

Tileyard Education/University of Wales Trinity Saint David

Creation Element - C1 ("Written Proposal") / "CPL0921"

Word Count: 2732 [Excluding 'Summary of Creation Proposal', Table of Contents & References]

Thomas Lewis William Magee - ID: 2112530

Creation Proposal [In Summary]

NB: Please continue reading for academic writing:

<u>Proposal:</u> Artist Development Project - " <i>Tom Lewis</i> "	<u>Submission Deadline:</u> 22/07/22	<u>Parties:</u> <i>Tom Lewis Creative LTD/Tileyard Education LTD/Tileyard Music & Media Limited</i>
<u>Project Overview:</u> A body of musical work(s) with a runtime of (up to) thirty ("30") minutes (exploring and encompassing Musical/Stylistic elements of my chosen genre (and the various sub-genres thereof)		
<u>Project Goals:</u> • Delivery of a body of work that is valid for academic submission (<u>and of "Distinction" Standard</u>); • Delivery of a body of work that is commercially 'on-brand' with the aims of the ADP*;		
<u>Scope of Work:</u> The assignment encompasses pre-production techniques (inc. Studio Work - e.g Mic Placement), DAW Methodology (inc. Vocal Comping), Mixing Techniques (for submission for external mastering), Industry Landscape Analysis (inc. Pitching/Market Mapping for Content) & Project Planning/Execution		
<u>Potential Roadblocks and Barriers to Success:</u> • Time constraints/external production factors (e.g Studio booking & availability of Musicians) • Technical constraints - e.g IT Equipment & Data Integrity; • Coherency & Quality of Communication between parties) - e.g Tileyard Music & Media Limited, Tom Lewis Creative LTD & third-parties; • (Potential) late submission (resulting in penalty/capped mark)		
<u>Evaluation Metrics and Criteria:</u> Metrics: • To seek feedback from Tileyard Music & Media Limited throughout various stages of the production process; • To seek feedback from other Industry Stakeholders; • To seek feedback from Tutors within Tileyard Education during stages of production process; • To ensure content is commercially viable & <u>valid for academic submission</u> Criteria: • Be (circa) thirty ("30") minutes in duration • Be of 'Distinction' standard (according to Tileyard Education/UWTSD Marking Criteria)		
<u>Project Due By:</u> 22nd July 2022		<u>Budget:</u> £1500-2000 (if applicable)

Table of Contents:

- 1) Project Overview
- 2) Reason(s) for Project Selection
- 3) Financial Injection
- 4) Benchmarking/Evaluation Metric(s)
- 5) Research/Project Methodology
- 6) Alternative Approaches to Creation Module
- 7) Delivery Timeframe
- 8) Summary
- 9) References

Project Overview

The overall aim of this creation project is to produce a body of work encompassing the skills learnt throughout the M.A; in addition to those currently utilized as part of my existing professional practices as a self-employed creative.

As a current mentee of Tileyard Music & Media Limited (referred commonly hereafter as "*TMML*"), my mentors (George Corton & Tashai Jackson) & I are currently working on an 'Artist Development Project' (referred hereafter either as "*ADP*" (and subsequent terms used therein include: "*Tom Lewis*" (the 'artist') or "*the brand*"). It is a desired aim to correlate the mentorship (and the knowledge gained) heavily with this academic assignment.

The success criteria(s)/Evaluation Metrics for this project (explained in more detail in later sections) are to present a body of work that is both:

- Internally (Tileyard Education/UWTSD) viable as an academic submission;
- Externally viable as a commercially marketable product.

The high-degree of variability and versatility of the sub-genres of contemporary twenty-first century popular music provides an opportunity to showcase my high degree of musicality/production abilities within the submitted content.

My mentorship with *TMML* additionally allows feedback from industry-figureheads and further guidance on creating commercial content (viable for use post-graduation). I aim to carry these skills forward in my ambition to become a profitable commercial producer and artist..

At this current planning stage, the (proposed) final submission would be as follows:

- *2x remix(es) exploring/encompassing the theories/musical elements of contemporary twenty-first century popular music;*
- *2x original musical works exploring/encompassing the theories/musical elements of contemporary twenty-first century popular music;*
- *1x 'Live' performance of live mashup/manipulation using DJ Technologies of either the aforementioned created works OR a mashup of existing musical works (from other artists);*
- *1x sequenced version of the 'Live' performance (demonstrating DAW Methodology/Application)*

The submitted content satisfies both the academic & external aims; as it is likely that I will be using the content created in this project as commercial releases moving forward. The "Live" performance element(s) will also allow me to repurpose part/all of the VT to showcase on social media sites such as 'TikTok'. The development of my ADP is also scheduled to incorporate social media promotion. This will highly aid the success of this.

Reason(s) for Project Selection

As referenced above, my main reasoning for selecting contemporary popular music as a genre to focus on was focused around my mentorship with *TMML*. However, I additionally chose to focus on this particular genre due to how open-ended the end result/product can be.

Stylistically, there are many gateways for exploration as part of this project. Certain works released commercially today feature a high-array of Musical instruments; yet others are purely acoustic with minimal accompaniment and are (almost) strictly Vox led.

My ability to approach this project with a (relatively) open mind/unrestricted creative path leads me to be strongly guided by my musical instinct (in conjunction with the creative input of other musicians/vocalists).

I believe this project also enables me to obtain additional 'real-world' experience. It should allow me to experience (ad-hoc/'locum') management-life (by *TMML*), real-world professional studio experience (working as an engineer in an 'industry-standard' recording studio) and allows me to bank further life experience (working on a project from the ground up).

In my current professional practice/ working conditions, some of my current sources of income stem from Ghost Production & the creation of commercial branded content. It's very rare for me to have total span of control on projects I'm working on. The prospect of such is an exciting one.

Financial Injection

Although this is an academic submission, due to my external aims of harvesting the produced deliverables as commercial content (post-graduation), I have allocated a flexible budget of between £1500-2500 to aid this creation project. The financial injection is (likely to) heavily impact the success of the project by being able to incorporate the following:

- Hiring/commissioning of Singer/Songwriters to aid with song development
- Hiring/commissioning of Sample Replay service(s) (If required)
- Hiring of external equipment (e.g outboard processing equipment)
- Hiring of engineer(s) to master (*NOT mix**) the final produced content
- Legal Fees (if applicable) (for proof-reading any relevant release forms for Song Stems/Sample Clearance)
- Consultancy fees for industry stakeholders (if applicable) (e.g representatives from record labels/publishers)

Benchmarking/Evaluation Metrics:

Throughout the production process, it will be imperative to refer to the evaluation criteria (both academic and self-set). In addition to those set by Tileyard Education/UWTSD, my self-set guidelines are (projected to be) as follows:

- Does the produced content sound musically coherent?;
- Is there variation/versatility throughout the submitted work(s)?;
- Does the produced content sound enticing/interesting to the listener?;
- Is the content suitable for a sync-brief (e.g. *ITV2 "Love Island"*)?;
- Would the produced content be ready/suitable for radio-play?;
- Does the vocal fit the track?;
- Is the track well-mixed?;
- Would I feel confident/comfortable showcasing the track to a record label?

One of the 'catch-22' quirks of my personality is that I'm incredibly self-critical. I do, however, believe this (in this specific case) works out to be one of my better assets (as I won't submit anything I'm not truly happy with!).

Consideration is also given to account for potential roadblocks & barriers to overall success/fluidity to project operation(s). these are referenced below:

- Time Constraints/External Production Factors - Studio availability is not guaranteed. A "Plan B" (in this case, my apartment recording studio) is set up & ready should *TYE* not be available either when booked, or at short notice.
- Technical Constraints - The robustness of IT System(s) and equipment is also not guaranteed. It is pertinent to account for this & incorporate (some) elements of fault-tolerance. To minimize any production downtime, a separate 'Studio' computer has been set up as a Backup in my home studio (an Apple Mac Pro) running a striped/mirrored RAID 10 configuration. Much as 'RAID' is not a backup solution - a separate drive has also been set up to regularly mirror the content of the logical drive to prevent data loss.
- Quality of communication between all parties - When dealing with external parties, the importance of relaying qualitative information is especially important. For stakeholders involved with the creation project, I will be setting up a Google Sheet (Spreadsheet) to manage the overall creation project process (in addition to the third-party Gantt Chart software)
- Ensuring all work is completed/delivered on time. A deliberate fortnightly window at the end of the production cycle is (currently) left unaccounted for. This is there as a fallback should any external environmental factors impact the production progress.

Research/Project Methodology

One of the research elements I chose to explore in this stage (and, in my opinion; unarguably the *most* important) is that of the necessary time management skills needed to ensure the project runs as smoothly as possible.

I undertook the initial task of establishing a 'median' time frame figure for producing an album, and using this to calculate a workable schedule to achieve the project aims.

The research conducted yielded a common result: *"From the first time you step into the studio, it's likely to take between a week and a month before you'll have a finished album."* (Webmaster, 2018). *"The time it takes to record an album can be a lot of different things. It can be long, short, or anywhere in between depending on the artist and their goals for the project."* (Reeves, D, 2018)

The high degree of variability in timeframe(s) led me to derive a custom schedule (explored in *"Delivery Timeframes"* in later section(s)).

Another key point of exploration in this pre-production phase was the adherence to the stylistic/technical elements present in the reference tracks I will be carrying forward to the 'production' stage in the latter stages of the assessment. To explore these elements in more detail, I attempted to step out of 'traditional' single-point analysis (i.e Musicians/Journalists analyzing lyrical/musical content as a single piece of work) and opted to source research material/topic modeling that established median trends in multiple pieces of work across the chosen Genre.

I was fortunate enough to discover a Data Science article referencing the accessibility of the Spotify API (and the details therein of features such as Loudness levels and Song Duration). The author utilized the API to 'spit out' (technically-phrased, 'compile') common traits from Spotify's playlist(s) (mainly, *"New Music Friday"*).

One of the key elements I chose to explore was overall *Loudness*. Due to me (likely) submitting work to a mastering engineer at the latter stages of the creative process, in order to correlate with my (proposed) Delivery Timeframe I had to ensure that my overall mix adhered to the desired *Mix* requirements (in order to leave enough headroom for an engineer) "...This sort of confirms that we tend to prefer louder music now than before.", "The five most "quiet" genres are — Jazz, Swing, Folk, Blues and Disco." (Anwuri, R - 2018). The developer also provided an interactive-site allowing artists' names to be entered & for the site to query the Spotify API automatically to compile a median 'loudness' ranking. (*Referenced)

I additionally sought to refresh my knowledge on commercial (production) trends & common traits of 'trending' popular music. As part of this research, I opted to refer to a popular commercial producer's YouTube Channel, Mark Ralph. Ralph's work/discography from artists such as Years and Years, Clean Bandit & Becky Hill showcase his high degree of versatility when it comes to working with commercial pop music. His works are what I am aiming towards & will measure success against as part of my reflective commentary during the later stages of the project. Ralph describes the success of commercial popular music as 'the simplicity is the complexity' (Ralph, M - 2019). One of Ralph's stylistic elements I originally also gravitated towards was his utilization of analogue hardware inside his studio (dubbed 'Club Ralph'). ""First of all, when you're recording, the beauty of a console is that you can really shape things in detail before you press Record. It's an old style of working that I think is still very important. It stops you recording stuff you don't really need, or that's flawed. You shape stuff the way you want it to sound before you even press Record, and this stops you from having to use tons of digital processing to fix things after recording them. The time you spend shaping your sounds at the beginning stage is time you don't have to spend later on correcting stuff."(Ralph, M - 2018)

I have always been a fan of analogue equipment (often dubbed '*gear*'); and due to these factors (combined with the above rhetoric by Ralph praising analogue), I have opted to use as much analogue equipment as possible when recording. A provisional second route of exploration/experimentation is the software versions of popular pieces of equipment (developed by Universal Audio, Waves, SSL (Native) etc); however the large (ever common) debate over the 'sonic' differences of analogue vs digital lead me to determine my own conclusion should I not be able to rent/use the 'real thing' and have to use a software version. "The plugins vs. hardware debate will probably rage on for the foreseeable future. There's so many opinions flying around on either side that it seems unlikely that it'll ever be fully resolved. Each side has its merits and valid arguments. Your decision whether to use one or the other rests more on personal preference than any objective benefits. But before you write your plugins off as cheap digital toys that will never produce a decent sounding record, take a hard look at the problems of analog—the grass isn't always greener on the other side!" (Hahn, M - 2019)

Alternative Approaches to Creation Module

One of the elements I considered as part of the planning phase for this project was utilizing online content delivery methods (e.g *Fiverr*) to obtain vocalists for the (proposed) *original* works.

An obvious advantage to this approach would have been the ability to obtain vocals quicker (*if part of contractual obligation of the booked 'gig'*). However, I opted against using this method as one of my (personal) desired outcomes of this proposed project would be to obtain as much in-person, real-life studio experience as possible.

One of the unfortunate advantages of the ongoing pandemic has been (in many cases) the forced closure of many independent recording Studios. I am fortunate to be in a position whereby I have access to the Studio facilities ("TYE") and intend to use the facilities where possible to bring in the desired vocalist(s) to record.

An additional advantage to recording in-person is that due to me wishing to address external aims (of producing commercially viable content) - the in-person Studio sessions enable photographs & videos to be shot/recorded to aid with the marketing proposal/ADP.

An additional alternative approach I explored was using online mastering services such as '*LANDR*' to master the content using AI. However, similarly I decided against this as I opted for a dedicated engineer to process the records individually according to both taste & the stylistic characteristics of each record. I did not feel confident 'trusting' a software algorithm to make creative decisions affecting the overall, final output of my (proposed) release. I felt that I wouldn't be doing either the singer/songwriters or myself justice by not giving the body of work the treatment it deserved.

The biggest mental contradiction I encountered whilst formulating my proposal was the inclusion of my 'external' criteria and the correlation between this academic assignment & my ADP. It was (almost) a no-brainer to include it; however I did question the viability of running two projects concurrently, especially when this module is such an important one.

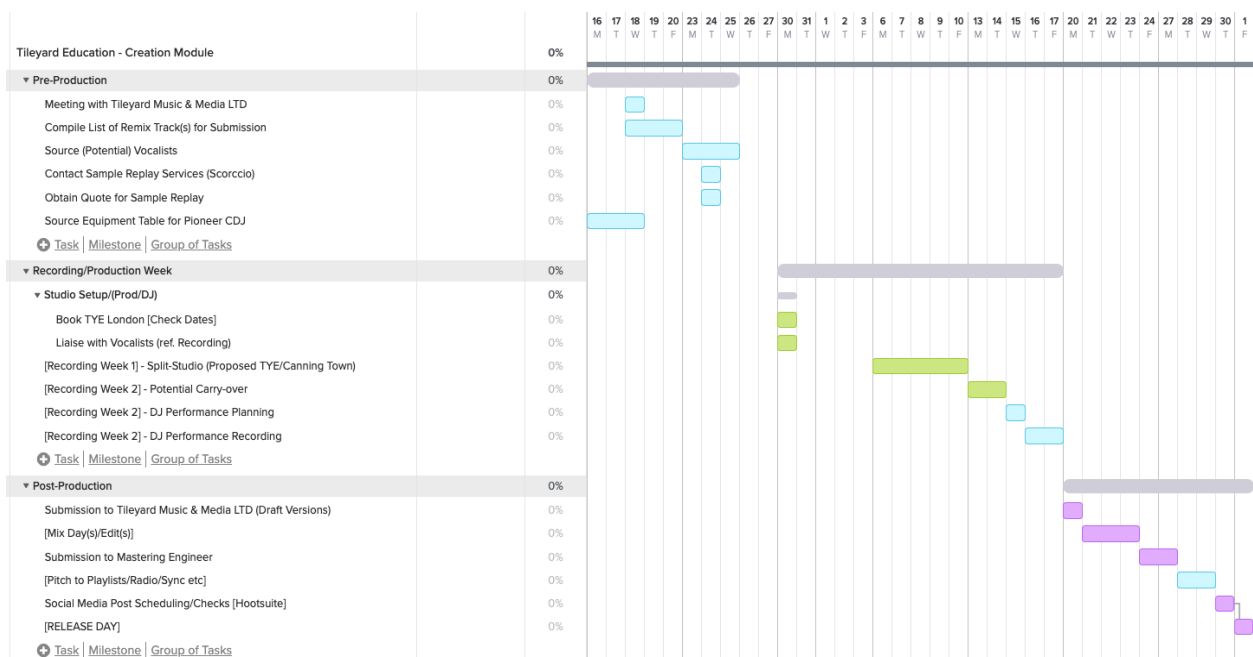
My conclusion was that I'd be a fool not to run the two together. The mentorship with *TMML* is (what I consider) to be a once in a lifetime opportunity. I felt it was imperative that I ran the two in tandem to both stretch myself practically, professionally and musically in order to achieve my full potential.

Delivery Timeframe

Attached below is the Gantt Chart measuring the predicted runtime (from pre-production to 'release day' (1st July). Due to external environmental factors (such as Studio booking) likely due to cause delays in the production process, the (deliberate) under-estimation in project runtime allows for an extra week to be incorporated (ad-hoc) should complexities occur.

One of my skills (as part of my professional practice being self-employed) is my ability to be highly adaptable to change and work around different circumstances/change of requirements quickly. One such previous life example was the delivery of digital content to a social influencer with 1 million+ followers. The requirements from my client were to deliver a file in a specific format; yet it was discovered he was unable to play the specific delivery format *he requested* on his target system. I was able to rectify the issue quickly and provide the solution during the same business day which enabled the client to be satisfied with the service delivered (and resulted in recurring business).

I aim to apply the same professional practice and life skills as part of this submission.



Note: "Submission to Tileyard Music & Media Limited" (as detailed in image) refers to an in-person playback-session. This does not account for any communication conducted via E-Mail/Zoom etc.

Summary

The prospect of creating a commercial body of work with the support of such a renowned 'industry powerhouse' (such as *TMML*) proves to be an exciting (yet undoubtedly *challenging*) one. One of the key issues faced by many Musicians today is *not* producing Music of 'sound' quality; however it *is* getting said content heard by the *right* people at the *right time*. I look forward to the feedback received from my fellow stakeholders in the various stages of the creation process.

The prospect of having feedback from my mentors throughout multiple stages of the creation process will (likely) heavily impact key decisions made throughout the process(es). I anticipate that their guidance will positively impact the overall quality and success of the final submission.

Externally, I am also excited at the prospect of further networking with other industry professionals/stakeholders.

References:

- Webmaster. (2018) - LONG PLAY: HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO RECORD A FULL-LENGTH ALBUM? [Online]
Available at: <https://www.kore-studios.com/how-long-to-record-album/>
- Reeves, D (2021) - How Long Does It Take To Record An Album: A Complete Guide To Recording Music [Online]
Available at: <https://www.itsaboutmusic.com/how-long-does-it-take-to-record-an-album>
- Anwuri, Rosebud (Jul, 5th 2018) - Billboard Top 100 Analytics [Online] Available at: <https://towardsdatascience.com/billboard-hot-100-analytics-using-data-to-understand-the-shift-in-popular-music-in-the-last-60-ac3919d39b49>
- Anwuri, Rosebud (N.A) - Site Home [Online] Available at: <https://theartandscienceofdata.herokuapp.com/music-dashboard/#!>
- Ralph, Mark (N.A) - YouTube [Online] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCf5ddvRj8luqCn7bT-HCvzw/videos>
- Ralph, M (November 2018) - SoundOnSound [Online] Available at: <https://www.soundonsound.com/techniques/inside-track-clean-bandit-solo>
- Hahn, M (March 2019) - LANDR [Online] Available at: <https://blog.landr.com/plugins-vs-hardware/>