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MA Music Producer

Creation Assignment Brief

Submission Element C1

Creation Proposal

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My Creation Project.

For my creation project I have decided to make an EP consisting of six to eight tracks recorded in my own studio with the majority of the instrumentation recorded from live instruments as I have the facilities to do so. I would like to record an eclectic set of songs, influenced by some of the greatest bands of all time. I will be recording an array of instruments including multiple guitars, bass, live drums, a brass section, a string section, Hammond organ, Fender Rhodes electric piano, numerous percussion instruments and probably some synth plugins from within my DAW.

For one of my projects earlier in the year I was challenged to pick three contemporary commercial songs of three different genres, analyse the instrumentation and production techniques involved in the making of these songs and write and record three of my own songs relevant to my findings. I thoroughly enjoyed the process and it proved to myself what I already knew: I enjoy and respect many if not most genres of music in one way or another. Although on previous projects for this course I have used my somewhat limited skills to play multiple instruments ranging from bass and guitar to piano and drums plus more, this time I intend to bring professional musicians into the studio to ensure I can capture the best musicianship possible. I still intend to play bass for the entirety of the project though as this is my main instrument. For similar reasons I will be bringing in a like minded friend that craves the same epic results I do for this project to write and co write the material. This is because I value what collaboration can bring to the table and I also really enjoy developing other peoples ideas and helping their visions become a reality.

Whilst growing up I played in quite a few bands of varying genres. I soon realised the buzz that comes with the moment when you connect with another musician. As I carried on I realised the buzz became bigger with the more musicians you could connect with simultaneously. I then found that this feeling could be passed on to the audience. This filled me with the desire to form a bigger band that incorporated a small brass section and keyboard player in addition to the standard four piece band I had become accustomed to. Knowing plenty of musicians and bands from the local circuit, myself and a couple of friends formed a 'super group'. This is the feel I am aiming for with my EP. A collaboration of exceedingly good musicians hand picked from the associations made over the years, coming together to create songs for music connoisseurs.

I am taking on this project for several reasons. A large portion of todays popular music is created using synthesised or virtual instruments bringing an artificial or unnatural kind of flavour to the charts. For some genres and sub genres this is appropriate and a modern way of creating music and I have nothing against this but for me live music will always rule. I really enjoy my role as a recording engineer as well as producer and thrive off getting a top quality recording to work with from the word go. While I continue to grow my business (White Noise Recording Studio) I feel this project would be an ideal way to showcase my recording and producing skills collectively. It's always been a dream of mine to make a collection of songs whether an EP or a full album that can stand up to some of my biggest influences in music such as Led Zeppelin, Jimi Hendrix, Pink Floyd and Fleetwood Mac to

name a few. If I can role these influences into one creation I will certainly be happy and feel a massive sense of achievement for what has become a life long ambition. It is safe to say that although this project is essential in completing my MA, other motives are clearly in play here. I believe that sharing such an EP would go a long way in terms of developing my recording studio business as it will showcase my skills in both recording and production. (If everything goes to plan of course)

Recently, due to being featured on a very popular television series (Stranger Things) a Kate Bush song (Running Up That Hill) from 1985 has shot to number one in the charts, doing better than when originally released and it achieved the number three spot. This goes to show that older styles of music are still popular today. After all according to a poll by YouGov, 1970s and 1980s prove to be the best decades for music. (Ballard, J (2021)) Currently this is cemented by two of my favourite successful bands out at the moment. Both American band Vulfpeck and Australian band Parcels display a heavy 1970s influence and both use key instruments from that era such as the Fender Rhodes electric piano, Hammond organs and brass sections. Both bands demonstrate classic 1970s funk with a modern twist. One track for the EP I am planning to make will definitely have a funky disco -esque vibe and as well as oozing with influences from the 1970s such as Average White Band and Earth Wind And Fire will also emulate to a degree these two current bands Vulfpeck and Parcels.

I am planning to write an epic rock song for the EP harnessing my influences of Jimi Hendrix and Led Zeppelin. Im hoping for a psychedelic mid section where I will try and incorporate some Pink Floyd influences and Ill be looking for a strong female vocal that would give Floyd's track 'Great Gig In The Sky' a run for its money. I wont be adhering to todays song durations of three to four minutes for this track, I plan to make this one around eight minutes like the great 'Stairway To Heaven'. I am very aware I will have to keep the track more than interesting to achieve this kind of duration though but I do have a few ideas up my sleeve that I hope will suffice.

In order to keep the EP eclectic I intend to have a country sounding song. My intentions for this track are to go all out and find a competent lap steel player as I feel this will really be the making of the track. Im considering working on a Beatles inspired track too and as for the rest of the EP I intend to let the creative process run its course and see what develops naturally.

I have certain musicians in mind for the project, most of which I will be relying on to do me a favour as far as costs are concerned then its just a case of getting the material written and getting the musicians into the studio to follow my directions.

The first benchmark for success will be that I have created a quality, professionally sounding EP featuring above average musicians. As far as measuring the success goes I will be relying on feedback from initially the musicians involved, friends and family members and probably one of my tutors and my mentor.

My approach will be to first and foremost write/co write the songs and record a basic guide track likely to consist of a guide guitar and a guide vocal track recorded to a click track. As there is likely to be up to ten musicians involved, the order in which the rest of the

instrumentation gets recorded will depend on the availability of the musicians at the time. Ideally I will try and get the drummer in first to record on my Yamaha kit with a ten microphone set up. Then I will aim to re record the guide guitar tracks where necessary and add extra guitar tracks where required. Being the bass player I will record all the bass parts in my own time in order to work around the availability of the other musicians using the fact that it is my own studio to my advantage. Im planning on featuring multiple sax parts such as baritone, tenor and alto sax, and multiple trumpet parts also. Knowing the guys I will be using for this I would imagine some parts will be recorded in my studio whilst other parts will be recorded remotely from the guys home studio set ups and sent to me to be added to the tracks and mixed. The Hammond organ will be recorded remotely from my friends home studio along with the Fender Rhodes. My co writer will be singing most of the main vocals and he lives literally round the corner so it wont be difficult to find a time that suits us both to get the vocals tracked. Next I plan to bring in an amazing lead guitarist who also plays lap steel to really seal the stamp of quality on the project. Knowing how talented this musician is, I plan to just record three takes of his parts for each track and comp them together later. Finally I will bring in a female vocalist aiming to give the listeners goose bumps. Then I will move on to mixing them mastering.

Sure enough alternatively I could record all the instrumentation and vocals myself to a reasonable enough standard or even programme everything in the box. For this project though I am aiming very high and to get the results I am striving for I believe I have hatched the correct plan.

I have looked at several case studies online. The first one I looked at was A Case study into the role of music producers in making records: The way the music producers influence the sound of a band or artists. (Tahmasbi, A 2015). This study examined the way a music producer plays its role to get the best out of an artist.

The production process usually begins with preproduction, which is the foundation and decision making phase and a crucial part of a producer's role. It consists of different aspects, such as song arrangement and song selection. Preproduction can be defined as when you decide how to make the record, whether it will be overdubbed, performed live, programmed or a combination. Occasionally, some producers tend to change their intended methodology based on observations from early rehearsals and some producers only work with a fixed plan, and the artists have to conform. In any occasion, some early decisions are difficult to get changed and reversed later. Preproduction is the best opportunity to develop an arrangement. This includes decision making regarding whether a song sounds better with or without a couple of extra bars in verse and choruses section. (Tahmasbi, A 2015)

In my experience as a producer I strive to make the artists feel as comfortable and relaxed as possible, I find this is how to get the best out of an artist most of the time. This can often lead to me changing my intended methodology. Song arrangement is usually set in stone.

The chemistry that happens by recording musicians live is dramatic and precious and can be unrepeatable. As the results, it is very crucial for a producer that assumes, at all times, that the upcoming performance might be the best one and failing to record it properly can let a great performance become lost forever. (Tahmasbi, A 2015)

I will definitely be taking great care to capture all crucial performances in the studio. Interestingly I have noticed that I don't tend to 'hear' the performances as I am recording. I am more than often too busy ensuring a good recording is made and I will be so focused on such things as levels, timing and wrong notes that it is usually during a playback where I will engross myself in the performance and finally appreciate it's worth.

I looked at an article by Shaun Letang titled 'How To make A EP Album – Step By Step To Extended Play Perfection'.

When picking the style for your extended player, you have a few options. You can either keep all the songs of the same type (e.g. All heavy rock, all pop, or all conscious rap), you can have two tracks more mellow and two tracks showing a different side to yourself, or you can have four tracks all showing different styles you can create. (Letang, S 2021)

I intend to have mixed genre tracks however I still want the songs to fit together on the EP and not feel out of place with each other.

Many people make music on a regular basis with the idea to eventually publish it. If you think about it, if you go from one project to another, you certainly will explore different moods, techniques, softwares and ideas. If you work on hardware gear, your music will mostly have some sort of common aesthetic though but with the computer, it gets pretty much all over the place since you have access to so many tools and samples. (Remillard, JP 2020)

With this in mind, I hope to achieve a common aesthetic throughout the EP by using similar variables across the multi genres. Such as using the same mics, amps and pre amps, the same instruments where possible and the same artists.

Once you have your session booked and everything else is under control, it is time to create a recording schedule. Doing this in advance will ensure everyone involved knows exactly when they need to be present and it also works to keep your session on track. (Birt, B 2019)

As shown in my Gantt chart (Appendix A) I have planned my time for this project in what I believe to be a realistic way. I aim to follow this schedule as closely as possible however as I am reliant on musicians having time to come in and also being reliant on them doing me a favour with regards to cost, I won't be able to apply much pressure as to when they can come in to record, it will have to work around their schedules too.

I am really looking forward to diving into this project, hopefully everything will go according to plan! Thanks for reading.

Appendix

A: Timeline

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