

Column by Renzo van Riemsdijk (Masterenzo):

~~Quality of sound.~~ Unwanted Lo-Fi sounding music.

After the loudness trilogy the time has come to tell something about sound, and by sound I mean the quality of sound, and even more specific the quality of the sound of music.

Quality has two dimensions: the quality of the music itself (or the artist) and the quality of the sound of the music. The latter is the subject of this month's column.

Quality is something subjective. Mikey finds the EP by artist X absolutely fantastic: Lo-Fi, greasy, hardly any stereo information and most of all sickening loud!

Little Pete turns into a sad vibe immediately when he listens to that same EP. He's totally into the latest album by James Taylor: Hi-Fi at its best, fine quality and very sophisticated.

Actually this equation already says a lot. Music and sound, it's all a matter of taste.

But... Behold! There is a very thin line between intense, well produced Lo-Fi tracks and badly produced music.

Lo-Fi can sound really great. Just have a listen to those fine albums by this little band called The Black Keys. These albums are the opposite of sophisticated Hi-Fi but they sound extremely fat, energetic and intense. This has probably got something to do with the engineering and mix by a certain genius called Mr. Tchad Blake, but they are the evidence of very well sounding Lo-Fi music.

So well meant Lo-Fi music is made Lo-Fi for a reason. Badly produced music is a desperate attempt to let (great?) music sound good. Failing to do so is merely caused by the producer/engineer lacking the necessary knowledge and experience in music production.

This causes unwanted Lo-Fi sounding music, terminology that could very well serve as a title for a new column about mastering music.

The moral of this story is as follows: producing good music in a good manner (Lo-Fi, Hi-Fi, Mid-Fi, Shit-Fi), is not easy. Recording, mixing, producing: these are all skills that require experience and craftsmanship.

For mastering the same rules apply: craftsmanship and experience are turning a mastering engineer into a complete person. It makes mastering the most beautiful profession in the world. The longer you do it, the more beautiful and more intense it gets. And most of all the better the music gets!

With this column I actually wanted to make a statement for promotion of a good music quality experience.

It turned out a bit different, making it already clear what I'll be writing about in next month's column.

Okay, let's have a listen to a great sounding record, preferably on vinyl with a bit of that analogue crackling sound!

Renzo

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