

**University of Wales Trinity Saint David /
Tileyard Education**

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Commercial Music Producer 2018/2019

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ABSTRACT

For this final term of the Commercial Music Producer MA, students are to produce a portfolio of original content consisting of approximately 30 to 45 minutes of music. This portfolio aims to showcase the knowledge acquired during the masters course and to develop a signature body of commercial work.

The main objective for this portfolio is to create a catalogue of 9 to 10 commercial tracks for the project ELEVNS in order to showcase its sound and to put together a constant monthly release plan for the rest of the year. The plan will include a marketing research plan and milestones.

In order to create such a project, some guidelines and methods will be followed so that the project results in a great product that would satisfy the targeted market. Collaboration and fan base crossing are going to be major points to meet the objectives.

The impact of this project will result in a sequence of frequent releases for the ELEVNS project, allowing growth of the current fan base and engagement as well as building a momentum.

HISTORY: Artistic Project, Record Label

The main objective of this proposal is to set the guidelines and objectives related to electronic music duo ELEVNS. This artistic project was created in August 2017 and consists of two musicians and producers, Aurelian (myself) and Gramm, joining their forces to create electronic based music with an array of diverse musical influences. The main concept of this musical project is to feature different artists for each song released by the duo. The diversification of the songs is a key element as well as the multi-cultural aspect of it.

ELEVNS released their first instrumental beat in the beginning of 2018 but did not release anything else before a year later. During that year they kept working and focusing on their craft in order to compose a large amount of songs to release during 2019. Their first official debut single '*Let Me In*' featuring Syon made it to the popular Spotify playlist '*New Music Friday*', catapulting the song into a sequence of major playlists made by the Swedish giant. The song cumulates over 70'500 streams on Spotify today.



Every single ELEVNS release has been made via their own record label *Deja-New Records*, based in London. The label was founded in 2016 to provide a structure for any artist and release.

INSPIRATION

The inspiration comes from different places and is an evolving thing. Artists such as Kaytranada, Snakehips, Alltta and J Dilla are the ones who grabbed ELEVNS attention the most. The sound contains a lot of different genres from Electro-Pop to Hip-Hop with elements of R&B and Soul music.



The creation of 'Deja-New Records' was inspired by a range of different independent record labels such as On & On Records, Future Classic and Macklemore LLC. The reason behind being independent was to be able to keep control of the artistic directions the project wants to go for. Major

labels do not offer such freedom to upcoming artists. The label's aspiration is to become an inspirational entity for independent musicians and artists.

MARKETING: Playlists Algorithms, Cross Fan Base & Campaign

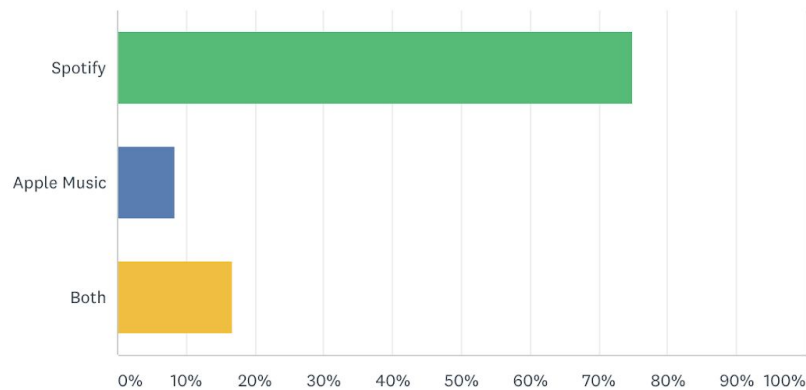
Spotify has become the most influential medium for music consumers over the last decade. Even if Apple Music reached more paid U.S. subscribers than Spotify currently does according to magazine Pitchfork, the Swedish giant is still remaining the point of reference in terms of streams number and influences. As a research investigation, an eight question survey was sent to a population of both musicians and non-musician in order to analyse their tendencies regarding streaming and music marketing. Results will be discussed in the following sections.



Here is a figure from the survey showing the streaming platform tendency for Spotify and Apple music:

Which streaming service(s) do you use out of the following two?

Answered: 12 Skipped: 0



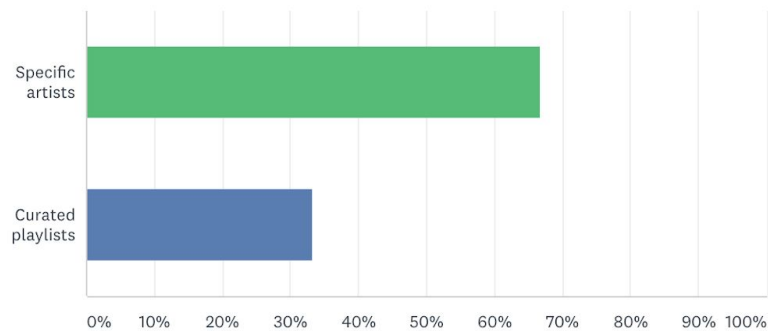
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Spotify	75.00% 9
▼ Apple Music	8.33% 1
▼ Both	16.67% 2
TOTAL	12

Playlisting has become the most important game for upcoming artists and bands in order to break out and increase streams and followings. Both Spotify and Apple Music have an array of playlists for their customers but Spotify has more popular usage and business out of it. Only Spotify for Artists allows their users to submit their music to curators to get a chance to get playlisted. Apple Music for Artists is still in beta but is slowly catching up. Spotify playlisting algorithms have become more and more efficient for spreading viral music but also very hard to get featured on the official playlists. An example of algorithmic playlisting: Sharing a song to your contacts via a messaging application such as WhatsApp or iMessage directly from the Spotify app would increase the chance for the song to end up on a viral playlist made by Spotify. A whole ecosystem of user playlists has developed around that and became a lucrative business for some companies and independent curators.

Even if the number of survey participants was less than twenty people it was very interesting to see that consumers generally listen more to specific artists rather than curated playlists. The following figure illustrates that tendency:

Do you listen more to specific artists or curated playlists?

Answered: 12 Skipped: 0



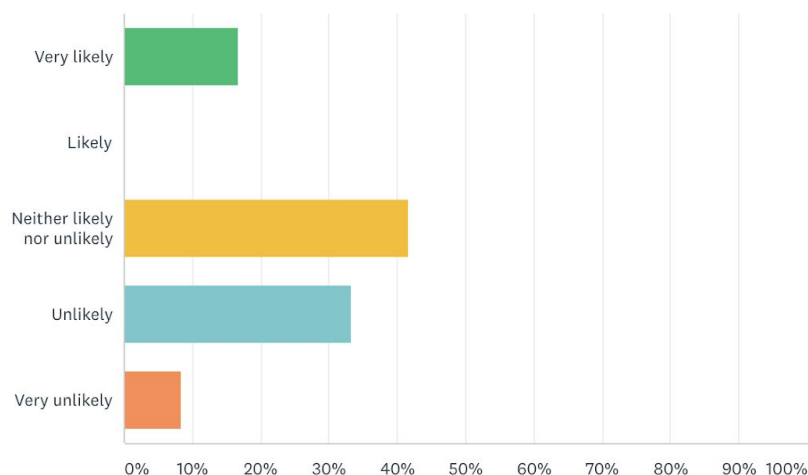
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Specific artists	66.67% 8
Curated playlists	33.33% 4
TOTAL	12

Releasing a product has to follow a strategy in order to reach an audience that will get the product and lead to a successful release. The marketing strategies in music often come to creativity but also to some simple and basic concepts. Even if Bloomberg recently announced the dissolution of iTunes into three separate apps, the iTunes store was one of the first digital stores to integrate the 'pre-order' option. This option allows fans to pre-order a song or an album from their favourite artists in order to get it as soon as the digital product comes out. This tool is extremely powerful as it increases the momentum of the release but also will help the song reach the iTunes billboard charts, allowing the song to get more visibility and sales potential. Spotify does not offer this yet but some third-party services allow artists to provide a 'pre-save' option to their audience. The major difference is that iTunes 'pre-order' generates actual money compared to Spotify 'pre-save' as they are considered as 'permanent downloads', representing a paid download, usually between £0.5 to £0.99 per song or up to £2.99 for EPs containing more than 3 tracks.

Nevertheless the survey results demonstrated a tendency that consumers are not really likely to pre-order a song in general like the next figure shows:

How likely would you pre-save / pre-order a song on Spotify or iTunes?

Answered: 12 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Very likely	16.67% 2
Likely	0.00% 0
Neither likely nor unlikely	41.67% 5
Unlikely	33.33% 4
Very unlikely	8.33% 1
TOTAL	12

Even though a bigger amount of data would be beneficial in order to provide a more accurate affirmation to this study, the iTunes 'pre-order' is still a very powerful tool regardless.

Collaboration is a key element when making music but also when it comes to marketing and promotion. The collaboration process helps to increase the growth of the social media following such that more potential fans across the web are reached. This strategy uses the collaborators' network to expand their own personal / business networks as a cross fan base strategy.

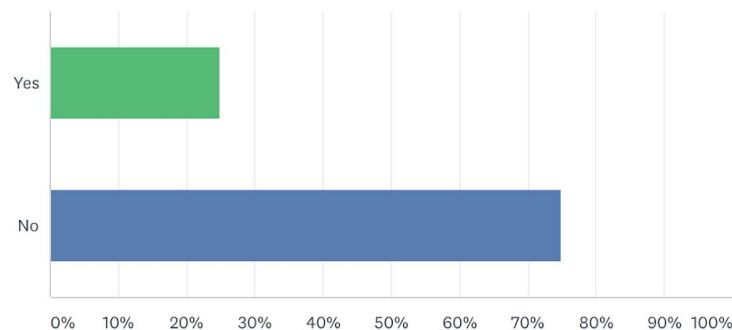
Social media has also become an important influencing tool in the last decade. Social networks such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter are crucial for creatives as they can share their work easily to the masses. Social media campaign helps getting traction to artists' pages in order to increase the following and traffic. Campaign runs from a small amount of money like £5 up to how much the user wants to invest. However, getting more followers does not automatically equate to "hardcore" fans that will give an artist their support and money. People are way more

likely to become these hardcore fans of a particular brand if they see daily engagement and strong presence on several platforms.

As one of the most common ways to promote products or a brand, newsletters are a classic but very important tool for any businesses to sustain. Building a strong list of contacts on a newsletter can help increase sales and maintain a frequent update to fans. Sign up forms are very easy to set up and a lot of websites and companies such as MailChimp or Squarespace provide strong website integrations in order to get potential customers to sign up. However, building a list of contact is not an easy task and requires some strategy such as providing free products / experiences in return of an email address. Bringing printed sheets for people to sign up at gigs is also a way to grow the list. The aforementioned survey results showed that 75 % of the people do not sign up to newsletters to artists in general.

Do you sign up to artists newsletters?

Answered: 12 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	25.00% 3
No	75.00% 9
TOTAL	12

Even if the number of answers was less than twenty people, this showcases the fact that it is a hard and long process to build a list. The link to the survey results can be found in the references.

MOTIVATION & OBJECTIVES

This following section mentions and discusses the main motivation and objectives of this proposal:

- Record and produce 10 original tracks mixing electro-pop and hip-hop music
- Mix and master the tracks to a professional level in order to be released as a commercial product
- Showcase the sound of ELEVNS
- Conduct market research and personal development plan (PPD)
- Conduct a release plan based on single releases

There are a few different motivations behind such a project. One of the main ones, if not the most important one, is the preparation for the professional world. This project sums up the entire year in terms of learning outcomes in order to be ready to kick start or keep building a brand. The knowledge acquired during the course constitutes the building blocks for such a musical project, on both creative and business sides. Having songs ready to be released to the world is also a huge asset for live performances as gigs have become a major source of income for independent musicians and artists. Performing live helps with merchandise sales and performing royalties.

Another important motivation is the expansion of the network throughout the collaborations and cross fan base strategy described in the previous sections. The music industry is a people industry so expanding the network of active identities within this market is crucial. Collaboration can take any form such as featuring an artist, having an external musician record on one of the tracks or co-producing. International collaboration is also an important asset in order to get more following and potential new work with artists from other countries.

Business motivations are also in the pipeline, especially building the Deja-New Records catalogue. With a strong catalogue of quality music, chances of getting synch deals and more income through the use of the masters are increased. It also helps create a reputation and brand awareness around the sound that Deja-New Records produces as well as the artists they manage and develop.

If some of the songs do not make the cut for the project, they can be pitched to other artists as well so the songs can be released regardless. Writing songs can increase the potential of getting a publishing deal. This would allow the songwriters to earn an income from their songs.

SPECIFICATIONS

In order to make the project come to life, the recording will need to be taken in a more professional setup than a usual home studio, using some high end equipment in order to end up with the best quality sounding product. The main focus is going to be recording clear and high quality vocals. In a commercial production, the vocals are what need to stick out the most because they are what the listener will grab on mainly.

MILESTONES & TIMELINE

This section sets the milestones and timeline to be met in order to satisfy the requirements for the final portfolio:

- Pre-production (arrangement) by 14th of June
- Record all vocals by Friday 28th of June
- Finalise production by Friday 12th of July
- Mix and master tracks by Sunday 21st of July

SONGS FOR THE PORTFOLIO

The following section introduces the titles of the songs and their genre that will be produced and finalised for this term 3 final portfolio:

- **Maybe** (pop/rap)
 - Written in Nashville, TN
 - Modern 2000's Pop with rap influences
- **Get Back** (rap)
 - Written in London and Paris
 - Featuring American rapper Mr. J. Medeiros from Los Angeles
 - Upbeat electro song with rap
- **Falling Into You** (pop)
 - Written in London
 - Featuring singer Milo Merah
 - Down tempo pop song with electronic influences
- **The Game** (rap)
 - Written in London
 - Featuring rapper Dr. Koul
 - Mid tempo Hip-hop track

- **1B4WeGo** (rap)
 - Written in London
 - Featuring British rapper Lucan Mills
- **You** (Pop/rap)
 - Written in London and Los Angeles
 - Featuring Lucan Mills and singer IAGO
 - Dancy pop track with rap and singing
- **Tension** (pop/rap)
 - Written in Nashville, TN
 - Dark Hip-hop song with a pop hook
- **Got You** (pop)
 - Written in London and Nashville
 - Featuring American singers Camden and Taylor Noelle
- **On My Mind** (pop)
 - Written in London
 - Featuring London based singer Rees
 - Dancy pop track
- **Same Thing** (Pop)
 - Written in London
 - Featuring Irish singer Emma Horan
 - Upbeat pop song
- **One Night** (Pop)
 - Written in London
 - Featuring Manchester based singer Danny Dearden
 - Upbeat pop song

CONCLUSION

Planification, aims and deadlines are crucial in order to have a successful project providing quality products and services. From the first notes recorded to the first stream, the process of making a record and releasing it for the people to judge can sometimes become overwhelming and stressful. This is where collaborations become handy as it helps dispatching and assigning tasks to the active members of a project. The share of knowledge and contact is a beneficial asset to all parties and helps the expansion of brand awareness.

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LINKS

1. Survey results: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-JCPXG5B6V/>

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