

**Tileyard Education
University of Wales Trinity Saint David**

MA Commercial Music Production

Creation Elements C1
Written Proposal
Word Count: 2283

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May 2023

INTRODUCTION

At the end of the development module, I was unsure of what I wanted to do for my final project as there were many areas, I would have liked to explore further such as composing a music library catalogue, creating a virtual instrument (HISE), or sound design for video games (FMOD). I researched each area during the Easter break, and I made my decision solely on which would benefit me the most in the short-term post Tileyard Education. I opted for a mini 6 – 8 track album that I could add to my portfolio for prospective clients.

The genre of music I will be covering on this project is Bossa Nova, a reflective genre blending in the rhythms of Brazilian samba with American Jazz (Arcand, 2019). Although the genre had its peak popularity in the 1960's with songs such as The Girl from Ipanema by Antônio Carlos Jobim which has been covered by Frank Sinatra and Amy Winehouse (Cantor-Navas, 2019). The genre has been pushed aside and described as “elevator music” (Lewis, 2013). Bossa Nova however still has an influence in commercial pop music as heard in Bazzi's I.F.L.Y. and Billie Eilish 'Billie Bossa Nova'. And there are new Bossa Nova artists with millions of listeners on Spotify such as Laufey and grentperez with grentperez song Cherry Wine amassing over 94 million streams on Spotify. This has led me to conclude that there is still a commercial market to explore as well as being able to experiment with the genre to try and create an album that can appeal to anybody who does not want the sophistication of jazz music.

As each song would have to be mastered to a high-quality standard, I anticipate releasing this album commercially to streaming platforms such as Spotify and Apple Music, which I believe gives a more professional aesthetic to a portfolio than a SoundCloud playlist. The end goal professionally of this project is to showcase my musicianship, songwriting, producing, and engineering skills with these 6 - 8 tracks. The main goal musically is to produce a Bossa Nova album to fit in today's market rather than a nostalgic piece of art.

The Project

The sound of the album will be within the realm of lounge music which is not as watered down as Muzak (background/elevator music) but appeals to fans of traditional pop (All Music, No Date). A great example of this although not Bossa Nova, is the album by the Arctic Monkeys 'The Car' with its warm textures of sounds (instruments) which makes it an easy listen. Ideally this album can be

listened to from a perspective of enjoyment as well as being able to be sold as a music library album for video creators on platforms such as YouTube and TikTok.

I will aim to collaborate with other musicians to try and record much of the instruments live rather than rely on virtual instruments which does not always give a human feel to them. Arctic Monkeys' producer James Ford mentioned that in the production of the album *The Car*, the human and wonkiness feeling is what makes an album with Alex Turner using a Tascam 388 tape machine to record their demos (Roberts, 2023). I will be using a tape machine in my production which I will cover in the process section of this proposal. I have also sourced a vocalist, trumpeter, and an accordion player who have agreed to take part in this project however I plan to create the songs first before deciding how exactly they will be utilised. I also plan to source more musicians once I have started the project. These recordings will mostly take place at my home studio and Tileyard.

Each of the tracks on this album will also have stylistic differences with influences from other genres although not stepping too far away from my chosen genre (Bossa Nova). This can include hip hop drums, funk guitar rhythms, and orchestral strings arrangements. This is intended to show my versatility as a producer and musician on this album. There will also be the criteria of trying to create individual songs for TikTok as more artists and labels are jumping on this trend to drive up their careers by creating viral sounds (Campbell, 2023). An example of this is the song *Sunday Best* by Surfaces which went viral on TikTok a year after its release (Robinson, 2020) and is currently sitting on over 863 million plays on Spotify.

With this project there are lots of boxes I am trying to tick, and it may sound very contradictorily for example not trying to make elevator music but trying to make music that can go in the background of a TikTok video. I think the sound and texture of the album is what's most important in trying to sound warm, vibrant, and rich rather than cheap background music solely made on a DAW using VSTs.

The Process

The timeline from writing, recording, mixing, and mastering this project will take 2 months to complete [see Appendix A]. I will be taking into account as a function musician that I will have time limitations as June and July are wedding

seasons so most of my Fridays and Saturdays will be taken as well as other days during the week. This means that I will have to pull in long hours during weekdays to get as much done. I also do have the advantage of owning outboard gear to make the sound of my recordings better as opposed to recording directly from a microphone to an interface helping me save time from going into Tileyard to record something as simple guitar rhythm.

I will be following the work ethic of Prince by writing a song a day (Doble, 2016), this will allow me to have by the 1st of June approximately 12 demos to work with. I can then scale this down to the 6 - 8 tracks I will feel most confident about for this project. The month of June is when I will be recording the live instruments and vocals and getting all the tracks finished ready for mixing. I will aim to start mixing by the 26th of June and getting all tracks mixed by the 5th of July.

I will be experimenting on this project in trying to get an analogue and tape sound as I believe this will give a warm tone to the album and provide a different listening experience to that of a pure digital recording. There are artists who make music using tape machines such as Mac DeMarco who uses a Tascam 388 (Canino, 2015). This will help me expand my skills as an engineer as I will be using secondary research in the form of books, equipment manuals, tutorial videos and documentaries in trying to get the best recording possible. In my home studio I have access to a Tascam M30 and Tascam 244 (cassette recorder), so I will be using these to shape the sound of the album. The Tascam 244 is the model following the TEAC (Tascam) 144 that was used by Bruce Springsteen to record his Nebraska album in 1982 (Keller, 2007). The Tascam 244 is also used by Mac DeMarco on his debut mini-LP Rock and Roll Night Club (Lloyd-Russell, 2023).

I think I should point out at this point that I have a basic understanding of jazz music theory and recording to tape, so my motivation to learn and research will have to be there for me to get through to the finish line. As a person who is naturally curious in life, I do tend to be inquisitive in trying to find out exactly how and why things are done. I anticipate that there will be a lot of trial and error during the recording and mixing stage of this project but with the internet in providing a wide depth of information and knowledge, I should be able to find solutions to problems.

Benchmark for success

I think preparation is key to do a great job especially when using recording equipment from the 80's. I have started this process by purchasing a pack of 3 new cassette tapes (C90 Maxell XL-II Music) to record the album on. In the case equipment does fail, I do have other outboard analogue gear such as the Warm Audio WA-73 which does a successful take on the legendary Neve 1073 channel module (Sound On Sound, 2018), so I'm well prepared for failure.

As I intend on releasing this album commercially to streaming platforms, one can always judge the success of this by the amount of listens it attracts however my aim is to showcase my skills to potential clients. If I follow my timeline and hit the deadlines, I set myself by the end of this journey I would have written and produced a high-quality album sonically as well as musically.

Research

TikTok has become a huge and influential social media platform with the mobile application being the most downloaded in 2022 and maintaining the third largest monthly active users behind Instagram and Facebook (Paul, 2022). This has affected the music industry as there are many songs as demonstrated earlier such as Sundays Best by Surfaces (Robinson, 2020) that have risen dramatically due to TikTok. Research by MRC shows that 63% of TikTok users discovered new music on TikTok and 72% associated certain songs with the app (TikTok, 2021). This has directed songwriters to even write specifically for TikTok as in the case study of Canadian rapper Tiagz who has amassed a following of 4.2 million on the app by writing songs based on TikTok's memes and trends (Whateley, 2023). I will be writing songs for TikTok that can fit into certain trends including #StyleTok, #CoffeeTok, and #TravelTikTok as these trends tend to use background music. This will be a great way to try and get my music discovered even by posting videos myself as the algorithm will push the video to at least one person and if successful with audience retention and interaction then TikTok will push this even further (Hern, 2022). TikTok has also launched a distribution platform for musicians and artist helping them to market themselves on the app (TikTok, 2023).

Tape machines and cassettes are making a comeback in the music industry, in America the growth of cassette tapes has grown from 173,000 in 2020 to 343,000 in 2021 (Browne, 2022), whilst in the UK it has seen its highest levels

of sales since 2003 with 195,000 sold in 2022 (Zahid, 2023). Within the recording industry there are companies such as Mara Machines who recondition and sell MCI tapes whilst other companies such as ATR Magnetics are manufacturing reel to reel tapes (Edwards, 2019). Well known recording artists such as the Foo Fighters, Jack White, Lady Gaga, and Mark Ronson are also recording to tape making producers, engineers, and studios with tape capabilities a unique selling point (Sax, 2016). During the Mixing Techniques classes at Tileyard, we had Ricky Damian speak to us in which he mentioned that he managed to get a job as an engineer for Mark Ronson mainly because of his ability to use tape, he's also mentioned this in an interview with Record Production (2016, 22:20). As I'll be using a home recording version of a tape machine (Tascam 244), this will be a starting point to learn and start recording to tape.

Implications

As mentioned, there are many implications of recording with equipment from the 80's such as channel strips not working, speed issues, etc. Due to the time limit of recording this project I won't have time to get these fixed by a professional so in the case that things stop working I have alternative analogue gear ready at my disposal. I could also try and fix the problems myself using the manuals of these machines as these are great tools of how the machine works. Sourcing a Tascam Portastudio is also easy in the current online marketplace (Facebook, Ebay, Gumtree) so getting one on the same day is a viable option. When recording an instrument or vocal to tape, there is little room for error as a musician unlike Pro Tools or Logic when you can re-record as much as you want. I will be considering bouncing the instruments and tracks to tape rather than record directly. Although it won't be a complete digital recording as I'll be using the WA-73 preamp and Tascam M30, it could save myself a lot of time.

Conclusion

I have not set any rules for this project apart from not straying too far away from Bossa Nova and getting an analogue tape sound. This will keep me motivated and focused as I can experiment every step of the way from songwriting to producing. As I'll be using home recording equipment, I do believe a high-quality commercial recording can be made as shown by Mac DeMarco on his debut LP, but I do have to be wary of this sounding broadcast ready and not like a demo.

As I'll be making a genre of music I have never produced before and using recording methods alien to me, I will be developing my skills further as I will be out of my comfort zone pushing myself to learn and research new methods. The concept of tape is making a resurgent and I would like to have the skills required to offer this as a service in the future. I have spent hours watching videos on YouTube on tape machines and now I feel ready to get this project started. I will learn a lot; I just have to make sure it all translates into a well-produced final product.

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Appendix A: Timeline

Date	Task
15 May - 30 May	Produce 10 - 12 Demos - send completed demos during this period to musicians I will collaborate with to bounce off ideas
31 May - 14 June	Start the recording process and get all 6 - 8 tracks completed in this 2 week window
15 June - 26 June	Get a balance mix of all the tracks and organise playback sessions for any changes or re-record any sections if needed
27 June - 5 July	Get each track mixed and organise playback sessions
6 July - 10 July	Finish the final mix of each of the track and get tracks ready for mastering
11 July - 20 July	11th July latest to have time for revisions if needed
21-Jul	Submit project by 9am to avoid any server problems