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Element C1

Written Proposal

Tile Yard Education

For my final project I intend to create a producer artist album based on collaborations in the style of the producer. I will produce and mix all the songs to a release standard and have them ready to be mastered at the end of the project.

The final version of the album will have a total of 10 tracks with approximately half of them being collaborations. I'd like to write at least 20 tracks and then narrow that down to final track list. This is something I've done in my previous experience as a member of the band "JAWS", although we usually have a longer time frame to write and no deadlines to meet as an independent act. I still think it's a good practice to write more than you need and not rush to release the first ten songs you finish as a project. An alternative approach would be to focus on making 10 really strong tracks, however I think too much thought and time into each track, especially when you have the time to work and explore more ideas can be detrimental to the process. You might get 10 good tracks, but the project as a whole might not be as strong as it has the potential to be. For collaborations I'll reach out to peers from Tile Yard, Friends, and professional artists to work on this project as well as using my own voice as the main vocal on songs.

The influences for my album in terms of sound come from different places, from leftfield indie bands like Radiohead and Bon Iver, to Rappers like Brockhampton and Travis Scott, to alternative electronic music Charli XCX and Four Tet. Although these artists are all commercially accessible, it's their quirks and original sounds that make them stand out, I plan to take some of those elements and apply it to my work.

I connect strongly with music that can communicate emotion without the need for words, this is something I always aspire to do when creating. At this point I cannot state a musical or lyrical theme for the album as it's at the very early stages, however I'm sure that the sound and the feel will become clearer as more songs are completed during the process. Even though I'm not going to define a genre I want to make sure the quality of production and mix stand up next to commercial releases. While I'm still developing my sound it's good to be open to all genres and have an open ear, I think that's where you can really push yourself rather than putting yourself into a pigeonhole before you've really started your career, however ultimately, I want to be a producer that people come to for their sound rather than a producer can make you a track in a specific genre. 'More than anything feeling is what matters' (*Producer Jim-E Stack: Song building workflow, Mixing & Production Tips, 2020*).

Producers are collaborators by definition, 'a record producer's job is to realise the full potential of an artist or band' (*Glossop, 2021*) however not all of them release albums under their own names. Rick Rubin for example has a career that spans 40 years working with everyone from Beastie Boys to Slayer to Red Hot Chili Peppers to Kanye West; a huge span of genre's but not necessarily a signature sound. In recent times producers have been signing record deals themselves, not only because of their composing talents but because producers also act as scouts for discovering and nurturing new talent (*Setaro, 2018*). This for me is where the producer can cross over into the artist world and release a collaborative project.

I'll be looking more closely at producer artists like Mura Masa and Jim-E Stack. Two producers that collaborate with writers and vocalists to release full projects under their own names receiving commercial success whilst having one foot in the alternative underground scenes.

Mura Masa's self-titled debut (*M, Masa 2017*) features 13 tracks and was produced between 2014 & 2016 (*Ceccarelli, 2017*). It includes 11 vocal collaborators and charted at 19 in the UK Album charts and has over 500 million streams on Spotify. Mura Masa's sound has influences of UK bass and electronic dance music but is ultimately a very commercial sound and for me musically lacks the same feeling as the other album I've looked closely at which Jim-E Stacks 'Ephemera' (*Stack JIM-E 2020*). This album is only 8 tracks with 7 collaborators and didn't chart in the UK, it still boasts 11 million streams for only being out for 6 months. The difference between Jim-E Stack and Mura Masa is that Jim-E Stack is a producer first, previously working with Bon Iver, Dominic Fike and Charli XcX before creating this album from off cuts and song's that were never used. 'Ephemera' was also independently released vs Mura Masa's major label marketing machine backing. What I'd like to try and achieve is to take some of the pop elements from the Mura Masa album and give them the feeling and warmth of the Jim-E stack album fused with my own sound and influence which I hope will create something fun but also emotionally engaging. Even though both records take on a more electronic sound, the JIM-E Stack record has a lot more live instrumentation like drums, guitars and pianos which is something I will be exploring in my project. Both records were put together over the space of a couple of years however that's not always the case when making an album. Black Sabbath spent one day in the studio to record their debut album in 1969 (*Black Sabbath 1970*) and Belle & Sebastian spent three days in the studio for Tiger milk (*Belle & Sebastian 1996*) (*Degroot, 2014*). I know this doesn't consider writing all of the songs but as a producer to do that much work in such little time is astonishing.

I'm taking on this project because I believe as a producer, I've started to develop my own sound and that's something I really want to explore deeper. Over the last two terms at Tile Yard Education, I've become a lot more comfortable with collaboration and letting people in on the creative process. Coming from a band background and having an anxious personality collaboration has always been something I've never entertained outside of the band, but with confidence intact I plan on working with my peers as well as reaching out to artists outside of Tile Yard Education. As well as this, producing music to a release standard that stands next to the artists I love has always been a personal target for me, aiming for this will help set me up for my career post MA. As I go through the project, I intend to hold two listening sessions with close friends and peers over zoom as well as reaching out to Sam Cantlon (Raygun) and James Cara (Dirty Hit) for professional A&R feedback on my songs. By doing this I can fine tune what might be more commercially successful rather than being completely guided by my own taste and lack of professional experience as a producer.

I intend to spend the first 4 weeks writing as much music as possible while reaching out for potential collaborations, I'm in the lucky position that I have a small room at home that I have set up as a home studio however due to the lack of space I hope to make use of the Tile Yard facilities as a place to collaborate, as restrictions are still in place and I currently share a house with 3 other people. As studio time will be limited in the period I have from now until the 23rd of July, most of the work that isn't collaborative will be completed from my home set up. I also intend to use the Tile Yard studios for guitar and drum tracking. To save on time I may record all my guitars via DI at home and re-amp them in the studio. This is a skill I've not really dived into and will have research to gain some insight on. I will also spend a day tracking drum loops and one shots to take home and use in my songs. I intend to apply multiple recording techniques here such as Glyn Johns (*Mcallister, 2020*) as I want to try and get a saturated old school drum sound for my record. I will also be making use of the studios to

re-do any vocal recording with collaborators in person, sometimes it's hard to get the best takes over zoom so with the world opening it will be useful to have that option.

Now the main obstacle for me is time, reaching out to people to collaborate is one thing but finding the time that works for both parties can be a struggle especially within a tight time frame. If I wasn't making a point of collaborating there's a chance, I could wrap it up quicker, but I also must consider when I'm not feeling creatively inspired. However, these are the times I can spend looking up and researching artists to work with, reading or switching off and coming back to the project with a fresh enthusiasm.

Having worked on 3 album projects in the past I have some experience when it comes to working to deadlines, although I've never had a deadline quite this tight to do a whole project. In the past I've had up to the best part of a year to collate a group of tracks together before getting in the studio with a producer to do the final versions. In my experience the more time the better when in the studio, on the JAWS album "Simplicity" we tracked 12 songs in 12 days, very long days and very long nights but we got the job done. I want to approach my project and my home studio with the same intent as being in the studio doing the final versions of songs. Today there's plenty of artists and records with commercial success that have been recorded and released from the "Bedroom" for example The Streets, Bon Iver and Mac Demarco (*Curtis-Horsfall, 2020*). It can be a limitation obviously, I can't record a full drum kit here or work until the early hours of the morning, but limitations can also force creativity, you have to use what you have and make it work. So even though it's an obstacle in that respect, it has its advantages, that being that it's free and I live in the room next door, so when an idea pops into my head, I can get straight into it.

As well as this my home studio has no hardware and a limited toolbox when it comes to software plug ins. Even though they go hand in hand, producing and mixing are two different disciplines, but I want to give myself the challenge of mixing too as I know I'll massively benefit from the experience. With that in mind I won't be mastering the project as I think it's important to get another set of ears on it before it potentially goes out into the public domain. Arguably I shouldn't mix it either but with no budget and time constraints as well as being passionate about it I want to at least attempt to do it myself. Another problem I may run into is quantity over quality, as mentioned before on previous album projects I've had up to a year to complete the writing and demos where I'd usually aim for 30+ tracks, here I'm going for 20 but even that might be a stretch if a bad spell of writer's block hits or there's a lack of inspiration. To counter this I'm going to get myself into a working routine to help me stay on track.

To consider this project a success I'd like to have 10 strong tracks fully produced and mixed to a release standard with at least 5 collaborations. Personally, I'd like to accomplish using the recording studio to track drums and guitars as part of this project to prove to myself it's something I can do going forward as well as generally building my confidence in a studio environment. Constructive feedback from peers and A&R that ultimately lead to a better end result and something I can be proud of that I would be comfortable with considering releasing and reaching out to artists and labels for production work.

I have 11 weeks to complete this project so I'm going to have to stay focused and plan a lot of what I'm doing, I've put together this schedule as a rough guideline to follow that will help me get this project to its end on time. I've set it week by week as I find putting a daily

pressure on myself is unproductive for me and can cause a lot of stress, I work better with freedom under a looser timeline. As I mentioned earlier the more time the better for these kinds of projects, but I think 11 weeks is a totally feasible timeline to complete this in.

May 3rd – May 24th

- . Write and produce 20 songs
- . 10 collaboration tracks
- . Drum loop tracking session at Tile Yard studios
- . Guitar re-amping session at Tile Yard studios
- . Research and reach out to potential collaborators

May 24th – May 31st

- . Peer feedback session 1
- . Continue to work on tracks taking into account peer feedback

May 31st - 7th June

- . Peer feedback session 2
- . Continue to work on tracks taking into account peer feedback

7th June – 14th June

- . Begin to narrow down track list
- . Begin final mix process

14th June – 21st June

- . A&R Feedback
- . Complete final mixes

21st June – 23rd July

- . Write reflective commentary
- . Time to re-do or tweak anything I'm not happy with recording or mix wise.

Upon research it seems there is no right or wrong formula for completing an album project, it's completely down to artistic expression and that's why some albums take years to make and some take weeks. It's all dependent on the artist or the individuals working on the project from the time to write the songs to the time spent working on the production. As a producer / writer I can do both of those things at the same time but as Rick Rubin said 'Producing is like fishing, you can say I'm going fishing today, but you can't say im going to catch 3 fish today' (*Zane Lowe Meets... Rick Rubin, 2014*).

You can't predict when inspiration will take hold or when the creative enthusiasm might fizzle out so there's always a chance I could get half way through my schedule and have 3 finished songs, but on the other hand there's also a chance that I might finish the project with 30 songs. That being said, I think with my own experience and the research I've done looking into producers and other similar projects, that is something I'm confident about accomplishing within the time frame and see it as a personal goal to prepare me for working to deadlines in my professional career.

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