



Creative Music Management

Reflective Summary

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Task

Write a 2500-word reflective summary which explains:

- a) Your involvement in the group portfolio and presentation task to create a single, remix and associated media assets, and;
- b) Your reflections on the impact of all types of digital technologies with reference to the creation and promotion of original popular music and team development on creative industry projects.

Introduction

We were tasked with forming in to a group of three to develop a series of assets to support the release of an original single for an artist. Immediately, Desirée Banugo, Denis Simms and myself were drawn to each other, recognising the skillsets among one another that could be effectively utilised to maximise results in this project. Personally, I have significant experience in artist development as I have been recording and producing music for over a decade as well as running an independent recording studio in Croydon since 2011. Producing my own content from this studio has provided me with the opportunity to work directly with other artists, producers, live music venues, distributors, collection societies and online music platforms. Most importantly, this role allowed me to form lasting relationships and build an extensive knowledge of the music scene in the UK. Desirée has an extensive background in content marketing and social media growth. Denis is vastly experienced in artist management, having managed bands and singers across the UK and US for a large portion of the past decade. We felt that each of our specialist areas could be perfectly married together to form a formidable group that would allow an artist to develop their career outside of the project's remit. As a result, the task of choosing the roles within the group was made easier.

Learning outcomes

It was detailed in the module brief that we were expected to be able to complete the module having developed the skills to build and present detailed, innovative and sustainable professional strategies and best practice for the exploitation of music and media intellectual property and skills. In order to attain this goal, we would need to enhance our abilities in financial management, asset development, entrepreneurialism, presenting, pitching and portfolio building. It was therefore essential that we worked effectively as a team whilst utilising our individual leadership and decision-making skills. I believe that many of the pertinent skills were initially developed throughout Semester 1 in modules such as Economics, Planning & Finance as well as Live Event Management. We were also able to use the first semester to find an artist on the MA Commercial Songwriting and Production course that we were most excited about potentially working with. I believe that we were able to achieve our learning outcome, both individually and collectively, and are now better equipped to tackle similar tasks in the real world.

Choosing the artist – Chloë Rona

The decision-making process in choosing artist to collaborate with on this project was particularly challenging. Although we all felt that there were standout artists, we each had our own feelings about how it would be best to take their respective careers forward. Ultimately, we reached a consensus on Chloe as she was the artist that we all had on our lists and the singer who we felt that we would be able to give the most to. Her distinctive fashion sense and sultry vocals made her perfectly suited to mainstream audiences. We also felt that she was still early enough in her development for her to malleable and open to new ideas in her artistry. We were in agreement that Chloe could improve her live performances and her chorus writing skills and suggested top-liners to support her in this process. Our initial meetings ran smoothly and were aided by her openness to work with us as a group and accept new ideas into her creative process. I had many pre-conceived notions about working with a singer on a project such as this, especially considering the intimate and personal nature of the song. It was my belief that this would prove challenging as the artist would be reluctant to take on changes in lyrics or production. Whilst this was true in some capacity, we were able to use each group members' area of expertise as a foundation for any changes that we felt needed to be made. I was therefore satisfied with the outcome of our decision and felt we were best positioned for success.

Developing the assets

As noted earlier, each member of the group had their specific strengths and areas of expertise that could be utilised in completing the task at hand. Aside from my experience in music production and studio management, I have also spent time overseeing asset development at a creative agency. This has given me practice writing briefs and pitch decks, developing mood boards and graphic mock-ups as well as working to tight budgetary restrictions in high-pressured environments. It is imperative that companies stick to deadlines and budgets when working on projects of this nature as any delays or overspends can damage business relationships and affect the quality of the product or service being delivered. I was able to develop a brief that I felt represented Chloe as an artist and would allow a design to be produced that was in line with her previous releases and brand identity. The end product was a clean, simple and striking design that I believe will engage new audiences who may discover Chloe's music on streaming services or social media.

I was also involved in developing the production of the song. My background in music production meant I was able to offer valuable insight into the R&B/Urban industry and how to break new artists in the most effective way. The production on the demo version of the song lacked identity and a driving melody. This was reconsidered by Chloe and ourselves and placed in the hands of Joe and Duncan, also students on the MA Commercial Songwriting and Production course. The song has since been redeveloped and re-recorded with a distinctive, dark instrumental to match Chloe's salient vocal delivery.

Restrictions

Although we were able to navigate the majority of tasks successfully, there were some restrictions that prevented us from being able to reach our full potential. The most important of these was the budget. Whilst we aimed to utilise the £500 given to us by Tileyard Music as effectively as possible, many music projects can escalate in cost when aiming to push the boundary creatively. The lack of funds meant that we had to scale down our original plans to offer a more comprehensive marketing strategy and promotional rollout. We also experienced restrictions based on Chloe's existing audience and fan base. At present, we had very little data on which to build our marketing strategy and therefore had to formulate ideas based on the direction we thought would work best. Given extra time to devise a more concise and accurate plan, I believe that we would be able to be more effective in our application and maximise results. Lastly, we faced restrictions from collaborators who were unable to understand the necessity in working towards a time plan. This slowed the production process, in turn having a knock-on effect on other aspects of the project's development. Nevertheless, I believe that the group was able to maintain the quality of the work and produce a high-quality final project.

The impacts of digital technologies

On music production

The implementation of new digital technologies has had a direct impact on the way in which music is produced today. Digital audio workstations (DAWs) such as Logic Pro X, FL Studio and Ableton have made music production accessible to the general public and “presented new opportunities for the optimizing and experimenting with the micro-rhythmic design of grooves” (Brøvig-Hanssen, 2016, p 111). These easy to use platforms have allowed so-called “bedroom producers” (Yellepeddi, 2015) to develop cutting-edge soundscapes “that could not have been achieved by musicians or any preceding technological tools” (Brøvig-Hanssen, 2016, p 111). This process has also become easier since the advent of more mobile recording studio facilities, computers and online file sharing websites. In relation to our project, courses such as Tileyard Education’s Masters’ programme (Tileyard Education, 2018) have given budding professionals the resources to develop their skillset in line with current industry standards. The students on the course have been open to collaboration and reshaping their typical working process in order to accommodate our needs. They have also been able to utilise their traditional musical backgrounds to good effect when working with new digital technologies.

On distribution, marketing and consumption

Digital technologies have also impacted the way in which music is distributed and consumed by global audiences. As part of the process of our project, we were tasked with developing the various assets for delivery. However, services such as the Kobalt-backed AWAL (AWAL, 2018) have provided new scope for the distribution of music that have encouraged and enabled people like us to make the finished product available to audiences worldwide in a relatively short space of time. Cresswell-Jones (2015) recognises the way in which “applications have changed how people procure and consume music.” This has been made more apparent in recent years through the wide scale adoption of music streaming services by the consumer. The IFPI’s Global Music Report (IFPI, 2018) indicates that digital revenue is now the source of the largest portion of global recorded music revenue, with paid streaming subscriptions up by more than 40% in the past twelve months. Spotify, the Swedish-based platform with the largest share of this market (Music Business Worldwide, 2015), launched

their mobile app in 2009 (The Guardian, 2009) and have grown year on year since. In 2017, they launched their audience insights application that enabled artists and their management to access previously restricted consumer listening habits and streaming data – a move that has seen artists go from strength to strength in terms of their engagement. Independent artists have now been able to use streaming data from their fans to forge their own paths in the music industry without the help of the major labels and build a system “based off of transparency” (Castle, 2018). The same can be said of the artists’ social media pages. Instagram, Facebook and Twitter all now provide audience insights that can be used to effectively target users and ensure product engagement is maximised (Instagram, 2016). Smartphone adoption is at an all-time high (BBC, 2016) and is showing no signs of slowing down. Utilising these services allowed our group to formulate an effective marketing strategy that could be used to most effectively grow Chloe’s audience. Given the tools at our disposal and our limited budget, we are still able to gain access to data that was previously unprecedented before the adoption of digital technologies in the music industry.

On communication and team development

Another way in which new digital technologies have impacted the creation and promotion of original popular music is through the changes in methods of communication and team development on creative industry projects. Whereas many projects previously required a more hands-on approach towards work, email has become the primary mode of communication. In addition to this, online tools such as Trello allow you to “work more collaboratively” to achieve collective goals in group projects (Trello, 2018). Tools like these allowed our group to work in the most effective way. As we are each based in different areas of London and travelling to Kings Cross was, at times, logistically difficult, digital technologies allowed us to communicate more efficiently. I also believe that this allowed the team to develop their individual communicative skills. Lastly, we were able to garner blog coverage, write press releases and make revisions to the assignment remotely. It is therefore clear that new digital technologies positively impacted the creation and development of this project,

Conclusion

I believe that this task helped me to grow as a learner. I feel that we were able to achieve our learning outcome of being able to present innovative and sustainable professional strategies.

The tasks that we undertook throughout the learning process gave me invaluable insight into the professional industry practices, requirements and expectations of artist development. As I have aspirations to delve into artist management, music production, asset development and project pitching, I believe that this experience will prove to be vital in nurturing these skills. Lastly, I feel the relationships that I have been able to develop with both the other group members as well as the artist will remain strong connections throughout all of our respective careers.

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