



**Module : BMTY7000 –Creative Music Management**

**Assignment: Reflective Essay**

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## **1. ABSTRACT**

This reflective summary is given following the group task to create a release plan for a remix of a song along with the digital assets that accompany a release. Furthermore, digital technologies are discussed in relation to how they are re-shaping the music industry as a whole and how they were used during the group project. Team and project management skills are an important quality to develop for those working in the music industry; therefore, a personal reflection and learning points are included in this summary.

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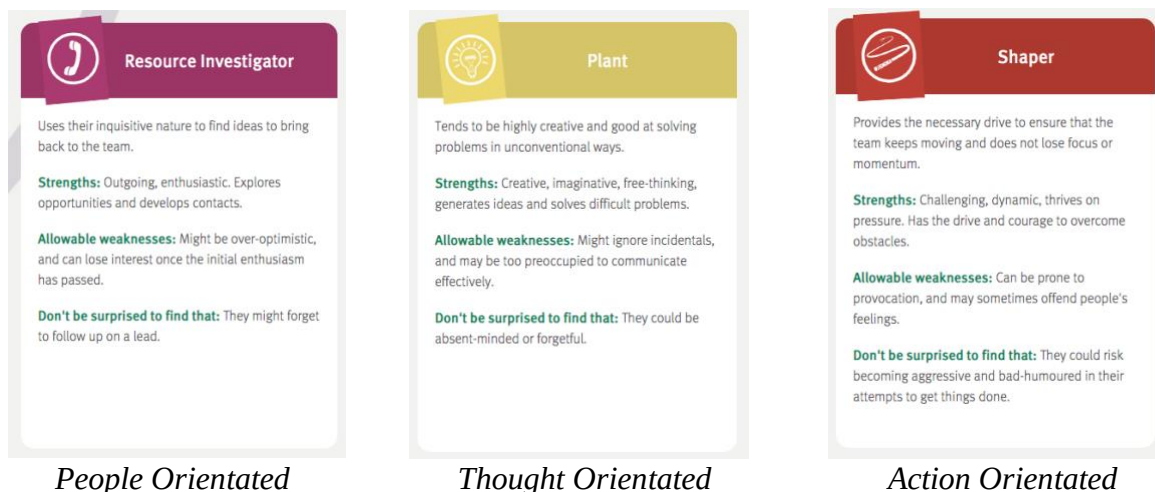
## **2. THE PROJECT**

Our group planned the release of single within a £500 budget, created the digital assets associated with the remix and developed a marketing strategy. The song is an old school breakbeat remix of original sea-punk shanty Aboard! - the latest single by my band JollyRoger. In the creative industry, there are a range of diverse tasks that need to be completed when undertaking a project (Davis and Scase, 2000). In small teams, roles can be intertwined but the main three functions are: production, creativity and control and co-ordination (Davis and Scase, 2000). I took the lead on the creative aspects; the production that I carried out involved making the promotional videos, digital artwork, screensaver, electronic press kit and press release for the single.

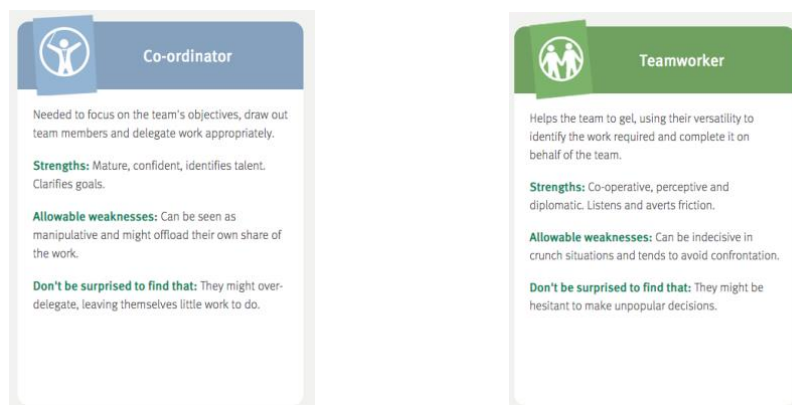
## 2.1 Roles of the group and Personality Traits

We did not assign official job titles to the group or delegate a manager, as the meetings went on, our roles developed more organically. The group decided it would be best for me take on the creative elements, therefore, I was responsible for creating the promotional video, digital artwork, electronic press kit and overseeing the song remix. On reflection, I think I found it difficult to step into a different role and let go of some of the jobs I usually do when independently releasing a single for JollyRoger.

Belbin (2012) suggests that there are nine team roles and that by learning about what characteristics you show in a team you can plan to develop your strengths. This team project has provided me with a deeper insight into the role I take within a group and I most identify with the three roles below (I also asked my band for their opinion):



Nathan came up with ideas too e.g. teaming up with a local brewery / using a QR code on a product. He was a reliable person to work with, delivered the work he promised to do and volunteered for the jobs that were not being covered by myself and Zoe. Zoe's strengths were organising our roles, gathering pieces together and keeping us focused on the task. I would describe them as the following:



Source Belbin (2021) –

<https://www.belbin.com/about/belbin-team-roles>

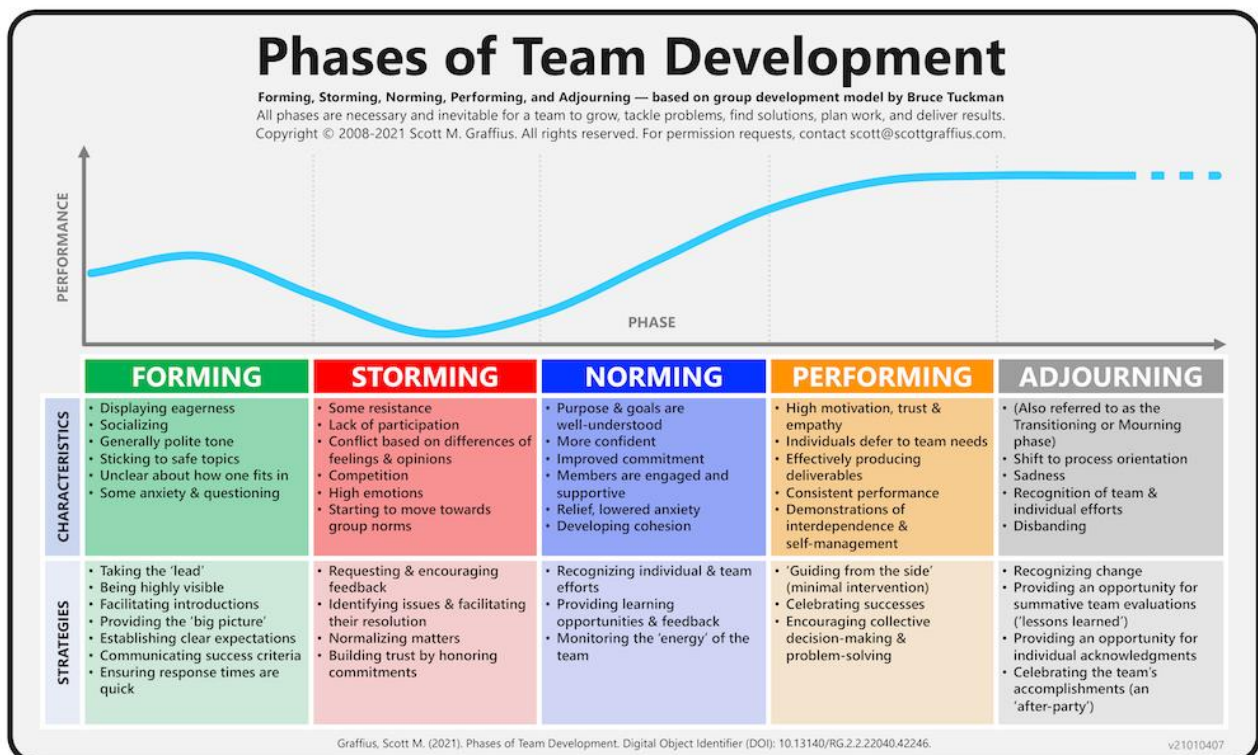
In the future, it would be useful to identify these roles at the beginning of a team project so everyone has a better insight into the strengths each team member can bring and roles can be allocated.

### 3. TEAM AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

#### 3.1 Phases of Team Development

According to Tuckman and Jenson (1977) there are five stages of development that groups inevitably go through when working together. *Figure 1* shows the characteristics of each stage and strategies on how the group can be propelled forward (Graffius & Scott, 2021) *see Figure 1*.

**Figure 1: Characteristics and Strategies in the stages of team development.**



Graffius & Scott M. (2021). <https://www.scottgraffius.com/blog/files/tag-storm-.html>

*See appendix 1* for a 'phases of team development' application to our project, it includes my personal contributions to each phase and what I learnt through the journey. The main learning points that came from this application were: to make sure everyone shows up to a meeting, as this is important (Barker & Cole, 2015); to work on my active listening skills; to audit group members skills and ensure the best roles get delegated to people; to give more clear and concise instructions to others and to form a plan that ensures time is left at the end of a project to tie up any loose ends.

### 3.2 Managing the Project

As a group, we did not delegate a project manager, as a result we seemed to share the roles of planning, organisation, direction and controlling the project. A well thought-out plan is a positive factor and can contribute to the success of a project (Allen, 2018) and I believe this is one of the things we missed out on by not having a project manager.

At some point during a project, more often than not, there will be a crisis to deal with (Barker & Cole, 2015). I believed I was faced with a crisis when the deadline was approaching and didn't hear back from the skate shop that we were planning to collaborate with. Also, after researching more into the music that skateboarders were listening to, I became less confident that the song would be a good fit. I made the decision that we should change our target audience and came up with a new plan and pitched it to the group. Good project managers focus on finding a solution and usually consulting the group is the best way to motivate people (Barker & Cole, 2015). However, I felt pressure due to the upcoming deadline and responsible for not conducting more initial research. As no-one was given the title of project manager, I found it difficult to pitch this to the group and on reflection, perhaps it would have been better to discuss other options together.

### 3.3 Group Reflection on the Project

Although we did not schedule an official de-brief, I messaged the group on our WhatsApp chat to ask if we could share some of our thoughts on what went well and what we would do differently next time. See *table 1* for the points we identified between us.

**Table 1: Reflective thoughts from the group**

|                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>What went well</b>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>We worked well together</i></li><li>• <i>We had lots of ideas to work with and were creative</i></li><li>• <i>We communicated with each other regularly</i></li><li>• <i>We were supportive, positive and encouraging towards each other</i></li><li>• <i>We agreed on a strategy together</i></li><li>• <i>We completed the task</i></li></ul> |
| <b>What we would do differently next time</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Be more creative with the distribution plan</i></li><li>• <i>Set deadlines early on</i></li><li>• <i>Finish tasks earlier to give us time for ongoing reviews and reflections</i></li><li>• <i>Create a more thorough plan</i></li></ul>                                                                                                        |

## 4. PERSONAL REFLECTION

By reflecting on the questions offered by Mead (2021), I aimed to improve my self-awareness further by completing a personal SWOT analysis surrounding my team work skills, see *figure 2*. SWOT analyses are a useful tool when it comes to self-reflection and setting future goals (Allen, 2018).

### 4.1 Personal SWOT Analysis

*Figure 2: Personal SWOT analysis self-reflection following this project*

| Internal                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Strengths                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Weaknesses                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coming up with creative ideas.</li> <li>Hard-working and thorough.</li> <li>Previous experience and understanding in the majority of elements to the task of releasing a single and collaborating.</li> <li>Willingness to take on roles, contribute and stay in contact with the team.</li> <li>Lots of knowledge about the band and previous marketing strategies JollyRoger have used and what their fans respond to.</li> <li>Flexible to change.</li> <li>Invested interest into the product as it is a remix of a cover of the band I am in and manage.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gives lots of ideas</li> <li>Continues to explore different avenues after plans have been made.</li> <li>Difficulty with quick decision making and sticking to decisions once they have been made.</li> <li>Difficulty giving precise instructions and directions to others.</li> <li>Doesn't always give others the time and space to contribute their ideas.</li> <li>Perfectionist traits lead to difficulty in trusting others. However, Mistakes teach us lessons and it is important to create an honest and open environment where it is okay for people to make mistakes (Barker &amp; Cole, 2015).</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| External                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Opportunities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Threats                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There any many people within the Tileyard community that I could collaborate with. Gaining more experience working in a team in the music industry could help me develop my team skills.</li> <li>Become more conscious of weaknesses by asking the teams I work with for feedback and advice, such as my band, friends and family.</li> <li>Ask my mentor for their advice and experience of working in teams.</li> <li>Look for online resources and help with developing assertiveness and active listening skills.</li> <li>Speak with counsellor (Suzanna from Tileyard) about any difficulties I had working in a team and use my support network the next time I work in a group.</li> <li>Work on setting boundaries and not taking on too much work.</li> <li>If a decision has been made as a group, stick to it and stay focused.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other people may not want to work with me in a team if I always try to do everything myself, this may lead to others feeling devalued.</li> <li>Working online with others is a new experience for us and we are still learning and developing technologies for working together remotely. No one is as familiar with or as experienced as they are working together in person.</li> <li>COVID 19 has isolated everyone for the past year, resulting in a general lack of socialising and practicing social skills.</li> <li>Another external threat for me personally was feeling protective over the project and considering the impact the project may have on the band that I am in and manage. I feel this resulted in me feeling more pressure than the others to keep the listeners and artists at the forefront of my mind.</li> </ul> |

## 4.2 Lessons Learned

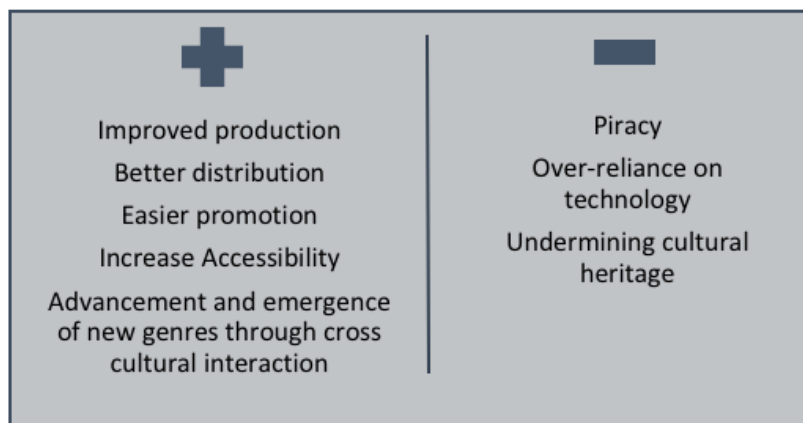
As a result of this experience I have set myself some personal future targets:

1. *To establish a deadline where I stop coming up with creative and new ideas. I feel this disrupted the group's ability to perform as it created disturbances in our direction.*
2. *To work on developing my active listening skills and ensure that everyone in the group is heard, their skills are recognised and roles are allocated early on.*
3. *To communicate with team members more clearly and go to the group with any issues rather than trying to sort them out independently.*
4. *To give clearer briefs and instructions when I am delegating roles to others.*

## 5. DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY

Without digital technologies, this project would not of been possible. The advancement of technology has had a huge impact on the music industry and the way that it functions. This comes with both negative and positive impacts, *see figure 3*. It has broken down the barriers that used to exist between the artist and their fans and the industry has moved further away from the major label oligopoly (Gamal, 2012).

**Figure 3 – The Impact of New Technology on the Music Industry**



Deaux (2017)

## 4.1 Social Media

Social media platforms have opened new pathways to promote music, build artist-fan relationships and receive direct feedback via comments and platform analytics. Our marketing strategy uses social media platforms to promote the release of the single, distribute the promotional videos and provide pre-save links and information of where people can hear the track. Social Media is a great platform to use to form a

movement around an artist. By becoming a great leader and providing a way for fans with a shared interest (the artist) to communicate with each other is a powerful tool for success (Godin, 2008).

## **4.2 Music Streaming**

Music streaming services have revolutionised the way people listen to music; facilitating instant access to songs and a customisable listening experience. The amount of people with an on-demand streaming account is rising (Dredge, 2019). These platforms give artists the opportunity to reach new audiences, self-release through digital distributors and be heard instantly. However, even musicians with millions of streams are not able to make a living from streaming revenue alone (The British Academy of Songwriter, Composers and Authors, 2020). Currently artists receive approximately £0.005 per stream (Sanchez, 2018). As streaming is one of the main ways people listen to music, we decided to release the track to the masses through 160 stores and platforms via digital distributor Ditto (Ditto, 2021) but are not expecting much of a financial return on this. So, I suggested that also release the track as a digital download on the JollyRoger Bandcamp page and include the options of two bundles, a digital bundle (which includes high resolution image of the artwork and an animated screensaver) and a limited edition physical merch bundle (which includes a face mask and t-shirt). By adding the Bandcamp release, we hope to generate some revenue for the artist's work.

## **4.3 Virtual Reality, Artificial Intelligence and Augmented Reality**

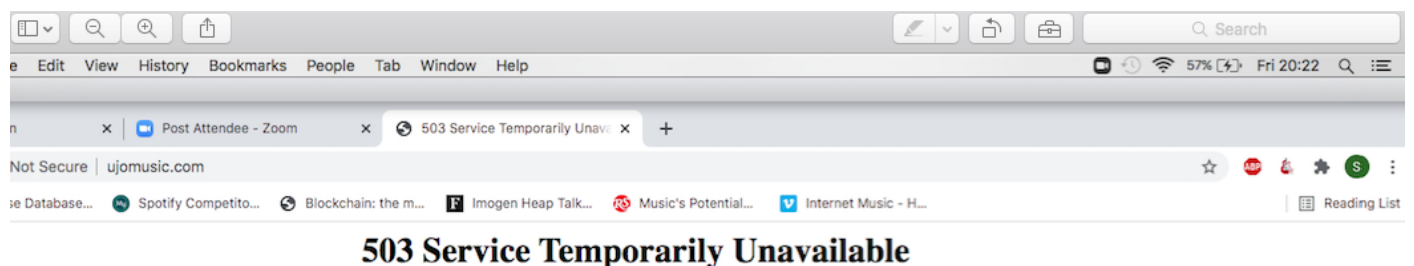
Other technologies such as virtual reality (VR), artificial intelligence (AI) and augmented reality (AR) are constantly evolving and providing opportunities for artists to offer immersive, interactive experiences which can be used to increase brand awareness (MusicFIRST, 2018). AR can help build relationships between consumers and the brand (Scholz and Duffy, 2018). In relation to our group project, I suggested involving the fanbase by an interactive marketing competition such as 'dressing as a pirate' or a augmented reality (AR) filter (see what you look like as a pirate or pirate name generator). We approached the marketing students at Tileyard but in the end we were unable to develop these ideas due to time constraints. However, we did receive a 2D filter to use on Instagram for marketing purposes.

## **4.4 Blockchain**

Blockchain technology is becoming more popular in the music industry, with artists using a decentralised music ledger to embed metadata onto the work including ownership and contract information (Atkins *et*

al, 2020). This technology minimalises the need for intermediaries such as record labels, meaning that a bigger share of revenue can go directly to the artist / songwriter. It may be hypothesised that the use of blockchain will result in more equitable payments for artists and bring new opportunities for revenue. We researched into using blockchain to release this single, however, the majority of blockchain websites appeared to be not working at the time which decreased their creditability and reliability (*see figure 4*). It appears there is still a lot of work to be done regarding this technology and how to best use it in the industry.

**Figure 4: UJO Blockchain site down.**



## 6. THE 'DO-IT-YOURSELF' APPROACH

### 5.1 The Rise of the Independent Sector

Artists without representation in the independent music sector is the fastest growing sector in the global music industry (Mulligan and Jopling, 2020). The COVID 19 pandemic has provided artists with an opportunity to spend time building on their social presence and write new music (Mulligan and Jopling, 2020). Studies have revealed that more artists are now self-releasing music (UK Music, 2019). Due to the internet and technological advancements, artists have access to the tools they need to independently record, create, promote, release and distribute their work (Cooke, 2017). Roles within a record label include Artist and Repertoire (A&R), marketing and promotion, branding and distribution (e.g. Loop Cloud, 2020) and we researched these to cover the main roles in our group. I also used release guides and advice for ideas on what to include in our release (e.g. AWAL, 2018).

Remote collaborations have become possible via file sharing and access to digital audio workstations (DAWs). The original song was recorded on Logic Pro X at my home studio. We used a double input Focusrite interface and two SM58 microphones to record the tracks and then sent the stems to a professional studio for mixing and mastering. I sent the stems to Iain via WeTransfer and he used these to produce the remix using Cubase (a different DAW). In previous years, before digital advancements, this project would not have been possible for an independent musician, as labels held the power to make these opportunities possible.

Musicians have been advised to upskill, take an entrepreneurial approach (Musicians Union, 2012). The online world is competitive and artists are recommended to become more efficient at utilising funding, collaboration and marketing tools that are available to them (Mulligan and Jopling, 2020). I used the software Final Cut Pro to edit the promotional video and animate the screensaver as I am familiar with this software and have experience using it to create promotional materials. As we were working to a small budget, the digital artwork was created on the free software Google Drawings and included filters and a royalty free background that I found on free websites (e.g. 100%FreeFonts, 2021; Photofilters, 2021 & LunaPic, 2021)

## **5.2 Have Industry Standards Changed?**

When it comes to the final product, the industry standard for music has changed from Vinyl – Cassette Tape – Compact Disc – Digital File. Anyone can release music now via the internet and this leads to a variation in the quality of music available. More artists are taking a DIY approach to recording, producing and distributing music and sustaining creative control (Daniels, 2019). Innovative independent artists use the programmes available to them and the equipment that they can afford to produce their music. The wide scope of formats, software and home-recording equipment means it is difficult to regulate, implement commercial control and enforce standards (Davis & Scase, 2000). A commercially released song can become popular, and a home recorded song can become a viral sensation. For example, the reason for our choice to remix a chanty style song is due to Nathan Evans uploading a TikTok video that went viral (Evans, 2021) and lead to him being signed to Polydor records and rising to number 1 in the UK Charts (Official Charts, 2021).

## **7. THE NEXT STEPS**

Things that are left to consider for this release are making sure that copyright is protected by registering the remix on the songwriters account on collecting society databases (e.g. Performing Rights Society). Also, to go through the budget again and make sure it adds up, account for things such as postage and packaging and for people that decide to pay more for the track on Bandcamp. Also, a contact list needs to be created for where the press release will be sent out to for further reviews and airplays. This will involve researching radio stations that are listened to by the Breakbeat community.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

Technological advancements have reshaped the music industry, making it easier for artists to self-release songs. This reflection explains how our group used digital technologies to create a single remix of a song and plan a release strategy while working remotely. It also reflected on how we worked as a team and what I contributed to the process. This group project experience and reflection process has given me an opportunity to highlight my strengths, weaknesses and areas that can be improved. I can dedicate some time to implement changes and make a plan to develop my teamwork skills. I feel this will result in more enhanced and cohesive future team experiences in my personal life, as a band manager and as a student.

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## 10.APPENDIX

### 10.1: Stages of group development - application to our project group

|                                 | FORMING                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | STORMING                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | NORMING                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | PERFORMING                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | ADJOURNING                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
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| Personal Contribution           | I sent the first message to the group via the Tileyard platform to ask how was best for everyone to communicate                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | I came up with lots of ideas in this stage, including targeting the skateboarding community, merch designs including a skateboard, USB skateboard stick.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | I took on the creative role in the group & the images, ideas and liaising with Iain about the remix. After researching more into music in the skateboarding scene and not hearing back from the skateboarding email I thought about a different approach, offered this to the group and we pivoted direction.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | At the performing stage, I worked independently on my tasks, I spent lots of time on the promotional video, EPK, press release, designs and was thinking practically about what we would be putting out to the world and was very focused.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | I initiated a small group reflection via WhatsApp and we shared some of our thoughts on what went well and what we could of done better.<br><br>I feel as though I could of offered more to the project if I managed my time more efficiently.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Learning points and reflections | <p>Zoe couldn't attend the first zoom call, in future I feel it is important to ensure all team members are present during the initial stages in order to aid the forming process.</p> <p>Although Zoe said she was happy to meet without her, I feel this may have resulted in unclear expectations from the beginning. It is important to make sure everyone shows up to a meeting (Barker &amp; Cole, 2015).</p> <p>I think it would of helped to delegate a group leader, perhaps I should of offered at the start as I have expertise in releasing songs for JollyRoger and we chose one of our songs.</p> | <p>I feel as though I got carried away with coming up with ideas and put in a lot of work independently in this stage.</p> <p>In the future, I think I need to work on my active listening skills and giving others more time to offer ideas and contributions.</p> <p>I found it difficult as the project surrounded a remix of my band's song. I am use to doing the majority of the work and found it hard to trust others with making decisions regarding the release.</p> | <p>I think I did well by coming up with a new direction, however, I did feel as though I could have taken a better approach. I put pressure on myself present a solution to the group, on reflection I feel it may have been more beneficial to talk through the issue and hear everyone's suggestions on how we could move forward together.</p> <p>I have learnt the importance of starting off by group members offering a personal audit of skills so roles can be assigned earlier on. I think this is important especially when working to a tight deadline.</p> <p>I feel I should of facilitated more of a conversation about Nathan's skill set, so we could find out where he would best be placed. I felt he ended up with the left over jobs that were not being covered by myself and Zoe.</p> | <p>Although Zoe kept reminding us to stick to the tasks we had set ourselves, I found it difficult to stop coming up with additional ideas in relation to the project.</p> <p>e.g. I spontaneously animated a moving screensaver and suggested a digital merch bundle near the end of the timeline because I wanted to produce more than a minimum viable product.</p> <p>I struggle to trust others when it comes to working in a group and feel my expectations can be too high and as a result I feel disappointment. This can get in the way of performing cohesively and remaining positive.</p> <p>I think it would help for me to work on giving more concise directions and information and sticking to ideas.</p> | <p>We have been updating each other on our progress with the assignment and showed positivity and gratitude to each other each time we uploaded our contributions to the project,</p> <p>We were all busy working independently towards the end of the process and found ourselves with not much time left for a final check of the work we had created.</p> <p>I feel that even at the end, there was confusion over the finer details of what we were including in our release strategy and what ideas would be left out.</p> <p>I feel that I contributed to this confusion by adding elements and new ideas too late into the timeline.</p> <p>Our previous assignment deadline got extended and I believe this was another contributing factor to why we were not left with much time at the end to go through any final queries.</p> |