

Marcus Green

Commercial Music Production

Creation (ADAD7004)

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Element C1 – Creation Portfolio Proposal

1. What you're intending to create?

For my creation portfolio, I have chosen to create a collaboration project consisting of 10 songs, each demonstrating a different genre including: Hip-hop, Alt Rap, Pop, Alt Pop, R&B, Jazz and Blues. This project will feature a range of different artists and songwriters, utilising my existing network and colleagues predominately from Tileyard. The project will utilise different musical styles, led initially by the artist's own preference or through my challenge to existing vocal comfort zones to encourage experimentation into new areas. This proposal will also challenge the boundaries of my existing experience, whilst expanding my knowledge skills and expertise into new areas, as well as my ability to inspire and collaborate with new artists.

I will be the sole producer of this portfolio, taking overall creative control. In so doing, I will be able to bring a sense of cohesion to the portfolio of songs influenced by my individual production style.

There are three key challenges to overcome including;

- ***The design of the portfolio***, the ability to blend multiple genres and styles to form a cohesive project that reflect my approach as a producer.
- ***Collaborating with multiple artists***, developing relationships some new some existing, accommodating personal preferences, understanding different styles and being able to innovate, and generate new ideas in new genres not previously explored.
- ***Project planning***, balancing tight timescales and multiple logistics without compromising quality standards. Understanding the inherent risks and inevitable trade-off decisions when issues arise against my success criteria, will be pivotal to achieving the desired outcome.

These types of collaboration projects are becoming increasingly more common throughout the Producer community, and the music industry as a whole. Especially in the last 20 years, the music industry has seen a considerable increase in the roles that the Producer will undertake. This has resulted in the emergence of a new title "Super Producer", reflecting the near end-to-end involvement of the producer when making records. "Super Producers are artists, tracking, mixing and mastering engineers, composers, and often play the majority of instruments on their records" (S. Audio, 2020).

There are many examples of Super Producers and excellent collaboration projects from producers such as Rick Rubin, Kenny Beats, Metro Boom, Kanye West, The Alchemist, The Neptune's and many others. I have used a number of these artists and their bodies of work to inform my project as well as researching the history and development of the 'Super Producer'. The role of the 'Super Producer' is a by-product of the technological evolution within music production. "The tools of professional sound production keep getting faster,

cheaper, and smaller. The time- honoured, king-sized mixing station is now a luxury item reserved for sonic chauvinists, an even the industry standard Pro Tools is getting squeezed from below by pure desktop systems” (R. Levine, 2003). Whilst aspiring to become a Producer myself, the foundation of learning this extensive set of skills has started at the outset of my career out of necessity, often working with limited resources including budgets.

2. Why are you taking on the project?

To produce a portfolio of different genres and styles that will showcase my range and ability as a producer, with an intention to utilise this work to leverage bids and future work opportunities. It will also enhance my networks and build relationships which may lead to further collaborations and work. As well as adding to the existing projects and pieces of work I already have in my portfolio. “A music portfolio is a place for music professionals to showcase their work so their audience and other collaborators can easily find more information about them” (C. Quoyeser, 2023). This project will be uploaded to my SoundCloud and possibly Spotify along with other streaming platforms to generate feedback over a longer timeframe.

Increasing my experience across different genres and styles will potentially increase the range of commercial opportunities available for me to progress, increasing my chances of success. “Instead of working in a single full-time job, a portfolio career is about working on several paid activities. The modern producer is no different. He or She is wearing several hats, having a multitude of roles, most of the time related to the music business” (D. Beentjes, 2021).

This project is an exciting challenge for me, it will open up new opportunities to work on an album that will feature so many different and new genres at once. Working in different genres whilst providing a significant stretch, is not the most challenging aspect of the project for me. The main challenge will be creating an outcome that makes all the songs sound cohesive overall as a project, not just a collection of uncorrelated stand-alone songs. “One key element that makes a project sound cohesive is the way it has been tracked and mixed. Recording your elements using similar techniques will not only create a sense of uniformity across the project, but also save time and money at this stage” (D. Stone, 2021)

3. What are the benchmarks for success and how will these be measured?

There are several key benchmarks that underpin the success of this project including:

- Planning and accurate estimating. The complexity of producing 10 songs over a relatively short period of time is the concurrency of activity, including managing artist and studio availability, whilst leaving adequate time to mix and master the final production. This is an important benchmark for several reasons. First, by staying on time, it means I will have successfully identified and estimated all the activities for each stage of development including making provision for

contingency time, recognising the need for flexibility when issues and changes occur. The second is the need to have regular checkpoints each week to review and iterate my plan so I can accommodate changes whilst maintaining the overall feasibility of the project. This will enable me to work effectively on priority tasks at hand and reduce my stress levels, protecting my ability to remain objective and creative throughout.

- Quantitative and qualitative feedback. A critically important benchmark to test concepts and seek other people's opinions and perceptions early in the life of the project and throughout the production process. External feedback is very important recognising just how easy it can be to become blindsided by certain issues and protective of ideas. It is also a good opportunity for the generation of new ideas I may not have thought of myself.

I will utilise my network of relationships to collect this feedback through my peers, other artists, and musicians. The most effective method to gain this insight will be through discussions with individuals and small group, supported by a questionnaire that is designed with a measurable scale to facilitate quantitative analysis, and open text for qualitative analysis to also capture the subjectivity of key areas. I have already commenced the design of the questionnaire as this will be an early and important activity to develop and review regularly as part of my weekly checkpoints. The questions will be impactful and insightful to the development of the project and enable people to give detailed and meaningful feedback. I will continuously gather, assess and review feedback iterating my plans, production style and quality levels to produce an optimum outcome.

I have chosen to do two rounds of questions, before and after the mixing and mastering process. I decided to do this as mixing and mastering are crucial parts of the project. However, it can also distract from the sonic qualities, arrangement and overall style of each track, which will be valuable feedback.

4. How do you intend to approach the project?

To successfully complete the project to the desired standard, I have broken the project down into different parts, to reduce the complexity and make it easier to see the end-to-end journey of activity and make everything more manageable. It also makes it easier to identify any potential issues or changes.

- i. Conduct research to help inform the basis for my project. Key areas include a review of producers with a similar style, understanding their inspiration for creating their projects, as well as their methods of working. I will also research the history of "Super Producers" and the development of the producer role through the decades, my initial research into this area led me to choose this approach for the project. During this research, I found that most 'Super

Producers' initially came from Hip-Hop, with early pioneers such as The Neptune's.

"The Neptune's are a record production duo, consisting of Pharrell Williams and Chad Hugo, who are credited with contributing the sound for many successful Hip-hop, R&B and Pop artists in the late90s and 2000s. The twosome's distinctive sound – syncopated, often synthesised rhythms hyped up by alternately terse and heavy beats". (C. Williams, 2015)

- ii. Blending of genres to create a cohesive body of work. A great inspiration for me is producer Rick Rubin. Rubin is one of the most well-known modern-day producers, working with a wide range of artists in a multitude of genres. "According to Eminem, who worked with Rubin on 'The Marshall Mathers LP 2', Rubin has an uncanny ability. "To dip in and out of different genres of music and master all of them" (R. Blatt, 2014). Ricks's approach and methods to creating music have been a focal reference point throughout my development as a producer. One of his biggest strengths is his ability to connect with the artist and create a special bond which in turn leads to amazing results.

"I'll spend time with an artist and listen very carefully to what they tell me and get them to talk about their true goals, their highest, highest goals" (R. Rubin, 2014)

- iii. Research individual genres. This will be achieved by asking each artist for reference tracks, listening to other influential artists of the genre and researching and developing key conventions. This also includes the different styles of production and ways of working. "If used correctly, reference tracks do not cut corners to creativity, and should not lead you to unoriginal sound. Instead, reference tracks allow you to position your music against the best ideas existing in other people's music" (A. Turley, 2021)
- iv. Creation of demos. I intend to create demos for each track, at my home studio, primarily 'in the box', mapping out and creating the foundations for each track. Parts of the tracks will change and develop throughout the process. The point of the demos is to give the artists and songwriters enough of an idea of what the overall sonic tone of each song will sound like. As well as the arrangement of the song so that they can begin writing lyrics and flushing out the arrangement. "Demos are intended to showcase the song, as opposed to the singer or band" (J. Blume, 2022)
- v. Recording process. Only certain elements of each song will need to be re-recorded in a studio setting, potentially, Vocals, Guitars, Drums and any sound that might benefit from re-amping. "Re-amping enables the user to experiment with different amps, guitars, microphone selection and placement to find the perfect sound". (A. Ledyard, 2023)
- vi. Mixing and Mastering. I will gather feedback throughout as detailed above, however a key input phase will be prior to the mixing and mastering. This will be

achieved through a series of demonstrations, discussions and questionnaire responses. I will work iteratively throughout this phase making final adjustments before production.

5. Alternative approaches that you could have taken, and why you chose against these?

There are multiple paths I considered to develop my approach to this project, recognising every producer will have a different way of achieving similar results however, it was important to challenge myself to determine what works best for me to achieve a high standard. Alternative approaches included:

- i. Create all demos with the artist. This can empower the artist to have more control over what the final track will sound like. It can also make the song writing process easier and more efficient for the artist, but it comes with an added risk that it can also take significantly longer to create, potentially impacting the producer's workflow. Balancing the dual needs of the artist and producer is a fine line, and often the producer has a clear idea of the final outcome.
- ii. Commence work in the studio. This would provide an opportunity to have access to a greater selection of instruments and hardware. The studio itself is a creative working environment specifically designed for music creation. However, with studios being in high demand there can be limited availability and regular usage will increase costs., I prefer to limit my exposure to this risk and make every second of studio time count. Therefore, I consciously prepare ahead and complete as much as possible, so I only use valuable studio time when I know exactly what I want to record, and I already have the lyrics or music notes written and rehearsed.

Remix artist's pre-existing songs. This can allow for some interesting creative decisions and can be effective. I chose not to take approach recognising that neither the artists nor myself are established enough to make this a commercial proposition, together with the creative limitation this will inevitably incur working with pre-existing material.

6. Timeline for the project

To make sure that the project is completed on time, I have created a project timeline. The project plan includes a breakdown of all activities, a decision on whether these activities are sequential or can be completed in parallel. I have included contingency time in some key activities especially those that are on the critical path (the longest path in time start to finish), recognising if activities move or change it will directly impact my ability to achieve the deadline. I have identified other activities that can move independently and have greater flexibility without impacting the overall timeline. I will review the plan on a weekly basis throughout the project and make iterations based on changes, risks and issues as they arise, whilst maintaining the overall continued feasibility to meet the deadline. I am conscious my experience is still growing in planning and managing ever more complex project so to mitigate this risk, I will also seek peer and tutor feedback on my plan to develop better time management and overall organisational success.

“Timelines are primary components of workflows, and they describe the timeframe required for tasks an overall project. These timelines subsequently refer to project deliverables in chronological order.” (D. Io, 2022).

When planning out this project I was able to divide the project up into 7 different sections. The sections are Research, Demo Creation, Arrangement and Writing, Recording, Feedback 1, Mixing & Mastering and Feedback 2. I will however, work on final adjustments after the last round of feedback but I will not include this in the timeline, as it's the final step and will require minor changes to the overall project. (Appendix 1)

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Appendix

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