

NAME: James Grover

STUDENT NUMBER: 1808648

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**ASSIGNMENT TITLE: Creation Assignment
(Element 2b)**

MODULE LECTURER: Ciarán Robinson

PROJECT: INCORPORATING DISPARATE INFLUENCES INTO POP MUSIC

INTRO

For this project, I planned to study other genres that could be used as fresh, untapped influences for use within pop and dance music, as I had previously noticed that it was often the tracks of mine with quirkier influences that got people's attention. It has become clear to me in recent months that an element of risk is critical in creating a song that people will love, and hence this project was selected as a good way to prepare me for my ongoing career in pop music production.

The idea was to learn how to effectively incorporate these uncommon influences within modern electronic productions, something with which I had previously experimented but at which I had never succeeded. The intent was to split my time evenly between some not-so-well-known world genres and some historically popular genres that are no longer considered 'cool'. With the world genres, I knew the challenge would be in finding ways to incorporate unfamiliar elements, whereas with the historical genres, I knew the challenge would be to repurpose known-but-unfashionable elements into something that can sound current. Success in either or both of these challenges should provide tracks that sound fresh and can attract industry attention. They should be different enough to stand out, but not so different that they don't fit with the current mainstream musical climate.

TIME MANAGEMENT

I knew the biggest challenge with this project would be to work efficiently to leave time for my existing paid production work, and for writing sessions with upcoming artists/topliners. The main aim of this project was to develop a good portfolio which can open doors to working with more artists/topliners, so turning down potential sessions would run counter to this goal. However, a key strategy was to write deliberately in sessions with a view to incorporating influences from world music or historical music later at the production stage. This required me to practise and develop a level of tact during these face-to-face sessions, to allow me to convey my vision for how these deeply unfamiliar influences could work in the setting of their song. It proved possible to get these collaborators excited about trying something daring and different, with the promise that we could always remix into a more "standard" production if they didn't like the end result. A side benefit of this was that I discovered many other musicians are also curious about these rare influences, and I can use this knowledge in future work.

When scheduling the project, it became apparent that finishing ten to eleven songs in the time allowed would be too hard to achieve. Further guidance from the course leader confirmed that 6-8 pop-length songs would be appropriate and there would be no penalty for submitting less than 30 minutes of music). It was decided that two genres mentioned in the proposal would be immediately omitted, for which I chose those which I felt were already closest to being represented in recent hits (Indian Carnatic music and Rock'n'Roll), and then another two genres would be omitted after further experimentation, depending on which I felt were least successful. (I would later decide that Spouge sounds too indistinct when modernised and polished, and would find that classical music is too melodic to use with a pop topline). The unfinished tracks in these two genres are included in Appendix B.

In total, I calculated that I could spend around one day per song on production, with an additional half day for final mixing. Upon researching project management techniques, it seemed like the best strategy would be to work in short 'sprints' of creativity on each track, then move to the next, cycling between multiple tracks so you never get bored of the same one and they all progress at the same rate. In practice, this method worked best when cycling between 2-3 tracks, as working on any more at a time became too confusing. It has proven most optimal to work in blocks of 2-3 hours on a track, before moving to the next. This afforded me a fresh perspective each time I went back to each track.

To keep track of the project as it happened, I maintained a spreadsheet in a Gantt chart format, an example of which is included in Appendix C. Indeed I found this to be very helpful in ensuring work was completed before the deadline, and I have since expanded this chart to include all of my unfinished demos, co-writes and other productions, which should prove useful moving forwards in my career.

PREPARATION

My initial research was conducted by studying a list of past hit songs (*DISPARATE INFLUENCES IN POP on Spotify*, 2019) that have achieved cast success by incorporating these uncommon influences. I felt it was critical to see how this can be done at the highest level, to see how far these influences can be pushed while remaining 'pop', and also to determine my comfort level with regards to what I feel is a respectful use of elements belonging to cultures other than my own. Appendix A includes a full list of my findings and observations, but in summary it seems that the best use of influences from other cultures is when this influence makes thematic sense with the lyrics of the piece. Also, it seems possible to morally use any music with which you can establish a cultural link (by collaborating with an artist who has heritage of that culture), or failing that, by legally clearing a sample of an authentic track from that genre.

CREATION

Eight genres were further researched and used to influence eight new tracks; these will be discussed below in chronological order of when they were begun (as I learned new lessons with each track that I would apply to later tracks).

PUNK

MAIN SKILL LEARNT - Blending live elements into an electronic track

This is a genre I know very well from my teenage years. Hence I decided to tackle this production first, as it didn't require any further research, but I knew it would require a lot of experimentation on how to successfully blend disparate elements. In previous years I had attempted to use distorted guitars in an electronic production and this never worked, so I was determined here to overcome this hurdle (and I knew that a big failure here could demand that I reassess my choice of project). Also, instead of waiting to find an artist and write an appropriate new song, I chose to cover one of my favourite punk songs, "Paper Wings" by Rise Against. I always believed this song to have hit potential if covered in a more pop style, and had long been waiting for an excuse to attempt this.

In terms of the feel and energy I wanted to capture in the production, I deemed that "I Love It" by Icona Pop was an appropriate reference. However, "Paper Wings" demands a very different tempo, so I couldn't use the same beat here. Briefly looking at the pop charts, I learned that most recent slower tempo hits use a drum pattern inspired by trap music, so this is what I used here and feedback is that the result is appropriately current-sounding.

The cover song included punk elements within the songwriting, so it was key to find an arrangement letting it sit in the pop genre. I based arrangement choices on artists like Chainsmokers and Marshmello and then added layers of distorted guitars, and also layered the trap drums with punk-style 'live' drum samples in the choruses to blend the two styles. This quickly sounded interesting and different to standard pop, but also it sounded very messy having the fast loosely played punky guitars of the machine-perfect synths and drums, so after some trial and error editing, the live guitars were quantised as lightly as sounded good, and then cut into loops and treated more like samples in the session; this quickly proved successful, and is a technique I went on to use in many more of the tracks.

Another critical 'punk' element of the Icona Pop track is the vocal production. This track is often referenced within the industry as a pinnacle of 'attitude' within the pop genre, so I was confident that the reference was fit for purpose. Artist Maki Flow agreed to record vocals for the song, attempted to capture this same energy with multi-tracking and distortion. It was also decided to contrast the loud verses and riff section with a 'beautiful' and 'dreamy' chorus; this type of idea is rarely used in real punk but upon playing rough versions to some industry professionals, it was agreed by all that this was the perfect approach for the song and serves to highlight the emotional chorus lyric, as was intended.

The final challenge with this song again lay in the volume blend of live and electronic elements, too much level on the distorted guitars and the song sounded more like Fall Out Boy than Icona Pop, but too little and it felt like it might not be a punk song at all. These mixing decisions taught me how easy it is to drastically change the feel of a whole song with subtle fader moves, and quite some time was spent perfecting this. Further feedback from industry professionals confirms that the balance is appropriate for an edgy pop track, and that the cover was a good choice as the song stands out in the current pop landscape.

GAMELAN

MAIN SKILL LEARNT: Using unfamiliar textures

The second track I began work on was a co-write with an artist called Erica Manzoli. My research into gamelan music such as *Gamelan Definition* (2018) and *Balinese Gamelan* (2015) had shown that it is intended to invoke a peaceful, trance-like state in listeners and hence is often used in spiritual contexts. Hence our song "Serenity" made thematic sense. The co-writing process for this song was actually one of the more challenging sessions I've done as the artist is half my age and the youngest I've worked with, hence we didn't have much common ground to start from. Throughout the day we found a rapport though and got a result that I was very pleased with; I'd say I learnt valuable people skills here such as deeper levels of empathy and tact than I had before. Additionally, this was the first time I'd recorded in a 'proper' studio in a few years, and I discovered upon taking the vocal stems home that the Neve preamp we'd used was quite noisy and there was significant hum across all vocal tracks. This first hand experience taught me that it's always good to

check signal quality on a known pair of reference headphones when working in a new room, and also how to de-noise audio with Izotope RX.

When arranging the track, I felt it was most respectful to use traditional patterns like those shown in *Teach & Play Balinese Gamelan* (2012) for the different mallet and percussion instruments of the gamelan orchestra (which were all played via a sample-based virtual instrument). Of course, any extensive use of world musics such as this would ideally be researched by travelling to the region of origin and studying with the masters of the genre, but of course this was outside the scope of this project. The scope of this my web-based research is enough to provide suitable material for our single song, though more songs would need more varied research.

Fitting the traditional patterns into the structure of a standard pop track proved quite difficult, so slight modifications had to be made, while trying to stay as true to the source as possible. The scale used in Balinese gamelan is called "slendro" and is based on a 5TET system (*Slendro*, 2019); this immediately sounds out of tune and out of place in a pop track so the notes had to be retuned to their nearest 12TET equivalents. Another example was the way the droning mallet patterns, while indeed sounding hypnotic and 'floaty', also sounded a little too boring in context over a pop chord progression, so occasional variations had to be added to make the arrangement work. Feedback on their piece has been positive, with comparisons to hits like "I Hate You I Love You" by Gnash.

SWING

MAIN SKILL LEARNT: Using the 12/8 time signature

Always in search of new sounds, modern electronic producers will often draw elements from the past; producer-artists like Flume and Disclosure often make use of jazz chords within their synth arrangements, and if performed with a triplet feel, this can be reminiscent of early 20th century big band jazz, generally known as 'Swing' music. The global success of Disclosure's house track "Latch" with its galloping 12/8 rhythm made me think that it should be possible to cover a swing classic with this same kind of arrangement.

In my first-hand research speaking to various signed producer-artists, it was discussed how many electronic producers have broken onto the scene with a covers or remixes of a classic song, such as Jonas Blue's cover of Tracy Chapman's "Fast Car" or Sigala's Michael-Jackson-based remix "Easy Love". The 'mere exposure' effect means people will usually prefer something they know over something they don't (*Mere-exposure effect*, 2019), so releasing a cover or remix version can expose people to your work who would have never paid attention to an original song with that same production. Hence, it seems that releasing cover versions is a good strategy for getting a hit song. I decided to cover one of my favourite swing pieces, Nina Simone's "Feeling Good", a piece which periodically comes back into the charts as covered by artists such as Muse in 2001 and Michael Bublé in 2005.

Also from these same conversations, I learned that technically any cover version can be released without permission from the original artist, with the only step required to pay for a license based upon the expected number of sales, which can be topped up later as needed (*The Harry Fox Agency*, 2019). However, in practice, most signed artists will approach the original writers/artist for approval nonetheless, as it is prudent from a legal perspective to seek and obtain this pre-approval.

The process of making the track was relatively simple, using the original jazz harmony but converting the piece from a 6/8 feel (feeling like it's in slow threes) to a 12/8 (feeling like it's in fast fours with triplet feel in the subdivisions) (12/8 vs 4/4 *swing?*, 2014). This process of conversion required a little trial and error, and I learnt techniques from studying the reference tracks. From here it was a case of careful layering and sound design to get a result that sounded modern and 'cool', and this result has been confirmed by feedback from industry professionals.

In my proposal I mentioned the possibility of including a sample from the original song, but I decided that this wouldn't be worthwhile as I was happy with the way the all-electronic arrangement sounded and also I don't have the financial means to clear a sample legally. For vocals, I collaborated with neo-soul artist KAJA, who performed the vocal in just two takes. To stay true to the swing origins, I wanted to keep the actual vocal to a single track as if it was a sample of the original acapella, and then I used various effects in a trial and error process to thicken up the vocal production and get a modern sound.

BAROQUE

MAIN SKILL LEARNT: Using counterpoint (and EDM production)

Baroque is a genre (or rather a an entire historical period of music) deeply rooted in music theory. This contrasts strongly with the currently popular genre of EDM, which is known to be very light on music theory, making the combination an interesting one that I hoped would open up unexplored avenues within this current sound.

Baroque is based on the rules of counterpoint, and so it was necessary to learn these rules and how to apply them. Essentially counterpoint is using layers of interlocking melodic lines that should imply a harmony, rather than using chords to play the harmony explicitly. Fux and Mann (1944) teaches that there is a set of rules governing how each individual melody voice can move within a piece. The technique is separated into five "species" of increasing complexity, as the more voices are added, the more complex these rules become. Including more than two voices means voices must move at different rates to avoid blending into chords, so my track "Atoms" which includes fifth-species counterpoint is comprised of the vocal/lead synth melody, bassline, plus an additional two or three melodies (in different song sections). The bassline was indeed extended upwards onto chordal instruments too in the chorus and drop sections in order to achieve the powerful EDM sound, but the individual melodic voices remain distinct on top of this. Industry feedback confirms the song is a competitive EDM track in composition and production quality, comparable with an artist like Avicii.

Texturally, I chose to stick broadly to the standard EDM sound-set, only hinting at baroque textures with some harpsichord-esque pluck sounds. In terms of the production, I actually learn a lot about typical EDM production techniques from many sources, such as *The Ultimate Guide to Build-ups* (2017), as this was a genre I've long wished to master. These techniques are too numerous to discuss here, but it should suffice to say that industry professional feedback on my EDM-esque portfolio tracks has been much more positive than for any EDM pieces I had showed in the past. This should of course be very beneficial to my future career, as better sounding songs means more chance of a major cut or getting a hit release.

BOSSA NOVA

MAIN SKILL LEARNT: Using uncommon grooves

This genre is a blend of samba and jazz, and has a very cool sound (*How to Play Bossa Nova*, 2018), so to stay true to the influence, I decided to make a mellow pop-dance track with a slightly deep-house feel. Also bossa nova uses a distinctive 5:4 drum groove (*Introduction To Brazilian Grooves*, 2016) based on Euclidean rhythms, where the bar length is segmented into beats as evenly spaced as possible while remaining locked to standard grid-value notes (in this case, 8ths) (*The Euclidean Algorithm Generates Traditional Musical Rhythms*, 2014). These kinds of rhythms are prevalent throughout world music and I have noticed them slowly gaining popularity within western music, as they provide grooves that can feel highly syncopated yet comfortable and predictable. These rhythms are typically used in pop and dance for playing melodic riffs or bass lines around a four-on-the-floor drumbeat, but in this track I have explored using the pattern on the snare drum instead, as is done in traditional bossa nova. This immediately gave a pleasing fresh sound, as it is a famous rhythm yet I have never heard this drum pattern used with electronic drums.

I also researched how to compose authentic-sounding bossa nova bass lines and chord "comping" (as it is known in jazz). The technique found in *Bossa Nova Piano Lesson* (2013) were applied to the arrangement, and this immediately summoned the vibe of the genre. In my proposal it was stated that the traditional instrument for bossa nova arrangements is the nylon-string guitar, yet all my further research pointed to piano techniques, and I deemed that there were more suitable for use with synthesiser sounds instead.

Production-wise, I also took this as a chance to further practice what I had learned about EDM while researching the previous track. However, a critical part of production is making sure the topline marries with the backing music. I personally feel that production decisions should feel motivated by the topline, in particular by the lyrics (as in the case of my gamelan-inspired production for the song "Serenity"). In this case, it seems that a Brazilian-inspired backing track only really made sense with a Brazilian-inspired lyric idea, so I collaborated with artist Maki Flow and topliner Hannah Beighton to write a suitable topline for the track, in much the same way as Camila Cabello's hit song "Havana" was written with a very Cuban salsa-inspired instrumental. Initial feedback has confirmed that the effect we achieved in our track is very similar. Also it was decided to create a song in the structure used by currently popular EDM artists such as San Holo and Dynoro, where a single hook section of vocals is repeated throughout the track, rather than including the usual verse-chorus structure. Feedback confirms that this helps the song to sound current.

CLASSIC ROCK

MAIN SKILL LEARNT: Repurposing "old-fashioned" elements.

As I stated previously, releasing cover versions is a good way to get people's attention, and hence many electronic artists break through with a cover of an old song. Mostly these are past pop hits, and I posit that the reason for this is that it's much easier to update a pop production than it is to reimagine a production when the original is in an entirely different style, and that it is even harder still to successfully blend the old non-pop style with a newer pop style. However, some classic songs would only be possible to cover if prominent elements of the original arrangement were also kept intact. There is no shortage of great songs from the classic rock / riff rock period, yet very few cover versions from this genre have ever re-entered the chart (to my knowledge). I believe that a reason for this could be that the song loses too much appeal if the original guitar riffs are removed. Yet, it is difficult to work a

distorted guitar riff into a modern pop production (as I already found with my punk cover).

Here, after searching to find a song with a vaguely modern lyric and structure, I attempted to cover the classic "All Right Now" by Free as best I could, staying true to the original guitar and vocal styles, while updating the drum production and layering electronic sounds for a modern pop feel. I had already learned that treating live instruments as if they were samples is the best way to blend them into an electronic track, so here I chose to do the same, deliberately adding reverb then chopping off the tails in time with the beat to get a new and cool feel out of an old and unfashionable guitar playing style.

The benefit of learning this technique is that there are countless classic songs that could be updated, all of which have proven track records as hits. No one can deny that "All Right Now" is one of the all-time-great songs, whereas a newly written original song by an unknown writer such as myself may be catchy but hasn't proved anything in industry terms. Current A&R people in this data driven age (Hu, 2019)

are wary of spending their budgets on releasing unproven music, so it seems likely that there could be a lot of commercial potential for a well produced cover of a classic song that hasn't been attempted before. Feedback is that this is indeed a successful cover version and could have some commercial success if released.

APALA

MAIN SKILL LEARNT: Using world influences respectfully

In creating a song with inspiration from the Apala music of the Yoruba people of Nigeria, yet having no direct cultural connection myself, I felt like the biggest challenge would be authenticity and finding a way to use the influence ethically, without distasteful cultural appropriation. Of course the first choice would be to go study with actual Yoruba musicians, but within the scope of this course, my learning was internet based. Oludare (2018) explained the compositional traits that I should use within the piece, particularly the way the talking drums should mimic the prosodies of speech. Further research (TEDxUTA, 2015) showed how speakers of the Yoruba language can at times *literally* understand the "speech" of the talking drum, as the drum speaks in proverbs and has "catchphrases" that would not be apparent to anyone from outside the culture. Of course, as a non-speaker of the Yoruba language I thought it more respectful to base the drum "phrases" on the English-language vocals within the song.

I decided the most authentic way to get the sound of these drums was to simply purchase a talking drum at a cost of only £56, rather than to use samples or to search for a drummer to record to whom I would not be able to afford to pay a fair session rate. With this small purchase, I have also bought a lifetime of realistic percussion fills and beats (as I can always play and record this drum myself). Techniques of correctly playing the drum were obtained by watching a video of a master drummer (YouTube, 2007), and although the advanced techniques are beyond me, it proved relatively easy to create the call-and-response interplay I wanted between the talking drum and the vocals.

As I previously explained, I feel it is important to have some obvious motivational thread connecting the production style to the lyrics of a song, so ideally I wanted to write a new topline that could provide this motivation in a way that makes very clear the respect of the culture from which the production borrows. However, with the time pressures of the project, I decided it was necessary to use a topline I have previously

written with a singer called Red, which compared city nightlife to a jungle (which makes sense in the way that Nigeria has a lot of jungle). I actually feel that using this topline with the specific Apala reference in the music could easily be considered disrespectful, so I would only release the track in it's current form if it were to be sung by an artist who has some Yoruba heritage. Otherwise the plan would be to either write a different topline, or make the music less specifically Yoruba-influenced. It is worth noting however that Africa is a growing market for the music industry and Yoruba artist WizKid has recently found international fame, so the demand for these kinds of songs could be on the rise. Indeed, I plan to learn more about other African genres after the completion of this project, as it seems like this knowledge may become more and more important as music gets increasingly globalised.

In general, upon deeply considering the effects of cultural appropriation, my conclusion is that it is down to the intent of how and why one might use the influences that makes it acceptable or not. If the intent is to introduce western audiences to a culture that is unfamiliar to them, to open their minds and teach them about it, then this is very much fair use. Whereas if the intent is to use the culture of another people simply as a fresh sound which you can call your own, for profit and without insisting on giving credit to the origin of the ideas, then this is not appropriate. This happened with the minor backlash against 'tropical house' producers stealing Jamaican dancehall music (Fuse.tv, 2016) as is further discussed in Appendix A. On the other side of the argument, generation Z are thought of as 'the first global' (Spotify, 2019), due to globalisation of culture via the internet. Hence this next generation will grow up with a shared global culture where all influences might be considered 'fair game' without any further questions asked, and if this happens, the older generation will have to play by these same rules to keep up.

CONCLUSION

The main aim of the project was to develop a high quality body of work made up of tracks created with modern industry-standard techniques, and I believe that success here is evident within my portfolio. Specifically the portfolio was to be comprised of pop tracks including the influences detailed above, and although it was always obvious that these tracks would sound very different from each other, it is this deviation from 'the norm' that is the connecting thread between them, with this 'unpredictability' becoming the unique selling point of the portfolio. Also, as these tracks would be released by or pitched to different artists, it is not necessary or useful to have a consistent sonic signature, instead placing value in versatility and being able to meet the needs of any pop artist, no matter how wide their influences may be.

Success within meeting the aims was to be measured by whether a panel of industry professionals can hear commercial potential in my productions. This was assessed along the way, getting positive feedback and additional notes from various professionals that assisted in finishing the tracks. It was hoped to present a finished playlist to these professionals and take a survey for objective proof showing that these highly relevant aims were achieved within the time-scale of the project. However, the final mixing and mastering stage of the project took longer than expected (due to other exciting opportunities being presented which I could not turn down). Hence, there was not time to get a second round of feedback from these professionals on my final masters, but it's fair to say that their positive feedback from hearing the pre-mix demos was enough to confirm success in these aspects, as professionals are very much used to assessing rough mixes and demos versions.

Additional aims were to bolster commercial awareness of how other genres affect pop music, and to turn all these skills into a competitive advantage. After learning from all the referenced sources, I definitely believe that these aims were met and that moving forward with my career, these aspects will certainly help me achieve greater success. Indeed, upon comparison of my current situation to that outlined in a personal development plan that I completed in October 2018 (see Appendix E), it is clear to see how much my situation and skill level has improved and this is further proof that my goals have been met.

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APPENDIX A:

Study of past hits

- African High Life - 'One Dance' by Drake - This uses quite a varied array of influences besides the High Life guitar parts, none of which make obvious sense together or match the lyric in any way, it's just an interesting 'mish-mash' of global influences, which strikes me as an interesting approach, but also it could definitely be considered cultural appropriation when you simply take different elements of world music and make no attempt to credit their origin.
- Caribbean 'riddims':
 - 'Sorry' by Justin Bieber - This blatantly takes Dancehall rhythm known as 'Dembow' and uses it without explanation or real credit in an otherwise standard pop song by all-white artists and producers, not the approach I wish to take as I find this distasteful in itself. Indeed this was not the first pop hit to use this beat, but it's the most prominent example of a long list of hits that are similarly distasteful in my opinion. However, it is also true that the trend for using this rhythm in white american pop music paved the way for the Reggaeton phenomenon, and this has undoubtedly led to financial benefit of many Caribbean artists in the few years since, and to their soaring relevance in the global pop music charts, so with hindsight this was not a bad thing for that culture.
 - 'Rockabye' by Clean Bandit - It is my opinion that this feels like Sean Paul was included in the song to ease the guilt of the otherwise all-white team, as they'd used these reggae and dancehall influences so brashly. Although his inclusion seems like an afterthought, it mostly justifies the use of these influences, and hence it is a smart way to give enough credibility to a song to make it useable for release.
 - 'Side To Side' by Ariana Grande - much like with Rockabye, this track feels like Nicki Minaj (of Trinidadian birth) was added to morally justify the use of the obvious 'cod reggae' sound, created by a multicultural team featuring writers and producers of Swedish, Italian, Indian and Persian origin but lacking Caribbean provenance.
 - 'Work' by Rihanna - This track has a much more authentic feel, coming from a team of artists and producers with direct Caribbean heritage. On Genius (2016) one of the producers states "I was born in Jamaica and I grew up on dancehall music. My dad would play only dancehall in the house. I really wanted to bring back the feel of how I felt when I heard that riddim". The only way to truly achieve this level of authenticity is to make it in direct collaboration with people who are of that culture, but there are indeed other ways to approach the issue too.
- Latin grooves - 'Wild Thoughts' by DJ Khaled - It's hard to define from what actual country the groove of this track originates, but the beat is mostly sampled from Santana's classic "Maria Maria", which of course is inspired by Carlos Santana's latino roots. It seems from this case that by sampling an authentic song, and then clearing this sample for legal use, this all-but-guarantees the moral high ground with respect to cultural appropriation, as the song is otherwise unrelated to Latin America, yet the use feels entirely appropriate.

- Middle Eastern - 'Talk Dirty' by Jason Derulo - as with 'Wild Thoughts', this song features a sample from a song by Balkan Beatbox, and this was legally cleared to be fair use. Moreover, the song's lyrics clearly reference the exotic sound, justifying its existence as core to the song and not only there for novelty reasons. I feel like this is the strongest use of this technique within the list, and that it is this marrying of the lyrics and the musical influences which made the song such a big hit.
- Indian Bollywood: 'Toxic' by Britney Spears - this uses two Bollywood string samples to great effect in terms of sounding generally exotic, without sounding specifically Indian. The samples were legally cleared and this is a good example of 'fair use' sampling, where it doesn't seek to 'steal' or cash in on any other culture, but simply to use it to add a little spice to the sound design.
- Native American pipe music- 'Stole The Show' by Kygo - this track uses pipe flute sounds for the lead line, and indeed this helped the track stand out as a little different but is a good example of a track that doesn't push the influence very far. The pipe is just used as "an instrument" rather than a cultural reference, and this is a fair approach but perhaps a little too easy for the scope of this project.
- American Bluegrass/Country/Folk: -
 - 'Timber' by Pitbull - it certainly feels morally acceptable for any white artists to use any other white genres as influences, since white peoples have faced relatively little oppression throughout history. The use of bluegrass influences here just feels like a bit of fun, and it is likely this sense fun within the track that made it a hit.
 - 'Wake Me Up' by Avicii - the same is true here. It is possible that the inclusion of Aloe Blacc's soulful voice was intended to stop this recording sounding 'too white' to be cool. The interesting thing here is that Avicii changed the face of dance music with this record, leading to many copycat records over the coming years that would combine the same influences in the same way.
 - 'It Ain't Me' by Kygo - this is one such example of a copycat record, as Kygo very much followed in Avicii's footsteps by using these types of influences.
 - 'Old Town Road' by Lil Nas X - this song is perhaps the most interesting on the whole list in that it is an example of cultural appropriation of a rural white genre by an urban black artist, using a tongue-in-cheek country topline over a trap beat. Indeed country music has been gradually taking rhythmic elements from trap, and this track felt like a humorous response to that. It is clear that it touched a cultural nerve and the ensuing controversy was what let to its enormous success. It is interesting to consider whether it is possible to deliberately mash together genres to generate further social conversation on the subject of inclusion versus separatism.

APPENDIX B:

My unfinished song experiments with other genres

Spouge:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/9spba79bu3t4i3k/OCEAN%20-%20SPOUGE%20VERSION.mp3?dl=0>

Classical music:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/tfrpvanrbdsmc2v/Swan%20Dive%20INST%2075bpm%20%40yconnmusic.mp3?dl=0>

APPENDIX C:

Gantt chart of song completion

KEY:		Urgent	Ready To Do	Incomplete	To Edit	B	A	N/A	Add/Change?										
Title	Artist / Version	Lyrics + Melody written?					Guide Vox	Instrumental produced?					Demo Vox	Demo Mix	Final Vox	Final Mix	My %		
		Cho	Ver1	Pre	Ver2	Bridge		Chords	Riff Hook	Groove / Drums	Sound Design	Dynamics						Real Inst Rec	
Paper Wings	Punk	cover version, doesn't need toplining					me							Maki Flow			pitch to artists	0% (cover)	
Serenity	Gamelan											add flute?		Erica Manzoni			pitch to artists	50%	
Feeling Good	Swing	cover version, doesn't need toplining					me			layered needed	layers needed			all electronic	KAJA		pitch to artists	0% (cover)	
Atoms	Baroque						me							all electronic	me		pitch to artists	more reverb	100%
Take Me Back	Bossa Nova	repeated hook only										make drop bigger	make drop bigger	all electronic	Maki Flow		pitch to artists	33.33%	
All Right Now	Classic Rock	cover version, doesn't need toplining												gtr solo?!	me		pitch to artists	0% (cover)	
Orange	Apala										edit talking drum				Red		pitch to artists	33.33%	
NOTE: Screenshot taken at time of writing this part of the essay																			

APPENDIX D:

A list of music industry professionals to which I spoke (informally),

In date order of first discussion on the subject:

Sean Hargreaves
 Martyn Ware
 FutureClub
 Reece Szabo
 Michael Harwood
 Giovanni Damiani
 Sondr
 Manovski

APPENDIX E:

Personal Development Plan (October 2018)

Updated comments are coloured

Tileyard Education Personal Development Plan

MA

Name: James Grover Course: MA Commercial Music Producer

Vision and Goals

My Vision
To become a well-known hit songwriter-producer with lots of major artist credits... the next Steve Mac basically.
Short/Medium Term Goals (next 6/12 months)
- Get a session with a signed artist – regularly work now with Sondr who are signed. - Get a cut with a signed artist – 2 songs of mine are on the cusp of getting deals for the artists. - Sign to management (officially) – Michael and Giovanni advised that writer/producers don't really need this - Work on a song that goes on to get some traction (playlisting, 100k streams+) – this seems possible with next release - Get a major label "mixing" credit – still not close but my mixing is a LOT better than a year ago - Possibly, release my own single (as YCONN) – have 2-3 potential songs I could use for this
Long-Term Goals (2-3 years)
- Get regular mixing work or vocal production work from major labels. - Get a session with a major artist. - Get a cut with a major artist. - Sign a publishing deal. - Start making reliable/sustainable income from this. - Work on a song that goes on to get real traction (major playlisting, 20M streams+) - Ultimately: Work on a legitimate hit song, and then repeat. - Also, use any success as leverage for one of my music-business startup ideas.

SWOT - Personal Analysis

Strengths	Development Areas
"Ears"... I've learned how to recognise hit potential (or a lack of hit potential) – even moreso now, regular "a-ha" moments on this front	Hardest to hear my OWN work with the same clarity
Making pop music (melody, lyrics, arranging, production, vocal production, and most of all mixing/mastering) – lots of general	Singing, sound design... finding the "right" production sounds AFTER the topline is written, to make it current and chart worthy – improvements in both of these
	Being pushy in business/self-marketing, and

improvements here Strategic thinking – Commitment – Team work – Organisation – Professionalism – Fast worker – Always learning Thinking of starting points for songs: instrumentals, riffs, concepts, hooks – need to organise these into a searchable format, I have so many	having more confidence in my ideas in writing room situations (when working with more experienced writers)... particularly due to my sub-par singing skills – my singing is better now and i'm definitely more confident in sessions generally Finding it hard to finish ideas because of being a perfectionist, and or having too many ideas to choose from (paralysis of choice) – finished and release a few things this year
Opportunities	Threats
Cowriting with TYe students and alumni + using TYe studio – done and will continue doing! Networking with established TY residents, try assist when poss. – done and will continue doing! Investment fund to potentially launch a business (app or plugin) – will apply for this in Dec Enough financial freedom ATM to take career risks – yes, ish...	Always short on time, a lot going on – even worse now Hard to say no to finishing projects that have been started, even when I can see the risk/reward ratio is too high (time risk) – too many projects that I literally can't turn down! Avoiding health issues from overworking (RSI, bad diet, no exercise etc) – working from laptop on bed/couch helps when RSI is bad from desk work, eating a bit healthier

**My Professional Development Plan
Education 2018/2019**

Tileyard

Name:	James Grover	Course: MA Commercial Music
Producer		

What do I need to learn?	What do I have to do?	What support and resources will I need?	How will I measure success? - What does good look like?	Target date for review?
Learn how to sell myself better (in situations where I can't directly show the quality of my work)	Reflect on the way I introduce myself... prioritise which parts of my background I should lead with. Figure out how to convey accurately without underselling but without any hint of arrogance	Just need time to think about this	When I feel like I can get the connection right every time with each new encounter	Weekly/daily Still a big source of frustration!
Learn more about current /cutting edge production techniques	Study hit songs (and "hits" in upcoming underground genres)	Just an MP3, plus song stems if possible, plus tutorials etc on	When every song I finish gets a positive reaction from the majority of people	Monthly Improving

		techniques, + time to do all this		
Learn who all the important people are who I should get to know	Attend all possible networking events and talk to people... see who knows who. Read industry sites more frequently to become familiar with industry people's names	Newsletters to alert me to these events Just need to find time	When I can keep up with all industry name-dropping that happens and frequently have a personal connection to the name being dropped	3 months Going good here
Learn to finish more songs (stay motivated to go from rough demo to full demo)	Prioritise the best demos and set my own personal deadlines to do them by. Start writing to track (which avoids the issue).	Feedback from people to pick out the best songs Premade beats (try make at least 1 per week)	When I have 20-30 finished showpiece demos instead of only a few	6 months Got good stuff now, still not 100% finished but better...
Learn how to work most effectively with artists to "get the single"	Get lots of practice working with artists and actually getting tracks finished+released Consider the psychology of what the artists are facing	Just need artists to work with	When I have lots of released tracks with artists and some are getting traction etc	12 months Hard to judge coz things move so slow