crisis inherent in virtual fieldwork and how that discomfort impacted how I came to understand the field, what it is, and where it is located.[160] In Chapter 4, the focus was primarily on understanding the development and construction of a sociomusical community within iCompositions.com. But the sociomusical activity of iCompers, and thus, the iCompositions community, is not constrained to the specific domain of www.icompositions.com. iCompers move in and out of various cybercommunities and social networking sites, utilizing a variety of networking tools and technologies. Such hyperlinks and connections are enabled through the site's features, such as the ShareThis button (see "iCompositions: Music Page" on page 26) and links to personal homepages, as well as through standard hyperlinks in forum and blog posts, song comments, and chat. Through such links, iCompositions extendeds beyond its own domain as iCompers engage in sociomusical activity in other environments and virtual spaces in the Internet. In this chapter, I explore several ways that the iCompositions community is extended beyond the site itself through the use of new media technologies and practices (e.g. Internet radio and podcasts), the extension of iComp relationships into offline spaces, and sociomusical interaction within the virtual world of Second Life.

Broadcasting iCompositions

GBMAN: Is there any way [iCompositions] can stream the compositions? I would like an internet radio choice as opposed to all the selecting, starting, closing, selecting, etc. So I could just listen while I do something else, or at least not be chained to the computer. Various "stations" would be nice too, corresponding to something like my previous suggestion regarding categories.

POURHADI: Streaming is definitely something we've been looking into. It's on my TODO list for version 1.5 or 2. Should see it soon, though (maybe we can stick it in early).[161]

Within days of the launch of iCompositions, community members were already discussing the possibility of broadcasting iCompositions songs via audio streams, or Internet radio. Soon, POURHADI, designer and co-administrator of the site, launched MUGradio, an Internet radio

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[160] See "Ethnographic Descriptions of Cyberspace" on page 70.

[161] http://www.icompositions.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=143

station hosted on Live365.com.[162] Live365 provided a quickly implementable solution for the automation of streaming audio and could be listened to through a web browser; iTunes, WinAmp, or other music jukebox applications; or through Internet-enabled audio-streaming devices, such as the home stereo music players made by Roku.[163] With the flexibility offered by these various hardware and software products, MUGradio expanded the physical settings within which the music of iCompositions could be listened to and experienced. Songs continued to be added to the program list and by December 2004, THATGUY, who had taken over MUGradio programming, boasted that MUGradio had "18 hours [and] 10 minutes of NO REPEATS" before the song list would loop back to the beginning.[164] But there were drawbacks to MUGradio and the Live365 service: there was no live programming or DJs and the station followed a traditional broadcast model, a unilinear flow of information without a built-in feedback mechanism for community involvement. There was little space for the interactive spirit of iCompositions.

Figure 70: MUGradio home page

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[162] Shortly after the launch of iCompositions.com, POWERMAC99 launched MUGnetwork as a parent company to iCompositions and affiliated sites (MacDesktops.net, DashboardWidgets.com, among others). MUGs, or Macintosh User Groups, have been around since the launch of the Macintosh computer in the the 1980s and MUGnetwork was a registered online Apple user group. The name MUGnetwork was retired in 2008, when Showrunner Media became the parent company of iCompositions.

[163] http://www.roku.com/

[164] http://www.icompositions.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=1277

119

MUGshots

JLGERK, a community member and site moderator, launched the first scheduled MUGradio program, called MUGshots. He was a strong advocate of MUGradio from the beginning and actively promoted the service on the iCompositions forums and chat. Excited about the possibilities that Internet radio offered the iCompositions community, JLGERK drew upon his own background in terrestrial radio (as opposed to Internet radio or satellite radio) to launch MUGshots, a program that focuses on the works of a particular iCompositions artist.

JLGERK: Back around 1970 I was living in Albuquerque for a little while and I got hooked up with some friends who were doing the radio out of the college there and I fell in love with that. I got a broadcasting license and all of that and did some work there—not too long, but long enough to get it in my blood. And then I moved back to the Bay Area in California where I'm from and did a little bit of work at the radio station at the Stanford station. That all [eventually] went to the wayside.

So when I got to this site and they started doing radio—I think it was on Live365—and I said, "Hey, I want to put together a show." I said, "Well, what could I do? You know…I'll just play some…I'll just spotlight some artists," because I didn't have any content myself. I am a musician, but I don't play a lot anymore. Anyway, I just thought that would be the way to do it.

At the beginning, I had no control over anything. I would just make a show and send it to these guys and half the time they'd forget to broadcast it. I'd go back on iChat and say, "Hey, the show is supposed to be up." "Oh, yeah, well we forgot." I'd get ticked off at that.

MUGshots was not initially a live program, rather JLGERK recorded the show ahead of time and posted it to iCompositions. The MUGradio administrator would then retrieve the audio file from the site and insert it into the Live365 stream to be played at its designated time.

JLGERK: [MUGshots] was on every Wednesday night. And then we programmed it so that it would play [more often]…because there's so many different time zones, you know, and nobody could catch it live. And we'd see only two people listening in—it was kind of disheartening. But I kept on plugging through. Kept making them.

MUGshots are significant to the development of the iCompositions community in that they helped bring the social nature of iCompositions to MUGradio by creating a regularly scheduled program that, although pre-recorded, increased the sense of "liveness" to an otherwise fully-automated, looped audio stream. In other words, as listeners connected to the MUGradio stream at the specified MUGshots time slot, they imagined the presence of other iCompers listening to the same stream at the same time, even though there was no immediate evidence of the presence of other iCompers. Later, however, listeners could actualize this shared experience by discussing the MUGshot in the site's chat or forums. Additionally, the attention that MUGshots placed on a individual iCompers (as opposed to the music alone), reflects the social orientation of the community. While the normal MUGradio audio stream did not include any identification of the

artists who authored the music, MUGshots turned the spotlight on individual iCompers through a comprehensive presentation of their musical involvement with the community. In order to highlight the particular artist chosen for a MUGshot, JLGERK sought to diminish his own presence on the show. At the beginning of the first MUGshots episode, which focused on the music of COCKEYED, JLGERK used the Macintosh's text-to-speech software voice, "Fred," to read the following introductory script:

> Welcome to MUGshots. A radio show by you and for you. My name is JLGERK and I will be your host. I plan on a focused presentation of one particular artist from our vast array at iCompositions. There are so many artists to choose from I think I will have a hard time to get to everyone at least for a time to come.[165]

By having the text read by "Fred," JLGERK masked his own presence in the MUGshot presentation. When I asked JLGERK about his use of a computer-generated voice, instead of his own, he explained:

JLGERK: I've never been happy with my voice. A little bit of shyness, and what have you. It was more of a radio show than anything about me, you know. After I did a couple of them, then I started doing theme shows and it was like a little theatre, actually. [POWERMAC99] had [private messaged] me and said, you really ought to use your own voice. Make this a little more personal. And so I did. I got over my shyness and jumped right into it.[…] I just wanted to keep me a little bit anonymous. But I worked through that.

By the fourth MUGshots episode, JLGERK was using his own voice, rather than the synthetic "Fred," to introduce the episode. Drawing upon his long-time interest in theater, JLGERK began producing more theatrical, narrative-driven MUGshots.

JLGERK: It's kind of been my background. As a kid…we put on little neighborhood shows. "Showtime this Saturday afternoon," you know, we'd put on a little skit, just to get some…charge the kids a nickel, or whatever.[…] I did a little bit of theater work in high school.[…] it's just kind of in my blood. There might have been a couple of shows that I didn't talk at all, except for, "Here's MUGshots, here's this guy" and play an hour's worth of music and say, "Thanks. Bye." But now that I know that people are listening and really enjoying it, I put a lot more into it.

JLGERK begins the fourth episode with a dialog between multiple characters, laid over an upbeat jazz tune. Speaking each part himself, JLGERK employed volume, pan, and reverb to create a sense of relative position of each character in space:

> Voice 1: Test. Is it showtime?
> Voice 2: Yeah, I'm here.
> Voice 1: Wait a minute? We got guests coming in?…You sure we're on?

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[165] *MUGshots*, Episode 1 was posted to iCompositions.com by JLGERK on 3 June, 2004 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/podcasts/episode.php?eid=6).

Voice 2: I'm sure.
Voice 1: 'Cause I don't think this is broadcasting.
Voice 2: It should be. I'm pretty sure.
Voice 1: Hey can you hear it?
Voice 2: I can hear it.

In beginning this episode with this dialog, JLGERK introduces several important elements into the MUGshot. First, he establishes the use of narrative as a framing device for the episode. Rather than just a collection of songs by a particular artist, strung together into a virtual "album," the MUGshot becomes a vehicle for storytelling. Second, the dialog at the beginning of the fourth episode expresses JLGERK's desire for a more socially interactive process in the creation and distribution of MUGshots.

The use of a narrative led to even greater expansions in the MUGshots format beyond just a collection of audio files. Talk-show or interview-like segments began to be included, letting the listener get to know more about the artist and stories behind the music. Eventually, MUGshots were provided as downloadable podcasts. POWERMAC99 added a new feature to the site that offered, for a small fee, to make an artists' songs available as a podcast via the iTunes Music Store. By distributing MUGshots as podcasts through RSS feeds and the iTunes Store, JLGERK increased the reach of the iCompositions community even further. In April 2009, after the successful launch of iCWeekly (see "iCWeekly" on page 132), JLGERK moved the MUGshots to a weekly, live video broadcast. Audio archives of the show continue to be posted on iCompositions, and accessible as a podcast via the iTunes Music Store, but the new format allows for greater synchronous interaction between JLGERK, the artist in the spotlight, and the audience.

iComp Radio

There were several drawbacks to broadcasting MUGradio and MUGshots on Live365, however, including network issues with the provider, the lack of control over the inclusion of ads into the MUGradio audio stream, and increasing costs. Eventually, MUGradio lost support within the iCompositions community and went offline. It wasn't too long, however before an iCompositions-oriented Internet radio station was reborn. This time ILLUMINATOR,[166] an active iCompositions artist with a background in radio, launched another music streaming service, which he named iCompositions Radio (AKA iComp Radio or iCR). iComp Radio had exceeded its predecessor, MUGradio, in terms of offering several real-time broadcasts, allowing participants to call in and interact with the show hosts in real-time.

TSHARVEY: Tell me about iComp Radio. How did that get started? How did you start doing that?

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[166] ILLUMINATOR deleted his account in 2008, but later returned to the site under the new name of LUMMIE.

LUMMIE: …Well, I'm an old hand in radio. I started back in the early 80's. In fact, before I graduated high school I had a job as a disc jockey on a radio station and I have been involved in radio for 20 years, I guess.…

…when I first joined iComp (and you probably remember this) JLGERK was running an iComp radio station on Live365, I think is what it was on. The problem with Live365 according to him (you may want to talk with him to get the details of this story) is they would insert their audio into your audio whenever they felt like it. So you could have their audio, their [commercial] "spots," being inserted into the middle of somebody's song, just because they inserted their audio without your lead. They just did it. So that kind of dissuaded him from actually continuing with iComp Radio version 1…

…So when I got involved, I started doing stuff on my own, broadcasting right out of the house—initially starting with just my music. You know, just playing 30 or 40 songs that I liked because I thought it was cool, you know, a way for family and friends to listen to it. And then I thought, "You know, this would be great if you could find a site that would allow you to broadcast to hundreds of users at a time." So initially I went out and researched and found Live365, Shoutcast, and other stations…or other sites…which were capable of doing that. The problem with them was, like JLGERK had figured, they will insert audio into the middle of your stream whenever they want. That was problematic because it took away from the music and the content you were trying to promote.…The specific thing about it is I had tried doing Internet broadcasting years before even attempting iComp Radio and, while it was doable, it wasn't easy and it wasn't fun.

I always keep abreast of what kind of software is going out and I found a beautiful program called Sam. I'm not sure if you're familiar with it. It's from guys at Spatial Audio. And basically it's an automated broadcast application. It allows you to basically run a radio station on a computer. Of course, that's something I was involved with back in the day when I worked with radio stations building automation computers. But this was software which ran solely on a PC. It was consumer level software, very low learning curve. So I picked up a copy of it as a demo, started playing with it, and I'm thinking to myself, "This is a great way to promote the artists of iCompositions." So after about six months of testing I began serious research on low-cost sites that allowed me to broadcast and it would just be the audio stream itself. But in doing that I had to weigh…actually do a feasibility study, a cost effectiveness study, on the number of potential listeners versus the cost that I could afford. So I looked at that and at that time there were about 45,000–48,000 members on iComp, and I figured, "Okay, not everybody is going to want to listsen to this. I figured if I could support 60 people at a time— 60 concurrent listeners—that would be a good start.

So I found a site—again the Spatial Audio guys. I found their server site, their streaming site, and I signed up for it. Sixty users at $60 a month, that's what we started out broadcasting and we waited for the listenership to build. Well, we

123

promoted ourselves on iComp, we promoted ourselves on the Internet and we downloaded as much music off iComp as we can to get the station library rolling. And during that time we were soliciting artists to submit their music to us. In the early days, they would let us know they wanted us to play their music by putting a parenthesis and the letter "b" in the description of the music to let us know they want that song to be broadcast from the radio. And after many discussions with the management of iCompositions we worked it so the radio station could be included into the terms of service of iCompositions. The radio station would then be allowed to download and play any music unless the artist opted out. And during the time that we play…uh…we ran iComp radio, the year and a half we ran it, we had one artist who opted out completely, everybody else loved it and loved what we did. Our problem was that we couldn't garner the listenership that we need to keep…you know, the numbers…to keep everything up and running, so we had to shut it down and let it go.

iComp Radio was eventually taken offline in September 2008 (the reasons for which will be discussed below), but not before it had performed a significant function in maintaining the community during a time of disaster and uncertainty.

The Crash of '08

One day in mid-February 2008, I logged on to iCompositions to find that the front page was not the normal homepage I was accustomed to seeing. In place of the usual dynamically-generated content (i.e. lists of recently uploaded songs and videos) was a relatively plain and static page.
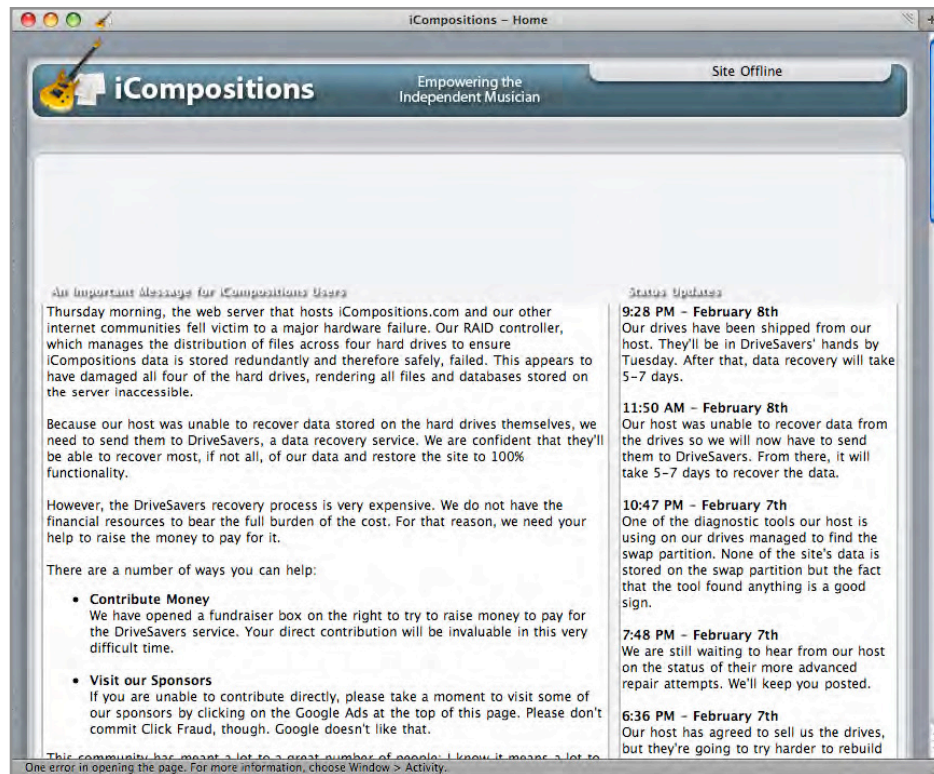
Figure 71: iCompositions home page during crash

At the top of the page was the following announcement:

An Important Message for iCompositions Users

Thursday morning, the web server that hosts iCompositions.com and our other internet communities fell victim to a major hardware failure. Our RAID controller, which manages the distribution of files across four hard drives to ensure iCompositions data is stored redundantly and therefore safely, failed. This appears to have damaged all four of the hard drives, rendering all files and databases stored on the server inaccessible.

My heart stopped. I was caught between genuine sense of loss on behalf of all of the iCompers who had devoted so much time toward the site over the preceding four years and fear of loss of my dissertation topic. "What if they can't recover the data from the hard drives?" I thought. "What will I do?" As the days went by, I followed the updates posted to the sidebar on the web page, hoping to catch a glimpse of good news that the site would be back up soon—and hoping that enough active iCompers would return to help rebuild the community in the aftermath of the crash.

7:48 PM - February 7th: We are still waiting to hear from our host on the status of their more advanced repair attempts. We'll keep you posted.

125

11:50 AM - February 8th: Our host was unable to recover data from the drives so we will now have to send them to DriveSavers. From there, it will take 5-7 days to recover the data.

9:28 PM - February 8th: Our drives have been shipped from our host. They'll be in DriveSavers' hands by Tuesday. After that, data recovery will take 5-7 days.

1:25 PM - February 9th: We now have a more definitive target for our fundraiser: $10,950. With your help, we will be able to pay the full cost of the data recovery service. If they are unable to recover the data, we will be charged a much lower "attempt fee" and will then be able to dedicate the money raised here towards rebuilding the site.

4:18 PM - February 12th: The drives have arrived at DriveSavers and they should begin the recovery process today. They won't have any reportable progress for another two days.

When good news regarding the status of the site started to come in, it was accompanied by more concern, as well. While it appeared that DriveSavers would be able to recover most, if not all of the data, the cost of such operations are staggering for a small, independently run organization, such as iCompositions. POWERMAC99 kept the webpage updated and included a plea for donations to help cover the cost of recovery.

Because our host was unable to recover data stored on the hard drives themselves, we need to send them to DriveSavers, a data recovery service. We are hopeful that they'll be able to recover most, if not all, of our data and restore the site to 100% functionality.

However, the DriveSavers recovery process is very expensive. We do not have the financial resources to bear the full burden of the cost. For that reason, we need your help to raise the money to pay for it.

There are a number of ways you can help:

Contribute Money

We have opened a fundraiser box on the right to try to raise money to pay for the DriveSavers service. Your direct contribution will be invaluable in this very difficult time.

Visit our Sponsors

If you are unable to contribute directly, please take a moment to visit some of our sponsors by clicking on the Google Ads at the top of this page. Please don't commit Click Fraud, though. Google doesn't like that.

126

Purchase from our Sponsors

You can also purchase a product from Bandmateloops or Drums on Demand after clicking on their ads on the right. These two companies have been very supportive of our community over the past months and years but they may not continue to advertise if it doesn't translate into increased sales. We'll need their support more than ever once the rebuilding process is underway.

Spread the Word

If you have communicated with other iCompositions members via email in the past, please email them and let them know what's happening. We need the support of as many iCompositions artists as possible and your efforts to spread the word would be extremely helpful.

This community has meant a lot to a great number of people; I know it means a lot to me. I'm not ready to see it go and I'm not going to stop working on this until we're back to full health. On behalf of the entire iCompositions team, thank you for your support in this time of crisis.

Shocked by seeing the site offline, I initially failed to notice two important continuing services on iCompositions further down the page: iComp Radio and chat. The iCompositions community was still active in chat and iComp Radio became the primary source of musical activity for iCompers. This became very apparent as I followed the live chat session available on the single iCompositions webpage:

BARRETOK: LEAHBANICKI is on ICR

BARRETOK: One of our sirens

SOULIMA: who is that?

ZALLAZ: w'hey LEAHS on iCR

DARRYLM: yeah BARR - great tune!

BARRETOK: Very soulful

SOULIMA: looks like iComp's recovery will be a slow process.

BARRETOK: I'm getting impatient

SOULIMA: ah, I think it will be awhile, BARRETOK

JUSTIN_CASE: I joined macjams, but still haven't started uploading

BARRETOK: Those other sites are very strange

JUSTIN_CASE: holding out hope

BARRETOK: Nice people but not the same

BARRETOK: What's this Frank Sinatra music now? Who's singing?

BARRETOK:	Is it you ILLU?
JUSTIN_CASE:	but different person listening
BARRETOK:	Maybe it's ZALLAZ
ZALLAZ:	it's B's lounge voice I reckon
JUSTIN_CASE:	old Crey eyes
BARRETOK:	Lol
SOULIMA:	what's yer nick there JUSTIN?
ILLUMINATOR:	That was JODYG.
JUSTIN_CASE:	haven't uploaded any tunes: STOCHASTIC
BARRETOK:	Really?
BARRETOK:	JODYG when he used to sing yeah
ILLUMINATOR:	Yes.
SOULIMA:	lol good moniker..and intellectual
JUSTIN_CASE:	love JODY's sweet touch on the keys
BARRETOK:	I remember his first Big Band uploads
JUSTIN_CASE:	missing those weekly improvs
BARRETOK:	He's like Dean Martin
ZALLAZ:	dont mean a thing if it aint got that swing...
BARRETOK:	This one is AREND
ILLUMINATOR:	It is EAGLE_1 with STORKAAS.
JUSTIN_CASE:	yes, always recognizable and passionate vocals
BARRETOK:	What am I gonna do with all my new songs?

I had not been an active listener of iComp Radio up to that point, largely overlooking it in my research on the site. But since the hard drive failure had disabled the possibility of listening and linking to each other's songs in the chat, iComp Radio moved into a more central role in helping to create a sense of community togetherness. As iCompers from various states and countries chatted on the iCompositions homepage, they were each listening to the same Internet radio service and thus able to maintain community cohesion through this shared experience. Between iComp Radio and the chat, the community continued to be active throughout the crash and recovery process (lasting about three weeks) and the significance of iCompositions.com to many of the artists was made clear when POWERMAC99 received nearly $11,000 in donations within one week to help cover the cost of data recovery.

I later talked with Lummie about his impressions of how iComp Radio helped sustain the community throughout the nearly three weeks of downtime:

TSHARVEY: As I mentioned earlier, I knew iComp radio was out there but I never really went out there and listened to it myself until the Crash and I remember during the Crash PM just had a static page up there except for chat. So you got chat running and that's when my attention was really drawn to iComp radio, because everyone was listening to iComp radio—at least people on chat. Everyone on chat, they're talking about how they can't access the music, so iComp radio became…did people talk to you about how…the role iComp radio played during the crash?

LUMMIE: Well, that was a very special time. You know, the thing about iComp Radio that probably not everyone knows is I was the only one running it because it was ran from Alabama in this studio right here. There wasn't a team of people who ran it. There was one guy who downloaded all of the music manually, who went and retagged the music manually, and who did the live part of the show when he could. And I'm still trying to work a day job and everything else. So, when the crash happened…basically, I think everybody found out about it the same way. It was like: iComp is there and iComp is gone and "oh my God, what happened?" So immediately the information feelers go out to all the members and at that time, if you'll remember, the ILLUMINATOR name that I used at that time was a moderator of the site. So, I think that PM notified everybody what happened from a moderator perspective. And I thought, "Okay. What I need to do as the guy who runs the radio is be a voice for the site to let all the users know what's going on." And I told PM in a series of emails that we went back and forth on: "Here's the deal. The radio can be a messaging entity for the community now, as opposed to just something playing music, because we have the ability to notify everybody with what's going on with daily updates, or updates as soon as we know what is going on, if you're willing to work with me and send updates as soon as you get them. I will get them on the air as quickly as I can. If I'm here I'll do them live and I'll also record them so they will play periodically throughout the day when I'm not able to be here to let people know what the last status update was and when the next live update will be. So, they know that they can tune in at a given time to find out what's going on."

             So at that point, he and I had worked the detail of that out to where he'd posted on the static web page: "You can tune into iComp radio to get updates." And I just started recording updates, playing them and doing them live as I got them. You know, there were many times which I'd be getting emails from PM and just read them live right directly to the people who were listening. And that was a big help to a lot of members of the community because PM wasn't always available. Of course, I wasn't always available, and some of the other moderators weren't always available either. So you didn't always get up-to-the-minute updates all the time. So the radio station was wonderful in that we could take and record stuff and have it play once or twice an hour with the latest update as we know it at that time

and then when we were able to go live we could just hit them live with brand new updates and everything else.

You know, I'd like to think that everybody found that comforting to a certain degree, because I know that from my radio background I thought it was kind of like a radio station's responsibility in times of disaster is to keep people updated with what's going on, what they can do, where you can go, where you can get help and stuff like that. So I figured that this was kind of like the same thing except it was the cyberspace equivalent of a tornado going through your town. So that's kind of the way I handled it. I did it with as many updates as I could when I could get them across live, or recorded, or whatever. So for me it was kind of like the Emergency Broadcast system for iComp.

iComp Radio had thus become a more central feature of iCompositions than MUGRadio had previously, with live broadcasts, listener interaction, and as a public service during the crash. But in April 2008, LUMMIE (then ILLUMINATOR), citing personal reasons, decided he could no longer continue operating the radio station. Due to the popularity of the station, PM vowed to keep iComp Radio up and running and so ILLUMINATOR handed over control of iComp Radio to POWERMAC99 in May 2008.

POWERMAC99: Some of you may have seen the letter that Illuminator sent to show hosts that was posted to the Forums recently. Circumstances have changed significantly since that was sent out so please allow me to share with you all our plans to preserve iCompositions Radio:

For personal reasons, ILLUMINATOR is unable to continue running iCR. I can't say I'm surprised; the job of operating the station is a extremely time-consuming. In addition to his role as an on-air personality, he also manually ads each song submitted by the community, schedules and coordinates the many show hosts, and handles the technical operations. We all owe Illuminator our gratitude for his tireless efforts and financial support of the station over the past year.

Going forward, I will serve as acting Station Manager of iCR, in addition to my regular iCompositions admin duties. While I won't be an on-air personality, I will take over adding submissions, scheduling shows, and the actual broadcasting. I'll need your help to spread the word about iCR and keep listening. I hope all show hosts will continue producing their shows so we can maintain something close to the same level of fresh content. That said, iConversations and Plug and Play will be on hiatus indefinitely.

The transition will take place during the week of May 12th. We don't have specific dates yet, but expect iCR to be off the air for 2-3 days while equipment is shipped and the station is transferred over.

Thank you to everyone who has offered their support over the past few days and to everyone who listens to iCompositions Radio. We'll need your continued

dedication as we make this transition, but I'm confident that iCR will continue to serve as a great medium for musical discovery and promotion.[167]

Initial reactions to the change were optimistic. Many iCompers expressed their gratitude to ILLUMINATOR, JLGERK, and POWERMAC99, and showed interest in helping to keep the station online. Several comments looked back to the downtime of the site just over two months earlier, recognizing the contribution ILLUMINATOR had made to the site and the value that iComp Radio offered the community:

JDWYER05:   Long live iCR!

ILLUMINATOR- you have been a godsend my friend. Thank you so much for all that you've done for the site. Without your dedication the station would not have been what it has become- a true beacon for the community.

Of course JLGERK has had a HUGE hand in this too. So let's not forget JL!

I am happy that iCR will continue and I look forward to seeing how it evolves.

Now all we have to do is get the community more involved to make it a great success!

8MONTHMALFUNCTION: [ILLUMINATOR], you have created something wonderful that has become a big part of iComp... Thanks for all your efforts, but YOU, have to come first, good luck in sorting out that horrid thing called 'life' that always seems to get in the way of the music...

And thanks and good luck to PM and JL for their continued quest to keep iComp and iCR alive!

KCSGROOVE: ILLU, want to thank you for your great work on ICR

Liked your shows a lot and loved listening to your amazing stories.

You talked us through the dark days of the crash.[168]

Although POWERMAC99 continued to operate iComp Radio for several more months, listenership was declining and the time and effort it took to keep the streaming service running proved to be too much of a burden on POWERMAC99 and the other administrators of the site. Additionally, ILLUMINATOR decided to take a break from iCompositions altogether in August 2008, giving public notice of his leave and resignation as a moderator of the site.[169] In September, POWERMAC99 took iComp Radio off the air:

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[167] http://www.icompositions.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=6229

[168] http://www.icompositions.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=6229

[169] ILLUMINATOR's leave of absence was, to some extent, a result of moderator burnout (see "Governing iCompositions" on page 111). By not only resigning his post as moderator, but removing himself and his music from iCompositions altogether, ILLUMINATOR was able to return to iCompositions as LUMMIE and begin anew, without the baggage of having formerly been a moderator.

POWERMAC99: We retired iCompositions Radio because, quite simply, no one listened. In the final week of iCR, we had a sustained listenership of two. And even when ILLUMINATOR and JLGERK were actively promoting the service, we never experienced anything more than a passing level of interest.

On top of that, iCR is very difficult and time-consuming to maintain. We just couldn't justify continuing to put so much time and effort into a service that no one used. We feel that it's in the entire community's best interests to put those resources toward our core focus.[170]

iCWeekly

In early 2009, just a few months after iComp Radio was taken offline, LUMMIE, JLGERK, FATCHANCE, and ALANATOMIC launched a new iCompositions-oriented radio program, iCWeekly. ILLUMINATOR, who had returned to participating in iCompositions under the new name of LUMMIE after a three month break, spearheaded the weekly radio broadcast. Rather than launching a full-fledged radio station, which had proved too much to maintain in previous efforts, iCWeekly was an attempt to leverage live streaming services and podcasting technologies.

LUMMIE: After I came back…we started looking at the possibility of [live video broadcasts]. I think JL and I—in fact JL told me about it—JL found Leo Laporte doing his broadcasts online—live broadcasts with video. Basically he does these podcasts—everybody knows Leo Laporte as a big podcast guy since he left TechTV…but not a lot of people know that he actually does live video broadcasts over the Internet now and everything he does is live…and that's how he does his podcasts. He records the audio while he's doing this live broadcast and he bundles it up and it goes off as a podcast. And there's a video version of it available…So JL introduced me to this, and I'm like, "How is he doing this?" And…found that anybody can sign up for this, anybody can broadcast. All you have to do is have a camera on your computer and have the ability to have a Flash application load and you're broadcasting…like we're doing with Skype right now. That was it! And I'm like, "I've got all this equipment from the radio station here and we've all got webcams. Why can't we do this using video and audio, just like the radio was except we're gonna put video with it."

So…we found uStream. And then we got to playing around with the technology we all have. We all have Skype. We all knew we were going to use the audio to get from Point A to Point B. So initially when we started the show, it was just an audio show.…Our goal, however, was to make it…video with audio that has user interaction. One of the things that Leo does is he has all these chat rooms open. He reads the chat. He comments occasionally on the chat. But you never see somebody from the chat being a part of the show. You know, bring them into the

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[170] http://www.icompositions.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=6621

132

show, put their audio up, put their picture up right along side of yours and have a conversation. You don't see that. Well, you don't see that on iCWeekly either. We do bring people from the audience into the show with audio. We include questions from the chat, we bring them in on Skype. We don't have the ability yet to bring their video in, but we're working on it.

The first episode of iCWeekly was broadcast on February 8, 2009 on uStream, a company that provides "a live interactive video broadcast platform that enables anyone with a camera and an Internet connection to quickly and easily broadcast to a global audience of unlimited size."[171] As LUMMIE mentioned, uStream allowed them to create an interactive show—a radio program that kept with the community spirit of iCompositions. With uStream, the live broadcast is delivered via a web page that also hosts a synchronous chat system. The chat window allows listeners to chat with each other, and with the show hosts, in real time, creating an interactive broadcast model in line with the expectations of a Web 2.0 society (see Figure 72 on the following page). Eventually, LUMMIE worked out a system to broadcast a video feed of iCWeekly, allowing listeners to see the four hosts and plans are underway to enable video for call-in guests. Each week on iCWeekly the hosts bring guests on the show—iCompers who are present in the uStream chat join the show via Skype and talk about their latest music projects. LUMMIE invited me on the show for the tenth episode to talk about my dissertation and the research I've been conducting on iCompositions over the past few years. As I talked with LUMMIE, JLGERK, FATCHANCE, and ALANATOMIC, listeners responded to my comments on chat, asking more questions, which I would then elaborate on via audio. iCWeekly shows are recorded and then uploaded to iCompositions as podcasts, making them accessible via Apple's iTunes Store within an hour of the close of the show each week.

Following the successful launch of iCWeekly, JLGERK moved MUGShots to the uStream platform, hosting MUGshots live with video of the host and featured guest and an audience that interacts via chat. As an artist's songs are played, listeners chat about the song, sharing their responses with the artist who is on chat, as well as being visible via a live audio/video feed (see Figure 72 on the following page). This format for MUGshots shares a simliar feeling to a live musical performance, with the intimacy of immediate feedback from the audience members.

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[171] http://www.ustream.tv/about
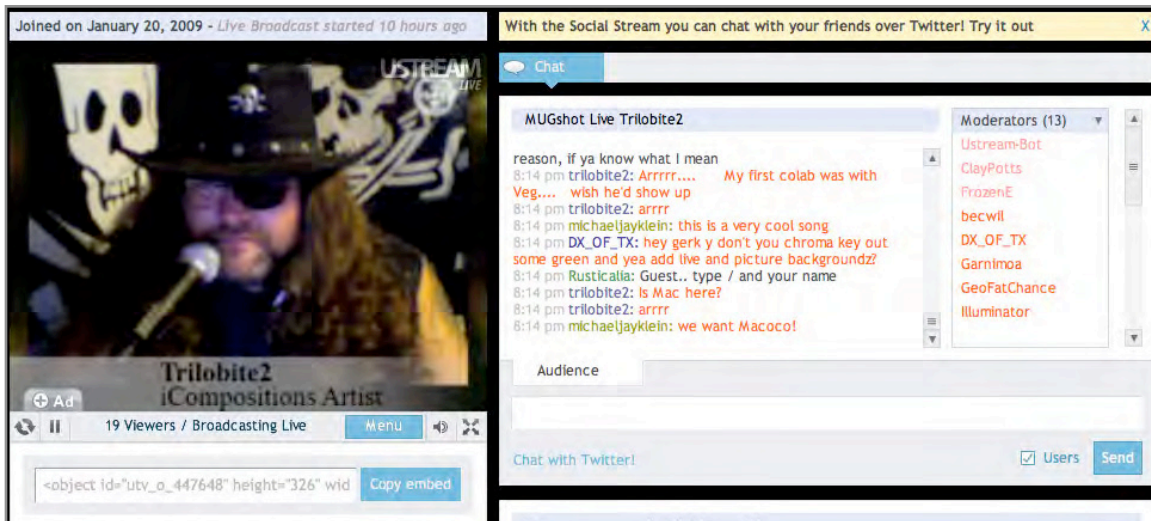
Figure 72: Broadcast of Trilobite2 MUGshot on uStream.tv

MUGshots and iCWeekly help strengthen the sense of community at iCompositions by demonstrating the possibilities for participation in the shaping of the site by anyone who has the initiative to get a project started. These projects also demonstrate the extensibility of the iCompositions community. As the community grows and expands (both in membership and interests/perspectives) Internet-based telecommunications systems, such as Skype and uStream, provide tools for expanding the iCompositions beyond its specific domain. they also demonstrate that iCompositions is a community within which iCompers can construct their own platform for extending the musical and social life of iCompers.

JLGERK has actively promoted this concept of iCompositions as a grassroots community through his activities with various permutations of Internet radio and broadcast technologies over the years, as well as through conversations with other iCompers, encouraging them to invest in making iCompositions-related podcasts of their own. The following conversation, which I observed on chat one day, demonstrates JLGERK's concern that other iCompers understand that artists are not merely content creators for iCompositions, but is constitutive of the community. From JLGERK's perspective, the growth and strength of the community is the responsibility of the artists and not site administrators:

RUSTICALIA: JL, they need to do a show of pre-teen talent

RUSTICALIA: so we can hear what the kids are up to these days

JLGERK: we is they

JLGERK: if anyone makes a show , we will attempt to get it heard

KNQULEARSHIFT: indeed JL

JLGERK: and. that means MUGshot too, anyone, just contact me

RUSTICALIA: true

134

RUSTICALIA: i'm too busy to do so, but I'm sure someone will

RUSTICALIA: they did have a CO episode devoted to teen musicians

JLGERK: they is still we

RUSTICALIA: true

RUSTICALIA: have you guys thought of adding a Psychedelic channel for people who don't quite fit other?

JLGERK: :you guys: is still us

KNQULEARSHIFT: i could go in that genre

JLGERK: would "you" like to host it ??

KNQULEARSHIFT: me?

JLGERK: you and me makes we

KNQULEARSHIFT: sure what all does it involve...

HENNESSEY: and we and we makes we we.

JLGERK: lolololoo

JLGERK: hi J

HENNESSEY: :)

JLGERK: tell him how we do this Jon

KNQULEARSHIFT: yes tell me...

Hennessey: tell we

KNQULEARSHIFT: I'm still new here so... but I have plenty of time....

JLGERK: make a show, and we will talk

With each comment by RUSTICALIA and KNQULEARSHIFT, JLGERK responds by subtly altering the pronouns of their requests: "you" becomes "me" or "we," reflecting the Buberian conception of "I and Thou" (Buber 1958). In this manner, JLGERK reinforces the communitarian concept upon which iCompositions is built. In addition to MUGshots and iCWeekly, iCompers have hosted several other iCompositions-oriented podcasts over the years, including: Electro, presented by LAPSKIN and featuring electro music of iCompositions; Criminally Overlooked, lesser-known recommendations on music in iCompositions from iCompositions members; iChomp, a cooking show by CIHEINS that also features iCompositions music (and sometimes includes guest artists from iCompositions, as well); Ponk Radio, presented by PONKEY and featuring his favorite iCompositions music; and, Miss Chi, a podcast in which LILICHI showcases her favorite music from iCompositions, with each show focusing on songs chosen according to a specific theme or genre.

ALANATOMIC: There's a lot of members that have the membership in mind […] One of the good things about iComp is that it's people helping people, people striving the best they can be, and it's also people taking other people's art very seriously.

LUMMIE: It's all about promotion. I think a lot of people are very happy and willing to promote other people's songs on iCompositions. I mean, it's not like a lot of places where it's all about "me, me ,me" as an artist, you know, "I want to promote myself, I want to plug myself." A lot of of people on iCompositions are about the community of artists and are willing to go out of their way to promote everybody else.

iCompositions in the "Real World"

TSHARVEY: Hi JL, TRILO

TRILOBITE2: Hi harv!

TRILOBITE2: arrrrr

TRILOBITE2: Harv...when are we going to talk again? I have another chapter for you

TSHARVEY: How about Monday?

TRILOBITE2: Sunday?

TRILOBITE2: No good...monday is good

TSHARVEY: Oh wait...Monday doesn't work

TRILOBITE2: arrr

TSHARVEY: how about tuesday?

TRILOBITE2: I can do tuesday

TSHARVEY: what time?

TRILOBITE2: how about after dinner? 7:00

TSHARVEY: sounds good

TRILOBITE2: arrr

TRILOBITE2: I need to get to bed...have to be up at 4 am to go fishing

TRILOBITE2 and I had talked via Skype a few weeks earlier, but our conversation was cut short, interrupted by real world events. During that conversation, my wife, Sara, came into our bedroom (where my office was located inside the bedroom closet) and interrupted our interview. As I have mentioned previously, home, along with its associated responsibilities, is never far away when conducting fieldwork online—especially when my office is located in my bedroom. Nonetheless, I was very much immersed in my computer-mediated conversation with TRILOBITE2 and was oblivious to events in the physical world transpiring around me. Sara had come to

inform me that the National Weather Service had issued a tornado warning for our county and she and the children were gathered in the bathroom as a precaution. But my immersion into the digital domain seemed so immediate, and the physical world so non-consequential, that I brushed her off:

TSHARVEY: [To Sara] You want me to come right now?

SARA: That would be nice…nothing's touched down yet, but the whole thing…there's multiple cells swirling.

TRILOBITE2:   [Bursts out laughing] Dude, you're gonna die! You gotta get out of here. This interview can't be worth losing the life of yourself or your family.

TSHARVEY: [Laughs]

TRILOBITE2:   Now I'm worried. Where are you? What state?

TSHARVEY: I'm in Florida. Tallahassee.

TRILOBITE2:   Do you have a basement or do you live in a trailer?

TSHARVEY: Luckily not a trailer. We're in an apartment complex. No basement.

TRILOBITE2:   Find shelter. If you need more from me, we'll talk again.

TSHARVEY: Yeah. I'll go where I'm not sitting right in front of the window here.

TRILOBITE2:   [Laughs again]

The acronym CMC (computer-meditated communication) suggests that online sociality is separate from everyday experiences, and experientially less immediate than the physical world that surrounds us. But this experience is just one of many that has lead me to realize how the technological apparatus that mediates communication in cyberspace becomes non-existent from the subjective perspective. The transparency of the computer software and hardware allows for a re-prioritizing of virtuality and actuality, such that the physical world may become less immediate than the online social engagement. Nevertheless, as online relationships develop and strengthen, there is frequently a strong draw toward extending that sociality beyond the Internet and into the real world.

Fishing with Trilobite2

The following Tuesday at 7:00 I logged on to Skype. TRILOBITE2 was not online, so I launched iCompositions in my web browser. I saw TRILOBITE2 on the chat along with other iCompers. I asked TRILOBITE2 if we were still on for our meeting on Skype. He didn't respond and as I watched my comment disappear as the conversations on the chat continued, I wondered if he saw my reminder. About a minute later, however, an incoming call came through Skype:

TSHARVEY: How are things going?

TRILOBITE2:   Things are going awesome actually. Real good.

TRILOBITE2:	I remember we were talking at one point last time…we were talking about how iComp moves itself into "real life" situations?
TSHARVEY:	Yeah, we were.
TRILOBITE2:	And I was telling you the other day, I said, "I got a new chapter for you"? You know EVILFACTMAN…
TSHARVEY:	Yes. I do.
TRILOBITE2:	I had a fishing trip set up the other day and a guy crapped out on me. Said he couldn't go last minute. So I got on iComp, I sam EVILFACTMAN, invited him along and he drove four hours to go.
TSHARVEY:	You ever met him before?
TRILOBITE2:	No. Never met him before. I mean, I met him on iComp—I've known him for years, but he's the first person I ever met from the site in real-life.
TSHARVEY:	What was the experience like?
TRILOBITE2:	It was just like being in chat, I would say. It was just smooth. I expected a little bit of awkwardness or whatever. He was meeting me at 4:00 in the morning on my front lawn and I expected it to be a little strange. But I know his voice—I've heard him singing a million times—and…nothing to it. Like any other friend showing up and going fishing. I was just great.
TRILOBITE2:	We talked a little about site stuff, but we talked very little about it. Really just more stuff about real life when we were in real life. But that's what we talk about here [iCompositions] too. Now he's a teacher and I'm a teacher and the captain of the boat is a teacher, so we talked a lot of shop.

Figure 73: TRILOBITE2 (left) and EVILFACTMAN (right) on fishing boat

Meeting another iComper face-to-face was an exciting experience for TRILOBITE2, as evidenced by the fact that he was so eager to share the experience with me. I found it interesting that he described the face-to-face encounter as "just like being in chat." Although TRILOBITE2 was somewhat surprised by the ease with which he found himself when meeting EVILFACTMAN for the first time, the lack of "awkwardness" goes to show that his offline experience served to validate his social experiences within the virtual community.

California Dreaming

When I first talked with zallaz (in private, through iChat) he was excited to tell me about some of his experiences in meeting up and playing with other iCompers live, in person. Following a trip to Northern California in 2007, zallaz produced his second MUGshot and named it "California Dreaming." Drawing upon the narrative structure jlgerk had developed with MUGsots, zallaz's "California Dreaming" is essentially a travelogue of his journey to California, including songs he performed and recorded with other iCompers while on his trip. But rather than read his travelogue himself, zallaz returned to the precedent jlgerk had set with his first few MUGshots and had "Fred," the Macintosh text-reading voice, read his travelogue.

> So, when did this story begin? It's hard to say. July 2007? Possibly.
>
> "So when are you coming to my side of the pond?" Rhonda (RHONIE) said to me as we said our goodbyes in London Underground.[…] I had no answer to Rhonda's question.
>
> Early October, I get an email from Alan (NORTHPOINT): "Hey, LAZ. I'm in London, Saturday. Want to grab a beer?" Now, I knew zilch about Alan, apart from a collaboration he did with another online musician, which sounded so much like a Cheap Trick outtake it hurt. I decided to meet Alan. Alan is a cool guy—one heck of a bass player with years of gigging under his belt.
>
> We got on famously, hit The Borderline club in London, saw four bands (only one really grabbed our collective imagination that night). When Alan told me about when he ended up yelling out loud, listening to a ZALLAZ podcast in the British Museum to the bewilderment of other visitors I almost choked on my beer. A great night, for sure.
>
> With zero planning, I booked an Air Canada flight to California. Why California? Simple. I could meet a few online musicians all clustered together—well, they looked close-ish to a Brit. So after a taxi, a coach, two flights (Heathrow–Toronto and Toronto–San Francisco), a hired car (armed with GPS)—basically a day of travelling—there was Rhonda again. I was jet lagged and slightly out of my brain. Driving in America in rush-hour with a sat map, I had not fully got to grips, which scrambled my mind. We went for a meal in downtown San Jose—a joint frequented by Silicon Valley's movers and shakers. I'll just say that the portions

were large.[…] I couldn't finish the steak—correction—not a steak, more like a herd. One thing I'll never forget is Rhonda blasting out our collaborations on her car stereo and the pair of us singing along. It was the coolest.

"You Make Me Feel Alive"[172]

> you go out dancing on a friday night
> you drink too much
> but thats alright
> but baby that's alright
> you make me feel good
> you make me feel alive
> you go out dancing on a friday night
> you drink to much
> but that's alright
> your hands in the air
> you drink too much
> you just don't care
> you make me feel good
> you make me feel alive
> you know it's alright
> baby that's alright
> you make me feel good
> you make me feel alive

The original posting of this song on iCompositions is not a collaboration. It features only ZALLAZ, who doesn't sing, but rather speaks the lyrics in time. With RHONIE's voice laid over the top of the original ZALLAZ track, a contrast arises between the two vocal styles. Together with the repetitive lyrics, this contrast in vocals suggests the setting of singing in the car. In the impromptu setting of car singing, lyrics are often simplified or improvised, when not known. Likewise, in this track, RHONIE does not sing every line with ZALLAZ, which makes spoken words or phrases, such as "baby" and "you make me feel good" seem like bare, improvised vocalizations of a participating listener—not unlike a karaoke singer.

> I was wrecked and all the travelling had zapped me. We grabbed a beer at the bar in my hotel and heard some karaoke. Now, I'm not big on karaoke, but compared to some of the dross I had heard in England, this was heaps better, standard. I crashed. Rhonda headed home. I'd meet her in the morning after the most disgusting breakfast I ever had in my life, which was all Aimee Mann's fault. Room 192, Clarion Hotel, San Jose, had one of those built-in wireless setups. The only thing to check emails, etc. It took forever. I did not really want to spend time

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[172] "You Make Me Feel Alive" was originally posted to iCompositions.com by ZALLAZ on 15 February, 2007 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=56379).

hooked up needlessly. I'm walking through the lobby, "Are those Red Vines the candy Aimee Mann sings about?" I think. I buy a pack, a Hershey bar, and a Starbucks Mint Cappuccino (got to eat healthy). Red Vines are not for me, I quickly discover. Oh, well. So a quick walk around the block snapping pictures in my Northhampton town soccer shirt to send to buddies back home, enter a strange street name: Gish. Are there other streets named after Smashing Pumpkins albums in America?[173] So, in the Toyota Corolla, enter Rhonda's location in the GPS. Should take about 15 minutes to find it. Well, I did, but did not realize I had arrived. Next thing, GPS is sending me back to hotel. I pull over, do a u-turn, I arrive again.

Ooops. Rhonda's juggling the day job. "You know, if I had a bit more notice you were coming over," Rhonda says. I'm still jet-lagged. Can you get car-lagged, too? I explain about the trip across town, nearly taking an hour. Am I going to be spending all my time fighting the GPS? Is this a hire company's way to sell more fuel? I used to work in car rental.

When Rhonda produces a one-kilogram container of Red Vines, I decline. Rhonda and her husband's home is spacious and the large windows just increase the sense of space. "A beautiful place, got you. Must remember we live in tiny rabbit hutches in England." I'm introduced to PB, a big, hairy, fluff-ball of a dog who is so relaxed. After working on several collaborations, it's great to see Rhonda's recording setup in person: guitars, leads tangled (isn't everyone's?), microphones, Macs, all sorts of recording paraphernalia. Kind of all seem familiar, slightly chaotic. This is reassuring. I work in creative chaos. I know where things are when I need them, but to anyone else it would seem chaotic. I'm more than happy, surrounded by axes. Every wish you had four arms, like when Peter Parker grew some more back in the 70s Marvel comic?

We spend time talking music, guitars, gigs, guitars, guitars…. Time flies. In the afternoon, I meet Rhonda's husband. He's keen to catch up on baseball on T.V. That I know nothing about. Plus, I really want to try and get something recorded using Rhonda's Rickenbacker. The Ricky plays like a dream. What totally blew my mind though was the Fender Jazz. The action is amazing. Plus, it's full-scale and I'm not keen on full-scale basses. But this is a revelation. I'm against the clock now. Dinner is going to be soon and I want to get something recorded. I tend to work fast when I'm focused. Something gets recorded, which, as I write this, I have not heard since. Hehehe.

A superb meal by my host follows. The conversation is lively. Rhonda's husband is a huge Stones fan. We talk Stones and soccer. David Beckham props. Ha! It's been a great day. I'm zapped again. Time to head back to Clarion. 4 a.m. I'll be wide awake, scribbling lyrics. But have I got the right song in my head?

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[173] *Gish* is the name of the 1991 debut album of American alternative rock band, The Smashing Pumpkins.

4 a.m., day three, wide awake in America: I'm jotting down lyrics. Jet-lag gets your mind out of gear. One minute you're in another time zone, then you're back here. Mid-morning, the plan is to meet Rhonda and then head from San Jose up to Concord to meet Matt Granz (THEGRANZ)[174] and Sarah G (WAKEGIRLSARAH). One thing I do manage to do at the last is add some credit to my phone, which was about to zero out. Rhonda is all suited and booted when I arrive. She has a meeting to attend. The trip across town goes much smoother today. Rhonda cooks an excellent breakfast, but just what are eggs over easy? Then we head out. I'm dropped off in downtown San Jose. Rhonda will find me following her meeting—hopefully.

Now, I mistakenly thought that "downtown" was the same as an English "town center" with stuff to do. I find a street market and can not help smiling when I see a stall selling persimmons. I had eaten my first one the day before in Rhonda's garden. I had never even heard of them prior to that. As I stroll along San Pedro Square Market I chat with Big Dog, a great blues street-performer. I purchase one of his CDs. "I'm going to ask a favor, now," I say, and he gets a ZALLAZ CD. Big Dog kindly gives me another one of his albums. I explain just what I am doing in California, listen to a few more songs, then say our farewells and carry on our exploration.

I'm lost. I stop a sharply-dressed business woman. "What can I go see here? I only have a few hours." She explains I'm going in the wrong direction. I need to head back the other way. As the conversation carries on, she explains to me what there is to check out. Then when I tell her I am a musician, she becomes animated. "I'm semi-retired. I spend six months a year in San Jose and six in France every year. I caught John Meyer in France earlier in the year. I love the blues," she says. We talk about Eric Clapton's recent auto-biography, which luckily I had heard weeks earlier on the BBC. Another ZALLAZ CD finds a new home.[…]

Once back at Rhonda's, it's time to head to Concord. Matt's kindly agreed to let me sleep on his couch that night. The following night, though, I have nowhere booked, but I'll worry about that later. Time to hit the bricks […] I need to be back in San Jose in a couple of days' time so me and Rhonda can do our "unplugged" session.

Travelling north up Interstate 680, I pass names of cities: Pleasanton, Dublin, Walnut Creek…but the name I thought was pretty bizarre: Diablo Hills. I come off 680 on to 242, then pick up 4. By now it's eight lanes of gridlock and the satmap's telling me to take a right…and I'm way over on the far left. I have no choice and I start my progress to get across. It's not my intention to annoy drivers, but it happens. Not long after, I am on Mass Road. According to the GPS, I've arrived. I

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[174] THEGRANZ has since changed his iCompositions user name to POWERMATT.

ask a woman who has just pulled up on her drive. She says she has not heard of the address. Odd. I phone Matt. A fifty-six second call costs $16 (8£). My credit melts.

"I'm standing by a…" I say on the phone, look across, and there's Matt, waving at me. Matt introduces me to his wife and family. Children are playing. Regular family stuff. There's a great informal feeling. Matt's wife is full of flu. I brought along a few bits and pieces for Matt, knowing he's into the Beatles and The Who. Plus I have a CD of really obscure British bands. "I have not heard of any of these," Matt says, reading the sleeve, which is what I'd hoped. I bring along a local newspaper, too. This gained significance the following morning. Matt is so easy to get along with. It's always odd for a moment when a person you've been chatting with on the Internet is there in reality. Perhaps I've been lucky, but everyone I've met always turns out to be better than their Internet personas. The good thing is the shared enthusiasm for music and that's a huge ice-breaker every time. The evening meal is ordered. It's slightly chaotic, but in a good way. Just a lot of stuff going. Oh, and…fact that I just appeared out of the blue, I knew I had to fit into my host's plans.

One thing I notice is that Matt has changed every icon on his dock. Basically I don't recognize anything on his Mac…well, one thing: the oh so familiar sight of Hal 9000's eye from the movie *2001: A Space Odyssey* (my all-time fav film, by the way. I could walk along for weeks on 2001.) Hal turns out to be the Safari icon. After dinner, Sara [WAKEGIRLSARA] and her husband are due to arrive. So, it's more new folk to meet. Sara and hub arrive. I think Sara struggles with my accent slightly, plus I can talk a mile-a-minute, which is silly on my part. More ZALLAZ CDs are distributed. Lively conversation ensues. We cover a myriad of topics. One that sticks in my mind is: how much of yourself do you put into a track/song? It's a good call.

Sara's husband has visited the UK, so he has an idea where I'm from geographically. No one has heard of Northhampton, by the way. Home of Bauhaus and a movie called *Kinky Boots*. Time flies a lot with energetic banter and laughing. Everyone is so easy to get on with. We take some pictures. It's getting late. People are getting tired. It's over way too quickly. And Sara and hub, "I have to leave." They're awesome people. I feel better for having the chance to meet them. Time to collapse. Again, Matt introduces me to the sofa. I'm out like a light. So worn out.

Then it's 5 a.m. I see a pattern here forming to my sleep It's been a long time since I slept on a sofa. The family cat, with these huge eyes, wanders by and looks at me. I fidget. I wake again. I know I won't be able to dose off. So, as to not disturb the sleepers, I try and quietly as possible have a shower. Ever notice when you are trying to be quite, you just seem to make more noise than normally. I feel like a poor man's Inspector Clousseu.

Gradually, folks surface. Matt's wife and Elvis have a school function to attend all morning. This will leave me and Matt with the little Granz. Matt's kindly burned me some CDs of Jellyfish, a band I know nothing about. Then I say to Matt, I notice he has "September Curls" by Big Star. This turns into a 4-CD compilation from Matt's iTunes. Me and Matt sit on his porch with a couple of his guitars. A few of the neighbors glance over—must happen all the while: a Brit turning up on a Saturday morning and start playing, I doubt. We head back to the lounge. Matt shows me "Sister Europe" by the Psychedelic Furs. I instantly recognize. "Matt, this is crazy. An American showing a Brit a track by a band I saw before they even had a deal. The Paddocks, Northhampton. (BTW, I think it was during World War I.)

Matt is an accomplished guitar player. I knew he was good from his iComp postings. In person he is way better. Matt has an idea. He plays me a couple of riffs. We join them up. "We need lyrics," he says, looking through a Northampton newspaper I had brought with me. "This is perfect." Matt finds a letter that had been written in to the rag, and these lyrics are born.

"Right Noises, Same Old Stories"[175]

'ol walter hit the nail on the head in your say today
the balloon festival is falling downward from the skies of grey
everything comes at such a cost
money saved just seems to get lost
the township disappeared a few years ago
wasted on white elephant proposals

This becomes, "Right Noises, Same Old Stories." Matt records several takes on his Zoom recorder. I play the arpeggio intro, then we both take up to playing. Matt sings lead, I croak in the background. Every so often, twice, I think, we have to stop as mini Granz bumps into a guitar, then another interruption, then the recording is going well, then it's "what?" Then we both stop. A police car, sirens blaring, goes by. We were seconds from the end of the track. We get a good take. Phew! It was great, but over way too soon. I always seem to be chasing the clock. I need to be heading thirty miles north to Sonoma in the Napa Valley wine region.

Matt takes some more pictures of me, by the car, by the pool. Typical Brit stuff. I wish I could have stayed much longer. Matt, thank you.

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[175] "Right Noises, Same Old Stories" was posted to iCompositions.com by POWERMATT and ZALLAZ on 23 October, 2007 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=75889).

PowerMatt posted "Right Noises, Same Old Stories" shortly after he recorded it with zallaz at his home. In his description of the song, PowerMatt highlights the spontaneity with which this face-to-face sociomusical encounter happened:

> On a sudden impulse, zallaz decided it was time to meet some of his iComp friends here in sunny Northern California. I received an email from him three days before his visit and agreed to put him up at my home for a night.
>
> It was a great time. We spent hours and hours talking about and playing music as well.
>
> This song was made in the moment, drawing it's inspiration from an article in a Northampton newspaper he brought along. I caught the live performance on my handy dandy zoom recorder and the rest as they say is history.
>
> It was a great time and I'm so very happy to have had the experience of meeting [zallaz] in person. He is a great guy and I am richer for knowing him better.[176]

Further down in the comments to "Right Noises, Same Old Stories" is a post by cobblersmark, a newly registered member of iCompositions. cobblersmark's artist page reveals no other activity other than marking "Right Noises, Same Old Stories" as a favorite and commenting on the song with the following post:

> Hey Granz and zallaz
>
> This is awesome and thanks very much.
>
> I must introduce myself as "Ol Walter" I think. Apparently it was my letter in "Your Say" in *Northampton Chronicle & Echo* that inspired your wonderful little tune. I feel honoured to have made it in the states now haha.
>
> You could release it over here, it would be a great message to Northampton's council, who certainly need inspiring.
>
> The local paper are running a story on the song next week, I would love to send you a copy of the publication if possible.
>
> Thank you very much for making me smile a little more than normal today.

Further down still in the comments to the song, zallaz posts a link to an article that ran in the *Northampton Chronicle & Echo* about "Right Noises, Same Old Stories":

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[176] http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=75889

Letters to the Chron? They're an inspiration!

A letter to the Chronicle & Echo bemoaning council decisions including the charge at the balloon festival has been turned into a song by musicians during a transatlantic songwriting session.

The song – called Right Noises, Same Old Stories – has proven popular since it was posted online.

The lyrics are an interpretation of a letter printed earlier this month. It was made into music by Californian Matt Granz and Northampton musician Kevin Misan, who records under the name Zallaz, during a recent visit by Mr Misan to America.

He said: "Matt took great delight in reading extracts and saying it was so English. I was saying "Of course it is". He was reading bits and pieces on the letters page and he said he had got something he could sing.

"If the Chronicle & Echo hadn't typed something from someone about the balloon festival, we wouldn't have done the song."

Meanwhile, writing partner Matt Granz said that when he found the letter "it all fitted together perfectly."

"I knew as soon as I saw the title that I had found something that would fit. Here in the US you never hear a sentence that begins with "right noises" and I was really wanting an English feeling for the song . . . I was also pleased to find the word "balloon" in the article.

"The article definitely gave me the English prose I was seeking. Thanks to the person who wrote in."

Letter writer Mark Kennedy, who lives in The Mounts, said: "It's absolutely incredible my letter's been made into a song.

"I'd seen a lot change in the town and it influenced the letter. Milton Keynes gets everything and Northampton goes backwards week by week.

"I feel a massive sense of pride to have inspired someone musically talented." (Pott-Negrine 2007)

Figure 74: Photograph included in the Northampton Chronicle & Echo (Left to Right: POWERMATT, ZALLAZ and WAKEGIRLSARAH)

The story surrounding "Right Noises, Same Old Stories" highlights the continual give and take between musical and social action in online and real world circumstances . No doubt ZALLAZ's visit to POWERMATT's home inspired POWERMATT to extend his own experience to the U.K. By brining a copy of the *Northampton Chronicle & Echo*, ZALLAZ provided POWERMATT with the material he needed to create his own sociomusical link to Northampton and the physical presence of ZALLAZ in Concord, California allowed POWERMATT to extend a sense of virtual presence in Northampton as a discussion of his song and his photograph appeared in the local Northampton daily paper.

> So, I am away again. Concord to Sonoma will take me through some truly beautiful countryside. The drag is I really have to concentrate on my driving, but I still manage to have my breath taken away by the landscapes I'm travelling through. Big Dog's CDs provide the perfect soundtrack. West-coast rock fills the Corolla.

> I still have not figured where I'm sleeping tonight. Blaine Transue hosted a show on KSVY 91.3 FM. The show highlighted Internet musicians. On his second show, Blaine played "European Grey" by ZALLAZ. That was a great thrill to know that a track I did was on FM radio in America. I became hooked on "Virtual Garage," heard heaps of great shows.

Blaine Transue hosted the weekly program "Virtual Garage" on the community radio station, KSVY, from 2005–2006. "Virtual Garage" was dedicated specifically to Internet musicians and while it was on the air, Blaine highlighted music by several iCompers and MacJammers (artists active in the MacJams.com cybercommunity).

> Blaine did a mini ZALLAZ special around a track Rhonda and me did: "Questionnaire." He really hyped ZALLAZ on that show. Another thing Blaine did was produce a little movie, David Best, *The Milan Car*, which featured "European Grey" on the soundtrack. We joked how one day I'd get to Sonoma and we'd go for a beer. So, I'm off freeway onto smaller, rural roads, driving past places with

names like Nicholson Vineyard. I've never seen a vineyard before. The neat rows everywhere and the green, lush hills, as autumn colors turn. But here things go green in autumn, because in summer, everywhere is so dry.

I'm running about an hour late. I find Sonoma, then the GPS sends me the scenic route. If you miss a turn it sends you way off course. By now I know this and ignore its directions and follow my gut. At last, I've arrived. Blaine had explained how he tore down a wall and he was in the middle of decorating prior to my arrival. First meeting Blaine it takes me a moment to adjust to his non-radio voice. It's not that different, just faster than the radio delivery. I see the renovations taking place, meet Blaine's wife, who explains their son and his girlfriend and a family friend are coming over later for dinner. I ask Blaine if there's time to see KSVY. We head out. As soon as I see the center of Sonoma, which is so unspoiled and well-kept, I recognize some of it. "Have you been here before?" Blaine asks. "No. It was that movie you shot had glimpses of Sonoma in the background," I reply. We walk around. There's a lot to see, and all immaculate. Civic pride is evident. Tom Waits and Francis Ford Coppola live nearby. We get that beer. Well, Guinness, at last. I see inside a renovated cinema. The owner lets me photograph inside as people are taking their seats for the evening show. Could you imagine that happening in England? No.

Blaine then takes some pictures of me at KSVY. That was a big thrill to see. If it was not for that show, I would not be doing the trip. I explain the fix I'm about tonight to Blaine. I can still find a hotel, if need be. We head to a store. The wine selection is incredible and the prices are crazy. Well, we're close to the source. This would be an alcoholic's dream nightmare place to live. The wine's on me. The least I can do. Time to get back for dinner.

We discuss memorable moments on Virtual Garage. The final moment when Lisa (LEDEBUTANT) burst into tears during the final show. She kind of summed up how a lot of people felt that night. I remember.

KSVY 91.3 FM broadcast the last show of Virtual Garage a little more than a year prior to ZALLAZ's visit to Sonoma. MacJammer, PETER GREENSTONE, travelled out to the KSVY studios in Sonoma from Texas to be a special in-studio guest artist for the final show. Many fellow MacJammers and iCompers called into the show from across the United States and the UK, including ZALLAZ, to say goodbye to Virtual Garage and host, Blaine Transue. At the very end of the 2-hour program, LEDEBUTANT, phoned in to share her sorrow at the end of the show.

Virtual Garage: Final Show

LEDEBUTANT: I'm so sad that the show's ending.

Her voice cracks as she fights back the tears.

KSVY913FM: Now don't do that, LEDEB.

LEDEBUTANT: I can't help it.

KSVY913FM: Don't make me cry on the air…

LEDEBUTANT: Okay, okay.

KSVY913FM: …'cause I still I still have to say goodbye.

LEDEBUTANT: Thank you so much for everything that you've done.

KSVY913FM: You're very welcome and, you know, again, it's just been my pleasure to meet all you guys and have all you guys out there playing this music and giving me the opportunity to put it on the air for you.

After visiting Sonoma, Blaine, and KSVY, ZALLAZ was back on the road, returning to San Jose.

[…] One thing I had to do was change the voice to "British" on the GPS. Strange. Anyways, one snapshop that sticks in my brain is crossing Fillmore in Frisco with "Solitary Girl" playing. Everything seemed perfect for a moment. Then the track changes to "Bottom Drops Out" by me and BOSSHOOK. I totally screw up. Almost cause an accident. I get "flipped" by a bunch of drivers. I switch the stereo off. Concentrate. I can feel sweat on my back. I'm against the clock again. The GPS calculates an hour to hit San Jose. Where's the 101? I seem to be going backwards. "Less haste, more speed," I think. I get out of San Francisco and the car-pool lane is open on a Sunday. Plus, the way you can overtake on either side helps in America on the freeway. The road changes name for some reason. Am I still on the right one? I turn the GPS off. Rhonda told me what mountains to look for if I get lost. I followed her tip. It works. I arrive four minutes ahead of schedule.

Rhonda's been busy. Her lounge has been transformed. Microphone stands, Macs, guitars, video camera, all set up. It looks like "Let It Be" for the 21st century. Are we the new Fleetwood Mac? Anglo-American team up. Not yet. Oh, well. I ramble on about the last couple of days. Anyone would think I've been gone decades.

"Would it ever work if we were in the same room playing?" we must have asked a trillion times online. We could only start with one track: "Questionaire," our first collaboration. I'm nervous, and totally excited. But I must concentrate. After a few false starts we go into "Questionaire." It's like we've been playing forever. It's fantastic to hear that voice just over to my left. Rhonda sits cross-legged in front of the microphone. I'm perched a few feet away on guitar. It's easy. It's relaxed. It's the best. It works, and I'm so glad I made the trip. This moment was what it was all about. Just play the songs together. Sounds pretty simple. Only took a few years to get around to it. Crazy. Easier to work thousands of miles apart than in the same room because of the Internet. That moment from virtual music to real, I'll never forget.

149

After departing northern California for England, ZALLAZ briefly met up with MISSREDD during a layover in Toronto. He has since returned to Canada and currently resides there. ZALLAZ and MISSREDD continue to record songs and also occasionally perform at local bars in Ontario. They produced a music video, which they posted on iCompositions, for their song "No More Blue Skies." "No More Blue Skies" features urban scenes from Toronto in the winter. Throughout the video, MISSREDD and ZALLAZ are seen walking and driving around the city, trudging through snow, bundled in coats and scarves.

Figure 75: MISSREDD in "No More Blue Skies" music video (click to play)[177]

MISSREDD: this little video was RIDICULOUSLY fun to make! ... and having ZALLAZ come to toronto for a visit was a real treat... it gave me the opportunity to rediscover my city (which i can sometimes take for granted)... we got a chance to see a few other ontario sights (like niagara falls, ottawa, and kingston)... and it was super-fun to finally get a chance to hang out (in person) with a cool friend from icomp...

BOB6STRINGER: Gotta tell you how much I like seeing visuals to go with this great collab... here as well as at Laz' YouTube. I dig this song for its non-virtual feel--like the concrete world, like the video. Great street shots.

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[177] "No More Blue Skies" was posted to iCompositions.com by MISSREDD and ZALLAZ on 20 January. 2009 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=104738).

150

As BOB6STRINGER points out, the concrete and asphalt imagery of the "No More Blue Skies" video stands in contrast to the non-physical reality of iCompositions. For most iCompers, the friends they make and relationships they develop through the site remain within the virtual realm of the Internet. Few will ever meet the collaborators and friends with who they spend hours per day or week conversing. For others, such as ZALLAZ, however, iCompositions and the Internet are very much embedded in their offline world and social and musical actions undertaken online inevitably lead to actual offline, face-to-face interactions.

A Second Life for Internet Musicians

I see that there's another world another life that I could live
And now there's a second chance a second choice oh should I relive

I know I can fly I believe I could reach the sky
I think I could make residence or maybe I could be relevant

And I want it too
and I want you to know
I want it too
and I want you to know
I want it too
and I want you to know

Chance I may... another world another life... another time
Reach a goal advanced this time and find some other soul

And I want it too
and I want you to know…

I know I can fly I believe I could reach the sky
I think I could make residence or maybe I could be relevant

Here's a chance that I've bestowed a legend in my mind some day may be told
About a second hand could reach and maybe achieve another dream...

And I want it too
and I want you to know…

– "A Second Life" by TEXASFEEL and SCOTTCARMICHAEL[178]

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[178] "A Second Life" was posted to iCompositions.com by TEXASFEEL on 8 July, 2006
(http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=41220). Used by permission.

Whle ᴢᴀʟʟᴀᴢ moves freely between online and offline sociomusical engagements with other iCompers, it is also common for many iCompers, such as TEXASFEEL, to move between multiple online musical communities, including iCompositions, MacJams, and the three-dimensional, virtual world called Second Life. Although Second Life is not exclusively a musical community (far from it), many musicians are attracted to the virtual world and the possibilities it offers for social and musical interaction. In the description to his song "A Second Life," TEXASFEEL explains:

> I wrote this song about a program called Second Life. Many people spend their time living a second life in this virtual world called Second Life. A lot of our own musicians here on MacJams play live gigs at different venues there.

By investigating the live music scene in Second Life, I take the opportunity afforded by this "Interlude" to look at a very different kind of musical cybercommunity. Unlike iCompositions.com, Second Life is built on synchronous interaction between participants, who engage with the virtual realm through their avatars. As we saw in earlier in this chapter, such real-time interaction is not foreign to many iCompers who, through Internet radio, video broadcasts, and "real life" interaction explore opportunities for real-time sociality with other iCompers. Nonetheless, the de facto mode of social and musical interaction within iCompositions is asynchronous, which differs significantly from the real-time musical performances of Second Life.

Visit Mexico: Simulating Place

"So this is Mexico?" Elijah said to me after I had summoned him to come meet me at a live concert featuring Jano Runo, a musician performing in Mexico City. "Viva Mexico!" responded Eve, a nearby audience member eagerly awaiting the start of the concert. The Visit Mexico concert was delayed by a few technical glitches, so we were able to catch our breath, having just arrived from Dublin moments earlier. As we waited for the technical problems to be solved, Elijah (who goes by the name of Robbie Fry in his "other life") and I toured the ruins that surrounded us. Soon the concert was ready to start and Valiant Strangelove, the concert organizer, made the following announcement:

> The newest Second Life LIVE music sensation ~Jano Runo~ takes the stage tonight at Visit Mexico. His voice is pure magic and his charm legendary. He is fast becoming one of the top live music performers in [Second Life]. So Visit Mexico and join us for a night of great LIVE latin music and salsa! VISIT MEXICO is sponsored by the Mexico Tourism Board.

Of course, we weren't really in Mexico, at least not in so-called "real life." But our avatars, our digital agents in the virtual world of Second Life, were indeed in a virtual place called Visit Mexico, dancing salsa on top of ancient ruins in the Yucatán Peninsula, surrounded by Indian villages, the sites of Chichen Itza, and the music of Jano Runo, which collectively gave us the sensation, at least to some degree, of having traveled there ourselves.

Figure 76: Second Life Chichen Itza in Visit Mexico

Figure 77: Second Life login screen

Introduction to Second Life

Second Life is an Internet-based, user-designed virtual world developed and maintained by Linden Labs, a San Francisco-based computer firm. The Second Life environment is user-designed in that Linden Labs provides a technological infrastructure as a sort of blank canvas upon which "residents"—as Second Life participants are known—may create diverse, computer-generated objects. Linden Labs sells land parcels, known as "sims," to Second Life participants, who then act as developers: landscaping, constructing buildings, and hosting various social events within their sim. Second Life developers have recreated "real world" places, such as the ancient ruins of Chichen Itza and the pubs of Dublin, Ireland, as tourist destinations, which host, among other things, "live" music performances. Although the events within these spaces may fall within the scope of what MacCannell calls "staged authenticity," where the tourists' desire for an authentic experience is satiated by objectively inauthentic presentations, I suggest that the signifying landscapes of Second Life primarily serve as vehicles for creating shared musical performances among Second Life residents. While music may serve to authenticate the sights of this virtual world, it is equally true that these virtual places create contexts for authentic musical experiences within the disembodied realm of computer-mediated sociality.

Second Life participants, or "residents," interact as avatars—digital bodies—which exist within the three-dimensional, computer-generated space. The features of these digital bodies are modifiable by the computer user, who controls everything from hair color, to the prominence of cheekbones and the percentage of body fat. Thus, avatars may take a variety of forms—human-like or otherwise (see Figure 78 below). Avatars are important because they provide the prospective from which the computer user experiences the virtual world and a sense of embodiment in which actions and perceptions are contextualized according to the position and orientation of the avatar in space.

Figure 78: Second Life Avatars: Ictus Belford, left; Geebz Gunawan (Garni on iCompositions) and Second Life wife, center; and an unidentified "furry," right)

Avatars communicate primarily through a text-based chat system, that may either be closed (a direct one-to-one, instant message-like mode of communication) or open, where the avatar "hears"—that is, the computer-user can read—text typed by all residents within the immediate area (see Figure 79 below). The Second Life environment also supports audio and video content that may be streamed into the virtual world "live," that is, in real-time.

Figure 79: Second Life Interface with Chat

While often referred to as a game, residents we have met perceive Second Life as a social space, a world that provides both alternative and extended experiences to their "real life." Such alternative experiences are evident in the ability of avatars to fly, teleport, and in the construction of the avatar itself. Second Life may also be seen as an extension of "real life." Through the avatar a resident extends her or his own personhood into cyberspace, blurring the distinction between one's first and second lives. This connectedness of Second Life activities to "real world" consequences is evident in Second Life campaign headquarters for United States presidential candidates, the Second Life economy (with a gross domestic product of about $600 million), and the sponsorship of Second Life tourist destinations and the live musicians that play there by "real world" tourism boards.

Music in Second Life

Within Second Life is a very active "live" music scene, where musicians and DJs perform in real-time in front of audiences of avatars, such as the concert at Chichen Itza in Visit Mexico. In this section, I explore the experiences of three musicians who perform live concerts within Second Life. In particular, I will focus on the negotiation of virtual and real-life interaction within the musical and social worlds of Ictus Belford and Carrie Laysan (who perform together), Rich Desoto, and Jano Runo. These stories highlight two rules of virtuality suggested by sociologist Steve Woolgar: 1) virtual technologies supplement rather than substitute for real activities; and, 2) the more virtual the more real (Woolgar 2002).

"Live" music in Second Life might be best understood as music which is controlled in real-time by human actors represented by avatars. Live music, thus, includes DJs who play prerecorded music, and live musicians, who perform music in real-time. One such DJ is o0o Oanomochi (aka oOo on iCompositions), who at one point was hired as a DJ on a cruise boat in Second Life and requested permission from other iCompers to play their songs in his rotation as a virtual DJ.[179]

Residents of Second Life distinguish "live" music from other musics, such as ambient music, a constant music stream established by Second Life developers as a soundtrack for their sim. This employment of background music provides soundscapes to the constructed landscapes of Second Life, much the way that "mood music," as Julie Pointer of Universal Studios Florida argues, "helps visitors suspend their disbelief" at theme parks (quoted in Lanza 2004, 223). Disbelief becomes further suspended through the opportunity for residents to interact with the Second Life soundscape, such as avatars' ability to play prims, or virtual musical instruments. While residents make clear distinctions between live and non-live music, both modes of musical production provide the musical tourist with a sense of place, validating both the music and the overall sociocultural experience.

Ictus and Carrie: Avatar Rockstars

I first became acquainted with Ictus and his music when I saw him performing at MJ's Blues and Dance Club. Ictus was accompanied on stage by his acoustic guitar and Carrie Laysan, who appeared to be playing a giant, psychedelic spoon-fork. As if to wipe away any doubt, her label (a sign that floats above an avatar's head in Second Life) read, "Carrie Laysan, Ictus' Spork Goddess." As Ictus sang and played, Carrie typed the lyrics to the song into the chat, as if to sing along with him.

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[179] http://www.icompositions.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=6923

Figure 80: Carrie playing a spork

Figure 81: Ictus and Carrie Performing at MJ's Club

After watching Ictus perform one evening at the popular live music venue, Crystal Sands, I requested an interview, and he agreed to meet with me the following night. As my appointment with Ictus approached, he sent me an instant message with instructions to teleport to his home. Ictus met me on the beach of his small, isolated island where, together with Carrie, he owns an

impressive, contemporary-styled home, all paid for by his earnings as a musician in Second Life. A radio outside the home played a stream of songs from Second Life live musicians, many of them friends of Ictus and Carrie.

The interior walls of their home exhibit photographs of Ictus and Carrie as well as artwork given to them by friends and other Second Life artists. Outside the front door to the house is a life-size (relative to Second Life) cut-out poster of Ictus, which was provided to him when he was included in a Second Life Music Hall of Fame.

Figure 82: The Second Life home of Ictus and Carrie

Figure 83: Interior of Ictus and Carrie's home

Perhaps it is this type of fame and fortune enjoyed by Ictus and Carrie within Second Life that makes virtuality so attractive. Foolish Frost, another Second Life musician, addresses this desire for virtualization in his song, "Avatar," a parody cover song of Nickelback's 2007 hit, "Rockstar":[180]

> I'm through with living real life cause nobody cares,
> And workin my job that's going nowhere
> Ya know Real life ain't quite the way I want it to be
>
> Tell me what you want.
>
> I want a virtual home in my very own sim
> And a harem I can have Cybersex with
> And enough Linden cash for anything I'm gonna need
>
> Yeah? So tell me what you need.
>
> I'll need a SexGen bed with every move
> And enough sexballs to keep my groove
> Gettin every X-cite bit That's ever been made for me
>
> Been there, Done That.
>
> I want a skybox so high I'll live next to god
> And to learn how to build without trying too hard
> So that everybody's gonna have to come to me
>
> So how you gonna do it?
>
> I'm gonna trade real life for virtual fame
> I'll even get prim hair and pick out a name
>
> 'Cause we all just wanna be cool avatars
> With the virtual land driving cybered-up cars
> And the girls come easy and they put out fast
> Course they're all really guys but hey who gonna ask?
>
> And we'll all hang out at the Elbow Room
> Wander every sexsim playing pixel boom-boom
> Every newbie wannabe gonna be there
> Every furry-girl bunny with her bleach blonde hair
>
> And…hey, hey, I wanna be an avatar
> Hey, hey, I wanna be an avatar

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[180] http://rezzable.com/virtual-worlds/music/avatar. Used by permission.

159

The appeal of virtuality expressed in the song "Avatar" fits into the typical discourses of virtual reality as separate and distinct from our "real lives," a space in which fantastical desires may be played out in ways impossible or improbable in the "real world." While there are certainly elements to Second Life that support this perspective of the virtual, I am interested specifically in investigating the blurring of boundaries between the virtual and the real (or actual). In their study of the English picturesque garden as a virtual reality, Stewart and Nicholls explain that they are "much less concerned about whether something is virtual or actual and more interested in the type of virtuality possessed by certain actualities" (Stewart and Nicholls 2002). I follow Stewart and Nicholls in being less concerned with what is virtual and what is actual within so-called "live" music performances offered by avatar musicians in a world of pixels. However, I would like to flip around the latter-part of their statement, that is, I am interested in the actuality of experiences within a virtual environment. In posing this question, I hope to move ethnomusicological inquiry of Internet culture closer towards Woolgar's hope for developing "a much more sophisticated appreciation of the relations between online and offline…" (Woolgar 2002), including the role music plays in our negotiation of social relationships between these two modes of interaction. An ethnographic account of Ictus and Carrie's relationship with Second Life, each other, and their audiences will provide further insight toward this question.

The Virtual Life of Ictus and Carrie

Ictus and Carrie first met in March of 2006 in *The Sims Online*, a massive multiplayer online game built around the popular personal computer game, *The Sims*. After months of daily interaction on *The Sims Online*, Ictus and Carrie got married—well, their *sims* got married—on September 27, 2006. But less than a month later, Carrie, prodded by friends who had begun exploring other social worlds on the Internet, began visiting Second Life, a virtual world with much greater depth for immersive interaction and user creativity than was available in *The Sims Online*. Within a few days, Ictus would log on to *The Sims Online* only to find that his wife was offline, immersed in her second life in another world. "He'd come home and find me in [Second Life] instead of in [The sims Online]," Carrie explained, "so I reckon he finally decided if you can't beat em...LOL."

Soon Carrie and Ictus were re-established in Second Life. At first "I hated it," Ictus told me. Controlling his avatar, his virtual body, was frustrating, as was the increased demand on computing power and Internet bandwidth, causing lag, or temporal delays due to network traffic inherent in such geographically-distributed environments. In his song, "No More Real Life," Ictus recounts the difficulties of virtualization as he was first initiated into Second Life:

> I was sitting at my desktop looking at this cartoon girl
> She was telling me she wants to give this Second Life a whirl
> Wondering what the hell I was doing here
> O, my God, I'm flying somewhere
>
> She lead me to a cuddle park,
> had me changing light to dark

I couldn't believe my eyes, what could I surmise?
All I knew was she was beautiful.

No more real life
I want my Second Life
No more real life
I gotta have my Second Life (yeah)

And then she said I needed hair
Well, I was thinking, "Who cares?"
I hadn't been here just a day or two,
since I got into this room I can't find my way out of here.

I couldn't move too quick, was like a walking stick
She called it lag, I though, "It's more like a drag."
And then she crashed, left me standing there
all alone holding her bag.

No more real life
I want my Second Life
No more real life
I gotta have my Second Life

On my way today, had to go to work
and it was cold and raining
Thought if I could just go back and sit at my computer
and have my lover and all my dreams come true

She said, "No, you're not!
Listen to me, mister.
You gotta do what you,
you gotta do."

No more real life
I want my Second Life
No more real life
I'm living in Second Life.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah…

"I got this job in here with a radio station," Ictus explained, "we both did, so it became interesting." They took jobs with a start-up Internet radio programmer, Crystal Clear Communications, where Carrie worked as Head of Administration and Ictus as Program Director of Crystal Clear Communications' classic rock radio station. Soon however, Ictus would discover the live music scene in Second Life and began playing solo concerts in addition to playing with a group called Virtual Live Band.

Despite his initial frustrations with Second Life, Ictus continues to log in to the virtual world because of the opportunities it affords for social engagement (particularly his relationship with Carrie—despite being married for over two years in virtual worlds, they have never met in "real life") and for musical activity. Carrie drew Ictus into Second Life (and they eventually got remarried in Second Life) and music helps him maintain a social presence within the computer-mediated environment, allowing for further development of his relationship with Carrie and interaction with his audiences and other Second Life musicians.

Figure 84: Photograph of Ictus and Carrie's wedding hanging over the fireplace
in their home

Rich Desoto's "Avatar Girl"

The central role that social interaction, and the sometimes subsequent development of more intimate relationships, plays in the Second Life experience is chronicled (and parodied) in Rich Desoto's popular song, "Avatar Girl":

> I'm in love with an avatar girl
> She looks so good in this virtual world
> I watch her dance, I watch her talk with her friends
> And when she can she cuddles up with me again
> I'm in love with an avatar girl.
> Doo n' doo, doo n' doo doo doo
> I'm in love with an avatar girl
>
> What is this place I have fallen in to?
> So many things here that I can do...
> When I arrived it seemed oh so strange
> But something kept me coming back again

So come to the beach and watch the sunset
Sit here with me and look into my eyes
We'll talk quietly in our private window
'til it's late, we're alone and we don't want to go

I'm in love with an avatar girl…

It's a life that's second to none
And when I'm here I find this special one
She's on the screen but so far away
But in my heart it seems so real I say

Doo n' doo, doo n' doo doo doo
I'm in love with an avatar girl…

Like Ictus, Rich found that music became both a vehicle of expression for Second Life social experiences, as well as a mediator for developing sociality within the virtual space.

Rich: The audience has such a varied response in what they like or what has drawn them to the song ["Avatar Girl"].

[…]and it's been fascinating to me because, you know, for me it was just an observation of what I've seen happening in this online community of people. And[…]they really would start to develop connections.[…]And as I saw this happening, to me it was just the perfect venue for song lyrics.[…]And I thought, "You know, people are actually getting involved in real life-type relationships."

And people would talk about, "Oh, what a wonderful time we had down at the beach last night, and we got to watch that beautiful sunset." And I thought, "Now wait. It's all pixels." But it gave the same emotional responses as if they had stood hand in hand walking along a beach looking at a sunrise together or a sunset.

Rich recognizes that audiences identify with his music because it addresses and revives those emotional responses experienced within social interaction in the Second Life environment. For audience members, the song validates the actuality of the virtual experience.

Building Sociality with a Virtual Audience

Live music events in Second Life are a social space in which interpersonal relationships are actualized and individuals/avatars negotiate the simultaneity of their social identity as both on and offline. The embodied nature of musical experience creates an immediacy for social interaction that transcends typical assumptions about the virtuality of computer-mediated communication. For Second Life audiences music is embedded in "real life" as much as it is a part of the virtual world in which the live music event is taking place. As one audience member said at a recent concert: "Nothing like listening to Ictus and doing the laundry…except not doing the laundry." Second Life residents are not living in a parallel world separate from the "real world" in which we have actual experiences, but rather, as suggested by Woolgar, Second Life is

163

an embedded experience within "real life" activity. Through their musical performances, Second Life musicians help mediate social experience between the actual and virtual worlds by interacting and building relationships with their virtual audiences and taking advantage of the unique characteristics offered by virtuality.

Rich explained some of the diferences between playing for "real life" and Second Life audiences, the types of social interaction that each of these performance spaces offer, and how that affects his relationship with the audience.

Rich: …as you can tell probably from my show this morning I like to really interact [with the audience]. And there's maybe times where I want to just go into a musical vamp so I can do that interaction and respond to the chat or talk about specific event items or…the hostesses or the people in the audience…and there's a lot to be said about how your audiences and the people that interact with you understand you as a performer and you as a person…What I don't get, and I mentioned this earlier, I don't get the facial expressions and the nuances from body language, but I do get the comments and…I think we don't often as musicians get that in real time. By the time the feedback comes it's in the event of, you know, a letter or an email or a lack of sales or…it's always a residual feedback, but this is an immediate…like you said, more intimate.

Rich's statement on immediacy here is not merely an observation of the temporal compression offered through communication technology, but also speaks to a social intimacy that challenges our assumptions of virtuality as a highly-mediated, technical process.

Figure 85: Carrie "singing' with Ictus

Carrie's status as a virtual musician highlights the immediacy made possible within the virtual realm. Although I have included Carrie as a musician in this presentation, she plays a unique role in that she produces no audible music, rather she "sings" in text chat, while strumming her virtual spork that doesn't even have strings. I asked Carrie about how she started performing with Ictus:

Carrie: After Pontiac left Second Life, I was like…ummm…twiddling my thumbs. So, all I did was Ictus's concerts. It started with me typing lyrics. I've always kinda just sung in chat along with him, just not all of the words. [Ictus] had several fans who were Korean…well Korean and [from] other countries…but a couple of the Koreans thanked me [after the show] because they said they could understand better when I typed the lyrics.

Ictus: Italians appreciate her doing it

Carrie: Anybody who doesn't speak English very well

So, I dunno, I just hopped on stage one day and said I was gonna play backup…and sing backup, and then when people started asking me to type the lyrics—more and more people asked me to type lyrics—I did. More and more. And then people started expecting me to get on stage and type. It feels weird to be "singing" from the audience. So, then I asked [a friend] to make my spork pretty since I was using it so much.

The ability to draw the audience in and provide not just entertainment, but rather to mediate social interaction among the audience and between the audience and Ictus is a thrilling and meaningful process for Carrie. Carrie focuses on the audience, pays attention to the chat, and plays off of what the audience members are talking about and their reaction to Ictus' performance. Her role as a virtual musician draws the audience into a more intimate relationship with Ictus. They feel closer to the music, because they realize that they, too, can sing along with the musicians. One of Woolgar's rules of virtuality is "the more virtual the more real" (Woolgar 2002). Carrie's virtual musicking lends immediacy to the actuality of the musical experience:

Carrie: I LOVE the audience participation!

Collyier: Do you [ever] find it intrusive?

Carrie: Nooooo. Noooo, I love it! I love being a part of the show and getting [the audience] in to it."

Ictus: You see in real life, bands stop playing and let the audience sing," Ictus added. "Do you know what a thrill that is for that band?"

Carrie: Sometimes he plays a chord and I type the lyrics to the first line of the song and … BAM, they go nuts!"

A Return to Visit Mexico

Back in Visit Mexico, as I watched a "real world" Mexico tourism video on a virtual plasma screen, I learned that in Mexico souvenirs are not mere objects, but signifiers that validate the authenticity of tourist experiences; souvenirs are, as the video states, "for the soul."
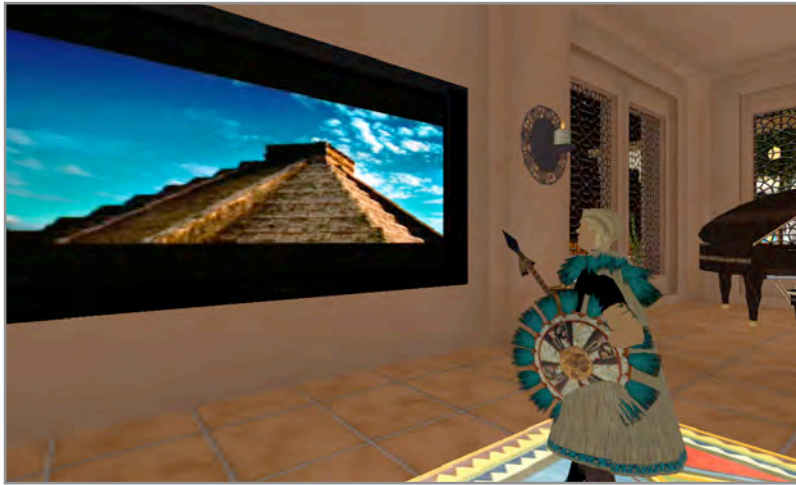
Figure 86: My avatar dressed in Mayan outfit

As I stood there in my ancient Mayan outfit souvenir, I reflected on our experiences at the Jano Runo concert. Like Carrie, Jano focused on audience participation in this virtual music event. During his performance of the song "La Cumbancha," which he described as "a very, very, very old Mexican song…from the 50s," Jano explained that the song teaches about the importance of cuban clave in Mexican music. The song begins with Jano's percussionist tapping out a 3/2 clave pattern and, after a couple of cycles, Jano solicits participation from the avatars. "Do it with us," he instructed the audience. By inviting the audience to perform along with him, Jano further reduced perceived space and time between the audience and himself. Soon, audience members began to join in and my chat window filled up with textual clicks, much to the delight of Jano.

Valiant:	click click
Valiant:	click
Eve:	click
Eve:	click
Eve:	click
Eve:	c;ocl
Eve:	errrr
Valiant:	lol eve

Eve: "D

Eve: click

Eve: click

Eve: click

Eve: click

"I can see that!" he exclaimed. "Very nice. Click-click-click click-click." Later, one audience member typed a series of X's, attempting to provide a graphical representation of his participation in the clave rhythm.

Eve: clikc???

Eve: igualmente!!!

Valiant: lol

Valiant: XX X XX

Valiant: XX X XX

Sheridan: venga Jano!!!!

"Thank you very much to everyone," Jano announced after the song was over. "Somebody was doing a great, great salsa rhythm on the chat," he said, "That's cool. That's another way to make music with us."

Conclusion

The fluid nature of virtual communities is often seen as problematic for critics of the notion of computer-mediated communities. In communities such as iCompositions, membership is unstable and participation is voluntary. As such, musicians may freely move in and out of virtual communities, as well as simultaneously exist in multiple communities. Similarly, the processual community is easily expanded and extended beyond perceived borders as community participants move and interact outside the space generally prescribed to the community. This elasticity to iCompositions is demonstrated by the extension of sociomusical interaction of iCompers beyond the iCompositions website through Internet radio, podcasts, streaming video broadcasts, face-to-face encounters of offline iCompers, and virtual worlds, such as Second Life.

Many spaces beyond iCompositions.com are explored for the possibilities they hold for synchronous communication. Interaction within iCompositions is asynchronous (with the exception of the chat). While this is not necessarily problematic, and meaningful social and musical interaction is possible within asynchronous systems, real-time communication offers another mode for establishing social presence and forming community bonds. Through streaming broadcasts, iCompers develop "live" events, bringing iCompers together at specific times for sociomusical engagement. Offline meet-ups allow for real-time collaborative performances

among iCompers that are not possible via iCompositions.com and largely impractical via computer-mediation, given bandwidth restrictions and subsequent latency problems. While offline engagements, such as those sought out by ᴢᴀʟʟᴀᴢ allow for face-to-face collaborations, they are typically restrictive in terms of gathering a larger number of participants together, either as performers or musicians. Within the virtual world of Second Life, Internet musicians are able to interact with a diverse and geographically-dispersed audience in real-time. The 3-D modelling and real-time performance of Second Life enables the creation of digitally-physical bodies and places, allowing for an expression of the types of musical engagement and audience participation more familiar in the "real world," such as dancing, clapping, and singing along. Regardless of the particular space in which the interaction takes place, however, iCompers and other Internet musicians build meaningful relationships by leveraging available technologies for engaging in collaborative sociomusical behavior.

INTERLUDE

REFLECTING ON COMMUNITY WITHIN iCOMPOSITIONS[181]

On January 12, 2009, BECWIL began a new discussion thread in the Lounge forum. The forum post was a follow-up to a discussion that had emerged earlier on chat in regard to people's feelings about their experiences on iCompositions. Over the next several days about three dozen iCompers responded to BECWIL, sharing their backgrounds in coming to iCompositions and experiences they have had while participating in the community. The resulting discussion reveals the varied personalities and musical approaches held by these iCompers, as well as their commitment to the community and the value of collaboration for the development of the individual participants and strength of the community as a whole:

BECWIL: In chat earlier, several of us were talking about the stages or feelings we all have gone through since discovering iComp. Like, MACOCO said he commented on everyone's songs, then took all his songs down because of a negative comment then uploaded them all again, then made his first collab...like that. (Hopefully he will say more here.)

     How about telling us all about your ride with iComp thus far.

     For me, I was very exhilarated by finding such great music and very intimidated by finding such great talents. I listened a lot, downloaded a few tunes, and left no comments. I was just at this same time beginning to expand my music into the digital world. I finally got up the courage to upload some tunes. Was amazed that folks commented on them, even downloaded some. That was a real boost to my productivity. I saw folks doing collabs and had no idea how that was done. DAVIDBOWLES held my hand through my first collab. Wow! This stuff works! This digital stuff really works! I am forever changed!

SOULIMA: Well, iComp for me, encouraged productivity as a creator. I spent a good year being very productive.

     Ignorant, apathetic or plain rude comments can certainly damage creativity.[…]

EASYESTEEMER: Been here almost 5 years. I stumbled onto this place looking for some help with the first version of GB. I made up some songs mostly just playing around. I quickly found that songs that made fun of the things that bothered me (primarily in my work environment) helped me feel better. Then went on a string of sarcastic tunes. Got a little tired of that and started to interact with the talented people

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[181] http://www.icompositions.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=7064

around here in various forms of collaboration. I don't post as often as I once did but still try to entertain at times.

LUMMIE: I started out playing music in grade school (band, don't ya know). I got into a real garage band in the very early 80's and had a blast making all sorts of great tunes.

I found iComp after getting my first Mac. That was almost 4 years ago (Feb 2005). Don't let the date on my profile fool ya. I've loved this site and been intimidated by the talent on this site for all of those years. At one point, I thought of leaving forever, but was talked out of it. At another point I did leave, but have since returned.[182] The talent is extreme, but so are some of the personalities. Regardless and, in some cases, because of this place is one of the best sites on the 'net when it comes to great music, and, as I have learned over the years, great friends.

SHADOWOFNINE: When I first discovered this mecca I was afraid to upload...Finally did and had no listeners...No comments....I thought then that I would leave and not return.... But I discovered music by other people and was very impressed with much of what I heard....So I stayed to listen....Did a few uploads (still no listeners and only a couple comments)....Continued to listen and to comment on material I liked...Then did my first Chat found people were nice and fun and funny....Did a few more tunes got a few more comments I was in heaven....So it went until today....More comments, more listeners, more friends.

As a musician who does not stay with what I would call normal musical rules, and as a person who does not compose to a specific genre I have been treated far above my expectations it still blows my mind that people listen at all, let alone seem to enjoy what they hear....I have been called everything from Good to Great, From Awful to Talented, From a Fraud to Pedestrian....Through it all I have kept my sense of humor my kindness towards my tormentors has not changed, and my love of music is even deeper than before I came...

JACKFANCY: I've been on this site for just a little of three months now. It already feels like family. I joined because I was looking for this kind of "iCompradery".

I had already discovered a few years back from playing live and in front of friends that my kind of music, my style and/or my words aren't necessarily going to find a large audience, so I didn't join this site looking for that audience nor for the "I love it" comments and I nor do I upload my songs for the same reason but really to catalogue my growth as an "artist"... If along the way I find folks who consider my music interesting (or just plain consider it at all), then it's rewarding but by no means expected.

I love the idea of collaborating! We live in an age of digital mayhem, beat slicing, tune dissecting and genre swapping and nothing tickles me more than being able

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[182] See "iComp Radio" on page 122 for further discussion of the history of LUMMIE on iCompositions.

to be part of that. There are so many great artists on this site and to think that I, living in China, can work with such persons from all around the world just fascinates me.

This site also encourages me to keep on creating and trying out new things and sometimes to raise the bar on my very low expectations.

So, for me...this ride... it's been great and it's exactly what I need.

JAMESJRN: This site has allowed me to interact with many talented and creative people who know so much more than me, and its really helped me grow from not knowing anything and to help me grow creatively and really learn how to express my feelings in music. I've also learned to appreciate a wide variety of genres that perhaps before I did not, and I've learned so many technical things with Garageband and Logic. The criticisms, the comments, the competitiveness in some forms, its really motivated me and inspired me to become better and made me enjoy the creation process that much more thoroughly to face all kinds of musical challenges.

Its a very positive atmosphere and the people are all very nice. Sometimes its hard to get feedback though unfortunately because sometimes we are too nice as a community, or also because we have a tendency to only listen to certain artists' music. As a result, the feedback people get is not evenly distributed (you can get 30 plays on a song you upload whereas another artist that is better connected might get 200 in the same span of time).

I'm not as active of a listener and commenter as I was a couple months back but find I am still making music. Its quality more than quantity that matters most to me as I grow. I've only been involved in the community since last April but I've found it a very positive experience.

YOSL: the ride: where to start

it has been a bumpy ride here with me on IC

got in trouble more than once more than twice

been banned & just about to be kicked out for good

because of profanity so IC rules say

in brief

am not a person who is born yesterday or just live or comes from around the corner

it will take more than humans to make or break me

always been, still & will be a yoh

& for all the stuck up arrogant people or artists i say shove it

for all those who are cool you got my love & respect

171

my language could be hard sometimes

am straight forward & dont kiss azz

All in all am here for my icompals first

IC comes second

GARNI: I have been on iComp now for almost 5 years. I must admit my first few attempts at music, I did not have the knowledge as I do today. I started off with iLife '04 with a DX7, guitar and acoustic drumkit. What was this 'Garageband' thing all about? I did not know or understand it at first. But after playing around with it, I was able to come close to reproducing what I could only do with my former band members of LegRoom.

It opened up many avenues for me to explore with my tastes in electronic music, with synthesizers and effects. Then I found iCompositions.com not long after, this enabled me to share my music online, I enjoyed being listened to, by people all over the world and leaving me their feedback. Feedback, was great to read, it made me strive to better my music abilities even more now.

Life dished out some challenges for me so I took a 2 year break from the site and in early May 2008 I re-discovered iCompositions again and discovered the famous 'chat room' that led me to meet all you folk from various parts of the world.

I was once again able to work on my music and the feedback I got again made me realize I could now take my music to a higher level, I now strove to do the best I could and with the help of many people including people like JOVANA, FATCHANCE, ABSTRACTVISION, REX, BARRETOK, NORTHPOINT, RAMONAJI and RUSTICALIA and many, many more... I was able to learn new ways to make my music sound richer and I feel honored to be associated with the people who I found I could collaborate with.

A highlight I must admit was to win the Olympic song contest, to be voted and to win this was simply amazing, to be in competition with so many amazing songs, written by the best that not only reside here in iComp but the music world i was blown away with winning, you guys have no idea lol

And so this for the first time gave me so much more confidence to strive even higher again. I joined the Virtuals[183] and then I was associated with so many collaborations that at one stage I had 18 songs going on at once lol.

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[183] See "Cyberspace Rock Bands" on page 190 for a discussion of theVirtuals.

Then, I decided I wanted to give back to this community so I started up the Podcasts the OzFile Series, (a podcast that highlights Australia and the aussies that are within iComp)[184]

On closing and rambling on a bit, I will say I have met some amazing people here who I have got close to and so I thank this site for allowing me to have this exposure with them and thank you all for listening to my work.[…]

LAPSKIN: I came i saw i ran wild and iam still running wild. 4 Years this feb ive been here this place i call my musical home. Tried other places no other place has felt right its either full of people who i cant get along with or sites are full of adverts left right and center. I found and stuck with icomps because of the people the music and the interface of the site. I did at one point make music with a mac but thats a whole other story ive been with pc all my life and my music life ive been practically attached to a computer since god knows when. If only this place had been around when i was in oz and i had the ability to to really record the noise i made way way back when dinos walked the earth. Now iam not blowing my own trumpet here but so many people have said this and i for one do not see this as being true MR PROLIFIC!!! nope lap laps lapskin HECK CALL ME MATT!! but i have never seen and probably never will see myself as prolific. Icomps gives me a home a place to show case my musical wares and abusive ear bashing moments. I have grown learnt and above all loved the environment that we have here.

From a nobody to the person you hear here daily if not hourly.

A thousand plus tracks

A Radio show/Podcast

3 Mugshots

A Load of great collabs

a couple of videos

An album on itunes

All of which would not have happend if i had not been here on icomps

I located icomps via the worlds biggest search engine and that ladies and gents is the history of my entry into this place i call home.

Oh i almost forgot ive had the odd scrape with doom on here too caused a couple of ripples here and there but hopefully my naughty ways wont be seen as to outlandish or foolish ok maybe a bit immature but hey iam a big kid at heart.

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[184] The OzFiles podcasts are available at http://www.icompositions.com/music/podcasts/ show.php?sid=11. On March 01, 2009, GARNI announced that he would cease production of the OzFiles due to low listenership.

I LOVES YA ALL AND ITS SO DAM FINE TO BE APART OF THIS COMMUNITY I CALL MY THIRD FAMILY.....

LUPIROZ: At first stage I got very much surprised because of the nice comments immediately received to my very first italian tunes but I couldn't react effectively so on my following posted tunes comments decreased......WTF? I thought...ok I started to make comments seriously and.....yeah..it worked greatly!.....then I entered the chat and all the rest!!

BABOON: "The long and winding road..."

BECWIL: Right, Babs, the road back home...seems to be a central theme in many folk's comments.

So, we're talking about our experiences with iComp and how it has affected each of us and our music.

Another thing I've thought about is how much I love the international-ness of this community. To make friends with folks from all over the world is as exciting as hearing their music and my music being heard by them.

I remember being scared of the chat room at first. LOL

CIHEINS: just to add to the road comments.. "the road less traveled"

Now for the rest.. I've had some good days and some bad days. I've made some really good friends here.

Some have been down right mean and others have been great. To say that any road is smooth would be a lie. It's an adventure everyday. I wouldn't miss a minute!

OMNICELL: I stopped playing everything at age 20.. I lost my sanity, myself, and my identity...

23 years later:

Their I was in my little apartment, going nuts, as I was suffering from agoraphobia again.. and for 6 to 8 months could not leave my bed room... I had to have 4 different therapist, one at a time get me outside.. I think the first walk I took, was about 500 feet.. I still managed to get to the store and eat, but not much else.. Their I was with nothing.. Then I finally snapped.. again, as usual.. and asked God for help to do something.. Anything..

Their had been a Roland Fantom s88 in m y room from my mother from three years before.... I never touched it.. had no interest in it at all.. But God being God.. he made it very clear that if I was going to do anything again.. I needed to start with the closest thing. .and that just happened to be that piano.. So I started again after 23 years... one bent finger at a time.. I could not play at all.. I then began a marvelous experience.. Part of my therapy was to just listen to music in my front room.. So, I got on Sound CLick, and begin to spend all day listening to other peoples music... It was a great time of discovery fro me.. Wonderful time....

Im not sure how I got to icomps.. I was searching for other sites to listen to music .. and this had something to do with the Mac.. And I use only Macs.. So....

I had goal... at that point.. to create my first real song... I did.. Its not posted here.. or anywhere.. I then decided it would be so cool to have my own music page somewhere with my very own compositions on it.. I thought that was rich....

SO I started....

At this point after 2/1/2 years... My composition skills have improved. .Ive learned more about how to share with people.. and what not to say....

Ive learned how to take a chance and collab.. THIS UTERLY SCARED ME TO DEATH.... at first.... I was never going to do it... But I have...

Im practicing writing blogs that I hope can help me and others who are less informed how to be an artist in the 21 century..

I have a community of cyber people that I feel at home with.. Although I really now little about them.... mainly through a few emails and the rest comments on music...

Im practicing...

My goal is to write my pop music and sing .. and start that area.. Its slowly getting their....

So far, a great place to prepare and just practice. Use my imagination and just learn to write and experience music again.. It is a very important part of my rehabilitation...

ARGALES: for me ..... it is just another way of life

PETE: I give it 5 stars!

TRIPLECAMP: for us, i think, icomp is to garageband (& now logic) as the sky is to a plane

8MONTHMALFUNCTION:After 10 years of trying to 'make it' as a recording artist and getting to the end of my tether with it all, iComp helped put the fun back into writing and recording music and has helped bring back the feeling of 'being in a band' again when working on Collabs... It has also helped me widen my musical horizons and skills and inspired me to write music that I never would have considered before...

FILMSCOREMIKE: When I started to realize my interest in music, I was looking for a place to both get my music heard, and also get feedback on it. The reason I was attracted to iComp very early, was because I did not see the point of making music that only I would listen to. In a sense, I am striving to get better because I know there will be an audience here. I find iComp to be an incredible place, because it allows anyone's 'musical voice' to be heard. I am thankful for every play, download, or comment I receive; I can still hardly comprehend that people are listening to my music, and it's incredibly encouraging when they actually like it!

I haven't really engaged too much in this community since I joined. I will never have the time to be completely committed to any online community, but the time I have spent here has been well worth it, and enjoyable. I've gotten great feedback, and listened to some amazing songs that I would have never heard otherwise. I hope to spend more time here; the ride is just beginning for me!

MUNGO: I came here because I already knew the artists known as PARTICLEDOTS and MYSTIFIED and a few others. I enjoy the atmosphere here and the active maintenance of the site by its caretakers.

DAVE: Over the years, it's been a smooth ride ... with the odd bump caused by the occasional idiot, but such is life.

I have been inspired by some of the contributors here, they have influenced and helped improve my songwriting and production.

It's brought my love for music back to life. What better recommendation could I give.

I just wish I had more time to devote to my music[…]

BARRETOK: For me it's been a great ride, and still is. In the beginning I had absolutely no idea of what was going on. For about a year I kept posting instrumentals that were basically my first attempts to learn GB. I had very few comments or plays. Sometimes none, but the ones I got were encouraging enough to keep me going. I had no idea that there was a chat and when I found it I was a little intimidated by it. Everyone seemed to know each other so well. Once I got to know a few people I discovered the world of collaborations thanks to Bass2x. Ever since then I have been posting music consistently, I have made great friends, and I've felt always at home. I'm not going to say that I haven't had a few bad experiences with some people, but those have been minor compared to the amount of people I have had great experiences with.

FARHANBABEH: Many awesome teachers here!!!

and i become a global student...

i have a song for this ..in punk genre (i think) "Friendster Vs Facebook ..iComp Win." And then RAMONAJI add comment "iComp always win !!" i think she's absolutely right..

my first song is "Ghostsong" and i always remember WALEED ...my first teacher who make me keep running ... and i keep running not only coz from comments to my song... but i also learn from comments in other member songs

when i get into discussion about music with my friend at school..sometimes i easily to remember musician like BECWIL, EIDO, BARRETOK, PHARMAKEUS, LAPSKINS, ZALLAZ, DIRIGENT, RAMONAJI, GARNI, FIGURE GROUND, MUSIKA, DEE, FEAHM etc ..more than musician in billboard chart.. i dont no why..(and make my school friends confused)

Thanks People (teacher)... iComp is my favorite school

wuiih i hope you understand my english..peace

(scaretodeathtochatbutiwant)

MACOCO: I hit iComp when I was trying to download free "iComp" loops by the Apple Download page.

"If it comes from Apple, it should be good", I remember I thought.

"Click"

Damn that click!

While downloading some loops, I saw there were songs uploaded in here. Listened a couple, and read great comments. "Nice!" "I love this" "I want more". All nice comments.

"I can do that!", I thought. You know, english is not my main language.

But I had to register.

Easy, free... done.

FORTUNATO was online, with LILICHI, ANTONELLO, RINCA, FROZEN... in a chat.

I read.

A lot.

During some months I just read the chat.

"I want to be part of this", I remember I thought.

I had stopped making music 20 years ago.

Then, I exported a midi file for a song of mine, "Marea," from my old PB g3 Wallstreet using Performer to my brand new iMac 17 (back then).

"They all are using GarageBand, I should give this copy-pasting-loops-thing a try"

And I found that GB had much more better software instruments than the lousy Quicktime extension under System 9.

I revamped "Marea," and uploaded it.

I was scared to death.

1, 2... 3 good comments... I'm in heaven!

4th comment was killer: it said "What if you use a different etc..."

I panicked, took "Marea" down and promised never to return to this place.

But I used that "if" in the mix, and "Marea" sounded way better... so I re-uploaded it.

177

Glad I took that second chance!

They liked it better.

Guys that were making music I loved, they spoke good about that "Marea."

Almost instantly, I started to upload all sort of crap: old recordings, copyrighted albums in which I had played, Bass solos... until I got the picture: "Upload when it's finished, or when it means something for the community, or unless you need help"

Again, took it all down except "Marea."

Then, I started to discover GB (2, at that time).

I missed my synths too much: I was great in Performer using lots of synths trough a Midi Time Piece II.

Slowly, I got along with GB sounds, and learned how to tweak them for my purposes.

When I was insecure, I recorded guitars. Many layers.

So, "Circulos," my second song was born.

At that time I was like a parasite in the chat window asking tech things about GB2, with a very Tarzanish english, and at the same time I was helping lots of newbies with my little skills: I'm a manual and Read-Me reader. That's how I learned my english.

After "Circulos," I remember making a collab with Lili, and my collab-addiction was born.

Now I have more than five times collabs than original music in my page.

Is not that I'm good: it is I'm here.

Today I find it is magic to be in touch with people all around the globe.

That is: magic.

BABOON: I'm proud of my achievements within these walls. I value the personal connections I've made, here. iComp has brought out my best writing and performances and will ALWAYS rank among the most meaningful experiences of my life. Meeting numerous musicians in the U.S. and from around the world has been rewarding and valuable beyond words.

That being said...and while I appreciate the sincerity of this thread...we dwell on the past when we're "idling" in the present. When you ride a roller coaster you don't think about rides you've ridden before, do you? So, instead of waxing rhapsodic about where I've *been* with iComp, I'd rather express where I desire iComp to go...moving forward.

I believe iComp can become a much larger vehicle with greater exposure for unknown musicians than it is now. Anybody have any ideas, time, connections or money to donate and brainstorm toward this end?

In order for iComp to succeed in '09, I believe it has to understand where and why its been successful in the past. This is my "C scale" regarding iComp, explaining where my head is at in '09 and what I believe would be invigorating for the site:

C) Bring back the weekly Saturday Night Release Party, or some variation thereof (competition is healthy and we need *some* reason to congregate regularly). In the past, visible moderator presence was also crucial to engaging members and a giving the site it's electric, living feel.

D) Restart iComp radio and expand it. I miss ILLUMINATOR and iCR. Reach out to other internet radio stations *and* broadcast radio...remember how cool it was to have Blaine Transue spinning icomp tracks on *real* radio?[185]

E) Advertise iCompositions.com more. There's way too much good music on this site for it to remain anonymous and hidden.

F) Generate more external links and hits...spread the seeds on your blogs and websites, link to it and promote it anywhere you belong.

G) Bring in more listeners and artists (again, more advertising)...but I think we should focus on means to open up the doors to non-artist listeners and mp3 downloaders. If there are lots of listeners here, artists will follow.

A) Offer more promotions, contests, games and give-aways to artists. We can certainly come up with one exciting "something" per month. (And, make it so the same person can't win 2 months in a row.)

B) Encourage more podcasts (and videos) and distribute them...youtube, etc...what are we doing to encourage relationships with indie film makers, record labels, game studios and media content sites?

C) Lastly, we should reach out to past members and encourage them to return and contribute songs...maybe a "Where are they now?" spotlight.

Again, I urge these notes because I want iComp to remain vital and innovative, and continue giving thousands of creative-minded people a vibrant place to showcase their wares. I don't want to bask in the glow of previous years...I want to light it up in '09 and generate new thrills.

Who's with me?

RINCA: I have meet some of the best friends here. i find it great that no matter how far away we are from each other or how different our music is we can converse and

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[185] See "Virtual Garage: Final Show" on page 148 for more on Blaine Transue and his Virtual Garage radio program on KSVY 91.3 in Sonoma, California.

love each other. the other morning i woke up on my birthday turned on the computer and there was BARRETOK ready to wish me a happy birthday. FATCHANCE has held my hand when i'm hung over and laughed at my spelling and typing, LETILETI has given me me so much fun and laughter- i never knew there was somebody as wacky as me out there! MACOCO has had me nearly wetting my pants with stories of his plastic plants LOL and then there are the new friends or the people we share and help if we can. i know YOH and BAMPOT i didn't mention you so here it is thanks LWINSTON amazes me and will continue to do so and then there is my beautiful two boys PSYKOSOUL and N2GROVE who give me the soul i need. all in all i have grown to love my family here. i only wish you were all closer. DDBALL your on my list too even though i haven't seen you again LOL. basically i tell everybody i know to get on this site and have a go even if they don't think they can make music. the great thing about this place is people can express themselves honestly. sure we may not like everybody, but i find i like more here than i do on the street. by us being on the internet and using this site we can share and meet people we may not have in any other way. we can collab with the musicians we have always wished for or who gives us exactly what we need in that second of inspiration. i know for my husband and friends you have all been a great inspiration and relief that they have somewhere to send me when i'm driving them mad- to my room. So thank you whoever it was and is that continues to make this place what it is. as BABOON said above 'iComp has brought out my best writing and performances and will ALWAYS rank among the most meaningful experiences of my life" and a big CHERIO to the lovely JACKFANCY pants who makes me giggle in continuation and thank you RAMONJA for asking me for help PS i know i can't spell so if your names wrong get over it you %$^&

NORTHPOINT: So far the ride has been great, and I think our best years are ahead of us.

Love Babs C Scale, and want to sign up for "the next round." Bringing back some of our past strengths is a wonderful idea (and is actually happening, take a close read of this thread and that point will be further illuminated...). Getting more people involved and greater attention: good idea, and suggest we all re-read FATCHANCE's and 8MONTHMALFUNCTION's blogs on promoting your music. The songs that get wide play have much effort put in to getting them heard. When we get attention (like the BBC articles ZALLAZ had, etc) it helps the whole community. So spread the word, and more people will notice. We talk about iCompositions at every gig, and many people have come here to enjoy all the great music.

I think best-ofs like the Criminally Overlooked, the MUGShots, and peoples favorites lists are other great resources to offer nice slices of guidance to navigate all the great music around us here on Tune Village.

Finally, if you get a chance, download a bunch of new icomp songs and walk around the British Museum (or any local museum will do) - you're sure to find many pleasant surprises, which will help you enjoy the ride even more.

Oh - and the more collabs, the better the ride.

DDBALL: Collaboration is the key. I am grateful for not being booted the first time I was denounced as a talentless git by my best friends. I think the casual acquaintances were way too polite to mention. I got my agenda and it isn't political in the traditional sense, but it is very political. After five years I can see daylight. I might be exonerated in the next year (mind you, I'm not accused of anything, I've only been smeared by senior politicians) .. or maybe not. Regardless, I thank you for helping me grow as an artist. I compare Icomps with youtube .. youtube is not edifying .. there is no growth. The comments are unhealthy. The collabs are limited. Cheers, friends

CHAPTER 6

VIRTUAL BANDS, REMIXES, AND CADAVRES: MUSICAL COLLABORATION ON iCOMPOSITIONS

These are communities that are being created by the opportunity this technology makes available and each one taking what the other had done and adding to it, mixing it, and changing it, and engaging in a creative outlet.

-Lawrence Lessig, in the film *Rip!: A Remix Manifesto*

In my opinion, the more people that share their stuff with each other, the better we all are.

-JLGERK[186]

Collaboration is the key.

-DDBALL[187]

Collaborations, the process of two or more iCompers working together on a musical activity, are an essential characteristic of iCompositions and iCompers believe that collaborations demonstrate the uniqueness of the iCompositions community. In fact, it was the exuberance for collaborative musicking, which iCompers demonstrate through both one-to-one and large-scale efforts, that drew my attention toward this particular community as the focus of my research. While music technology—MIDI, sequencers, and DAWs (such as GarageBand)—draw attention for the possibilities they enable for home-studio musicians to work in isolation by recording and producing multiple-part works by themselves, Internet musicians have demonstrated a desire for using these tools in conjunction with social networking technologies to collaborate with other Internet musicians, extending the application of the technology beyond its initial conception by the developers. Increasing interest in amateur musical collaborations on the Internet is

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[186] http://www.icompositions.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=302

[187] http://www.icompositions.com/forums/viewtopic.php?p=67252

demonstrated not only by the growth of iCompositions and similar websites,[188] but also by large-scale projects promoted through sites not exclusively dedicated to music, such as the YouTube Symphony Orchestra[189] and an episode of Chicago Public Radio's *This American Life*.[190] On iCompositions, collaborations largely result from two iCompers working together to record a song. Collaborations, or collabs (as they are generally referred to), may also take a variety of larger-scale forms, including virtual bands, remix and compilation projects, and a variety of musical games. For many iCompers, collabs are not only representative of the culture of iCompositions, but are constitutive of the community itself. The notion of community within iCompositions.com is a social process realized through the musical performances of participant musicians and community takes shape as individuals interact musically, affecting each other's social experiences and musical expressions

Collaborating on iCompositions

Most collaborations on iCompositions result from direct contact between iCompers who have a pre-existing relationship that was formerly developed through conversations on chat, comments on songs, reading and writing blogs, and posting to the forums. The chat is also a space where collaborators form new partnerships and ideas for musical projects are initiated. When collabs arise through informal conversations on chat, initiators tend make more formal proposals of the idea via private message (when the collaboration is kept to a small number of collaborators—generally two or three) or via posts to the Collaborations discussion board (when an open call is desired for soliciting a large number of participants). In addition to iCompers posting a call of participation on the Collaborations discussion board, large-scale, community-oriented collaborations are sometimes initiated by the site administrators. These collaborations often take the form of contests (see "Community Competitions" on page 105). By and large, however, collaborations on iCompositions have resulted from a "grass roots" effort of individual iCompers extending the tools and technology available to them in order to engage in more meaningful sociomusical experiences. As POWERMAC99 explained to me, "Collaborations have grown to be such a defining characteristic of the community, highlighting how it has grown far beyond my initial concept with very little prodding from me."

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[188] See Appendix A, "List of Music Collaboration Websites," on page 204 for a list of online musical communities that promote collaboration among participants.

[189] http://www.youtube.com/user/symphony

[190] http://www.thisamericanlife.org/Radio_Episode.aspx?sched=1203

Approaches to Collaborations

Artists sometimes post incomplete recordings or works-in-progress to the Collaborations forum or the Official Song Plugging Thread in the Lounge forum in order to solicit help from others in expanding their musical ideas. For example, an artist may post an instrumental song or "beat" and use the forum to seek out a singer or rapper to add a vocal part on top of the original song:

EVILFACTMAN: I have some ideas about how some female vocals could be worked into this tune
http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=61706

If anyone is interested send me a message. 😊🎹 [191]

Or an artist may seek to replace a drum loop used in the original recording with a live recording from an iCompositions-based drummer. Threads on the Collaborations forum also list drummers (and other instrumentalists and vocalists) who are interested in collaborating with those in need of their particular skills:

O0O: Hi dear iCompers,

Are you a drummers/percussionists? Please leave your comment here so others who search for drummers/percussionists can easily find you.

Leave some information behind for others to get a good idea of your skills. If you are not good with writing words in a forumthread you can also link us to a song you perform your skill on.[192]

As I mentioned in Chapter 3, participants view iCompositions as a culturally diverse,world-wide community, and occasionally artists seek very specific or unusual skills that they hope might be found among the international membership of the site:

ZALLAZ: Anyone out there in iComp-land able to do Japanese lyrics to track 'Life In Tokyo'

http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=32179[193]

TELECASTER29: i've been listening to nordic folk music and scandinavian jazz recently and would love to collaborate with a hardanger fiddle player on a folk/jazz/electronica fusion project. i play guitar and synths, but i also have bouzoukis and mandolins at my disposal. i'm also able to sample instruments if anyone knows of any royalty-free samples of said fiddle.[194]

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[191] http://www.icompositions.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=4950

[192] http://www.icompositions.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=6246

[193] http://www.icompositions.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=3044

[194] http://www.icompositions.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=7714

Often artists will add "open collab" or "for collab" to the title of a song posted to iCompositions to draw attention to and clarify their interest in working with others to develop a musical idea. Sometimes open collabs are intended to simply pass on a recording for others to develop however they choose, while other times artists have more specific ideas and a desire to work directly with other iCompers in an open collab. When more specific ideas are held by the original poster, details are generally given in the song description:

Bass2x: Open iC Collab Invitation […]

I have a rhythm track I will send you (and lyrics)

Tempo: 88 (4/4)

Chords: D7 G7

You add vocals, percussion, solos, etc whatever u like and return your track to me

I'll slice and dice, mix down and put it all together

Then I'll post the results!

Need:

Lead and harmony vocals

Lead instruments, guitar, sax, bone, piano, vibes, nose flute, whatever

Take as many choruses as u like

Send PM [private message] with email addy where u can receive mp3 and text

Try to have your track to me in a week to ten days.

Have fun with it![195]

Additionally, artists assign usage rights as metadata to each song uploaded to the iCompositions database, which elucidates permissions granted to others who might want to collaborate on the song (see Figure 43 on page 34).

Often artists may not explicitly request collaborators, but rather discreetly suggest that the song might be useful for others in their musical explorations. Artists who may be looking for collabs to join in on or who find a particular song compelling, may simply add their voice, so to speak, to the song, if the license allows it. For example, in posting "Your Soul is Mine [instrumental]," RANDOLF suggested that the song would make a good backing track for a rapper:

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[195] http://www.icompositions.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=7665

RANDOLF: FEAHM sent me the beat and title. I added vocals.

SANTARII added instruments & progression.

I did the final mix.

A nice rap backing/dance tune...[196]

CARLAJPATTERSON listened to "Your Soul is Mine [instrumental]" and decided to add a vocal track to the song:

CARLAJPATTERSON: Okay, this is one of the most fun things I've done all week. Saw this song in recent uploads and as it was by my friend RANDOLF, I went to listen to it. It said it could use vocals or rap so I brought it into GB and just improvised this, in one take […] Hope the three artists who created this will love it, too - though I doubt it's what they had in mind! Or... who knows, maybe it is!? LOL[197]

Initially, when iCompositions first launched, few iCompers collaborated on songs and collaborations were not very well supported by the site design. Over the years, however, as the number and frequency of collaborations have grown, POWERMAC99 has worked to improve the underlying technology in order to better support collaborative works. In addition to design considerations, POWERMAC99 also began encouraging collaborative efforts by incorporating collaboration in site-wide contests.

Collaboration in Competition

As POWERMAC99 has explained, encouraging and enabling collaboration among participants in the iCompositions community has come to be an important aspect in design consideration of the site, most notably with the addition of a major feature in 2005: the ability to list multiple artists as collaborators on a song. In celebration of the third anniversary of iCompositions in January 2007, the site administrators launched the collaboration-oriented "Invisible Dyad" contest:

> The release of [iCompositions, version] 3 in late 2005…introduced a site-supported method of naming collaborators on songs and the response to that change has been phenomenal. There are currently more than 2000 songs posted to iCompositions that credit multiple artists and, considering the great distances that separate many collaborators, that is no small number.[198]

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[196] http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=120247

[197] http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=120251

[198] By April 2008, the 2000 songs POWERMAC99 cited in this January 2007 post had grown to 6200 collaborations. That number has, of course, continued to grow as roughly one out of every ten songs posted to iCompositions is marked as a collaboration between two or more iCompers.

186

With the prevalence of the collaborative spirit in the community, this year's iCompositions Birthday Celebration contest will allow pairs of entrants to submit songs created for this contest. There is no specific theme or genre but entries must be original creations for this contest.

So that covers the "dyad" part, but what about the invisibility? I'm glad you asked! Nearly every aspect of this contest will be handled in secrecy. Once participants have committed to participate, they will be randomly paired with another entrant. They will be provided with each other's contact information (email addresses) and can then discuss and go about composing their song. Submissions will be sent via email and posted to iCompositions for member voting by members of the iCompositions team. They will be uploaded by the user "Invisible Dyad" to maintain the secrecy of the artists' identities. Artists will not be allowed to tell anyone who they are paired with or which song is theirs.[199]

Almost a month after kicking off the contest, POWERMAC99 announced that all songs had been received and voting could begin. Registered members of the site could listen to each entry under "Invisible Dyad" and then click a big "vote" button on their preferred song page. I chatted with ICEPACK and JKANE, the second place winners of the contest, about their experiences working on the "Invisible Dyad" project. What interested me particularly about these two was the multiple layers of collaboration within their compositional process. ICEPACK is actually a duo itself, comprised of two friends, HARRY G and EASYE, who live in the same city and compose together (offline) on a regular basis. So while HARRY G and EASYE collaborated together in person to make up ICEPACK, ICEPACK was then collaborating with JKANE over the Internet:

TSHARVEY: Who came up with the idea for the song?

ICEPACK: I did

             As for content, JKANE, myself, and my friend wrote the lyrics and performed them in our own way

TSHARVEY: Did you and JKANE discuss ideas before you laid down some tracks, or did you just do it and then send it to JKANE?

ICEPACK: i sent JKANE the beat, gave him instructions on where to sing, and sent him a song similar to what I had in mind

TSHARVEY: so was JKANE involved in the compositional process at all, or just the recording of the vocals?

ICEPACK: i told him the layout of the song, intro, hook, 16 bar verse, hook, 16 bar verse, hook, 16 bar verse, hook, outro

             so he came up with the lyrics and vocals for the hook, part of the intro, and half of the last 16 bars

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[199] http://web.archive.org/web/20070107043923/http://www.icompositions.com/site/contests/

TSHARVEY:	IcePack is actually a duo, is that right?
IcePack:	yep. me and my friend
	he came up with lyrics and vocals for the first verse
TSHARVEY:	You're •••• and you also work with...okay.
IcePack:	My rap name is Harry G and his is Easy E
TSHARVEY:	Did you send MP3 files over to JKANE, or did you transfer GB files?
IcePack:	sent mp3s over. we tried GB files but didnt work
TSHARVEY:	too large?
IcePack:	yeah
TSHARVEY:	so JKANE sent you an mp3 of his track back?
	did you then just add that track in and do a final mix in GB?
IcePack:	yeah, i exported it at the end into logic express to increase the quality
	we sent our vocals back and forth to each other for feedback
TSHARVEY:	so you'd make suggestions and he'd incorporate those, rerecord/remix and send it back to you (and vice versa)?
	About how many times do you think you guys went back and forth like that?
IcePack:	like 2 or 3 times
	everything we turned out was dope basically so it didnt need much feedback
TSHARVEY:	How long did you guys work on the song total? How many days/hours?
IcePack:	the quality of my vocals and my friends were weak due to the mic, so that was really our only problem vocal wise
	um... 1 hour for the beat and layout
	1 or 2 hours for the vocals
	im not sure about JKANE
TSHARVEY:	Had you done collabs on iComps before?
IcePack:	yes, but mostly me taking someone else work and adding a twist to it
	not email correspondence
TSHARVEY:	so this was the first time you actually went back and forth?
IcePack:	yeah
TSHARVEY:	Why did you want to join the Invisible Dyad project?
	I mean, you didn't know who you'd get paired up with, right?
IcePack:	it was a contest and i felt that ICEPACK wasn't getting the recognition it deserved

188

TSHARVEY: Do you think you'll do more collabs on iComps?

ICEPACK: i have some in the works now

TSHARVEY: so you enjoyed working with JKANE on this project?

ICEPACK: yes very much

TSHARVEY: what's interesting, I think, is that you are already collaborating with EASYE in person, right?

ICEPACK: yeah

    We are good friends

TSHARVEY: I mean, a lot of guys on icomps work solo at home and collaborating on icomps is a chance to work with another person. but you guys are doing both: collaborating in person and collaborating online.

ICEPACK: yeah, i put some solo stuff on icomp too tho

    like right now i just have beats i have made

TSHARVEY: so whats different about collaborating online (like with JKANE) and when you work with EASYE?

ICEPACK: haha online it is slower

TSHARVEY: so icomps gives you a chance to collab with guys other than EASYE?

ICEPACK: when me and EASY are together it's easier

    i can just tell him my ideas

    its a better process, but working online is good for working with people you wouldn't work with otherwise

    the contest was great, and i was lucky to be paired with a vocalist

TSHARVEY: yeah JKANE is good.

    your track (I'm listening now) is great.

ICEPACK: yeah man, i surprised it got 2nd

    cuz our track is so different from the others

    no rapping on their tracks, all guitars

TSHARVEY: You say that collaborating live is better, but you wouldn't know from listening that you guys weren't in the studio together. It sounds tight.

ICEPACK: yeah, some good layering

TSHARVEY: was that hard to achieve, you think?

ICEPACK: well the 3rd verse which sounds very fluid with me and him

i had to specifically tell him about maybe lacing the beat (intro and outro) with some background vocals

in the song i sent him for my idea the artist did that behind the rapping

TSHARVEY: so you sent him some other song as an example to get that point across?

ICEPACK: yeah

for the vibe i wanted in general and the layout

it was great cuz he did what i asked of him but he did it his way in his style

TSHARVEY: so you felt (and he felt) that even though you were kinda driving the process, he could bring his own thing to the project.

ICEPACK: right, he really wanted to do something different for the song

the experience has opened him up to hiphop

JKANE agreed. When I asked him about his experience in collaborating with ICEPACK he said, "The experience had opened my mind to creating songs in this genre, but the competition was the best part as some of the collabs were truly wonderful."

JKANE's emphasis on the results from the collaborations underscores the value collaborations hold in the sociomusical world of iCompositions. The Invisible Dyad contest, in particular, highlights the interest iCompers have in expanding their musical experiences and meeting new collaborators with which to work. ICEPACK's comments clarify, however, that iCompers are not necessarily motivated by some conscious effort to strengthen the community through collaborative projects, but may be working from a more self-interested standpoint. ICEPACK entered the Invisible Dyad contest in order to gain greater notoriety within the community. This exposure has lead to increased collaborations, however, which in turn serves to strengthen the sense of community on iCompositions.

Cyberspace Rock Bands

As various artists rerecord, overdub, or remix each others' songs, they sometimes develop relationships which lead to repeated collaborations, long-term projects, or "virtual bands." Several virtual bands have formed on iCompositions, including FRACTALGARDEN, ONEVOX, and THEVIRTUALS.

Figure 87: Banner image for THEVIRTUALS

THEVIRTUALS currently consists of eight different iCompers from six different countries: TONI1 (England), lead and backing vocals; O0O (The Netherlands), lead and backing vocals; DLB (England), lead guitar; LUPIROZ (Italy), electric and acoustic guitars; MACOCO (Argentina), bass and electric guitar; MERLIN (Italy), keyboards; GARNI (Australia), drums and percussion; and ASHLEYBEANHEAD (USA), production engineer and special effects. Past members and special guests have included DYLAN (France), harmonica; ILLUMINATOR (USA), vocals; THAT80SBOY (USA), keyboards; and JAMES.MOORE (England), drums.

Figure 88: The eight members of THEVIRTUALS, an iCompositions-based rock band

Like other collaborative efforts on iCompositions, the process undertaken by THEVIRTUALS demonstrates a balance between individual control and expression and collaborative authorship. LUPIROZ explains the compositional process for THEVIRTUALS as follows:

LUPIROZ: THEVIRTUALS' tunes are normally realized starting from an original idea coming from one of its components; a rough, not structured, musical concept, like a

191

chords sequence above a percussion path, with or without melody and/or lyrics…If ALL members are cool with it, the TL prepares a structured version of that idea (getting an harmonic plus rhythmic structure under the form of a song, that's to say: intro-verse-chorus-solo-verse-chorus-outro)…From now on the real collaborative phase takes place: it starts a long collective emails exchange in which, step by step, all the members furnish their musical contribution to the song and evaluate the working progress…This collaborative phase proceeds slowly and can take many weeks, lots of emails are exchanged, individuals parts are modified and substituted.......till EVERYONE IS HAPPY…however…musical roles are very strictly defined: each member has total ownership of his/her own instrument/ voice. All members can express suggestions/comments on others' executions [or] propose new arrangement ideas, but they CAN'T put their hands on others instrumental competencies/executions.

The sociomusical results of this collaborative process by THEVIRTUALS have been praised by community members for transcending geospatial distance and demonstrating being-togetherness in a cyber-place. Such a reaction is expressed through the following comment HERRSOLERA posted in response to THEVIRTUALS' song, "Shoulder":

HERRSOLERA: Bravo! Even after two years of being on this site, it is incredible to think that at no point in this song's creation were all of you (or any of you?) in the same room at [the] same time. It sounds so cohesive, as if you all brainstormed and troubleshot melodies with each other for hours.[200]

For MACOCO, the band's Argentina-based bassist, working with THEVIRTUALS provided an opportunity to re-experience the interpersonal sociality of communal musicking, despite his physical separation from other band members by thousands of miles:

MACOCO: I can finally say, after 20 years... I'm in a band again! It is such a privilege to play music with those guys and this lady... and mostly... I had a great time! Thank you Dave for the original idea, and congrats to the Virtuals.[201]

Collaborative Musical Games

Another general type of musical collaboration on iCompositions might be referred to as a musical game. Unlike the contests, these collaborative musical games are non-competitive in nature and oriented more toward challenging one's own abilities in responding to others' musical expressions and thus expanding one's own musical palate. Musical games are generally announced as large, open collaborations and often the rules are discussed by potential participants in the forums before the process commences.

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[200] http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=86499

[201] http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=86499

192

The Cadavre Exquis

"27 artists... two songs... one amazing mess." That was how LILICHI summed up the largest collaboration effort up until that time on iCompositions. What has since become known among participants at iCompositions as a cadavre, a "cadavre exquis collaboration" (also known as a "Dead Guy Song"), was to become a hallmark of the community spirit of iCompositions.

LILICHI: It started Feb 22nd with Kat's idea on the chat: what about a 'musical' Cadavre Exquis? and pretty much we all jumped into it (http://www.icompositions.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=3041). By Feb 28th [2006] we had 25 artists on the list and a bunch of weird rules (2 other artists were added shortly after). We had to divide the whole thing into two ~ 5 min songs, to be able to have something 'listenable' and also to finish it in a decent amount of time...

     I thought it was going to take more than a month and I thought I was going to have to push people to finish their pieces, but, 22 days after and with only one player that couldn't play for traveling reasons, but that was instantly covered by a new player, we have two absolutely CRAZY and wonderful Cadavre songs...[202]

The idea for a musical cadavre exquis was based on the famed parlor game developed by a group of surrealists in Paris in the mid-1920s. To play the game, each participant takes turns by writing a phrase or drawing a picture on a piece of paper and then folding it before passing it to the next participant, partly concealing the previous contributions. The end poetic or pictorial product is a type of collective, accidental collage. As a game, it served as a vehicle for self-amusement among artists wishing to explore unexpected forms; as an art, it represented both the collectivist and non-conformist ideals of the surrealist community.

Following Kat's suggestion, LILICHI posted a suggested adaptation of the cadavre exquis to the Collaboration forum. The process would be as follows: artist "A" composes a 20 second piece of music and emails the composition to LILICHI (the moderator). The moderator forwards the 20 seconds from artist "A" to artist "B," who then has two days to compose her 20 seconds to follow the 20 seconds from artist "A." The moderator then sends the 20 seconds from artist "B" to artist "C" and so on, so that each artist only hears the 20 seconds immediately preceding her own composition. "After [all is] done," LILICHI explained to the participants, "I'll post the song 'as is' just pasting the parts together, no mixing." The result is a hodgepodge of styles juxtaposed in a continuously shifting song. While some artists worked to integrate the previous part into their new part, others chose to expand on an idea expressed in the previous composition, while still others shift suddenly into a new stylistic realm.

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[202] http://www.icompositions.com/artists/lilichi/entries.php?pid=573

The response to the cadavre collabs was overwhelmingly positive—"a true Classic if I ever heard one!" according to POWERMATT[203]—and many cadavres have followed in the years since the idea was first introduced into iCompositions: a halloween cadavre, Christmas cadavre, New Year's cadavre, electronica cadavres, orchestral cadavres, etc. The cadavre experiment also helped launch a tradition of other musical games and large-scale projects.

Chinese Whispers: The Cover Cadavre

Just a few months after the first cadavre had been completed, PONKEY proposed a new type of cadavre—a cadavre of cover songs:

PONKEY: What would happen if I wrote a song, and LILICHI did a cover version of it? Well, it would sound a bit different. But what would happen if ETGILLES did a cover version of that, without ever hearing the original version? And if someone did a cover of that? And of that? Well, folks, we would have a game of Chinese Whispers (you know, the one where you all stand in a line and whisper something into your neighbour's ear, and at the end of the line you come out with a completely different phrase than went in at the start...).[204]

PONKEY: Chinese Whispers…stems from a period a few years back where a number of iComp users started doing covers of one another's songs. The best known example on the site would be DIVERSION's song, "Afraid of Girls,"[205] which eventually extended to 14 versions.

Meanwhile, I remembered overhearing someone say they wanted to do a cover of "All Along the Watchtower" by Jimi Hendrix. When I told them it was a Bob Dylan song, they didn't believe me. (I actually hadn't heard the original - I knew it from U2's version on the "Rattle & Hum" album). This had made me think that it would be an interesting experiment to do a cover of a cover of a cover, and see how far it would change, mutate and distort.

Combining these two ideas led to the first Chinese Whispers project, "I'm Free." The process of how we organised that is pretty much fully documented in the discussion forums. Bulgarian Mumblings and the third Chinese Whispers were just repetitions of the same process, although with slightly different variables.

What does Chinese Whispers mean to me? I'm really proud of the idea, and of the end product. The first one, in particular, gave an interesting result that really hit on what I was hoping for. The way someone would introduce a guitar theme to spice

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[203] http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=37420

[204] http://www.icompositions.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=3805

[205] http://www.icompositions.com/music/search.php?q=afraid%20of%20girls

up their arrangement a little, and the next artist would hear this guitar part as being a central riff that the song was built around. ([Bulgarian Mumblings] and [Chinese Whispers 3] had more intentionally introduced non-random randomness, which I think made them more interesting to some participants, and less interesting to others - me for one - although I haven't said that directly to anyone involved.)

The "99 Bottles" Collab

In the late Fall of 2007, ᴢᴀʟʟᴀᴢ opened a new thread in the Lounge forum on iCompositions.com with a message titled "iComp Highlights 2007?" In his forum post, ᴢᴀʟʟᴀᴢ solicited input to the broad question of "what have been the memorable moments on iCompositions for the community?"[206] Responses covered a broad range of community activities and new features of the website, including the Invisible Dyad Contest and the "99 Bottles" collaboration.[207] A collaborative rendition of the classic song-to-pass-time, "99 Bottles of Beer on the Wall," the "99 Bottles" collab was a significant undertaking that combined the efforts of over 85 iCompers. The final work consisted of 100 independently composed and recorded verses that were mastered by stringing each recorded verse into a single, 55-minute-long song, much in the same way the cadavre exquis projects were done.

In the summer of 2007, ᴍᴡꜰᴍɪʟᴇꜱ posted a suggestion on the Collaborations forum to undertake an iCompositions-style rendition of "99 Bottles of Beer." Like the cadavre collabs, "99 Bottles" would highlight each individual artist's stylistic approach, while creating a singular work. Each artist would choose a verse (with 85 collaborators in the final project, some artists produced more than one verse) and compose their own rendition of the verse. Although some parameters for the contributions were discussed throughout the collaborative process (e.g. staying within the key of G-major or E-minor, with a tempo of 120 bpm,[208] and including at least a reference to the number of bottles left in the particular verse) the actual submissions varied widely. I, for one, did not notice a discussion of parameters for entries until after I had uploaded my contribution, which followed neither the suggestions for key (I used C-major), tempo (I was closer to 64 bpm), nor the inclusion of lyrics—consequently my verse has no identifying marker as "Bottle #35." In the final mix, none of these discrepancies seem to matter, despite my concern that my contribution might sound "out of place." I was certainly not the only deviant collaborator. In fact, as with the cadavre collabs, listeners and participants celebrated the stylistic

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[206] http://www.icompositions.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=5633

[207] http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=74911

[208] "bpm" = beats per minute. A tempo of 99 bpm was also suggested and it appears that collaborators never came to a consensus on the tempo.

discrepancies between individual artists' compositions. "[F]antastic idea and fantastic result!" wrote LAHABANAROOM. "It's a mix of so many influences living together in a same piece of music."[209]

Conclusion

For iCompers, "99 Bottles," as well as other collaborative projects, demonstrates the role technology can play in bringing together diverse people to a particular cyber-place, resulting in community-formation. MWFMILES assessed the "99 Bottles" project as a "collaboration [that] helped pave the way for more artists to work together, through the power of the Internet."[210] ROBOSCOTT also emphasized the coming-together of geographically-dispersed participants, calling the "99 Bottles" collab "just amazing with so many people joining hands across the world—a stunning achievement."[211] For many, the "99 Bottles" collab typified the unique qualities of the iCompositions community:

AARONT: I can only say whoa…what a huge effort. These are the kinds of accomplishments that make this community unique. Great music, great musicians, great fun for my ears!"[212]

Because the community is constituted by musical collaboration, iCompers are drawn into the community by their participation in collaborative musicking. It is within this sociomusical process, and the simultaneous experience of being-together, that meaning is constructed for community members. For MESIAHTHEGREAT, the excitement of collaboration experienced within these moments constitute the iCompositions community:

MESIAHTHEGREAT: YES!!!!! THIS IS AMAZING.

I'm not sure I would have been given an opportunity to take part is such a big thing in any other online community...

Happy to make history with my friends

Great job to ALL. Lets get the word out now, inspire more artists to join the community... Yes Yes![213]

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[209] http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=74911

[210] "99 Bottles of Beer," Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ 99_Bottles_of_Beer#References_in_popular_culture (accessed August 10, 2008)

[211] http://www.icompositions.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=5633

[212] http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=74911

[213] http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=74911

Like the "99 Bottles" collab, the reaction to the first iCompositions cadavres, particularly relating to the juxtaposition of individual styles, was overwhelmingly positive. As WOODGUY32 wrote, "UNBELIEVABLE…never wood [sic] I know it [would] sound THIS GREAT…awesome job EVERYBODY. The one thing it does prove…We all have different styles and sounds…(Which IS AWESOME)…" Indeed, gaining exposure to new musical expressions through the celebration of difference is tantamount to the iCompositions experience. By working with others, members of the iCompositions community expand their own musical experiences, as HARRY G and JKANE expressed after collaborating on the "Invisible Dyad" contest.

Between Christopher Small's notion of musicking (music as process) and Davis Studdert's concept of action-centered community (community as process), we see how the virtualization of music through collaborations are vital to the health of the iCompositions community. Musical collaboration—the act of communal musicking with other iCompers—is not merely an expression of community nor an exploration of diverse musical styles, but it is the very process within which community exists. As suggested by the concept of a social network (or the image of a web), a community is strengthened and maintains its cohesiveness by creating more connections between its members. Musical cadavres, virtual bands, and other collaborative efforts serve as a means of building these connections between iCompers—they extend sociality and musicality by connecting iCompers together through a series of collaborative projects.

Within the context of iCompositions, Internet musicians are not isolated, one-man bands creating sonic products devoid of the social aspects of musical experience. Rather, the virtual musicking in which they engage is at its core a social activity. Through a mode of decentralized, participatory, and inclusive musical activity, iCompers view themselves as working as a collective to revolutionize the popular music experience.

BOB6STRINGER: This is the kind of international music conspiracy the Web, and of course this community, was made to launch.…The music world will never be the same. I'm grateful to be hangin with such conceptually intelligent and talented freaks as you…and you…and you…[214]

This collective spirit, which is shifting the dynamics of the popular music landscape, provides evidence for Duckworth's claim that it may be necessary to redefine music. As Duckworth puts it, "with this degree of decentralized authority, not only is there a redefinition of musical object and musical space but also a restructuring of the traditional composer, performer, and listener roles" (Duckworth and Farrell 2005). Through their collaborative efforts, iCompers see themselves as breathing new life into an otherwise stale popular music culture, "resurrecting the dead guy" in a cadavre exquis.

YOHMAR: the best part of it we all brought the dead guy back to be alive…very alive n kicking.

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[214] http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=34127

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Historically, recording technology—a form of broadcast communication, which renegotiates spacial and temporal relationships—forced a separation of subject-to-subject (synchronous) musical interaction into a subject-object (asynchronous) relationship (Willson 2006). This detachment between participatory agents engaged in a musical performance has drawn criticism of music technology from musicians, aestheticians, and social theorists. From John Philip Sousa's rejection of "canned music" as a packaged product extracted from the social world and artificially preserved for an extended shelf-life to Theodor Adorno's reminder that listeners have become the object of the marketing efforts of the culture industry (2000) to Jacques Attali's assertion that music, "fetishized as a commodity," will lose all meaning (1985, 4–5), the argument has been that music technology threatens the social health of musical life. There is some truth in this. Not only is the listener objectified through technologically-mediated communication, but he also acts as the consumer of a music-object, an aural phenomenon objectified by the wax cylinder, vinyl record, compact disc or digital file embedded with restrictive digital rights management (DRM) code. This case study of Internet musicians, however, demonstrates the emancipatory potential of music technology when paired with the multidirectional technology of the Internet. iCompers have reclaimed music as a form of interactive communication, subsequently reclaiming their own subjective position within musical society. iCompositions, and related online musical communities, demonstrate that recreational music-making, which a concerned Sousa once declared endangered (Wald 2009), is—to borrow a phrase from YOHMAR—"very alive n kicking" (see page 197).

Like the violins, trumpets, and autoharps commonly purchased from Sears-Roebuck by amateur musicians a century ago, GarageBand and other inexpensive DAWs are vital tools for developing and maintaining a culture of active musical participation in the twenty-first century. These instruments provide musical novices the tools necessary for musical engagement, such as pre-recorded loops and automatic transposition and tempo-matching, just as the autoharp sounded chords with the press of a button and a simple strum or the player-piano provided helpful accompaniment for parlor choirs. At the same time, these digital instruments are extensible and advanced musicians operate and manipulate them with great skill, attaining complex and fascinating results.

Studies of amateur musicians in both Western and non-Western contexts frequently emphasize the community aspect of the musical activity. In fact, the very notion of amateur music typically conjures assumptions of local musical culture: music that happens within the home, at the nearby high school, and in the public spaces of one's hometown. But the vibrancy of cybercommunities, such as iCompositions, require a rethinking of our understanding of what is local, immediate, and intimate. Just like Ruth Finnegan's "hidden musicians," iCompositions

demonstrates "grass-roots music-making as it is practiced by amateur musicians in a local context" (1989, 3). Localness, for iCompers, is not bounded nor static, but rather a fluid concept determined by valid musical experiences shared among friends and family in any publicly-accessible place, whether geographic or virtual. Musicking extends social presence into cyberspace allowing for meaningful interactions that express both self and communal being-ness among musicians who are geographically dispersed. For this group of Internet musicians, iCompositions provides a space for the creation of a local (i.e. interactive) context for amateur musicking. Additionally, the actual acts of performing and listening to music happens locally, within the home-studio of each individual iComper. These musical experiences are further localized as artists share their iCompositions-related creations and discoveries with friends and family within offline spaces.

iCompositions is not a website frequented by listeners seeking for static musical products (although that certainly happens), but rather it is composed of artists and collaborators who engage in a musically communicative process. The digital technology and social networking tools employed by iCompers has virtualized the recorded commodity, liberating recordings from their position as a static object toward something processual—a socializing framework for intersubjective collaboration. In this way, the iCompositional way of musicking stands apart from normative behavior within popular music culture. This position taken up by iCompers is understood as forward-looking—an effort to save music for "the future for all mankind," as EVILFACTMAN suggests in *The Infinite Campus* (see "Overture" on page xx). For iCompers, the continued existence of music as a significant social force lies not in the instruments or tools used, or any particular musical style or specific skills held by musicians, but rather in the creative activities of amateur musicians, working in collaborative fashion in an exchange of real-world experiences and an expression of ideological convictions.

Suggestions for Further Research

In this study I have focused primarily on one single musical cybercommunity: iCompositions.com. As I have mentioned, however, iCompositions is just one of many similar communities and many Internet musicians interact in more than one such community.[215] As with any technologically-dependent activity, particularly digital technology, musical cybercommunities are in constant motion, changing rapidly as their active membership shifts and they adopt and adapt new technologies into their social practices. Further research could certainly focus on other communities or provide a comparative study of multiple communities.

As I discussed in Chapter 2, GarageBand had a significant impact on democratizing digital audio recording technology for recreational, home-studio musicians and iCompositions served as an important gathering place for those musicians to share their music. But within a few years after the release of GarageBand and the launch of iCompositions, during the boom of Web 2.0

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[215] See Appendix A, "List of Music Collaboration Websites," on 204.

social networking and user-generated content sites, many more websites were launched for the explicit purpose of musical collaboration. Some of these sites, such as Kompoz.com and Koblo.com were designed from the beginning with collaboration in mind, and provide specific tools that allow for different musical processes than those discussed in this dissertation. Additionally, sites like Indaba.com integrate digital audio recording into the website technology, allowing anyone with a web browser to record directly to the website's servers, further democratizing musical production. When working within Indaba.com, for example, musicians do not need GarageBand nor any other recording technology, because the technology is provided by the website and available to anyone with an Internet browser (provided they have a fast enough Internet connection). Just as GarageBand opened up digital music-making for a whole new segment of "non-musicians" by being bundled for free with every Macintosh computer, Indaba (and others) are increasing that accessibility by migrating the software to Web servers, potentially making the technology even more affordable.

With these continual changes in the simplification, accessibility, and affordability of new technology, I expect that this research can be expanded to include a growing group of "new musicians"—people with little to no musical training, who embark upon the creative process of musical composition and recording through the application of Internet-based digital tools—and continued growth in collaborative activities in online spaces. The reaction of the commercial music industry to increased activity by amateur Internet musicians will be a significant factor in this development. While large record companies have mostly taken a protective stance toward their valuable assets by aggressively protecting copyrighted material (both preemptively and through litigation), many artists and independent labels are experimenting with new models for the format and delivery of music. In 2006, Beck expressed his interest in enabling Internet musicians:

> Even though the mash-up sensibility has become something of a cliché, I'd love to put out an album that you could edit and mix and layer directly in iTunes.… In an ideal world, I'd find a way to let people truly interact with the records I put out – not just remix the songs, but maybe play them like a videogame. (Steuer 2006, 232)

Beck is only one of many recording artists who have explored the idea of extending sociability and musical process through cyber-technology. Nine Inch Nails, Barenaked Ladies, and Radiohead, have all leveraged the Internet in support of musical cybercommunities, offering their works up for a more open collaborative process with cyber-musicians. Singles from *Barenaked Ladies Are Me*, which was released in 2006, were available for purchase online as a folder containing an MP3 file for each discrete track that was used for the final stereo mix, giving separate control over Ed's vocals from Steve's vocals, and Steve's guitar from Ed's Guitar, and bass from drums.[216]

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[216] Discrete tracks delivered in this fashion are now commonly referred to as "stems," a term that came into use when Radiohead adopted a similar delivery mechanism for their album, *Nude*, via iTunes Music Store in early 2008.

Nine Inch Nails expended even more effort in enabling the remix artist with their single, "The Hand That Feeds" in 2005. Trent Reznor, of Nine Inch Nails, posted the song on their website in GarageBand file format as a free download, making the discrete tracks more portable and extendable, thus in some ways more controllable by novice remixers. Nine Inch Nails created, and still maintains, a dedicated webspace for exchanging remixes between Internet musicians working with Nine Inch Nails songs.[217] More recently more mainstream artists, such as Madonna, have delivered songs through Indaba, an music website that promotes remix contests among Internet musicians. This trend by commercial artists and record labels to leverage the Internet and digital tools in order to engage consumers as musical participants, collaborators, and co-producers certainly deserves further investigation.

Just as the Internet has mobilized home-studio musicians, allowing them to transcend the isolation of their basement rooms by interacting with other musicians on the Internet, recent technological developments in mobile computing are changing the contexts in which Internet musicians can create and share musical experiences with each other. The most notable device affecting this change is the iPhone.

> 1, 2, 3, 4…
> Music can be found most anywhere
> Look into your soul and you will find it hidden there
> It lights a passion in my heart
> Just let it out and give the melody a chance
> And now its ringing in my ears
> You got the rhythm, now the music's living here…
>
> Now I have hung up my guitar
> I start my iPhone as my voice begins to chant
> And now I'll sing this song aloud
> Just sing along, the music's speaking for itself…
>
> – "iPhone A Cappella" by 8MONTHMALFUNCTION[218]

One day, while bored at the office, 8MONTHMALFACTION recorded "iPhone A Cappella" by overdubbing four separate vocal parts using a 4-track recording application on his iPhone. The bare-bones technology of recording applications on the iPhone lacks tools such as a click track for setting the tempo at the beginning of a recording, so 8MONTHMALFACTION's song beings with

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[217] While most iCompers seem disinterested in remixing commercially-released songs, preferring instead to create their own songs, some iCompers have uploaded their remixes of Nine Inch Nails songs to iCompositions.com.

[218] "iPhone A Cappella" was posted to iCompositions.com by 8MonthMalfunction and Toni1 on 1 January, 2009 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=118953). "iPhone A Cappella" written and performed by 8 Month Malfunction, Copyright 2009. Used by permission.

an audible "1, 2, 3, 4" which flows naturally in an a cappella performance. The four tracks consist of a doo-wop style bass line, a harmony line of "ahhhs," a lead vocal melody, and a backup vocal part.

8MonthMalfaction: The iPhone has so many possibilities for the mobile musician, and with a few additions, that could be added in the future operating systems, it would take away the need for me to travel with my laptop and extra recording gear. …RecordStudio Pro, which I recorded the A Cappella in has the ability to import instrumentals onto track one, allowing you then to overdub vocals and other live instruments on the remaining 3 tracks…

Mixing on the iPhone currently is a no no, and no App i have found gives you the ability to add basic compression, reverb or EQ to iron out all the nuisances in live recording. So, in Logic, that is basically what I added to the iPhone A Cappella. I didn't edit my performance in any way, making sure that when singing the individual parts I got them good enough to use. A new piece of software called RecTools08, which is an 8 track recorder for the iPhone now allows editing and copy/paste facility for live tracks, which is a good start, but RecordStudio Pro doesn't offer this facility, so I had to get the performances as good as possible.

When I was mixing the A Cappella, I duplicated tracks to create a stereo feel and used Bandpass filters and Noise Gates to remove the unwanted hiss from the iPhone's built in mic. I added compression, EQ and reverb to the vocals and basically that was that…

The iPhone just keeps getting better and better and I for one will certainly use it more and more to demo songs, record ideas and even create full productions. You should check out signed artists "The 88's" and "Gary Go" who have actually released singles utilising the iPhone's music making capabilities... The 88's actually made a whole video on the process, which was an interesting watch!

I think that the iPhone's music making ability will be embraced by musicians, by slowly. I actually put up a forum post asking for iPhone collaborators to work with me on "Don't Hear The Distance", knowing full well that many other iComp users had iPhones... I only got one response, which actually worked out really well, but I thought more people would at least take an interest.

Not only do mobile devices, such as the iPhone, provide opportunities for digital recording and musical production in settings outside the home studio, but the Internet capabilities of these devices allows for connecting with the virtual communities, such as iCompositions, while traveling or away from home or the office. Podcasts by iCompers can be downloaded directly to the device and communication applications, such as Skype, can allow for connecting with other iCompers on-the-go. The technology is still young and underdeveloped, but future changes will most certainly open up new possibilities for recreational musicians and musical collaborations,

which has already been demonstrated through applications such as the Leaf Trombone.[219] Also, the mobility of such devices further blurs the lines between offline and online activities of iCompers and other Internet musicians.

Further research on mobile computing and musical culture might also be oriented toward issues of offline cultural identity as expressed through musical applications available on the iPhone. The relative ease of development tools available to iPhone programmers has lead to a number of musical instruments associated with specific regional or ethnic identities, such as a gamelan gangsa, a darbuka, a harmonium, and the iShakuhachi.

Finally, I assert that ethnomusicologists should be actively engaged in researching musical culture wherever it may be found. Yet, very little attention has been given to Internet-based musical communities as the central focus of ethnomusicological fieldwork, except in cases where those virtual communities can be linked to specific geographically-based culture groups. If this study serves in any way as an inspiration to further our investigation of musical cybercommunities, I should be very pleased.

> Dear iCompers,
> I am going to bed now
> Keep on recording let the spirit flow
> Those melodies in your head let them out...
>
> – "The iComp Goodnight Song" by CKROHM[220]

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[219] http://leaftrombone.smule.com/

[220] "The iComp Goodnight Song" was posted to iCompositions.com by CKROHM on 22 February, 2009 (http://www.icompositions.com/music/song.php?sid=107468).

APPENDIX A

LIST OF MUSIC COLLABORATION WEBSITES

band-collab.net (inactive) http://www.band-collab.net/	Site oriented toward forming and supporting online bands, Members can post classifieds to find other musicians, collaborate on lyrics, recording, and guitar tabs in a private workspace for each band.
BandAMP http://www.bandamp.com/	*For musicians. By Musicians.* Members challenge each other to participate in friendly competitions for the purpose of improving their skills and garnering feedback on their abilities. BandAMP takes a collaboration-through-competition approach.
BandChemistry (inactive) http://bandchemistry.com/	*Make you band, find your sound.* BandChemistry is a bandmate-matching service that allows members to upload songs, listen to other songs, and participate in discussion forums.
Bojam (beta) http://www.bojam.com/	*Mix. Record. Collaborate.* Bojam allows for real-time recording among multiple musicians using a Web-based DAW.
ccmixter http://ccmixter.org/	*Download, Sample, Cut-up, Share.* Members can use samples licensed under Creative Commons to create and share mash-ups, remixes, or new compositions.
cocompose http://www.cocompose.com/	*En-joyn the music.* Members initiate projects, which can contain audio files, video files and caption tracks, and invite others to collaborate on the production and marketing of the product.
digitalmusician.net http://www.digitalmusician net/	Social-networking site oriented toward professional musicians. Members find and sell music jobs
eJammingAudiio http://www.ejamming.com/	Real-time collaborative performance network.
Indaba Music http://www.indabamusic.com/	*Make Friends. Make Music. Make Progress.* Members collaborate on projects and participate in remix contests using songs provided by popular, commercial musicians.
indomite music (beta) http://www.indomite.com/blog/	*Music in the making.* Members initiate projects and record using a web-based DAW. Musicians can add to any open project.
JamGlue http://www.jamglue.com/	*Remixing for the Masses.* Web-based DAW allows members to upload or record songs and offer them to other members for remixing.

JamNow (beta) http://jamnow.com/	*Where music, the Internet and social networking converge.* Backed by Lightspeed Audio Labs, members can participate in real-time "jam sessions" with other members and broadcast the performance live over the Internet for others to hear.
Kalabo http://kalabo.net/	Online collaboration site based on CreativeCommons licensing. Members can upload new songs or search for others to add to or remix.
Koblo went offline in 2009	*A Friendly Music Community.* Participants can collaborate and remix each others' songs using free, open-source software.
Kompoz http://www.kompoz.com/	Members can upload songs, or fragments of songs, and invite other members to add to the song.
MacJams http://www.macjams.com/	Similar in features and collaborative activities as iCompositions, except large, open, community-wide collaborations are less common.
Minimum Noise http://www.minimumnoise.com/	Members post a call for a specific recording or production needs and invite other musicians to audition with sound bites or examples of previous work. The winning musician gets paid the agreed upon amount by the original poster.
MixMatchMusic http://www.mixmatchmusic.com/	*Evolving Music.* Artists and producers can promote their music by holding remix contests. Artists can sell "stems," or discrete tracks for their songs. Members can collaborate with each other on remix projects.
Musicollaborate http://musicollaborate.com/	*Bringing musicians together in a music project community.* Members upload a song, or partial song, for collaboration. Once others add to it, the original poster may move the song into a "mid collaboration" folder, indicating more collaboration is needed, or a "completed projects" folder, if the song is considered complete and further collaboration is unavailable.
muxicall http://www.muxicall.com/	Created by Diana Antunes, muxicall is an online instrument that allow multiple player to interact in real time, choosing from three sound banks: piano, strings, drums.
MyOnlineBand http://myonlineband.com/	*Compose, Collaborate, Record, Share.* This social networking site is oriented toward meeting other musicians to form band that collaborate on the Internet.
Ninjam (inactive) http://www.ninjam.com/	*Users connect to Ninjam servers using Ninjam software to play together in real time over the Internet.*
**Older Hipster	Aging Musician** (inactive) http://agingmusician.com/	Social networking website oriented toward collaboration among older musicians.

rifflet http://www.rifflet.com/	*Home for unfinished songs.* Members can upload "rifflets," a piece of a song less than 60 seconds in length, and then combine and mix rifflets contributed to the site to create full-length songs.
RiffWorld http://www.riffworld.com/	Operated by music software developer, Sonoma Wire Works, members use the free RiffWorks application to record, mix, apply loops, and collaborate in real time with other musicians. Real-time collaborations can be recorded with RiffWorks and uploaded to the website.
Splice (offline since March 2009) http://www.splicemusic.com/	*Connect continents of sound.* Musicians upload songs and sounds to a common library, where others can add them to a new song using an online sequencer.
Virtual Recording Studio http://thenetstudio.com/	*Removing the limitations to music collaboration.* Aimed at connecting songwriters, producers, engineers, and musicians, members can initiate new recording projects or join projects begun by others.
Tune Rooms http://www.tunerooms.com/	*Create Music with Friends Online.* Members can post want ads and participate in forums to find fellow collaborators. Listeners can listen to songs throughout the collaboration process.
v-band.de http://www.v-band.de/	*Online music collaboration.* Similar in features and collaborative activities as iCompositions.

APPENDIX B

COPYRIGHT PERMISSION

Trevor S. Harvey
College of Music
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306-1180

Thursday, September 17, 2009

Ian Husbands
6 Archer Terrace
West Drayton.
Middx.
UB7 8PZ
UK

Dear Ian Husbands:

As you know, from our various email exchanges on iCompositions, I am completing a doctoral dissertation at Florida State University entitled "Virtual Garage Bands: Collaborative Cybercommunities of Internet Musicians." I would like your permission to include in digital copies of my dissertation recordings of "Me And The Rejects" and "iPhone A Cappella."

The requested permission extends to any future revisions and editions of my dissertation, including non-exclusive world rights in all languages, and to the prospective publication of my dissertation by UMI Company. These rights will in no way restrict republication of the material in any other form by you or by others authorized by you. Your signing of this letter will also confirm that you own the copyright to the above-described material.

If these arrangements meet with your approval, please sign this letter where indicated below and return it to me. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Trevor S. Harvey

PERMISSION GRANTED FOR THE USE REQUESTED ABOVE:

Ian Husbands

Date: 18/09/09

APPENDIX C

HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE APPROVAL LETTERS

)   )

Office of the Vice President For Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742
(850) 644-8673 • FAX (850) 644-4392

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 6/4/2007

To: Trevor Harvey [tsharvey@fsu.edu]

Address: 925 E. Magnolia Dr. Apt. K3
Dept.: MUSIC SCHOOL

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research
Virtual Garage Bands: Collaborative Cybercommunities of Personal Computer Musicians

The application that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and two members of the Human Subjects Committee. Your project is determined to be Expedited per 45 CFR § 46.110(7) and has been approved by an expedited review process.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required.

If you submitted a proposed consent form with your application, the approved stamped consent form is attached to this approval notice. Only the stamped version of the consent form may be used in recruiting research subjects.

If the project has not been completed by 5/30/2008 you must request a renewal of approval for continuation of the project. As a courtesy, a renewal notice will be sent to you prior to your expiration date; however, it is your responsibility as the Principal Investigator to timely request renewal of your approval from the Committee.

You are advised that any change in protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee prior to implementation of the proposed change in the protocol. A protocol change/amendment form is required to be submitted for approval by the Committee. In addition, federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report, in writing any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the Chair of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protection. The Assurance Number is IRB00000446.

Cc: Frank Gunderson, Advisor [fgunders@mailer.fsu.edu]
HSC No. 2007.446

Office of the Vice President For Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742
(850) 644-8673 · FAX (850) 644-4392

RE-APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 5/16/2008

To: Trevor Harvey [tsharvey@fsu.edu]

Address: 925 E. Magnolia Dr. Apt. K3
Dept.: MUSIC SCHOOL

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Re-approval of Use of Human subjects in Research

Your request to continue the research project listed above involving human subjects has been approved
by the Human Subjects Committee. If your project has not been completed by 5/13/2009, you are must
request renewed approval by the Committee.

If you submitted a proposed consent form with your renewal request, the approved stamped consent
form is attached to this re-approval notice. Only the stamped version of the consent form may be used in
recruiting of research subjects. You are reminded that any change in protocol for this project must be
reviewed and approved by the Committee prior to implementation of the proposed change in the
protocol. A protocol change/amendment form is required to be submitted for approval by the
Committee. In addition, federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report in
writing, any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the Chair of your department and/or your major professor are reminded
of their responsibility for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in their
department. They are advised to review the protocols as often as necessary to insure that the project is
being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

Cc: []
HSC No. 2008.1385

About Informed Consent

The following statement provides collaborators in my research with information regarding their voluntary participation. Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions or concerns regarding your participation in my dissertation research.

Informed Consent Statement

I freely and voluntarily and without element of force or coercion, consent to be a participant in the research project entitled "Virtual Garage Bands: Collaborative Cybercommunities of Personal Computer Musicians." This research is being conducted by Trevor S. Harvey, a graduate student under the advisement of Dr. Frank Gunderson at Florida State University. The purpose of this research is to explore musical collaboration within online communities.

I understand that my participation is totally voluntary and that I may stop participation at any time. The definition of "participation" manifests itself in the form of conversations and answering questions regarding musical composition. I understand that I am not being asked to provide any particular information or to behave in any particular way. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts if I agree to participate in this study. I will not be paid for my participation. The results of this research study may be published. I have been given the right to ask and have answered any inquiry concerning the study. I understand that any questions I have concerning the research study or my participation in it, before or after my consent, will be answered by Trevor S. Harvey, tsharvey@fsu.edu, or Frank Gunderson, fgunders@fsu.edu.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Trevor S. Harvey earned his Bachelor of Arts in Music from Brigham Young University, where he studied music composition. After working in the technology sector for a few years. Trevor returned to school to pursue a graduate education in ethnomusicology. He earned a Masters in Music in Musicology (Ethnomusicology) at Florida State University in 2006. While at Florida State University he developed a Web-based course to accompany *World Music: Traditions and Transformations* by Michael B. Bakan (McGraw-Hill, 2007) in addition to teaching courses in world music cultures, the history of popular music, and American roots music. He served as the Web coordinator for the Southeast and Caribbean chapter of the Society for Ethnomusicology for six years and as the president for the FSU student Society for Musicology for two years. He currently resides in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, where he is an Instructor in Music at Middle Tennessee State University.