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“Analog In, Digital Out” Book Review

My favorite part of this book was the chapter, “Mariah Carey Syndrome”. This section makes the analogy comparing Mariah Carey’s voice to using every cool nifty trick in a developer’s box at once.

Basically, Mariah Carey often uses her impressive vocal registry through the entirety of her music. But just because she has this impressive talent, it doesn’t mean she should drag listeners up and down over and over again throughout all her songs.

Dawes ties this idea back to digital media. He basically argues that just because design programs like Flash and Photoshop have numerous and intuitive tricks and features to make stuff look more interesting, it doesn’t mean that they should all be utilized at once and as Dawes puts it, “not drowning every pixel in them”. The ultimate point of this chapter is to not let design directions be controlled by the newest technology but rather let new technology buttress and improve good design.

This section really resonated with me because I could totally relate to what Dawes was saying. Like he admitted in this section, I am also guilty of “Mariah Carey Syndrome”. I know for a fact that when I first played around with PowerPoint and Photoshop, I was intent on utilizing all the features these two expansive softwares had to offer. While I was satisfied with my results initially, I pondered the necessity of pooling all these features together in a clump of effects. I now see the error in doing this and this chapter taught me to stay aware of using the tools at my disposal where they are needed and not superfluously.

This book relates back to my degree of IDM because it basically encompasses the life lessons and wisdom of an IDM designer that he has learned over the years. Every single chapter has some form of focus that ties back to design and digital media. While some chapters were more fascinating than others, all of them had important lessons and advice to give about the field of IDM and design in general. Through Dawes observations and experimentation with digital media, I ultimately learned a lot about seeing the world through a different lens and thinking abstractly within the industry.

Dawe’s book was a breath of fresh air for me through the sometimes stagnant zoom life I have been currently living. His ideas and experiments were often engaging for me, and his advice and lessons were even more important. Dawe’s insightful commentary really showed me that you can have the skills and technical savvy to be a designer, but it takes creativity, ingenuity, and curiosity as well to really be successful and stay interested in your career. This book showed me that there is way more than I thought to being a good designer. But this isn’t necessarily a bad thing for me, nor does it cause me to waver in my choice of this path. If anything, the lessons this book has shown me have only inspired me to look higher and keep pushing the boundaries of my comfort zone. Of course, I plan to utilize the advice given in this book and try my best to apply it in my future at Drexel and beyond in the rest of my career. While I know it is a long and uncertain road ahead for me, I hope that by keeping Dawe’s advice to heart, I can have just as interesting a journey as he has.