

Creative Practice 2 – Music Technology

Producer Case Study

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For this case study I aim to research in depth two producers who interest me. I will explore their production work process and see how both of my producers' styles vary, their similarities and their differences. I will show how their music and style has evolved through their careers as well as the people they have worked with.

The producers I have chosen are Olafur Arnalds and Nolly Getgood, for their range of experience. Both have different ways of producing. Through this case study, I hope to achieve a greater understanding of the various ways there are to produce music.

Role Of The Producer

A music producer is a person who manages the overall construction of a song and the people involved. 'Music producers are expected to know how to monitor and control virtually all the sound elements of a session' Harrington (2018). This job role can include making music, mixing, mastering and moulding the sound for yourself or for others.

Generally, a music producer will create music from scratch. Once an idea is thought of They will then go about recording in a studio using recording gear such as an interface and selected microphones, often with the help of a sound engineer. They will then oversee the recording making sure everything is managed properly as well as making sure any session musicians and staff are comfortable. After the session is successfully completed and everything is recorded, the producer will mix and master the song. As well as this, Producers don't always create music, they can record, mix and master another artists music to be released.

In a studio, you would typically have two staff, a producer and an engineer. An engineer's job role is to help and assist the producer in the studio. This person will usually only handle the technical side of the recording such as mic placements and the use of outboard gear. In most cases producers tend to double up as an engineer as well as a producer. This is so they can control the aspects of the sound themselves as well as it being cheaper than hiring an engineer.

Olafur Arnalds



Olafur Arnalds is a producer and composer from the country of Iceland. Since his first album, 'Eulogy for Evolution' was released in 2007, Olafur has created, produced 15 more albums, two of which being soundtracks for the British television series 'Broad Church' which won a BAFTA music award for original music. Olafur's latest album 'Re:member', which was released in 2011, explores a new direction of creativity, unheard before. This new direction and production style will be the focus of this artist's case study.

Olafur Arnalds recent album, Re:member, his production style flows around one clever musical creation that has changed the way of recording music completely. Following a car accident which left Olafur with nerve damage in his hand, he thought he'd never play piano again. As a result of this Olafur worked to create a piece of software called "

"Stratus", this would then give him the ability to play two upright Disklavier pianos, via the software, with one keyboard. After being able to regain feeling in his hand, this software was then developed and became two semi generative player pianos controlled with one central grand piano with a midi strip installed to capture the notes played and to convert them to midi.

A song that truly shows this software in action is 'Undir' on his album 'Re:member'. In this song the pianos generative sequence creates a sound so gentle that it compares to the light patter of rain.

This is complemented with the use of felt on the pianos to create a damper, more soft and percussive sound. These two pianos are usually recorded with small diaphragm condensers and are panned hard left and right in the mix to give a wide spread of sound to feel as if you are surrounded by them. Please see below an image of the Stratus pianos (which some have named the ghost pianos):



These pianos are usually accompanied by a quartet of cello, viola, violin 1 and violin 2, viola usually playing more of a lead than traditional quartets. As well as this he uses a wide variety of synths and soundscapes in the creation of his music, two of the most frequently used synths being a Korg PS3100 and a Roland Juno-60 plugged into two Roland space echoes'.

Olafur Arnalds is involved every step of the way in producing his music, however for large orchestral projects he is usually seen overseeing the progress from behind the console and lets the engineers set up the microphones.

Nolly Getgood



Nolly Getgood is a music producer and engineer from the city of Bath, England. Nolly is known for his close relationship with the djent band 'Periphery' to whom he used to be the bassist for until recently leaving the band. Nolly has a very hands on approach to his job, he is completely involved in the recording and will usually take on all aspects of the job such as placing the microphones himself to achieve his own personal preferred sound and will be riding the console. He has produced, mixed and engineered for artists such as Periphery, Devin Townsend, Animals as Leaders, Northlane and many more.

As well as this Nolly Getgood has done live sound engineering for many big bands, a notable example of this is his of engineering the sound at the Royal Albert Hall live for the Devin Townsend Project. This is extremely impressive due to the huge size of the hall to be able to achieve a good mix in those acoustics takes a person with a good ear for sound, which is what Nolly definitely has.

Getgood studied sound production and engineering at the University of BIMM Bristol. He now owns his producing company as well as working with multiple large companies such as Neural DSP and Bareknuckle pick-ups, it is with these companies that his fascination with sound clearly shows.

Through various experimentation with musical electronical equipment, speaker cabinets and a little help from Neural DSP Nolly was able to capture his many unique amps and speaker cabinets to be played by anyone simply by plugging in a guitar direct into a computer. With this he has released

software called the Nolly Archetype amp simulation plug in. As well as this, Getgood works with Bareknuckle pick-ups helping to capture the desired sounds that people want their guitars to be like. In this job it is very important to have a good ear for tiny changes in sound.

When micing up instruments Nolly will continuously move each mic until he achieves the best raw sound possible so that not much needs to be edited in post as too much editing can take away the energy from the sound. When mixing, Nolly Getgood swears by the “top down method”, this means that before mixing any of the separate instruments in his session he will send them all to a single master bus which he has a set preset that he uses for every project. This gives him an idea of how it will sound as a whole, also this way makes mixing the rest of the track more inspiring.

Conclusion

To conclude, Both producers have many different ways of producing, as well as many way similar ways of producing. Starting with similarities, both have become very successful through their unique way of sculpting audio. As well as this, both producers have worked hard to create new technologies that have been unheard of, this has greatly backed up their careers. Also, Olafur and Nolly both take care when sculpting their unique sound, this is very important for a producing career as this makes them stand out as an individual, meaning that more people will desire to work with them due to their one in a kind sound. Both are willing to experiment with explore sound passed the usual way of thinking to achieve the best sound possible that in some cases can not be replicated again. As proved by Olafurs generative pianos which never play the same sequence.

Despite these similarities, these producers also have many differences in the way they handle sound. Nolly Getgood is very hands on with everything he captures, he will personally mic up, test and tune a drum kit, he will experiment with many different mics which best suite the genre he is working in as well as best compliments the instrument he is recording. However, Olafur arnalds tends to take a ‘backseat’ approach to recording. He will leave the setting up of mics to the engineering team and

will have his lead violinist organising the musicians and conductor. Olafur is usually behind the glass in the console room overseeing everything and making sure every sound is captured to his specification. This is a more traditional producing role than Nolly, as Getgood takes on the producer role as well as the engineering role.

From the research I have conducted in this investigation of the two producers I have found that to become a good producer you must have very good ears to listen to the finer details in sound. Through this you can explore deeper into the world of sound and create new ways of producing it. As a result, you will become noticed from this and people will want to work with you, greatly expanding your career to new opportunities.

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