

Introduction and Intentions for the Project

This written proposal will describe the ideas, reasons, concepts, approach and overall plan in the creation of my project. In addition, it will lay out benchmarks for success upon its completion as I try to achieve an adequate result. Further still, a timeline will be laid out to ensure a satisfactory and productive process, maximising workflow and alleviating time management pressures. Overall, this proposal and the extensive research and planning within it will streamline my ideas and enhance even my own understanding of the venture as a whole so that the desired outcome is accomplished.

I plan to create a collection of 10 tracks inspired by the R&B, Hip-Hop and Trap genres, collaborating with the artist Hazl, who will be a co-writer and the vocal performer. Upon their completion, the artist, his management, and myself will decide whether the songs will be released as an album, a number of EP's or as singles. Ultimately, this decision will be made depending on and with consideration of what best suits the artist, his audience, his plans for the future, as well as the current trends and landscape of the contemporary music industry, specifically in relation to those particular genres and their respective industry spheres. However, my precise role and focus within the project are as a producer and co-writer, putting a number of distinct tasks (at least within this particular job) in my hands. Some of these are; developing the artist's ideas and tracks into high-quality productions, creating additional musical material that fits the themes of the genres, getting the most out of the artist in the recording and production processes, overseeing and managing the creation process as a whole and meeting the demands and visions that the artist has for his music. In addition, I would also be responsible for mixing the music that we make together in the final stages of the project.

Having conducted a number of initial meetings and communications, Hazl and I established four artist references that we would use as staples in the formulation of our music - SZA, Chris Brown, Travis Scott and Bryson Tiller. Apart from the fact that these four artists have more than 130 million combined monthly Spotify listeners (**Spotify, 2021**), indicating the high levels of their recent success, they were musicians who personally inspired Hazl and reflected the stylistic, musical and commercial direction in which we wanted to take the project. Our decision to take influence from these artists is justified by the multiple R&B and Hip-Hop nominations they have accumulated, with SZA, for instance, earning a number of Grammy and Billboard nominations (among others) for best R&B song and artist (**GRAMMY, 2021**).

Furthermore, Hazl and I established that we had a desire to enhance this collection of songs in some authentic way and that simply having ten songs in the same style thrown together was not original enough for the complexity and level of work we wanted to achieve. We developed the idea of the tracks being one continuous, flowing piece of music when released together as a whole or as different bodies or 'volumes' of work in the form of EP's. However, apart from the considerably higher amount of planning that this would require (e.g. transitions between songs,

careful arrangement of track order, further research into executing this inside a DAW), we also had to take into consideration that there would need to be versions of at least some of these songs that would be suitable for single releases. Especially as we had to be attentive towards the requirements of the contemporary industry climate - an increasing demand for regularity and a growing culture and appeal for single releases (Leight, 2021).

Although the genres we were aiming to emulate take largely electronic approaches, we both expressed a desire to add a little more flair, vibe and feel to the songs by recording live drums, guitar and bass parts where appropriate. This would, of course, require me to organise recording sessions with a number of musicians, which I would be responsible for selecting, as well as having the task to communicate our ideas and vision to them. In addition, demo tracks would have to be prepared and sent to the performers in advance so that they're able to rehearse and develop the parts they would be required to record.

Why I'm Taking On This Project

There are a number of reasons for my desire to take on a project of this kind. Firstly, I have never before worked on a body of work of this size, and I want to challenge myself as a producer to achieve something of high commercial standard and large proportions. Secondly, creating a collection of songs that are adjoined and flow from one track to the next seamlessly is also a fresh challenge for me and would hopefully be an effective demonstration of my development and skills as a producer, writer and musician.

Furthermore, this project would be an excellent addition to my professional portfolio, and I would be able to utilise it as a tool to gain a higher level of exposure and acquire more work as a producer. Of course, this is essential because it would allow me to earn money doing what I love and therefore enable me to continue progressing with a career in the music industry. Moreover, with this in mind, Hazl is a strategic choice for collaboration, given his 22.5k followers and 1 million likes on TikTok - a platform that has recently propelled several tracks to substantial commercial and chart success with its 700 million international users (17 million of which are from the UK)(Iqbal, 2021).

In addition, on a more practical level, another reason for taking on this project is to develop my studio recording skills, particularly when it comes to drum recordings, as this is something I have little experience in (being a primarily home-based producer). Hopefully, this will set me up with useful experience and know-how for future projects and productions in my career.

Benchmarks For Success

The primary benchmark for success I want to strive for is to have a collection of works that fits within the chosen genres and is on at least a similar level of professional sound to the artist references. For me, this means that I want to achieve a final result that doesn't stand out as lesser quality than a fully produced, mixed and mastered commercial R&B/Hip-Hop/Trap release.

A more pragmatic one is to be able to achieve the above within the agreed-upon deadline and to time-manage effectively so that no quality is lost and no corners are cut during the creation process. This is imperative for a professional, commercial release.

Another crucial personal benchmark for success is to realise the artist's visions, goals and ideas with regards to the music we're working on together. It is vital that Hazl is satisfied with the finished product and feels that it reflects his artistry and musicianship, or the project would not end up being a triumph or of any real benefit to his career.

Project Approach

Research conducted prior to embarking on the creation of this project was essential for achieving the desired result and meeting my benchmarks for success. It allows for an expansion of an approach and methodology that will play a key part in the execution of a commercial piece of work. Further still, it is a part of my job as a producer, enabling me to be informed on certain stylistic choices and project planning decisions that will have to be made.

The initial focus in developing my approach was to study my points of reference with regards to the music that is to be created, fixating on how SZA, Travis Scott, Chris Brown, Bryson Tiller (as well as similar artists in their genre) and their producers have made successful music. I was able to analyse the producers' creation process of songs and beats put together for all of these artists using the 'Deconstructed' series by GENIUS. This method of research was insightful and interactive, allowing me to learn straight from producers and writers who created these songs as they explained their processes.

Perhaps the most prominent common theme among all of the producers was that the ideas for their music were inceptioned through the utilisation of samples from well-known songs, with soul vocal parts, in particular, playing a major role in their productions. It is common for creators in this genre of music to take samples such as these and manipulate their tempo, key or sound, using effects such as reverbs, delays, filters and modulators. For instance, K.P and Envyi's "Swing My Way" is used in "Exchange" by Bryson Tiller, Otis Redding's "Cigarettes and Coffee" is in "Modern Slavery" by Travis Scott and Justin Timberlake's "Summer Love/Set The Mood (Interlude)" features in "The Weekend" by SZA. Producer Foreign Teck of Bryson Tiller's "Exchange" conveys "When I heard this sample and all the extra intricate things that I added to it, and the fills and whatnot, that's the only way I thought to create it", which reflects just how important samples are in this particular world of music production (Foreign Teck, 2018).

Taking this into consideration, I began collating an extensive playlist of suitable samples and loops, using YouTube and Splice, focusing mainly on soul vocals and parts, which I could easily sift through and use as inspiration when beginning to develop material for this project.

In addition, I cemented some further stylistic understanding of the genre. Producers ThankGod4Cody, Buddah Bless and OG Parker, who worked on "The Weekend" (SZA), "Modern Slavery" (Travis Scott) and "Pills & Automobiles" (Chris Brown) respectfully, all talked about creating space for vocals within their productions, perhaps due to the nature of this

genre being acutely vocal focused (ThankGod4Cody, 2017)(Buddah Bless, 2018)(OG Parker, 2018). An observation of mine was that the vocal production of most R&B, Hip-Hop and Trap songs is very clean and very front and that in many instances, especially in the case of Travis Scott and Chris Brown - auto-tune is utilised stylistically. Furthermore, it is noticeable that the space for vocals is often attained through keeping the timbre simplistic and focused in the lows and low-mids, with only the artist, hi-hats and occasional synth part occupying the highs.

In Hip-Hop and Trap leaning songs, 808 drums and bass are used religiously and define the percussion element (OG Parker, 2018)(Buddah Bless, 2018), whereas, in the R&B genre, slightly more acoustic, lo-fi, real drum sounds are often appropriate (ThankGod4Cody, 2017). This was appealing for me as a producer, allowing for versatility but even more appealing within the scope of the project, considering our wish to record live drums on a number of tracks. Foreign Teck asserted how important attention towards drum parts and programming is within these genres, showcasing how ghost notes, tuned snares and kicks and a large array of different percussive sounds within a track is essential to acquiring a fitting sound (Foreign Teck, 2018).

It was imperative that I conducted this research into the characteristics of R&B, Hip-Hop and Trap so that I am armed to make the right musical and production decisions in the completion of this collection of songs and ensure the project is a success.

In addition to this analysis, I was aware that I would be in charge of recording real drums for the very first time and therefore consulted with esteemed producer-engineer Sean Hargreaves. Sean advised that a suitable approach to capturing live drums for commercial music is to record the kick, snare and hi-hats separately to cymbals - increasing performance accuracy. Moreover, this method allows for a cleaner and tighter mix, as the cymbals aren't picked up by the microphones on the kick and snare. He also suggested that I can maximise studio time by being well prepared for the recording sessions by ensuring everything is set up in advance.

A critical component to our approach is our decision to aim to make double the amount of material that we need. This is a system that many commercial artists utilise to select only the very best of their tracks for release.

Another aspect that was noticeable from the creation processes of all of the producers I analysed was that they worked separately from the artist when making the beats for them. Subsequently to their completion, the artists were sent the beats and were able to write melodies and record vocals separately. This also became a part of the approach for this project, with Hazl and I concurring after our first couple of sessions together in the studio that we would yield better results working like this. This method would allow us to be free of studio time restrictions and enable our maximum creativity in familiar spaces where we felt we could be most productive. However, we did agree upon having one session a week in the studio to run through our ideas and progress together so that thoughts and opinions could be appropriately expressed - an essential facet of ensuring that our visions are being fully accomplished.

Given that we are planning to make a collection of songs that flows seamlessly from one song to the other, it was useful to me to explore instances where this has been done before for practical and inspirational purposes. Some examples I discovered are King Gizzard & The Lizard

Wizard's "Nonagon Infinity", Pink Floyd's "The Wall", Frank Zappa's "Apostrophe", and The Decemberists' "The Hazards of Love". In "Nonagon Infinity", there were riffs and themes which recurred throughout the album, particularly during the intros and outros of the songs, which created a relatable and adjoined feeling to the body of work as a whole. Pink Floyd regularly employed textures, ambience and nature sounds in the transitions between songs in "The Wall", while The Decemberists used the same key throughout most of "The Hazards of Love", switching between and recycling different movements and chord progressions. In "Apostrophe" and indeed the rest of these examples, there was a feeling of one continuous live performance or simply a very long composition. I plan to utilise all of these ideas into creating my project, which will have to be executed within a single Logic session.

Noticeably though, I could not find examples of this concept within our chosen genre for the project, meaning that this idea could turn into an appealing unique selling point for our work if executed successfully.

Project Timeline

The final and one of the most important planning pieces I made was setting out a project timeline and deadlines that would ensure progress but were also realistic (see below).

PROJECT TIMELINE

HAZL ALBUM

END OF APRIL

SOME DEMOS AND GENERAL DIRECTION OF THE PROJECT ESTABLISHED

MIDDLE OF MAY

HAVE 3 TRACKS PREPARED AND SENT TO HAZL FOR VOCALS

END OF MAY

SECOND LOT OF 3 TRACKS SENT TO HAZL

START OF JUNE

ARRANGE DRUM RECORDING SESSIONS FOR A COUPLE OF THE TRACKS

MIDDLE OF JUNE

ANOTHER 4 TRACKS SENT FOR RECORDING, DRUM TRACKING FINISHED

END OF JUNE

ALL RECORDING DONE, FINAL PRODUCTION TOUCHES FINISHED

START OF JULY

BEGINNING MIXING PROCESS (2 WEEKS)

MIDDLE OF JULY

SEND OFF FOR MASTERING

22ND OF JULY PROJECT END

Reference List

Spotify.com. 2021. *Listening is everything*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.spotify.com/>> [Accessed 12 May 2021].

GRAMMY.com. 2021. *GRAMMY.com*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.grammy.com/>> [Accessed 12 May 2021].

Youtube.com. 2021. *The Making Of Bryson Tiller's "Exchange" With Foreign Teck | Deconstructed*. [online] Available at: <https://youtu.be/wmf3kEYvy_E> [Accessed 13 May 2021].

Youtube.com. 2021. *The Making Of SZA's "The Weekend" With ThankGod4Cody | Deconstructed*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eM9Rrwnco8Q&t=20s>> [Accessed 13 May 2021].

Youtube.com. 2021. *The Making Of Travis Scott & Quavo's "Modern Slavery" With Buddah Bless | Deconstructed*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ASGimLVQdbQ>> [Accessed 13 May 2021].

Youtube.com. 2021. *The Making Of Chris Brown's "Pills & Automobiles" With OG Parker & Smash David | Deconstructed*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cp9YFmeEvNs&t=47s>> [Accessed 13 May 2021].

Leight, E., 2021. *Why Your Favorite Artist Is Releasing More Singles Than Ever*. [online] Rolling Stone. Available at: <<https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-features/why-your-favorite-artist-is-releasing-more-singles-than-ever-629130/>> [Accessed 13 May 2021].

Iqbal, M., 2021. *TikTok Revenue and Usage Statistics (2021)*. Business of Apps. [online] Available at: <<https://www.businessofapps.com/data/tik-tok-statistics/>> [Accessed 13 May 2021].