

MUS113 Project Documentation

MUS113.1 Project Development and Pre-Production

Student Name:

Student Number:

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1. Project Conception

1.1 Group Details:

Name	Student Number

1.2 Project Type:

This will be a thematic EP

1.3 Project Theme or Style:

The EP will be soul, jazz and classical based music but with some more modern and experimental production methods and FX. It will be focussed on using organic and found sounds and use symbolism around the four elements of earth, wind, fire and water.

We would like to use techniques such as polyrhythms, polymeters, metric modulation, modal modulation and play with extended chords that hold tension.

2. Project Pitch Outcome

2.1 Green Light Received?:

Yes

2.2 Feedback Received:

I really like this idea for the thematic EP. You have both outlined the roles and responsibilities of each person in the group. Exploring the themes in terms of musicality and symbolism affords an avant-garde approach that will allow you to be more abstract in the musicianship and wrangling of sounds. That said, remaining contemporary will make the music accessible and the amalgamation of your disparate musical backgrounds could really work, when centered around such a strong theme. As mentioned in the feedback, speak to the tech team about the best way to capture audio externally, and legislate for extra-curricular activities to capture these. These should be established in the Project 1 documentation. That you are already using a shared playlist to build ideas bodes well for the organisation of this ambitious project. Great work, so far. Please keep me in the loop and reach out if you require any help organising equipment. Brian also recommended seismic sounds for the earth track, baggy kick drums.

3.Planning

3.1 Musical and Production Considerations:

Create a list of attributes using the 'Active Listening' techniques outlined in reading 2 of the week 2 pre-class activity. Include an analysis of sound, harmony, melody, rhythm and form.

- Listening to different layers with each listen through
- Timbral characteristics - dry, wet, boxy, hollow, airy, bright, dark etc
- Thinking about harmony - is there an obvious chord progression or is harmony implied in another way - with what instruments and what chords? Fast or slow changes?
- Rhythm - do repeating phrases happen often or are they sparse, what instruments imply the rhythm?
- Form - how does the song change over time? Are they clear sections or are they blurred together? What instruments make up the sections
- Listen in "chunks" or sections - breaking it up into different size chunks can let you understand what your ear are hearing better, you can loop in your daw
- Listening subjectively will help you understand the inner workings of the sound on your emotions or the techniques they use, which if you understand it you can recreate it

3.2 Music References:

Reference 1

Title	Link to Reference
Outré Lux	Photay - Outré Lux (ft Madison McFerrin)

It's always reminded me of a damp forest and we've chosen a theme about the elements so we should include organic sounds and interesting sonic ideas like this song does.

Analysis:

- Tape warble
- Deep percussive sounds, syncopation, not regular toms, found or synthesised sounds
- Layered pads, harmonic, voices layered with synths, keys, strings
- Heavy side chain on a kick drum as a transition effect
- Hats don't come in until halfway
- Call and response melodies with brass sounding instruments - panned
- Reverse cymbals
- Textured, layered, weird kick drums
- Bass and kick play at the same time - would've been hard to mix
- Percussion goes through a big reverb
- Fairly clean, subtle or no use of distortion
- Vocals are used to build, and as the main hook
- Vocal layers, harmonies
- Strings and newly introduced perc sounds used to transition into next part
- Then new elements introduced being synth and hats
- Parts come in and out often, not having clear 8 bar sections so the transition into many different parts is smooth
- Big hits to transition
- Interesting instrumentation - almost jazz but with unique production
- Interesting ending, big swell

Reference 2

Title	Link to Reference
Lest we forget (blood)	Esperanza Spalding - Lest We Forget
<p>It also fits our brief being soul and jazz inspired but with interesting and contemporary production techniques</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Live recording of nature sounds at beginning• Calming• Vocal melody, folk inspired• Deep percussion, panned• Rich, thick synth chords• Heavy groove• Guitar to accent chord changes• Vocal recording sounds like a close proximity recording - you can hear the air and rasp but its not overpowering - still a good balanced, rich recording• Key stabs• Lots of layers• Main hook is a vocal melody• Vocal stacks, harmonies• Less obvious call and response but I think its there (things sort of come in and out like the last song in not such obvious chunks of time)	

Reference 3

Title	Link to Reference
SNIFF	Nord Live Sessions: DOMi & JD Beck - Sniff
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Electric piano playing descending melody and chords• Drums are super fast and loose but not drunk timing - breakbeats• Walking bass line, synth bass, played on a low octave - plays with how fast note changes are made in different sections to reinforce the tension of how fast this song is being played• Hectic piano solo• In different sections the keys switch between playing out the chords with a longer and shorter sustain (staccato and marcato)• Even though there is only 3 instruments and the chords stay the same there is plenty of variation in the structure to keep things interesting throughout the song• Really minimal use of FX (I can only hear a short reverb on the e piano) instead they use their musicianship and sync as a main feature• I think this is a good reference track because if it was played in a minor key instead it could be really dramatic and tense like trying to escape a bushfire (or modulated to a minor key to communicate something went wrong or got a bit more scary)	

Scheduling

4.1 Timeline and Milestones

Milestone	Date	What to do	Complete?
Concept Pitch Presentation	Week 2	Meet up with Sophie to talk about ideas and get on the same page Fill out powerpoint presentation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mid-Point Reflection	Week 2	Pre Class readings Set aside time to do it	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Instrumentation Complete	Week 3	Choose presets/design synth patches Choose drum samples (loops and one hits) Design some chord and rhythm ideas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Draft Vocal Recorded	Week 4	Brain said it's not necessary	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Demo Completed	Week 4	Arrange it out Share with sophie	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Final Reflection	Week 4	Pre Class readings Set aside time to for making the music in the next project	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Final Production Timeline</i>	<i>Week 5</i>	<i>Create a schedule and list of milestones for Project 2 Final Production</i>	

3.2 Studio Session Information:

Date and Time	Studio	Session Purpose	Performer (If appropriate)
Week 5		Live record keys on nord 3	
Week 7		Record vocals	
Week 9		Record more found sounds (this time in a quiet environment) as finishing touches / textures / ear candy	
Week 10		Backup session in case anything from previous sessions didn't work out in the mix	

4.Deliverables

Project Links	
DAW Project Session + Demo Wav (.wav 24bit, 48kHz)	
<hr/>	
Sample Pack	
<hr/>	
Checklist	
Have you completed all sections of this project template?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Have you completed a mid-project reflection (250 word minimum)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does your mid-project reflection include at least one (1) citation, using APA 7 referencing, and the full reference has been documented in "5.0 - Reference List"?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Have you completed a project-completion reflection (250 word minimum)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Have you compressed your DAW session folder (to a .zip file) and uploaded it to Google Drive?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Have you set the share link to "Anyone with the link" and pasted the link above?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

6.1 Mid-Project Reflection

My planning so far consists of swapping reference tracks with Sophie and analysing those tracks to see what elements will make up our song and give us a starting point. I've also done some word association, researched the chosen genres (mainly through just making playlists and actively listening), and choosing my sounds on ableton (samples or synth patches).

It's great working with Sophie, our communication has been good and we're keeping in touch regularly over slack to keep each other on task and delegate tasks or just ask for advice. We've both said to each other that we're open to honest feedback and she has given me some, just suggesting I could do some things to stay more within our chosen genre. I think this is a good thing as I haven't written soul or jazz before so I'll need some reminders going forward. The feedback I've given her has been all positive and encouraging. I think we're working towards enhancing the collaboration through regular messaging through slack, sharing music and getting to know each other better in general.

In the pre class readings they talk about sitting at your instrument and experimenting with harmonies without knowing the chordal function and in fact trying to delay deciphering the function as long as possible (Simos, 2014, 5). I call this noodling and I do it often. This is something that has interested me since I watched a video of Jacob Collier explaining that there are no wrong notes, just different levels of strong and weak choices, and it all depends on the harmonic context you give it. I think you need to at least know your internal intention when you want to play with harmonies like this. I've found this week's class with Sam about functional harmony to be super helpful with this subject because I think the chord choices will be really important for this EP so I'll be approaching the design of the chords with both ideas in mind, using the knowledge I got about dominant and subdominant chords etc while also exploring and trusting the feeling you get from that chord/chord progression. The feeling you communicate with the harmonies is the most important thing after all.

The skills I'm using in this project are communication, mixing, fitting sound/instrument choices for the genre, and DAW operation. The techniques and knowledge I'm using are around harmonies as stated above, and my knowledge on how to make everything in a song say the same thing or express the same feeling. I'll do this with grooves, velocity and humanisation of midi instruments. I think these are all my strengths. As for my weaknesses, it would be a lack of live recording knowledge and ability. Soul or Jazz is performed and recorded on live instruments so I'll need to work hard at either making this possible through actual live recording or humanising sequenced instruments or leaning into a different sound entirely. I think there are a lot of options to make up for this weakness and it will depend on my collaborator which way we go.

6.2 Project-Completion Reflection

Appraisal:

I think my analysis of the reference tracks has been good and that has helped me to target a genre I'm not used to. I'm excited about trying this new genre and idea. It's going to take quite a few sessions for idea generation to get the chord progressions and rhythmic ideas that fit both the genre and thematic idea. This demo was successful in helping me to understand where my strengths and weaknesses lay. I foresee wanting to break some of the soul genre conventions and lean more into an experimental genre in terms of sound design. However I love the harmonies and rhythms of soul and jazz music so I'll stick to those conventions. I wasn't sure what to expect with a pre production project because it's not that common with electronic music. Researching what these types of artists do for pre production is helpful and I think it will help having a specific folder of sounds/samples to dip into during the next process.

I think another success has been my collaboration with Sophie so far. Our ability to be open and honest about the direction and what we both want has been good. The level of communication has been great but we need to start actually getting in the same room with some instruments now. This part of the demo process could have worked better.

Challenges:

The biggest challenge was and will be writing in an unfamiliar genre. It was really good timing that in another unit we covered functional harmony so I have a bit better understanding of that now. That will be helpful in writing soul and jazz chord progressions, particularly with conveying emotions relating to fire or water. Conveying more abstract ideas will take some overcoming as well. I think Sophie and I will need to go deeper in the idea stage still to really pinpoint what exact thing we want to convey about these elements.

Future Goals:

There is more pre-production I could've done. We're doing two tracks for the EP so getting both demos done in time would've helped and I would do that next time (in real life). I would like to improve my time management skills for next time and be able to hand up the project earlier. This is something I'll aim to do for the next project. I'll also aim to do more academic research as it was mostly my own analysis.

I will repeat the same level of communication with my collaboration partner and my level of genre analysis. These have been helpful things.

For my next project my challenge will be sticking closely to my genre analysis and remembering to refer back to it often.

Splice References

Simos, M. (2014). *Songwriting Strategies: A 360-Degree Approach*. Berklee Press.

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