Part 1:

Throughout the first half of this semester in the Intro to Informatics lecture class, we have discussed several different topics that relate to informatics such as Bits and Bytes, Technoethics, or Problem Solving. However, the topic I found to be the most interesting in class was the lecture that discussed making computer systems more usable design efficient, this of course being subtopics in the HCI lecture. HCI is short for Human Computer and Interaction, and, it is the study of the user-computer relationship and it is generally used to create better computers, programs, or devices (Onesti and Richert). HCI was the topic that grabbed my attention the most because, in the future I would like to build music production systems that are easy to use for everybody, no matter their skill level. Continuing on, HCI is a very important piece of Informatics today as everyone is trying to make computers more usable, which is another reason I have selected to further my knowledge in it. This constant improvement can be seen in the progression of HCI, which, was first about Interface/Usability meaning that participants were using HCI to figure out which interface, “what is being used” (Onesti and Richert), should be used and, the overall usability, “how easy it to use the product” (Onesti and Richert), of the product. These ideas then escalated into Ethical and Cultural Implications of products or in other words, how to use HCI when, “designing for a culture” (Onesti and Richert). Needless to say, HCI systems could
be applied to any technological product to improve it, I believe that HCI can be applied to music production systems and then significantly generate improvement even though it has seldom been done in the past.

In order to test this theory of HCI in music production I did some more in-depth research using the article, "Applying HCI Principles to Create the next Generation of Music Production Tools" by Collin Dodd. In this article, Dodd relates HCI concepts to the difficulty of music production tools. Dodd says that there is a problem with music production tools in the sense that, “The tools used to mix music have not evolved to better fit these new user groups” (Dodd). Meaning that a lot of HCI work to be done and, it is clear that Dodd believes this because, in the article specifically states that, “there are three areas of HCI that could have a significant impact on the design of new music mixing tools, these are: Interface Design approaches, Tangible interfaces, and Ambiguity as a resource for design.” (Dodd). Meaning that, these specific HCI approaches could be used to make the programs simpler for all, which correlates with my idea to simplify music systems, this also suggests that, HCI in music is a tangible concept that could be worked on in the future. Dodd continues on with this idea of HCI improvement in music by saying “there is quite a lot of HCI evidence supporting the advantageous nature of bimanual input” (Dodd) which means, the form, “How a design appears” (Onesti and Richert), of mixers could change to make it more usable for any user. Considering the concepts that Dodd discusses, it is apparent that HCI can and should be applied to all musical systems to improve production systems and musical quality.

As it was previously stated, HCI is the study of human-computer relationships, which is used to generate some sort of improvement for a product. Keeping this in mind, the music production systems have been lacking in generating improvement since the time of their creation. Therefore, HCI is a necessary tool that should be used to improve these musical production systems, which, could eventually simplify the systems to a point of total simplicity allowing new users to excel in making music. Upon finding more information on HCI and its relation to music, I am glad to say that the future is bright
for young musicians and I am excited to see what HCI could do for these systems over the next couple of decades. This research process was informative and exciting to me as I am greatly passionate about music and computers, I cannot wait to find out more about Informatics and Music.

Word Count: 703
Works Cited


Part 2:

TV Show: Parks and Recreation

Episode: Season 3: Episode 16 – Lil’ Sebastian

Background: The show, Parks and Recreation, is an office-humor sitcom that follows the main character, Leslie Knope, on her quest to become a local representative for the local government in the fictional Indiana town Pawnee.

Technology: In the episode, “Lil’ Sebastian”, there is a music performance set up on stage, complete with, amplifiers, mixers, and lighting.

Technology is most certainly a valued item in today’s society, as it almost everyone owns technology and, it can be used for almost anything in today’s society. For example, just about everyone has a phone, a TV, and a computer, meaning, everyone owns at least one of these three and these items all have capabilities of completing necessary tasks, or even entertaining tasks for that matter. As a matter of fact, this technology use can be seen in just about any television show set in today’s time era. Even in the Parks and Recreation episode, “Season 3: Episode 16 – Lil’ Sebastian”, technology is put to use. To be more specific, the episode is about Leslie putting together a festival in memorial of the famous horse Lil’ Sebastian and, in the festival one of the main characters, Andy Dwyer, plays his song that he made about Lil’ Sebastian live at the festival. During the performance, musical technologies are seen on and off stage. For example, many music amplifiers and mixers can be seen in accompaniment with concert lights.

It is important to note that the technologies from the show can be used to create music therefore, music is a part of the technology. Respectively, the technologies used in the episode are certainly not considered to be an average everyday item that is used at length but, it is available to all
who can afford it from specific musical stores and online shopping sites. The reason this equipment is limited is because, it is so expensive. For example, the article, “Building a Home Recording Studio for under $1,000”, the writer suggests buying the “JBLSR 305 for $284” (“Building a Home Recording Studio for under $1,000”). With this price in mind, it is evident that most aspiring musicians will not be able to afford such things as, most of these artists are young and are dependent on their parents therefore, unable to afford even the bare essentials, meaning that, it is not available to everyone. However, the cost may be worth it to sum as music technologies could be considered as technology with problem solving capabilities.

Music can be considered problem solving because, “Listening to music can have a tremendously relaxing effect on our minds and bodies” (Collingwood). Another real world example of music solving problems can be seen in a therapeutic light, more specifically, music can take the place of going to therapy as it is proven that, “Listening to music can relieve depression and increase self-esteem ratings in elderly people.” (Collingwood). With these two examples in mind it is apparent that, music is able to relive stress and make people overall happier. This musical stress release can be seen in the Parks and Recreation episode when, all the members of the audience are enjoying Andy’s tribute to the great horse, Lil’ Sebastian. Considering the enjoyment of the crowd, the music technology that is being used by Andy is overall making the lives of people in Pawnee better in the sense that, they are remembering the good times of Lil’ Sebastian and their lives are being enriched with the stress relieving quality of the music.

Considering the overall joyfulness that music can create, I think that it is clear that the music technology, which generated the beautiful song from Andy, is highly ethical. I also think this because, music is a source of expression and, the only time I can see it being unethical is when someone is using this technology to create music with harmful ideas that are not protected under the first amendment. Although the technology is ethical, helpful, and available, I believe it will change over the next 10 years. I
think this because, technology is always changing and, the music technology is much due for an upgrade.

Music making technology is truly special, it might be because I love music, but, it is also a highly efficient product. This technology has many benefits and not many negatives, for example, music makes people happy and is seldom used to discourage people. The use of this technology in the “Lil’ Sebastian” episode of Parks and Recreation, truly shows what this technology is all about and how it can be used correctly. It is important to remember, when thinking about all the aspects that come with Andy’s music making technology, that music making technology is highly ethical, it can problem solve, it is available to those who can afford it, it is subject to improve over the next 10 years, and it is a highly beneficial technology that will hopefully never go out of style.

Word Count: 803
Works Cited


Goor, Daniel J. "Parks and Recreation/Season 3: Episode 16 - Lil' Sebastian." Parks and Recreation. NBC.