

Crawford_S_CREATION_ELEMENT_1

FINAL WRITTEN PROPOSAL

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Executive Summary

This document provides an outline and a proposed framework that I will be using for my final project. It sets out my personal aims and objectives, but more importantly my professional aims and objectives. These aims and objectives are viewed through the lens of the commercial music industry today and at the end of the final project, I will be asking myself based on evidence collated during the final project, if I have what it takes to become a commercial music producer, or if this is only ever going to be a passionate hobby.

I discuss distinct options available and why I have chosen to follow one strategy Vs another.

As with all proposals, the research and theory that underpins the decisions being made will be discussed and shared. Identified leading and lagging indicators for measurement of success will be discussed and I will outline what types of measurement could be applied.

Although in this document I only touch on the topic of ethics lightly, ethical standards will play a factor throughout the final project, this not only applies to copyright and intellectual property, but also to panel selection amongst other themes.

“It is a big theme in my life, learning about myself and being a better person. I am a work in progress; I have revelations everyday”. (Rick Rubin).

Introduction

Many years ago, I was fortunate enough to sit down with Dr David Alred MBE, who is “an elite performance coach who has worked with some of the biggest names in sport.” (Dr David Alred)

During our conversation he told me that the only limitation in stopping you achieve is “you”. We are taught from an early age to measure ourselves against other people. What the world’s greatest professionals do, is measure themselves against previous versions of themselves, they remove the psychological barriers that hold them back - As an example if you measure yourself out of 10, what happens if when you achieve 10, do you simply stop and say that you are now at the top of your game?

What happens when you remove the limitation and stop measuring yourself against other people?

This very concept falls part of the basis of my proposal by, pushing the boundaries of what I have achieved to date. Encouraging me to layout a methodology that demonstrates continuous growth, daily.

My proposal and final portfolio, whilst being submitted for academic evaluation, the proposal itself is not designed for academic purposes. Instead, this proposal aligns with my own personal development, aiming for precision, technical capability, creativity, commercial awareness, as well as further expanding and developing the traits, drivers, behaviours, and technical competencies / skills that a commercial music producer needs to have in place in 2021 and beyond.

It is a proposal that will stretch me emotionally, creatively, and technically, from looking at my own workflow and methodology, how I organise and invest my time, how I create efficiencies in sample and audio management, filing and naming projects. All of which require focus and discipline.

I will then tackle key areas of the music pre-production process, this includes, song writing, creating melodies, writing drum patterns and grooves, manipulating sound, and really spending time

focussed on the use of audio manipulation, including plugins and outboard, for example, using specific compression, reverb, Eq, limiters, gates, vocal processing techniques.

The next part will be then spending time on how I arrange the compositions and finally how I mix and master my final work.

As part of this process, the need for collaboration is an important skill, as is the need for communication skills. I will be working with musicians where possible and vocalists. I will also in conjunction with another student be creating a production company called Seditious Mind / Addicted Groove which will fall under the legal company structure I have already created, call Street Level Music Group Limited.

The need to identify others with different skillsets is what makes a unique team.

“Music collaboration is when two or more creatives come together to produce a musical project. Collaborative partnerships can occur at various stages of the creative process. It’s one of the most significant creative forces driving music today. As an artist, it’s essential to understand the value of music collaboration and the advantages this skill offers”. Harry Levin 4/12/2019

<https://iconcollective.edu/music-collaboration-tips/>

The result will be a body of work that will act as showreel to submit to Tileyard London, Sentric publishing and other sources, to identify commercial opportunities within the music industry. My work will be submitted and registered with the appropriate bodies, including the collection societies, PRS/MCPS, for releases I will use PPL, AIM.

I will be leveraging best practices from master classes held by Slate Audio, Groove, Music Guru’s alongside spending time researching via online, academic papers, books and journals on specific

production techniques, I will be purchasing a number of books, that provide the technical insight into audio effects.

The portfolio

My portfolio will be focusing on one distinct component.

1. Commercial music – write, create produce, mix, and master a range of commercial music, across various genres. This music will be able to be submitted for sync opportunities, including publishers and music supervisors who are looking for music for game, film, advertising. I will be submitting tracks for remixes too, something that I am passionate about.

I plan to select at least one track and put together a commercial release for summer 2021, this will include: a) the main single, b) an extended club mix, c) radio edit, d) remix.

I will pull together a project plan and map out a release schedule, selecting a music distributor, using the ISRC codes already in place via Street Level Music Group which is registered with the PPL. I will select a distribution company to work with, alongside creating a branding identity for “Seditious Mind” this will include developing a well thought out marketing strategy, thinking about the branding, the imagery used, the single artwork and the development of an EPK, creation of a website, social media strategy and outreach activity that will help build a fanbase.

There will then be a focus on PR, and I will be researching the various PR options available, including using plugging agencies, who work with Music Week and the midweek charts. These companies send out your tracks to DJs all over the country who then score the track, the analysis of this data will be used.

Lastly, through my research and creation of my music, I will be investigating the various monetization methods available. I will have identified specific publishing companies to target. This will include registering my work through the collection societies, to collect any royalties and for those tracks to be registered globally through partner societies.

My aim is that the commercial track I plan to release, will be used to secure confidence from Tileyard London to offer stems of recent releases for me to work on, or, as part of a speculative basis. “This mitigates risk, meaning that a producer is only paid if their remix is selected”. (Jazzy Jeff, - personal meeting in London 2006)

The music industry is competitive, and I recognise this, therefore my final body of work, needs to incorporate a certain sound, especially if I am approaching Tileyard London, who has a very distinct sound themselves. Reference artists include, Ella Henderson, Sigala, Joel Corry, Ella Eyre to name but a few.

Why this is the path for me.

According to online sources there are multiple revenue streams that commercial music producers have available to them. There are other viable options from creating beats and monetizing through license agreements via sites like Beatstars, focusing on mixing or mastering through establishing a commercial recoding facility. Creating topline. Scoring a film or other types of sound design, as well as creating sample libraries and packs for commercial usage. All of these models were reviewed, but for me personally the core area is where my passion lies.

One of the key outcomes that I feel is crucial to success is finding and building teams for collaboration, if you look back throughout history, some of the most successful artists and producers

have been duos or small groups, Neptunes. The iconic sound that these production groups have created have defined genres and eras.

I will be further investigating this through additional research as this will link directly to finding and developing my sound as Seditious Mind.

My professional aims

Over the last year this has been an incredible journey, leading to self-discovery and often self-doubt. I came into this not knowing music theory, playing any instruments, or having the technical ability. What I did have was the determination and drive, see music literally saved my life. As I work full time as a Senior VP for Korn Ferry, and suffer from ADHD and Insomnia, it is this very need to push myself, that has so far pushed me to formally create a limited company, setup the commercial structures of a record label and production company and I am in the process of designing my recording studio and facilities and have made significant investments in this to date. I am using my income from my core work to subsidise the setup costs required to be successful as a commercial music producer.

As already outlined my proposal touches on one core area.

- Several commercial tracks, Dance music, Pop music, Hip Hop, RnB. – This showcases my ability to work across different briefs and provides discipline in doing so. A body of music that could be used for TV, Film, emotional pieces using orchestration, Spitfire libraries.

Remixes, taking existing vocals or songs and remixing them. This builds on my creativity and use of my ears to apply new ideas and if I cannot execute them, it develops the communication skills required to talk to musicians.

- To select one track and create a commercial release strategy and actual release for Summer 2021. This will include a radio edit, extended club mix and a remix. This looks at the professional development of successful commercial releases in today's music industry.

“You'll need to be highly creative, driven, resilient and a great communicator to make it in the exciting and competitive world of music production” (<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles/music-producer>)

Executing – The methodology I am using.

The aim of this part of the document is to discuss and outline the theory that underpins my final project, the research methods that will be carried out and that I will be using throughout the final project, the methodology I will use during the creation of the main body of work.

To be a successful commercial music producer requires a specific set of traits, drivers, and technical competencies. According to various interviews, academic papers, ADD QUOTE

The role of a commercial producer is to be able to monetize their work for commercial gain. It is here where I plan to start, I have selected a small sample size of successful producers who I will be interviewing following a structured interview process. This aligned with using academic prospectus sites and identifying through watching specific documentaries, listening to audio and radio interviews as well as music industry sources.

One of the observations I have identified is that producers typically make the music they like as opposed to what consumers are looking for. I therefore plan to use a brief survey using Survey Monkey to a wide range of people, multiple demographics, the purpose will be to identify,

1. How is music discovered.
2. How do they consumer music.
3. Do they share new artists with others?
4. What genre(s)
5. Other – 3 top tracks.

This qualitative data will then help underpin my final submission of music that I create.

There are two core areas that I am interested in and that is writing for TV, Film, and games. Which falls under the sync and publishing area of the music industry. I will be researching the various ways in which you can monetize your music, the specific deliverables, where to identify live briefs and opportunities. I will be using trade bodies PRS/MCPS/ as well as sites like Music gateway, and interviews I can find from Midem events, industry panels along with trade press including music week.

Defining and measuring success

Defining success metrics, setting a criterion, and developing a methodology to determine the overall outcome from the final project, provides multiple options.

These include and are not limited to the following.

- Taking a sample across multiple demographics on how they discover the latest music, consume music, role that social media plays. This would help inform the type of commercial tracks that I write and produce.
- Identifying a panel of industry experts who are known to me, selecting a small sample of music that can be shared via a private SoundCloud link followed up with a small survey of up to 5 questions with drop down selections and 1 question that is a free text. This will provide quantitate and qualitative research. It is worth noting that this option could present some ethical considerations, due to bias, from those who I have a personal relationship rather than purely professional.
- Assemble a panel from within the Tileyard Education, Tileyard London, Adam Audio, Spitfire Audio.
- Peer reviews from fellow students to measure the technical skills.
- The use of Spotify algorithm platforms, that measure a songs score. (See appendix)
- For the commercial release, using a plugger early on will enable feedback from radio, DJs, this would be an indication of commercial success.
- To capture self-reflection with specific defined questions to be answered each day.
- To use industry tools and software to measure the frequency range and wave forms between my final audio artifacts, using spectral analysers.

- Time management and achieving defined milestones set out in a project plan to be created.
- Looking at other artists and producers and their trends and stats.

The above will be leading indicators, however there are additional lagging indicators that will provide critical feedback and will be stronger measurements, as the above are subjective, whereas the lagging indicators will look at the following.

- Number of placements,
- Responses from publishers and aggregates like Music Gateway.
- Downloads, streams.
- Royalties, these are typically collected and analysed over a three-month clearing period, this varies depending upon the distributor.
- Access to Apple Music, Spotify for artists will also provide statistics too.

My final project will be underpinned by a range of research methods, these will include structured interviews within my professional network of current successful commercial music producers, music supervisors and other leading industry figures. The purpose of these structured interviews is to identify the core themes and attributes and to see if there is a commonality on achieving success. Those selected have all been involved in commercial projects, that are aligned to my own personal goals and aspirations.

I have identified:

- Simon Britton
- Cliff Randall
- Rod Gammons

- Pete Kirtley
- Melanie Redmond
- Sir Harry Cowell

I will use primary research methods and secondary research methods to support the overall project, these will include identifying the skills required and self-analysing myself against these standards. This will be provided as a self-development plan.

I plan to identify a panel of industry experts across the music industry from publishing, A&R, synchronisation for TV and Film, commercial releases, and remixes, this will provide me with qualitative feedback.

As music platforms and algorithms now play a significant role in defining playlists, I will use quantitative methods to measure specific criteria used with Spotify algorithms that look at the specific measures.

Summary.

This final project is a complex and challenging project that I strongly believe will enable me to develop my skills, it will enable me to identify ways I can monetize my time and work and prepare me for life after the Tileyard MA is over. Organisation, methodology and efficiencies of workflow will play such a crucial part of this and will tie into the professional processes I am going through in creating my own recording facility. It provides strategic goals with clear aims and objectives that can be measured. It supports the entire framework of study that has been taught and researched to date with a final body of work, that I intend to seek investment or commercial backing on.

Appendix

- Instrumentalness: This value represents the amount of vocals in the song. The closer it is to 1.0, the more instrumental the song is.
- Acousticness: This value describes how acoustic a song is. A score of 1.0 means the song is most likely to be an acoustic one.
- Liveness: This value describes the probability that the song was recorded with a live audience. According to the official documentation *“a value above 0.8 provides strong likelihood that the track is live”*.
- Speechiness: *“Speechiness detects the presence of spoken words in a track”*. If the speechiness of a song is above 0.66, it is probably made of spoken words, a score between 0.33 and 0.66 is a song that may contain both music and words, and a score below 0.33 means the song does not have any speech.
- Energy: *“(energy) represents a perceptual measure of intensity and activity. Typically, energetic tracks feel fast, loud, and noisy”*.
- Danceability: *“Danceability describes how suitable a track is for dancing based on a combination of musical elements including tempo, rhythm stability, beat strength, and overall regularity. A value of 0.0 is least danceable and 1.0 is most danceable”*.
- Valence: *“A measure from 0.0 to 1.0 describing the musical positiveness conveyed by a track. Tracks with high valence sound more positive (e.g. happy, cheerful, euphoric), while tracks with low valence sound more negative (e.g. sad, depressed, angry)”*.

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