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Introduction

The aim of the project has been to be able to provide a product of work that is a mixture of genres from my influences, to produce a product which is the fabled “unique sound”.

I believe that this research will be qualitative rather than quantitative due to nature, though there are some quantitative results with a regard to mix of genre.

Though the aim of the project is creativity rather than success thoughts will be considered within as to why this could be viable as a product and also considerations for why not?

I Written, produced, engineered the majority, mixed the material with performances on bass, guitar (all bar one track), all programming as well as all vocal performances.

There was definitely an element due to covid-19, of do the best with what you got, a sort of punk method but in the best environment to work from.

Drum performances and bass could be better but so could many things,

Through time of writing and mixing/producing my own productions, there's an element of psychology involved and the need not to “psyche yourself out” aswell the project I believe asks quite a lot, a sense of arrangement through music theory, the ability to play a variety of instruments as well as mix stylings while not being afraid of my own vocal performances and committing.

Theory

Quoteinvestigator (2019)“A creative person who is absorbed with the task of generating an artwork hesitates to declare completion. Reworking and improving a piece are always tantalizing possibilities. Here are five versions of a saying about unavoidable incompleteness:

- A poem is never finished, only abandoned.
- A work is never completed, but merely abandoned.
- A work of art is never completed, only abandoned.
- Books are never finished—they are merely abandoned.
- Films are never completed, they are only abandoned.”

The opposite can be said to a brutal extent, an example of this with regards to mixing, from a mixing engineer, within his document “ If You Think A Mix Is Never Finished Then You Are In The Wrong Profession”

Hughes (2018) states In some ways, mixing to deadlines and not is the difference between cycling for pleasure, like all the MAMILs I see at weekends pretending to be Chris Froome. A MAMIL can simply saunter along with their fellow MAMILs every weekend as they pretend to be in the Tour de France whereas Chris Froome has to work bloody hard to ensure he's the very best if he doesn't then he'll be doomed as a professional.

Ive been starting to understand both sides of these views of late, though it can be far difficult when mixing your own production in which you feature on the majority. You have the creative side where it is an art form and the attachment to the project reflects that, but if the intent is to release a viable product, which is supposed to gain interest for the project, it wont garner any attention if it forever stays on the laptop so there comes a time to release and then grow. Otherwise you could be viewed as just a dreamer.

Simplicity is key in my opinion, though I think I may have taken this to the extreme with vocal, but repetition is something that the human ear is drawn to.

O'Bannon(n.d) In a study at the Music Cognition Lab, Margulis and her team had participants listen to two sets of music. One set was music by 20th-century composers like Luciano Berio and Elliot Carter — composers who intentionally avoided repetition in their works. The other set was digitally altered versions of these composers' works that were edited to loop and repeat in places.

Margulis writes about her experiment that the listeners reported that they found the altered versions more enjoyable and “more likely to have been composed by a human artist rather than randomly generated by a computer.”

“Repetition serves as a handprint of human intent,” Margulis writes about her experiment. “A phrase that might have sounded arbitrary the first time might come to sound purposefully shaped and communicative the second.”

I think this study shows, what i've tried to doing within the arrangements of my music, I think that the repetitive nature within the tracks structure and use of words, will stick with the listener, hoping it brings a sense of relatibility and intent, though I tried a sense of being still smart.

“ I know you heard it all before” self referencing the simplicity in a patronising way.

With reagards to intent, I think with the lyrical stylings and content can make it hit a bit harder and with the emotional sort of confesional styling, the more intent I can convey within the music the more it serves itself.

After listening to the track “I know” a few times, there are moments where I wish I went more technical, with regards to lyrical content, but to some extent this is a form of acceptance, that what I got at the time felt like the correct thing to do at the time, and at the time of recording was less precious and had the intent of doing so. I believe it works though in future works outside of this, considerations would be made to far more interesting verses, but again even between prior work and this work i've definitely grown to learn that actually finishing your product and saying as such, can give you a point of refference to be able to highlight your improvemnts since, see your own development be it as an artist, recording engineer or a mixing engineer.

(Perry 2019) “Genres are a crutch for incompetent music writers. What do such vague terms as Americana, metal (which has more subgenres than most of us have had hot dinners) or country mean? Do any of those genres convey anything about how the music sounds? Not really. Of a piece with genre fail is the incessant comparison of fledgling artists to existing performers. This is not limited to the older, increasingly fossilized generation of writers. Look at Pitchfork. Their pool of writers contains a lot of millennials, and you see the same issue.”

I think that the above is an interesting view within the genre classification approach, often punks didnt like being called punk, and many artists have discredited themselves from the attached genre label, it can make things narrow and that it classifys art for the sake of pidgeon holing, but if you do intend for your music to hit the market, clasifaction does help people find you , as people will search for rock playlists, hip hop, electronic and so on rather than some abstract termonology and if you want to take advantage of the playlist model, you would have to conform to such.

FOUNDRY13 MUSIC (n.d) So far, we have discovered two ways in order to have the freedom of experimenting with genres and sounds for an artist. One, start experimenting from day one, so that people view your experimenting as the norm, and love you as an artist for it. The second is to keep to one genre, holding a sense of consistency within you artist profile, which in time will gain fans, and then once you've reached a large enough audience (and I mean large), you can then create clout and a fanbase clique for yourself, then whatever you do, you will have people backing you up all of the way.

we rarely see this form of experimentation within the industry. It is so hard to get your fans and audience to support new styles from an already defined artist.

I think the above term can be a bit too narrow of a view though there have been cases where bands have changed stylings midpoint through their career and be accepted for it namely The beatles and their Sgt pepper album, though was this at a time when the market was less saturated, was the reasons why fans attached themselves was the rarity of the new music, now if you want to hear an experimental artist you'd find an experimental

artist, not look for pop star and get hip hop, The Beatles and artists of the time were in a unique position where a lot of the genre restrictions or concepts of the modern day did not exist.

Musicthinktank(n.d) "The interviewer first comments on the fact that much (if not most) of what musicians (bands in particular) attempt today are largely based on the foundations laid by iconic bands such as the Who. He then asks Daltrey if he thinks music has stagnated. His reply was surprisingly humble and candid-

"Well, I don't really like to comment on things like that. I think in our day, it was easy to be original because nothing had been done. There was us, a few others and the Beatles. It was still a big empty canvas, but now so much of the canvas has been filled. That isn't to say that some other bugger won't come along and paint a completely different picture."

So in essence he was saying that largely because of scarcity, it was much easier to be 'original' and consequently be considered innovative. I don't think he was totally dismissing the talent involved (lord knows, there was a lot of talent in the British invasion) but he was simply saying it was easier to stand out because there wasn't a sea of artists you were competing with. Unlike now where just about EVERYBODY is in a band or was in band or plays something or knows somebody who was in a band and so on."

I think this highlights a lot on the lack of options these days on making something truly new and unique, I think that the only way really is to make the music as personal and authentic as you can, and through cross genre attempts of blending styles to come out with a unique style, though it comes back to the age old comment, has it all been done before?

Harper (2015) What is experimental music, and what does it want from us? As a term and as a field of music-making, it's widely accepted but fits uncomfortably and is never well defined. "Experimental music" was a phrase used in the mid-twentieth-century to describe a range of ultramodernist compositional techniques as being a form of quasi-scientific research. John Cage was careful to point out that the term should apply to music "the outcome of which is not known"—that is, music with chance elements or improvisation built into it—since a composer ought to have completed all the necessary experiments before the piece was finished. And yet in everyday parlance, especially in popular music, "experimental" music has come to refer to music that seems radically unconventional, pretty weird, as if to experiment with the very building blocks of musical beauty.

I think the comments above show as the name suggests its experimental, things can go right things can go wrong within cross genre music it can often come under experimental , its unconventional so to a degree is it outlanish for it not to be accepted within a conventional music market, though at the time of 2020 are we at a sense of a conventional music market, covid 19 may have reset a few things and with artists at the time of the market being in full swing such as Billie eilish, Yungblud and Bring me the horizon the cross over and experimental market may be as viable as any, and some could say its only experimental, until it becomes successful.

Mullen(2017) Crossover music can not only provide unexpected exposure to an artist or record label, but it can expose the public to a style of music they may not be that familiar with. While some artists have been criticized by their die-hard fans for their crossover albums and songs, others have been able to find new life when they have produced an album in a new genre or style of music than they normally do

From Ed sheeran "Blow" and his work with hiphop producers and mcs on his collaberative efforts in notably the no6 collaberations album that ed sheeran released though he's working with grime artists like Stormzy, Aitch and Blow featuring Bruno mars and a Glam metal style production it gives Ed a wide audience, the youth that listens to some of the more modern stylings of Stormzy and even more of the American market that prior may have just thought of Ed as the ginger boy with the acoustic guitar, I guess in this sense it gives the artist a sense of liberation too with the facility to branch out with in their writing.

The harmonic series is essential to writing music even in a experimental sense, though at times I made the use of drones through distortion pedals to reverbs I made sure that the pitch of the feedback was in key with the track.

It also explains why what you hear works (if it does work) in western music.

Neff (n.d) Our eyes are naturally drawn to certain colors, and similarly, our ears are naturally drawn to the lowest note of the harmonic series, and this is the pitch that we hear. This pitch is called the fundamental. All of the notes that make up the harmonic series above that pitch are called overtones because they happen above, or 'over,' the fundamental pitch. They can also be called partials because they are parts of a pitch. The more common of these overtones are called harmonics, and they are frequently played by certain instruments such as harps and guitars. If we relate this harmonic series to color, the fundamental would be the 'white light' of a pitch that we actually hear, and the overtones would be the 'rainbow' of individual notes that make up that pitch.

Fundamental notes unless from a sinewave will produce over tones its the pitch of the overtones that then go on to be used to create chords and melody.

Though a lot of the project is played within the major key I tried to use dissonance to convey emotion.

Bowing (2015)Musicians and theorists have long considered consonance and dissonance to depend on the fundamental frequency ratio between tones (regularly repeating sound signals that we perceive as having pitch).

As the above states, a lot of use of dissonance tends to work when the dissonant notes are played within the higher octaves lower octaves working in conasance and the higher in conosance.

Practical

There is an argument that you can not do the same at a home studio that which you can do in a recording studio, due to room treatment, quality of equipment and I believe there is an argument for getting more done in a actual working environment than a home environment.

Waves(2018)“The greatest drawback of recording at home is a lack of knowledge and experience. Both of these can pose huge problems when trying to record your album at home. There is a lot of work and technique involved in recording, mixing and mastering to get a sound of professional quality and unfortunately that is not something that can simply be achieved overnight. The equipment available at a professional studio is very expensive and there is simply no way you will be able to reproduce the quality of sound with your own –free-to-download software and £5 microphone.”

Though I am not bound to a £5 microphone and own emulations of a neve preamp, the non linear nature of electricity can not be recreated within a piece of software free to own or not, especially within the vocal chain itself I wanted to have an analogue chain as far as recording was concerned.

The vocal chain for recording consisted of a 1073, sta-level compressor to the api eq using patch bay taking a digital signal from pro tools patching to the input of the 1073, then out put to the input of the sta- level , to the api , routed back to a channel of pro tools.

I tended to try using different production style within the mix before the mix bus rather than using presets and templates, trying to keep the feel and originality of the tracks, my own authentic sound I hope, I believe presets can be helpful and really unbiased towards them but for this project I tried avoiding the “build a template and import” method I may reach for in a more business related approach, if I had to work with a commercial client, I can tell from this experience I would not put it into practice on someone else's material unless requested or it called for it but could see that being rare.

Drums using the glenn johns technique for the sake of phase and going for a more rock sound, sometimes with the use of a double kick in parts for the sake of experimentation, but a very standard drum sound really.

808 drum machines were often played while mixed with live drums there had been difficulties where getting the drummer to play around it (due to not often working in the style) had been difficult but I don't think its too out of place especially when blended into tracks such as All i'll see this year is the kitchen sink trying to work within a death grips live / prodigy influence.

Mistakes often happening and deciding whether I wanted to keep them in for a real feel or edit them out, I made the decision to leave in the odd mistake for the sake of a real feel

A lot of the mixes sound is the SSL G channel (an emulation of) using the low band of the eq to boost lows, low mids to cut mud , high mids for bite high end for air, the compressor but sidechaining it against itself to only to compress the higher mids rather than the lows in the majority of the tracks.

With the vocals I was trying to achieve a Rock/pop style vocal mix, the looseness and lack of hyper editing and editing within the DAW, focussing on the performance but with the vocal high in the mix (rather an american style vocal mix than british being a bit more buried within the mix) and as clean as I could get it, with adaptive eq helping at the end, though my intent overall was avoiding preset options I felt adaptive eq tools such as soothe 2 were a no brainer for a last bit of clarity. Get as far as I feel I can with subtractive and additive eq be it with digital or analogue based software, but then allow some subtle correction, I like to think I done a lot of leg work with the vocal and allowed soothe 2 to take off the blinkers so to speak, especially with some of the final vocal mixing taking part in a home environment.

I'm actually quite proud of the lack of tuning within tracks like "wat ya say" meaning for a more live sounding recording, and feel the timing helped keep the track strong where the timing could become a bit loose in the instrumental.

I tried using some of the grime influence I have with vocal delivery and flow some lines lazy and slow others on the beat as close as I can, think this is why later according to soundclouds genre algorithm a few tracks came up as hip hop/ trap.

Dreaming features more programming overall using serum and samples more than emulations of analogue based softsynths such as the arturia collection. Overall aiming for an electronic and hip hop based track.

Though with the vocal mix I aimed for an american style production I've noticed of time similarities to blur and kasabian, think that may be due to living within the mid and southern areas of the uk, rather than say the northern stylings of oasis and pale waves.

I think the mix hangs slightly to the left by 6db in "wat ya say" possibly a few other tracks.

Waiting, I decided to go against the standard pre chorus to chorus arrangement style instead opting for a chorus to "drop" more similar to electronic styling as its heavily drum and bass influenced.

Though a lot of music is qualitative in approach than quantitative to try and put a science to it, and show quantitative results, I uploaded some of the tracks to spotify for its algorithm with their suggested genre tags as some of tracks, with results coming back as hip hop, trap, metal, alt rock and to my surprise gothic.

Figure1 Soundcloud (2020) Sing out when uploaded to soundcloud, soundclouds algorithm suggested the genre tags of – rock and rock and roll

I believe that this is an incorrect judgement but there's definitely elements I think many listeners

Though there are many cases that I think it fits within rock and roll be it guitars with delay effects and clean but distorted guitars through pushing the tubes in the preamps the use of rain fall and synths, inspired by electronic artist's such as burial, but that may be the judgement of an algorithm, its based on the main focus of the arrangement and not the

parts you may have “crossed over” as the main arrangement of the track I'd say is rock based.

in future cases i may consider getting even weirder and try blurring the lines a bit further but im thinking with a first release it can be easier to conform to genres at least In some ways to be more relatable then in future cases can do more as I please and believe with an existing fan base it can resume.

Figure 2 Soundcloud (2020) Dreaming when uploaded to soundcloud, soundclouds algorithm suggested the genre tags of – hip hop and trap

I believe that this is a accurate description especially within the hip hop tag.

in future cases i may consider again trying to import moe of a crossoverpoint, I introduced live drums into the project and went for a more sing/projected delivery and may introduce more band style elements but i'm content with how the production turned out and is the one track im probably most content with “putting a lid on”.

Figure 3 Soundcloud (2020)What ya say when uploaded to soundcloud, soundclouds algorithm suggested the genre tags of - metal and industrial.

I believe that this is a bit of a sign that I cant escape my metal influence, I think its more rock and alt rock but think this can show the intent behind my proposals, idea of not so much changing genre or direction as metallica did from the black album to loaded and reloaded but using your genres influences within your own styling.

Im fairly content with the out come of this track I think theres elements where I would make the verses have more of a pop style verse similar to michael jackson style tracks with distorted guitars but over all im content with the production.

I question how accurate the algorithym within soundcloud can be? A side note machine learning with regards to genre clasification I dont believe to be that useful, though this is far from a study on machine learning the following may show some insight into soundclouds judgements.

Sturm(2013)the problem of identifying, discriminating between, and learning the criteria of music genres or styles—naturally restricts the number of genre labels people use to describe a piece of music. Perhaps this imagined limitation of MGR comes from the fact that of 435 works with an experimental component we survey (Sturm 2012a), we find only ten that use a multilabel approach.

My music can highlight the exact restrictions something like Soundclouds algorithym, it takes into account certain aspects of the music, but does not have the facility to take into account the smaller details.

I think overall the strengths of this production is the wide variety of skills i've shown, though a sense of weakness I felt within the production is that with the “many hats” I am wearing, there can be a consideration that the ability to step back and asses can be difficult.

Waves (2018)“Occasionally, in a group, whoever is in charge of mixing may choose to bring their opinions into the session. For instance, maybe they dislike a guitar riff so they

bury it in the mix, or they think the bassist is sloppy so they unnecessarily quantize the performance. The more involved someone is in the process of making the record, the more emotionally attached they become, and the more emotionally driven their decisions become.

Keep this in mind whenever you step foot in the studio, and be sure to check your ego at the door. The only way to prevent this problem is to be aware of it and to actively make an effort to stifle those actions. If you trust your unbiased ear, use it and make the mix decisions that need to be made. If you value the feedback of other trusted individuals, ask for their feedback.”

I think this quote conveys my exact opinion, its very hard to emotionally distance yourself truly, to walk in and not over think “well how will this be in the mix” lets quantize this , lets quantise that, though on the oposite side allowing things to slide can also create its own problems later on , I tried allowing the sessions to flow more, later on I felt I could have been more on it with regards to performance takes on drums, but the drummer was out of practice (self admittedly) and id rather a tight but out of practice drummer for a real feeling than a drum machine.

That and as soon as you start the project, rather than just record the project, then mix , then pass on to mastering you can end up chasing your own tale.

One thing I tried more with this project is working within the same project file, rather than having a demo file then master file, trying to constantly move forward with the piece than fall into “the demo aint done therefore cant work on the recordings”

Through the wide variety of genres the production I believe it will open doors, when released to be able to hit a wide market through the crossover style, the threats overall I'd think is competition, is the makret oversaturated and with covid will music be less of a viable comodity within the upcoming years?

With the project post- masters, taking it further the mixes will be sent for mastering at a comercial facility, throughout the masters as a business sense i've decided to keep the project almost as a solo act, with live performers, im hoping to have the same consistent live band but on a hired basis, it also allows me to experiment with new players in future recording processes, meaning for more interesting and varied productions a kinda no long term commitment, the project being named Ideas on a stave to reflect the somewhat band style aproach rather than “The Stephen Jenkins experience” Not a fan of that.

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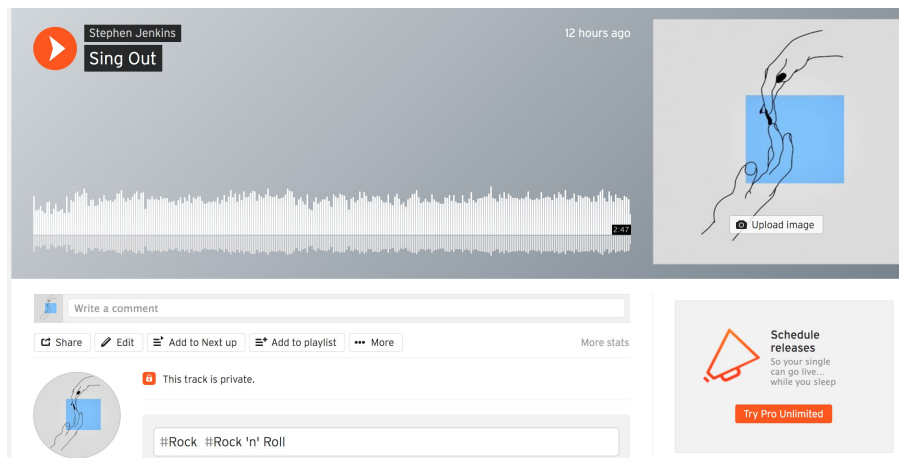
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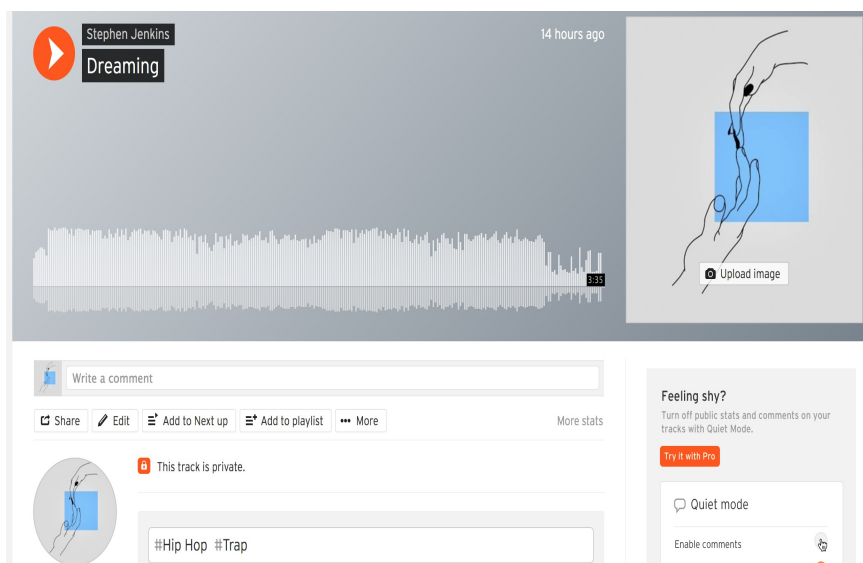
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