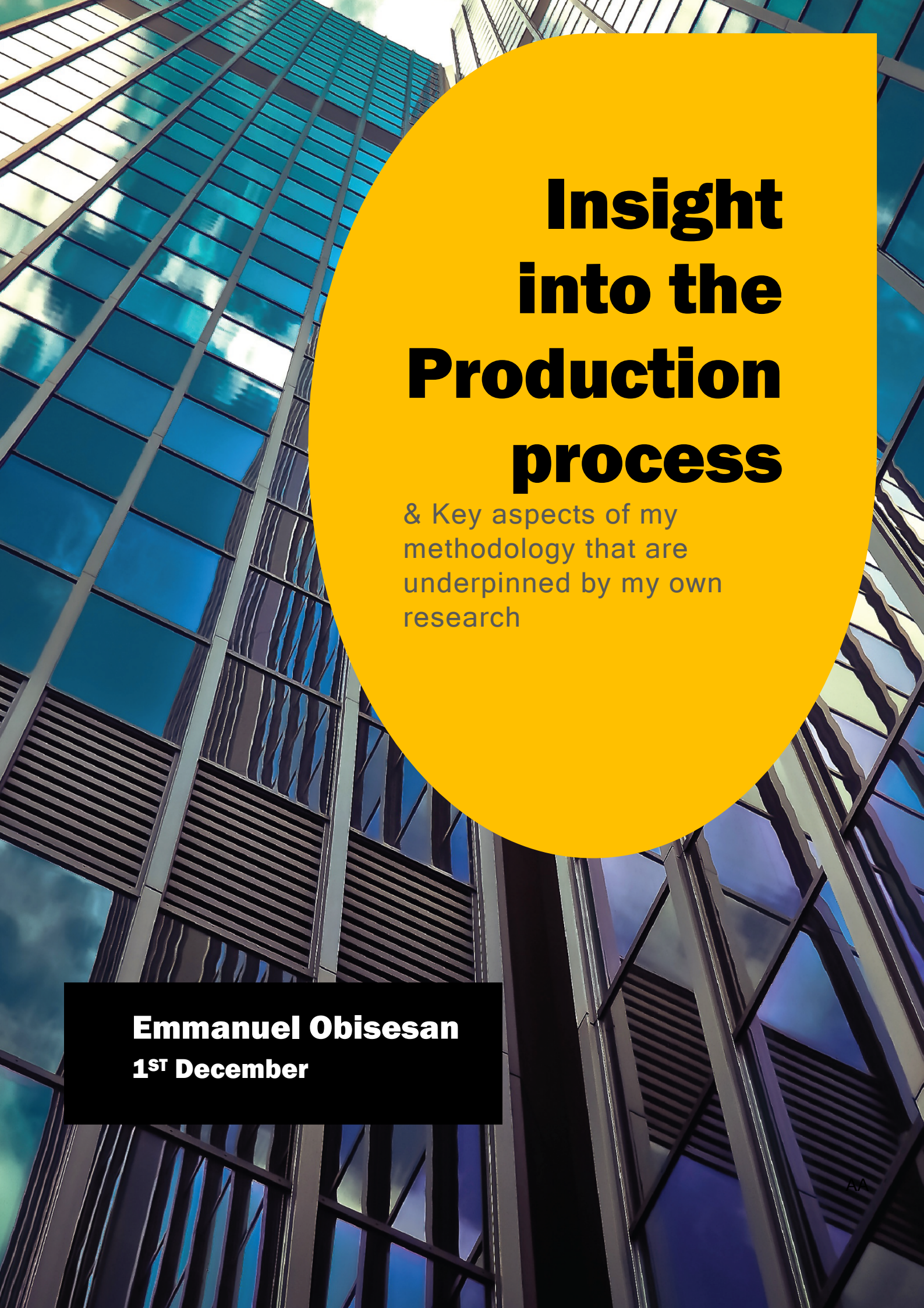




Insight into the Production process

& Key aspects of my
methodology that are
underpinned by my own
research

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1ST December

Tileyard

Education

Essay

My sound palette for all three tracks were based completely on Omnisphere 2.6 and Analog Lab.

The drum pack used was an !!!mind Drum pack. !!!mind is a Grammy Award Winning Producer for Hip hop, Trap, soul and electronic music.

01

**Stormzy – Own It Ft
Ed Sheeran, Burna
Boy**

10 Million Youtube
views

02

**J Dilla / Slum village
– Fall in love**

7.5 Million Streams

03

**Sir & School Boy Q –
Something foreign**

20 Million Streams

My Methodology

This essay aims to analyse the defining characteristics of the Genres and the similarities and inspiration behind the tracks I have created in my portfolio.

The essay is split up into 3 parts for each song, and will delve into the Instrumentation, arrangement, Mix (EQ Level and Balances), use of effects, Tempo, Time signature, Musical Key signature and mode for each production track.

Literature Review

In terms of literature used for this essay my work is primarily based on the work of Joseph G. Schloss In his book *Making beats: The art of Sample based Hip Hop (Music Culture)* released in 2004

Schloss compiles many methods and techniques shared by the hip-hop community and techniques to explore the “Afro-Diasporic” textures used in hip hop and urban music. One of the main takeaways from this piece of literature was the understanding that Hip-Hop in its earliest sense was used as a form of expression and oppression. In addition, Jazz is the mother of Hip-Hop as many songs as well as beats have several Jazz influences. This will be shown in Track No 2, where I sampled Japanese Jazz fusion from the 60s to create a modern contemporary track.

Another piece of literature used to inspire my production process was the book *Mixing Hip Hop* by Sample craze. The book touches on several modern mixing techniques used by producers and artists in order to transform things such as Drums and synths. Techniques such as EQ Linear phase versus Minimum phase were extremely useful in the back end of my production process on track 1, and Side chaining vocals or in my case acapella’s against the mix helped my final product. Another technique that the book touched on that was extremely insightful was the use of Drum reverb and using delay as a reverb for certain parts. That is used heavily in all my tracks.

Lastly *Song Arrangement for the Small Recording Studio* also helped in all 3 of my tracks. This book was hugely influential in the final mixing and methodology of my final track. The book suggested a very practical approach to mixing in terms of mixing sounds in while you add them rather than leaving them for the postproduction phase. This thus enabled me to mix my synths and bass lines in while I was still in mid production, In particular sounds from omnisphere and analog lab required compression and a careful adjustment into the balance of frequency in response to the audio signal or controls. This helped me push most of the base to the low end to allow space for Stormzy’s vocals in the middle and high end.

01 - Reference Track Stormzy - Own It Ft Ed Sheeran, Burna Boy

Instrumentation

The Hip-Hop grime genre heavily relies on the drum, hi hats and the snare and this is very much the case in Stormzy's latest single own it. The use of the Kick on the track creates the bouncy euphoric rhythm which proved very easy for stormzy to capture and ride in terms of his lyrical flow. Synths and Bass (808s) create a very unique rhythm which provides a good bounce for the afrobeat star Burna boy to influence. The use of the hi-hats is very consistent which compliments the sample and the soft and fat snare used. The term 808 was originated due to the popularity of the Roland TR-808s which revolutionised the hip-hop industry as a drum machine. (Video,2015)

Rather than use the 808, my track featured a more traditional bassline to coincide with the Kick to create a more traditional bounce for the artist to feel comfortable with the beat. The use of a low end 808 bass in the reference created a club ambience in which I steered away from; I preferred a more residual crackle bass sound on omnisphere in order to keep the authenticity to the original jazz origins. Going back to the Kick of the track, originally as seen in the portfolio it started off a bit muddy, however by pushing the frequency to +7db at 3.7khz it gave it the attack I wanted for this punchy tune.

To add my own personal touch to the song, I added low synths to accompany the chord progression as another layer beside the beat. Using effects, I'll later touch on in the mixing session of the report I'll discuss how I used EQ and level balances to make it work.

Arrangement

The arrangement of the track is very straightforward following the traditional 4 bar rap loop, with a 4-bar introduction. The verse of this type of genre (rap hip hop) traditionally is the primary part of the song where the rapper in this case stormzy traditionally would state his point in the song. My track Pina, differed greatly in the arrangement as I wanted to keep the traditional 4 bar loop early pioneers of hip introduced and show that it can work for a verse and a chorus without completely changing the rhythm and flow of the artists who decide to put their creative spin on the track.

Another thing worth noting with the arrangement of the song is the fact that with the original reference track there is a little, bridge from Burna boy to link us back into the verse. This was kept in on my version to illustrate and highlight the many different styles that can go onto the beat.

Mix (EQ and Level Balances)

The mix in the reference track was very clean, with the producer making sure that the kick and 808 did not clash on the low end. I followed a similar strategy with my kick and bassline as I heavily compressed the low end of the bass. This ensured that as well as making sure that I EQ'd the kick. It is also clear that the vocals were mixed to stand away at a different frequency from the song. Sample craze pointed this out in their book on mixing hip-hop that it is very important for the vocals not to get cluttered by the kick and the bass.

The snare of the song was also carefully mixed in as I wanted it to stand out, this is a common theme with several songs in the afrobeat genre. There are also faint passing chords in the mix of the song. I used Valhalla room and reverb to create an ambience for the track. Valhalla room is a versatile, true stereo algorithmic reverb. It features eleven original reverberation algorithms. This helped to create to reverberations throughout the track to ensure that.

Use of effects

Several effects were used in both the reference track and my own track. While it was difficult to gauge what VST's were used in the reference track several assumptions can be made by analysing the genre. One effect that was used was a reverb for the vocal. Stormzy voice proved very prominent and I too wanted to make that the case in my own reference track.

Going into detail about the effects I used in my own track, I used a feature called Mrhythmizerin. Mrhythmizerin is a time manipulation VST, I used these on the chords to create a little and subtle glitch that most listeners won't notice. I also used a Filter pro Q in order to equalize my bassline. As I mentioned earlier it was a very conscious decision to ensure that the snare in my track stood out to coincide with the many features of a Hip-hop/afro track. In order to do this, I used an effect called Blood Overdrive, this ensured that the snare stood out prominently in comparison to the rest of the track. In addition, I also used a peak controller to control the peak of the kick and the bass. I created a sidechain compression for this particular track in order to regulate the kick and bass, so they don't clash.

Tempo

The tempo of the reference track is 104bpm. This created a high energy and bounce to a track that created a certain danceability. The tempo of my track is also 104bpm, this allowed me to create a very jumpy bass line that danced along the kicks.

Time Signature

The time signature is a basic 4/4

Musical Key signature

The key signature of this reference track is a Bflat major It plays with its relative G minor however the bassline which sits on the note G highlights its nature. My track however is a distinct minor baseline which jumps on the enharmonic equivalent G minor. Instead of using a 4-bar chord progression like the reference track uses I decided to use two chords on the minor scale to create a catchy 4 bar rhythm.

02 - Reference Track Fall in love - Slum Village

Instrumentation

The instrumentation for this track is very 80s 90s hip hop. The producer of this track J Dilla used an MPC3000 to sample. *Gap Mangione - Diana in the Autumn Wind released* in 1972. J Dilla was a producer born in Detroit, who died in 2003. Dilla is widely regarded as one of the most revered producers. One thing that makes his instrumentation very unique are the drum patterns in this song. The instrumentation is very laid back in its approach providing a very cool and chilled beat for the artists of this song to easily rap to. A full drum kit is used on a MPC to create a calm, easy and steady groove for the sample. J Dilla used a technique in all his productions as he went against the industry standard at the time to quantize all your drums. By not quantizing the drums it creates this very laid-back structure to the song.

I aimed to capture the feeling as well by using an MPC 200 to program the drums for this track. I sampled Hiroshi Suzuki song Romance from his Cat LP in 1975.

It worked to great effect it gave the track a very 80s hip hop/RnB vibe.

Arrangement

The arrangement of the reference track song is very straightforward as it follows a typical Hip-Hop 4 bar loop. What makes the arrangement interesting however is the layers of the chords interchange as the song progresses on. By layering the pads/chords It creates a melancholic distortion which creates a very 80s vibe.

The song starts with the 4-bar loop with the singer's voice, then continues with the 4 bar loop. J Dilla clears the low end for the verse to create space for the singer and rapper harmonies and vocals.

In my track I decided to distinguish the verse from the chorus by using the sax from the original sample and then also by removing the drums in certain parts to create a bit of distinction. The original sample which is inside the portfolio shows the distinguish from Hiroshi Suzuki song Romance from his Cat LP in 1975. Hiroshi's drum was very basic with a simple with a soft brush to set the pace. He used the bassline to set the pace of the song, where I followed J Dilla's style of using the Kick and the snare to dictate the pace.

Mix (EQ and Level Balances)

A common theme in J Dilla's music and particularly this track fall in love was the low-end texture on the kicks. He would cut the high end of the kicks and leave the low end. He used this on another one of his tracks titled Runnin' which is also featured on the portfolio. In terms of mixing I paid particular attention to the drums on this particular track. I ensured that I left a lot of the low end for the kick to completely occupy to give it a bounce and the head rocking movement that is so synonymous with hip-hop. In addition, I made sure to EQ the sample to ensure it did not clash with the kicks in any form. I steered away from adding too much reverb to the production entirely as I wanted to create the authentic minimalistic production that J Dilla is so renowned for.

Use of Effects

The use effects on my track was also very minimalistic to re-create the style of the producer. "Dotted among Dilla's compositions are two pieces by minimalist French pianist and phonometrician (someone who measures sounds), Erik Satie. "Satie, Ravel, Debussy and Poulenc are all impressionistic composers," Atwood-Ferguson says" (Fitzpatrick, 2011).

My track attempted to recreate the impressionistic production style that J Dilla ultimately mastered in his music. The only affect that really stood out in my production the use of reverb for the saxophone on the sample. By using the MPC I took the Sax out the sample then added Valhalla room and reverb then mixed it back into the music to create a longer lasting effect.

Tempo

The tempo of the reference track is around 91bpm, which differs slightly from my own track which sits at 72. While I was tempted to bring the tempo up to 91bpm. I however opted to keep it slower to create a more relaxed track. I included an example of my track at 91 bpm to show the difference

Time Signature

The time signature of the track is a basic 4/4, similar to most J Dilla tracks

Musical Key signature

The key of my track is Bminor, the enharmonic equivalent of Dmajor. The key of the reference track fall in love is however a flat major

03 - Reference Track Sir Something Foreign

Instrumentation

Being a pianist by nature this reference track stood out to me due to the heavy piano melody with the dark ambient chords as a background. There is a lovely jazz piano rift which is maintained throughout the whole song with a Low sub piano doing the bass. With my track, I decided to remove the Jazz rift and replace them with Jazz chords 11ths. The piano is the main theme also with my track, and while there is no rift maintained throughout, I opted for a dark and menacing siren. Inspired by Daniella Andrade's latest single Ayayai, which you'll find inside my portfolio

The drums on the track are very simplistic with a very low-end kick, the producer of this track kept a very wide snare and with hi hats ticking on each count. The piano is from Spectronics keyscape titled cinematic piano which gave the piano this lovely authentic sound behind the ambient synths and pumping kick and low-end bass.

Arrangement

The arrangement of the track follows similar suit to the Reference track with a 8 bar introduction before the drums come in. The chorus is indicated by the dark menacing siren. I also used an 8 bar verse and a 16 bar chorus similar to the reference track by Sir.

The Pre-chorus is shown by the introduction the low-end bass, which I carefully mixed in. And the outro is shown by the change in drum pattern at the end, as I removed the kick and opted for on unorthodox drum pattern to end the song

Mix (EQ and Level Balances)

The mixing for this particular track proved very interesting. For the piano I used Valhalla room and reverb to create a very dark and menacing ambience. The bass line 808s which is synonymous with hip-hop is also pushed very much to the bottom of the low end to leave room for a vocalist or rapper to enter.

With the siren that comes in on the chorus I used the time manipulation feature to drag it out trough the chorus and made sure to level it behind the chords and drums.

Use of effects

In order to create that siren seen in the chorus, I simply copied and pasted the chords used for the verse into a new instrument channel and found a synth on omnisphere called "dark siren". This proved very surprising as it was a technique I had not quite utilised before. The rift used on the reference track used a lot of reverb to create that sustain in the piano, I opted for the siren instead as I wanted to create a darker track for a singer / rapper.

Another effect I used was on the chords, as I also time manipulated them to create a warp which is very subtle to the average listener. This was to fit the theme of a spooky track.

Tempo

The tempo for the reference track is 108bpm which creates a nice rhythm for the vocalist to sing on. I opted for 114bpm as I wanted the synths at the back of the song to move more.

Time Signature

The time signature is a basic 4/4

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