



CREATION ELEMENT C1

Written Proposal

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1. Introduction

The premise of this project is to compile an album of about eight songs based in the R&B, Hip Hop genre.

Growing up in the 90's I was listening to songs from Mary J Blige, 112, Jagged edge, TLC, Michael Jackson, and a whole host of other successful R&B artists. I started thinking about the music and what made it so impactful? Why did these songs resonate so much? and why do I still yearn for the sounds of this time?

In my contemplation, I started thinking about the generational gap between my siblings and I, As the youngest, there is an eleven- and thirteen-years age difference between my brother and sister and me. When we were coming up, they listened to artists such as Bell Biv Devoe, New Edition, Keith Sweat, Sade, Patti La'Belle, a lot of reggae, and music from the late 80's/ early 90's, this is how I was introduced to these artists.

For this project I would like to delve deep into that sound to find out the characteristics and the makeup, what made it so good?

Was it the subject matter the artists wrote about? The composition and arrangement of the music? Or was I just the subject of some great marketing campaigns who sucked me into believing a fantasy?

I will explore and research the producers of the music, what they were influenced by and how they steered the genre through its metamorphosis.

When reading this article, they postulated the following: *“By the mid 1980s, R&B was at a generational crossroads and rap was on the rise. An amalgamation of the two genres was being made in the St. Nicholas Projects in Harlem, New York, where a prodigious music talent named Teddy Riley joined with an up-and-coming artist named Keith Sweat. The result brought a seismic shift in urban and pop music when Make It Last Forever was released on*

November 24, 1987. The New Jack Swing movement was born, and it proceeded to dominate much of pop for the remainder of the decade into the early 1990s.” (Williams, 2012)

Throughout the 90’s and early 00’s , R&B music was transforming from the ‘New Jack Swing’ sound from producers such as Jimmy Jam & Terry Lewis, Teddy Riley, L.A Reid, Baby Face who were dominating the charts with hits such as “I’m Your Baby Tonight” - *Whitney Huston 1990*, “Remember The Time” – *Micheal Jackson 1991*, “That’s The way love goes” – *Janet Jackson 1993* , To a more integrated style of music becoming heavily influenced by Hip Hop and Soul.

In the 90’s many of the groups or production houses I listened to and was influenced by were groups such as Sean “Diddy” Combs’ ‘Bad Boy Records’, Jermain Dupree’s ‘So So def’, LA Reid and Baby Face’s ‘La Face’, Dallas Austin, The Roots, The SoulQuarians which consisted of (Common, J Dilla Questlove, D’Angelo, Erika Badu, Q-Tip, and others.)

In this final project I will decipher what made the music of the 90’s so fantastic, with this knowledge I will attempt to apply it to my own productions adding some of today’s influences such as ‘Trap’ Hip Hop and Pop to compile an album that will evoke the same catharsis as when listening to my beloved 90’s music.

2. Why does the project interest me and why is it important?

This project appeals to me for several reasons.

- It’s a great opportunity to create a body of work I can add to my repertoire, not only that, but it also gives me a chance to work and collaborate with artists and musicians I really like. At this stage of my development, it’s really important to find my sound. When listening to certain artists such as Robert Glasper (Black Radio experiment), or Jam and Lewis, even Timbaland, they all have their unique sound. I would like to find mine, develop it so that my music is recognisable and distinguishable.

- Over the past four years whilst I have been on my personal development in education, I have noticed that within R&B, about every decade or so the genre changes, transforms into something new. Be it borrowing from other genres such as funk, soul, gospel or from other genres such as Pop and Hip Hop borrowing from R&B. When listening to contemporary artists such as Ella Mai, “[Boo’d Up](#)” (*Produced by Mustard who has produced songs for Rhianna, 2Chains, Migos, Nicki Minaj*).

(YouTube, 2018).

This track to me sounds like a Jam and Lewis hybrid, the use of the Roland 808 drum machine, those lead synths in the Pre Chorus and also the woodblock is synonymous with that smooth Jam & Lewis sound you would hear in “[Can You Stand The Rain](#)” New Edition or “[Control](#)” Janet Jackson, Mustard however, according to [udiscovermusic.com](#) “Has Placed a contemporary spin on 90’s Hip Hop Soul” (Smith, 2021), which I strongly agree with.

As it seems, the “old skool” influences are coming back into fashion. As this is the flavour I particularly like, it is fortuitous that I will be producing music I love, with people I love who are of my age range (Around 40 – 50 y.o.a), for the people of our generation.

The project for me is important because it allows for experimentation, for collaboration with some of the best musicians I know from Birmingham along with the artists. I have confidence in all of their abilities and from the telephone conversations, we’re all quite excited for the adventure.

3. How I will Run the project

The project will be split into three main segments. Weekly writing camps, Recording and Mixing. (*Please see figures 1-4*)

○ 3a Weekly writing camps

The writing camps will run for three weeks. This is to enable the artists and I time to compose the tracks. For this segment I plan to track the basis of the songs, e.g., building the drum patterns, keys and chord structure, lyrics and melodies.

The location for this will be my home studio where I will host the singer/songwriters/Rappers in person along with the out-of-town writers via zoom.

It's important to the project that the artists write together because it will give a cohesive feel also everyone will become familiar with each other's style of writing and work more as a team. From past experience with writing camps, being in the same space really builds the comradery amongst the team which makes for a better session and more importantly, solid tracks.

○ 3b Recording

The recording aspect will be the more difficult and tedious task to perform as it involves other people's diaries. I've found that musicians aren't always the best at keeping organised.

At first, I was tempted to leave all the recording until weeks five and six and then get everyone in to do back-to-back sessions tracking their parts. However, this may cause unwanted stress because of everyone's schedules especially as venues and workplaces are re-opening and the musicians are getting booked and busy.

To avoid the last-minute cancellations and my running round to find replacements, I will host weekly recording sessions with the musicians.

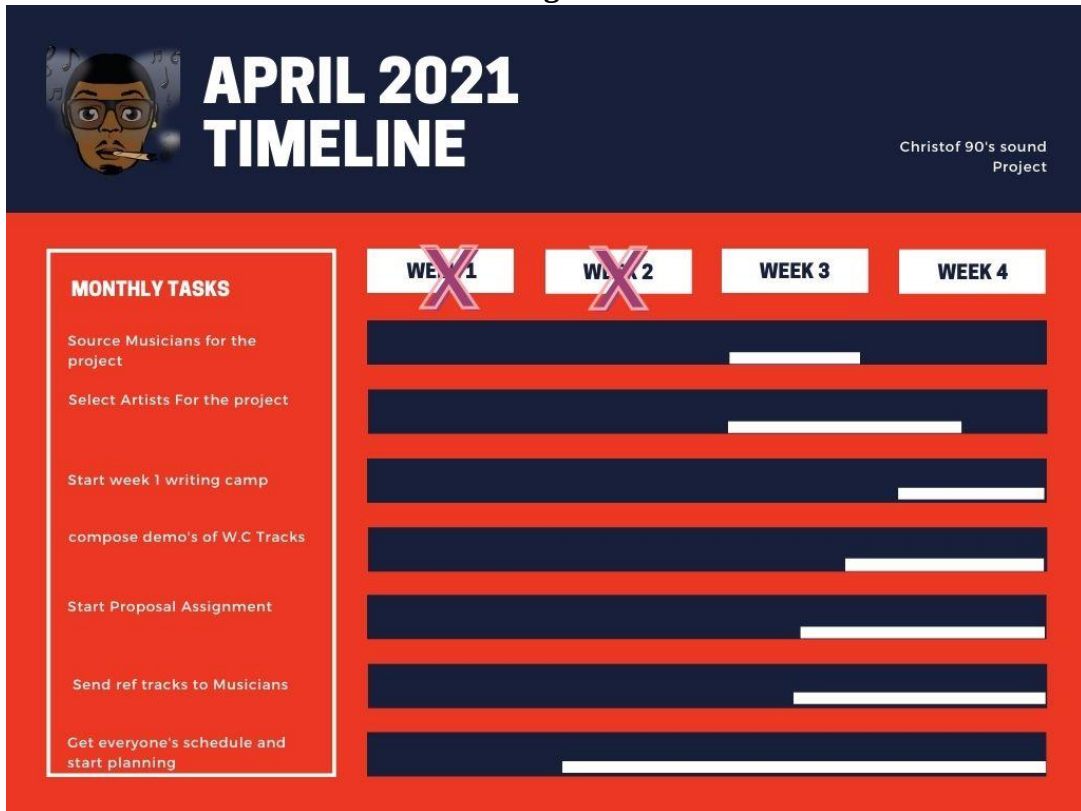
By having weekly recording sessions, this will enable the tracks to have a fast turnover from concept to demo, then if the artists have any changes to the music, this can be done without having too much of an impact on the project schedule.

- **3c Mixing**

The mixing process will commence at the end of the recording process. (*around week 6/7*)

I prefer to keep everything compartmentalised because it's a more efficient workflow for all involved. Also, this is beneficial because by that time, I will be listening with fresh ears so if anything doesn't sound right it can be easily rectified by calling in whichever musician to tweak the parts.

Figure 1



(Gantt Chart Week 1)

Figure 2



(Gantt chart Week 2)

Figure 3

Christof Final Project Timetable Notes

DATE	SESSION TYPE	TRACK	NOTES
May	RED = composition/writing YELLOW = Tracking/Recording GREEN = Mixing/Mastering		
Week 1			
Tues 4 th May		Carlene Lawrence T1	For this session we will talk about style, Carlene mentions she wanted a Snoh Alegra type track so we will experiment with some sounds and maybe start writing the lyrics.
Wed 5 th May		Complete Demo of Carlene T1 for musicians	- Work on the Carlene T1. Place drums, keys and bass ideas to send off to the musicians. - Send off demo to the musicians to get them familiarized.
Thurs 6 th May		Writing session with Sol & Marissa	Both Marissa and Sol wanted reggae tracks so in this session we will discuss what type of reggae and I will make a start on the beat whilst they make a start on lyrics and concept.
Fri 7 th May		Complete Demo from Marissa & Sol Session for Musicians	- Work on the reggae beat. Place drum pattern, keys, and bass ideas to send off to musicians. - Send Demo off to the musician.

(Project Timetable Week 1)

Figure 4

Christof Final Project Timetable Notes			
DATE	SESSION TYPE	TRACK	NOTES
May	RED = composition/writing YELLOW = Tracking/Recording GREEN = Mixing/Mastering		
Week 2			
Mon 10 th May	Composition	Zara Sykes Track	Sykes mentioned she really loved the sound of "Computer Love" by Zapp and Rogers. Using this as ref track compose a demo for the musicians to familiarized themselves with.
Tues 11 th May	Tracking	Carlene T1 Sol/Marissa T1	12 - 2pm (Guitar recording session) BJB 2 - 4pm (Drums recording session) Chris R
Wed 12 th May	Tracking	Carlene T1 Sol/Marissa T1	12- 2pm (Bass recording session) Donmeal
Thurs 13 th May	Composition	Sol T2 (slow beat)	Sol has provided a ref track to the kind of beat he would like, having listened to the track it does fit with the theme of this project. - Work on the demo for the musicians to become familiar with structure. - Send off to musicians.

Christof Final Project Timetable Notes			
Fri 14 th May	Composition	Christof T1	I really like the sounds from 'Bad Boy Records', 'So So Def', songs like 112 "Only you" Jagged edge "Lets get Married" I would love to have a go at.

(Project Timetable Week 2)

As a result of everyone's busy work schedules, I am unable to plan more than two weeks in advance. I have made accommodations for this with frequent communication with the team and have agreed to make all the plans a week in advance, so they have time to prepare.

4. Timeline for the project

The timeline for the project is as follows:

Weeks 1 – 3 – Composition and writing weeks.

Weeks 4 – 7 – Recording and tracking weeks.

Weeks 8 – 10 - Mixing Weeks.

Weeks 11 – Mastering week.

5. My Approach to the project

My approach is to study contemporary artists who have release collaborative bodies of work.

Artists such as Robert Glasper and his approach to the “[Black Radio Experiment](#)”, Lauryn Hill and “[The miseducation of Lauryn Hill](#)”, The Soulquarians and other groups who have a great synergy and working relationships.

I would like to have a collaborative effort on this project for a few reasons, the main however, is for the project’s consistency.

I’ve found in the past, when working on a project such as an album or even singles, it really helps the sound when the musicians all have a connection, in fact I’ve had many experiences in bands where because of the strong bond amongst the players, it seems as though they communicate telepathically at times. In this article, the writer mentions this ‘nonverbal communication’ saying; *“When everyone is playing together live in the same room it is easier to communicate nonverbally, performing live can ignite a spark between the musicians that can add energy to the music. This can add a great feel or “groove” to the recording.”*

(Recordings, 2019)

I realize this isn’t the same setting as a rehearsal or a live performance on the stage, nevertheless, my idea with this live recording is to select musicians who already know and play together, and in the little space that is my living room I am hoping to recreate the environment to encourage and stimulate our muses and create some beautiful vibes.

Another approach would be to have over-dubbing sessions with the respective musicians.

This would be beneficial as it would allow each musician more time in the recording sessions.

This would also dramatically bring the price down as less time would be needed with each musician.

The downside to this however, is that we may lose the vibe, the interactions with each other often adds to the feel of the music.

When listening to albums such as Terrell Grice “[An Invitation To The Cookout](#)” or D’Angelo “[Voodoo](#)” or even the aforementioned Robert Glasper and His “[Black Radio](#)”, All have mention in interviews and Vlogs how they used the same musicians to track the records.

In addition, with Robert Glasper according to an article found on [udiscovermusic.com](#).

“With only a five-day window to record in LA, Glasper took a very jazz-centric approach, consulting his digital Rolodex of singers, rappers, and other past collaborators to jump in the studio, resulting in a very collaborative and spontaneous recording process. With all instrumental tracks recorded live, often in a single take, it was a feat only a group as versatile as the Experiment could pull off. All four members — Robert Glasper, keys; Casey Benjamin, sax and vocoder; Derrick Hodge, bass; and Chris Dave, drums share a deep jazz pedigree that makes improvisation and collaboration with other artists an integral part of their musical makeup”. (Stavropoulos, 2021)

In regard to my approach, I will be using a hybrid where I will track some things live and other instruments can be overdubbed e.g., The Bass and guitar can be recorded simultaneously as I will be using DI connection (*Which is built into my UA Apollo Twin interface*), this way I have the choice of which amp to use in post. Native Instrument’s ‘Guitar Rig’ allows for multiple rigs to be used and as an emulator, is one of my favourites.

By preparing the demos i.e., programming in the midi parts prior to a session and sending the demo one week in advance of a session, this will give the musicians time to familiarize themselves with the tracks.

6. Collaborators

Writers

Saskhia Mendez (*Tileyard Education Marketing MA*)

Marissa McKinnon (*Tileyard education Singer/songwriter MA*)

Carlene Lawrence (*Birmingham Chanteuse*)

Christof Jennings

Recording artists

Sol Morgan (*Apollo Band*)

Carlene Lawrence (*Birmingham Chanteuse*)

Marissa McKinnon (*Tileyard education Singer/songwriter MA*)

Zara Sykes (*Birmingham Rapper*)

Christof Jennings

Kezia Johnson (*Birmingham Chanteuse*)

Band

Ben (BJB) Bartlett (*Guitar*)

Chris Russell (*Drums*)

Donmiele Montell (*Bass*)

Christof Jennings (*Keys, Production, Engineering*)

7. Budget

Each musician will cost £50 per session. In the session we will record two tracks.

Although this is a great price, it will still add up to £800 for the recording cost and another £280 for mastering cost if I am to master the tracks professionally. This quote is from Zion Studios in Birmingham who charges £35 per track. Totalling £1080.00.

This is obviously way out of my budget.

To get this price down I will propose to the band that each take a cut of the shares of each song.

This may not go down very well with the musicians, so as a contingency plan, I will do most of the recordings i.e., use the technology I have available to me to create the tracks using midi, then calling in BJB (*Guitar*) to play both lead and rhythm guitar along with some bass from the guitar. Then with NI's '*Guitar Rig*', placing an octaver on the guitar to tune it down, then add a bass amp to create the basses.

Although this is very unconventional, I've used this method in the past and it does yield some great results.

This will dramatically lower the cost of recording, in sacrifice for vibe and maybe some groove.

8. Summary

In this research I would also like to touch on elements such as race and the socio-economic status of my case studies to look at how these factors affected the success of their musical endeavours.

In my own musical pursuits, Beit through the years of stage performances, the events organising, development deals and the more recent educational system, I have come across so

many microaggressions and out right racism in the music industry and education system, I would like to know if this was also a factor which may have affected my predecessors, and how they may have overcome those barriers.

For this research there are no interviews with professionals apart from the musicians and artists I am going to be working with, I'm not too sure weather this affects the necessity of an ethics form, for this I will have to seek guidance from some of tileyard's tutors.

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