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Element 1 - Written Proposal

Introduction

In this proposal, I will explain and present the taken approach for the upcoming EP project. Moreover will demonstrate the thought process behind the chosen ideas and support that with the academic research amongst the methods from professional producers and engineers.

Project: EP - The Quiet Wars

The goal is to create a conceptual EP/Album in the genre of Alternative Pop with elements of rock music, blues and folk.

I would like to create an album that sounds “authentic”, with a great focus on using analogue instruments and hardware devices.

Furthermore, I am aiming to deliver from 5 to 7 tracks (approx. 30 min material) produced and written by myself.

Why “Quiet Wars”?

The vast majority of my past collaborations and productions were made using DAW (in the box). With that said, I want to challenge myself to expand my skills set and to become more flexible to the potential client and for my music. Moreover, my great focus is on the studio recording sessions, as its a great potential to experiment with different approaches and mic angles to capture desired sound recording.

I will work on my recording skills, learn new techniques to improve my work ethic, and hopefully result in better sound quality. Nonetheless, I would like to improve my workflow in the studio. Moreover to expand my communication skills with the instrumentalists and engineers. Furthermore, I would like to learn more by using physical hardware, a mixing desk, and various devices such as preamps, compressors etc.

Considering past pandemic and obstacles which goes wit it, the studio recordings sessions were almost impossible to arrange. As the restrictions are easing, it would be a unique opportunity to

create a body of work. Moreover, I would like to challenge, also to test myself as the producer and team leader in this upcoming project.

The vast majority of my past releases were based on electronic music. Nonetheless, as time progresses, I have noticed differences in sound quality and tone when tracking with analogue devices. Arguably, when a material recorded using the real instrument, (out of the box) possess a cleaner sound. It is believed that working “in the box” (VTS, plugins) may cause a lack of emotional factor. Nevertheless, these opinions differ depending on the project, whatsoever working in the box could save time and finances. I will explore that topic and present my final thoughts with the recorded material in July.

This project is a fascinating opportunity to develop my style as an artist/producer and songwriter. Nonetheless, as a debuting artist myself, it is a chance to improve the tone of my musical sound. Furthermore, that project also allows me to work on the arrangement and songwriting style.

The Quiet Wars will allow me to create a new team, including instrumentalist, writers and engineers. Hopefully, my songwriting and the concept behind it will be strong enough to convince and to find the right people for it. Whatsoever will help me create a solid team as it is crucial. Nevertheless, I believe that a strong team with safe, honest, accepting, open-minded members could improve the performance of each member.

Facts exist in the article from Laura Delizonna: “ *two-year study on team performance, which revealed that the highest-performing teams have one thing in common: psychological safety, the belief that you won’t be punished when you make a mistake. Studies show that psychological safety allows for moderate risk-taking, speaking your mind, creativity, and sticking your neck out without fear of having it cut off...*”. (Harvard Business Review. 2021).

The benchmarks for success are:

- written and produced 5-7 tracks
- Create a cohesive body of work that enhances the narrative of the EP.
- The vast majority of the material recorded in the studio using analogue equipment.
- Emotional (authentic) performance has been obtained and well translated with the music.
- Balanced arrangement
- Research and create a fully committed group for that project
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Additional and personal success benchmarks:

- Explored new recording techniques
- Improvement in creating an arrangement
- Expand network
- Experimentation (Mics, compressors, amps, techniques)
- Authentic writing and vocal delivery
- Improved workflow in the studio
- Improved leadership

Intended approach to the project:

1. Recording - Studio time

I will plan and schedule the additional rehearsal time for each instrumentalist and meet them individually ahead of the actual recording day, which will prevent any misunderstanding. Due to its high demand, it is crucial to managing the studio time wisely. The recordings might be limited to a total of 16h recording sessions that may cause pressure and unwanted stress when closer to the deadline. However, prior rehearsals and meetings could prevent that from happening and save the studio time. Whatsoever can be solved, by arranging additional meetings to answer any questions regards the arrangement, etc.

"Asking for feedback on how you delivered your message disarms your opponent, illuminates blind spots in communication skills, and models fallibility, which increases trust in leaders...", (Harvard Business Review. 2021).

2. Plan, schedule, preparation:

Arguably the more is planned, the smoother the process gets Owsinski says: *"You might get away with being a jerk on a live gig since the band or others on the crew usually will put up with you (to a point) as long as you do your job well. Not so in the studio. If you make someone feel even slightly uncomfortable for any reason, chances are you probably won't be asked to do another project with them."* (p. 22-23, Owsinski, B., 2005.).

Being a producer requires patience, organisation, preparation and being ready for unexpected events. Moreover, by working with different groups on past projects, I observed the importance and the different values which each new member brings when joining the project. Nonetheless, there are no rights or wrongs, it is about different outcomes.

"Nervousness, tension, and a lack of confidence in musicians and recording artists when faced with recording in a formal studio space can often be prohibitive to artists producing the desired performance or a 'good take'". (p. 2908 A. Watson, J. 2012).

Keeping that in mind, I intend to create an open and safe space for any ideas and make sure that each member knows their role. Nevertheless, it is crucial to state clearly, what I expect but still keep it relax, creative and fun, but productive.

As mentioned, preparation is the key, and one of the biggest challenges is to find the right balance in managing the group. Whatsoever also keep it professional and productive.

Therefore, I will work on the music sheets for each member, and ready demos, also will try to meet each of them in person to discuss the vibe and will hand out the reference tracks.

*"A lot of people go 'oh f**king hell, I'm in a studio' and so ... as a producer you have got to be supportive, you have got to see them through it. Just kind of hold their hand through it sometimes really and just be there for them. And they appreciate that. A"* - engineer and producer Tim, studio owner located in South London area. (p. 2908 A. Watson, J. 2012).

Although there are many skilful players, it is crucial to find the right ones who understand the vision for this EP. Nevertheless, It will be fascinating to reflect on this new collaboration in the final stage.

"Joseph, a male producer-engineer and studio owner, noted that often 'it just takes one sentence to transform everybody's performance' and that providing this input is a big part of being a producer or engineer." (p. 2909 A. Watson, J. 2012).

Thanks to my prior participation in past projects and live events, I have created some great relationships with talented musicians. However, I would like to challenge myself and create new friendships by collaborating with people from Tileyard.

The songs will require a different style of guitar playing, and with that said, I am planning to invite a confident guitarist and drummer. (Musicradar.com. 2020.).

3. Demo Tracks

That relates to the previous statement about the planning. I will create the entire demo production, write, record and sing on all of the songs till the end of May. With that said, I will work to get the song demos ready to present to the band members, so they have a clear vision of the project. Furthermore, that preparation will save us time and avoid any major changes on the actual recording day and clear up any misleading pieces of information.

4. Techniques/Equipment

This EP project relies on electric/acoustic guitars, I am about to use available guitars, bass, and drum kit from Tileyard. It will eliminate any additional stress of getting equipment booked or travelled and delivered to the recording studio at the right time.

Getting access to the Tileyard studios is a great advantage, that allows using their analogue compressors and amplifiers, which down the line is crucial for that project.

Moreover, after speaking to Sean Hargreaves from Tileyard at MD Sessions, I will consider using the old studio preamps and compressors to get the best drums results, likewise guitars.

Additionally, I plan to explore the variety of vocal recording techniques.

I will try to record with different available mics at Tileyard. Alternatively, I will record vocals at my place if needed. As mentioned, recording in the studio may create pressure for the performers and affect the delivery. Moreover, recording lead vocals at my place will save some time for tracking the instruments. Nevertheless, if the schedule will allow, I will attempt to record in Tileyard studios.

Recording stereo techniques

Arguably the drums and the bass are the core of the song. Moreover, great performance on those instruments can inspire guitarists and vocalists for better results. Likewise, balanced drums arrangement can create excitement and a sense of tension (build-up) which, we can hear in Natalia's previously released albums.

Inspired by albums like "Jak Malowac Ogien" and "Ofelia", I will look at a few recording techniques which could help in creating a sense of depth.

Techniques that could help to achieve a sense of distance:

- Spaced pair
- ORTF method
- Baffled-omni pair
- Coincident pair

Throughout the research, each method has its pitfalls and advantages. Nevertheless, I will be very keen to go for the Coincident Pair method. That enables me to manipulate the stereo spread by experimenting with the distance between two directional mics. Moreover, that way, I will get accurate imaging.

However, some principles need to be kept when the method is applied.

B. Owsinski explains: *“If the spacing between mics is too far apart, the stereo separation seems exaggerated. On the other hand, if the mics are too close together, there will be an inadequate stereo spread.”*

On the other hand, Owsinski advice is: *“The greater the angle between microphones and the narrower the polar pattern, the wider the stereo spread.”* (p.64 Owsinski, B., 2005.)

Nonetheless, I would love to try out the spaced miking. Spaced miking has its advantages, it helps to create a sense of warmth and great ambience. Moreover, by using omnidirectional microphones, there is the possibility to gain more low-end frequency.

Owsinski in his book states: *“The spaced pair method tends to make off-centre images relatively unfocused or hard to localize. In addition, combining both mics to mono sometimes causes phase cancellations of various frequencies, which may or may not be audible.”* (p.65 Owsinski, B., 2005).

Moreover, to obtain more punchy and clear stereo sound, the Glyn Johns technique could be beneficial. However, that method works perfectly in the big rooms. Nonetheless, it is still a great starting point in getting a great sound of the drum kit.

The article explains crucial points and why this method works so well when correctly balanced:” The big picture is that the sound comes from the overheads while the kick and snare mics act as “spot” mics to fatten up those two huge elements of the kit and give you a bit more to mix with.”.

Additionally, it's necessary to place mics at the same distance (overhead mic, snare mic) to get them in phase. Glyn Johns method could be a great option for that project, nevertheless, I am very keen on the Coincident Pair method for more wide sound.

(Recording Revolution, 2021).

Nonetheless, the article states: “...stereo recording is not just a question of reproduction at hard left or right. Naturally, the “in-between” distribution is important. Otherwise, angular distortion will occur.”. (DPA., 2019).

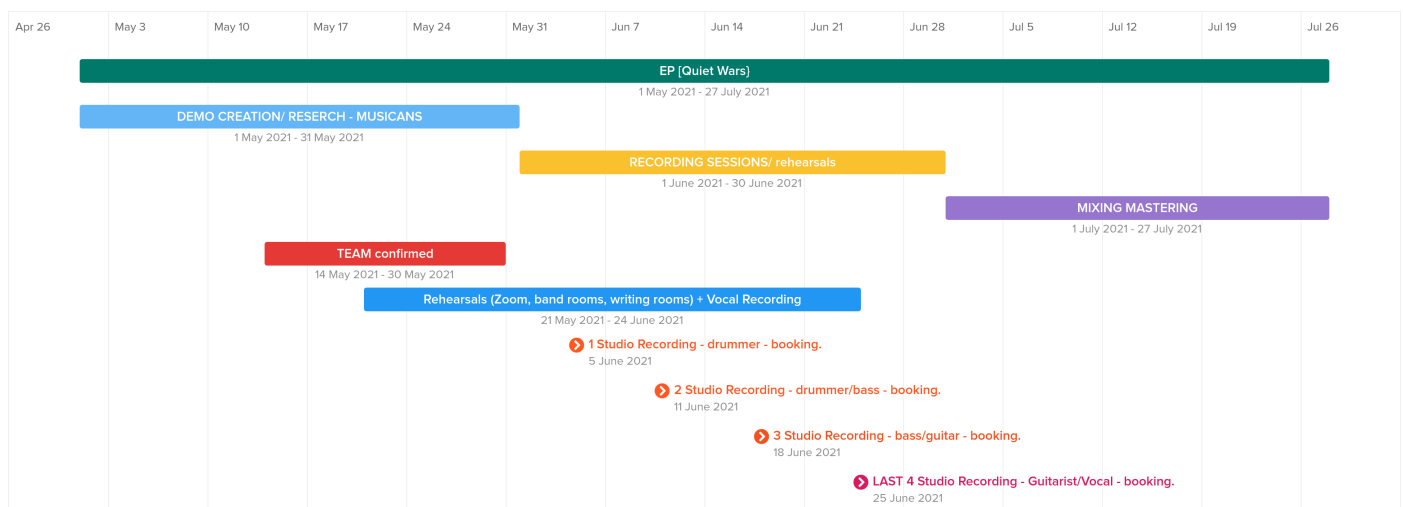
As the reference point, I have chosen an album by Natalia Przybysz named Jak Malować Ogień (Translated from polish: ” The way to paint the fire”) and "Ofelia" by Ofelia. Moreover, both these albums produced by Jurek Zagorski.

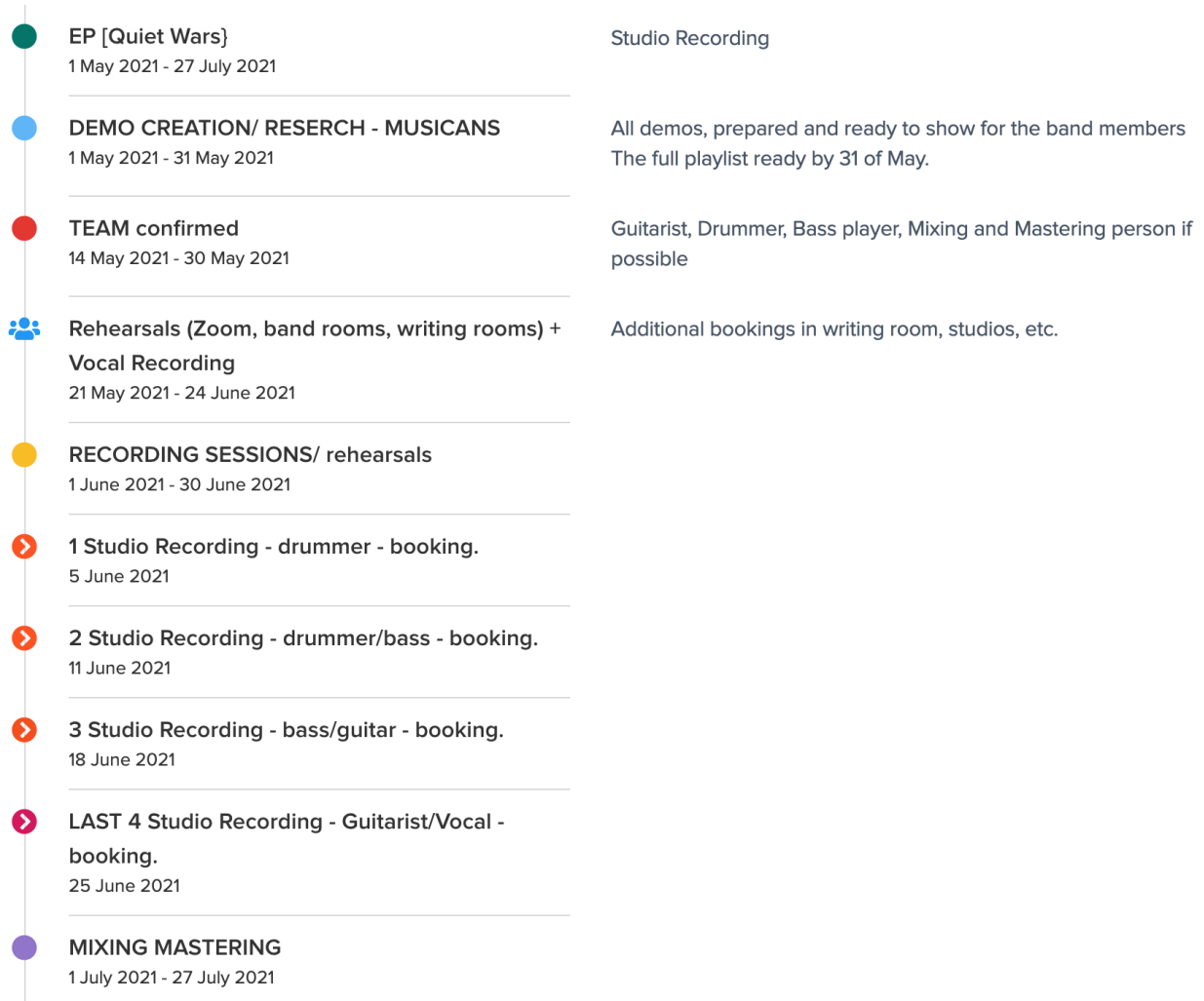
J. Zagorski is a fantastic producer, well known in the Polish scene and awarded countless time for his music productions those albums.

The culture journal says: *“The album, which came out in the autumn 2014 – and was recorded at the time when Przybysz went into therapy – is filled with blues, rock, and even country references. The sharp guitar sounds and powerful, organic drums, could be compared to Neil Young or even The White Stripes.”* (Culture, 2021).

Albums Prad and Ciepły Jak Malować Ogień by Natalia is a unique body of work. The production elements and arrangement demonstrate a sense of intimacy and honesty from the artist to the listener. Likewise, another great production from J. Zagorski is on the album from Ofelia named “Ofelia”. Great arrangements, rich guitar sound, authentic vibe, and honest vocal delivery, likewise fantastic songwriting.

Quiet Wars - Timeline





Conclusion

There are still things that need a more detailed plan, and songs that need to write. But as I go down the line will have to think critically to make this project finished, furthermore I will use and evaluate methods that works for me but also create my own. That means a balance between deadlines and the budget over creative control, moreover, gather creatives to work together and deliver an honest body of work. *"I have all the songs in my head thousands... they come up when it's time , I let life take me on this ride..."* producer, Benny Blanco. (Apple Music, 2021).

Throughout working on this proposal, I have developed the overall vision and, I got the bigger picture of what's coming next. That is a great starting point where I can get things to start evolving and translate them into practice.

This proposal will help reflect on the things in the final stage, where I will evaluate the entire process.

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