

Collaborative EP Proposal

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Throughout this proposal, I aim to display my intentions regarding the production of 30 minutes of music. During this, I aim to outline my thought process behind the project, and to justify my ideas with relevant research as to why I intend to go about completing the works in the way that I am proposing. There is a plethora of methodologies at the disposal of music producers through case studies, documentaries and interviews which shed light on the numerous methods used by professionals, and I intend to draw upon these to obtain the best results and to create the highest quality of musical project. With reference to benchmarks for my personal success alongside the success of the overall project, comparisons will be made to existing bodies of work that I see fit as an influence. Alongside my established ideas and direction for my current project, I intend to discuss alternative thoughts that I have considered and how these impacted my final choice. A timeline of my proposed methodology will highlight my initial thoughts behind the working process and my justification for this, with reference to pre-existing methods of process documentation.

I intend to create six to eight songs that feature different singers on each track. According to Output Mag, an EP by today's standard can be defined by a run time of 30 minutes and under (Output Mag, 2021). I believe that with this approach, I will be able to work with a range of vocalists and engage with artists within a multitude of styles and genres. The genres that I feel most comfortable producing include R&B, Lo-fi style, and Soul style songs. I intend to heavily feature myself as a guitarist within the six to eight tracks, where I can demonstrate my ability as both a guitarist and a producer like Nile Rodgers for example. I want to create the majority of the tracks prior to the sessions with the vocalists and have them prepared in advance, creating more efficient vocal tracking. According to the Project Preparation Trust, preparation within project management equals great results regarding conceptualisation and planning (Project Preparation Trust, 2022). In addition, if the songs are entirely structured, with intros, verses, choruses and other elements in place, the vocalists can have complete creative freedom to add their own influences, whilst my song writing, and chordal input is remained as constant. Allowing for peer inclusion within decision making invests others within your project and can encourage and increase work ethic; it is said that successful teamwork is based on inclusivity (Dixon, 2021). This can create a cohesive series of songs, that could be described as 'my sound' as a producer. Discovering one's "sound" is very important within musical identity and can be described as essential within music production. Musical consistency can contribute massively to the development of your own sound (Splice, 2021), alongside drawing on already established skillsets, like guitar playing in my case. Collaborations similar to the one that I am proposing, can be seen throughout many EPs, and have proven to be successful. For example, Connor Albert's album 'Collage 2' has a different vocalist feature on each track and has achieved over 15 million streams. The success arguably comes as a result of the quality of the tracks, however, through collaboration, reach of audience can increase due to an artist's existing fanbase. In this example, Albert's collaboration with Mac Ayres arguably granted the EP's greatest success. The intellectual capital gained through collaboration can develop both your own skillset within an industry, as well as increase the audience or market reach. I intend to use this collaborative approach to name each track within the project, and to use a combination of all 6-8 tracks to influence the final name of the EP.

I have chosen this specific project because I want to display all of what I would say are, my best skills and attributes in one place. A collaborative project can help to find singers who I

work well with and can set the tone for future projects. In addition to establishing artist relationships, this EP will in future, act as promotional material for both my production, mixing and guitar playing services. The age-old phrase, “it’s who you know, not what you know” unfortunately rings true within the music world and through building early relationships within a career, it can help to increase longevity within the business through an established network (Alhanati, 2023). Ultimately, the EP will be a product that I can use to market myself and use to obtain future work. Having a complete set of works within a themed project displays commitment and craftsmanship, something that is impressive and attractive to potential clients. Regarding marketing, consistency within products such as themed EP’s, is vital to the overall successes of a career due to the initial established audiences that they attract. A huge shift away from the initial product or theme can lead to an abandonment of audiences as they find alternate mediums to consume. To further encourage the success of the project, a risk assessment (*appendix 2*), displaying the potential issues with suggested solutions has been created, in order to negate some of the difficulties the proposed project faces.

The benchmark for success within this project will ultimately be the production of six to eight tracks that I am proud of and can go on to release under my own name, on all major streaming platforms. Benchmarks for success have been previously described as income generation, profit, and other monetary valuations (Hydra, 2023). In opposition to this, for my project I don’t intend to generate monetary profit, but the beginnings of a following. Further benchmarking throughout the project includes a constant referral to the project quality, schedule performance and product completion. Early signs of success will be identifying what I would consider to be the right singers for each track and allocating the music that suites. I believe that it may be difficult to find eight different singers and record them within the time frame provided for the assignment, so I intend to feature at least four different vocalists across the six to eight tracks. Further indicators for success include having guitar present in each track, with guitar solos and my own personal improvisation featuring on each track. Later measurable benchmarks for success will be engagement in the EP upon release, that can be measured through listens. Engagement within music can come from many places and the success for this can be increased through promotion via radio, social media, and articles (Out Now, 2023). And finally, the last and most important measurable aspect of success will be if I and other musicians feel that the EP has its own established ‘sound’ that can be noticed throughout each individual track. I intend to work with the most successful vocalists from the project as I can use our combined works as an indicator of best style and genre to follow, alongside which features, and vocalist combinations yield the best results. It is important to take data from such services like Spotify for Artists to dissect a target audience and to refine the next marketing approaches to begin to develop and write the set of goals (Maiorca, 2021).

I intend approaching the project from the point of view of a case study. I want to base my approach on producers that have no vocal input to their work, and work alongside vocalists to produce their works. For example, Connor Albert’s ‘Collage 2’ features twelve tracks, with ten out of twelve featuring a vocalist and two being instrumentals, featuring his own piano playing. This has provided a great framework for this project and is evidence it is possible to create a series of musical works with lots of featured singers. Through reaching out immediately to singers that I like and have worked with previously, I intend to gauge interest

and initiate the first communication regarding whether it's a project they would like to be included within. When contacting prospective vocalists, I intend to explain that I will have already produced the songs, ones that are pre-written regarding chords and structures before the first session with a singer. This will ensure more efficient sessions with less ambiguity. I will, however, allow creative freedom regarding vocal melodies and lyrics, with my input being constant but reserved to allow for a vocalist's personal input. I will approach sessions with an open mind regarding any potential changes suggested. For example, changes in structure and most importantly, changes to the key of the song, to accommodate for the vocalist's range. Accommodating for a singer's range is vital to the success and can be the difference between a powerful vocal performance and a timid one (Emenau, 2020). I will use the pre-written parts for structure, but I don't intend to become too precious over them if change is needed. The key and range of the singers will be estimated based on their own personal material and a conversation will be had in advance to song writing. I intend to approach the song writing process in a way to ensure the songs aren't too formulaic and each vocalist has the opportunity to showcase their own defined character and style. Through keeping a log of information for each individual track, it will be possible to track the progression of the production process and to learn from each track's journey. It's been said that through benchmarking and the documentation of a process, the better the framework will be for future endeavours (York, 2022).

In contrast to my current proposed plan, I initially intended to undertake the creation of a sound library, drawing on my skills as a producer and a guitarist to record loops, beats, and sound effects to encase a stylised sample pack. This is an avenue that I am incredibly interested in perusing in the future as I am a regular user of samples and enjoy the creative nature of using existing sounds to craft new and unique timbres. Sample packs from producers such as Ocean have proven to be a success in the past and can be used as a passive revenue stream once created. The initial problem with using this as a platform for creation is that I have no following and therefore would find it very difficult to break into the market, as it is saturated with thousands of producers doing something similar. An established following would be needed prior to the creation and sale of such a sample pack, as an audience of producers could be interested in purchasing samples once my following is settled. In addition to this, creating thirty minutes of samples is difficult and requires a high level of editing and processing. The time pressure of the assignment has deterred me from perusing this idea. For example, I would need to create 180 ten second guitar loops to satisfy the brief, with a small sample pack being considered to have between 50-150 samples (Splice, 2016). I believe within the time restraints, this is not feasible and may be an idea for the future, upon gaining a small following.

Regarding planning a project, it's crucial to have a working timeline in order to strategically allocate appropriate divisions of time, to achieve the desired goals (Hennigan & Bottorff, 2022). My proposed working timeline (*appendix 1*) for this assignment goes as follows. I will reach out to the vocalists that I would like to work with to gauge their level of interest and to see whether this project is something they would be interested in perusing. I will design a message to send to each singer explaining the process I intend to follow, with options of styles and genres being presented as options to them. Once I have gathered the information from the vocalists, I will begin to write songs within the genres of Neo-soul, R&B, Lo-fi and Hip-hop depending on the feedback I will have received. I will maintain the constant of

writing the songs using Logic Pro X, using MIDI scroll to play in MIDI keyboard parts. The reason I don't want to record anything solidly outside of MIDI is due to time efficiency. If I can create the chord progressions and structures within midi, I have the flexibility and ease to change key if needed, in preparation for recording live instruments such as guitar and bass. Once the demo versions of the songs are recorded and bounced to MP3, I will send the songs to the singers with the aim to book a session to begin to record vocal ideas and lyrics over demo versions of the songs. I will then draw on the strongest and most established ideas to continue to construct a song. Once I am satisfied with the demo version of the song, I will book a second session with the vocalist in question to record their working vocal take. I will comp the best takes together to create what I will consider the final demo of the track. Once the final demo is established, I will book studio time to record the final vocal takes and to capture the most natural and authentic version of the song in real time. Although a single, constant take can result in a more authentic version of a vocalist's voice, comping vocal takes together can obtain the best results and is an efficient and easier strategy to record vocals, whereby dynamics and character can be fine-tuned (Universal Audio, 2023). Once all of the songs have reached the satisfactory point, I will begin to mix the songs and focus on consistencies in my techniques, to encourage the emersion of a 'sound' within my production work, one that can be recognised throughout the entirety of the six to eight tracks. Following the advice of F Reid Shippen, I intend to use the same combination and order of plug-ins on my mix bus which will encourage this consistency in sound throughout all of the tracks (Pack, 2020). A playback session will be arranged with each artist and a revised mix will shortly follow, attempting to find a compromise where necessary, and using my own artistic judgement to form the best final version of each song. I intend to ask a friend to master the songs or to outsource the mastering to a professional studio. In the future, I would like to release the finished songs to a streaming platform, to further the investment in myself and my music and to use the completed works as a portfolio for future work ventures. It is said that a portfolio of finished works is one of the best examples of commitment to a project and displays high levels of work ethic and a desire for completion (Martin, 2021). I intend to document this process meticulously and to later reflect on the process as I wish to refine and develop my process of music production.

In summary, by the end of this process, I intend to have a 6-8 track EP, featuring more than 4 vocalists, within the Neo-soul, R&B, Lo-fi and Hip-hop style. Through listening to jazz, reading lead sheets and chord charts, I will have taken relevant influence from the melodies and chord progressions to imbed them within my production. Drawing on influences from producers such as Nile Rodgers, Connor Albert, and mix engineers like F Reid Shippen, I intend to have a cohesive, well-produced and most importantly, a musical EP. I will further use it as a portfolio to demonstrate my ability as a producer, guitarist and mix engineer. Through my research and acquired musical knowledge, I intend to have developed a sound that can be heard across all six to eight tracks with the hope that one day, songs that I produce can be recognised solely through their sonic content. The process will be properly documented, with every success and failure noted with the intention to learn from the process, and to refine and devise a much more well-informed series of processes. The working timeline is inevitably subject to change; however, I intend to keep track of the events as they unfold and aim to make informed decisions based on the circumstances that are presented. Upon completion of the EP and after submission of the assignment, I intend

to release it to all major streaming platforms where I envisage the beginning of a small following and hopefully, a career in music production.

Date	Event/Action
May 15 th	Reaching out to potential vocalists. Begin producing songs.
May 22 nd	All songs will be sketched out and written in MIDI form in preparation for sending to singers. Towards the end of the week, a comfortable key will be established for each vocalist.
May 29 th	Begin to book sessions with singers to develop vocal ideas and to record the first demos.
June 5 th	Recording more demos, recording vocals in a DIY format.
June 12 th	Begin to establish live instrument elements in each song and start recording live guitar and bass.
June 19 th	Book sessions with vocalists to discuss the song and work on details within the tracks. Final vocal comping commences.
June 26 th	Fine tuning the tracks in preparation for final demos. Week commencing the 26 th of June all 6-8 tracks will be recorded and the mixing process will begin.
July 3 rd	Mixing the tracks, following a consistent format to establish a 'sound' through the entire EP.
July 10 th	Playback session with vocalists to gather feedback. Revise final mixes and send for mastering.
July 17 th	Receive master tracks and discuss with engineer if more revisions are needed.
July 21 st	Submission day

Proposed Working Timeline – appendices 1

What are the risks?	What could they result in?	What are you already doing to control the risks?	What further action do you need to take to control the risks?	What opportunities could the risk present?
Lack of interest in participating in the project	Few featuring artists on the EP	Asking a more vocalists than I need to work with me	Make sure the message I send is clear and concise, without ambiguity	A good working relationship with a few artists
The possibility of only one recording session with a vocalist	An unsatisfactory take that I don't want to use	Be prepared for vocal recording sessions, going into them with the song written	If there are significant time pressures for a particular vocalist, have a back-up vocalist in mind who could record instead	Create a high-quality instrumental track without vocals, recording more guitar focused melodies
Financial hinderance	Poorer quality of mastered music	Reaching out to quality assured professionals within my close network	Keep costs low and do as much as I can on my own, using the tools available	Financially sustainability for future releases
Time restraints	Rushed elements of the overall project	Planning to delegate equal quantities of time to all 6-8 tracks	Ensure each track reaches a similar level of development before moving to postproduction	Good practice for decisive bulk mixing and postproduction practices
Technological failures	Lost work and unrecoverable data	I have an online cloud-based storage folder where I intend to back up work	Make a copy of each session onto both a hard drive and the cloud, in addition to a bounced version after each session	This could result in earlier versions of mixes that I prefer and can go back to, as well as reference tracks for demos
Songs sounding similar	A boring, lifeless EP	Writing songs with contrasting tempos, time signatures and sonic elements.	Structuring songs so that they don't follow a similar pattern, creative stop sections, stabs, and other varieties of arrangement	A conscious effort to write songs with contrasting elements, whilst maintaining guitar elements as a constant

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