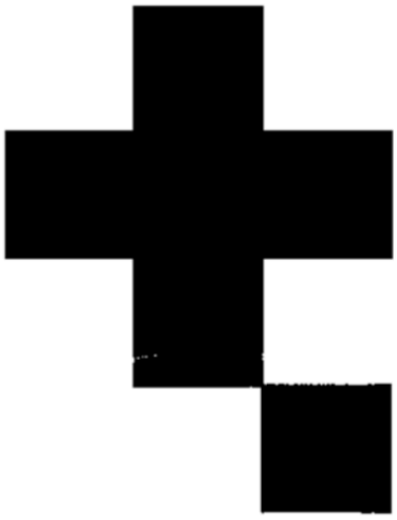
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Creation (ADAD7004_LON)
Element 1
Ciarán Robinson

TILEYARD



EDUCATION

In this proposal I will be attempting to discuss a number of approaches in consideration during the final major project creation. With this in mind I shall be looking to lay down some of the key principles in which the project is built on in order to reflect and evaluate the projects successes and failings in regards to the approaches and decisions made. I can forsee that during the life of the project there will, most likely, be amendments along the way. As my knowledge for the many elements of this body of work will hopefully increase, this may lead to different approaches in which I may execute some of the tasks and lead to more refined ways of working effectively. **In** this essay I aim to touch upon crucial themes such as genre, black music in black culture and production processes. I believe the topics mentioned are a large fundamental component to many projects of today. With this in mind I believe it's critical to formulate and develop a system of working through these topics in order to create a flexible blueprint for operating which has a level of pliability as my experience increases. On a personal note, these topics represent areas within my journey of music production whereby I'm aspiring to grow, therefore exploring these topics can be a way of strengthening whilst integrating the best practices into a personal framework which will help to create and hopefully look to foster a sense of longevity within the music production and songwriting fields.

My Approach: Genre

The initial concept for this project, with regards to genre, has largely been influenced by my personal interests and growth within my musical endeavours before being interested in music production specifically. The two core genres that I will look to explore in this project are gospel music and RnB predominately. I do envisage exploring an element of pop music, even within that exploration of this genre I do feel as though it may be through the lens of an RnB mindset at heart which I will hope to successfully merge together. Having been a musician, from the age of eight years old, has meant that I've been fortunate enough to have been exposed to multiple genre's of music in the capacity of music performance. Along with taking great interest in music as a listener outside of the performance arena, these elements have directly impacted my musical journey creating an eclectic palette of genres that have informed my musical taste in regards to music consumption and music production.

I personally hold an interest in the development and creative expression of the UK gospel music. Part of my studies is in the hope of helping to consistently create competitive sounding music within the black UK gospel community. I do feel, in a broad sense, the quality of black UK gospel music does fall short in the consistency in creating quality music across the board. Geographically, the quality of the music along with the artists tend to be centred around London based singers and performers with acts seeming to not be at the same standard nor as prolific. This is highlighted in an article written by a Juliet Fletcher, a well known torch barer for black UK gospel music, in which she highlights a number of artist that she refers to as being 'the best in black UK gospel music'. As she states, 'GuvnaB, Lurine Cato, London Community Gospel Choir, Muyiwa Olarewaju, Noel Robinson. These five are obviously are certainly operating at the top of their genre style – prime examples in song, deed and action' (Fletcher, 2021). The issue with this comment is that while Juliet Fletcher expresses her opinion of who she deems to be at the pinnacle of black UK gospel music, all the aforementioned artists are London based acts. My hope is, in the long term, I can be catalyst to help even the playing field in the standard of production within the genre geographically speaking as I am a West Midlands based producer, which will have an impact on the genre overall.

The main component that generally defines the genre of gospel music is more the lyrical content of the music and what its' message is hoping to convey as opposed to any particular musical ingredient in the creation of the music. Many forms of contemporary gospel music tend to borrow from a number of current, along with traditional, styles and musical identities of music. Within the gospel element of this project I'm aspiring to incorporate three core sounds/ feels which are a stripped back acoustic, soul and Afro beats. Over the past number of years there has been a considerable emergence of the 'acoustic' approach to commercial music. This can be highlighted by the introduction of BBC Radio 1's well received live lounge segment which sees artists rework their current hits, as well as existing classics, into an acoustic presentation which seeks to portray a more personal approach to the music. This particular segment has been running since 2009. Another indicator of this point may be found in the recent successes of Justin Beiber and Ed Shereen's recent singles of 'Love Yourself' and 'Afterglow' which topped there respite countries charts of recent years (Ahlgrim 2021, Unknown 2021). The acoustic slant towards gospel music isn't a new found concept either, with the much loved gospel icon Kirk Franklin implementing the acoustic feel within his catalogue of works with songs such as 'Imagine Me' 'Change' and 'Hide Me' as they convey much more emotional topics within the Christian walk of life.

Another expression of music I'm aiming to create through this project is, the very popular and music industry changing genre, RnB. The genre has been a huge influence on my formative years in music as it is synonyms with black culture and musical heritage whilst having close links, in personnel and sound with contemporary gospel music along with the black church. Often times you may be able to trace a prominent black artist and producers' early years back to an involvement within their local church. For such artists and producers as Whitney Houston, Usher, Babyface, John Legend, Pharrell Williams (Ranker, 2021) and countless others (including myself) this was an early platform to develop their musical talents naturally within their musical journey.

The songs for the RnB segment of this project will look to focus on more of the current trend of RnB music which we are more accustomed to today, which has developed since the genres hay day of the 90's period. Today's current RnB trends seem to have a number of sub-genres infusing a collective of black culture within its sound of today. Influences of African music's Afro beats, Jamaicas' Reggae along with Dancehall music and Americas' Neo Soul genres can all be heard having an influence on one another and creating a melting pot of ideas which help to push it's parent genre forward. Instrumentation wise, RnB looks back at previous production practices as a means to move forward in implementing some new elements into the instrumentation. An example of this can be seen through the chart toping artist Usher and his body of work; in his early albums 'My Way,' '8701' and 'Confessions' which heavily used midi guitars within production was a common practice across other RnB acts within the time period of 1995 - 2010. The trend has since changed within RnB, whilst the use of guitars has not diminished within the genre the application has developed from using midi instruments to implementing acoustic and electric guitars making the instrument a focal production element in many current RnB songs.

Music in the black culture

As mentioned previously; with many artist, producers and songwriters having come from a gospel church background I believe it would seem inevitable that both musical environments would become closely linked. A familiar sight within the genres of RnB, Neo Soul and Hip Hop artist is the collaboration amongst the sub-categories, but in addition it's common to see collaboration within artist and amongst the gospel genre. For those individuals, it's no surprise to see artists and producers a like, who have influenced both genres significantly. More specifically I believe the mirroring of sounds between gospel music and R&B is largely down to the participating producers and songwriters who curate these bodies of music. Since the late 1970's well known producers have collaborated with some of gospel musics' finest artist for Teddy Riley a world famous producer who worked with the likes of Michael Jackson and Bobby Brown had also worked with gospel artists' The Winans on their well received song 'It's Time.' This particular song fused gospel lyrical content over a new jack swing beat which was pioneered by Riley, this enabled the song to have a modern appeal allowing The Winans to spread their christian message to a wider audience as the music production itself was able to stand next to music production of its' time within the R&B field. The gospel release was well received within the R&B genre reaching to number five in the R&B charts and featuring on the popular show The Cosbys' (Beat, 2021). I believe that this example can illustrate how fusing R&B sonics with gospel lyrical content from a production standpoint can yield great results if when merged correctly.

Production Elements

The project will encompass a mixture of production processes which tend to be consistent with some of the genres techniques in curating music. For a project such as this, which will seek to be a broad representation of genres, there will be a substantial amount of 'in-the-box' instrumentation as well as some live instrumentation implemented; this will require the use of some recording technique knowledge. Traditional gospel music is generally known to have a mixture of live instrumentation, since its early conception because of its close ties with the church setting. The terminology 'contemporary' meant that gospel music naturally absorbed some of the musical expression of the current generations sound which has led to the genre baring a striking resemblance to that of RnB, Soul and even Hip Hop genres of music.

Across this project there will be a heavy us of in-the-box elements that will underpin the production elements on this body of work. R&B is seen as quite an urban genre which along with Hip-Hop helped pioneer some industry standard tools and processes with one of those techniques being the use of samples. This has given birth to the platforms such as Splice which is a tool that stores thousands of sample libraries for producers to access and use on a subscription basis. You can find an array of loops, melodies and one-hit samples to suit a multitude of tastes and genres. I do find that I often use some Splice samples as a place holder to generate ideas quickly, I may or may not revisit those specific parts once I build the of the production up and replace with that specific element. A great example of the recent use of sample in an R&B song can be seen in production of H.E.R.s' grammy award winning track 'Hard Place. The producer, Rodney Jerkins, uses a break beat sample which he then chops up to give what he describes as 'a bit of dirt' to the production. The drum loop is further augmented by a rimshot sample from a Al Green song (Mix With The Masters, 2021).

The use of VST's are a big part of my music production process as it allows me to find the sounds that I hear to create the particular mood for the song. For example I use a lot of pads and ambient sounds when producing. I very rarely turn to a sample for the of pads or any melodic element as I'm very particular with my melody and chord voicings which a sample may or may not give me and using a VST allows me that freedom to as opposed to being restricted to a sample. One of my go to VST's for this use is Spectrosonics' Omnisphere as it has up to 50gbs worth of sounds and a vast array of patches which means I'm generally able to find either keyboard or pads patch that will work in most scenarios I would require them for, I also use VST's for my bass and 808 sounds with a VST called Sublab which is an 808 and sub bass instrument that also allows you to comprehensive editing tools whilst also giving the user an opportunity to bring in external 808's samples then be edited with the same ease

I will also be implementing some live instrumentation into the some of tracks as a segment of this project will have an acoustic feel to it, this will include live drums and acoustic guitar. Micing techniques will be very important for these instruments especially for the acoustic guitar. Having done some initial research into micing techniques for acoustic guitars the main question I fell the studiy has posed Is whether to mic the guitar using a mono or stereo techniques. According to the company Audient, the use of micing technique should be should defined by the type of production the song needs (5 Essential Tips For Recording Acoustic Guitar, 2021). For instance if the guitar is the centre piece of the production then it's suggested that a stereo micing technique is implemented into for a fuller sounding recording. The processes mention are a realistic target for this project and will be a very efficient manner in bring this project to fruition and made to a high standard. I feel these techniques will give me a platform to be as creative as I need to be whilst also push myself to implement unfamiliar techniques that can only benefit my work process.

Conclusion

Upon reflection, the idea of creating a playlist as a showreel for future projects seems like a plausible way to create a body of work that represents who I am as a producer. Due to the nature of the genres I believe it will be a great tool to showcase my skills as a producer in genres that have been impactful upon the music industry. As R&B has been a consistent influence on the music industry and has woven its DNA upon the fabric of popular music, it only makes sense for me to explore my sound through the genre that I have personally grown having being influenced by from an early age. There are many parallels that I can draw with regards to my personal journey within music which lends itself to me creating both R&B and Gospel music that feels authentic to who I am and my influences within music. From a comparative point of view the heritage of R&B seems intertwined with Gospel music as previously mentioned many artists have come from a gospel music background which has helped to share their musical talents today. Seeing how the both genre are produced today has strengthened the fact the fact that the production process I very accessible to me and can compliment the way I work at present but will also challenge me to enhance my processes. Being 'in-the-box' as well as implementing some recording techniques is an area I relish gaining more experience in which will develop my production skill. With the different facets of this project along with the wealth of experienced gained I can forsee the project having a level of success on a personal level under the direction I see project heading and with the aims and objectives met.

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