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BMTY7000 Creative Music Management

Element 1 – Reflective Summary

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1.0 Introduction

This reflective essay aims to discuss, analyse and critique the contents of my portfolio submission containing all assets of our hypothetical release of my own commercial pop song, “Good On My Own”. I will start with a reflection on my involvement in this group project by using Kolb’s reflective model, which will allow me to review the team dynamics as well as successes and shortcomings and draw guidance for future best practices. I will continue with a discussion of the impact that digital technologies have had on the industry as a whole and on our own project. Lastly, I will critique some of the industry-standard theories and tools that I have applied over the course of this assignment.

2.0 Personal involvement

In this section, I will be applying Kolb’s reflective model (1984) to review my involvement in this group project as well as my experience within the team.

2.1 Concrete Experience

Our group began the project by determining every member’s strengths and weaknesses in order to assign tasks adequately. It was easily and rapidly decided that Róisín would handle the brand identity, the website and the EPK, Jan would deal with financial aspects of the campaign as well as produce the remix and the iconography, and I would work on the marketing and release strategies in addition to creating all campaign assets. As it was clear that I was the most creatively inclined in the group and we were working on my song, my role quickly became

evident to all of us. Although I would be handling the creative aspects of the campaign, I still wanted to make sure that everyone's ideas were taken into account and part of the theme for the assets came from Róisín.

After we had defined a direction, I started producing the digital content. I began with the acoustic video that I filmed alone in my bedroom and edited at a later stage. The lyric video was the asset that took most of my time as I spent a total of twenty-seven hours on making it. While I knew that I could have done a simple video in less than an hour, I was very ambitious with the final product and was eager to create something that we would all be proud of. I also created a Spotify Canvas video from the lyric video as well as the artwork for the single and its remix. The final asset that I made was the TikTok video.

Once the campaign material was finished, I began working on a release strategy. I weighed the pros and cons of several distributors and created a release plan along with a marketing strategy including the target audience, goals, key performance indicators and impact points, which are all essential elements (Ferrone, Pacifico and Davy, 2019, p.39).

While the group intended to meet every week and discuss progress, ideas and feelings, many challenges arose one after the other. We had organised to film a simple music video on the last week before the Christmas break, however the newest variant of Covid-19 pushed many people to stay at home, including Róisín and myself, so we had to give up on our idea. Nevertheless, I felt that we all knew what our assigned tasks were and that we were all going ahead with our work during the Christmas break. However, while communication between Róisín and I was constant, reaching out to Jan grew difficult and it quickly became clear that he had not been doing his share of the workload. As we were close to the deadline, Róisín and I became increasingly worried and made the decision to prepare to do

Jan's tasks if the need arose. Jan eventually got back to us with his assets only a few days before the hand in date. We were confident that we would be able to finish in time, but we faced more roadblocks. My family caught Covid-19 and, as my father is at risk, it put additional stress on my shoulders. Unfortunately, Róisín became severely ill and had to stay in A&E for several days, including the day of the deadline, and was ordered to rest for a significant amount of time. We were lucky enough to obtain a deadline extension to complete our project.

2.2 Reflective Observation

Looking back on the experience as a whole, I have mixed feelings. Communication was definitely an issue with one team member and it brought immense stress onto the group. However, Jan eventually apologised for his absence and produced high-quality work in a short amount of time. I am proud of how Róisín and I handled the situation as we were both very anxious but kept going with our work. I consider myself very lucky to have had someone like her on my team as she is a hard worker with a strong work ethic and did not hesitate to help out in areas that she was not familiar with. Róisín was exceptionally supportive throughout the project and I strongly feel that it is one of the reasons that we were able to produce a portfolio that we are proud of.

Belbin (2012, chapter 3) theorises that there exist nine team roles and that all need to be filled for a team to be most effective. Over the course of this project, I have identified Róisín as a Resource Investigator, a Plant and a Completer Finisher. She was very good at reaching out to people for advice; she organised our meeting with Sebastian Smith and attempted to meet with one of his colleagues. She also consistently came up with new content ideas such as interviews and videos and

took on the responsibility of looking over every asset to make sure that our delivery would be of high quality. Jan, who focused on the financial aspects and the remix, has shown to be, in my opinion, a Specialist: he provided excellent and in-depth knowledge about the specific areas that he worked on. Finally, I identify myself as a Monitor Evaluator, a Shaper and an Implementer. I feel that I did a fair job of staying logical when making decisions, putting aside the personal feelings that came with us using my song. I would also like to believe that I encouraged the team to stay focused, especially during our group sessions, and that I was able to carry out the team's ideas.

However, we were missing the roles of Teamworker and Co-ordinator, which could have been very beneficial to our team. The Teamworker helps bind the team while the Co-ordinator delegates and assigns tasks. Had these two roles been filled, maybe our team would have been more cohesive.

I am overall happy with the assets that I created for this project. While they are not all as professional-looking as I would have liked, I am pleased with the outcome. I am particularly satisfied with my release plan and the lyric video. As for the other group members' work, I was very impressed with the remix that Jan produced and Róisín's overall branding abilities. She helped me greatly when it came to defining VALE's persona and did a terrific job of putting my thoughts and ideas into words and colours.

2.3 Abstract Conceptualisation

The only conflict that the team faced was due to task interdependence. West (2012, chapter 11) explains that in the case where one member's task depends on the prior work of another member, "frustrations arise when [the] reliability of a team

member is seen to be lower than acceptable". West suggests that making sure that "people are clearly aware of each other's roles and the objectives of those roles" from the beginning can help avoid this type of conflict. If we had all been well informed about how reliant we were on each other's work, maybe we would have been more conscious of the importance of our own tasks.

With regard to my own duties, I feel that I could have been more efficient in managing my time by being less of a perfectionist. I spent many hours making a lyric video that was not required and could have been much simpler. Overall, we produced many more assets than necessary. While I managed to finish every video and piece of artwork before our initial deadline, I worked under pressure and put myself under a lot of stress. If I were to do this again, I would focus on producing the most important pieces of content before giving myself any additional work.

2.4 Active Experimentation

While creating my portfolio, I put my better understanding of prioritisation into practice. I started by completing all the required elements before thinking about its appearance and how to make it more interactive.

3.0 Application of Digital Technologies

The switch from physical to digital came along with the rise of social media. Ferrone, Pacifico and Davy (2019, p.40) point out the importance of maintaining "a dialogue or presence, regardless of which point the campaign has reached." This puts pressure on artists to continuously produce and share content. For this reason, I made

sure that the social media posting schedule would make the best of Instagram's algorithm. Posting once a day brings consequential engagement while posting up to three times per week ensures consistency, boosting exposure. It is also important to post at times when your audience is the most active (Das, 2021). Moreover, Harrison (2021, p.236) states that "cross-media branding is becoming increasingly important." There needs to be consistency across platforms and visuals have become absolutely essential to any artist's campaign as "new talent is seen... before they are heard" (Crowley, 2019).

This focus on social media and digital releases made our group disregard physical products almost instantly. From experience, we agreed that without an established fan base to purchase CDs or vinyl records, their production would be a waste of time and resources, especially as most music discovery now comes from streaming services (Crupnik, 2021). We therefore put emphasis on using playlist submission platforms such as MusoSoup and SubmitHub as Spotify playlists have become so prominent that they "have serious cultural power" (Harding, 2021).

Social media now also plays a significant part in music discovery: TikTok is how many young consumers find new songs to listen to and become fans of new artists, including independent ones (Rosenblatt, 2019). Many independent artists, such as Lil Nas X or Nathan Evans, were discovered on TikTok by users before being spotted by major record labels. With such platforms, influencers have gained remarkable power over music promotion. Ferrone, Pacifico and Davy (2019, p.39) explain that the "marketing message is most effectively amplified via tastemakers and influencers." This is why we decided to use SubmitHub's influencer platform to maximise exposure.

Digital technologies were not only the basis of our marketing and release campaigns but also our means of creating, storing and sharing our visual assets. Tools such as Microsoft OneNote and Zoom allowed the group to work remotely and keep all ideas in one place. I made most of the videos using Adobe's Premiere Pro, After Effects

and Lightroom and produced the artworks with Adobe's Photoshop. All the content created by the group was stored on a shared Google Drive before being posted on a website made with Bandzoogle. A website is a great addition to an artist's portfolio of platforms as it makes them look professional, gives them complete control over the content posted, takes some of the power away from social media and, most importantly, makes for a "one-stop destination" for consumers (Robley, 2015).

4.0 Reflection On Industry Standards

While working on this project, the main industry-standard theory that I have learned and applied to the best of my abilities is the importance of social media marketing. During our discussion, Sebastian Smith, Senior A&R at Believe Digital, stressed the importance of social media advertisement and stated that "digital spend is everything" (see Appendix A). While looking at similar artists' release plans and social media posts, I quickly realised that they were all very much alike. While I understand that this is because this strategy has been proven effective, I do find it quite generic and wish there were more variety and unique ideas. This encourages me to come up with my own ideas to try to stand out in the future.

Industry-standard tools such as Adobe Creative Cloud software programs were surprisingly easy to use. They can be costly for independent artists, but the extent to which it allows the expression of creativity is, in my opinion, worth the expense. As stated in the previous section, interesting visual assets are essential to any artist's campaign and, as an artist myself, I enjoyed understanding how those elements were created.

5.0 Conclusion

Overall, I have found this experience fun and educational. As a creative, I deeply enjoy creating artwork and I have done it before. However, this context made it feel more professional and I found this to be excellent practice for future undertakings. It also allowed me to get a better understanding of the fast-paced social media landscape and the importance of consistency in artist campaigns. Working on the visual assets taught me how no detail is left to chance and I got the opportunity to learn to use industry-standard creative tools, which will undoubtedly serve me well.

Now at the end of this project, I know how to deal with group conflict in more effective ways and how to prioritise my tasks more efficiently. I also understand what makes a good team and healthy work relationships. I am excited to apply these new skills in a real-world environment and witness the benefits first-hand.

6.0 Sources

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7.0 Appendix: Sebastian Smith Interview Notes Excerpt (see full notes [here](#))

Further pointers:

Digital spend is everything, makes or breaks an artist

Paid ads

Shitty TikTok posts

Attention seeking industry

Just have to be open to everything, all built on relationships

If a song starts moving, you need to work with it, change your plans depending on how the song is popping off. Adaptability is key.

Going on a whim and figuring it out