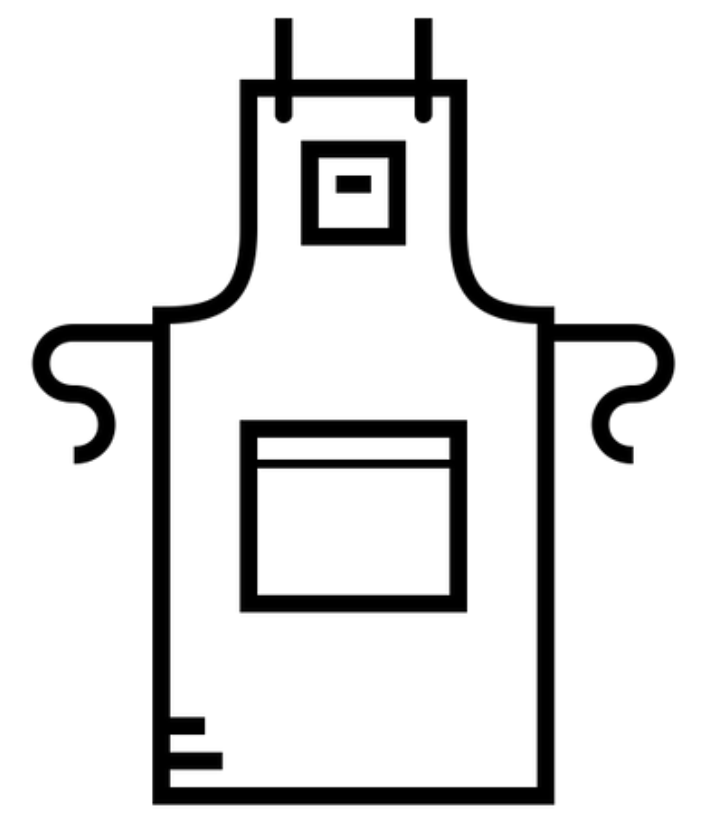


Gearheads: How choices about the array of tech shapes creative collaboration in music



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Introduction

A growing body of literature contends that as workers use intelligent machines, their work will transform and creativity will emerge as the fundamental contribution of human labor (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014; Florida, 2012). But what happens to creative work as technologies are enabled to be more creative? A focus on creatives' technology choices elucidates how they adopt, reform, and invent the technologies they use. Musicians are an ideal context for investigating creatives' tech choices and the future of work because they (a) use a wide array of technologies in their work, and (b) organize in fluid and precarious networks.

Research Questions

RQ1 How are musicians using advanced music technologies in their collaborative work?

RQ2 In what ways do their collaborative practices inform their technology choices? (In progress)

Methods

Qualitative methods: Observations and interviews of music workers with a focus on work practices (Leonardi, 2015; Tracy, 2010).

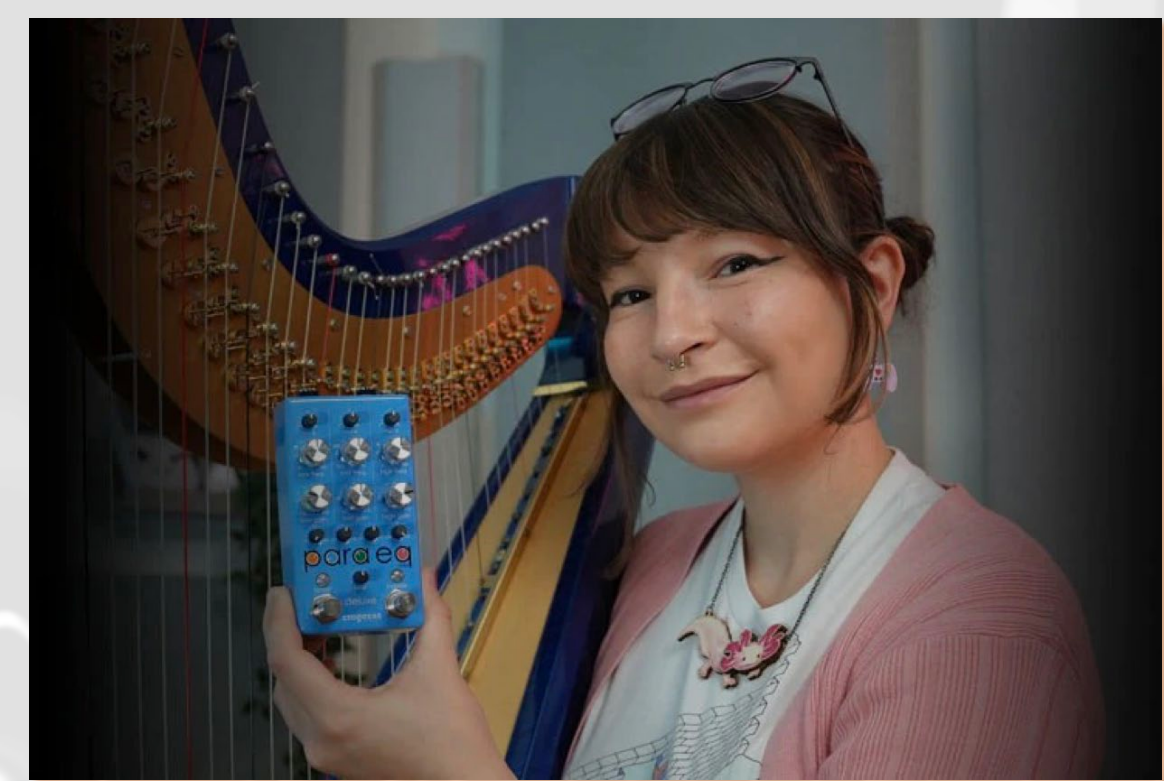
Observations (113 hours; 18 projects, 8 in-depth)
Interviews (N=47)



Preliminary Findings

Musicians use technologies to:

• (a) Communicate what is “cool” and construct “cool” identities



Cool as Identity:

- Authenticity
- Independence
- Nonconformity (Dinerstein, 2017)

Apollo (Bass Player): “You see my gear, and you have to ask questions to figure it out, and I think that’s the coolest part...about being a musician. You can have cool and interesting stylistic gear that also is your tone...But it can also [have] an interesting story beyond something that you just got a Guitar Center.”

Jordan (AI User): “I was like, okay, this is really **cool** because most producers right now go on Splice and grab the biggest samples. This [AI technology] is really useful now to **sound different**. I can have **unique sounds** and having **unique sounds** is what gives your music a **unique touch**.”

• (b) Shape and direct collaborative processes



Adding new tools shapes creative workflows

Producers and engineers are empowered to make crucial creative decision

Engineer: “A lot of studios have big monitors, but the critical work isn’t done on those. That’s there to impress everybody...But you can’t make a good decision on those because they sound too good. Those are there to make everybody feel it and go like, ‘Yes, we’re doing good work.’ Then people are at ease and they trust you.”

- (c) Generate familiar contributions
- (d) (Unintentionally) introduce paradoxes that complicate the work

Contributions

Understanding musicians’ technology choices complicates understandings of occupational factors that shape creative work by focusing on fluid, disparate organizing rather than formal organizations (see Bailey & Leonardi, 2015; Ganesh & Stohl, 2013).

Musicians use technologies (in part) to navigate the tension between autonomy and constraint inherent in creative work; e.g., Novel technologies allow them to express and construct “cool” identities.

Issue of power emerge in that knowledge of advanced technologies allows some workers to direct collaborative decision-making.



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