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2016417
Creative Music Management
BMTY7000
Reflective Summary
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Abstract

The following essay reflects on the undertaking of Raspberry Beret’s campaign planning a single release. The essay will define reflection, explain its importance within a project, and apply a reflective approach to review the campaigns strengths and weaknesses, specifically referring to our work as a group, and my role within that group.

Reflective essay

Reflection is described as a “purposeful activity in which you analyse experiences, or your own practice/skills/responses, in order to learn and improve” (University of Birmingham, N.D). It is important to reflect on any work completed in order to learn from the positive outcomes, identify any issues and means to improve.

‘It is not sufficient to have an experience in order to learn. Without reflecting on this experience it may quickly be forgotten, or its learning potential lost.’ (Gibbs, 1988a)

Porter (2017) states that reflection enables the brain to pause amongst the chaos, “untangle and sort through observations and experiences, consider multiple possible interpretations, and create meaning”. Reflection is essential to give clarity to learning and establish room for improvement on future projects. Gibbs (1988b) Reflective cycle demonstrates a system of learning that ensures reflection is utilised in a way to improve future performance (Figure 1).

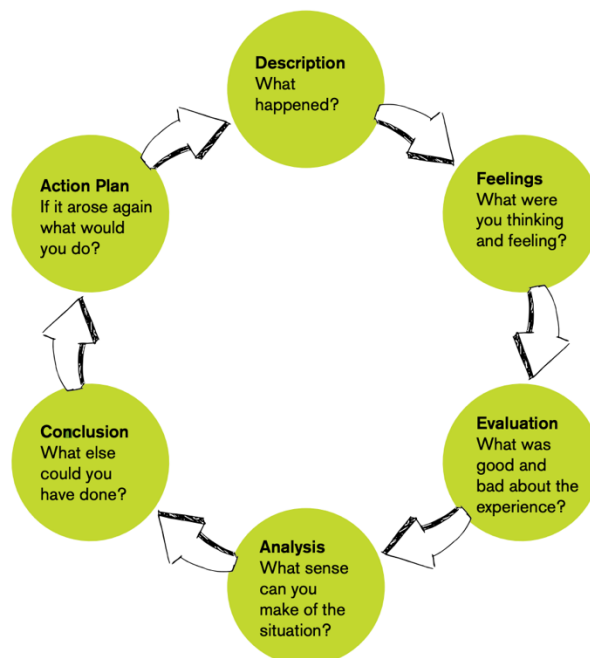


Figure 1. Gibbs' Reflective cycle

Assignment

For our assignment we were given a theoretical budget of £500 and tasked with creating a strategy and implementing a release campaign for an original piece of music by an artist. The music business online (MBO) cohort were split into groups, and I was originally placed into a team with Aidan Regnaud and Emma Moore, under the name Raspberry Beret.

Group work and team roles

To succeed in this task, and for all of us to gain valuable learning in creative music management and the process of releasing music, it was vital that we all worked as a team, communicated regularly on creative decisions and established our strengths in order to best utilise our resources. Johnson and Johnson (1989) state that cooperation has a direct result on outcomes, with conditions such as positive interdependence, face-to-face interaction, individual accountability, social skills and group processing. After discussing several options. It was decided that we'd use my track, as it was a new project it gave us a good opportunity for us all to contribute to shaping the fledgling project. As a result, I took the role of product manager.

We chose to use traditional label roles to delegate tasks within the group. Emma had experience in social media and Tik-Tok so it was decided that she would write a social media plan, and it was her responsibility to create the new profiles and plan to build follower numbers on our social media platforms of choice, Instagram, Tik-Tok and Facebook. Aidan believed his strengths to lie in creative tasks, so he was assigned the role of managing the creative aspects and design. This allowed for a fluid collaboration as Emma could liaise with Aidan on any social media assets she needed. As my experience lay in promotion and the song was in a music scene that I was familiar with, I oversaw the marketing of the single, including writing the press release, creating a marketing plan and identifying any opportunities for support or coverage. Although we set out roles, we collaborated as much as possible and consulted each other on creative decisions. The contracts and budget were to be handled by Emma, although we pivoted once Kalina joined the group, and she took over contracts and budgeting. We discussed the Facebook and Instagram advertising, and she planned the advertising spend based on the target demographic detailed in the marketing plan.

I believe that the roles allocated played to our strengths, although it may have offered more learning for us all to take on responsibilities for areas in which we didn't have experience, in order to broaden our knowledge. I also suggested referring to a slightly more formal Belbin's team roles (Belbin, N.D) framework when delegating tasks, as that would have given us more informed insight into who might have performed best in different areas, although I didn't follow up on this. Referring to the team role summary descriptions (Figure 2) retrospectively, I believe we naturally fell into roles that played to our personalities. Kalina was a welcome addition to the group and offered critical feedback on the song that was lacking prior to her involvement.

BELBIN® Team Role Summary Descriptions		
Team Role	Contribution	Allowable Weaknesses
Plant	Creative, imaginative, free-thinking. Generates ideas and solves difficult problems.	Ignores incidentals. Too pre-occupied to communicate effectively.
Resource Investigator	Outgoing, enthusiastic, communicative. Explores opportunities and develops contacts.	Over-optimistic. Loses interest once initial enthusiasm has passed.
Co-ordinator	Mature, confident, identifies talent. Clarifies goals. Delegates effectively.	Can be seen as manipulative. Offloads own share of the work.
Shaper	Challenging, dynamic, thrives on pressure. Has the drive and courage to overcome obstacles.	Prone to provocation. Offends people's feelings.
Monitor Evaluator	Sober, strategic and discerning. Sees all options and judges accurately.	Lacks drive and ability to inspire others. Can be overly critical.
Teamworker	Co-operative, perceptive and diplomatic. Listens and averts friction.	Indecisive in crunch situations. Avoids confrontation.
Implementer	Practical, reliable, efficient. Turns ideas into actions and organizes work that needs to be done.	Somewhat inflexible. Slow to respond to new possibilities.
Completer Finisher	Painstaking, conscientious, anxious. Searches out errors. Polishes and perfects.	Inclined to worry unduly. Reluctant to delegate.
Specialist	Single-minded, self-starting, dedicated. Provides knowledge and skills in rare supply.	Contributes only on a narrow front. Dwells on technicalities.

Figure 2. Belbin Team Role summary descriptions

Project management

We decide to schedule at least one Zoom call a week to discuss the project, update on the progress of tasks and discuss any creative aspects. Zoom has been used throughout lockdown in the music industry, not only for meetings but for remote collaborations (Leight, 2020). We utilised Zoom's share screen feature to allow every team member to view assets, and it was particularly helpful when consulting the project management software we chose to use, Milanote. Milanote gives you the possibility of assigning tasks to people and setting deadlines, so it was great to refer to when making sure tasks were completed. We also had a moodboard for design ideas, which allowed for a collaborative experience as we added artwork we thought would be suitable, along with other themes that fit with the Incan/Peruvian theme of the Aramu Muru project. We did attempt to switch to online project management software Monday as it was possible to integrate the task timeline we created into a Gantt chart. However, we discovered that Monday only offered a 1-week trial, so decided to return Milanote. We also set up a WhatsApp group to keep in communication between calls and this was really useful for any quick communication we needed, along with sending assets and utilising WhatsApp's web app. We used Google Drive to store assets such as artwork, creative, contracts, marketing plan and press release

One of the big issues we faced was with setting deadlines. As the track was in an early stage, we wanted to utilise feedback in order to make it as strong as possible, however we found it difficult to set deadlines for task completion. We initially wanted to release the single in time to assess the performance and garner more press

coverage and radio support, but due to the tight nature of the project, time restrictions and us looking to implement group and industry feedback, this wasn't possible.

Vocal brief

We discussed the style of vocal we thought would fit well with the group, and after further discussion with my co-producer we settled on two reference tracks for vocals, Everything But The Girl - 'Missing' (Todd Terry's Club Mix) and Hot Natured – 'Altered State' (ft. Roisin Murphy). I approached a vocalist I'd worked with previously, Yemi Bolatiwa. She has recently featured on a release on BBC Radio 1 dance host Danny Howard's Nothing Else Matters label and also had plays on BBC 1 and Kiss FM, so felt she would be a good feature to leverage the track. She requested a fee of £100 to write the lyrics and vocal melody. We agreed this would be a recoupable advance, with a 33% royalty split afterwards to reflect her considerable input. If we had more time I believe it would have been preferable to spend more time deciding on a vocalist. As we were a new project and were adopting a streaming-focused approach, using a vocalist with more monthly listeners may have benefited us, in addition to the radio and promotion we were planning for, as Yemi's monthly listeners only amounted to 561 (Spotify, 2021). Music Gateway (n.d) estimates that 150,000 streams would amount to £516 in streaming income on Spotify. Although we would be able to generate income from other digital service providers (DSP's), working with an artist with a consistently high listenership on Spotify would have made us less reliant on the music being supported by media and radio.

Industry feedback

I reached out to contacts requesting feedback on the song in order to further drive the direction. Harry Fowler, A&R at Armada Music, gave excellent feedback (see Appendix A1), and highlighted the difficult nature of breaking a new act in the current climate with Coronavirus, recommending that we built some momentum by releasing music. We had considered pitching the song to labels, but this feedback helped to cement our strategy for the single. I also received feedback from James Hill, Head of A&R at Xploded Music (see Appendix A2), which was also valuable as he recommended shortening the song for Spotify, introducing a stronger lead melody and following a more rigid verse-chorus arrangement. While this was really useful in shaping the direction of the song, if the song would have been ready for feedback earlier, we would have been able to alter the song slightly sooner and scheduled it for release earlier.

Marketing plan

Writing a marketing plan allowed us to collate the target demographic, similar audience, key dates and project aims for the single. Having this document in one place that we could all refer to helped us to stay on track with the overall goals. With permission, I used a previous marketing campaign template from a project I was involved with for an artist named GRiZ (see Appendix B), in collaboration with Red Light Management and the Family Business. The marketing plan was key to informing decisions and helped give context to others in the group who weren't familiar with the dance music industry by listing similar artists and targeted demographic.

Baker (2013) listed 5 first steps to marketing music, which are given below:

1. Have a clear idea who your ideal fan is
2. Discover what motivates your fans
3. Create and use a brand identity statement
4. Focus on the benefits your music delivers
5. Stop talking so much about yourself

Referring to this list, I believe the marketing plan and strategy we devised correlated loosely to these guidelines. We spent time researching our target market by identifying similar artists and looking to leverage their fanbase with targeted promotions via social media. The key motivation for fans was the feel-good message of the song, which we felt was perfect both for summer and the impending easing of lockdown restrictions, and they were encouraged to upload their own Tik-Tok videos being themselves, to tie in with the theme of the lyrics. While we didn't explicitly create our own brand identity statement, we used the following sentence across the press release, social media bio's and posts and any other material that was shared: "Aramu Muru carve out their own niche with a modern take on retro styles". We only posted a short clip on socials, but the focus was to encourage others to get involved and try and create a sense of community behind the message.

Our sole focus was to promote the single online and push streams, so I contacted premier dance music website We Rave You to pitch the song and gauge interest around supporting the single. I was offered advertorial and sent their media kit. I presented this to the group, and we agreed to portion £115 of the budget to track coverage and a homepage feature. With a reach of 1 million page views on the website monthly, posts on all social media (over 1 million followers) and a repost on Soundcloud, we decided that the exposure to a relevant targeted audience would be worthwhile and should drive people to our social pages and to stream the single.

Lathrop (2007) advised that the traditional method of music marketing was to "start small, expand widely, then go global", but stated that the "go global" approach was "more pressing, more promising and more possible". Recognising the global scale of the dance industry, I requested to be added to Yemi's Spotify For Artists page as a team member and used her top 5 countries to inform our PR targets, leveraging the small amount of traction she had in those areas.

Although the release was to happen after the deadline, I pitched for a handful of artist profile pieces with the press release I wrote, requesting the media to post the link to our Instagram post teasing the single, to drive followers to our pages and build some momentum. We secured an artist profile piece on Beatselector Magazine (2021) linking to our Instagram. I also had feedback from Connor Coates, peaktime Saturday dance host on Northern Ireland's #1 station (Love Belfast, 2020), Cool FM, who confirmed support (see Appendix A3). Finally, Point Blank Music school confirmed a masterclass for their students with Yemi (see Appendix A4), involving her discussing writing to a song brief using the brief we gave her. This would also be posted on their YouTube channel, which has over 450,000 subscribers, and their content partners DJ Mag, Magnetic Mag and MusicTech gave us scope for further promotion of the single.

While we had good feedback, I believe I should have considered outsourcing certain aspects of promotion to the rest of the group, or to specialised companies such as radio pluggers for radio promotion. I also believe that it would have been a better approach to devise multiple income streams relating to the release. A ticketed livestream could have been a good option in the absence of shows, although due to the nature of it being a new project, coupled with Yemi's relatively small following, I feel this approach wouldn't have yielded many results. As a result, I believe the decision to allocate the majority of the budget and marketing strategy to track and social media promotion was justified, to give us the best chance to generate streams and ultimately income.

Video assets

With little budget left to accommodate to the creation of a music video and little time to have one produced, I enlisted my brother to film a behind-the-scenes video as he had previous experience. Working in-person allowed me to direct the filming, creative direction and overall aesthetic of the video, and meant we were able to produce the finished video in one session. Given more time, I would have liked to spend a little bit time on the video, incorporating more elements and doing a comprehensive track breakdown to open up the track to the considerable music production audience present on YouTube. I also requested that Yemi send over a video of her singing the song acapella, giving us another tool to promote to a slightly different audience.

Personal reflection

Swot analysis



Figure 3. Personal SWOT analysis (created on Creately)

Quast (2013) states that the purpose of a SWOT analysis is to “identify the actions you can take to best meet the requirements of the job or promotion you are seeking”. In this case, the requirements were related to the success of the campaign. I believe it was the correct choice to assume the role of product manager, as I had the confidence to oversee the project and have fairly extensive experience in collaborating on similar music projects within my current job. I tried to adapt a collaborative approach to every aspect of the project, as I was aware of the project being a personal one and wanted the team to all glean positive learning experiences from the campaign. We tried to define clear roles early into the project, and I feel the roles we took all played to each individual’s strengths. There were several occasions where I initiated contact on a task, such as reaching out to Ian Penman at New Media Law to ask for advice before he offered to draft a splits agreement. In hindsight, it would have been more efficient to maintain our roles and pass the idea to the person who was initially managing contracts, Emma.

Conclusion

I believe the outcome of the project was positive and the team functioned fluidly and effectively. The early feedback and coverage on the single, utilising the assets created, indicated that the single had scope to perform well, and that our approach with budgeting and marketing strategy may have been justified and rewarded. Although we applied an unorthodox approach to project management, the high levels of communication and regular interaction allowed us to ensure that we met our stated goals for the campaign.

While the whole team displayed a high level of motivation and worked well together, the project would have benefited from more formal structure in places. If we'd have implemented strict deadlines on tasks and I'd have finalised the single sooner rather than trying to polish it further, we may have had chance to release the single in time, and we could have created the assets sooner and began to implement more of the planned initiatives.

I believe the team showcased a high level of adaptability, seamlessly integrating Kalina into the group and redefining roles in order to utilise everybody's strengths, ultimately resulting in a largely successful campaign.

Word count: 2,746

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Appendix

Email correspondence

Appendix A1

 Harry Fowler <harry@armadamusic.com>
Fri 19/03/2021 12:56
To: You

Hey Ben,

Thanks for sending this! Definitely onto something here in terms of the vibe – got a good thing going with that nice groovy bassline. The kinda track that could be a good summer/ibiza jam in a normal time / season.

Like you touched on, I think it needs some overall polish so not quite there yet, but I would recommend to keep going. As you probably know super hard to launch a new act these days... so we're currently looking for momentum that we can build on. My advise would be to work on getting lots of music done and start releasing so you can begin to build the story. I'd be the guy to hit up further down the line with the intension of taking the project from one level to the next

Good luck with this man ! & feel free to keep me in the loop

Thanks,
Harry



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Appendix A2

Aramu Muru 'Who We Are' (ft. Yemi Bolatiwa) A&R feedback

 James Hill <james@xploded.com>
Tue 06/04/2021 12:19
To: You

Hi mate,

Thanks for sending, nice track! - have put together a few thoughts for you below and have approached as I would any other record that comes through to us, so hope that helps!

Would definitely like to hear a streaming focused edit. I can hear that this obviously feels more like an extended/ club version and sure you'll do one anyway, but having that streaming edit is so important for any record as it's now 80%+ of the industry and where most opportunities will lie for a new artist.

Structure wise, I think it would benefit from more of a verse-chorus form when you do the edit too.

Overall production is solid and the vocal is nicely produced too! - It would be great to hear a more hooky melody/ riff. A lot of the melody feels quite 'backseat' to me, can feel you're going for a more chilled housey vibe but i'd definitely try and incorporate something a bit more standout especially around the 1:00 - 1:30min mark... reference wise maybe something like the Fred Again 'We've lost dancing' riff ?

Vocal chops and the arp in the breakdown are great, think you could utilise them more!

Cheers

James Hill
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Appendix A3



Coates, Connor <Connor.Coates@coolfm.co.uk>



Tue 06/04/2021 13:22

To: You

Hey Ben,

I'm great! Hope you had a good Easter?

Thanks for sending. The track sounds good. Looking forward to hearing the final master. Keep me posted and I'll try to give it a play on the radio show for you.

Cheers

Appendix A4

Writing to a brief masterclass // Aramu Muru - 'Who We Are' (ft. Yemi Bolatiwa)



Stanley Li <Stanley@pointblankmusicschool.com>



Thu 08/04/2021 22:55

To: Ben Morling

Hi Ben,

Thanks for your email!

I've checked with the team and they're really excited to get Yemi for a masterclass especially as welcome week is coming up for our new intake of students.

I can offer the following dates, all are at 7:30PM and we have the option of filming it at the school of Yemi can remote via Zoom.

April 19, 20, 21.

We can discuss after confirmation the exact format of the masterclass.

Cheers

Stanley

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Appendix B
Marketing Plan



GRiZ
Ride Waves
Marketing Plan

Artist: GRiZ

Title: *Ride Waves*

Label: GRiZ

Release Date: April 5, 2019

Genre: Electronic

Top Territories: United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, South America

Preview Link:

Buy Link:

SOCIALS AND TARGET AUDIENCE

Socials

[FACEBOOK](#) - 289K likes

[TWITTER](#) - 171K followers

[YOUTUBE](#) - 38K subscribers

[INSTA](#) - 225K followers

[SOUNDCLOUD](#) - 360K followers

Target Audience:

- Fans of GRiZ
- Electronic Music fans ages 18-35

TEAMS:

- Management: Red Light Management
- Sales, Distribution & Marketing: INgrooves
- PR: Infamous PR (US) Urban Rebel PR (Europe)
- US Radio: Red Light/Distiller
- Digital Advertising: Gupta
- Marketing: The Family Business

TRACK LISTING:

01. Can't Get Enough