

LEARNING IN THE **DIGITAL ERA**

By Mike Clinton

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Collaborative Project

Roles

Mike:

- Lyric writing
- Vocals (Backing)
- Guitar
- Drums
- Mixing
- Midi Instruments

Joel:

- Lyric writing
- Vocals (Lead)
- Bass
- Piano
- Mixing
- Midi Instruments

Instrumentation

Sonically the song is quite a classic rock sound, relying on guitar, bass, drums and vocals to create the majority of the track. There are some more classical elements in there too such as the grand piano, strings, horns and timpani.

Equipment

Vocals:

C414

Guitar:

Focusrite DI

Piano:

2x C414 L&R

2x C414 stereo bar room mic

Drums:

Kick D6

Floor tom D4

High Tom D2

Low Tom D2

Snare Above/Below 2x i5

Overheads 2x ADX 51 L&R

These mics require Phantom Power

Other:

Bafflers x3

Logic Pro x

Song Analysis

The song is in the key of Gm and shifts between two tempos of 110bpm and 145bpm.

The song starts at 110BPM in the key of Gm, it begins with a grand piano which is playing arpeggiated power chords in a descending progression, (vi, V, IV, III) playing the D as a major chord to give the song a harmonic minor flavour. Accompanying the piano in the intro are horns, timpani and strings which were played using MIDI. The intro then ends by ascending to a climax with tremolo piano and a timpani roll; the classical instrumentation of the intro mixed with the harmonic minor tonality make the track sound very grand and dramatic.

The first verse is introduced by an atmospheric pad sound played on guitar, then the double tracked guitars come in moving between G and F power chords, with drums playing at a low dynamic and the bass following the guitar. The vocals come in with a call and response between the lead and the backing, keeping the dynamic low. For the second half of the verse the dynamics are raised with the drums changing to a full backbeat instead of just a sidestick pattern, the guitar changing from being palm muted to played open, and the vocals getting harsher and belted slightly more; this was done because we wanted the song to build throughout.

After the verse, the tempo increases to 145BPM, and the dynamics are suddenly dropped all the way down as the vocals and strings play a chromatic descending line. Keeping in theme with the verse the dynamics are again raised really high with lots of different belted harmonies, distorted guitar and a complex drum beat which plays a backbeat leading on the ride and all the 16th notes being filled by toms.

For the chorus we switched the feel to half time and changed the progression from descending chromatic chords to the descending diatonic chords of harmonic minor to make the chorus feel more open and singable.

There are lots of layers in the chorus, there is guitar, bass, strings, horns, harmonies singing diamonds and the lyrics, lead vocals, piano and drums. There was temptation to keep adding increasingly more layers to the chorus to make it sound massive, but the mix ended up getting way too crowded and we had to turn some things down.

After the chorus, the verse comes back in at 110BPM again only this time the dynamics come in a lot higher than the first time with more aggressive vocal delivery, more harmonies, louder drums, and non-muted guitar; then for the second half of that verse the dynamics were raised more with even more aggression on the delivery of all the parts and more harmonies. Next is another pre-chorus, but for this one we switched to half time and gave it a swung feel for the first half and then going into the full-time straight feel version from before. For the last chorus everything was the same as before except we added some operatic sounding staccato backing vocals; then finally to finish up we played one of the previous riffs from the song in a light jazz way with just the drums and piano playing and faded it out from there.

Developing the work/Writing/Recording

When it came time to writing the song, we sat down in the studio and talked about what each of our musical abilities and interests were, so we knew what we had to work with. Once we had decided on a rough genre, I put forward a guitar riff which I have had for a long time, Joel then took that riff and used it as inspiration for something new. Afterwards we all sat with our respective instruments and talked about where the song could go; although because some of the members were not as confident with song writing as others, a lot of various parts were written by one or two people. Once we had a part for everyone to play in this riff section, we moved on to another section which ended up being the pre-chorus, which was a variation on the previous section. After playing these parts a few times, we decided we didn't like the original riff and scrapped it just keeping the pre-chorus part.

Then I came up with an idea for the verse on guitar and drums and the bass played the same thing. Once we put these two sections together it became clear that we needed a chorus, so I came up with the chord progression on guitar and played the half time groove on drums.

In one of the following days, I had Joel come over to my room we sat with a guitar each and wrote the vocal melody and lyrics for the track. And worked on some of the transitions between sections; we also toyed with the idea of turning it into a rock opera which we then took parts of and added into the final song. In that session we only wrote the first verse, pre-chorus and chorus lyrics as we wanted to allow others to contribute if they wanted to. We asked if anyone wanted to write lyrics and a most of them said they were not comfortable with lyric writing, and one person had a go but said they didn't like theirs; so afterwards me and Joel went into the studio and sat in separate rooms to write half of the next verse each. After, we came back into the same room and sorted the parts out so that they fit nicely. By the time it came to recording me and Joel had a lot of arrangement ideas in our heads and so it was quite easy to know what we wanted to do.



(Pictures show me and Joel figuring out the parts for guitar and bass)

There have been multiple versions of the track with different recording techniques. When it came to recording the actual music we had a couple other people in our group have a go, but we had differing opinions of how the parts should be played and so Joel and I ended up recording all other parts ourselves, I will be talking about the way the two of us recorded the parts rather than how the others recorded their parts, as the version of the piece I will be submitting is the one with just me and Joel. There was also a version me and Joel put together very early with just midi parts, so we could get an idea for how the song would sound, this was more as part of the writing process than an actual serious recording.

Firstly, we recorded the drums, micing each drum up individually, and checking the two overheads were in phase by measuring the distance from them to the snare in the middle of the kit. I recorded to a click and went section by section. We also panned the individual mics of the drums slightly to make it sound like the listener is sitting at the drum kit with all the drums around them.

For the guitar I recorded direct input and got my tone through a virtual amp on logic, I double tracked the guitar, meaning I played everything twice, and panned one track hard left and one hard right.

For the bass, we once again recorded DI except this time we just recorded one track and put it straight down the middle instead of panning.

When it came time to record the piano, we put multiple mics above the strings and checked they were both in phase just like with the drums, we had to measure they were both the same distance from the hammer on middle c.

When recording the vocals for the song we originally had four room mics set up, two far in the back of the hall, and two that we stood in front of, this gave a very reverb heavy sound which we ended up not liking. We realised this sound worked for some of the backing vocals as they sounded quite atmospheric this way but for the lead vocal and a couple of the harmonies we wanted a more focused sound, so we re-recorded it with a single mic in the cardioid setting and put sound proofing around the mic to make it more focused, we also used a pop filter to get rid of any plosives this time as we were a lot closer to the mic.

While this worked at getting a more focused sound, I think if I were to do it again, I would record in a different room to get a drier sound rather than fighting with the hall's reverb as I think it would be a lot easier.

There are also multiple midi parts that we put in such as strings, horns and timpani.



(Picture above shows us recording vocals with the first mic'ing technique described)

After all the parts had been recorded me and Joel and multiple sessions of mixing, I went off to EQ the drums by myself, but for all the other parts we worked together in the studio.

Rehearsals

We only had a couple of rehearsals as a full and because many of the times people could not turn up for one reason or another. In the rehearsals we had, Joel and I would be often teaching the other group members the parts as we had written them; once we had taught them the parts, we did several run-throughs of the track focusing on areas which were not as strong. Seeing as in a lot of the rehearsals many people couldn't show up, we just pressed on with the writing of the song as to not waste any time, we wanted to get everything done as quick as possible so we could spend more time on the recording, arrangement, mixing and mastering. This also gave us more time to work on our other projects.



(This picture shows one of the few rehearsals we had, where we taught Sam, who joined late, the parts)

Song Link:

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Online Project

Roles

Mike:

-Guitar

-Drums

-Mixing

-Midi Instruments

Joel:

-Piano

-Mixing

-Midi Instruments

Sam:

Midi Instruments

Guitar

Liam:

Midi Instruments

Equipment

Guitar:

DI box Focusrite

Piano:

2x C414 L&R

2x C414 stereo bar room mic

Drums:

Kick D6

Floor tom D4

High Tom D2

Low Tom D2

Snare Above/Below 2x i5

Overheads 2x ADX 51 L&R

Phantom Power

Other:

Logic Pro x

Song Analysis

The piece we produced is more of a soundtrack than an actual song, we wanted to tell a story with the song using only instrumental sections, as if it were a movie score. The track begins with a serene peaceful part that Joel created, and then transitions into my part which is meant to signify war. My part begins with a choir singing a vi/III/IV/III progression accompanied by low menacing horns with a long drum build. The track then goes into a new section following the same harmonic minor progression, but with a 6/8 rock beat and string leads. I also added a sub kick on the downbeats which is meant to signify a heartbeat which is why it fades out towards then end, because of all the death in the war. I then added an outro on the ride to help the song transition into the next piece, which is Sam's grief part, which uses a lot of acoustic guitars. The song then finishes with a triumph/revenge section made by Liam.

Story

The story we made came up with to make a soundtrack to is called "The Last Son of Nüwa" and is set on the Martian city of Nüwa.

Act I: Serenity

A young warrior is living peacefully in his family, which is reflected in a soothing jazzy piece of music.

Act II: War

The city of Nüwa is ravaged by an enemy force from another city, this is reflected by an ominous orchestral rock section.

Act III: Grief

The young warrior returns to find the remains of his city, and mourns the loss of his family. This is reflected in the melancholic acoustic guitar of the section.

Act IV: Triumph

The warrior sets of to take his revenge on the ones who wronged him. This is reflected in the music with orchestral sounds and the return of the main theme from the beginning.



(The picture above is artwork I created showing the desolate city described in the story with the main character standing in the foreground. I made this because it helped me to have an image in my head of what I was creating.)

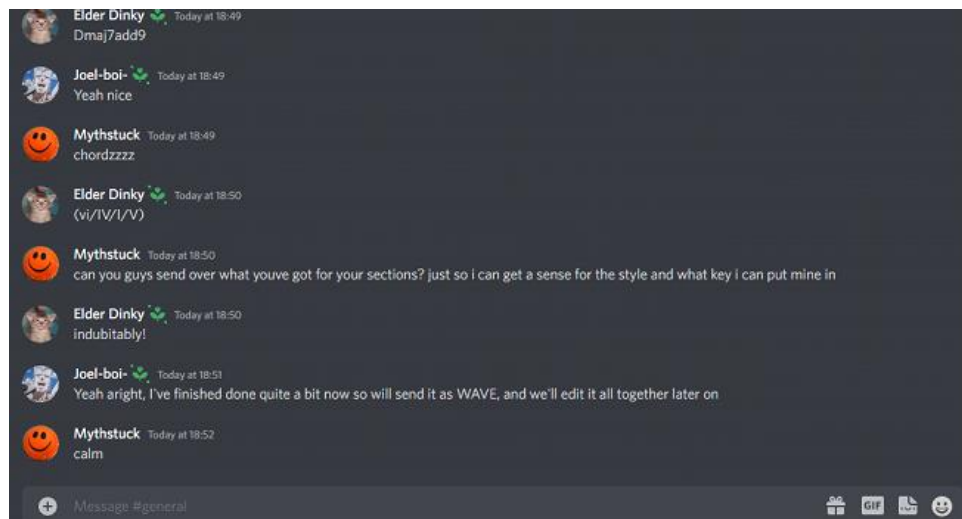
Developing the work

When developing the work, we had calls talking about what we would like to do with the song, when we came up with the idea of doing a film score, we then came up with four different sections and themes to write for, since there were four of us it meant we got one section each. We came up with a timeline for the story to be; romance, war, grief and then triumph. Once we thought of the sections, we went about assigning the parts to ourselves.

For much of the discussion we talked online using things like discord to call and snapchat to message each other and plan calls. We used these calls to keep each other updated and to talk about sharing motifs and phrases.



(Picture above shows one of the calls we had discussing the direction of our pieces)



(This picture shows some of the sort of stuff we would message about online)

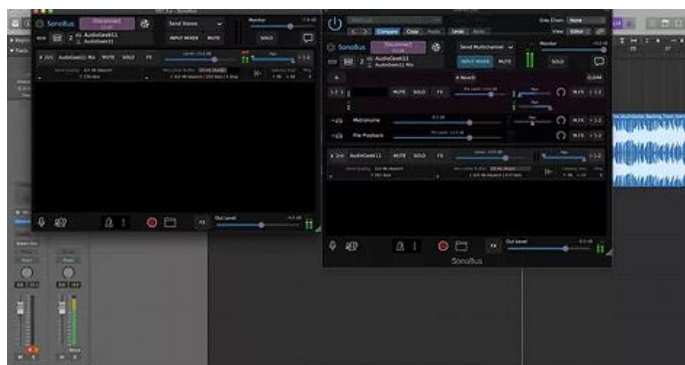
For the individual parts I took the war part, Joel had romance, Sam had grief, and Liam had triumph.

When it came time to record my part, I took a motif that Joel had put in his and changed it up to sound more minor and tense.

Once I had this new motif, I began to build the track around it, adding strings, horns, drums and guitars. I originally recorded everything midi just to demo it, but I then re-recorded the guitar and drums because I didn't like the way the midi sounded, so I recorded real drums in the studio, and recorded direct input for the guitar. When recording the guitar, I made sure to double track and pan hard left and right.



(Picture shows the logic session with the midi instruments being recorded)



(Picture above shows one of the other ways we went about making the music, we tried using sonibus a bit as we knew Sam already had it installed and that he could walk us through it a bit, we used this for online jamming.)

https://uowtsd-my.sharepoint.com/:u:/g/personal/2205207_student_uwtsd_ac_uk/Eakx7oNjp-VFsyFw7NSockMBdUxYf1NESnx2Yy2TaMDzNA

Logos

Logo 1: Artist logo



For this logo I chose to do one for my music projects. To come up with a name for my projects I just reversed my name to get Ekim, as I wanted something unique sounding so that I could stand out.

When it came to designing the logo, I first came up with the design below, but I wanted to add more colour and definition, so I added a highlight and edited the picture.



I wanted to produce something quite dark and dramatic looking because I wanted it to reflect the style of music I like making.

I used a website to generate art and kept editing it and re doing it till I got the sort of thing I wanted.

Logo 2: Business logo:

[Mikes Mics Logo.mp4](#)

For this logo I wanted come up with something for a music shop, and I settled on the name Mike's mics because I thought it was fun and memorable. I would use this for a microphone company, and I started by generating some logos by choosing an icon I liked and pairing it with the name. Once I had done this and generated multiple logos, I went about picking which one I liked the most.



Once I had this still image, I went on to add it to a picture of the product, which would be a microphone.



I wanted to add some animation and sound to the video, so I got the picture to fade in and then the logo to appear afterwards, to add sound I went into logic and played some sound effects to go with the animation.

For the sound effects I wanted the sound of a cable being plugged in, to show that it is a music equipment related company, and then a nice warm sound to go with the movement of the animation.

Logo 3: Artist Logo (album cover)



For this logo I wanted to do something similar to the first logo in terms of aesthetics, but I wanted to apply the idea of the previous logo to an album cover so it could be used for actual music that I am currently working on.

For this album, the music I have been making is quite dark sounding and dramatic, so I wanted to go for a similar type of aesthetic for the album cover. The album I have been working on called “Blood Moon,” so I put that on the cover with the artist's name I came up with at the top and added a variation of the logo to the picture.

Autobiography

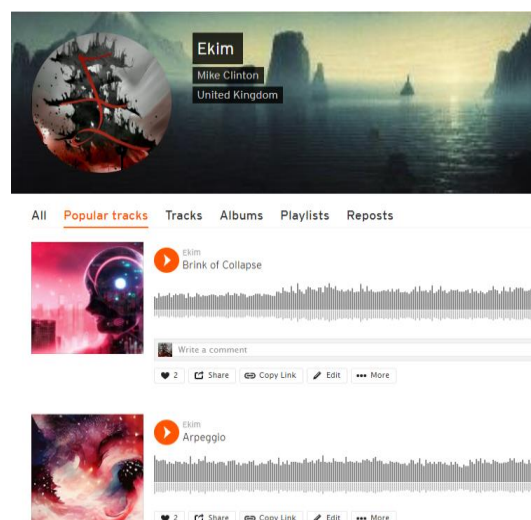
Mike Clinton is a Professional music producer, multi-instrumentalist, songwriter and performer with over a decade of experience.

He has experience playing guitar, drums, bass, piano, singing and more.

Having studied music for several years at multiple levels of education Mike has a wide range of experience spanning across many areas of music, with lots of experience with theory, writing, arrangement, producing, mixing and more.

Recently he has been working as a music producer, creating tracks for many types of clients from spa relaxation music to warm up songs for dance groups. This required him to make multiple tracks a week and modify them to fit the needs of the client.

He also creates music in his spare time which he uploads to sites such as SoundCloud under the name “Ekim” He has often collaborated with numerous other artists on music.



(Picture shows SoundCloud mentioned above)

Mike excels at making dark dramatic music with rock influences, he is inspired by many bands such as Muse, Alter Bridge, Radiohead and Rush, and this can be seen in the music he makes. Although he is most known for this type of music, he loves to delve into other genres, such as lo-fi, pop, prog, jazz and more.

Most recently he has begun studying music technology and a university to improve his abilities.

In the future Mike is looking to release more music that he can then go out and perform at gigs. He is constantly creating new music and looking for opportunities to collaborate.