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Portfolio – Reflective Summary

Creative Music Management
BMTY7000

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For the Creative Music Management project, myself and Aaron my project partner decided that we would work on the project as a pair. We thought this would give us the best opportunity to be involved in as much of the process as possible, and we have a rapport which extends beyond the realms of the project which meant we knew we would be able to effectively share the work load and support each other throughout the duration of the project.

We decided to approach an artist named Ellen Barrow to work with on the project. Ellen is a songwriter, acoustic guitarist and singer and she is an artist that we had both seen perform live beforehand and agreed on how talented she was. We arranged to meet Ellen to discuss the project with her and to address questions and concerns. Ellen was very keen to help us out with our project in return for our assistance and support in relaunching her brand. She had no material officially released and no following on social media, so we saw this as an opportunity to start from zero and see what we could achieve from nothing. We agreed with Ellen that for a minimum duration of the length of the project, we would financially support the creation of a single and associated media for Ellen, and at the end of the project we would reflect and discuss whether we would like to continue working together outside the realms of the project.

Aaron and I decided that we would form a record label that we would use as a vehicle to sign and release artists and their music. We thought this would be the best capacity in which to work and would provide the professional standard expected by anyone we would approach during the course of the project. We named the label 'Resurrect Records' and set about securing domains and social media handles. I took charge of designing the logo for the label, creating business cards and producing a website. Some of the designs for the label can be seen in the portfolio.

As soon as we had Ellen on board with the project, we set about securing social media handles and web domains. We registered ellenbarrow.com and [.co.uk](http://ellenbarrow.co.uk) and social media handles dependent on availability. We decided to make use of Music Glue to create a basic site for Ellen which will, in future, host links to her music and video content as well as have information on Ellen's upcoming live appearances.

We were very fortunate in the fact that despite Ellen not having released any material in a number of years, she was sitting on a stockpile of written material. She chose a number of her favourite songs and played them to us live to gauge our opinion on which tracks we should move forward with and try to release. We chose a number of songs we liked which included the track we have submitted called 'Lay Me Down'. We decided to make use of some free studio time that we had to record some demonstration tracks. Myself and Aaron are not producers or engineers and while the material we recorded was sufficient in quality to use for demo purposes it was not at a standard that we could use as a basis for a fully produced track. We have submitted the acoustic demo as part of our portfolio to demonstrate the progression from demo track to fully finished track.

Ellen had mentioned that she wanted to flesh out her tracks beyond just her vocal and acoustic guitar and so we began to think about producers we could approach with the project. As Ellen's music is of a style a little different from the production students' work that we knew of, we decided to approach a producer that I had met at my job during my undergraduate degree. We sent over a couple of the demo tracks and he was very enthusiastic about the music and keen to work with Ellen. The producer, Paul Carr has been credited on a number of notable albums including Shame's 'Songs of Praise' and Gary Numan's 'Savage: Songs From A Broken World' (Discogs, 2018). He agreed to produce and mix the song with Ellen at a heavily reduced rate. The invoice for his work is included in the portfolio as well as a letter of engagement we issued to him which also served as a receipt for the money he received for the work. He was a true professional across the entire project and a pleasure to work with, and we hope we will be able to employ his services again in the future.

Ellen decided that she wanted to portray a very down to earth and accessible image, her own personality rather than a work of fiction. She decided she wanted some photography to be taken in a pub that she used to work at in her home town. Her connections to the pub meant that we could gain access after-hours and it was a very relaxed photo shoot. Oli, a friend of Aaron's, and his girlfriend agreed to help us out with the photography and provided us with the finished photography which can be seen in the portfolio. This photography was used across social media and Ellen's website.

While Ellen liked the photography we had taken, she was fairly certain after seeing the results that she didn't want to use them for the single's artwork and so she asked a friend of hers to see what she could come up with. Included in the portfolio are some draft pieces of artwork painted by Ellen's friend that we hope to turn into artwork for the single.

Overall, given the limited budget I am very pleased with how the track turned out and have received very positive feedback so far. Due to constraints and other requirements of our Masters programme we have not yet been ready to release Ellen's track but we have a fairly clear strategy on our next steps.

We hope to release the track in the early summer this year and accompany and launch the single with an event at Two Tribes Brewery in Tileyard Studios, Kings Cross. As a part of the process of putting on this event we plan to assemble a live band to accompany Ellen and hopefully continue to play with her at live shows after the release of this first recording. We plan to partner with the brewery to create a limited edition beer to be given out to guests at the event. Being down to earth, Ellen likes having a pint in the pub and we think a special beer will be in alignment with her brand identity. A draft poster for the event can be found in the portfolio.

We plan to distribute the single using an online digital distributor but as yet have not decided which one will be best for our purposes. Distributors we can choose from include Ditto, Tunecore, Distrokid and CDBaby (Herstand, 2014). This will ensure the track is made available for streaming on all major platforms as well as for paid download on iTunes etc. We have begun to create a lyric video to accompany the track on video streaming platforms until such time as we can produce a full music video for it. I feel that the type of acoustic music that Ellen makes also lends itself well to live videos which we hope to produce to help build a following on YouTube.

We intend to launch Ellen's social media presence imminently and start putting out teasers for the upcoming release. We have budgeted to spend on paid social media advertising in the hope we will be able to target a demographic that already enjoy listening to music comparable to Ellen's.

We have now registered the label with PPL and are in the process of registering the recordings with them. We wanted to ensure that this was set up in preparation for any future use the track may receive as well as be ready for new material once it comes along. This now allows us to assign ISRC codes to tracks and readies us for potential expansion into working with other artists.

With this track we intend on sending it out to as many places as possible. We believe it has the potential for radio and so will be sending the track off to BBC Introducing. We can also see potential in the track for synchronisation purposes and will aim to utilise our contacts to try to see the track fulfil its prospects. I think this will also be a good opportunity to gain valuable feedback on the music to help to guide us with future tracks with Ellen. We had Paul provide us with an instrumental version of the track should this be required for sync usage.

Without modern technology a project like this would not be possible given the budget we received. The tools we had to create the track itself, along with all the associated media was made accessible and affordable, if not free, thanks to technology.

Thanks to affordable Digital Audio Workstations like Logic Pro, which Paul used to produce the track, it was possible to track the entire song in a (well kitted out!) bedroom. This gives producers like Paul the opportunity to be able to work at home and even while travelling. This has allowed artists to create music outside the confines of professional recording studios. While it can mean that there is now a saturation of lower quality music, skilled producers can use the tools extremely well and achieve fantastic results.

Streaming services have made it easier than ever to distribute music online and make it available to vast numbers of people. According to IFPI Data, 54% of global music revenue is generated from digital means, 38% of which being streaming (IFPI, 2017). This indicates that streaming is a vital component in the industry, and technology has made it possible to use this medium for almost nothing. Digital distributors, as mentioned before, enable us to publish the track across all major platforms at the click of a button.

All communications between parties working on this project have been connected via email and Facebook. Using Facebook, it is easy to share files as well as have group chats where messaging is instantaneous. Social media has also given us an excellent mode to produce advertisements and serve them to the right people. Using Facebook Audience Insights it is possible to identify the demographics of fans that like certain pages on Facebook and use that information to serve ads to those demographic groups in order to have a greater chance of creating a successful engagement.

Over the course of the project we used Trello which is a task management tool. It allows users to join a group within the application that can all have access to the same working area, adding and editing tasks as they are conceived and completed. We used it as sort of a 'to-do' list with all the tasks we needed to complete organised into groups. Once completed, we could check the task off as completed and each of us would see the list updated. There is even a mobile application that we used to add things on the go (Trello, 2018).

Sometimes it was not convenient for Aaron and myself to meet up to work on things but Google Docs and Google Drive made it especially easy to collaborate on documents over the course of the project. Docs allowed us to work on the same document at the same time from different computers, and drive gave us a shared place where we could store all our project materials where we could both access it at any time. We created all our content using Adobe which has been made even more accessible as it is now a subscription based service. We did not need to employ the services of a designer in order to create the logos and other designs we needed for the label. Using Photoshop we could create everything. We also used Muse to create our website. These designs can be seen in the portfolio.

While £500 is not a huge amount of money to budget for a single, we have found so far that we have been able to conserve costs by doing a lot of the work ourselves. We obviously wanted a high quality track and ensured that while we did try to get the best deal we did not spare skimp on spending to get a well-made product. This has still left us with a healthy budget to spend on putting on a launch event, and any remaining funds will be put towards online ad campaigning. Our initial budget can be found in the portfolio but we have found that we could save in some areas to be able to spend more on others and so our actual expenditure will look rather different once the project is complete. We have high hopes for the track and for Ellen and hope that we will be able to continue to work with her after the completion of this project.

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