

Sound-Dust? High Fidelity in the Age of Perceptual Coding and Home Recording

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The record industry has undergone profound changes as the consumer has switched from high-quality audio formats such as CD and vinyl towards technically inferior formats such as MP3. In tandem with this development, there has been a sharp rise in musicians recording from home using sophisticated Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) platforms such as Pro Tools and Logic Pro.

The recent dominance of compressed audio files, which utilise perceptual coding techniques, has been subject of much debate in recent years in light of plummeting sales figures for physical music formats. What has not been as widely discussed is the effect the combined shift by artists away from professional recording studios and toward low-quality end-product such as mp3 has had on the quality of the audio itself.

Through analysis of relevant research and literature on the subject, accompanied by interviews with musicians and audio professionals, this research paper investigates whether or not high-fidelity reproduction of music is becoming a thing of the past and why the public appears to be unconcerned about this. Although compressed audio casts a long shadow over the music of today, there is enough evidence of advances in both recording and reproduction technology to suggest that the future of high fidelity is not all bleak if the public can be stirred into demanding it.