

Column by Renzo van Riemsdijk (Masterenzo):

The way we experience music, from the seventies up until now.

A high quality music experience, what does that mean? If we take a closer look at the past five decades, a few things stand out.

First the setting in which we “consume” music. Back in the seventies and the beginning of the eighties we were mostly listening to music on our home audio systems. Portable audio was rare at that time (except for the 8-Track player in cars) and that leads us to the next big difference compared to nowadays: playback media.

In the seventies and begin eighties we listened to music on vinyl or on tape (8-Track, compact cassette or a reel-to-reel machine). In 1982 the introduction of the compact disc started the era of digital music production and playback, leading all the way up to the use of music streaming services we use nowadays.

With the arrival of music streaming services another musical aspect changed: the amount of music we’re offered. Especially since the growing popularity of Spotify the amount of music we’re offered has grown immensely. Spotify uses playlists and it’s these playlists that offer us a whole league of other artists related to the music you’re listening. This way you encounter lots of new and previously undiscovered music.

Music streaming services are causing another effect: nowadays we tend to listen to single tracks rather than whole albums. An album as a whole which takes us on a musical journey as intended by the artist.

Luckily this effect is weakened by the revival of music on vinyl. A vinyl record is the number one medium when it comes to experiencing an album. You even have to give it some extra attention as you need to turn the record after 18 minutes if you want to keep enjoying the music.

And then there is music played on headphones or ear plugs. These devices have caused us more and more to listen to music on portable devices instead of our home stereo system, accompanied by a good drink, some nice nuts and ... (you name it).

Music on the bus, on your bike, on a train, on an airplane, during an important meeting and so on. It makes music become more volatile. When you’re on the road there are many impulses distracting you from your music.

This leads -not surprisingly- to the conclusion that listening to music at home on your couch is a totally different experience from listening to a single track through earbuds when you’re on the road. It’ll probably be a lot safer also.

There is nothing wrong with that and these experiences can very well exist alongside each other, but it’s a good thing to be aware of the differences between listening on a mobile device and on a stereo set.

There’s also a significant difference between a whole album and a single track from a mastering point of view. I will elaborate on that in next months’ column.

To be continued!

Renzo

Renzo (Masterenzo) is a Rotterdam based Dutch mastering engineer. He has worked for Gery Mendes (GMB), Charlie Dée and Phil Bee's Freedom. More info about mastering and about Masterenzo can be found on his [website](#).