

The solarkiddmusic Project

Introduction

The purpose of this project and proposal will be to define the music and artistry of Keenan Bailey, the producer, also known as solarkidd. With this body of work, I expect to display the skills, style and all-round ambition of solarkidd as a producer as well as an artist, songwriter and musician.

I will be employing all the tools and knowledge I have learnt and gained during my career as an artist/sound engineer and producer. Then combine it with the skills, I have acquired at Tile yard through my MA in Commercial Music Production in the hopes of turning my career into an undeniable and sustainable success.

I hope to outline the benchmarks upon which I will base my success as well as the methods used to achieve this including my plan and strategy for execution.

The project will consist of 8 Tracks or singles. Each track will be produced with the intention of re selling, or pitching to a vocalist, A&R or for sync and to build up my personal catalogue as a Music Producer.

If I am unable to find a suitable vocalist for a specific track, then I will be writing and performing on the tracks myself so that a completed guide or reference can be used for pitching or marketing purposes.

These tracks will be subdivided into subcategories and will all be based around the style or genre known as UK Urban Pop and Afrobeats. This includes its subgenres such as Afro Swing, Afro Soul, Afro Pop , Hip Hop and House.

The combination of styles will showcase my versatility and dexterity as a producer within this genre and I would like to make sure that every song is produced to the highest standard and quality so that it could be considered commercially viable and appeal to afro pop culture which will be my statement of intent as a UK music producer on the world stage.

Methodology

I will be incorporating various methods of research based around data collection and analysis.

Such as:

- Experiments – With a couple of tracks, I will try to develop a new sound based around the genre I am trying to create and incorporate other elements to see if I may be able to create a new niche within the genre. For example, adding hard rock guitars to my Afrobeats sound or including elements from other genres such as classical music etc. Then use the feedback sessions to gauge if these are valid options or areas to explore for future development etc.
- Surveys, Questionnaires – I wish to conduct a survey surrounding the relevance of recording contracts in today's market and how important this is to an artist or producer in terms of making a success of your craft in order to further assess the route or path I choose to follow in my career.
- Interviews – I plan to interview a number of producers (established and other) who make music in the genre I am working with as well as others in order to see what their approaches, techniques and methodologies are for music creation and how I can learn or implement any of these techniques in my production approach.
- Case Studies – I will be using 2 to 3 producers as case studies who are or have been successful in my chosen genre of production.
- Studies using the Delphi method – I will set up and conduct a few panel discussions surrounding the UK Afro Pop movement with industry professionals as well as students or average music consumers.
- Music Study – I will be listening to and spending time consuming the music of artists and producers within this genre to get a feel taste for the methods, sounds and overall production style and quality of the music.

During this process I will be deconstructing topics such as,

- What makes a hit song?
- How to make yourself known as a producer?
- Is it possible to combine a left field genre or idea with my chosen style?
- Is it possible to make a hit record in a home studio?
- Is fame a necessity for a producer?

- Can creating an alter ego, mysterious identity or shock tactics aid in promoting a record?
- How does a song become a soundtrack to your life?
- Is there still such a thing as black and white music in the global economy?
- Why is playlisting necessary?
- How important is a record deal?
- How to create longevity in the Music Business?

I will also be using this project to gain market research and analytical data using the marketing models of Tik Tok campaigns and Instagram Reels.

The general vibe for the music I will be creating is up tempo which seems to be commercially viable in this Tik Tok, Snap Chat, Insta Reels generation with many bands and artists finding fame through this platform.

Some artists have also been rediscovered with this platform, referring to (Zarczynski, 2021)

I do recognise that as much as the potential is for Tik Tok to break an artist, there are also many draw backs for major artists because of the fact that fans don't always engage with the music but tend to be more drawn to what is being shown in the Tik Tok video such as a dance trend or funny video etc. as cited by (Leight, 2020)

Music consumption – Music in the current climate is mostly consumed as singles which is a lot cheaper for artists to make as well as manage and you can focus more on one song at a time and make it great rather than the time it takes to make an album. (Murphy, 2019)

These singles are generally consumed using peoples favourite streaming service such as Spotify or iTunes, which has now become the main source of music consumption in 2021. It has become so popular in 2019 that the whole Music Industry has had to conform around it. (MN2S, 2020)

Music lovers generally listen to their favourite playlists on shuffle and my intention is to get onto some of the major playlists out there such Spotify and iTunes. There are many popular playlists but I would like to target ones such as the Top 20 Afrobeats chart on Spotify as well as others such as Pop/Urban UK and Hot Hits UK.

Background and stylistic choices surrounding my project

I have chosen to centre my project around a sound that has very quickly found its way into mainstream music and can be heard in many pop songs at present and the style or rhythms are used to varying degrees in many other popular songs as well.

The tracks I will be producing for my portfolio will all be based around the UK Urban Pop and Afrobeats style and its sub genres.

A bit of history

Afrobeat's is still a relatively new genre in the Music industry and is based on West African pop music and includes Rap, Bashment, Dancehall, R&B and EDM and is designed to make you dance.

The style of music found its beginnings in West Africa and broke into the mainstream in 2005 with the launch of MTV Base Africa.

It then began to appear in the western markets as early as 2011 with artists such as D'Bange with his smash hit Oliver Twist as well as because of music moguls such as Akon. He has also signed many popular Afrobeats artists including the very successful Wizkid who found global success on the hit record One Dance where he featured with Drake. There are many others such as Rick Ross and Tiwa Savage to name a few.

In July 2020 the genre was finally given its own chart, the Official Afrobeats Chart which is a weekly Top 40 initiated by Afro Nation. (Copsey, 2020)

This rise of this genre and the amount of attention it is receiving is a revelation to me, being of African heritage and holds a place in my heart and I would like to be a part of this Afro revolution.

Afrobeat which it should not be confused with was made popular by African music legend Fela Kuti but Afrobeats with an S is a completely new incarnation of this, as the former is a combination of West African rhythms and American Jazz, Big band and Afro funk style and is also highly political.

It was pioneered by Fela Kuti and then kept alive by his sons Femi and Seun and his grandson Made Kuti. (Dubenion, S)

Personal Development

The most important reason for this project would be to show that I have not only taken the time to work on my craft as a producer but that I have now also included and developed my aptitude for the commercial aspects of the Business of Music Production.

This would mean that the music I create in this project would be commercially viable and should be received as such in terms of quality and would be used for pitching for sync or to an interested Artist, Publisher or Label.

It should also create a return on the investment of my time, energy and creativity into each song, as well as displaying my broad understanding of music and the ability to work with artists within the genre I will be creating for.

In terms of the music business and industry, the streaming numbers received, followers and subscribers to my social media networks would hold weight and assist in the promotion of my brand and identity as an artist, however I intended to publish the music on SoundCloud and will not be releasing them officially until concrete interest is shown by a potential client.

These statistics would also not be my main benchmark for success because to me financial gain and recognition from industry executives and artists would hold more value and weight in the long run as well as in terms of my validation and accreditation as a Music Producer and Artist and serve to help create a sustainable career in the Music Business.

As far as my personal goals and objectives, my main aim during this process would be to establish my sound and credibility within this genre and the overall production skill and qualities that defines me as an artist, producer and engineer.

I will also be using the resources gained at TileYard as well as through online applications and resources such as Club house (which is an exclusive apple app) to grow my network.

I have already received some amazing advice from top record executives on Club House such as, Life Griffin who has helped to guide some of the biggest artists in the US such Erykah Badu and Snoop Dogg. As well as Ross Wilson who is a UK Music manager who has managed artists such as Mario Winans, Letisha Gordon etc.

Quality standards

I intend to use the best possible recording equipment available to me and will be mixing using some of the best audio gear available for a home production studio as I will not be able to use a professional studio at this time. However, if the lock down restrictions do ease then I will endeavour to get into a quality recording studio specially to track vocals and possibly to finish off my final mixes.

I will be employing my skill as a Sound Engineer to mix and master my music to the highest level possible as well as some of the tips and tricks learnt during my time at Tile yard. I will be testing the music in many settings to see how it translates on many devices such as phones, iPod, blue tooth speakers, in the car and with professional studio monitors.

I will also be getting feedback from a variety of sources such as Professionals as well as non-professionals and general music consumers during group listening sessions and will be taking note of all the advice and feedback given to me.

Targets and Deliverables

- 6- 8 Songs to be completed to a reasonable standard or outline by the 4 Apr 2021
- During this time write up proposals for peer reviews as well as set up times and dates for listening sessions.
- Create the questionnaires and feedback forms to be used for research
- Set up feedback and listening sessions from peers and professionals between 5 and 17 April (Online listening sessions, peer reviews, interviews, Clubhouse, Mentor, Questionnaires, feedback etc.)
- Ask Harry to set up a listening session with Sway who is an industry expert in this genre as advised by Ciaran.
- Complete final Mixes and Masters between 19 April and 1 May (Leaving a week for any last-minute changes before the final deadline on 7 May)
- May 4th all tracks to be mixed, mastered and ready for submission

How do I measure success?

Once my tracks are completed to a decent standard, I intend to use the following tools as a benchmark or measure for my success.

- Peer reviews - I intend to set up groups as well as individual listening sessions. I will utilise the resources at Tileyard such as the weekly student AR sessions which has been organised by the students. I will also send the tracks to industry friends and peers (not necessarily within the industry) to gauge and review the reaction and general overview of the project.
- Questionnaire reviews and application to my work if relevant.
- Professional feedback – I will speak to my mentor as well as other mentors within as well as outside the Tileyard community to get feedback on production level and mixing standards as well as commercial viability of each track.
- Syncs or clients obtained from this body of work – This will be a benchmark for my success in the sense that if any or at least up to half of the tracks in this body of work is licensed, purchased or used for sync, it would be considered a reasonable return on my creative investment.
- Any sort of Chart success digital or otherwise would be a success as I have never had any song chart before.
- If any of my tracks get over 10k viewers whatever the platform.

Conclusion

Looking Ahead

Being a self-employed sound engineer and music producer over the past 10 years has aided in my decision making when it came to producing, recording and mixing bands and artists from many different backgrounds and genres and won me a lot of praise and accolade in my career to this point as I was always able to adapt and understand the needs of any type of artist or musician. The only drawback to working as a commercial producer or engineer was that I never had the time to develop my own style or sound because I have always been creating music for clients and to other people's tastes or preferences. I would now like to reflect my style and sound through this body of work as a representation of my artistry, the genre I am working within, my likes and my influences.

My ambition as a producer is not necessarily to be an artist in the limelight but to be known and respected by the major players, executives, artists, publishers and A&Rs in the music industry akin to the likes of producers such as James Last and his trademark “Happy Music”.

I see myself being financially independent and established as one of the “Go To” UK producers in the world as well as all the accolades that comes from success in the music industry such as chart hits, plaques and awards as well as the financial freedom that comes from being a success in this industry.

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