



Artistic decision-making and strategy in self-produced music production projects

Aleksi Kiiskilä

Bachelor's Thesis
May 2021

TAMK Media & Arts
Music Production

ABSTRACT

Tampereen ammattikorkeakoulu
Tampere University of Applied Sciences
Degree Programme in Media and Arts
Music Production

KIISKILÄ, ALEKSI:
Artistic Decision-making and Strategy in Self-produced Music Production
Projects

Bachelor's thesis 55 pages, appendices 1 pages
May 2021

The purpose of this thesis is to provide an overview of artistic decision-making process in musical productions, from the perspective of self-producing musical artists. In addition, it aims to offer guidance in accomplishing successful and meaningful projects, such as songs or albums.

The thesis was written for modern artist-producers, who write songs and take responsibility for producing them into existence on their own. More specifically it aims to provide non-technical methods for overcoming common artist-producer problems, such as vision loss and lack of focus. The core is in strategy utilization and decision-making-oriented approach to music production.

A literature review was carried out to explore themes related to music production, decision-making, strategy and philosophy. The emphasis was on non-technical attitude, philosophy behind music production and purposefulness.

The media part was built around a full self-written and produced folk-rock album which acts as a practical example for concretizing the discussed theories. Description of the album making process demonstrates the methods and approaches of this thesis phase by phase, and aims to validate their usage in practice.

Key words: music production, strategy, decision-making

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	6
2	BECOMING A SELF-PRODUCED ARTIST	8
2.1	Foundation and motives	8
2.2	Training and practice	8
3	WRITING SONGS: THE BIRTH OF A PRODUCTION	10
3.1	Inspiration	10
3.2	Ways of songwriting	10
3.3	Listening and understanding the songs	12
3.4	Clarifying and polishing ideas	12
3.5	Determinate decision to start the production	13
4	PRE-PRODUCTION AND FORMULATION OF STRATEGY	14
4.1	Basics of strategy	14
4.2	Setting goals	15
4.3	Setting a financial budget	16
4.4	Choosing the recording environment	16
4.5	Choosing tools	16
4.6	Creating limits	18
4.7	Creating schedules	18
5	RECORDING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGY	20
5.1	Recording order	20
5.2	Sticking to a plan or being open to new ideas on the go?	20
5.3	Focusing on the original goals	21
6	POST-PRODUCTION	22
6.1	What is post-production?	22
6.2	Defining the goals of post-production	22
6.3	Editing	23
6.4	Mixing	24
6.4.1	Formulating a strategy for mixing	24
6.4.2	Strategy implementation: mixing	26
6.4.3	Recognizing the ready mix	27
6.5	Mastering	29
7	WORK SAMPLE	32
7.1	PA Kiiskilä: <i>Ihmisen laulu</i>	32
7.1.1	Background	33
7.1.2	Pre-production and formulation of strategy	33
7.1.3	Setting goals	36

7.1.4	Setting a financial budget	37
7.1.5	Choosing the recording environment	37
7.1.6	Choosing tools	38
7.1.7	Creating limits	41
7.1.8	Creating schedules	41
7.2	Recording and implementation of strategy	42
7.2.1	Recording order	42
7.2.2	Sticking to a plan or being open to new ideas on the go?... 43	
7.2.3	Focusing on the original goals	44
7.3	Post-production of <i>Ihmisen laulu</i>	44
7.3.1	Goals of post-production	44
7.3.2	Editing	45
7.3.3	Mixing.....	46
7.3.4	Mastering	46
7.4	Aftermath	47
8	CONCLUSION.....	50
9	REFERENCES	51
10	APPENDICES.....	55
	Appendix 1. PA Kiiskilä: <i>Ihmisen laulu</i>	55
	Spotify:	
	https://open.spotify.com/album/3mA6ivfmptLDvbO8OLjAVB?si=K4bbTv7qScCrjjsihTpUoA	55
	Youtube:.....	55

GLOSSARY

A-B testing	Comparing two different audio sources, such as different mix versions of the same song or two different songs, with each other
Artist-producer	A musical artist who is responsible for producing one's own music
CD	Compact disc
DAW	Digital audio workstation
Demo	Demonstration of a song or a piece of music, for example a first recorded version of a song used for future refining
DI	Direct Input or Direct Injection
EP	External Play, a record that is longer than a single but shorter than a full album, usually between 15 – 30 minutes in total
Inspiration	Someone or something that gives one ideas for doing something
MIDI	Musical Instrument Digital Interface
Preamp	Audio signal preamplifier
RMS	Root Mean Square, a term used to characterize the average of continuous varying signals such as audio and electrical signals
Strategy	A general plan to achieve one or more long-term or overall goals under conditions of uncertainty
Zen	A Japanese sect of Mahayana Buddhism that aims at enlightenment by direct intuition through meditation

1 INTRODUCTION

In present time, an increasing number of musical artists are producing their own music due to the democratizing effect of digital recording technology and the will to take advantage of that in music production. These artist-producers, people who write songs and produce them into existence by themselves, are a constantly growing class of modern music creators (Burgess 2013, 9).

Technical and artistic limitations have radically reduced as new technology has given a chance for almost everyone to produce music. As the possibilities are reaching the point of unlimitedness, music producers' and artists' focused decision-making is becoming more important than ever (Glossop & Massey 2000, 238). Limitless options in terms of imagination, time, tools and budget can lead to issues in music productions. Common artist-producer problems include not getting tracks or albums finished in time, lack of vision and unnecessary doubts about the music's quality (Burgess 2013, 153 - 169).

This thesis aims to examine and present tools used for decision-making and strategic approach in music production projects and offer methods for problem prevention. The goal is to provide guidance for overcoming common artist-producer problems. The thesis describes how to formulate and implement a useful strategy for a production, why to create goals, how to make decisions before and during the production and how to keep focused on the initial goals. In addition to implementing this approach in pre-production, recording and post-production phases, it discusses the first stages of an artist's or a producer's career. These include building sustainable motives, attitude and an uncluttered vision which seems to be a difficult task for many (Matla, n.d.).

The media part is based on PA Kiiskilä's second solo album *Ihmisen laulu*. It is an 11-track folk-rock album, which is used for describing the ideas of this thesis in practice.

The source material consisted of several books, web articles and theses related to the music production, decision-making and philosophy. The thought was to use

the source material to support my own views, clarify them and make my strategy and decision-oriented approach seem credible through theory and practical examples.

There are plenty of literature and online lessons about how plug-ins, pre-amps and digital audio workstations work (Hoffman 2019). Since this thesis is about artistic decision-making, most of the technical discussion was left away. Briefly, this thesis should offer an in-depth overview of self-producing artists' decision-making process. It also aims to offer tools for preventing common problems in productions.

2 BECOMING A SELF-PRODUCED ARTIST

2.1 Foundation and motives

Without motivation, it is hard to strive for success and gain happiness in life (Zambas, 2019). Also, in music production strong motivation is required for delivering successful results. This is the very first stage of a successful musical production.

In most cultures, becoming a music producer or an artist seems to be a professional calling rather than a profession where a person has applied for, accidentally drifted into or has been forced into (Burgess 2013, 1 - 4). This natural will to work with music can act as an intuitive compass for successful artists and music producers and can lead to successful decision making (Marsh 2004, 414 - 415).

The core of being any professional is the will to be a professional. The core of being a professional music producer is the persistent, determinate will to be a professional music producer. Without this motive-based foundation it is difficult to gain success (Burgess & Coolidge 2013, 29).

2.2 Training and practice

One of Japan's most famous Samurai warriors, Miyamoto Musashi (1584-1645) stated that *The Way is in training* (Musashi 1645, 49). Considering the fact that he only lost one battle during his plus 60 -battle career, it seems reasonable to take his instructions about training seriously (Thakrar, 2008).

Though some say that 10 000 hours of training can make anyone an expert in anything (Burgess & Gladwell 2013, 30), it appears clear that it will not make anyone a professional. Becoming a professional always requires more than just technical training (Sample, 2019).

For example, Musashi highlighted that the true value of sword-fencing cannot be seen within the confines of sword-fencing technique and criticized sword-fencing schools which lacked deeper sense of meaning (Musashi 1645, 85 – 93).

10 000 hours of training could make someone a technically skilled guitar player or a singer but creating songs and understanding their full production requires quite a lot more. It requires, among other factors, life experience, technical skills, right kind of openness, wide knowledge of musical elements and extensive motivation (Burgess 2013, 30). It could be said that it is a lifelong practice.

For delivering successful results, comprehensive technical training is necessary. Artists and producers can develop their skills for example in schools, at home and on the internet. Wide knowledge of audio physics, recording equipment, mixing techniques and songwriting skills play a role in becoming a professional artist-producer (Burgess 2013, 30). Though gaining mastery in technical skills can lead to a successful career as a mixing engineer, a studio technician or a teacher, alone they have no use for an artist-producer.

During years of practice, artist-producers should constantly develop ideas, be open for inspiration and search for their own voice, cherish and polish it. They should also have a meaning and purpose in what they do, otherwise the final products may appear shallow (Glossop & Massey 2000, 233 - 245). This foundation of strong motives, technical skills and clear vision seems to often lead into great productions (Leckie & Massey 2000, 99).

3 WRITING SONGS: THE BIRTH OF A PRODUCTION

3.1 Inspiration

A song needs to start from somewhere. Many times an idea starts from an inspiration, whether a clear one or a more abstract one (Sawyers & Springsteen 2006, 25). In the very first stage of writing a song, inspiration and the initial idea, songwriters should keep themselves open to everything. Sometimes in this stage songs can feel like they want to say something and sometimes they act like puzzles. A person who writes songs should be open for inspiration, not discarding any feelings or thoughts, and listen to what the inspiration has to say. Another approach is the one writers like Leonard Cohen used, which does not rely on inspiration but rather on just showing up and getting to work (Tirrell, n.d.).

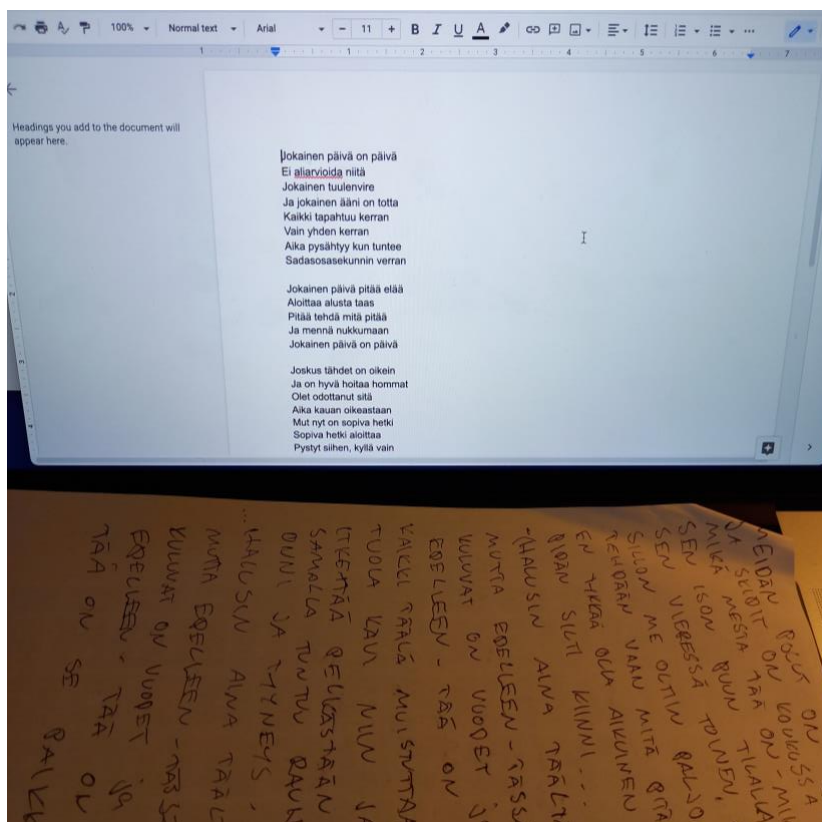
When a songwriter starts to understand the true nature of a song which is becoming into existence, one can already start writing lyrics and melodies and think what the song is about, basically identifying its true nature (Legend & Tirrell, n.d.). Often this stage is subjectively influenced by the songwriter's personal life and worldview. It depends on the intended use of the song whether this influence should be highly present in the song or not. Paying attention to this can be especially important in lyrics (Barra, 2019).

The first stage of songwriting is also about much deeper questions, such as “why do I want to write this song”, “what is the purpose of this song?” or “why do I write songs in general?”. It can be useful to actually think about these questions deeply, as it can lead to a more meaningful production (Hawking, 2012).

3.2 Ways of songwriting

There are different ways of writing songs, and none of them is better than another. It seems to be the most important thing to find a way of writing that simply feels best. Some songs have to be written quickly, some need years of work. As seen on PICTURE 1, some texts need to be written on paper, some texts on an online

cloud service. Whatever makes songwriting more efficient and focused, that should be done (Masterclass 2020; Tirrell n.d.).



PICTURE 1. Different ways of writing. Lyrics can be written on paper, on a cloud service, or whatever feels good at the time. (Kiiskilä, 2021)

It all comes down to the song itself and what it needs. For example, The Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards wrote the band's first no.1 hit (*I Can't Get No*) *Satisfaction* in his sleep. Richards woke up during the night, recorded the song's main riff on a nearby tape recorder and went back to sleep. The following day he listened to his recording from the night before, also featuring 40 minutes of snoring, and had no memory of creating the riff whatsoever. Later on, the singer Mick Jagger wrote lyrics on the song, the band arranged it together and recorded it – creating one of the most popular recorded songs ever (Chang, 2020).

In comparison, it is said that Leonard Cohen's classic *Hallelujah* took somewhere between two to five years to write. At some point the song also included 80 verses (Cheal, 2016). Still, both songs are very successful, despite the fact they were created in a completely different manner.

3.3 Listening and understanding the songs

When the writing has begun, the listening has as well. When a writer has tried ideas for example on a guitar or a piano and tried to sing some melodies, the listening must begin. It is said that a good song is the core of all production and that a good song will shine through every production (Massey & Shivy 2000, 299).

Humans tend to attach to habits and approaches so tightly that it is hard to let go of them (Colley, 2017). This can be good in everyday routines but should be paid attention to in musical productions. As there is no one way to craft a song, it is important to listen to the songs and think what they are really about, and what elements need to be included in them and what not. Recording demos and giving them time can help to examine and understand the songs (Gagel & Massey 2000, 317).

After working on a song for a while, there is a chance that the song will take a whole new form and none of the initial idea is left anymore. This does not matter. What matters here is the development and the way the song is turning out to be, as the only thing others will hear is the end result (Levine & Massey 2000, 262).

3.4 Clarifying and polishing ideas

Once the song is finding its key elements such as tempo, key and lyrical theme, it is time for artist-producers to start clarifying and polishing the ideas. It's really important to understand the essential factors in a song, since it is simply impossible to include everything in one song.

Often artists wish to use a guitar solo or use a certain melody just because they get excited, but it can be way more efficient to keep a song simple and focus on what it needs. This requires the skill of understanding what is necessary and what is not. If there are lyrics, melodies or parts that you like but they do not support the song, it can be good to just get rid of them. (Massey 2000, 4; Reynolds 2009, 95.)

The clarifying and polishing stage may happen quickly, or it may require trying different things and options, for example in key, arrangement or tempo. It is after this stage when the songwriter should have a song that is composed and arranged into its actual form and has its possible lyrics either ready or almost ready. This means that the song exists. It exists in the world, it has happened, the legal copyright has been created and it has an identifiable existence (Easy Song Licensing, 2016).

3.5 Determinate decision to start the production

In this stage the artist-producer should have a ready song and an idea of recording it. It is agreed by many professional producers that the production is only as good as the song is (Afanasieff & Massey 2000, 267), so it really should be taken in consideration whether the song is ready or not. This is important in avoiding a variety of future issues in the production (Burgess 2013, 153 - 169).

Outside the music production field, the same principle has often been used mindfully with intention. As an example, Eihei Dōgen (1200-1253), the founder of the Sōtō school of Zen in Japan, put emphasis on paying attention to acts and words.

Students, when you want to say something, think about it three times before you say it. Speak only if your words will benefit yourselves and others. Do not speak if it brings no benefit. These things are difficult to do all at once. Keep them in mind and learn them gradually. (Masunaga 1971, 101.)

This universal wisdom applies to music production as well. To implement this approach in music production, artist-producers need to be sure that what they will do has meaning. When the artist-producer has created a song and is confident about its need to be recorded, the song is ready for the pre-production stage. In the case of a full album or an EP, every song goes through this same birth process. To efficiently record multiple songs, they should all exist as songs already before the pre-production stage. To become good in this, one should learn the steps gradually with patience.

4 PRE-PRODUCTION AND FORMULATION OF STRATEGY

4.1 Basics of strategy

According to Liddell & Scott (1940), strategy is a term that comes from the Greek *strategia*, meaning generalship or art of troop leader. Another definition of strategy is *a general plan to achieve one or more long-term or overall goals under conditions of uncertainty* (Freedman, 2013).

As seen on FIGURE 1, strategy consists of two parts: formulation and implementation. Strategy formulation consists of creating goals and creating a plan how to reach those goals. Strategy implementation is following the formulated plan and executing all actions needed for reaching the desired goals (Junea, 2018).

STRATEGY FORMULATION	STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning and long-term decision-making involved in developing strategic goals and plans. - Setting goals and thinking of ways to reach those goals in a sufficient manner. - Taking all details of upcoming strategy implementation into account. - Creating a master plan. - Formulation can still be developed while implementing the strategy, if needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involves everything related to executing the strategic plans. - Executing actions that lead to the goals set in strategy formulation. - Keeping the original goals and details in mind while implementing the strategy. - Short-term decision-making = reacting wisely and quickly to unexpected changes in strategy implementation. - Following the master plan.
Strategy Formulation is creating a plan how to reach a desired goal.	Strategy Implementation is executing the actions that are needed for reaching the desired goal.

FIGURE 1. What is included in strategy formulation and implementation (Kiiskilä, 2021)

4.2 Setting goals

When an artist-producer has made the determinate decision of recording one's songs, setting goals is useful. It is important to know exactly where to aim instead of shooting blindly (Suzuki 2014, 23). Concrete examples of setting goals can be for example recording sound-, recording budget or time limit oriented. Whatever the goal is, it should be clear so that the production can be planned properly. (Massey & Sutton 2000, 293; Riopel, 2021.)

A great example of a successful goal-setter is NASA, The National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Before launching any space exploration program NASA sets clear goals which are not only interesting and useful, but equate their core values of safety, integrity, teamwork, excellence and inclusion (Blodgett & Dunbar, 2020). Closer detail can be seen on FIGURE 2.

Studying Mars' Habitability, Seeking Signs of Past Microbial Life, Collecting and Caching Samples, and Preparing for Future Human Missions

The Perseverance rover has four [science objectives](#) that support the Mars Exploration Program's [science goals](#):

Looking for Habitability:	Identify past environments capable of supporting microbial life.
Seeking Biosignatures:	Seek signs of possible past microbial life in those habitable environments, particularly in special rocks known to preserve signs of life over time.
Caching Samples:	Collect core rock and "soil" samples and store them on the Martian surface.
Preparing for Humans:	Test oxygen production from the Martian atmosphere.

FIGURE 2. Goals of NASA's Perseverance rover (NASA, 2020)

Goals of production are set in the formulation of strategy. Whatever the goals are, they are important because they clarify decision-making (Riopel, 2021). The risks of not having goals in a music production project include irrational tweaking of sounds, unnecessary mixing rounds, going over budget or even never getting the product finalized (Burgess 2013, 153 - 169).

4.3 Setting a financial budget

It is sensible to set a financial budget during the strategy formulation. When the budget is planned well in advance, it's easy to plan the use of financial resources according to the project's strengths and weaknesses. For example, if the artist-producer is really good at writing songs and playing instruments but not that good at mixing, it would make sense to hire a person to record and mix (Hiilesmaa 2014, 42 - 44). The financial budget should be set so that it serves the needs of the songs and provides a chance for them to become complete.

In many cases the budget is non-existent, and the only choice is to make everything alone, using whatever equipment one has. One then has to formulate a strategy that fits this budget (Hiilesmaa 2014, 42 - 44). Before anything, extensive research and practice of all aspects of music production is required in this way of producing.

4.4 Choosing the recording environment

If possible, the environment should fit the project's needs. What the project needs, depends on the project.

One studio may have a great ambience, but it is far and hard to reach. Some studio is easy to reach but may lack feeling. It is important to understand what the project and the artist needs and choose the recording environment accordingly if possible. (Hiilesmaa 2014, 11, 14; Kramer & Massey 2000, 131.)

4.5 Choosing tools

Choosing tools in music production means choosing the instruments, the microphones, the effects and such. Tools should always be chosen depending on the situation and the project. One guitar does not work for all songs, one microphone does not work for all singers and one compressor does not sound

the same on all drumkits (Massey & Panunzio 2000, 162 - 170). It really depends on the song, the artist, the instrument and so on.

Miyamoto Musashi said: *there is a time and a place for use of weapons*. (Musashi 1695, 47.) He added that *you should not have a favourite weapon, nor likes and dislikes. To become over-familiar with one weapon is as much a fault as not knowing it sufficiently well*. (Musashi 1695, 48.)

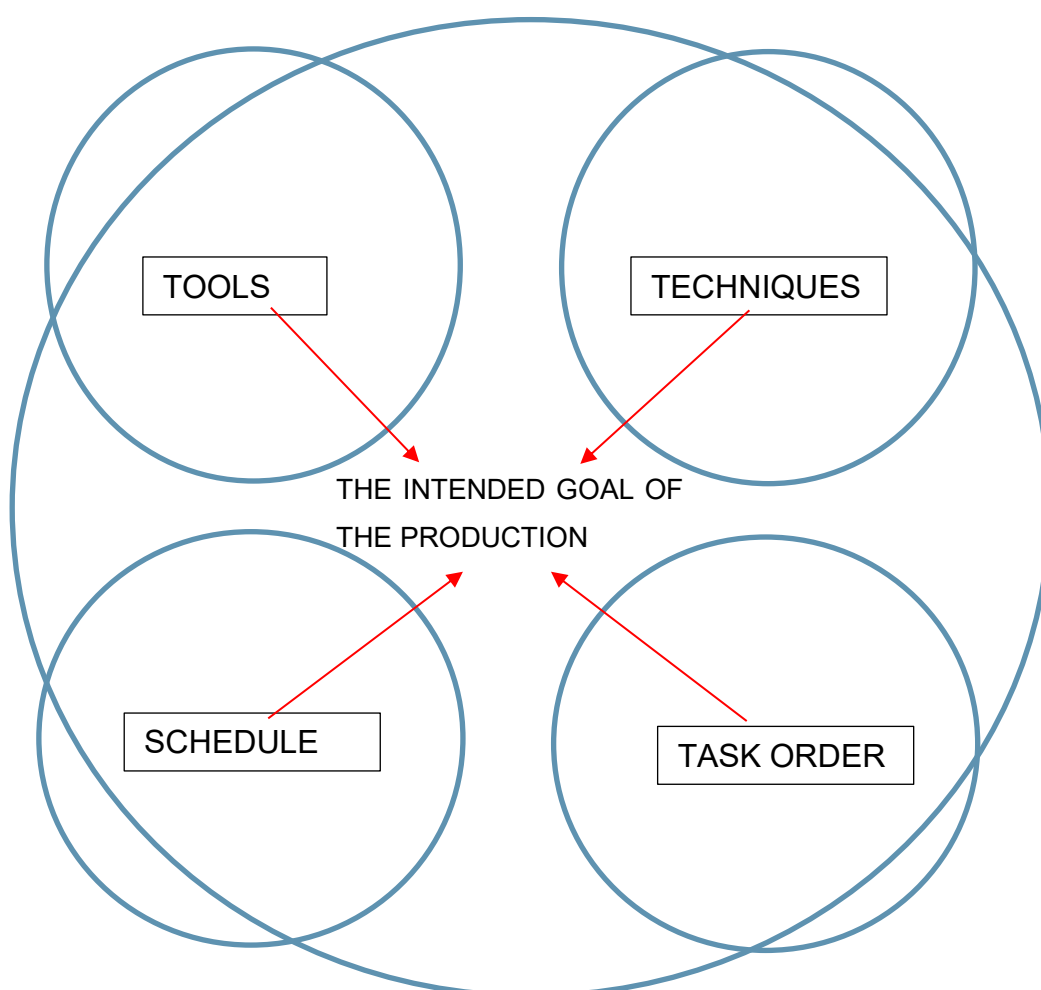


FIGURE 3. Strategy used for reaching the intended goal of the production consists of different sections, such as tools, scheduling, choice of techniques and defining task order (Kiiskilä, 2021)

There should always be a reason for using a tool. A reason can be a need for a certain feel, a certain sound or a certain level of familiarity. Keeping the goal in mind helps with choosing suitable tools. If something needs to sound pleasant, choosing smooth sounding tools may be a good idea. If the end result needs to shock the listener, using dissonant non-musical items as instruments may work.

What worked in the last song may not work in the next song (Massey & Panunzio 2000, 162 - 170). As illustrated in FIGURE 3, tools, techniques and strategy are used for reaching the intended goal of the production.

4.6 Creating limits

Creating limits has proven to make creativity bloom. There are plenty of limitations one can create for a song or a production, and these can lead to great results (Taylor, 1997).

Creating a limit for recordable track amount is a common limitation and was even inevitable before the digital era (Martin & Massey 2000, 79). In present days, with unlimited track amounts, deciding to use two guitar tracks instead for four naturally forces to focus on the guitar arrangements and compositions a bit more. Time limits in recording schedules can be useful as well, as they can prevent tendencies for overproduction and losing perception (Burgess 2013, 153 - 169).

4.7 Creating schedules

Schedules should be rather loose than tight, since there are almost always unexpected things that occur, such as illness or technical faults. Schedules should also include enough time off, since free time is important for maintaining focus in the right things while working (Burgess 2013, 107). It is said that even more important than creating a successful strategy, it is important to react to changes in a successful manner (Karhumaa 2019, 28).

Schedules should be planned in a way that they are efficient, realistic and feasible. Several things should be taken into account; technical skills of the ones involved in the production, level of song practice before recording, budget and other life such as family health and possible day jobs are all important to think about while formulating the strategy (Burgess 2013, 106 - 107). Schedule should be practical, and it should contain a specific recording order, such as drums first, then bass, then guitar and then vocals. A properly pre-planned recording order

makes the strategy implementation clear for everyone involved. The order should be decided case by case - whatever leads to the best performance and best results.

5 RECORDING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGY

5.1 Recording order

When the recording order is set in advance, the formulated recording strategy is easier to implement and execute. The recording order strategy should fasten the recording process and make it seamless (Recording Revolution, 2011). Knowing the recording order in advance also helps the one recording and using the DAW, since this person can then plan the DAW sessions and input / output patching accordingly. Also, for example microphones can be placed in advance and people who are not needed in the studio know when they can be away.

It is good to start by recording the base of the song. It should be the layer of a song that keeps the whole thing together, like a floor plan which acts as a guide track for the rest of the recording. Often this is drums, but it can be any instrument or track that works as a guide for the rest of the recordings. Usually in typical song productions vocals are recorded last, because they require the full instrumentation behind them. Details and effects should be recorded later, after thinking whether the song really needs them or not (Recording Revolution, 2011).

5.2 Sticking to a plan or being open to new ideas on the go?

Sticking to the recording schedule is important, but there are times when things do not go as planned. In these situations, it is equally important to recognize the things that do not work and react accordingly by discarding everything that does not support the overall goal. These things can be for example certain guitar tones, vocal doubles, a certain drumbeat, a lyric phrase or a sound effect. It is important to remember the goal and to simultaneously get rid of previous working methods and ideas if they are not taking the song towards the desired point (Reynolds 2009, 95).

Changes in productions are more than likely and situations often change, so even more important than the original plan is to react to changes successfully. This is an important part of any successful strategy (Karhumaa 2019, 28).

Adding too many things on a song in the recording phase can lead to loss of perception and doing reverse movements in post-production. Professional artists and producers do their best to avoid this by recording everything so that they do not require corrective movements in later phases (Burgess 2013, 153 - 169).

5.3 Focusing on the original goals

Perhaps the European history's greatest sculptor Michelangelo once described how every block of stone has a statue inside it and it is the task of the sculptor to discover it. When he started chipping away the rock, eventually revealing an amazing sculpture, he already knew what he was up to (Parker, 2013).

To demonstrate the meaning of this a bit more, the same approach applies in NASA space exploration. In the case of Perseverance, NASA's first Astrobiology-focused mission which studies the planet Mars with a high-tech rover, the NASA team set four main science objectives: studying the geology of Mars (rocks and landscapes), studying the astrobiology of Mars (possible signs of life), sample catching (finding and collecting physical samples from Mars and bring them on Earth) and Prepare for Humans (testing technology that would help sustain human presence on Mars in the future). These goals acted as the base for the entire project that has now led to the fact that there is a brand-new rover on another planet, Mars, working on all these goals right now (NASA, 2021).

The same approach applies to recording music. The people who record music must know what they are recording and why. Keeping the goals in mind will more likely lead to a successful production than impulsive recording.

6 POST-PRODUCTION

6.1 What is post-production?

Post-production is the stage in production when the recording is wrapped, and the editing of the material begins (Maio, 2019). Music post-production refers to all tasks associated with editing, mixing and mastering.

Post-production can be a purely technical task, but often includes artistic decision-making as well. Artistic vision is required especially in mixing, since it affects the recordings and their final form dramatically.

6.2 Defining the goals of post-production

It is a big mistake to think that the best way to express yourself is to do whatever you want, acting however you please. This is not expressing yourself. If you know what to do exactly, and you do it, you can express yourself fully. (Suzuki 2014, 23.) This Zen quote is good guidance for an artist and a music producer.

After, or even during the recording phase it is crucial to define the goals of post-production. There has to be a clear vision of the mix and how it should sound like. With lack of vision there is a great risk of making blind movements and wrong decisions that later require corrective movements and extra working hours (Burgess 2013, 153 - 169).

The overall goal can be for example a cold sounding album or a natural sounding song with a natural mix. More detailed goals can be for example an uncommonly loud hi-hat sound for increased personality or a snare reverb which reminds of the ones from 1980's metal albums. There should be a vision for the choice of effects and tones and the balance between the instruments. Without this vision there is a chance that the mixing phase turns into a trying phase, a confusing playground for mixing engineers or the artist (Cormier, 2017).

Reference tracks can be used for expressing the overall balance or desired frequency curves. They can act as a good reference point to the mix and keep the vision clear by A-B testing. (Horea n.d.; Sonarworks, 2020.)

6.3 Editing

According to LANDR website, audio editing is the manipulation of recorded audio files in a musical arrangement, film soundtrack or broadcast. Audio editing includes changing the position of audio clips on the DAW timeline, cleaning unwanted sounds, selecting takes, creating fades and so on (Hahn, 2020).

Editing should lead to a mixing session that is clear and focused. In practice this means cleaning and organizing the DAW sessions so that they are ready for future mixing. Editing includes getting rid of undesired tracks and takes and doing timeline-based fixes such as putting out-of-tempo drum hits onto place or doing length adjustments with MIDI tracks.

It always depends on the project how much editing is required. Mostly the need for editing depends on the number of tracks, the amount of takes, the amount of microphones used and in overall the amount of things in the DAW session. Another thing that affects here is how much uncertain material there is, for example takes that are not sure if they're going to be used or not. This is something that can be prevented already in the recording phase by determinately deleting all bad takes and leaving only the ones that are surely going to be used.

6.4 Mixing

Mixing is the process in which all audio material of a song is being blended together into one or more channels. The most common mixing format in music is two channels, also known as stereo (Modern Mixing, 2011).

Mixing means creating a desired balance between everything included in a song by using different audio tools and techniques. It is an essential part of almost any audio production.

6.4.1 Formulating a strategy for mixing

Before starting the mixing there should be a clear vision and a plotted plan for the mixing (Massey & Sutton 2000, 293 - 294). Planning the mixing phase in advance is the strategy formulation in mixing.

The right audio tools and reference tracks can be chosen well in advance. Whatever fits the mix and makes working efficient should be chosen. This is also like a toolbox which can be organized in such way that it serves the project's needs. Every mixer has their own preferences and every song requires different approaches, so knowing where to aim seems to be the key (Massey & Sutton 2000, 294).

A common technique in mixing strategy formulation is developing a sound field map. It demonstrates different instruments' place in the mixes stereo field, both panning and depth-wise. It helps with creating an overall picture of the basic panning, equalization, compression and reverberation settings between all elements in the mix (Keller, 2020).

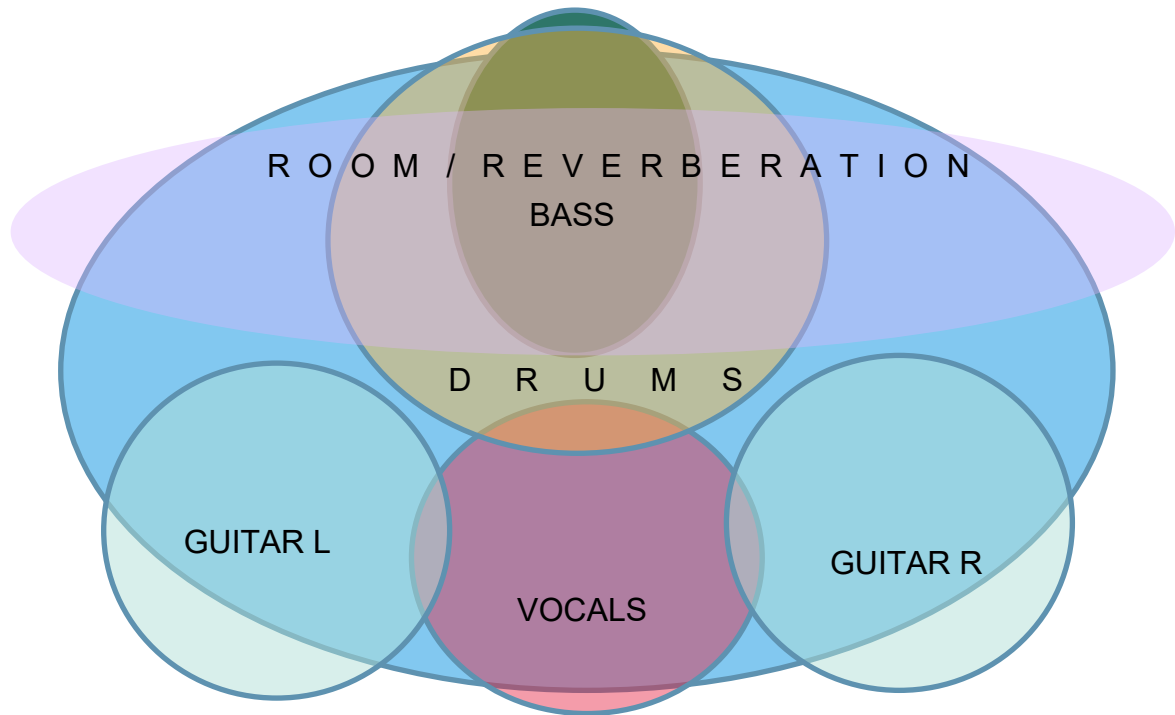


FIGURE 4. A typical sound field map of a band mix that consists of two guitar players, a bass player, a drummer and a singer (Kiiskilä, 2021)

Just like in recording, the strategy can consist of scheduling, the choice of tools, task order and the techniques used. How these are planned, depends on the project. After all, the idea is to reach the goal which is a desired sounding mix.

One important part of the mixing strategy formulation is to make sure that the mixing environment will be reliable and honest in means of the physics of sound. Briefly this means that the listening environment has to be properly calibrated in such way that the person mixing has an honest view on what's happening in the mixing session. If this has not been taken care of, it is same as shooting on a target with a broken scope rifle. Taken care of this can eliminate the need of listening to the mixes in several different environments and with several different devices (Sonarworks, n.d.).

6.4.2 Strategy implementation: mixing

Implementation in mixing strategy means the mixing process itself by following the formulated strategy and reacting to needed changes in a successful manner. It is a mixture of organized movement and intuition.

Strategically mixing can be done by progressing from big towards small movements. First the overall sound and the feel can be created, without paying much attention to detail. In this way the person mixing can make sure that the direction is right, and also discuss about this with the other people involved. In a case of artist-producer mixing one's own material, one just needs to trust the original vision. After finding the overall feel one can go through different sections in a song, creating more detailed balance using automations in volumes, effect controls and such. Details create wholeness so both big and small perception are important (Ballard & Massey 2000, 23).

Many kinds of tools can be used to help with mixing. Some of the most used tools are frequency analyzers, which show a visual version of the played sound's frequency spectrum curve. These tools can be very useful, giving a more detailed view about what's happening inside the sound spectrum.

Sense of hearing must be sensitive and reliable while mixing. As illustrated on FIGURE 5, human ears start decreasing some frequencies after a certain amount of listening time and they are also reflective to sound pressure levels, by filtering some frequencies more than others (Keller, 2020). Therefore, keeping breaks is an important part of the mixing process. It looks clear that listening environment and breaks between mixing sessions play a crucial part in mixing truthfully and successfully. This should be taken in consideration when creating the strategy formulation for mixing.

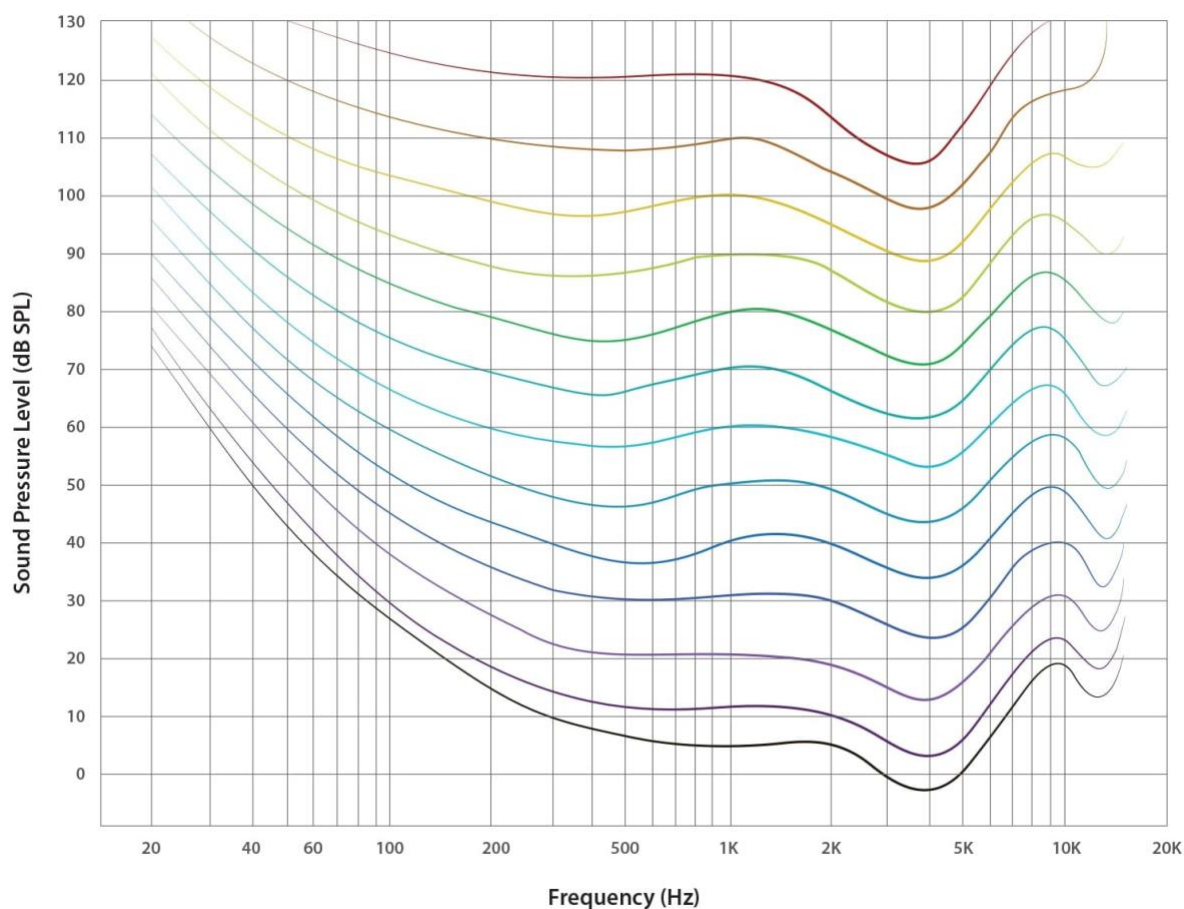


FIGURE 5. How our ears filter sound depending on the sound pressure level (Keller, 2020)

6.4.3 Recognizing the ready mix

It is important to know when the mix is ready. If there is not enough attention paid to this, it can result in overproduction or unnecessary mixing rounds (Burgess 2013, 155). There are different ways of recognizing a ready mix. Probably the most common way is to understand and notice when the goal has been reached. This can happen in various ways, such as comparing the mixes to a reference track or just simply knowing this with intuition and confirming it with taking a look at the frequency analyzers (Horea n.d.; Massey 2000). Usually when the mix is almost done, some details still come up. For example, a certain bass frequency or an unbalanced vocal line can still be fixed as a final touch.

There is a story about Michael Jackson's super hit *Billie Jean* which tells that the song was mixed 91 times by mixing engineer Bruce Swedien. After all it was the mix number 2 what went onto the record. The idea of going back to the mix number 2 came from the producer Quincy Jones (Cormier, 2017). This could be seen as an example of losing perception and overproducing the song.

Bruce Springsteen's 1982 album *Nebraska*, seen on PICTURE 2, ended up in a very different way. Springsteen had recorded a bunch of demos at home, using a 3 ¾ inch Tascam tape recorder. The idea was to arrange these demos again for his band and record a band album. After trying different things Springsteen, his band and the people involved in the production noticed that something is missing from the band versions. They even tried to record the songs again as acoustic versions in a proper studio, but nothing sounded like the original tapes. In the end, Springsteen and a team of sound engineers ended up using the original tape demos, record the audio on studio tapes, add a bit of reverb and release a massive scale album through Columbia Records consisting only acoustic bedroom demos (Marsh 2004, 363 - 367). The album turned into a classic, Platinum selling record. This is an example of recognizing the true nature of the material and choosing to work on it accordingly, no matter if it feels strange at first.



PICTURE 2. Bruce Springsteen's album *Nebraska* (Kiiskilä, 2021)

6.5 Mastering

According to Izotope, mastering is the term most commonly used to refer to the process of taking an audio mix and preparing it for distribution. It consists of unifying the sound of a record, maintaining consistency across an album, and preparing it for distribution (Izotope, 2014). It is very much a technical task rather than an artistic task.

Mastering is important since it polishes the mix and packs it up, ready to be delivered. It will not save a bad mix but can make a good one shine (Izotope, 2014). It can also make drastic changes in the way the song plays in streaming platforms, phones or radio stations, and it is a procedure that should be done by a person who knows where the song is going to end up. If the music ends up on a vinyl record, there are certain rules that should be followed to prevent problems in the record production, such as bass sub frequencies, loudness and phasing (Galindo, 2019).

If the song is not mastered properly, there's a risk the song won't get radio play. It should include metadata which can be read by different devices and make sure the song's rightsholders get their royalties. Nowadays, as shown in FIGURE 6, the song should also play on a correct level of peaks and loudness so it fits playlists and different streaming platforms (Spotify, 2021).

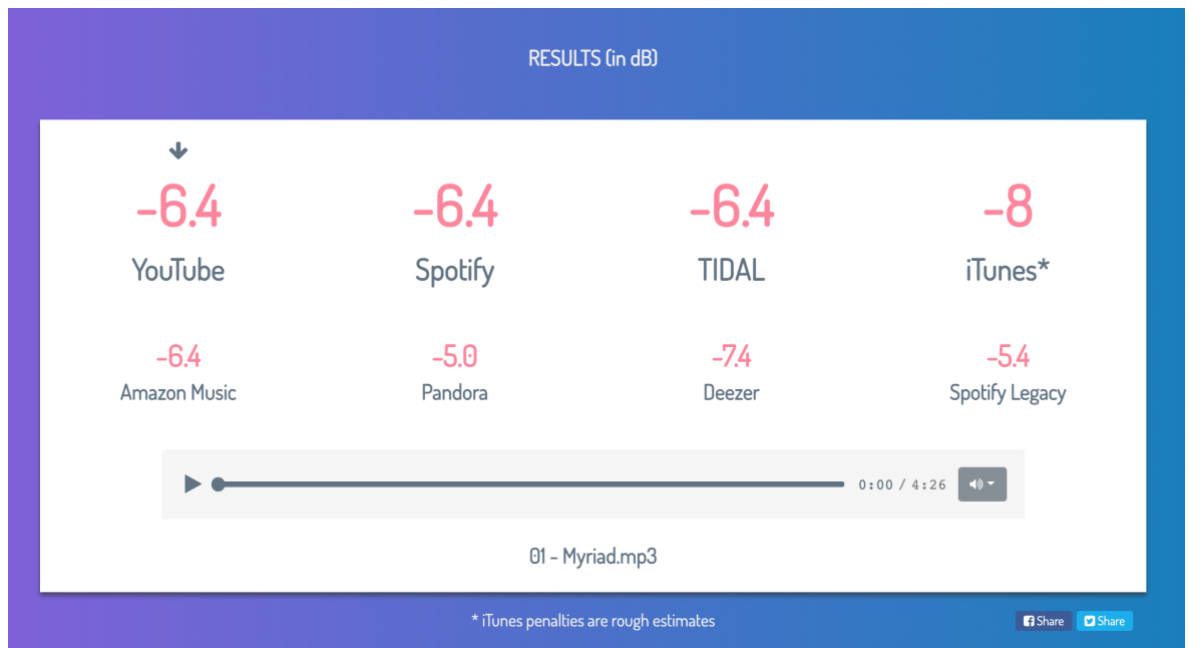


FIGURE 6. This screenshot is a demonstration how different streaming services adjust the streaming volumes according to the original material loudness, in this case of a song with peaks in -0.0dB and RMS in -9.6dB (Loudness Penalty, 2021)

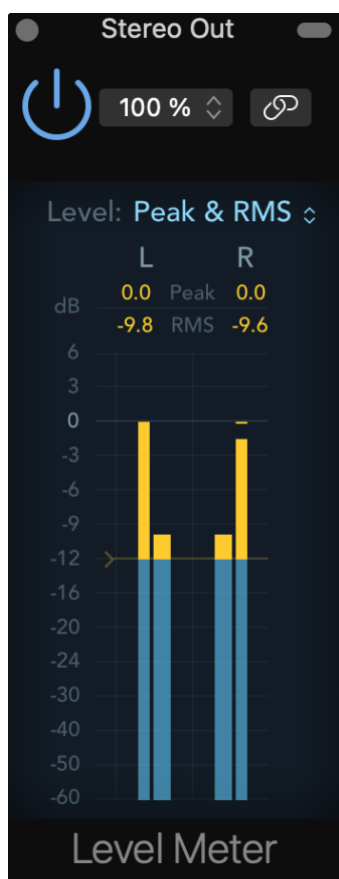


FIGURE 7. Logic Pro level meter showing the peaks and the RMS of the same song that was used on the Loudness Penalty website in FIGURE 6. (Kiiskilä, 2021)

7 WORK SAMPLE

7.1 PA Kiiskilä: *Ihmisen laulu*

As a work sample I am using my second solo album *Ihmisen laulu*, a folk-rock album which was recorded and released in 2020. This album is really a whole, so I found it better to describe the entire album making process instead of just some of its songs. I was both the artist and the producer on this album, so this is a good example of an all-encompassing artist-producer production.

The album was written during years 2019 – 2020 and it was recorded and produced in Tampere in 2020. The album consists of nine songs and two transition tracks, which are all written and performed by me. The record was released as a self-release, both digital and CD formats, through Last Day Of The North in July 2020.



PICTURE 7. *Ihmisen laulu* CD version (Nevalainen-Kiiskilä, 2020)

7.1.1 Background

I am a textbook case of an artist-producer described in Burgess' book *The Art Of Music Production* (Burgess 2013, 9). I have faced most of the common artist-producer problems mentioned in the book and this thesis, such as lack of vision and not getting my works finished. The album *Ihmisen laulu* was chosen for this thesis because I overcame these problems with strategic approach and focused decision-making while crafting the album.

My first solo album *Vapaudesta* (2019) was a very minimalistic, almost lo-fi acoustic folk album. On *Ihmisen laulu* I decided to go further, both in means of songwriting and production. I understood that I have these good, strong songs, so I really want to get the most out of them. The initial idea was to record an acoustic folk-rock album with mostly acoustic instruments and honest takes.

Like pointed out by Zambas (2019), motivation and foundation play a great role in accomplishing tasks. I felt the topics and themes on *Ihmisen laulu* were highly personal and important, and this helped me stay focused throughout the production. The songs are about feelings, death of close ones, outcasts, addiction and growing up as a person. Freedom was an important theme, and it played a big role on the album's cover art as well as seen on PICTURE 7. The cover was painted by Finnish painter Sanneleena Stenvall. Lyrically I felt that there are these stories and topics that should be told and discussed. As a musician and a songwriter, making an album was the way to go. I dwelled my inspiration from personal life, historic events and feelings. The album contains strong emotions and my goal was to encourage the listener go through those emotions within oneself.

7.1.2 Pre-production and formulation of strategy

The whole album *Ihmisen laulu* was carefully pre-planned in terms of schedule, budget and production. Many of the methods presented in this thesis, such as

Junea's (2018) descriptions of strategy management, were used in the album's pre-production phase.

The songs were written during years 2019 - 2020. When enough songs were finished, I formulated a strategy for producing these songs into a record. Writing the album was like designing a house, similar to how Musashi (1645, 41 – 43) described on Book Of Five Rings. I was inspired by the book and tried to develop my approach to songwriting and producing through its texts.

The comparison with carpentry is through the connection with houses. Houses of the nobility, houses of warriors, the four houses, ruin of houses, thriving of the houses, the style of the house, the tradition of the house, and the name of the house. The carpenter uses a master plan of the building, and the Way of strategy is similar in that there is a plan of campaign. If you want to learn the craft of war, ponder over this book. The teacher is a needle, the disciple is a thread. You must practice constantly.

Like the foreman carpenter, the commander must know natural rules, and the rules of the country, and the rules of the houses. This is the Way of the foreman.

The foreman carpenter must know the architectural theory of towers and temples, and the plans of palaces, and must employ men to raise up houses. The Way of the foreman carpenter is the same as the Way of the commander of a warrior house.

In the construction of houses, choice of woods is made. Straight unknotted timber of appearance is used for the revealed pillars, straight timber with small defects is used for the inner pillars. Timber of the finest appearance, even if a little tweak, is used for the thresholds, lintels, doors and sliding doors, and so on. Good strong timber, though it be gnarled and knotted, can always be used discreetly in construction. Timber which is weak or knotted throughout should be used as scaffolding, and later for firewood.

The foreman carpenter allots his men work according to their ability. Floor layers, makers of sliding doors, thresholds and lintels, ceilings and so on. Those of poor ability lay the floor joists, and those of lesser ability carve wedges and do such miscellaneous work. If the foreman knows and deploys his men well the finished work will be good. The foreman should take into account the abilities and the limitations of his men, circulating among them and asking nothing unreasonable. He should know their morale and spirit, and encourage them when necessary. This is the same as the principle of strategy.

Like a trooper, the carpenter sharpens his own tools. He carries his equipment in his toolbox, and works under the direction of his foreman. He makes columns and girders with an axe, shapes floorboards and shelves with a plane, cuts fine openwork and carvings accurately, giving as excellent a finish as his skill will allow. This is the craft of the carpenter. When the carpenter becomes skilled and understands measures, he can become a foreman.

The carpenter's attainment is having tools which will cut well, to make small shrines, writing shelves, tables, paper lanterns, chopping boards and pot-lids. These are the specialties of the carpenter. This are similar for the trooper. You ought to think deeply about this. The attainment of the carpenter is that his work is warped, that the joints are not misaligned, and that the work is truly planed so that it meets well and is not merely finished in sections. This is essential. If you want to learn this Way, deeply consider the things written in this book one at a time. You must do sufficient research. (Musashi 1645, 41 – 43.)

First, there was the initial personal will and the initial idea of starting the album creation. Then, I thought about the style and the genre, which were very much influenced by my personal background. When I was sure I would write an acoustic folk-rock album, I started to make decisions about how to create the album. If compared to Musashi's (1645, 41 - 43) text on carpentry and house building, this could be seen as choosing the house's architectural style, size and maybe the materials.

Before I started recording, I drew a sound field map seen in FIGURE 8, which would act as a core and a guide for the album production. It guided me with knowing how many tracks to record and whether everything I record has a space in the mix. This could be seen as a floor plan, as in building a house. Also finding reference tracks was one of the first steps. Bruce Springsteen's *Devils and Dust* was the number one reference, and it gave a hint of the possible tone, feel and mix balance of the upcoming record.

As described by Musashi (1645, 41 – 43), it is important to allot workers according to their abilities. In the very beginning of this project, I decided I would hire another person to mix the album. Mikael Vanninen got involved and we decided that he would mix the album. I presented him the initial references already at this stage, so he would know what is coming. We also made a deal that I would personally

record and edit all the material by myself and he would then mix the material. This was a budget, perspective and time -related decision.

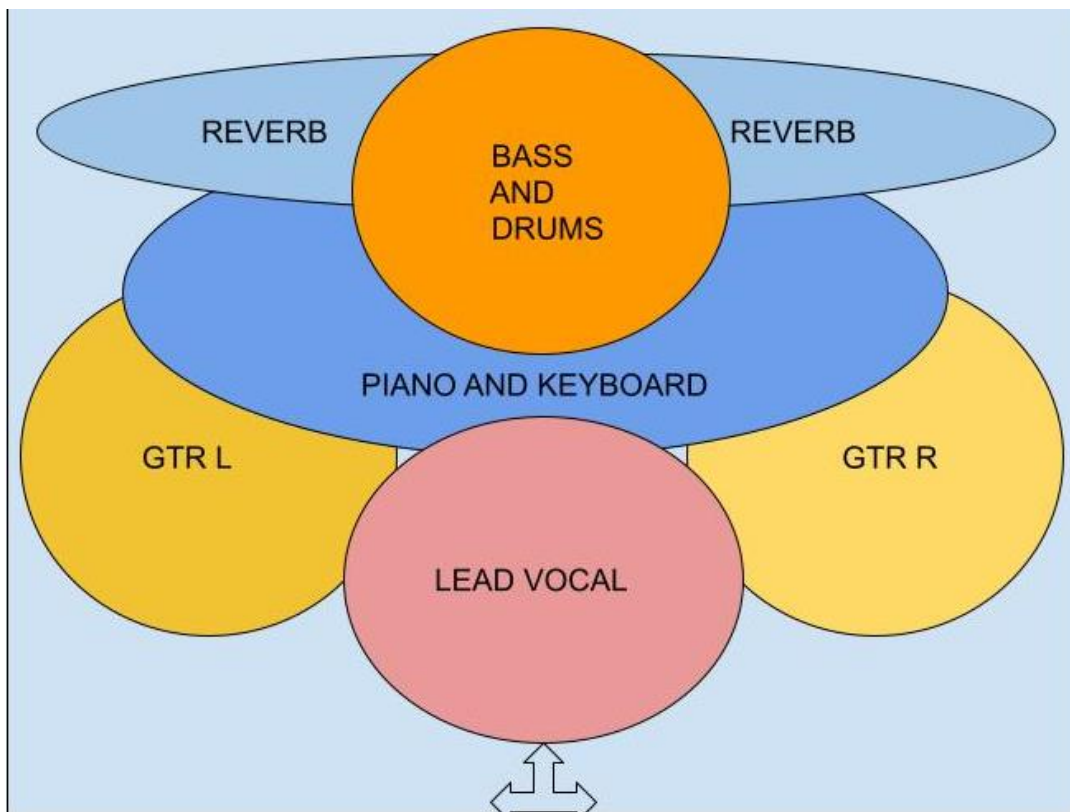


FIGURE 8. Basic sound field map for *Ihmisen laulu* (Kiiskilä, 2020)

Most of the songs were recorded with a click track. This made it easier and more efficient to record all the tracks and vocals and hop from session to session. Only two songs, *Inari* and *Älä käännä minua takaisin*, were recorded without a click because I recorded them live, playing the guitar and singing at the same time.

7.1.3 Setting goals

Three main goals were set before the actual production. Though my second solo album and NASA's (2020) Perseverance mission are literally from another planet, the basic principles of goalsetting were the same. They helped with staying organized and knowing where to aim and focus.

1. A professional sounding record. This was the base of everything. The songs, the sounds, the mix and the performance had to sound professional and timeproof. In my opinion these goals were reached.

2. Finish the album before summer 2020. I started in January 2020, the album was ready in late April and was released in July.
3. Beat personal perfectionism. I tried to learn how to record so that I would realize when a take is good enough, as well as not to worry too much about details. I think I really learned this during the production of this record.

7.1.4 Setting a financial budget

The production budget was pretty limited for this album. Since the album was a self-release, most of the money had to be saved for the album release costs and promotion. The album was recorded alone at TAMK Mediapolis premises, free of cost. This saved most of the budget.

Mixing was the only actual album production cost. As I thought it could work out well if I hired someone else to mix so that I wouldn't have to overhear the songs, we made a deal about mixing with Mikael Vanninen. I mastered the album myself because I didn't have any extra money and I wanted to learn more about mastering.

7.1.5 Choosing the recording environment

As discussed by Hiilesmaa (2014, 11, 14) and Massey (2000, 131), the recording environment should be chosen with thought. The recording environment for *Ihmisen laulu* was chosen mostly due to finances, but also because the TAMK premises have a wide variety of microphones, recording gear and a professional studio environment. In this case, recording at TAMK was the most practical choice.

If I had had the money, I would have probably chosen another studio, purely because of the feeling of peace and aloneness. The TAMK premises usually have students or other people around, and this can cause problems for singing

performance and relaxation. I weighted the pros and cons and still decided to record the material at TAMK. It worked out really well.

7.1.6 Choosing tools

Like Musashi (1645, 48) said, we should not have a favourite weapon, nor likes and dislikes. To become over-familiar with one weapon would be as much a fault as not knowing it sufficiently well. This approach was kept in mind while creating *Ihmisen laulu*, but not in a very forced way. All the tools chosen to create this album were chosen due to their availability as well as their tonal characteristics that would serve the album well. The tools consisted of guitars, bass, microphones, percussion instruments and such.

Ihmisen laulu is very much a guitar album. I play guitar on every song of the album, so the main guitar of choice had to be good. For the main guitar track I used my Yamaha acoustic guitar from 1991 and for the complimentary guitar track I used a Martin acoustic guitar I found from TAMK premises. There is also one nylon string guitar played in the song *Värisuora*, bringing a sort of gypsy jazz -vibe to it. This guitar was also found at TAMK while recording the album.



PICTURE 3. Yamaha acoustic guitar used on *Ihmisen laulu* (Kiiskilä, 2021)

The acoustic guitars were recorded with a Røde NT5 small-diagram condenser microphone pair, chosen for their natural sound. For future stereo imaging, the other mic pointed at the 12th fret and the other mic pointed off-axis towards the guitar bridge. The preamp used was Audient 880, chosen simply because it was there at the studio.

The electric bass used for tracking, seen in PICTURE 4, was an early 1970's Japanese short scale bass. All the bass tracks of the album were played with this bass. The bass was chosen due to its smooth and even sound. The bass' vintage tone was very good simply through the Audient 880 preamp which was used as a DI.



PICTURE 4. Vintage Japanese short scale bass used on *Ihmisen laulu* (Kiiskilä, 2021)

The vocals were recorded with a Røde K2 tube microphone. This microphone, seen in PICTURE 5, was chosen because it gives a nice low end and tamed most of the sibilance and harshness already in the recording phase. I have tried it for a female vocalist before, and it was not the perfect match. Somehow for my voice, which is lower, this microphone really felt like a good fit. The preamp used was Audient 880. The tambourine and other percussive sounds were also recorded with the K2 and Audient preamp. As the sound was good, so there was no need for trying different setups.



PICTURE 5. Røde K2 (Kiiskilä, 2021)

Drums and piano were created with Logic Pro X samples. The album's drum tracks mostly included only bass drum, so the Logic drum samples did the job really well. Logic Pro's piano sounds were used for the album's piano takes, but they were saturated with a tape saturation plugin before sending them over for the mixing engineer.

7.1.7 Creating limits

As pointed out by Massey (2000, 79) and Taylor (1997), creating limits boosts creativity. One of the limits created was the principle that all of the songs should withstand live show situations, where the songs are performed with just one guitar and harmonica. Basically, this meant that there should not be too much stuff, and the guitar and the vocals should play the main part in every song. This is why the guitars and vocals were recorded first, and then enhancing things were added on top of them.

Another limit was that only acoustic guitars and acoustic instrument samples would be used. This was the case in most of the songs, but electric piano was added on a few tracks after all.

7.1.8 Creating schedules

The recording and mixing schedule was pretty relaxed, and sessions took place whenever there were free days. The album recording started in January 2020 and the official release date was supposed to be in July 2020, so everything just had to be done about two months before that.

As seen on FIGURE 9, one recording day was used for guitars and two days were used for vocals and bass. After that more time was spent with the piano tracks and drum tracks, since they turned out to be much more difficult to get right. For mixing, around a month was reserved but it did not take that long. The first mixes were done only after a week or two from when the material was sent

to the mixing engineer. We went through a few mixing rounds before everything started sounding final.

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
DAY	Free	School	School	School	School
EVENING	Changing guitar strings and practicing	Practice and preparing the DAW sessions	Guitar recording	Vocal recording	Vocal and bass recording

FIGURE 9. A rough schedule for recording guitars and vocals at TAMK Mediapolis' Sputnik 1 studio room after sound design classes in January 2020 (Kiiskilä, 2020)

7.2 Recording and implementation of strategy

7.2.1 Recording order

Recording order can be thought through house building phraseology as well. First, a floor plan was created (the sessions and upcoming stereo image), then the foundations (first guitar tracks with a click track), then the walls and the roof (other instruments and vocals), then paint and decoration (piano and software instruments). Musashi (1645, 41 - 43) describes this perfectly in Book Of Five Rings.

1. Creating sessions with confirmed tempos
2. Recording the main guitar tracks as good as possible at TAMK studio

3. Recording the thoroughly arranged second guitar tracks on top of the first guitar tracks at TAMK studio
4. Recording bass at TAMK studio
5. Recording tambourine at TAMK studio
6. Recording vocals at TAMK studio
7. Bouncing a simple mix for software instrument recording at home
8. Recording piano, drums and other software instruments at home

The recording order was planned in advance, based on similar views as presented by Recording Revolution (2011). The core of *Ihmisen laulu* recordings was the guitars, so everything started from there. It was important to plan all this in advance since I had to manage through all the recordings, studio and microphone bookings, creating sessions and all that on my own. I used a calendar and plenty of notes to stay on track what I would do and when.

7.2.2 Sticking to a plan or being open to new ideas on the go?

As written by Karhumaa (2019, 28) on his book on artist management strategy, changes in productions are more than likely and situations often change, so even more important than the original plan is to react to changes successfully. Mostly I stuck on my original plan on *Ihmisen laulu*, but there were a few changes which came up during recording. These little things made a massive difference on some songs and it would have felt wrong not to involve them.

For example, on *Huomenna me ollaan vapaita miehii* the idea was to play both guitar tracks with a capo on the 9th fret, but while recording I realized I could add more depth and color by playing the second guitar track with the capo on the 2nd fret, playing different chords. This change made the song sound better. The similar thing happened with *Halusin aina täältä pois*. The idea was to play the main melody with a harmonica, but I could not pull it off. Since the melody could not be played with a harmonica, it ended up being played with a software instrument electric piano. The tone of this instrument brought the song to a whole new level by adding a childlike, gentle tone on the track.

The whole production was very well planned, but if only the original ideas would have been followed, the end result would have been a lot worse. That is why it felt important to have a mixture of both, a good pre-production plan and an open mind while recording.

7.2.3 Focusing on the original goals

Just like when NASA (2020) worked on the Perseverance mission or when Musashi (1645) made a move to cut his enemy, the original goals were clear at all times while crafting *Ihmisen laulu*. Everything had to sound professional and personal, and what this meant in practice was that everything was recorded as well as possible, with as fitting equipment as possible. The goals helped with knowing when the desired results were reached. It was easier to be confident about whether a song has enough tracks or not, for example. Also, I did not start the recording before I was sure that the songs were as ready as possible in terms of lyrics and arrangements.

Also, the schedule plan was present at all times. Everything went as planned in terms of scheduling. If I had fallen sick or forgotten my third goal (beating perfectionism), the schedules could have been broken.

7.3 Post-production of *Ihmisen laulu*

7.3.1 Goals of post-production

To mitigate the album production risks mentioned by Burgess (2013, 153 - 169), clear goals were created for the album. There were separate post-production goals for the entire album and separate tracks. A song-by-song wish list was written for the mixing engineer before sending the tracks to him, as well as a wish list for the tone of the entire album. For the entire album, tonal keywords were written down, like presented in FIGURE 10.

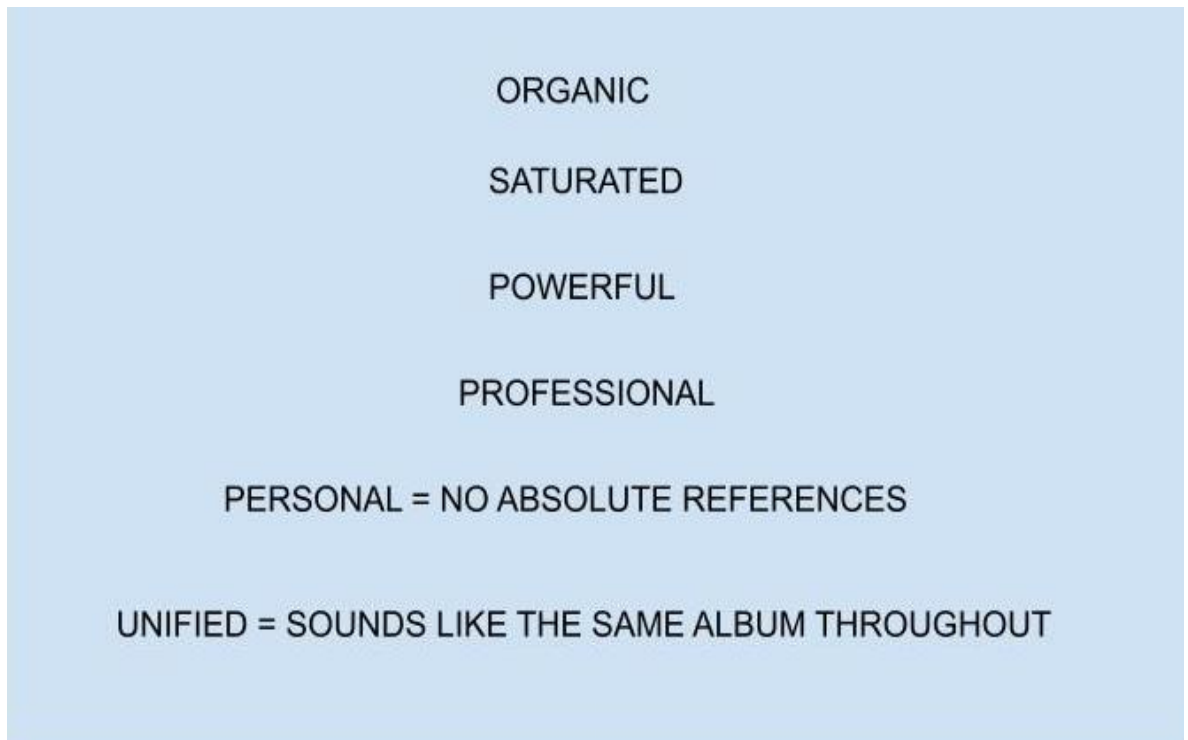


FIGURE 10. Post-production keywords for *Ihmisen laulu* (Kiiskilä, 2020)

This album was going to be both a digital and a CD release, so the master was to be done either for both formats or in such way that it fits both formats. Since I mastered the album, I read information about CD mastering and digital streaming platform mastering and set my goals accordingly.

7.3.2 Editing

I edited and prepared the album tracks myself. The editing happened quickly, since I was very familiar with the tracks right after recording them.

Also, I felt that it would be fair to do this on behalf of the mixing engineer, because the amount of money for mixing was not so high that I could have asked for choosing the takes and editing as well. We made a deal that I would choose the takes, edit the tracks as thoroughly as possible and send him the material as ready, right length, edited tracks, ready to be mixed. This technique worked out well.

7.3.3 Mixing

The album, except the last track *Älä käännä minua takaisin*, was mixed by Mikael Vanninen. Mikael is a skilled mixing engineer when it comes to technique, critical listening and objective thinking. He also understands audio physics and technology. We have worked on some school projects before, and I thought that my artistic vision and his technical approach combined would work out well on *Ihmisen laulu*.

As discussed between Ballard and Massey (2000, 23), a mix can benefit from going through from large to small movements. This was done on *Ihmisen laulu*, where the mixing engineer first sculpted an overall tone on the entire record, and later attention to detail was paid song by song.

The mixing happened very quickly since everyone involved knew which direction to go with the mix. The wish list and the keyword list helped in maintaining the focus on the original goals. At some point a ready mix was recognized and the goals had been reached. The technical specifications also seemed right and the mixes were bounced for mastering.

7.3.4 Mastering

I mastered the album on my own. First, the idea was to master it at TAMK premises, since the sound environment is very honest and the tools are the best available. Unfortunately, the corona virus came in and the TAMK premises got closed due to lockdown. Out of money, I decided to master the album at home using Sonarworks Reference and Beyerdynamic DT770 Pro 250ohm headphones. Because of this, mastering of the album was largely done with eyes. Spectrum analyzers and level meters were used a lot and any unbalanced frequencies what were left in the mix were fixed with the help of visual tools.

First, notes were made of all the mixes and information about peak levels, RMS levels, left and right channel levels and frequency spectrum curve were written down in detail. With this information it was easier to know what to do with every

track. The goal was to master the material so that it would work both on CD and on digital streaming platforms. The aim was to make all songs reach -1.5 true peak level and no more than -12db RMS level, so that the songs would have enough dynamics but would work on a Spotify pop playlist somehow as well.

7.4 Aftermath

During and after its release period, *Ihmisen laulu* was received surprisingly well by the public and Finnish media. All of its four singles *Sataa sataa sataa*, *Värisuora*, *Halusin aina täältä pois* and *Mä en oo kuollu* were added on Spotify's editorial playlists. Finnish broadcasting company YLE's journalists Teppo Vapaus and Jorma Hietamäki, as seen on PICTURE 7, played a song on their radio shows.

ARTIKKELIT ARVOSTELUT FOLK POP PUNK ROCK

"Taidokasta ja ihmisläheistä folkia" – arvostelussa PA Kiiskilän "Ihmisen laulu"

Toimittaja: Mikko Nissinen - 09.09.2020

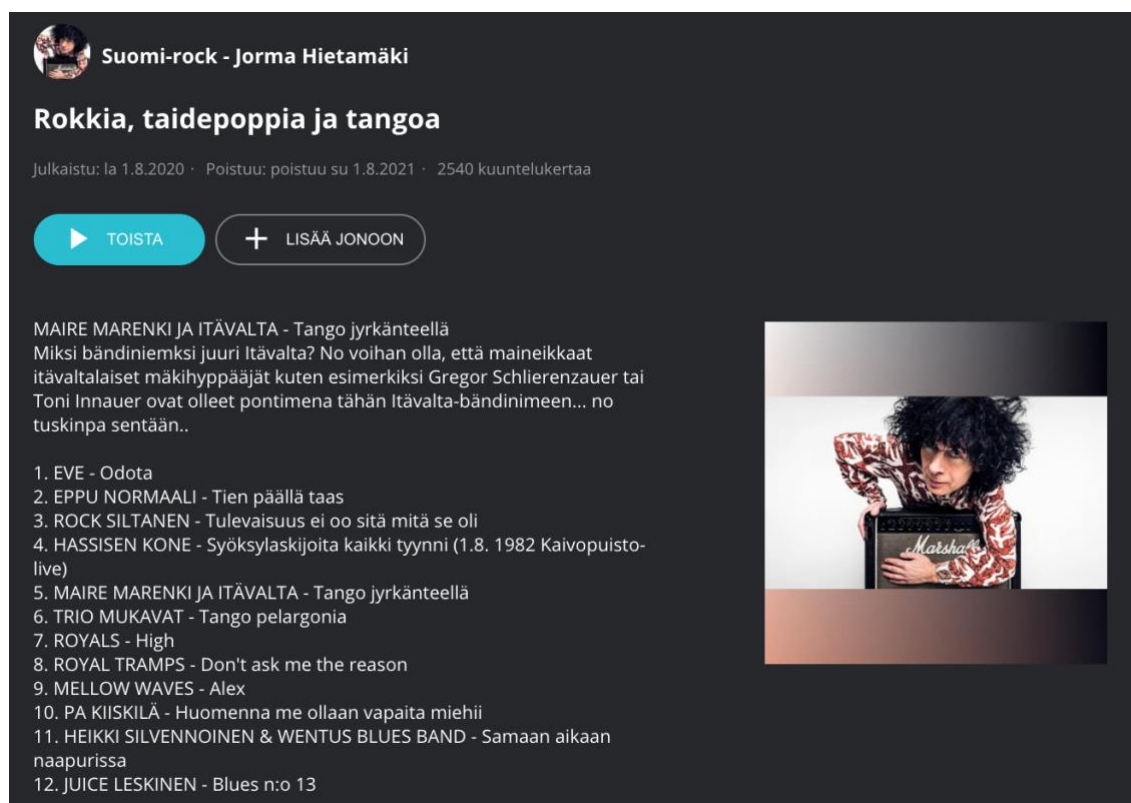
Jaa tämä artikkeli   



PA Kiiskilä on kotimaisen folk-perinteen vakavasti otettavimpia uusia kykyjä. Toiseen albumiinsa päässyt vanhan liiton singer-songwriter-meiningillä operoiva trubaduuri tarjoilee muun muassa Dave Lindholmin, Tommi Liimatan ja Kari Peitsamon henkeen yhdeksän ilmavaa ja rauhoittavaa akustista biisiä.

PICTURE 6. 8- / 10 *Ihmisen laulu* review on KaaosZine (Kiiskilä, 2021)

The album was also reviewed by a plenty of web medias like KaaosZine (PICTURE 6.) and Desibeli, and also a couple of printed medias like Savon Sanomat. All of the reviews were positive and gave the feeling that me, Mikael and the people involved in the album's visual appearance had done a great job.



PICTURE 7. Finnish radio journalist Jorma Hietamäki played *Huomenna me ollaan vapaita miehii* on Yle Radio Suomi (Kiiskilä, 2021)

There were Covid-19 restrictions but the album release show, seen in PICTURE 8, with Pystyyn Kuolleet Hipit at Tampere's Vastavirta-Klubi in July 2020 was sold out. Many people came to say that they have shed a tear while listening to the record or that the lyrics reflect their emotional life in one way or another.

Personally, I was very happy with the album and how it turned out. It is not the perfect album, but it sounds the way it was intended to sound. It sounds like itself. All in all, I could say that *Ihmisen laulu* was a successful production and reached its goals.



PICTURE 8. Photo taken from *Ihmisen laulu* album release show at Vastavirta-Klubi in July 2020 (Nevalainen-Kiiskilä, 2020)

8 CONCLUSION

The bottom line of this thesis is that there is no one way of producing music, but there are approaches and methods that can help with most projects. Every decision, whether it is related to songwriting, recording order or the goals of mixing, can be done in a way that it serves the music. As noticed from the wide variety of source material, even music production related decision-making can be learned outside recording studios and songwriting classes. Everything can be art and everything can be done either with a goal or without it. The main idea is to have a goal and a strong motive to reach that goal.

A goal can be a certain kind of result on a musical record as described in Massey's (2000) and Burgess' (2013) books on music production, or as in Suzuki's Zen talks (2014), self-realization and enlightenment through just sitting. As an artist-producer, the goal is to succeed in creating and finishing a song, a track or an album. Every artist-producer has to think through their own motives and goals within themselves and decide what success means for them on a personal level. It is not useful to think how others craft their projects or formulate strategies, but instead it is useful to deeply think of our own projects, take all possible details in consideration and formulate own strategies accordingly, all while being open to more-than-likely changes.

Formulating production strategies can be useful. A comprehensive strategy formulation and its well-focused implementation can clarify the artistic and technical decision-making process and lead to efficient work and successful productions. They can also help with time-related and budget-related issues. Strategic approach on its own can be stiff for music production, and therefore openness and adaptiveness play an important role in balancing out detailed schedules and pre-planned working methods. It could be said that this kind of reactivity may be the most important part of the strategy itself.

Ihmisen laulu was the first album where I properly focused on strategy formulation and implementation. The organized approach used on this album made the whole production feel clear and more professional than my previous projects. As an end result, it led to a successful production.

9 REFERENCES

Barra, Erin. 2019. Songwriting Basics: Choosing the Right Point of View. Web article. Released on 22.1.2019. Read on 18.3.2021. <https://www.izotope.com/en/learn/songwriting-basics-choosing-the-right-point-of-view.html>

Burgess, R., Coolidge, C., Gladwell, M. 2013. The art of music production: the theory and practice. Fourth edition. New York: Oxford University Press.

Chang, Rachel. 2020. Keith Richards Wrote One of the Rolling Stones' Biggest Hits In His Sleep. Web Article. Released on 27.4.2020. Read on 16.3.2021. <https://www.biography.com/news/keith-richards-satisfaction-rolling-stones>

Cheal, David. 2016. It was originally 80 verses long – and 19 other facts about Leonard Cohen's Hallelujah. Web article. Read on 16.3.2021. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/music/artists/20-facts-about-leonard-cohens-hallelujah/>

Colley, Kyle. 2017. The Psychology of Habits: How to Become a Master of Change. Web article. Released on 27.7.2017. Read on 16.3.2021. <https://www.goalcast.com/2017/07/28/psychology-of-habits-how-to-become-master-of-change/>

Cormier, Roger. 2017. 21 Thrilling Facts About Michael Jackson's Thriller. Web article. Released on 30.11.2017. Read on 9.3.2021. <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/71786/21-thrilling-facts-about-michael-jacksons-thriller>

Easy Song Licensing. 2016. How to Copyright Your Music. Web Article. Read on 17.3.2021. <https://www.easysonglicensing.com/pages/help/articles/copyright-law/how-to-copyright-your-music.aspx#:~:text=In%20fact%2C%20music%20is%20automatically,paper%20or%20on%20audio%20recording.&text=All%20you%20have%20to%20do,your%20song%20without%20your%20permission.>

Freedman, L. 2013. Strategy. Oxford University Press.

Galindo, Jett. Izotope. Mastering For Vinyl: Tips for Digital Mastering Engineers. Web Article. Released on 25.3.2019. Read on 17.3.2021. <https://www.izotope.com/en/learn/mastering-for-vinyl-tips-for-digital-mastering-engineers.html>

Hahn, Michael. 2020. Audio Editing: 10 Helpful Tips for Better Results. Released on 16.4.2020. Read on 10.3.2021. <https://blog.landr.com/audio-editing-tips/>

Hawking, Tom. 2021. 20 Brilliant Musicians on Why They Make Music. Web article]. Released on 11.10.2012. Read on 17.3.2021. <https://www.flavorwire.com/336601/20-brilliant-musicians-on-why-they-make-music>

- Hietamäki, J. 2020. Rokkia, taidepoppia ja tangoa. Radio program. Released on 1.8.2020. <https://areena.yle.fi/audio/1-50559750>
- Hiilesmaa, K. 2014. PRENATAL PAIN IN ALBUM MAKING PROCESS: How To Anticipate and Understand Stressful Situations and whether We Can Learn Something from Childbirth. Tampereen Ammattikorkeakoulu. Bachelor's Thesis.
- Hoffmann, Charles. 2019. 7 Essential Books Every Music Producer Must Read. [Web article]. Released on 17.1.2019. Read on 16.3.2021. <https://www.blackghostaudio.com/blog/7-essential-books-every-music-producer-must-read>
- Horea, Tiki. Sonarworks. 2020. Mixing and Mastering with reference tracks. Web article. Released on 11.9.2020. Read on 17.3.2021. <https://www.sonarworks.com/soundid-reference/blog/learn/mixing-and-mastering-with-reference-tracks/>
- Izotope. 2014. What is Mastering and Why is it Important? Web article. Released on 19.6.2014. Read on 3.3.2021. <https://www.izotope.com/en/learn/what-is-mastering.html>
- Junea, P. 2018. Strategic Management: Strategy Formulation vs Strategy Implementation. Web article. Read on 1.4.2021. <https://www.managementstudyguide.com/strategic-management.htm>
- Karhumaa, M. 2019. The Essence Of Music Business: Strategy. Karhumaa.
- Keller, Daniel. Universal Audio. Mixing in Stereo: Adding Width And Depth To Your Recordings. Web Article. Read on 17.3.2021. <https://www.uaudio.com/blog/studio-basics-mixing-stereo/>
- Liddell, H., Scott, R. A Greek-English Lexicon. Oxford. Clarendon Press. 1940. Web dictionary. <https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0057%3Aentry%3Dstrathqi%2Fa>
- Loudness Penalty. 2021. Website. www.loudnesspenalty.com
- Maio, Alyssa. 2019. What is Post-Production? A Quick Rundown & Why Trust Matters. Web article. Released on 21.11.2019. Read on 1.3.2021. <https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/what-is-post-production/>
- Marsh, D. 2008. Bruce Springsteen: Pomon tarina. 2nd edition. (T. Pulkkinen & P. Markkula Trans.) Helsinki, Finland: Like.
- Massey, H., Afanasieff, W., Ballard, G., Gagel, W., Glossop, M., Kramer, E., Leckie, J., Levine, S., Martin, G., Panunzio, T., Shivy, S., Sutton, R. 2000. Behind the Glass: Top Producers Tell How They Craft The Hits. San Francisco: Backbeat Books.
- Masterclass editors. 10 Techniques for Writing Memorable Songs. Web article. Read on 18.3.2021. <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/songwriting-tips->

[techniques-for-writing-memorable-songs#10-techniques-for-writing-memorable-songs](#)

Masunaga, Reihō. 1971. *A Primer of Sōtō Zen: A translation of Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō Zuimonki*. University of Hawaii Press. Honolulu. 101.

Matla, Sam. *Finishing Music: Strategies For Completing Your Tracks*. [Web article]. Read on 16.3.2021. <https://www.edmprod.com/finishing-music/>

Matla, Sam. *Stop Staring Blankly At The Empty Project In Your DAW*. [Web article, offer]. Read on 16.3.2021. <https://www.edmprod.com/workflow/>

Modern mixing. 2011. *What is mixing?* Web article. Released on 10.1.2011. Read on 10.2.2021. <https://modernmixing.com/blog/2011/01/10/what-is-mixing/>

Musashi, M. 1645. *A Book of Five Rings*. (V. Harris Trans.) The Overlook Press.

NASA, Blodgett & Dunbar. 2020. *Our Missions And Values*. Career information web page. Updated on 17.7.2020. Read on 10.2.2021. <https://www.nasa.gov/careers/our-mission-and-values>

NASA. 2020. *Mars 2020 Mission Contributions to NASA's Mars Exploration Program Science Goal*. Web article. <https://mars.nasa.gov/mars2020/mission/science/goals/#:~:text=The%20Perseverance%20rover%20is%20designed,in%20which%20it%20was%20formed>

Nissinen, M. 2020. Kaaoszine. "Taidokasta ja ihmisläheistä folkia" – arvostelussa PA Kiiskilän "Ihmisen laulu". Web article. Read on 9.9.2020. <https://kaaoszine.fi/taidokasta-ja-ihmisläheista-folkia-arvostelussa-pa-kiiskilan-ihmisen-laulu/>

Parker, Nils. 2013. *The Angel in the Marble: Modern Life Lessons from History's Greatest Sculptor*. Web article. Released on 9.6.2013. Read on 19.3.2021. <https://nilsaparker.medium.com/the-angel-in-the-marble-f7aa43f333dc>

Recording Revolution. 2011. *Best Order To Record In?* [Reader Question]. Web Article. Released on 24.1.2011. <https://www.recordingrevolution.com/best-order-to-record-in-reader-question/>

Reynolds, G. 2009. *Esityksen suunnittelu: zen ja pelkistämisen taito*. 1st edition. (E. Sarkkinen Trans.) Jyväskylä: WSOY.

Riopel, Leslie. 2021. *The Importance, Benefits and Value of Goal Setting*. Web article. Released on 27.1.2021. Read on 17.3.2021. <https://positivepsychology.com/benefits-goal-setting/>

Sample, Ian. 2019. *Blow to 10,000-hour rule as study finds practice doesn't always make perfect*. [Web article]. Released on 21.8.2019. Read on 10.3.2021. <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2019/aug/21/practice-does-not-always-make-perfect-violinists-10000-hour-rule>

Sawyers, J. 2006. *Tougher Than the Rest: 100 Best Bruce Springsteen Songs*. Omnibus Press. New York.

Sonarworks. 2021. Technology Overview. Website. Read on 15.3.2021
<https://www.sonarworks.com/technology>

Spotify. 2021. Mastering & loudness. Web guide. Read on 1.1.2021.
<https://artists.spotify.com/faq/mastering-and-loudness#how-does-spotify-calculate-loudness>

Suzuki, S. 2014. *Kirjeitä tyhjyydestä: Zen ja elämisen taito*. (L. Porceddu, Trans.) Helsinki, Finland: Basam. (Original work published 2002).

Taylor, Gregory. Oblique Strategies. Website. Released on 1997. Read on 1.4.2021. <http://www.rtqe.net/ObliqueStrategies/OSintro.html>

Thakrar, Raju. 2008. General Musashi: A Do Or Die Warrior Not To Be Crossed. [Web article]. Released on 27.4.2008. Read on 10.3.2021.
<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/life/2008/04/27/general/musashi-a-do-or-die-warrior-not-to-be-crossed/>

Tirrell, Nora., Legend, J. Songwriting Advice from 10 Grammy-Nominated Songwriters. Web article. Read on 17.3.2021.
<https://online.berklee.edu/takenote/songwriting-advice-10-grammy-nominated-songwriters/>

Zambas. Joanna. 2019. Why Motivation Is Important for Your Success and Happiness. [Web article]. Released on 13.3.2019. Read on 17.3.2021.
<https://www.careeraddict.com/why-motivation-is-important-for-success-and-happiness>

10 APPENDICES

Appendix 1. PA Kiiskilä: *Ihmisen laulu*

Spotify:

https://open.spotify.com/album/3mA6ivfmptLDvbO8OLjAVB?si=K4bbTv7qScCrij_sihTpUoA

Youtube:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B0JBCPX4Atg&list=OLAK5uy_kiZ7ep76KR-thlYmIY_VPt_8ad9QCDImI