

Creation Proposal - MonMon Nursery Rhymes

MA Commercial Music Production

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The proposal is to create a selection of ten modern nursery rhymes. This will include six original compositions and four re-works of traditional classics. The intended listener will be new born babies up to the age of 3 and at the same time it should be enjoyed by their parents and siblings being coherently fun and uplifting.

Being a father myself I have found that most music in this field is rather cheaply produced with very basic midi drums and thin sounding instruments. Generally I have not found the majority of music in this category to be pleasing. In conjunction with an artist Monelle Bryce, we share a vision to modernise, taking advantage of top quality production techniques, creating an album with a distinct groove that will be enjoyed by the most discerning of pallets. Some of the songs on this album will be based on classics and my first research was into the copyright issues that could arise. By frankly considering the intellectual property of nursery rhymes and any potential copyright I consider this research to be ethical. Music that is created before copyright falls into public domain and this means that it can be used for any reason without permission. Generally music that is over 100 years old will be in the public domain and we will be free to create our own version without fear of infringing existing copyright. The following is what the track list will look like, the type of song it will be and I have included the approximate date of the original versions where relevant:

1. "Cokey" Dance track (Based on Hokey Cokey - 1826)
2. "Bobbin" Reggae feel (Based on Wind the Bobbin 1890)
3. "Thunder" Bass/Jazz/Strings (Based on I hear Thunder/frère Jacques) 17th century
4. "Twinkle" Delicate and uptempo (Based on Twinkle Little Star 1806)
5. "Playtime" Drums, tambourines, distraction pops, horns & sax (Original)
6. "Rumbles" Bubbly, moving tempo between fast and slow (Original)
7. "Milky" Strings (Original)
8. "Bum" Nappy Change, afro beat (Original)
9. "Sleep" Calming sensory (Original)
10. "Love" Calming piano (Original)

This ten track album of short fun and uplifting songs will be enjoyed by both baby and family. The listening setting would be in the car, at bedtime or in the nursery.

I will draw upon the skills learnt in the foundation and development modules of this course to complete this task and utilise research to maximise the effectiveness of the music appropriate to the desired listening time and setting. For example the bedtime songs will need to create a peaceful atmosphere to aid a healthy sleep and the action songs should be fun, charismatic and inspiring. The entire piece should be as engaging as possible and enjoyed not just by the children but the parents and siblings too.

I chose to produce this album of nursery rhymes for a number of reasons. To start with I want to improve on what is in the market already as noted above. I will be able to exercise my production skills and use my music theory and my knowledge of recoding to create high quality work that meets the vision.

Secondly there is no doubting that this is a massive market and I believe this particular niche has the potential for longevity as a good rendition and master recording that is popular has the potential for playback for many years, if not decades. A successful project therefore has the potential to counter the growing effects of 'disposable music' and earn royalties in the face of declining industry trends as seen in other modern genres of music.

Thirdly there is scope for large commercial returns as not only is this a huge market but there are many opportunities for the work to be licensed and synced in advertising and with brands that cater to this demograph. There are also opportunities to expand across media into books, video and computer games.

Successful delivery of this project will include primarily achieving the main aim of producing the ten tracks and completing this outcome.

In relation to how good these are and the standard that is delivered I aim to make this more than a subjective opinion by having feedback sessions with baby clubs and gathering opinions. In order to best do this ethically and as honestly as possible I will anonymise and ensure responses are private. I hope to devise a feedback sheet to guide responses and help prompt answers. I also aim to distribute demos to parents directly and ask their opinions on whether they want to listen to the songs again and rating their child's enjoyment of the music. A benchmark for success I wish to achieve is over 50% wanting to listen to the music again.

I made initial research into the existing market space by seeking competitors in the market and looking at the size in comparison with the 140 million children born each year. The market is huge although hard to find information directly quantifying the exact size and market share of each competitor. Youtube channels have in excess of 50 billion views annually and popular Spotify artists are averaging over 250,000 plays monthly.

However my aim is not just to make one of the most popular selection of nursery rhymes but also to make an acoustically healthy set of songs that will positively impact the listener. Accordingly I have made initial research into the sonic properties that have the most positive impact on babies' health.

Children relish listening to songs full of rhyming, rhythm and repetition. Many songs share a similar tune or melody with the alteration of lyrics. This has developed from a time where music was unwritten and therefore the same melodies and rhythms were used and lyrics adapted over time. This also has the effect of helping children learn new words and understand how words are formed. As children learn language and literacy skills across different beats and rhythms it provides an opportunity of value and they become more confident learners.

The aim will be for these compositions to aid healthy relaxation in adults and babies. Research has shown that singing is the most effective in keeping babies from crying. Sucking behaviour improves with the sound of a gong, a drum like instrument used to simulate two-tone heartbeats, whilst an ocean disk can enhance sleep.

Music but particularly live music has been proven to excite and activate the body. Levitin, author of the book "This is your brain on music" analysis points to a myriad of ways listening to music influences health such as the production of the antibody immunoglobulin A and natural killer cells. Music also reduces levels of the stress hormone cortisol. "This is one reason why music is associated with relaxation" Levitin says. Playing music before medical procedures has been proven to make a big difference halving reports of pain and distress and doubling the ease of administration.

The music can also have a huge impact on the parents too for example by reducing stress and this increases as they partake in singing. The adults' role is equally important in

engaging the child by being confident, singing slowly and clearly, using a clear tone, and involving the children through actions, pictures or symbols.

At its core music is a sound that is rooted in vibration. Lee Bartel, PhD, has been exploring the effect of sound vibrations absorbed through vibroacoustic therapy and initial results have been encouraging in a range of disorders including Parkinson disease and depression. Lower frequencies around the 30Hz range seem to be most effective and I will try to utilise sub bass in the compositions where possible and appropriate.

Music can help sleep hygiene by helping the listener feel relaxed and at ease and gentle rhythms and lullabies are proven scientifically to help children of all ages, from premature infants to those of school age, go to sleep quicker and sleep better. Most studies have shown that music that syncs to the bodies resting heart rate of 60-80 bpm is best. I will therefore try to incorporate this knowledge when composing the tracks for bedtime.

Younger listeners have a shorter attention span and therefore the album is likely to be around 15-20 minutes long in total. Each song is likely to average around a minute and a half though this is subject to change though the production process.

Typical instruments used in this genre are usually those found in a classical ensemble such as piano, strings and brass instruments and mallets such as the glockenspiel. The arrangements are simple with space between the layers. I intended to use familiar sounds and incorporate them into the compositions. This combination of orchestral and familiar should also add to the longevity of the project. I will be looking to create interesting arrangements but not overly complex.

Similar and reference material will include works by market competitors such as Kids Hit Project, Nursery Rhymes Baby Walrus, Monkey Music, Hartbeeps music, and the signing company.

Synthesising this research the aim is to create a project focused on being happy and sensory, enjoyed by parents and children alike. It is to be modern sounding and not corny and will fit within my musical identity. The target market being babyclubs and toddler groups.

This project will be made up of primarily live instrumentation and I do not want to over quantise the recordings. On some of the tracks I wish to use session musicians for example to have live strings and horns. I will sparsely tune the vocal recording but this is to be the main feature and must be well recorded and transparent with light use of effects such as EQ, compression, reverb and delay.

I will oversee the songwriting, arrangement and recording processes. I hope to ensure that I am fair and ethical in sharing potential future earnings and revenue from this project. I will use revshare contracts and with the songwriters and artists to create the pieces of work. I will draft these using Share4 and manage a limited budget to take on session work where necessary.

I intend to make the music with the vocals being recorded first and then create an appropriate backing track to compliment.

There are some alternative approaches that I did consider. There is an emerging trend to take modern day songs and turn them into lullabies. For example Sparrow Sleeps is an

artist who has been taking the melodies of popular songs from artists such as Avril Lavigne and My Chemical Romance and making them into soft glockenspiel versions with lush strings suitable to be played to young children and bedtime.

In contrast there is the band Slay Duggee who have taken songs such as 'Babyshark' and 'Happy Birthday' and made heavy metal versions that would not be out of place on any large stage to a hardcore audience.

Both approaches are interesting and perhaps give greater scope to artistically fuse these classic nursery rhymes with my own style of music. However in the end, working with my chosen artist it was a shared vision to stick with a more traditional style of nursery rhyme and to make more appealing versions of them. It was also a result of the research that to achieve maximum health benefit for the children sticking to calm vocals and familiar sounds was the best way to achieve this.

I will utilise project management skills to keep the project on time and to a limited self financed budget of under £300 for payment of session musicians. I have created the following time sheet to keep organised.

W/C	09/05/22	16/05/22	23/05/22	30/05/22	06/06/22	13/06/22	20/06/22	27/06/22	04/07/22	11/07/22
ACTIVITY										
Initial Ideas										
Vocal Sesion										
Compose										
String Session										
Horns Session										
Backtracks final										
Final Vocal Session										
Finalise Drafts										
Feedback sessions										
Final edits										
Mixing & Mastering										
Submission										

I will further investigate and research types of instruments that aid healthy relaxation in adults and babies and utilise these methods appropriately in each track.

I hope that this body of work will be published. Of course it would be good to use as a reference in my own portfolio and perhaps lead to further work in the field; creating audio books and further modern takes on classic nursery rhymes.

The project itself could evolve to include actions and dance routines suitable for babies with videos as well. There is scope for an accompanying reading book and story book and audio book.

I hope to learn more about production, working with multiple artists and instrumentalists and coordinating and managing a large project.

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