

Thomas Read

Student Number: 1808655

Creation Module

Element 2b – Reflective Commentary

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INTRODUCTION:

This commentary aims to answer the question of whether the traditional studio environment still has its place in modern music production, and if it produces better results for certain types of music, such as acoustic-based music. It will also aim to determine whether electronic music production requires a traditional recording studio, or whether it can be produced to a professional level in a bedroom/home studio.

AIMS:

My intention was to demonstrate versatility as a music producer who can operate at a high level in both the new world of electronic music production, and the old world of analogue acoustic production.

This was to be achieved by producing two collections of work that would enable me to compare and contrast the similarities and differences between the styles and techniques involved in producing both electronic music and organic/acoustic music.

The electronic music collection would be produced in my home studio, and the acoustic music collection in a traditional studio.

Finally, my aim was to explore whether there is still a benefit to using a traditional studio vs using a home studio, and whether different genres are better suited to either one of those environments.

Through this process I attempted to answer the following six questions:

1. Does the professional recording studio still have its place in modern day recording?
2. Does a professional recording studio produce better results for recording acoustic instruments?
3. Can electronic music be produced to a professional standard entirely in a home studio?
4. Is there a noticeable difference between instruments recorded in a professional studio vs a home studio?
5. Is song production easier/quicker/more effective in either environment?
6. What is the cost breakdown between the two?

THE PROCESS:

In order to answer these questions, I wanted to produce music in each environment in order to compare the results. I decided to produce two 5-song EPs.

The first EP was for a female pop artist named Bryony Dunn. Her sound and style is similar to other artists who started out with bedroom producers, most noticeably Lorde and Billie Eilish. The EP was produced in my home studio.

All of the songs were recorded and produced using the following criteria:

- All sounds and instruments would be recorded in my home studio with only the equipment available in my studio – including vocals.
- No outboard gear would be used for compression, limiting or EQ. All of that would be done using digital emulations.
- No real drums would be recorded and only sampled or programmed drums would be used.
- Every song would contain electronic synths and samples.

The second EP was for my own artist project. I had recently released a few EPs that have been fully produced with a band using a combination of both home and traditional recording and production techniques and equipment. I decided to re-record some of these songs in a stripped back style for this acoustic EP. The style for the songs is similar to mainstream artists such as Lewis Capaldi and Jon Bellion. The EP was produced in a traditional studio.

All of the songs were recorded and produced using the following criteria:

- All sounds and instruments would be recorded in a traditional studio with only the equipment available in that studio – including vocals.
- Outboard gear would be used for compression, limiting, and EQ during the tracking of all the songs.
- Only real drums would be recorded and used. No samples or loops would be used.
- Every sound recorded had to have come from a real instrument – no VST or samples would be used.

RECORDING HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE:

Home Studio EP

The studio that I recorded the EP for Bryony Dunn was my home/bedroom studio. This entails a basic setup that includes a vocal booth, and it would allow me to produce a mix of programmed drums and virtual instruments, alongside tracking real guitars and vocals.

The DAW that I used was Logic Pro running on a Mac Mini, with a Universal Audio Apollo Quad interface. All the drums were programmed using drum samples from various sound libraries, including the stock Logic Pro drum samples. I also used some drum loops downloaded from online sample libraries such as Splice.

The electronic synths used were a mixture of soft synths, such as the TAL U NO plugin which emulates a classic Roland Juno-106 synth, and hardware synths such as the Behringer Model D, which is a clone of the classic Moog Model D analogue synth.

The piano sounds were all recorded using a combination of a Nord Stage 2 keyboard, and a Kontakt plugin called The Giant, which is an emulation of an upright piano.

Acoustic, electric and bass guitars were recorded directly into the Apollo using the built-in unison pre amps and amplifier emulations.

Traditional Studio EP

The studio that I recorded the acoustic EP in was the TYe studio at Kings Cross in London. The studio has a decent sized live room that allowed me to track drums, piano, acoustic guitar, and vocals.

The DAW I used was Pro Tools. As part of my Personal Development Plan (see Appendix) one of my goals was to become proficient in using Pro Tools, as it is seen as the industry standard and can be found in most studios. Alexander Hume of Dance Music North West says: “Nowadays, Pro Tools is the industry standard. Artists from Alan Walker to The Chainsmokers swear by the program for mixing and arranging tracks. While Ableton, Logic and Fruity Loops are amazing for sequencing, MIDI, and audio-editing, Pro Tools main forte is the high level of integration across high-end studios.” (Hume, 2017). I felt the best way to get to grips with Pro Tools would be to create an entire project using it as the main DAW.

For the acoustic guitar tracking, I used a Martin OOO15M acoustic guitar, which was miked in three positions and routed through Neve preamplifiers:

Neck: Neumann KM184
Sound hole: Aston Spirit
Body: Neumann KM184



For piano, I used a Yamaha upright which was miked in seven positions and routed through a combination of Neve and API preamplifiers:

Front L/R: Neumann KM184 stereo pair
Front Centre: Shure SM 57
Back L/R: Royer 121 stereo pair
Back Centre: Coles 4038 Ribbon Mic
Room L&R: Neumann KM184 stereo pair



For the drums, I used a Yamaha custom kit which was miked in twelve positions and routed through a combination of Neve, API and Chandler preamplifiers:

Kick in: AKG D112

Kick out: Soundelux E251

Snare: Neuman Neumann KM184

Snare: Shure Shure SM57

Snare Bottom: Neumann KMS105

Hi hat: Neumann KM184

Floor tom: Electro-Voice RE20

Rack tom: Sennheiser 421

Overhead L/R: Coles 4038 Ribbon mics

Room Centre: Shure SM7b

Room L&R: Neumann KM184 stereo pair



For vocals I used both an Aston Spirit and a Soundelux U99 routed through Neve preamps. I wanted to have the option of two different microphones, so I set up both microphones in a Blumlein style configuration where one microphone is placed above the other (see image below). This allowed me to track my vocal using both microphones so that I could compare the different qualities of each microphone and choose which one was better suited to the song.



CHALLENGES:

In order to answer the questions raised in this project, I needed to find a way to measure and compare the differences between the two environments. This proved to be challenging as I had decided to record two completely different styles of music in each environment, so it would be difficult to determine whether any differences were down to style and genre of music or recording quality. When looking at the two EPs I realized that there were a few different cross-over points in which I would be able to compare the recording qualities of certain instruments:

- Acoustic Guitar: both projects used acoustic guitar, and the guitar was tracked in both environments
- Strings: both projects used strings so I would be able to contrast the difference between the midi strings used on the home studio EP and the real strings recorded in the professional studio.
- Drums: Is there a noticeable difference in the sound and quality of drums recorded in a professional studio versus using drums from a sample library.

Written Proposal Changes:

In my written proposal for this project I had stated that ‘to compare and contrast the two environments, I will produce one song from each collection in the other studio environment to see if it produces any noticeably different results.’ It became clear due to some of the problems I encountered (outlined below) with limited studio time and scheduling musicians that this would not be possible. I therefore needed to come up with another way to measure my objectives.

I decided to create a survey with an AB-test in comparison to acoustic guitars, strings, and drums, which was conducted with 75 respondents coming from different musical and non-musical backgrounds. (Read, 2019) This would then allow me to analyze the results and measure the differences between the two recording environments.

However, this still left me with a problem of how to measure the quality of the electronic EP and how I would be able to determine whether it was produced to a professional standard. I decided that this would have to be left to personal evaluation on whether I felt that the results were at a professional standard. I would also look at some current artists who are self-producing music at home with great success and compare my productions to theirs.

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

Throughout the recording and production process there were a couple of problems that I encountered, particularly with the acoustic EP.

Limited studio time:

As with a normal commercial studio, it was difficult to manage the time needed in the studio and then to coordinate that time with all of the other musicians involved in the project. Coming from a home studio environment, where I'm able to use my studio whenever I want, it proved difficult to get all of the studio time I needed. As a result of this I had to make some compromises in the recording, and therefore I decided to record the bass guitar in my home studio as I knew that I had the equipment necessary in my home studio to get a good recording. Similarly, with backing vocals, ideally I would have liked to record them in the TYe studio, but due to the limited studio time I had available, I decided that I could get adequate recordings in my home studio.

Budget:

Another significant challenge was finding musicians to record on a limited budget. Again, I had to prioritize which musicians and instruments I wanted to record. One main compromise I made was with strings. Originally I had hoped to record a string quartet, however I was only able to afford one violinist, and ended up using a combination of real strings and programmed strings together to create a string quartet. This meant that I wasn't able to fully achieve my goal of recording only real instruments for the acoustic EP.

Technical Issues:

I ran into a few small technical issues throughout the process. For example, the piano stool I used had as slight squeak to it that was picked up by the microphones when tracking. In my home studio I use a Nord electronic piano that plugs directly into my audio interface, so it's not something that I even thought to listen out for, but it again highlights some of the differences between analogue and digital recording.

I also found the process much slower than I had anticipated as I was unfamiliar with Pro Tools and therefore spent a lot of time figuring out how to do things, and watching tutorial videos. Although this slowed me down, it did help me to achieve one of my personal development aims, which was to become proficient in Pro Tools and show my versatility as a music producer.

A/B TEST RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

For my A/B test, I took audio clips from my songs and created a survey where participants were asked to listen to the audio clips and answer the following questions:

1. Could you hear a noticeable difference in sound quality between the two clips?

2. Which of the clips sounded better to you?
3. Of the two clips, which do you think is a recording of a real instrument?

I created clips using three different instruments:

ACOUSTIC GUITAR	STRINGS	DRUMS
Clip 1: Junk Male Recording: Home Studio	Clip 1: Falling Recording: TYe Studio	Clip 1: Honeycomb Recording: Drum samples
Clip 2: Falling Recording: TYe Studio	Clip 2: Swimsuit Royalty Recording: Midi Strings	Clip 2: Borderless Recording: TYe Studio

When analyzing the results, it became clear that there is a noticeable difference in sound between real instruments recorded in a professional studio, and instruments or virtual instruments recorded in a home studio.

- When asked if they noticed a difference in sound quality between the recordings, respondents overwhelmingly said they could: Acoustic Guitar (97%), Strings (75%), Drums (88%).
- When asked which recording sounded better in their opinion, the majority chose the real instrument, or professional studio recording: Acoustic Guitar (72%), Strings (58%), Drums (73%).
- When asked if they could identify which clip was the real instrument, the majority of respondents correctly identified: Strings (69%), Drums (86%)
- When asked if they could correctly identify which clip had been recorded professionally the results were much closer and there was no clear majority: Clip 2 - Professional Studio (44%), Clip 1 – Home Studio (21%), Both (35%)

So, what can be surmised from these results? In my original thesis proposal, I wrote: ‘In my own experience of over 20 years of making and recording music, I’ve seen my own journey from recording exclusively with analogue equipment in studios, to now primarily producing and recording music in my own home studio. Over that period, I’ve witnessed the improvement of virtual instruments and plugins, so much so that it can often be difficult to distinguish between the real versions and the virtual versions. However, in my opinion, there are still a few instruments that have not been as successfully translated into digital versions - namely drums, acoustic guitars, strings.’

It becomes clear, even without the need for in-depth analysis, that there still is a significant difference in sound quality between real instruments and virtual instruments, and not just in the opinion of industry professionals, but also in the opinion of a wide sample of listeners.

Not only were respondents able to notice a difference, but in each instance, they also said that the real instrument / recording from a professional studio, sounded better in their opinion. This was particularly evident with the drums, where over 80% said the real drums sounded better than the programmed drums.

Variables:

Although this survey does give some valuable insight and data, there were a few extraneous variables that need to be taken into account when analyzing the data.

Non Standardised Variables - one of the main problems with the survey was that the test was not standardized for each instrument. Therefore, participants were comparing different recordings which may have affected their responses. However, this was not purely a test on which environment yields a better recording of a specific instrument, as it would seem fairly obvious that a professional studio would yield a better recording. Rather, this thesis revolved around the issue of recording different types of music in different environments, and whether the differences are enough to justify the use of a professional studio.

Participant Variables – the question of what sounds ‘better’ to each participant is subjective. For example, a person may think that something sounds better for a number of reasons: the style of music, the song, the way the instrument is played, or personal preferences and associations. These variables may have had an effect on how a participant hears an instrument and therefore affect the data.

Situational Variables – one of the main factors that could influence the survey was the type of device that was used to listen to the samples. In a 2015 survey run by Statista, 50% of UK adults said that they listen to music on a laptop. A further 47% also said they listen on a mobile phone. (Statista, 2015). Given that this survey was conducted online, it’s likely that most respondents listened to the clips through either a laptop/PC speaker, or through their mobile or smartphone device. The speakers on these devices are not designed to give the clearest or most defined audio output, and this would also have had an impact on the data.

Counter Evidence:

In his 2018 thesis, Joonas Vuopala, from Tampere University of Applied Sciences set out to prove whether it is possible to achieve similar results by sampling a drum kit in high detail and programming the samples in MIDI, as by physically playing the drum kit. Vuopala conducted his own AB-test in comparison to live drums with 41 respondents and concluded that: ‘Analyzing the results of the blind test, it can be concluded that it truly is possible to achieve great results with carefully sampled and programmed instrument libraries that are on par with real, live drums.’ (Vuopala, 2018)

CONCLUSION:

1. Does the professional recording studio still have its place in modern day recording?

Even with all of the advancements in digital technology, the traditional studio still has a role in modern music. It’s clear that recording in a professional studio can produce different results from recording in a home studio, and these differences are more evident with certain types of music and instruments. However, in his 2015 thesis ‘The Evolution and Decline of the Traditional Recording Studio’, Philip Ronald Kirby from the University of Liverpool says of studios in the 21st century: ‘The primary market for pro-audio products became the home studio market as the professional sector declined significantly. There were considerable changes to industry structure as the major labels suffered a drastic loss of income in the 21st century and by 2015 there were only three major labels worldwide. There was a similar process of consolidation in the pro-audio industry, as numerous takeovers occurred. Due to a reduction in recording budgets and the widespread diffusion of DAW

technology numerous large studios closed, further reducing the number of large professional studios.’ (Kirby, 2015)

Although there is still a role for the traditional recording studio in today’s world, it is more commonly found in areas where the home studio can’t yet compete. I foresee that more studios will follow the pattern of studios like Old Chapel Studio in Chichester, which have changed their business plan to focus primarily on recording live drums. Paul Burton, owner of the Old Chapel Studios in Chichester, noticed a sharp decline in business over a 5 year period from 2010 to 2015. “Artists, and record labels don’t have the budget anymore to book weeks in the studio like they used to.” However, Burton did notice that there was one thing that people kept wanting to use his studio for: drum tracking. “I noticed that people were booking the studio for 1-2 days in order to just get all the drum tracking done, as it was something they couldn’t do well by themselves.” To capitalise on this, Burton decided to reconfigure his studio, and set it up with drum tracking as a priority. “I invested in a really good drum kit, mics, and acoustics for the room to try and get the best live drum sound possible in my studio.” Burton now estimates that 75% of his business comes from drum tracking alone. (Read, 2019)

2. Does a professional recording studio produce better results for recording acoustic instruments?

In my proposal, I asserted that the traditional studio environment still yields better results when it comes to recording acoustic instruments, in particular drums, strings, piano, and vocals. Probably the most difficult instrument to capture outside of a professional studio environment is acoustic drums - this is down to both space and equipment constraints. Generally, recording drums in a larger room gives a better sound, and it also requires good microphones and outboard analogue gear to capture live drums well. Both through my own observations and through the results of the survey I conducted, this assertion is supported by the evidence. However other studies, such as the one conducted by Vuopala, have shown that, when done to a very high standard and with great skill, virtual instruments can be recorded and produced to a similar level as real instruments.

My conclusion is that for most people, using a traditional studio to record acoustic instruments will give a noticeably better recording, however the gap is closing, and people with the skill can recreate acoustic instruments using virtual instruments and samples to a very high level.

3. Can electronic music be produced to a professional standard entirely in a home studio?

The short answer to this question is yes. The addendum, however, is that while it is possible for electronic music to be produced to a professional standard entirely in a home studio, it is difficult to do. First it is worth noting that as a measure, ‘professional standard’ is itself problematic. There is no definitive authority that can offer a clear answer as to whether any song can be considered to have achieved this measure, regardless of where it was produced. Perhaps a more appropriate measure of the success of any piece of music is listener’s response. Since the birth of the internet, general trends show the rising popularity of independent/self-released music. There has been a democratisation in music. Industry professionals are no longer in the position of acting as gatekeepers and as such the styles and standards of music reaching the listening public have diversified. The listening public is generally open-minded and receptive of music that comes from a variety of sources, no matter how much they may have deviated from established industry standards. In fact, creative deviation is a very important factor in the progression of popular music.

The success of artists such as Billie Eilish, Post Malone, Lorde is evidence of the fact that listeners are ready to receive music that is progressive. The music of these artists was not produced according to industry norms, so might not be considered to be at a strictly 'professional standard', but certainly can be approved as more than acceptable to their respective listening audiences. They are just three examples proving that music produced in bedroom/home studios can be hugely successful deviations from existing professional standards, and act as agents of change within the industry.

4. Is there a noticeable difference between instruments recorded in a professional studio vs a home studio?

The answer to this question will boil down to the skill and ability of individual producers. While there is plenty of highly sophisticated technology at the bedroom/home studio producer's disposal, results can vary widely. The data I have collected in my own survey shows that at this point in time, and at this stage of my own professional development, people are able to tell the difference between instruments recorded in a professional studio vs. a home studio. I predict that with more practice and as technology improves these differences will be minimized, but probably not completely eliminated.

5. Ease of creating and producing a song. Is it easier/quicker/more effective in either environment?

Accessibility is the key issue when it comes to using a professional recording studio. Unless a producer has full access to a professional studio, a well-equipped bedroom/home studio is always going to offer the path of least resistance. Because of this it becomes an important part of a producer's job to weigh the opportunity cost between ease, speed, availability, and quality of recording. If presented with the rare situation where time and money are unlimited, it would still depend on what style of music I was recording as to how much, if at all, I used a traditional studio.

In my experience, it is much quicker and easier to use my home studio for recording and producing, however I would always choose to track acoustic instruments in a traditional studio when possible.

Home studios can be equipped well enough to do a good job of recording and producing electronic instruments and music. It is worth noting that simply having the option of using either professional or home studios can cause issues. In some cases, excellent results can come about when people have not had any option of using a professional environment, so are forced to improvise and come up with new techniques when producing at home. Interestingly there are also examples of independent/self-produced artists who have suffered as a result of being signed and moving towards professional production, however this may be more to do with the overall production direction rather than the actual recording environment itself. With this in mind it could be fair to say that remaining in a well-equipped home studio would have been the more effective option.

6. Cost: what is the cost difference between the two?

Possibly the biggest impact on any recording project is budget. Unless you have access to a traditional studio, it will cost a lot of money just to hire the studio space. This factor alone is why so many producers prefer to make music in their home studios. Paying by the hour or day for a studio can also bring unwanted stress and pressure on the project as everyone is on the clock.

Musicians can also cost a significant amount to hire. Initially I had wanted to hire a string quartet to play on the acoustic EP, however it proved too expensive and difficult to schedule, and it became much easier and cheaper for me to hire one musician, and then use virtual string samples to fill out the rest. In my proposal, I conducted a small survey among music producers asking what influences their decision to use a professional recording studio vs a home studio, the number one factor was budget (78.6%). (Read, 2019)

PERSONAL REFLECTION

This project has been an incredibly worthwhile learning experience for me as a professional commercial music producer. The various stages of laying out my objectives, designing the project and executing the practical work each brought about challenges and valuable lessons. The challenges and problems I encountered have already been laid out above, as have the findings from my results, but also worth mentioning are the additional discoveries I have made throughout the process.

I found myself surprised at how much I enjoyed making the acoustic recordings of my own songs. For the past couple of years my emphasis has shifted from being an artist to producing other artists, and doing this predominantly in the digital arena. While I have thoroughly enjoyed this as an important stage of my professional development I now realise that I would like to invest some more time and effort into producing music that I have written and will perform. Although my recent progression has moved me away from acoustic instruments, I have not suffered too much loss of skill and am reminded that analogue vs. digital music does not have to be an either/or proposition, but can in fact be both/and.

I also found that recording real instruments in a traditional studio gave me an immense type of satisfaction and enjoyment that I don't experience when recording a virtual instrument at home. There is still an allure associated with recording in a 'real' studio, surrounded by real instruments and analogue gear – I felt much more connected to the music I was making and the entire process felt much more organic and authentic than the electronic music produced at home. In an interview with *The Independent* Sara Atalar and Joni Juden, aka Visions of Trees, say, "There's so much you can do with a laptop now, or even with a phone," though they acknowledge there are some things you just can't do with a laptop, "it's missing the physical side that you get from strumming a guitar or banging a drum kit." (Gill, 2019)

The implications this project will have on my own creative and professional practice are numerous. I will be able to apply what I have learned when it comes to weighing up the opportunity costs of recording specific instruments in certain environments. At this stage I feel more confident about continuing to work with electronic music in my home studio, and also spending the time, effort and money to record and produce in a professional recording studio. As part of my development as a producer, I now feel comfortable in both environments, and also have a better understanding of when and how to use each environment.

As valuable as this project has been to my own practice, there are applications that can also be made by others who might be interested comparing different recording environments. The main points to take away are: first, not all instruments are created equal when it comes to recording and production environments; second, certain instruments can be produced easily, quickly and effectively in a home studio, sparing costs; and third, in the absence of choice, it is absolutely possible to record and produce music from a bedroom/home studio that stands every chance of becoming widely accepted and successful.

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Appendix:

Tileyard Education	MA Personal Development Plan
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Name: Tom Read	Course: MA Commercial Music Producer
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Vision and Goals

My Vision
To become a full time writer/producer working with a management company and publisher within the next 2 years.
Short/Medium Term Goals (next 6/12 months)
To develop myself as a songwriter and a producer. To identify the steps I need to take to get from where I am to where I want to be. To learn the technical skills needed to improve, both software and instruments. To network and meet people who are in the business who may be able to help me develop.
Long-Term Goals (2-3 years)
To complete my MA course in Commercial music production. To have the opportunity to work with a management company writing and producing with their artists. To write/produce at least 10 commercially released songs.

SWOT - Personal Analysis

Strengths	Development Areas
I am good at critical thinking. I have a good ear for what sounds good and what will work well in a song, both for the artist and commercially. Likewise I am good at seeing and hearing where things could be changed or improved to make it sound better. I am detail oriented and pay attention to the finer details of music, which helps me identify the smaller details that take a song from 95% to 100%. I'd like to develop this further by working with other producers and writers and learning from them. I am a team player and easy to get along with. I want to help artists achieve their goals and sound, rather than impose myself on them. I am able to get my ideas across without crushing other people's ideas.	I am a fairly shy/introverted person, so I need to be encouraged more to work and collaborate with other people. I like working with others, but I also feel nervous about it beforehand, which can often put me off from arranging collaborations. I'd like to develop my confidence and mental strength in this area. I play guitar, piano, and sing, however I am not a formally trained musician which I sometimes feel limits me and puts me at a disadvantage in some settings. I would like to develop my musical knowledge and ability. I want to develop my technical skills and proficiency with Digital Audio Workstations (DAW) so that I have an advanced understanding in the two major platforms (Logic and Pro Tools). I'd also like to understand Ableton to a basic level. I want to become more efficient as a producer so that I can work faster and finish projects quicker. At the moment it takes me too long to finish a song, and I know to work with some of the bigger artists and labels I need to be able to deliver songs faster than I currently am able.

Opportunities	Threats
Being on this course at Tileyard has given me a great opportunity to meet all kinds of people in the industry that I want to work in. I also have the chance to have my work heard by management companies, labels, A&R, and publishers.	I suffer from an anxiety disorder which can affect me badly if I don't manage and look after myself well. I am also travelling into London from Oxford 3 days a week, which is tiring, and also a financial burden, so I need to make sure I manage both of those well.
Working with lots of other songwriters and producers will give me the opportunity to learn from them and develop myself.	My shyness can hold me back from seizing opportunities or 'putting myself out there' so I need to make sure that I push myself forward and out of my comfort zone.

My Professional Development Plan

Tileyard Education 2018/2019

Name: Tom Read

Course: MA Commercial Music Producer

What do I need to learn?	What do I have to do?	What support and resources will I need?	How will I measure success? - What does good look like?	Target date for review?
Learn advanced DAW proficiency (Strengths/Tech Skills)	Attend lectures on the course. Watch some MusicGuru's courses online. Learn from some experts and other producers.	Buy Pro Tools and Ableton so that I can start to use them. Get MusicGuru's account	Being comfortable enough to run a session entirely on Pro Tools at the same speed I'm able to use Logic.	6 Months
Develop myself as a musician (Strengths/tech skills)	Learn the basics of music theory. Deepen my understanding of chord structures, progressions, and scales. Practice my instruments for 20 minutes a day.	YouTube videos. Find a good book on teaching music theory. Find a piano teacher	Feeling confident in my ability to play any chord and in any key on the piano. Understanding the chord structures – e.g, 7 th notes	12 months
Better networking and communication skills (Soft skills and attitudes)	Attend the Notting Hill Network nights at Tileyard. Find and research other networking events.	The MA course is a great way to meet new people. Expand on that foundation.	To have attended several networking nights. To have met and made some significant relationships with other producers, publishers, managers.	3 months

	Put myself forward for opportunities that arise. Challenge myself to meet new people each week.		To have developed a good community of likeminded friends in the industry	
Become a more efficient producer (Tech skills and attitudes)	Develop a better work flow to help me work faster. Set up templates and equipment to improve efficiency and reduce time wasting.	Remove distractions such as social media from my studio environment. Set deadlines for projects and stick to them. Research templates for DAWs to improve efficiency.	Being able to fully produce and deliver a finished song/demo within 3 days, to a high professional standard – ready for A&R and labels to hear.	12 months
Manage my mental health and wellbeing (knowledge and attitudes)	Stick to a healthy work/life balance. Get enough sleep. Make sure that I am getting regular exercise.	A regular bedtime routine. Improve my diet. 45 minutes walk every day.	Ongoing monitoring and assessing myself to make sure that I am not burning out. Regularly getting a good night sleep and feeling refreshed in the mornings.	6 months