



| ELEMENT C1 - PROPOSAL

Creation Assignment CMP 0920

Matthew Buckland
Student Number: 2010910

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1.0 What am I intending to create

I am intending to create six Drum and Bass (D&B) tracks for my creative project. The idea is to pitch these tracks to major D&B labels. I have chosen three of these labels to pitch to, which are:

- Ram Records – probably one of the most well-known and revered commercial D&B labels, founded by D&B DJ Andy C and Ant Miles – artists such as Andy C, Chase and Status, Calyx and Teebee, Rene LaVice, and Sub Focus.
- Metalheadz – trendsetting underground label with commercial crossover founded by Goldie – artists such as Goldie, Photek, Dillanja, Dom & Roland, Codename John (Grooverider) and Commix
- Exit Records – Experimental label founded by Bad Company UK artist dBridge – artists such as dBridge, Skeptical, Dub Phizix, Alix Perez, Calibre, Genotype and Fracture.

I am planning to make two tracks for each label, following the conventional D&B release of two tracks (so mirroring the typical vinyl release of Side A and Side B). The tracks will be between 4-5 minutes in length so that they are DJ friendly. I will also provide a DJ mini mix of the tracks as a showcase for this assignment.

1.1 SMART Analysis

I have conducted a SMART Analysis to provide clarity and focus for this project.

Specific – I have identified clearly and precisely what I want to achieve – six tracks produced to commercial quality

Measurable – The tracks will need to be ready for public consumption/” shippable”

Achievable – I believe that whilst this will be challenging it will be achievable. The skills I have gained through the course plus my knowledge of the genre will help with this.

Time-bound – project deadline/” shipping date” 23/07/2021

2.0 Why I am taking on the Project

D&B is the reason I became interested music production. At the start of this course, I said to myself that I would not make any D&B as I wanted to learn how and make other genres. However, I have come to the realisation that I do not have anything to show for my own artist profile. I have always

had a pipe dream that someday I would sign a release on these labels, and I think there is no time like the present to attempt to actualise this.

My D&B releases in the past have focused more on the underground/niche elements of the genre, (such as Jazz Liquid, with releases on smaller labels such as Liquid Brilliants and Soulflex Digital). I want to take this opportunity to make D&B at a commercial level.

I have not attempted to write for these labels before because I felt quite intimidated by the level of production required on these types of tracks. However, I now feel that what I have learnt during the course at Tileyard has prepared me to undertake such a challenge. Not only on the production side, but also on the song writing side. I have benefitted from the song writing camps, writing for a diverse set of pop genres (from K-pop to indie pop), and am keen to implement these skills into my D&B productions.

3.0 **What the Benchmarks for Success are**

To create a benchmark for the success of my project, firstly I need to define what each labels sound means to me and how I can best approach writing these tracks.

- Ram Records – Main room dance floor sound, with a futuristic/sci-fi/dark edge
- Metalheadz – Heavy focus on originality and not following the latest trend (they are usually a trend setter in the D&B community). Really heavy drums and a focus on musicality,
- Exit Records – Very experimental. The tracks signed to this label are more of an experiment of what can be done in the 140bpm to 170bpm range.

I have found some great primary sources with interviews from the label founders. I find it interesting that the label founders appear to still be heavily involved with listening to demos.

The first interview, titled “Goldie and Ant TC1 Talk Headz” (Goldie & Ant TC1 Talk Headz, 2021) is a YouTube video of Goldie (Metalheadz founder) and Ant TC1 (Label Manager) discussing the history and future of Metalheadz. The video was produced by Metalheadz for their YouTube channel and premiered 18 March 2021. It is quite a good insight into what they are looking for in tracks. For example, Goldie simply states in the interview “if it ain’t running, I ain’t gunna get back to ya” (Goldie & Ant TC1 Talk Headz, 2021).

The 2nd interview, titled “Echoes 01. How to get your music signed on a label? (ft. Ant TC1) (Echoes 01. | How to get your music signed on a label? (ft. Ant TC1), 2021) was published on Soundcloud on 29 April 2021. It was posted by the channel Studio Drum and Bass, and presented & produced by Emily Makis (Elevate Recordings, Shogun Audio, D&B Arena Awards nominee). The audio is not good in quality (addressed by the channel in the post description). There is a DJ mix followed by an interview with Ant TC1 discussing his process for listening demos. In it he discusses that he is mainly looking for musicality/original ideas, and high production values. He also states that he plays the demos through laptop speakers, and if he hears something that grabs his attention, he will then reach for the

headphones. I think this shows that the level of production required means that the track should sound good on all playback systems. (Ant TC1, 2021)

The third interview I found is with dBridge, which is from the Deeper Dive series on Patreon by Martyn 3024 (Martyn3024, 2020). dBridge makes the point of not writing everything in the key of F, as he sees most modern drum and bass written in this key (dBridge, 2020). This would imply to me that musicality is a key component for dBridge.

In the paper titled Fragile Empowerment: The Dynamic Cultural Economy of British Drum and Bass Music, Andy C was quoted as saying that “the dance floor is where [the music] comes from and that’s where its main focus should be. In the clubs and on the dance floor, not pansying about in a quiet lounge or something” (Fraser and Ettlinger, 2008)

The above quotes and interviews direct from the people making the decisions as to whether demos get signed or not has given me the necessary information to create a framework in which I can measure success.

So:

- The ideas must be original (are they?)
- The production must be high quality (is it?)
- The tunes must translate well to the dancefloor (does it?)
- All the above must be to a “good enough” standard (is it?)

I have defined “good enough” to mean usable/shippable for the purposes of this project.

If I can answer all the above points as a yes, I will know my project has been successful.

3.1 SWOT Analysis

I have conducted a SWOT Analysis so that I can take the best possible advantage for success.

Strengths – I know the genre well

Weaknesses – I am easily distracted

Opportunities – to work with other students/producers and engineers, use the studio, learn new techniques

Threats – writers block

4.0 How I intend to approach the Project

4.1 *Research Method*

I will be gathering research for my project using a mixture of primary and secondary sources, as well as existing case studies. I will use the CRAP test to determine the robustness and relevance of the sources of information I am researching.

To deliver this project, I will be using elements from the Scrum project management methodology. The definition of Scrum from The Scrum Guide is “Scrum is a lightweight framework that helps people, teams and organizations generate value through adaptive solutions for complex problems” (Schwaber and Sutherland, 2020). Prior to studying, I was the Project Coordinator/Project Manager on a nationwide project working with the NHS. We used Agile and Waterfall (“Wagile”) on this project, and my plan is to use some of these tools that I have learnt from this project, to see if they can be used in my creative project.

I have decided to prioritise tasks based on sequence, so the current high priority tasks are feedback from this proposal and composing/arranging the tracks. Mixing and mastering are currently low priority. The priorities will change each week, as I progress through the project. A copy of my Project Tracker can be found in Appendix A.

I have researched four case studies where people in the music industry have applied Scrum (or hybrid versions).

4.2 *Case Study 1*

Using Scrum in the Music Industry, (Micaela Syjuko, 2018) is a blog post by Micaela Anna Syjuko, and can be accessed on the Scrum.org website. The author describes how they are a Professional Scrum Trainer in one life, and a Band Manager in another. They applied Scrum to record the band second album. The tracks were split into Sprints, so that each track became the shippable product. The Product Backlog became the track list. The Product Owner (the Band’s producer) was effectively ordering the Product Backlog (track list) as a deliverable product, by a date set by the consumer (publicist). The Band Manager became the Scrum Master, and the Band became the Development Team.

They defined their Definition of Done as “Vocals recorded for the music and mixing, and mastering finalized” (Micaela Syjuko 2018). Each track also had to be ‘shippable’ i.e., good enough to be released to the general public (Micaela Syjuko 2018). They used two-week Sprints over a 3-month period and appeared to achieve their goals (and won some awards in the process).

4.3 Case Study 2

Unconventional Agility #1: Music Production (Vivify Scrum Insights, 2018) is a blog post that can be accessed at the vivifyscrum.com website. It details the author's process and retrospective of using Scrum to create a Lo-Fi track in a one-week sprint. They have set a Work Brief, X Statement (used in the game developer world to define a projects' objective succinctly), and Requirements. They broke down each element of making the track into stories and appear to have introduced a Kanban board to track progress.

The author then describes the challenges faced (most notably where the author self-overestimated and having writers block). Again, this case study appears to show some success in the author achieving their finished product.

4.4 Case Study 3

Agile Development Doesn't Work For Music Production (Simon Frost 2016) is a blog post and can be accessed on the authors page on medium.com. The author is a programmer who has worked within Agile Development teams. The author describes three main categories: Staying Healthy, Communication and Providing Consistent Feedback. For Staying Healthy, the author identifies that "Agile Development doesn't exactly say anything about health, but it has certain measures such as time boxing and estimations, that shields individuals from unrealistic expectations, which can then consequently cause strain on personal health" (Simon Frost 2016).

The author then identifies that there were some communication issues (due to the locations of the team). The final category discusses consistent feedback. One of the points raised by the author that I found notable was that "artistic projects don't necessarily make sense when you consistently evaluate the status. It's not until you add 'that sick bass' that the rest of the mix makes sense, or that 'bit of red' that the painting becomes complete" (Simon Frost 2016). This case study identified that Agile did not work for this artist's project.

4.5 Case Study 4

My Experience of using Scrum to Compose Music (Shadowsoflight777, 2020) is a post that can be found on the [WeAreTheMusicMakers](https://www.reddit.com/r/WeAreTheMusicMakers) sub-Reddit. The author of the post has experience of using Agile and Scrum in the world of Data Analytics and has attempted to apply these techniques to their music production.

This case study highlights that there is only one person working on this project (as the other case studies have at least one other person or a small team). The author identifies that they would be assuming all the roles of a Scrum team. The author defines the Sprint level items will result in

something usable (listenable) (Shadowsoflight777, 2020). The author achieved success using the Scrum framework.

The most notable points that I have noted from this case study are:

Time-Boxing: do as much work as possible in a constrained time frame, then move on.

Prioritization and Focus: do the important work first and limit work in progress based on previous experience.

Frequent Delivery: finish valuable “products” in two-week intervals (a “Sprint”). This helped me build momentum by having tangible milestones I could achieve on a continuous basis. (Shadowsoflight777, 2020)

4.6 *Case Study Conclusions*

After researching these four case studies, I have decided to use elements of Scrum to manage my project. Most of the case studies show that success was achieved, and my interpretation of the case study that did not (Case Study 3) is that for some people (especially in the creative industries), applying a rigid framework does not work for them.

I will be taking some elements of Scrum and using them to plan and execute my project. I believe it is the best way to plan out and break down into sizeable chunks of what is needed to complete the project, whilst having the flexibility to change/pivot if something does not work.

4.7 *Project Execution*

I have provided a Sprint timetable and Gantt chart in the Appendices. This will be used as my project tracker, again something I have learnt from my professional experience. I have given myself the weekends off in my plan, however these will be used as redundancy days in case something goes wrong, and I need to make changes. I have also allowed two weeks for feedback for this paper. If the feedback is returned earlier, I can start the project earlier. If it is later, I will have to start later, and I have allowed three weeks at the end of my project to facilitate this.

Regarding my SWOT analysis, the major threat I have identified is writer’s block. I can use the Staying Healthy section from Case Study 3 to mitigate this (and for my main weakness; being easily distracted), as well as my own methods (going for a walk, do something else for a time etc.)

I am planning to record live drums and use the Rhodes piano, synths, and other gear available at Tileyard. I will then do most of the writing and arranging at home using Ableton 10. Early mixes will be done at home, with final mixes being done at Tileyard.

I am planning to use another producer/engineer for my final mix, and a mastering engineer to do the final masters (hopefully at Tileyard). I have discussed this briefly with Sean Hargreaves in my first MD meeting with him.

5.0 **Alternative approaches that could have been but have not**

I had three other approaches to this project that I decided against.

5.1 Recording a Soul/Pop Album

The first was to record a friend of mine, as he has an album's worth of material ready to go. I decided against this, as whilst I would have been producing this, ultimately it would be his artistic vision. I also concluded that I would like some music for my own artist profile. However, two of the tracks (for Exit Records) will be co-written with this friend. We had an act named Semaphore which has been on hiatus since 2014, and we have decided to resurrect this act for these tracks. We had some success with Semaphore, and Bailey (of Metalheadz fame) played one of our tracks on his Ministry of Sound Radio show (Intabeats, 2014)

5.2 Concept Album

I had an idea for a concept album exploring human history, from the start of civilization, up to present, and possibly into the future. Musically this album would be inspired by Massive Attack, Zero 7 and Gorillaz. I currently have one track in demo stage (currently titled 10800 BC) for this and am working with a fellow student from the song writing course on this project. I felt that this project will need longer to grow and marinate, and so I decided against using this for my final assignment.

5.3 Eight tracks

I had originally planned to do eight tracks, with two aimed at Hospital Records. Following my meeting with Sean Hargreaves, he advised I do six, so that I can focus my efforts. I may still do these two extra tracks, but these will fall out of the scope of this project.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Project Tracker/Sprint Timetable

Appendix B – Project Overview Gantt Chart

Appendix A

PROJECT START DATE		07-May-21		SCROLL TO WEEK #		1	
Sprint	Priority	Start	Finish	Duration	Status	% Complete	
Project Summary		07-May-21	23-Jul-21	56 day(s)		0%	
Sprint 1		07-May-21	21-May-21	11 day(s)	Red		
Feedback from Proposal	High	07-May-21	21-May-21	11 day(s)	Red	0%	
Record live drums/synths/rhodes	High	10-May-21	21-May-21	10 day(s)	Red	0%	
Sprint 2 - Composition/Arrangement		22-May-21	06-Jun-21	10 day(s)			
RR Track 1	High	24-May-21	25-May-21	2 day(s)	Red	0%	
RR Track 2	High	26-May-21	27-May-21	2 day(s)	Red	0%	
MH Track 1	High	28-May-21	29-May-21	1 day(s)	Red	0%	
MH Track 2	High	01-Jun-21	02-Jun-21	2 day(s)	Red	0%	
ER Track 1	High	03-Jun-21	03-Jun-21	1 day(s)	Red	0%	
ER Track 2	High	04-Jun-21	04-Jun-21	1 day(s)	Red	0%	
Checkpoint - Send to Sean Hargreaves	High	04-Jun-21	04-Jun-21	1 day(s)	Red	0%	
Sprint 3 - Record vocals		07-Jun-21	11-Jun-21	5 day(s)			
MH Track 1	Medium	07-Jun-21	07-Jun-21	1 day(s)	Red	0%	
ER Track 1	Medium	08-Jun-21	08-Jun-21	1 day(s)	Red	0%	
ER Track 2	Medium	08-Jun-21	08-Jun-21	1 day(s)	Red	0%	
Sprint 4 - Pre Mix		14-Jun-21	19-Jun-21	5 day(s)			
RR Track 1	Low	14-Jun-21	14-Jun-21	1 day(s)	Red	0%	
RR Track 2	Low	15-Jun-21	15-Jun-21	1 day(s)	Red	0%	
MH Track 1	Low	16-Jun-21	16-Jun-21	1 day(s)	Red	0%	
MH Track 2	Low	17-Jun-21	17-Jun-21	1 day(s)	Red	0%	
ER Track 1	Low	18-Jun-21	18-Jun-21	1 day(s)	Red	0%	
ER Track 2	Low	19-Jun-21	19-Jun-21	0 day(s)	Red	0%	
Checkpoint - Listening Feedback Ciaran Robinson & Jake Miller & Sean Harareaves		21-Jun-21	25-Jun-21	5 day(s)			
Checkpoint	Low	21-Jun-21	25-Jun-21	5 day(s)	Red	0%	
Address Checkpoint Feedback	Low	21-Jun-21	25-Jun-21	5 day(s)	Red	0%	
Sprint 5 - Mix and Master		28-Jun-21	02-Jul-21	5 day(s)			
RR Track 1	Low	28-Jun-21	28/06/2021	1 day(s)	Red	0%	
RR Track 2	Low	28-Jun-21	28/06/2021	1 day(s)	Red	0%	
MH Track 1	Low	02-Jul-21	02/07/2021	1 day(s)	Red	0%	
MH Track 2	Low	02-Jul-21	02/07/2021	1 day(s)	Red	0%	
ER Track 1	Low	02-Jul-21	02/07/2021	1 day(s)	Red	0%	
ER Track 2	Low	02-Jul-21	02/07/2021	1 day(s)	Red	0%	
Sprint 6 - Write Essay		05/07/2021	23/07/2021	15 day(s)			
Write Reflective Essay	Low	05/07/2021	23/07/2021	15 day(s)	Red	0%	

Sprint Project Tracker

PROJECT START DATE		07-May-21		SCHEDULE TO MEET #		1		5	
Sprint	Priority	Start	Finish	Duration	Status	Complete			
Project Summary						0%			
Sprint 1		07-May-21		21-May-21		11 days		Red	
Feedback from Product		High		07-May-21		21-May-21		11 days	
Recursive dependencies/nodes		High		10-May-21		21-May-21		10 days	
Sprint 2: Complex Arrangement		22-May-21		04-Jun-21		10 days		Red	
PR track 1		High		24-May-21		25-May-21		2 days	
PR track 2		High		26-May-21		27-May-21		2 days	
MR track 1		High		28-May-21		28-May-21		1 day	
MR track 2		High		01-Jun-21		02-Jun-21		2 days	
ER track 1		High		03-Jun-21		03-Jun-21		1 day	
ER track 2		High		04-Jun-21		04-Jun-21		1 day	
Checkpoint - Send to stakeholders		High		04-Jun-21		04-Jun-21		1 day	
Sprint 3 - Record review		07-Jun-21		11-Jun-21		5 days		Red	
MR track 1		Medium		07-Jun-21		07-Jun-21		1 day	
ER track 1		Medium		08-Jun-21		08-Jun-21		1 day	
ER track 2		Medium		08-Jun-21		08-Jun-21		1 day	
Sprint 4 - Final Mix		14-Jun-21		19-Jun-21		5 days		Red	
MR track 1		Low		14-Jun-21		14-Jun-21		1 day	
MR track 2		Low		15-Jun-21		15-Jun-21		1 day	
MR track 1		Low		16-Jun-21		16-Jun-21		1 day	
MR track 2		Low		17-Jun-21		17-Jun-21		1 day	
ER track 1		Low		18-Jun-21		18-Jun-21		1 day	
ER track 2		Low		19-Jun-21		19-Jun-21		0 day	
Checkpoint - Taking Feedback From Robinson & Joe Miller & Leon Foresters		21-Jun-21		25-Jun-21		5 days		Red	
Checkpoint		Low		21-Jun-21		25-Jun-21		5 days	
Address Checkpoint Feedback		Low		21-Jun-21		25-Jun-21		5 days	
Sprint 5 - Mix and Master		28-Jun-21		02-Jul-21		5 days		Red	
MR track 1		Low		28-Jun-21		28/06/2021		1 day	
MR track 2		Low		28-Jun-21		28/06/2021		1 day	
MR track 1		Low		02-Jul-21		02/07/2021		1 day	
MR track 2		Low		02-Jul-21		02/07/2021		1 day	
ER track 1		Low		02-Jul-21		02/07/2021		1 day	
ER track 2		Low		02-Jul-21		02/07/2021		1 day	
Sprint 6 - White Story		05/07/2021		23/07/2021		15 days		Red	
Write Reflective Story		Low		05/07/2021		23/07/2021		15 days	

May-7		May-14		May-21		May-28		Jun-4		Jun-11		Jun-18		Jun-25		Jul-2		Jul-9		Jul-16		Jul-23		
3	4	5	6	7	10	11	12	13	14	17	18	19	20	21	24	25	26	27	28	31	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	5	8	9	10	11	12	15	16	17	18	19	22	23	24	25	28	29	30	1	2	
M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T

Appendix B