

Michael Harley

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Module Code ADAD7004_LON

Module Title Creation

Element 2b – Reflective Commentary

In this commentary I will be examining the contents of my “War Chest” as laid out in my proposal. The War Chest is a document including all the content required for a commercial music producer to send and successfully attain the attention of a record label or their Artist and Repertoire (AnR).

The War chest contains such items as information about myself as a producer and my band/ brand The Beat As well as including my production show reel which consists of three commercial songs and three remixes of the songs in different genres , information about the featured artists , who I have worked , existing production credits , social media content including ;photos , videos , pre written posts ,stories , my one sheet and links to existing content

I will be using the up and coming artist’s, my lecturers, mentors, social connections at Tile yard, online articles and academic sources to support my commentary

I will now start to break down the war chest into its different sections:

War Chest Contents:

The “War Chest “is broken down into several elements that a record label, manager, AnR or journalist would ever require from a producer or artists or anyone pitching on their behalf.

The Brand:



The Beat Bakery

When presenting yourself to a label or to anyone, it is key that have an established brand with a clear brand image and message you are conveying as the artist. You must know exactly where you sit in the marketplace and who you are aiming your product at.

My brand is called The Beat Bakery

The Beat Bakery are an Irish - English Electro House production duo, based in London. HYPNOTYST met Harley at Tile yard where they are both about to complete their master's degree (in Commercial Song writing and Commercial Music Producer). The Beat Bakery create their unique sound by fusing an extroverted electronic sound with memorable melodies that quickly get stuck in your head.

"Your brand and image should be a true reflection of you as an artist "(Arm, 2020)

Everything from the social media we use, to our clothing , colour schemes , the way we act on stage, to the way we come across in interviews , it has been calculated to show our brand and image in the exact way, we wish to represent and that reflects us as the artist and the brand.

"Your brand is who you are and how you present that message. If you're doing it right, those who take a quick glance and listen should immediately have a sense of what's going on and of what kind of person (and artist) you are. It needs to be shown in the photos you use in the press, the posts on your social media accounts, and of course, your actual art."
(Making A Living from Music for Picture: Part 2, 2020)

The Beat Bakery EPK

In this section of the War Chest it contains everything an artist would need to send out into the industry including: An Electronic Press Kit (EPK), professional head shots, social media content, our website and of course the music.

The Beat Bakery Has its out EPK seen below, giving a short overview of who we are and what we do, the EPK has a clear and consistent style that matches The Beat Bakery. It Contains a short a bio, photos, social media and website links as well as our managements contact detail.

Electronic Press Kit / One Sheet:

Having a one sheet that stands out from the crowd is so important:

According to AWAL it should include:" Artist name / logo, press photos, a brief biography, major achievements, Press quotes, social media handles and numbers, Album or touring information, videos and extra imagery, official website and contact information" (9 Tips for Creating a Killer Artist One Sheet, 2020)

It you have a professional looking one sheet containing all the correct information making the labels life easier and it will create a great first impression.

First impressions really do count it's all about how you present self and how you are remembered in some one's mind.

After attending an AnR session with Charlie Arm the head of Tile Yard Music he said *"First impressions are critical if that AnR thinks you are rubbish and then tells your boss your rubbish they will just ignore and trash any emails or material that you send. Make your first impression be rememberable and professional"* Arm, C., 2020.

"First impressions count, and you need to be ruthlessly self-critical. Remember, most of the executives you're targeting will be getting piles of these discs across their desk every week. What they're listening out for is the sound of someone who can deliver, and that goes for technical and technological ability as well as the musical goods. Unlike a band demo, it's important that your showreel sounds at least like a competent recording. (Making A Living from Music for Picture": Part 2, 2020)

Which is why I have created an EPK For the Beat Bakery and all of artists, I have inserted them below:

The Beat Bakery EPK



Contact:

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3, Acorn, Tile yard
Studios, London N7 9BN

Phone:

07868354131

Email:

thebeatbakeryofficial@gmail.com

Instagram:

[@thebeatbakeryofficial](https://www.instagram.com/thebeatbakeryofficial)

Facebook :

<https://www.facebook.com/thebeatbakeryofficial/>

Twitter :

<https://twitter.com/thebeatbakery>

Soundcloud :

<https://soundcloud.com/thebeatbakeryofficial>

The Beat Bakery are an Irish - English Electro House production duo, based in London. HYPNOTYST met Harley at Tileyard where they are both about to complete their master's degree (in Commercial Song writing and Commercial Music Producer).

The Beat Bakery create their unique sound by fusing an extroverted electronic sound with memorable melodies that quickly get stuck in your head.

Alongside his MA Harley is currently being mentored by "Faithless's" "Sister Bliss" giving Harley an expert view on the electro music scene.

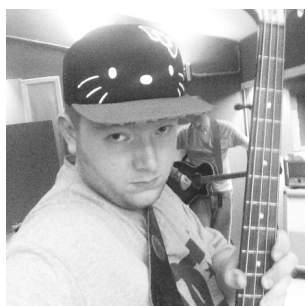
Harley Has recently had a track signed to Sony as well catching the attention of Universal, Ultra Music and Electric Pineapple with the latest release " (Done) Lovin' You" from the Beat Bakery.

Previously Harley has worked as a recording engineer for "Ayo Beatz". Working with such artists as "KC Pozzy" who recently signed a publishing deal with Sony Music with his album *Ice Water Boy* ft. Ms Banks.

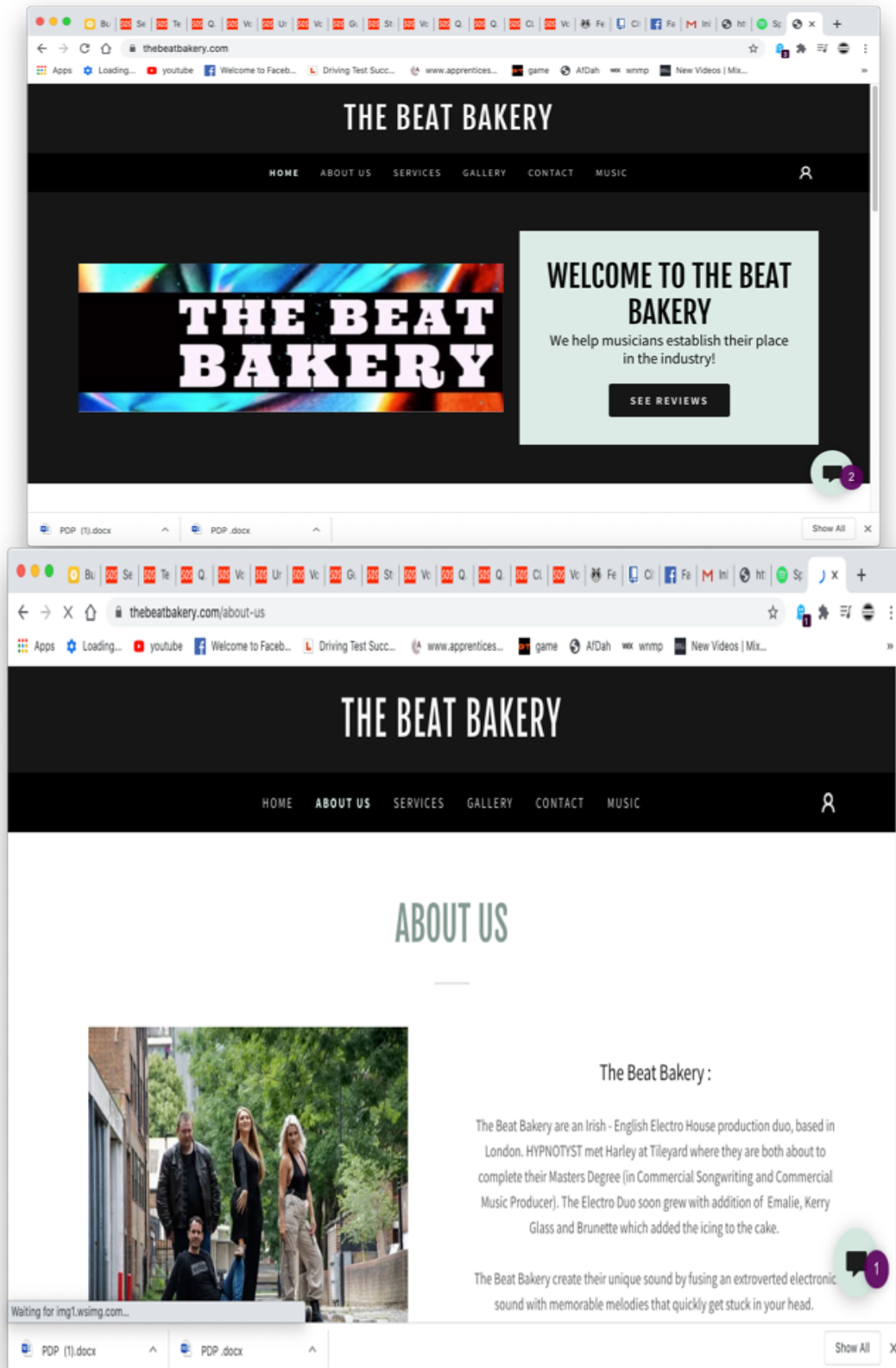
Recently Hypnotist a multi-talented artist, producer, songwriter and topliner was awarded a bursary by Yamaha with: *HS7 Studio Monitors, Reface DX Synth, Reface CD Synth, HPH MT8 Headphones* – such a generous prize! They will also be to assist him with developing his artist career and will be hosting HYPNOTYST on a live show in Yamaha London, later this year.

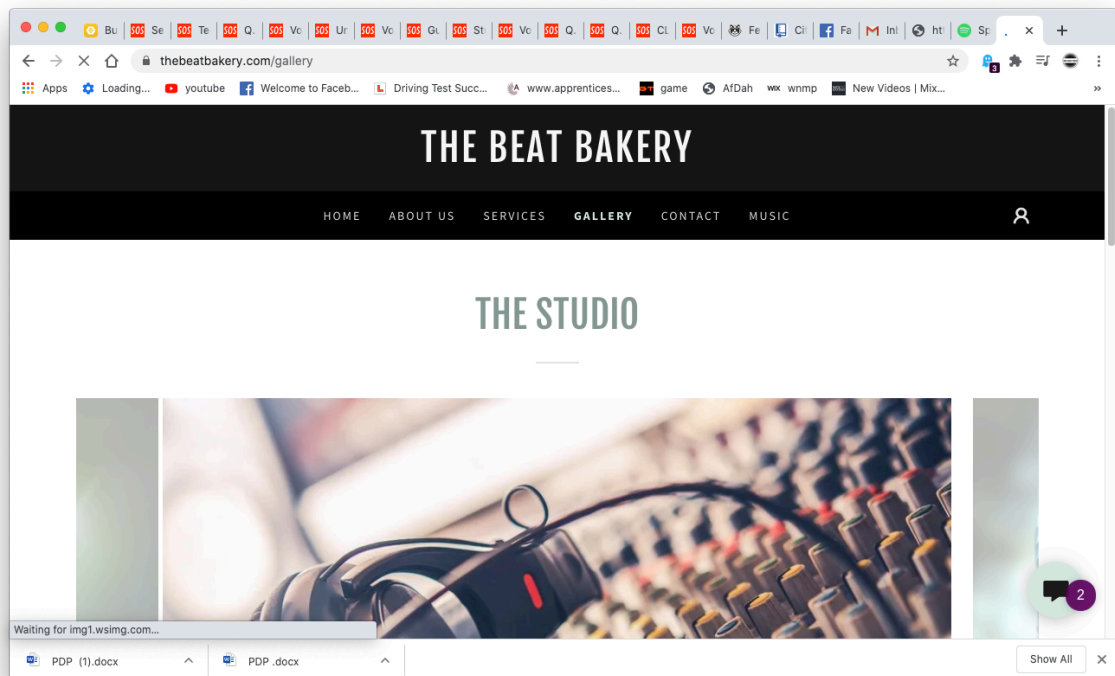
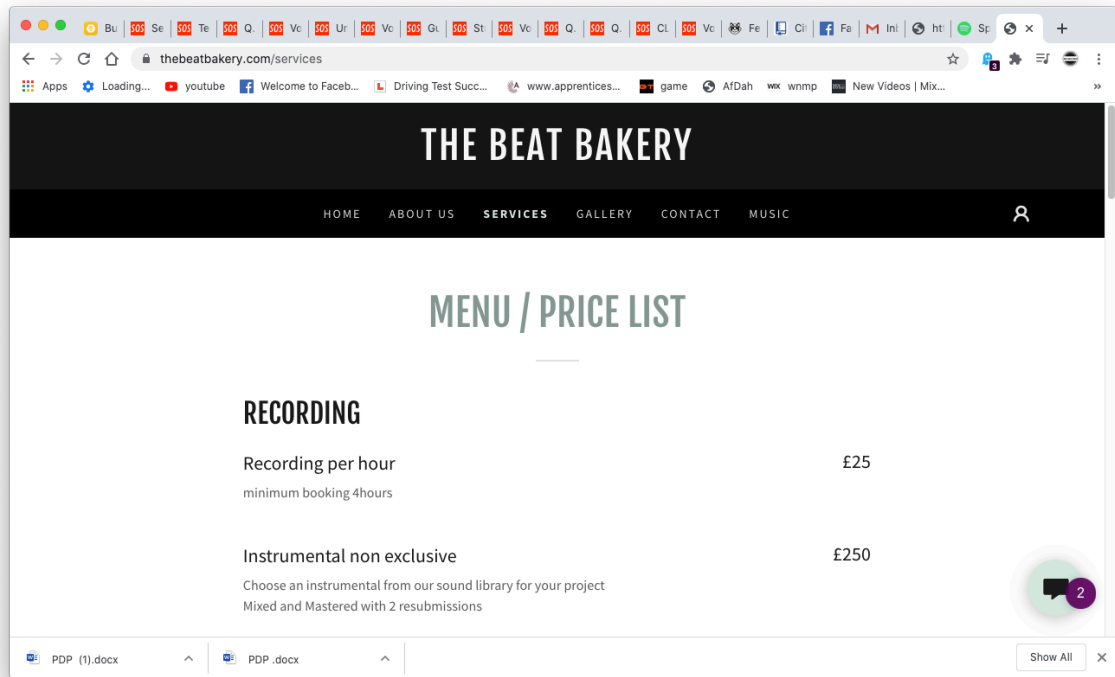
HYPNOTYST is an Irish electronic artist, songwriter and producer based in London. My style is commonly called "Astro Pop", which I have fused together over many years of music creation and experimental exploration of sounds and frequencies.

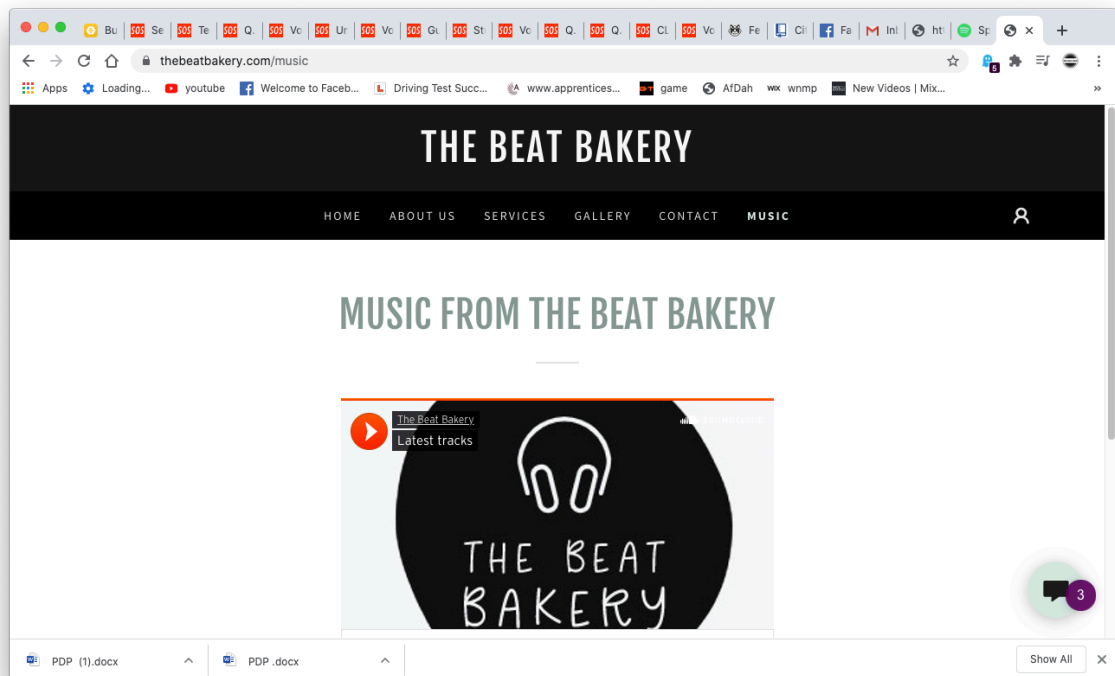
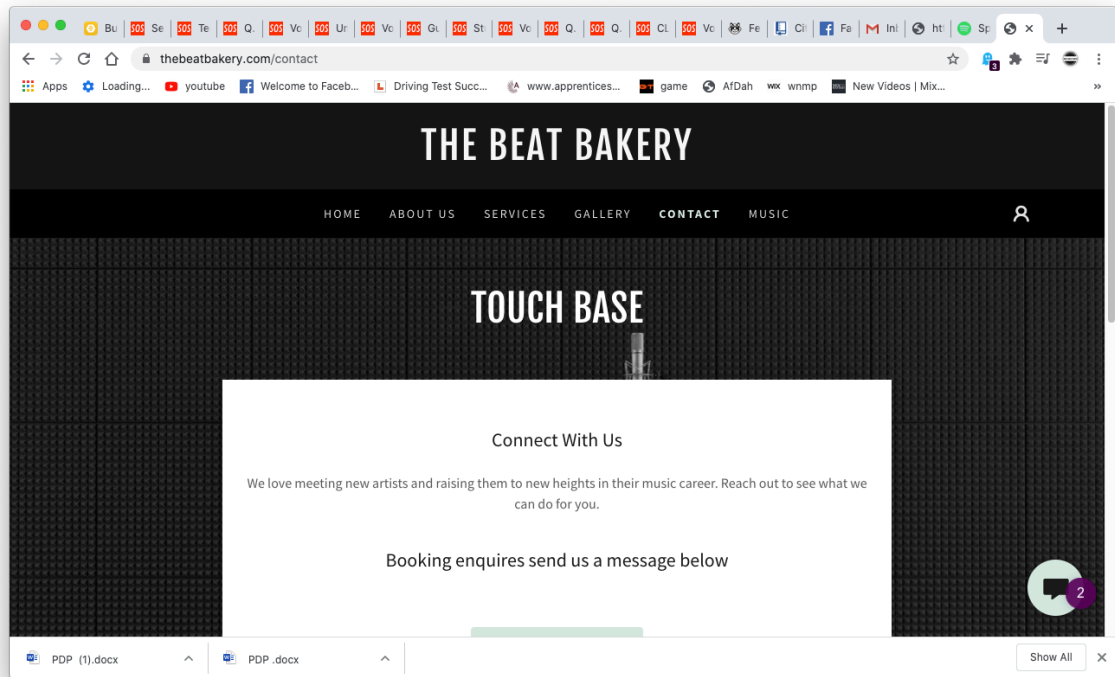
The Beat Bakery are currently working on the new album written with Brunette who has written and sung with such artists as The Beat Freaks, Chambers and Little Mix



The Beat Bakery Website:
www.thebeatbakery.com







Artist: Harley EPK



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FACEBOOK
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TWITTER
<https://twitter.com/mikermpharley>

SOUNDCLOUD
<https://soundcloud.com/mikeharley>

LINKEDIN
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/mrmikeharley>



Up and coming Music Producer Mike Harley a recent graduate from Tile Yard Education

For the last year Harley has been studying his Master's in Commercial Music Production at Tile Yard. Alongside his MA Harley is currently being mentored by "Faithless's" "Sister Bliss".

For the last year Harley Has worked as a recording engineer for "Ayo Beatz". Working with such artists as *KC Pozzy* an Afro beats artists who recently signed a publishing deal with *Sony Music* with his album *Ice Water Boy* ft. *Ms Banks*.

Harley is currently producing with his own label "The Beat Bakery London" who produce dominantly UK house and Pop. "The Beat Bakery London" are currently working with an artist known as "Tierz" who has supported such artists a *Dappy*, *Mob Deep* and *Xzibit* as well as having support of *ex Radio 1 presenter DJ Memzee*.

Several of Harley's tracks have had national radio plays with: *Capital Extra*, *BBC Radio One*, *BBC Introducing*, *Link UP TV*, *SBTV*, *VEVO Official*. As well as catching the eye of the

press: Croydon Advertiser, Red and Black Magazine, Kent Messenger.

Harley has great in-depth knowledge of industry standard DAW Including Logic X and Pro Tools , as well as audio plug-ins such as Waves ,Native Instruments ,Spitfire Audio and Universal Audio.

Harley is talented musician playing guitar and Bass at a grade 8 standard as well as several other instruments including drums, piano and synth.

Harley has worked as a studio manager for *NXG Records* a London based independent record label. As well as being an in house producer for *Kreativ Monstar's* a South London Label where he under took such roles as the preparation of the studio, recording , mixing and mastering as well as the musical development of artists.

Harley has a passion for music production and gives a 100% into any project he undertakes to make sure the end product meets the desired need of the client.

I have included a personal development plan in along the EPK to show how the artist has developed and how they wish to develop in the future.

A personal development plan provides a framework that will you identify the areas of their strengths and weaknesses and come up with a guide that will optimize and capitalize on their existing skills and capabilities. It is a snapshot of where do you stand at the time of the assessment that lets you reflect on your next steps (Why is it important to create, and review, your Personal Development Plan on a regular basis?, 2020)

My PDP

Tileyard Education Plan Template	MA Personal Development
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Name:	Michael Harley	Course: Commercial Music Production
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Vision and Goals

My Vision To become a Music Producer in one of the major record companies within a one year or have a publishing deal for my music
Short/Medium Term Goals (next 3/6 months) Create a production show reel containing several tracks to show of my production skills Keep completing the music briefs each week from Tile Yard Music Get accepted onto an internship for music production Start to generate income from my music via studio work, music library's and sync
Long-Term Goals (6-12 months) To complete and pass my Commercial Music Production MA at Tile Yard Have a job within the music industry ready for me to start after I leave Tile Yard .

SWOT - Personal Analysis

Strengths	Development Areas
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I am someone who can work quickly and efficiently to deadline and I have learnt at university and through the last seven years as a retail manager to manage and plan my time effectively. This has led to me being able to balance a full-time job with major music releases. I have a great knowledge of Logic X a music DAW which has allowed me to create some fantastic music as well as gain experience in professional studios recording with professional musicians I am very passionate and motivated when I set myself a task I don't stop until it is complete and to how I or the client wants it I have been a musician for many years achieving grade 8 in guitar and bass. Which allows me to compose and create in a variety of genres.	I have to be able to manage effectively so that I do not find myself overwhelmed and burning out I must keep up to date with what is happening in the industry and how it is changing. So that I can react and change accordingly. I have to keep reading and increasing my knowledge of the music industry so that I have better understanding of how it works. I want to develop my skills in Logic X and Pro tools so that I can become a better producer creatively and technically so I can be comfortable in studio I happen to be in.
Opportunities	Threats
Being able to socialize and network with music professionals within Tile Yard. Being able to work in a professional studio to develop my skills as a producer Being able to work with other great producers and musicians to create amazing music. Being able to attend A n R sessions to have feedback on my work and how to make improvements	I can get stressed and suffer with some anxiety at times, particularly if I overwork which is easy to do in marketing. I haven't exercised for some time but know this helps me to sleep better and relax more. I can get distracted when in a relationship and find my priorities being pulled away from my music . I have work commitments alongside my studies which I must not allow to interfere with my work I suffer with depression and have to keep a constant check on my mind set and beware of my triggers as not to slip back into a negative mindset

What do I need to learn?	What do I have to do?	What support and resources will I need?	How will I measure success? - What does good look like?	Target date for review?
- How to use Pro Tools DAW (Strengths/Tech skills)	- Start using Pro tools	- Pro Tools master classes and Attend Production lectures	-I will be able to use Pro Tools confidently and produce high quality mixes	3 months
- An in-depth knowledge of the production industry (Soft skills and attitudes)	- Carry out independent research	- Read the books within the reading list	-I will have completed at least 2 books from the reading list	3 months
- How to release a great single successfully (Knowledge and Attitudes)	- Carry out independent research	- Talk to business students and seek help from Tile Yard music and other distributors on site	- I will have out how to release a successful single	3 months
- How to have my music Synced (Knowledge and Attitudes)	- Speak to the distributors on site	- Use the links provided by Harry to find out how to contact the right people	- I will know how to have my music synced	6 months
- How to get my music heard by the right people (Soft skills and attitudes)	- Attend as many networking events as possible	- All the networking events provided by Tile Yard	- I will increase my contacts	6 months
- Keep my Mental Health stable (Soft skills and attitudes)	- Know my triggers and how to handle it	- Use all student support services	- I won't regress back into depression	6 months
- How to create and produce commercial music (Knowledge and Attitudes)	- Work hard at my craft and complete all assignments to a high standard	- Complete my MA	- I will have completed my MA	12 months
- Become an expert in Logic X (Tech Skills)	- Take online courses and learn from others	- Online sources ,	- I will have a greater knowledge of logic	12 months

		Find some online short courses and YouTube sessions		
		Find some good books		

What do I need to learn?	What do I have to do?	What support and resources will I need?	How will I measure success? - What does good look like?	Target date for review?
Beware of my learning styles audio and learning by doing	I will be constantly learning and reviewing my learning style	Use my tutor and book tutorials	Proactively learning and improving	3 months

Featured artists in the project :

After speaking with Sean he advised me that for this type of project I should incorporate several different singers “ *Mike I feel you should get a variety of singers involved in your tracks as it will give you more to work with and show off your production skills in more depth*” (Hargreaves, 2020)

_ I have included three singers and one rapper in my project each adds something different and something unique :

Tierz

Tierz is a singer/ rapper from south London with a sound similar to Professor Green with a real grit and edge.

Melite

Melite is a Singer/Songwriter based in central London, originally from Scotland. Prior to moving to London, she fronted a 400 strong Soul Choir selling out venues across the country and sharing the stage with Soul legends such as Mica Paris. Since moving to London, a couple of years ago, she has been putting in the hours in her studio, writing material and toplines for various genres, artists and producers. Melite draws on her background singing soul and rock to bring deep and gritty vocals to The Beat Bakery bangers.

Brunette

Brunette is a writer and singer very similar to Karen Harden a Soul Diva with a huge range and a fantastic ear for melody.

The Beat Bakery are currently working on the new album written with Brunette who has written and sung with such artists as The Beat Freaks, Guy Chambers and Little Mix and many more

Emalie

Emalie is a singer/songwriter who trained in singing and acting at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, Hollywood, Los Angeles. After graduating she worked on various professional musicals in Los Angeles and Las Vegas. She released her debut EP 'Brand New' on all streaming platforms in September 2018 and has since released 2 more singles. She has been interviewed and had her tracks played on BBC introducing Norfolk. Her single was also 'track of the week' on Future Radio. With over 25,000 monthly listeners on Spotify she has a growing fan base and looks forward to seeing where her new partnership with the Beat Bakery will take her.

you can see her EPK

Featured Artist Emalie EPK :



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Spotify:
<https://open.spotify.com/artist/5XhBrF8ENqdv8d51yxDXb>

Instagram:
[@thebeatbakeryofficial](https://www.instagram.com/thebeatbakeryofficial)
[@emaliemusic](https://www.instagram.com/emaliemusic)

Facebook :
<https://www.facebook.com/thebeatbakeryofficial/>

Twitter :
<https://twitter.com/thebeatbakery>

Soundcloud :
<https://soundcloud.com/thebeatbakeryofficial>



Emalie is a singer/songwriter who started performing from a young age. After auditioning at 13 she was cast in a British Youth Music Theatre production. She was then cast in their productions for the next 2 years.

The following year she was cast in a play that toured across America with a professional Theatre company. It was on this tour that she decided she needed to train in America.

She auditioned to attend the prestigious American Academy of Dramatic Arts, Hollywood, Los Angeles. She was accepted with a scholarship and trained in singing, acting and dance by industry professionals for two years.

After graduating she worked on various professional musicals in Los Angeles and Las Vegas. She was also cast as small roles in 2 TV shows and a film that is currently on Netflix.

Last year she choreographed a professional musical in Guangzhou, China which was broadcast on TV there.

Emalie is grade 8 in singing and the saxophone and enjoys performing sets using both instruments.

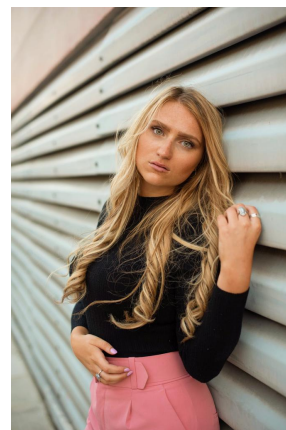
She released her debut EP 'Brand New' on all streaming platforms and has since released 2 more single with great success.

Emalie writes her own songs based on her experiences and is very versatile in her style, she has hints of Soul and Diva mixed with alternative and house, as well as reggaeton.

Emalie is bilingual in English and Spanish, and enjoys writing songs in both languages. She grew up learning Spanish as she stayed with a family in Spain every summer which lead her to develop a great love for the culture and music.

She has had interviews with BBC introducing Norfolk. Her single was also 'track of the week' on Future Radio.

With over 25,000 monthly listeners on Spotify she has a growing fan base and looks forward to seeing where her new partnership with the Beat Bakery will lead to.



Existing music:

Emalie currently has four singles out :

1. You
2. Pina Colada
3. Brand New
4. Hola Thomas
5. 21

With a totally of 600,000 streams across all platforms

Fan Following details :

Emalie currently has over 27,000 monthly listeners on Spotify from all over the world including, America, India , South America and Africa

Chart analytics is a website and program that is the first place that record labels will go to check an up and coming artists numbers .

“ chart analytics is the first stop for AnR’s and it even has an AnR tool included the lazy way of doing it if you ask me I prefer to use my ears and my own experience to decide on the artists I take onto the label” (Arm, 2020)

Using chart analytics to break down the following numbers:

Instagram followers, Facebook ,Twitter, Spotify monthly listeners, YouTube plays .
SoundCloud followers and listeners,

Social Media Content:

Included in the social content will be:

Photos, videos, stories, prewritten material posts it will be included everything needed for a successful social media campaign.

Photography:

Head shots , photo shoots , to be added here

Music Videos:

Current links to music videos will be added here once the videos have been shot.

The Music/Show Reel :

“If you're ever going to make it in this game, you need a calling card, a way of impressing potential clients with your musical ability. You need a showreel. We explain what to do to create one...”(Making A Living from Music for Picture: Part 2, 2020)

“ your showreel should contain a variety of styles. You should also be acquainted with the various types of score that will be used with moving pictures, such as stings, phrases, underscore, themes, and beds, and know which of these to include on your reel, ...”(Making A Living From Music For Picture: Part 2, 2020)”

My music show reel consists of several tracks equalling to 30 - 45 minutes of original music including:

1. Need you: The Beat Bakery X Emalie (single)
2. Need you Extended House (remix) The Beat Bakery X Emalie
3. (Done) Loving you The Beat Bakery X Brunette (single)
4. Weekends with You the Beat Bakery X Emalie (single)
5. Mixed Signals the Beat Bakery X Emalie (single)
6. Ups and the Downs the Beat Bakery X Tierz (single)
7. Te Necesito (I Need You) the Beat Bakery X Emalie (Single)

My show reel contains several singles in variety of genres including house, electro house, pop rock and hip hop. Each track has been mixed and masters to radio ready quality. This gives me the best chance at pitching my singles being cut by a label.

I have also included an extended house remix, of the single “Need You” including of the element of the original piano and vocal tracks while introducing new sounds and production throughout the remix.

After speaking with Sean Hargreaves, we agreed on having seven strong songs rather than eight good songs as we felt that eight songs would be too ambitious and that I would not be able to complete the tracks to the standard required for pitching.

“I really like your idea it will show case all aspects and elements and your productions and given the current climate and situation this should be easily achievable”. (Hargreaves, 2020)

Overall Production time of Project :
Problems, Benefits , what I would do different

It took me between 6-9-week to turnaround project given the current Covid 19 situation it may be quicker if the situation changes. I decided to split the time evenly between tracking and mixing. Giving 6 weeks to the composition of all 8 tracks and 6 weeks to mixing, mastering and completing the written work with a two-week buffer in place to allow for any mishaps or misfortune that could have occurred.

I saved time by mixing on the fly as well go along in the tracking and of course by knowing my singers voices incredibly well and how far to push them and what treatment in terms of mixing they each require allowing me to create presents and adjust them to the tracks as needs be.

The 12 weeks. Break down will be as follows:

Preproduction: 1-4 weeks

It took me 1-3 weeks to prepare all three tracks at my home studio, Including the programming and recording of each song. I wanted to have each at the highest standard possibly before entering the studio at Tile yard where we then recorded Vocals, guitar, bass and piano for each of the tracks.

I added another week to this process to act as a safety net and to give a chance for the artist to learn their parts and just encase I encounter any issues such as my mac book completely failing or Logic releasing an update that is not compatible with my Universal Audio hardware and software or they extend the lock down and I am not able to record any artists. Both of these occurred during in the recording of this project my MacBook pro decided to die, Logic released an update without telling the industry causing my Universal Audio Apollo Twin unable to work with in logic.

The way I overcame and planned for these issues is just good working practice, all of my current and live projects and backed up to external hard drives and to the cloud via drop box and google drive. I wasn't planning on a full hard drive failure from mac book pro, but as I use time machine a built in program that apple use to save a copy of your hard drive to a separate location mean eighty pounds and new Solid State hard drive and six hours of files transfer all repairs were carried out by myself with the use of YouTube and was back in business and realistically only lost a day of working on the project.

I will now go int further detail about the overall vocal production and what techniques I have used followed by how I approached the mixing of this project.

Vocal Production:

Firstly, I start off with Choosing the right mic for house music and a female vocalist I would usually be reaching for the U87 or SMB.

. *"I have two go-to mics for general use, which are the U87 and U47," (Vocal Production, 2020)*

But you have to choose the right microphone for the right singer and what works best for their voice

"But, much more than that, it's about pairing the mic with the vocalist, because the difference between the mics is, fundamentally, some EQ curves. You can start a session thinking 'I want a glossy pop presence sound so the U87 is going to be great,' and actually the singer already has that in their voice and the two together sound awful. So sometimes you need the microphone that's the opposite of the singer to balance it out." (Vocal Production, 2020)

Which is what happened with Emalie's voice it already has a great presence and by using the u87 it would over emphasise that particular sound on the vocal, so we went the SMB paired with a sm57. As I wanted to combine the close mic sound with the ambient mic sound to get the warmth and right tonality of her voice.

"Supplementing a single close mic with an ambient mic or two, however, offers a bit more potential. If the ambient mic is at least a couple of metres away, its recorded waveform will be different enough from that of the close mic that the phasing effects will tend to be much less noticeable; it will pick up a much more complex signal combining the direct vocal sound with reflected sound from the room." ." (Vocal Production, 2020)

Probably the best-documented example of a recording where ambient vocal mics were used is David Bowie's 'Heroes'

"which Tony Visconti discussed in the SOS October 2004 Classic Tracks feature. A heavily compressed Neumann U47 close mic was joined by Neumann U87s further away, the latter being gated in such a way that they only opened to give a more reverberant sound when Bowie sang loud."

Using this technique of heavily compressed microphones with a gated reverb microphone really helped to create the soul diva vocal that I was aiming for. I tried out both using both the U87 and U47 and then swapping in the SM57 to see which worked best. I personally preferred using the SM57 instead of the U47 as it handles the mid-range vocals just slightly better. But Emalie preferred using the U47 so for the final take I blended both recordings together to create the final vocal sound.

"Jack Douglas, engineer for many of Aerosmith's most successful albums, has also mentioned that he often combined close and ambient mics for Steven Tyler's vocals."

Unusually, though, he used a Shure SM57 dynamic up close and a heavily compressed Sennheiser shotgun mic about five feet away. The SM57 not only captured part of the final sound but was also useful for giving Tyler something to focus on, keeping his position fairly consistent relative to the shotgun mic. (Q. Should I record my vocals with more than one microphone? 2020)

But before we even think about mixing you have to make sure you Get it right at the source!

I always try to make sure that I obtain the best performance from the artist as the better performance the easier it is to mix and create a sounding vocal. You can head off a lot of unwanted vocal noises during tracking and recording just by correcting the artist style of performance. Once you have the vocal sounding at its best it's time to begin the recording process.

"vocal noises during tracking. Plosive pops tend to be very directional, for instance, and moving the mic off-axis to the singer's mouth can make a big improvement there. If you move it above or below the singer's mouth, you'll also usually find that sibilance is less pronounced too, as 's' sounds have a habit of firing out in a horizontal plane. Whether you go above or below the mouth is a question of taste — the advantage of the higher position is that the vocal typically seems to keep a more consistent tone if the singer moves with respect to the mic during the performance, while the plus point of the lower position for me is its slightly brighter tone". Mike Senior (Vocal Production, 2020)

Vocals, Mixing and Production

I would like to start this section off with two great quotes:

"Have a really great singer When you talk about vocal production, there's a tendency to start talking about plug-ins and outboard, but the most important thing at your disposal is the singer," Ritson says. "All the great record producers, the work they've really done is about getting the best out of the artists and session musicians, not the best out of the equipment." (Vocal Production, 2020)

"A vocal that doesn't have some level of electronic manipulation in it somehow doesn't feel like it belongs in electronic music. You have to do something... Electronic production is all about using technology to create sound. (Vocal Production Techniques for Deep House, (Vocal Production, 2020)

Everyone who listens to music from the AnR's to the kids at the back of bus, are all listening for one key part of the song; the vocals. If your vocals aren't mixed to the industry and to what people are used to hearing from the plugin chain used on the vocal to the reverb and compression and where the vocal sits in a track. They simply just won't listen to your track.

When mixing vocals, I always go about Creating the right energy for the vocal and the track from triggering different emotions from sad to making people want to get up and dance:

“When you’re sampling what were originally soul or R&B ballads — so maybe 90 to 110 bpm, and sung very romantically and gently — and then putting them into up-beat house records at 120 to 125 bpm, it creates a very interesting energy in the music that you’ve never had before.” (Vocal Production, 2020)

I used this technique of speeding up and slowing down samples frequently with in my house tracks I find it works particularly well with drum patterns , especially “toppers “ a combination of the high hats and other percussion I usually take a topper sampler between 90-110bpm and speed it up to 124bpm and it creates a groove that makes you want to dance which I would place in the second half of the chorus to create a change in dynamics and to keep the listener engaged and in anticipation of what will happen next.

Correct vocal placement in the mix:

How I Create Vocal Space :

*“One of the oldest and best-known methods of keeping the vocal sounding forward is to separate the dry sound and the following reverb using a delay — something we call pre-delay, which most reverb plug-ins have built in. Pre-delay times can be anything from a barely noticeable 30-40 ms to well over 100ms”.
(Vocal Production, 2020)*

When I am mixing, I will always set up two or three reverb busses, one short to give presence to the vocal, one long to create space and last is more often than not a tape delay to help the vocals sit more comfortably in the mix. I have also side chained the reverb buses to the main vocal, so that they only work whilst the vocals are triggering the threshold , this technique works very well for keeping a clean reverb mix with in the overall mix.

Paul Stacy taught me a great vocal trick if your vocals are sitting to far forward in the mix add a slight old school tape delay to bring them back to a comfortable level. I have the pleasure of Stacy actually assisting me with the mixing the vocals of Need You in this way. *“If you are having trouble getting a vocal to sit in the mix add some old school tape at 14ms and 50-75 wet in mix “(Stacy, 2020)*

It is also important to remember that silence is a great tool within the track and as a rule I tend to have this phrase which Sean had said to me the very first time we met:

“When the beat isn’t busy let the vocal be busy and the vocal isn’t busy let the beat do the talking “Hargreaves, S The instrumental and Vocal have to have mutual respect for one another and that neither is more import than the other.

Vocal Compression

A moderate ratio of between 2:1 and 4:1 with an attack in the region of 10ms and a release time of 50-100 ms usually works fine as long as you don't apply more than 5dB or so of gain reduction on the peaks. (Vocal Production, 2020)

My personal preference of vocal compressors includes the 1176, LA2A and Avalon. But in this project, I stuck strictly to using the 1176 and the LA2A with the beautiful Fairchild 670 and the Empirical Distresser combination. I have used all of these in parallel as they give me greater control over the whole sound from the amount of compression in the mix, to when to Slam the Distresser into the red to create a real Diva sounding Vocal and when to ease it off in the quieter more emotional driven sections of the song.

Emalies Vocal compression settings start out the same for every track but are then tweaked and adjusted to suit the track accordingly. I use a combination of the 1176 and Teletronix with the 1176 set to a medium attack and medium release with a 4:1 ratio with the Teletronix set exactly how its quoted above a very quick attack and a slow release, I have found that this works best when is belting and holding a note.

Vocal Tuning:

The first thing I do once the vocals have been recorded and we are happy to start the mixing process, is to break out Melodyne and check the singer has sung in tune correctly, nine times out of ten the singer will have sung perfectly in tune. But because all records we hear have the vocals "snapped" in tune. I have applied Melodyne to every single vocal track with in the project for two reasons, the first so that it fits in with the current music trend and the second once you start perfectly tuning vocals all the vocals have to be tuned too or they will sound out of tune with each other.

The two other really important techniques involve messing very aggressively with the pitch and speed of the vocals. Obviously, we've been able to manipulate pitch and tempo in DAWs for some years now, but it's only recently that we've had such direct access to a variety of really sophisticated tools. If you're using Logic, for example, you can put everything on Flex Time, and you've got various re-pitching tools and different algorithms to choose from. We've become totally free to move the pitch and speed of everything around independently.

"Try feeding the delay or reverb send via a pitch-correction plug-in, set to the scale being sung, and with the correction speed cranked up full. This way, the original retains its pitching while the delay and/or reverb effects are fed from a hard-tuned signal. Balance this effected signal with the main dry vocal and you have a new twist on an old effect that sounds far more subtle than you might imagine."

(Vocal Production, 2020)

The technique mentioned above is what I have experiment with on the track “Mixed Signals”. Blending the pitch corrected vocals in with the normal vocals to create new twist on an old sound. To create this effect I used logic built in pitch correction plugin set to the key of the track , with the pitch correction time set at 44ms which is a slow correction time so you can the pitch correction in real time, with the detune setting left at 0. I found that these setting create the autotuned pop house vocal we were looking for

“At the same time, the vocals are often being put into a different pitch from where they were originally sung. The classic deep–house trick is to pitch down a female vocal about three steps to make a vocal of what you might call ‘indeterminate gender’! A classic example is the Duke Dumont track ‘The Giver’ which sounds kind of like a guy singing but kind of not. It’s a pitched–down female vocal, and that creates a slightly more soulful, large–bodied kind of sound. (Vocal Production, 2020)

I use the pitching a vocal down technique on the track “Done Lovin’ You “ to firstly create lower soulful harmonies, that singer couldn’t reproduce in real life which create a real dark deep energy at the intro of the track.

Vocal Automation / Vocal Comping

Michael Stavros also talks about using this kind of technique in his book 'Mixing with Your Mind', although he suggests controlling the levels of the ambient mics with mixer automation, which allows for a bit more precision at mixdown. (Vocal Production, 2020)

I prefer manipulating all the vocal audio by hand with either automation or by comping or a combination of the two when the comping and cutting vocal isn’t fine enough to remove a breath or to emphasise a certain word of syllable. You have great tools like the wave’s vocal rider and Izotopes RX7 which do an amazing job in the half the time, but I feel by using automation you great a more personal sound to the vocal.

Mixing:

I have been mixing all the tracks at my home studio using a combination of Logic X for composing and Pro Tools for mixing I have been working closely with Sean where we sent mixes back and forth for feedback and any adjustments that we think the track needed this could include anything from mix errors to the actual structure and writing of the song.

"Mike I think it's a great idea that we set up a SoundCloud playlist for your project so that you can upload any new tracks for me to listen to and to provide feedback." (Hargreaves, 2020)

Before bringing the mixes to into Tile Yard's Studio, I reference mixed and adjusted my current mixes using the selection of speakers including Adams, KRKs and Yamaha NS10's. To make sure that songs sound great across all speakers.

I believe my songs have a commercial sound overall.

This was achieved by making sure I got the right sound from the source I was recording whether it had been vocals, guitar or piano it is so important that the artist performs well, and the microphones are set up to capture the performance perfectly.

All about the source:

Before I start mixing I always make sure that what I am recording is correct at the source, from microphone pairing and placement to the right vocal bus setting.

"Ritson's technique of setting up a vintage vocal bus means that the long chains of plug-ins involved can be tweaked throughout the mixing process, but these days he's just as likely to make a range of other decisions at source" (Vocal Production, 2020)

The deep-house sound: shares more with the minimal-house aesthetic, where you can make a track work with kick, snare, hi-hat, one bass sound and one effect or lead sound. So, there's loads of space to put the vocal in which why the blend between vocal and instrumental is so important.

For my mixing I used a selection of UAD Plugins, Waves plugin, Cable guy plugins and so many more.

"We recorded this with Yola Carter, and she can do amazing power-diva-type vocals. We listened to a load of Loleatta Holloway records to get a sense of the vowel sounds, the types of vibrato... you get lost arts of how things are performed. The vocal is really driven very hard through the LA-610 to the point that you're starting to hear the distortion in the preamp. Then inside the box, recreating going quite hot onto tape and then quite hot onto vinyl. If you listen to the vocal it's really distorted – it should be wrong. But it's actually no more wrong than an overdriven guitar is. There's just more harmonics coming in, and because it's nice distortion from a nice performance, it works."

I tried this technique of pushing the LA-160 to the point of distortion and really driving on the track "(Done Loving You)" to create the edgy vocal sound in the middle eight.

"So that's the formula — excellent singing, recorded with a vintage aesthetic, but then heavily manipulated in terms of speed and pitch. This is true of almost every single deep-house vocal that's sampled. "(Vocal Production, 2020)

And therefore, when I'm creating new deep-house vocals I apply exact same techniques to achieve the exact same results.

Conclusions:

To conclude my overall aim was to create five original songs followed by an acoustic, extended house remix and rap versions of the five original tracks to send out to record the labels complete with a war chest containing all the information a label would require from an artist. The entire package of the War Chest is now complete and ready to go into the industry where it will hopefully attract the attention of a label executive.

“you need to chase, cajole and charm your way past countless receptionists to try to get hold of the executives you sent them to. For me, this is the hardest bit of all. It's the composer's equivalent of being a cold-calling insurance salesman: no-one wants to talk to you, and they will produce every excuse in the book to avoid doing so. Also, these executives are genuinely busy people, and will be fixated on whatever project they currently have on the go. As so often, it's a fine balance between annoying them enough to persuade them to speak to you, (Making A Living from Music for Picture: Part 2, 2020)

Once you have the executive's attention after annoying them into submission you have to present the best product possible and sell yourself as an artist and brand correctly to give you the best chance of succeeding and remember to have the correct professional attitude. Which is what I believe I have achieved by fine stocking my War Chest.

“It has been known for people to become very exasperated when they realise that their demo has not received a printed review after it's been sent to SOS, and they then begin showering the magazine with phone calls and emails rudely demanding an explanation. However, far from having a positive effect, abusive emails or phone call tend only to reduce the chances of getting a review. Even those famously 'difficult to work with' pop stars probably spent years being nice and subservient before they got to the position where they could afford to behave like a rotter. By the same token, you might not like the fact that the A&R person has been sent one or two of your demos and hasn't called you back, but bombarding them with angry mail telling them how aggrieved you feel is not the best way forward.” (How to Get Noticed by Record Labels, 2020)

Artist references for The Project:

Below is a series of links that I will be referencing my songs and mixes against to make sure they are to the same standard in terms of mix and toplines.

The weekend Blinding Lights <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4NRXx6U8ABQ>

Doja Cat Say So https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pok8H_KF1FA

Dua lipa Physical <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9HDEHj2yzew>

Sunship M Dubz remix Bump n Grind <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hdJyLJMaQMY>

Robin S Show me love <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ps2Jc28tQrw>

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