

Name: James Newhook

Student Number: 1808649

Module Title: Creation

Assignment Title: Element 1

Module Lecturer's Name: Ciarán Robinson

Argument

Unlike a traditional music producer whose role ends at the studio door, I want to contribute to the whole of the artist's output in addition to the recorded music, including but not limited to live performances, marketing and visuals. For my final project, I will explore this role by collaborating with an artist on a multimedia project through the production of an album and contribution to their project as a whole.

Argument discussion

My journey as a music producer to this point began with playing in a band. The majority of our songs were born from songwriting sessions with the band's vocalist, rather than from sessions with the full band. I found this method of songwriting effective as it allowed us to focus on the story of the song and serve it the best we could.

As the guitarist in the band, I was interested in finding innovative but appropriate sounds for our songs. This developed into music production as I explored sound design and arrangement in more depth across more instruments and sounds than just the guitar. It also helped me to understand how every element of a song should support the story.

Discovering that these two elements were what interested me most, is why I decided to pursue being music producer.

Being in a band, however, did not just involve the writing and recording processes. Live performance is a major aspect of being in a band and since focussing on music production, it is something I have missed. The medium of live performance introduces different rules and considerations for the delivery of music and, compared to recorded music, it's effect can be more dramatic and memorable.

Marketing and management as well as the production of other forms of media such as images and video were also aspects of being in a band. This experience began to teach me how the modern music industry works, and I learned how artists and bands today need to learn to run themselves as a business. I also found a lot of pleasure in this as it allowed me to express creativity through other mediums than music.

The Wall by Pink Floyd is a great source of inspiration to me. The concept album, which stands alone as a commercially successful (Povey, 2007, p. 348) and critically acclaimed piece of work (Acclaimed Music, 2015), was also supported by a film, a theatrical and ambitious live show and visuals that are iconic in their own right. This is an example of a complete cohesive production that engages the audience on multiple levels which is something I aspire to. In 1979, Pink Floyd were one of the biggest bands on the planet and had reached a point where, in addition to strong financial backing, they had almost complete control over their creative output.

Industry expert and founder of The Brighton Institute of Modern Music (BIMM), Damian Keyes, claims that we are living in 'The Creative Age' where "creativity is not just a powerful tool but it's a tradeable [sic] commodity". He goes on to say, "A creative can make something for free and achieve their dreams through just finding different ways around solutions and just making cool stuff" (MarketingProfs, 2018). He is describing the barriers to entry in the music industry which continue to lower, and how artists such as Chance the Rapper can be successful artists (both commercially and creatively) without the necessity of record labels and other industry organisations (Bennett, 2014), often using creativity to make up for their lack of resources.

Although most do not have the same financial backing as Pink Floyd did in 1979, they do have access to their own creativity and all the tools required to deliver a complete artistic vision. It is this inspiration and 'The Creative Age' that makes me want to carve out this role of multi-disciplined producer for myself.

Aims

I have two aims for my final project:

Produce and record a collection of songs with an artist. The final products will be of a high quality ready for release, comparable with similar existing commercial works.

This will be the core of my project and where I will begin my role as multi-disciplined producer. Since I intend to produce music and to make a living from it, it is important that the recordings are of a high quality.

Contribute towards other areas of the artist's project. These areas could include live production, marketing and visuals.

This is where my role will continue past producing the music. Past my core role as music producer, the other areas that I input on may vary based on the type of project and how many collaborators are involved.

My aims are explained more in depth later in my proposal.

Case Studies - Producer

There are a number of practitioners undertaking roles in the industry with varying degrees of similarity to what I wish to achieve.

Tyler Bates, a successful Hollywood composer (Discogs, 2019a) has, starting in 2015, produced two of Marilyn Manson's albums and toured with him as lead guitarist. This is part of what I want to achieve, as Bates exits through the studio door with Manson and performs live with him, likely having some input into the live show. Although, in an interview with Revolver Mag, Bates refers to his touring duties as a way to "blow off some steam" (Bates, 2017), rather than as a career focus.

Nigel Godrich, long-time producer for Radiohead (Discogs, 2019b), also produces the solo material of Thom Yorke (frontman of Radiohead) and has performed with him live (deliciousreindeer, 2018).

Mike Dean has produced Kanye West and Travis Scott and toured with them as a musician ('Mike Dean (record producer)' 2019). A YouTube video which appears to show Dean controlling the floating stage featured in Kanye West's Saint Pablo tour (john jet, 2016), although I am unable to confirm this.

All three of these examples involve the producer performing live with the artist. Apart from the possibility of Dean having some input into the theatrical element of West's shows, I am unable to find any proof their roles go beyond music producer and live musician.

This is where my role will differ in that, although I may perform live with the artist, I would not limit myself to just one additional responsibility. My comparison with these three producers

however does not take into consideration the prolificacy of the artists that they work with. These producers are at a much higher level in their careers than myself, and the artists they work with have the industry and financial backing, and the fanbase to execute large and complex productions.

The type of projects I intend to work on will be smaller in scale at least at this point in my career. This allows me to work closely with the artist on a number of areas that may not be possible on a bigger scale project.

Project description

The artist I have chosen to work with is Nimrod Schwartz, whose artist name is Nim (Nim, 2018). I believe he has an engaging and intriguing artistic voice that has not been delivered to its potential in his previous music releases and I would like to develop this with him. He is also interested in multimedia projects and in creating a concept or theme around a project, something that I too wish to explore.

The project he has conceptualised focusses on the theme of 'Relationships in Crisis'. It will be delivered through an album release, a series of music videos and a live show that combines both. I will be working with Nim to produce the album and act as music director for the live shows as well as inputting on marketing and visual direction.

The live show is intended to be the focal element of the project and will consist of a live performance of the recorded music synchronised to the music videos. The video will be portrayed across three screens, each showing a different visual and the stage design will feature elements of these videos.

Although I will be providing a lot of creative input and working equally with Nim, I still consider our roles to be very different. Nim holds the artistic vision for the project and, although the project is not directly about him, it is his point of view and experiences that will form the content. Once the project is running as a live show and all the music is produced, I could leave the project and it would still be delivered in the same way but should Nim leave, the project would lose its identity and cease to exist.

My roles

As music producer of the project, my responsibilities will include arrangement, sound design, musical performance, hiring session musicians, studio recording, editing and mixing.

In addition to this, my role of musical director for the live shows will include live music arrangements, backing track production and technical planning.

I expect these two roles to develop throughout the course of the project as I refine my practices and methods.

Collaboration

In addition to working with Nim on this project, there are also a number of other participants.

Irene Marino will be providing additional vocals to the recording and performance. Nim has a history of working with female vocalists and having heard the two sing together previously, I believe that their voices complement each other in a way that will enhance the final product and add more depth to the storytelling in the songs. Irene is also a vocal tutor and I believe

her expertise will benefit both Nim, who is not an experienced vocalist, as well as myself as I believe vocal production to be one of my weaker areas.

Tom Hillyard will be the visual director for the project and is responsible for creating the videos that will be included in the live shows. I have collaborated with Tom many times in the past and feel that his artistic vision and our existing relationship will benefit the project. It is important that I consider the visual elements of the project in my music production as the two need to complement each other well as they will be presented together.

In addition to this, we will be working with a number of session musicians for the recording sessions. We also plan to work with a marketer to assist in the promotion and advertising of the project.

Case study - project

Ragnar Kjartansson's *The Visitors* is an influence for this project (*The Visitors*, 2012). Delivered as an instalment at museums worldwide, it features 9 screens showing musicians in different areas of a house simultaneously performing for 64 minutes. Each screen has its own speaker that plays the audio for that visual.

Although our project will be delivered in a different format than *The Visitors*, its use of multiple screens and sound sources has influenced our project and is something I will need to consider in the music production. In some cases, the 3 screens will be linked to the stereo field in the studio recordings, with the right, centre and left each being assigned to a visual.

Music style and genre

In the music production I will be focussing on supporting the story in Nim's songs, whilst developing and exhibiting my own production style. The songs produced may cover a number of genres but need to be delivered as one cohesive product so that each song doesn't sound alien to the next.

My current production style has developed from my background in alternative and progressive rock music. In the past year I have experimented with mainstream pop and other modern forms of production and plan to introduce elements of this to my style. In a meeting with producer Sean Hargreaves, after hearing some early demos for the project, he suggested incorporating contemporary music production techniques such as treating the recorded studio performances as samples and rearranging them across the track as well as introducing more sound effects such as filter sweeps and reverse piano to add tension and dynamics (see Appendix A for meeting notes).

I feel that if used within the right circumstances, these techniques could add a more contemporary edge to the music that it may otherwise lack due to my background in more traditional band-based production. This could push me creatively and develop my signature sound into something more distinguished. On the other hand, these methods may not suit the songs and production and sound forced. Mindfulness and feedback are required when using these techniques.

Unlike my previous productions, I intend to focus more in the recording stage on how the recording method (microphones used, placement etc.) contribute to the overall song. For example, composer Dustin O'Halloran talks about a method of recording piano:

"I'm always trying to play the piano as soft as I can and record it as intimately as I can because I think there's something that's really beautiful about the way when you have the

mics turned up really loud you're getting all the detail but your able to play very evenly...with a really soft touch you can get a really unique rounded recording" (Native Instruments, 2018).

A method like this that produces a round intimate sound could compliment the songs that deal with very personal and intimate subjects. As with the modern production techniques, this kind of method should be used when called for and not all the time as it could result in predictability and the song lacking emotional depth and subtleness.

Genre wise, Nim's previous music could be considered alternative music, which is a broad term. Due to both mine and Nim's previous work, I feel that the music will still fall under the umbrella of alternative music, however we plan to explore elements of other genres such as country, southern gothic, electronic and experimental music. Although I feel that Nim's distinctive voice, combined with Irene's vocals and the theme of 'Relationships in Crisis' will result in all the songs sounding cohesive but I need to be careful not to let the experimentation with genres go too far which could result in a body of work that sounds disparate and unrelated. Once again, feedback from collaborators as well as keeping in mind the concept and the theme of the project is important in regulating this.

Methodology and research methods

I plan to use an ethnographic research methodology in my project. In a journal article by R. Lyle Skains, he explains a methodology called 'auto-ethnography':

"a self-directed form of ethnomethodology during the composition of the texts, in the form of a research log (noting insights, process, difficulties), and draft materials and revision notes (which can later be analysed as in situ utterances). " (Lyle Skains, 2018).

Using this methodology, you treat yourself as the subject being observed and record a journal throughout your creative project to reflect on in your exegesis. I will use this method of journal writing in order to analyse and reflect upon my performance in the role of multidisciplinary producer and how it affects the final artifacts created. In addition to this, I will conduct an unstructured interview with Nim at the end of the production phase to receive his reflection on my performance and how it affected the final outcome. I will also have one external party in attendance to provide unbiased feedback on the final artifacts and mine and Nim's collaboration.

Research ethics

Collaboration

With any collaborative project there is likely to be some areas where it is impossible to avoid overlap.

As stated previously, Nim and I have clearly defined roles; he is the artist and I am producer.

Nim is generating the ideas and writing the songs and although I may provide feedback on the harmonic, melodic and lyrical content of the songs, this is Nim's role. Nim will be creating the songs.

In reverse to the songwriting, my responsibility includes the arrangement, recording, editing and mixing and Nim is only providing feedback on this. I will be creating the master recordings.

Irene's contribution to the project may also spill into some areas as she has her own artistic voice and may contribute to the final artifacts in ways that neither myself or Nim would have without her.

The same issue applies to any session musicians used in the production of the music.

Journal accuracy

The journal I will keep must be recorded on the same day as the entry or as close to it as possible. The purpose of the journal is to reflect on my performance accurately. When recounting an event from memory, rather than written account, inaccuracy can arise.

Professional working environment

Session musicians are professionals and will be in their place of work when working with us. We should maintain a respectful and mature environment for all parties involved.

Bibliography

Povey, G. (2007). *Echoes*, London, UK: Mind Head Publishing.

Acclaimed Music (2015). *Pink Floyd*. Available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20150922155315/http://www.acclaimedmusic.net/Current/Pink%20Floyd.htm> (Accessed: 2 June 2019).

MarketingProfs (2018). *Breaking Rules to Break Records: Damian Keyes on Marketing Smarts* [Podcast]. 12 July. Available at: <https://www.marketingprofs.com/podcasts/2018/39469/damian-keyes-social-media-marketing-smarts> (Accessed: 2 June 2019).

Bennett, C. J. (2014). 'Exclusive: Chance the Rapper Reveals New Album 'Surf,' Working With Frank Ocean & J. Cole' Interviewed by Dan Hyman for Billboard, 21 October. Available at: <https://www.billboard.com/biz/articles/6289302/exclusive-chance-the-rapper-reveals-new-album-surf-working-with-frank-ocean-j> (Accessed: 2 June 2019).

Discogs (2019a). *Tyler Bates*. Available at: <https://www.discogs.com/artist/168946-Tyler-Bates> (Accessed: 2 June 2019).

Bates, T. (2017). 'How Film Composer Tyler Bates Became Marilyn Manson's Secret Weapon' Interviewed by Dan Epstein for Revolver, 13 September. Available at: <https://www.revolvermag.com/music/how-film-composer-tyler-bates-became-marilyn-mansons-secret-weapon> (Accessed: 2 June 2019).

Discogs (2019b). *Nigel Godrich*. Available at: https://www.discogs.com/artist/169094-Nigel-Godrich?filter_anv=0&subtype=Production&type=Credits (Accessed: 2 June 2019).

deliciousreindeer (2018). *Thom Yorke & Nigel Godrich - Oakland 2017 - Full Concert*. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5U6Pt3GDv98> (Accessed: 2 June 2019).

'Mike Dean (record producer)' (2019) *Wikipedia*. Available at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mike_Dean_\(record_producer\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mike_Dean_(record_producer)) (Accessed: 2 June 2019).

john jet (2016). *Kanye West Floating Stage, Mike Dean in Control Tampa Show*. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7w-Fap74k8Y> (Accessed: 2 June 2019).

Nim (2018). *Music*. Available at: <https://thesoundofnim.com/music/> (Accessed: 2 June 2019).

The Visitors (2012) [Exhibition]. Migros Museum, Zurich. 1 September 2012 - 28 October 2012.

Native Instruments (2018). *Dustin O'Halloran: A Different Dynamic* | *Native Instruments*. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xw8Fq0YJjfs> (Accessed: 2 June 2019).

R. Lyle Skains (2018). 'Creative Practice as Research: Discourse on Methodology', *Media Practice and Education*, 19 (1), pp. 82-97.

Appendices

Appendix A, notes from meeting with Sean Hargreaves

she's wild

On slide section add a
chant/hook to fill it out

Scan

Venues

#1

Invite to Host
Show

↳ The Pleasants (Islington)
- Connections with
Edinburgh Fringe

↳ Kings Place (long term)

↳ The Depo (Finchley)

↳ The Gorman Street Theatre (small
capacity)

↳ Dean St Theatre

↳ Bloomsbury Theatre

L2 Elgar room (Albert Hall)

Opening track

- Dry piano ORTF (slight width)
- Left/Right mono with ~~the~~ different processing/effects
- Coles - warm-only 1
- Left swirling delay - crystalizer
- High pass - for L/R
- R88 from Foursite
- Coles at front + back
- R121 behind - good distance
- Condensers for OH + room mic (looking away)
- 57 down the middle

Small
Capacity

Follow the river

~~SPX~~ Guitar

- ORTF at 12th fret
+ Condenser at base
- Parrot mics over shoulder
- SM57 + 1176 for singer ~~songwriter~~
- ~~to~~ Spirit / Soundelux at back
of room + 1176 mixed in
low

Vocal sound + Electric guitar?

- John Lennon - lots of delay?
- Richard Hawley
 - ↳ For Your Lover
 - Warm vocal sound
- Soundelux on both vocals
(burn lights down)

War song

Fleet Foxes

↳ overall message

- Leslie Model - Hammond organ

- Synths - make bass cleaner

- Start too early

on the - Hold off on delay

- Bvs breathy - 16 tracks
minimal - stretch out

- Bass drop out in bridge
- Don't bring Hammond in too early

- Pan soundscape left with
slide guitar right?

- Simpler drum section

↳ Tom Jones - spirit in
the room

- Hold back on snare until end
- Vocal delay ^{hold off} until end
- keep double length chords
- Add sub to shake the room
- Vangelis like arp at end?
- Filter sweep / whoosh
- Atmospheric / soundscape stuff
 - ↳ Reverse piano layered in

She's wild

- Drums - not real drums, more percussion
cans, gravel
lean off ^{ragin' lone man} cymbals ^{tot} backback

- less band focussed
more modern production

Running Through Woods

- Take overb down of
verse
- Hold off on bass until
second section of
verse (maybe drums as
well)
- Reverse piano
- Low tremolo in verse
guitar
- Higher + panned acoustic
- Drop for first bar of second
verse
- Hold chord end of second
verse

- Piano chords in chorus fill out lower mid
- Bridge - lose trumpet at end
- Verse 3 → more character to
snare sound
 - ↳ Boom-Boom-Snare pattern
 - tambourine with snare
- Chorus 2
 - ↳ under snare mic
 - ↳ Different guitar parts
 - ↳ Bring BUs up
 - ↳ kick in D12 - mic
- Bass - T62 preamp
- Outro - Trumpet up an octave
 - ↳ Cds + up an octave + Neve

fill

Recording scheduling

end

bo

even

les
we
mic

- Drums + Bass ← blues
+ ~~maybe~~ ~~Hammond~~ or
+ ~~trumpet~~ or cello

- Piano ← blues
+ Hammond } ~~percussion~~
 } + trumpet

- Vocals - blues

- Blues - cello ← ~~trumpet~~ ^{Always light}
 + percussion

Doing our recordings

↳ current productions

octave

seanhargreaves@gmail.com

n
ve