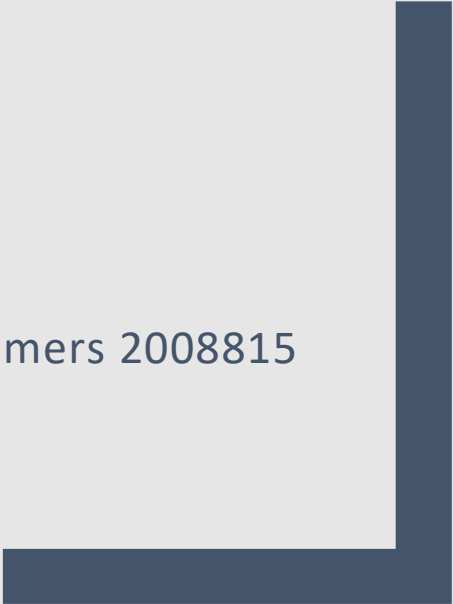




Creation Assignment Element C1

WRITTEN PROPOSAL

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In this piece I will outline my written proposal for my creation assignment. First, I will discuss my creative intention and why I am taking on this project, then I will discuss the benchmarks for success, the approach, the project management techniques, stakeholders and timeline before moving on to the conclusion. Word count: 2740.

Creation Intention

I am intending to create a 6 track EP that features me as an artist. The most important aim for this project is to find my artistic voice within my music production, inspired by my life and my taste in music. The aim for this project will be to establish some more unique sonic elements to my tracks, whilst still intending to create commercial music for the charts. References for my artist project include musicians like Rosalia, Frank Ocean, Lorde, 1010 Benja SL and Timbaland.

The music business grew by 7,4% in 2020, despite not having much opportunity for live entertainment, but the artistic vision and conviction of an artist, can be what brings a project to higher levels of success, as seen on Dua Lipa's 'Future Nostalgia' (arguably one of the most commercially successful albums of the past year), states Joe Kentish, Head of A&R at Warner records (IFPI, 2021).

This indicates that it can be a lucrative exploration to try and find my own distinct sound, and that this could lead to potential success.

Although I have produced and written songs for many different briefs, the past songs I still like are always the ones who draw most from personal experiences. For this project, by focusing on themes, occurrences and interests from my own personal life, such as heartbreak, love, desires and my childhood I intend to find a sonic identity in my music that feels uniquely me.

Why I am taking on the project

With my past music productions, I find that they are often solid representations of the middle ground in their genre (pop-rnb). They are well put together and use the right samples and structures of what is expected within the genre specifications and limitations. Like many

producers, I have been focusing on my technical abilities, whilst losing sight of developing my own unique sound, arguably the most important part (Townsend, 2018).

I find that my songwriting (choice of titles, themes, lyrics and melodies) is often more left leaning and original, and I want to match this more within my production as to create a cohesive sound that I can be proud of for being different or more unique to me. When I think about the artists that I have looked up to for inspiration, such as Rosalia, Lorde and Timbaland, I find that they have created a unique sonic identity for themselves that was different from what was popular on the charts at the time, which made them stand out. I believe this can be achieved through a combination of vision and experimentation.

For the past several years I have focused on being able to make commercially viable tracks, however I feel like I have not been able to find a specific style of production that sets me apart from others. According to industry specialist and consultant Andrew Shaw, creating your artist identity is all about telling your own story. Questions like what is your narrative, who are you, what are you and your music about and how are you different come in to place here (Baur, 2019).

I am hoping that with this project I can take the best parts from the artists I like in combination with inspiration from my life events and apply this to my own production in order to create my original sonic identity. As described by artist advisor Storm Gardner; all great artists 'steal', but you need you add your own perspective (Baur, 2019).

The benchmarks for success

The benchmarks for success will probably be established by how I feel about the project after I 'finished' it. Since finding my voice as an artist and producer is linked to a feeling and therefore in a way subjective, it will heavily rely on whether I personally feel like I can be proud releasing those songs. Since I don't plan on releasing the songs within the timeframe of the submission, the actual commercial success will not be recorded in the reflective commentary, however, big streaming numbers, radio play and live shows would be a benchmark for success later down the line.

I will be able to measure success relative to the references I decided to use, for example, does the track do something similar that Rosalia's would do, did I use experimental vocal production techniques like Frank Ocean does? However, since the goal would also be to move

away from the references and add my own style, this method of measuring success isn't complete. Therefore, I decided to come up with a few questions I will ask myself at the end of the project that can help me understand more accurately whether I achieved what I set out to.

1. Did I complete all 6 tracks of the EP?

This will be the easiest method of measuring the success of this project, as it is quantitative.

2. Did I follow the timeline, and if not, how has this affected the project?

This question should also be reasonably easy to answer, as the timeline will be set out with enough time per track, however, some tracks may be more labour intensive due to more instrumentation or detailed work, or others may have taken more time due to creative struggles or lack of skill. However, it will also be educational to see whether the imposed timeline helps me be more productive or perhaps even helps me achieve more than the guide. Deadlines can encourage artists to create, regardless of quality, and I think for this project being more creative and less critical during the process will be beneficial (Davidson, 2019).

3. Did I establish my own artistic voice within the tracks?

The answer for this question will rely on my feelings towards the product after completion. Right now, most people will hear my finished tracks and consider them to have their own identity and sound, but I think this is mainly because I have an identifiable style of writing and singing, not so much from the tracks. Incorporating my own voice in the productions much like Timbaland and Rosalia do, might help me create a unique sonic identity.

4. Does the EP establish a cohesive sound throughout?

This can be measured by surveying listeners and noting their responses. Do they feel like these 6 tracks belong together in some way? Do they have recognisable unique elements whilst also being refreshingly new?

The approach

I will start the project by analysing the sounds of the artists and producers who (in my experience) have a very unique identity and whose records I love. I will try to figure out how they established this sound, what makes them unique, and how I can take what I like from them and use it as the building blocks for my own sound. The artists I like work across different genres, so I think taking inspiration from more than one will be a successful method, as a signature sound is something that defies genre (Darling, 2020).

One of those artists that has inspired a wave of change in music is Rosalia. She states that for her music she wanted to find a connection between heritage music and electronic sounds. She states her generation is connected to its roots whilst simultaneously being aware of what's going on outside of her home country, Spain (Yalcinkaya, 2018). This mixture is arguably what you can hear in her music, which is a combination of flamenco, hip-hop, rnb and reggaeton. In her productions she often uses her own voice, everyday sounds, and a mixture between organic and electronic elements.

Producer and artist Timbaland has also carved out his unique lane in the industry. A lot of his percussion is created by beatboxing, using just his mouth. He is also known for sampling everyday sounds in his productions, for example a baby crying, crickets, animal noises. This gives the tracks a unique, organic feel. Timbaland created a future funk sound of muffled adlibs and warping vocal effects (Brydon, 2015). He too uses a combination of organic and real sounds and electronic elements whilst mixing in his own voice.

Both artists are innovative, and in order for me to achieve a new sound, I will have to innovate too. This means I will have to translate my ideas into something new that creates value. In order to have something innovative (the final product, my distinctive sound), I will use the creative technique of experimentation. Experimentation means I will have to try new and different approaches to creating music than I have done before. The focus with experimentation is on the process, as you are setting out to find something without certainty it will be found. Experimentation will help me learn. It will help me understand the process of why I want to achieve a certain sound, what it takes to achieve this and how I get there. It

helps me by using a broader approach, rather than sticking to one thing, thus creating more chances of success. It will also help me fail, as some approaches are bound to be unsuccessful, and by finding out what fails in the early experimentation phase, I will save time and effort in the later stages. The earlier the experimentation starts, the faster I can rule out uncertainty (Saarelainen, 2017).

Although innovation doesn't necessarily have to be fully disruptive, I could still make a difference in my industry, by providing the listeners (customers) with something that's just a little better than something on the market right now (Daisyme, 2021). Rosalia isn't the first person to make flamenco music, but rather the first one to combine it with hip-hop beats. It will still be a game of chance, as new ideas might need evolution to reach their final form. The market might move on, or listeners might reject the sound, but trying might also result in finding something completely new and unique.

A great example of a producer and artist that disrupted the industry is Kanye West, with his debut album 'The College Dropout'. It represented an exciting counterpoint to the digital production style that had previously been popularised by Timbaland. West is known for his sampling, so arguably he didn't reinvent music, he just put a new twist on something that was already there. The lyrical content was also new for rap, talking about religion and more relatable family matters. Kanye challenged the status quo, and this resulted in a successful sound and career (Opie, 2019)

Another creative technique I will use is collaboration. Collaboration doesn't only help you develop your own sound by taking influence from your collaborators, it can also help you learn new skills by complementing each other's strengths and weaknesses. It will increase productivity by delegating tasks to whoever is more proficient at it, or even by challenging writers block and sharing ideas. Learning about my weaknesses during the collaborative process might also drive me to push the boundaries of my limitations and allow me to put in practice some new production techniques. Collaborators will also be able to give me constructive feedback and help, expand my professional network and perhaps even expand my fanbase after release (Levin, 2019). Timbaland has stated he likes to work through

collaboration and use everyone's strength to come together to create a masterpiece (Complex, 2018).

Audience, stakeholders, project planning and management.

The target audience for this project will be people around my own age, from 18 – 34 years. I will release worldwide, but predominantly promote in my home country Belgium, in the UK (London areas), and Los Angeles. This is where I have connections, family and friends, and at the start, this will be my main audience. Considering I want this artist project to exist at a similar side of the commercial genre spectrum as someone like Lorde, Frank Ocean, Charli XCX or Rosalia, I would also eventually target those audiences who enjoy this style of music; pop-rnb, electronic, alternative pop with intricate lyrics and alternative tendencies, but still very radio friendly. Based on my Instagram insights, my main audience is 57% female, 48% are aged between 25-34 years, 40% are aged between 18-24, and main cities include London, Antwerp, Los Angeles, Kalmthout (my hometown) and New York (Appendix A).

Fans will be able to listen on all major streaming platforms like Spotify, Apple Music and Soundcloud. It will be available for free, and I will distribute via Distrokid, which allows me to pay a one-off fee to distribute an unlimited amount of songs for a whole year. With the current COVID-19 pandemic going on, it is hard to consider a plan for live events, however, society seems to enjoy streaming more than ever, with the music industry seeing a global rise of 18,5% in revenue of paid streaming services in 2020 (IFPI, 2021).

I will try and promote the songs through an acoustic performance at Sofar sounds, enabling me to perform for a small group of new fans, to slowly widen my audience in an intimate way. Right now, these are only happening virtually, but they will hopefully occur outside again soon. I can then record this acoustic performance as well, to be distributed on YouTube. This way the project can be enjoyed by a live audience as well, and I can grow as a performer, whilst promoting the tracks.

I will be the main stakeholder of this project, the other collaborators have not been established, as I am still in the organising and designing stage of this project. I will most likely

work on the production with my friend Josh (as JUUIICE), and my fellow team members of our collective Laura and Noah, on writing the songs.

The project management technique I will use is the Critical Path method. This allows you to map out the most important tasks in the project, with their duration, to get an estimate of when the project might be completed. All projects have some core tasks that are the most important towards completion, regardless of budget and size. Other tasks are in addition to the main ones, who act as the 'critical path'. It's a sequence of activities that need to be performed for the project to be a success. Every activity can have a different duration and allocation of resources (Cohen, 2018).

In this project, the core tasks would be for example to complete the topline first (subtasks can be to finish the melody, then finish the lyrics), then complete the tracks (subtasks can be finishing drums, making sure there's a bridge section, mixing the instrumental), vocal production (comping, tuning, editing), and finally mixing and mastering. Then we can move on to the release of the project.

The main tools I need are my DAW and my home recording setup. I will book the studio at Tileyard during the mixing stages, to have access to better speakers and equipment, although I like the idea of restrictive creation (using my home equipment), as limitations can allow me to more inventive with what I have.

Alternative approaches

An alternative approach I considered taking would be to start experimenting without researching the artists I look up to and see what comes up naturally when I create. I decided against this, as I believe there will be elements to their music and creative methods that are a common thread, that I will be able to use too. It seems like a more efficient way and by doing something similar to them it will help me feel like I'm working towards achieving the same results as them too.

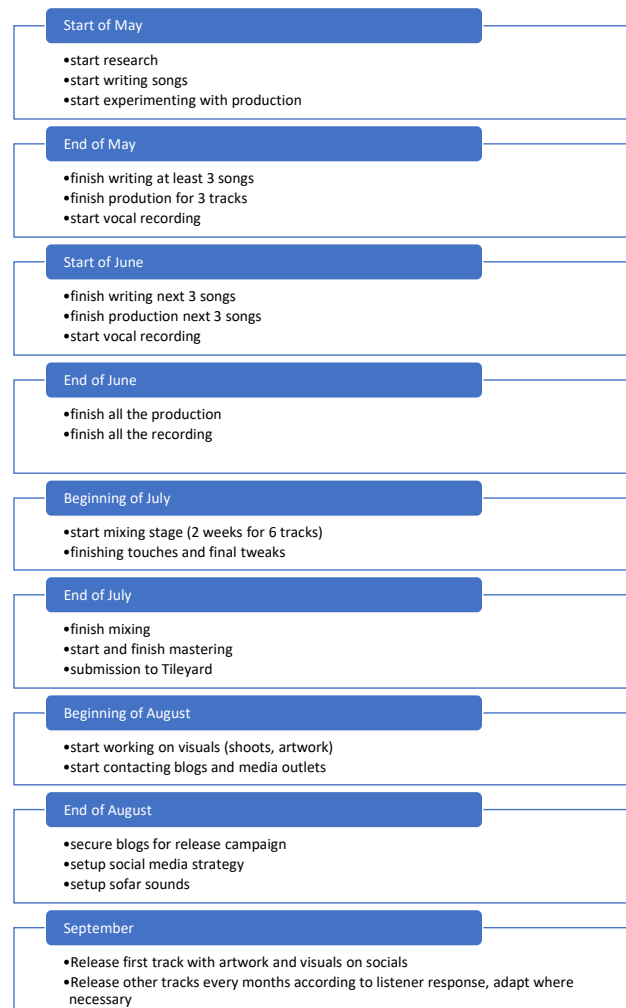
I also considered using the project management approach Kanban. Kanban works as a good visual representation, and it can be motivating as it works by labelling tasks with 'to do',

‘doing’ and ‘done’. However, I felt that it was lacking in clear timeline guides, so I decided against this as the Critical Path method seemed like a slightly more advanced version of this, by using core- and subtasks.

Conclusion

I am excited to continue working on this project. Experimenting might be risky, but I believe in my approach and the opportunity to express myself creatively makes up for any risk.

Timeline



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Appendix A

Instagram Insights

