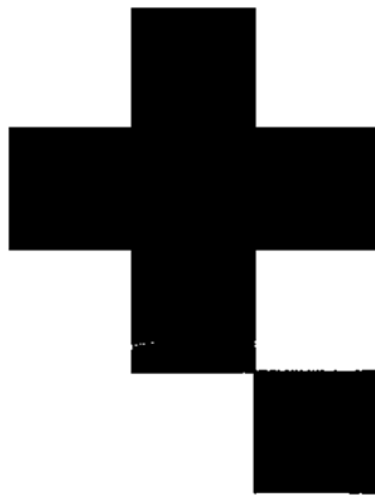


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EDUCATION

Introduction.

The project report below covers a plethora of factors that all share an equal level of significance when considering how they contribute to providing the critical context for the theoretical framework that supports this final body of original work. The proposed EP is going to be heavily influenced by reggaeton, a genre originating in Latin America that has now, in 2020, taken on a well-received global audience. This report will break down the theoretical framework into two key areas: firstly, there will be a discussion on *external* factors including the music industry today and how reggaeton has become one of the main components of this, and then secondly, an analysis into the *internal* factors such as all the elements that affect my ability to carry this body of work out. From the artist networks, production techniques and promotion in a very practical sense, this framework will explain the larger context as well as the ground-level reality of making this happen. Linking these two areas together in such a way will allow the reader to understand how the *internal* connects with the *external* and more importantly, how everything has consequently been accounted for.

The Music Industry in 2020.

Although no one can ever truly foresee how the music industry in any one year will pan out, one aspect that cannot be disputed is the takeover of streaming services and how they have affected the way people listen to music. In 2019, the average track length of the Top 40 was ‘three minutes and seven seconds’ (Breuner, K, Moser, M et al., 2020). That was thirty seconds less than the previous year. Reggaeton hits in the western mainstream market like ‘Despacito’ (Spotify, 2020) by Luis Fonsi and ‘Mi Gente’ (Spotify, 2020) by J Balvin were 3:49 and 3:05 respectively. Synonymous for their catchy melodies and infectious grooves, the genre could perhaps be seen to be growing in popularity because of this increase in demand for shorter and snappier-like tracks with listeners being more in control of what they want to listen to and for how long with the likes of mass-libraries in Spotify and Apple Music at their fingertips.

Another external factor worth considering in this framework is the way in which major artists are producing hits at the lowest price rates possible. For example, Lil Nas X’s ‘Old Town Road’, a song that lasted seventeen weeks at the top of the Billboard Hot 100 (Billboard, 2019) and is 3x Platinum in the UK alone (BPI, 2020) was made on an instrumental beat that he bought off of the popular Beatstars website for a grand total of \$30 (Ingham, T, Wang, A et al., 2020). As a result, producing in the box has become very popular and the need to use analogue instruments and hardware, although very good in their own right, come at a high price that the average person cannot invest in regularly and for someone like Lil Nas X who at the time was unknown, Beatstars allowed him without the music industry knowledge and contacts to be able to release a competitive song to do just that. Many reggaeton songs are produced in the box with many of the sounds being sample-based from the melodies to the drums. The VSTs today have a sufficient range of tools to be as creative as one can be and more importantly, create a hit with little to no investment apart from a good engineer regarding the sound quality of the record.

Now more than ever, the demand for songs that push genres as many have come to know them over the last four decades are being challenged once again in 2020. Billie Eilish’s ‘Bad Guy’ (Spotify, 2020) was produced in a very unique sounding way to the current market trends and the originality was welcomed. One could dispute that pop even five years before that would be likened to a song like Ed Sheeran’s ‘Thinking Out Loud’ (Spotify, 2020). Nevertheless, even the sample selections and way songs are being moved in terms of the production have become

more freestyled as a result of these inexpensive digital audio workstations that allow inexperienced users to be creative who bring ideas that do not always conform to musical theory as such. As a result, this is leading to music that is more experimental and given the rise of apps such as TikTok and Instagram, with fans wanting a more personal relationship with the artist, songs are consequently becoming more of a reflection of the artist themselves rather than the artist pertaining to one genre or another. So, for this project, though reggaeton is not necessarily the style of music I initially thought I would make as a producer, but through experimentation I have developed a very good workflow and enjoy producing this style of music. The likes of Eilish and many other current artists like Lil Nas X who took risks when they released their respective hit songs inspire the attitude employed towards approaching this project.

The Rise of Reggaeton in Western Culture in 2020.

Since the mid-2010s to now, reggaeton has become one of the most popular genres in music worldwide. As Echeverria (2020) highlights, reggaeton has ‘flooded’ the mainstream music industry becoming a ‘central genre for radio stations, major record labels, promoters of stadium sized concerts, music charts, and music awards.’ Furthermore, the line-ups of the ‘most renowned music festivals in the world’ (Rolling Stone, 2019) have been headlined and filled with reggaeton artists. Popular late-night live TV shows in America including *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*, *The Late Late Show with James Corden*, *Saturday Night Live* and *Jimmy Kimmel Live* have invited many big Latin artists such as J Balvin, Bad Bunny, Maluma, Nicky Jam and Shakira to perform on their shows. In *Fifa 20*, the chart-topping song ‘Yo x Ti, Tu x Mi’ by Rosalía and Ozuna was featured in the game’s soundtrack. Like so, the genre has been transcended into a global powerhouse with many artists releasing songs that take a great deal of inspiration from the rhythms and flavours that make this genre so popular. As a result, the notion of doing a reggaeton EP appears to be a commercially viable option in 2020.

In addition, major Latin and North American artists have recently achieved many cross-collaboration successes in the industry. For example, Justin Bieber featured on a remix of ‘Despacito’ (Spotify, 2020), released in April 2017 that broke the streaming record a year later with ‘almost five billion’ (ITV News, 2018) plays. Beyoncé experienced similar success with her feature on the remix of ‘Mi Gente’ (Spotify, 2020) ending Bieber’s ‘Despacito’ remix top spot in the Hot Latin chart. This back-to-back domination at the top of a major US chart reader could be argued to have sealed the high demand for cross-collaborations between North American and Latin American artists. Although it could be argued this was 2017 and therefore not a reflection of the industry in 2020, reggaeton has most certainly continued to feature heavily at the top of the mainstream charts as a direct result of these two hits. By the end of 2018, Bad Bunny and Drake’s hit ‘MIA’ (Spotify, 2020) was again blowing up the charts and by May 2020, the music video, released in 2018 on YouTube has gained a staggering 1,026,890, 923 views thus proving the commercial necessity for collaborative songs between Latin and North American artists in peoples’ 2020 playlists. Most recently, J Balvin and Bad Bunny’s 2019 EP ‘Oasis’ (Spotify, 2020) featured a song with Mr. Eazi, a very popular artist from Nigeria with a large fanbase in the UK. This all demonstrates that the demand for these types of records are still high on peoples’ wish list going into this next decade.

The Artist Networks.

The above analysed the external factors of the music industry that directly impact and provide the critical framework from which this proposal relies heavily upon. Equally, it is important to discuss the several internal factors and how they matter to this framework. A good place to start would be with the available network of artists able to feature on this project. Connecting at Tileyard, Maria Rojas Gomez (artist name ROJAZ) has been working with me on a number of songs, some in reggaeton and some in other genres. The relationship has been very healthy and the feedback provided by the likes of Lorenzo Cozi and many other producers, artists and ordinary listeners on one of our unreleased reggaeton tracks proved to us that the sound we had created in this particular record was enjoyed and liked by all. Maria's ability to sing in Spanish and English has brought a sense of uniqueness to this sound, fused with my production skills that have a very eclectic feel, being born and raised in London but of Indian descent. Like so, the ability to work very well together has made the notion of creating a reggaeton-inspired EP very invigorating and exciting. To add, through Maria, there are two other artists from Spain who have agreed to be a part of this project. The first is Daniel Sabaterr who has amassed 931, 420 streams in Spotify (2020) alone on his 2019 release 'Calor'. The second is LUADSANT, a Spanish and Brazilian artist with a growing audience. The EP would be a great way for these up and coming artists in Spain to tap further into the mainstream reggaeton sound that has enjoyed a great deal of success (see external statistics above). Thus, with three artists on a 6-8 track EP it would be an adequate blend of different styles coming together in the collaborative way that could spark exciting future prospects for all involved.

The Production Process.

For an EP like this, it is expected to be an 'in-the-box' production process throughout. As mentioned above, Lil Nas X made 'Old Town Road' from a \$30 instrumental beat that he purchased from Beatstars. Reggaeton falls into the urban category of music that is synonymous for its sample-based productions with the likes of Splice and my vast collections of sample-packs playing a major role in the production of this proposed project. As for the melodies, VSTs and samples entwined allow for original work to blend with sampled work. The producers of 'Despacito' used such techniques to achieve their award-winning record (YouTube, 2019). This way of production is realistically achievable for this project proposal and will be the most efficient and effective manner of getting this EP made to the highest standard as it is where I am most comfortable producing and likewise, the artists are at their best when being given the freedom to flow over the instrumentals I send or arrange to work in studios with them to carry out, but of course, abiding to the new coronavirus pandemic social distancing measures.

Promoting the EP.

As an independent, promoting this EP at a time when our world has become more connected than ever before and the most accessible it has ever been should allow one to market the project in a comprehensive fashion at a very affordable price. For example, DistroKid allows artists to 'upload unlimited songs and albums' (DistroKid, 2020) for \$19.99 per year and then places the EP on all streaming services including the most popular hubs in Spotify and Apple Music. In addition, it allows for added features such as placing any upload to Shazam; an app that detects and informs the listener of the song details and also in more recent technological advancements, placing the music on Instagram's stories database where users can play songs in their stories over pictures from their personal lives. Therefore, not only does DistroKid offer a platform for

the EP to be provided as a service but through Instagram stories, anyone from fans to first time listeners can promote the song further.

To add further to Instagram stories, in the current year an app called TikTok has become a major marketing tool for the likes of Drake with his recent hit 'Toosie Slide' (Spotify, 2020) which have seen fans follow Drake's dance moves from the YouTube (2020) music video. This dual form of social networking where video and music come together has expanded the ability for fans to promote an artist's music with the ability to place their favourite music on top of their personal videos. For the proposed EP, the scale would likely be far less than the reach of Drake given his fanbase and years of building that, but this form of promotion has been hugely successful for less well-known artists. For instance, Regard released a remix of Jay Sean's 'Ride It' (Spotify, 2020) that went viral on TikTok with users playing the song in their videos and making it a sensation during 2019 with 'more than two million' (Leight, E, 2019) TikTok videos using the record. Uploading the song to TikTok would therefore be a smart move because of the chance that any one of the songs from the EP could be the next sensation given reggaeton's feel-good nature that assists TikTok's fun spirit.

Conclusion.

Upon reflection, the notion of creating a reggaeton-inspired EP in 2020 seems quite plausible not only from a commercial perspective but also socially, as demand for the genre has grown enormously over approximately, the last three years as demonstrated by the chart-topping hit collaborations featuring Justin Bieber, Beyoncé and Drake to name a few. As mentioned above, the way the industry in 2020 is favouring shorter music falls well with reggaeton which typically, is short and sweet. And though not the reason for it being easily produced, but recognising Lil Nas X and his ability to make a hit on a \$30 instrumental makes this project easily viable and efficient given the heavily sample-based production style of reggaeton. Clearly, there is a huge demand for reggaeton globally and Rosalía's feature in Fifa 20 illustrates this. The genre is seeping into other areas of popular culture despite its prominence at the top of the charts. Thus, from an external point of view, reggaeton as a genre is one of the primary sounds leading the charge in mainstream charts in 2020 and therefore making the framework relevant to the era that it is being proposed in. Moreover, having my own contacts who have proven some varying levels of success in the infancy of their careers within Latin-influenced music it would be a possible option to make this EP with the bespoke network at my disposal. In addition, being an 'in-the-box' producer, I have a gradual record growing of producing reggaeton in this way as well as other genres so the process from a musical and creative standpoint would be an intriguing and exciting journey. And finally, the promotion of the EP can be done as discussed above and with little to no physical expense. Through all of this internal knowledge and experience and seeing how they connect with how the external bigger artists have achieved success using similar frameworks means this project is very possible to a high degree in a short space of time through my leadership and coordination from start to finish.

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