



Towards a New Pop Paradigm: The Innovation of Music through Genre Blending

The combination of music genres diversity as the achievement of new creative musical directions: practical description and analysis.

Oleksandra Polovynska

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Author: Oleksandra Polovynska

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Abstract

This master thesis, investigates the potential for innovation in contemporary music through the intentional fusion of diverse musical genres and production styles. The central premise of the research is that new sounds and genres emerge through the synthesis of contrasting

musical elements, which expands the boundaries of artistic expression and challenges conventional genre identities.

The practical output of this research is a four-song portfolio, developed between 2022 and 2024, in collaboration with producers and songwriters from Sweden, Finland, Ukraine, Serbia and Germany. Each track within the portfolio represents a distinct creative experiment, blending elements such as jazz inspired vocals, funk inspired baselines, rock textures, electronic production, and pop frameworks. These collaborations aim to transcend stylistic boundaries, offering a fresh approach to pop music that integrates influences ranging and the genre blending experiments.

The thesis positions music as an evolutionary art form, emphasizing that progress often comes through unconventional combinations and radical experimentation. It also advocates for a collaborative creative process that prioritizes innovation over adherence to established templates. While references to iconic tracks and artists provide foundational guidance, the work stresses the importance of reimagining these influences to create something entirely original.

This research is supported by an analytical framework detailing the creative and production processes, including demo versions, production screenshots, single covers, and interviews with collaborators. The work is informed by a comprehensive listening study, showcasing how it's elements have been re-contextualized in the portfolio.

By blending diverse musical traditions, this thesis demonstrates how genre mixing can lead to the creation of avant-garde sounds and foster new creative directions in music. It contributes to the discourse on music evolution, offering both a theoretical exploration and a practical application of genre experimentation in contemporary music production.

**This practical thesis project has significant practical outputs that should be listened to in conjunction with the written element.*

Language: English

Key Words: creative collaboration, songwriting, pop music

EXAMENSARBETE

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Abstrakt

Detta examensarbete undersöker potentialen för innovation i samtida musik genom avsiktlig sammansmältning av olika musikgenrer och produktionsstilar. Den centrala idén i forskningen är att nya ljud och genrer uppstår genom syntesen av kontrasterande musikelement, vilket utökar gränserna för konstnärligt uttryck och utmanar konventionella genreidentiteter.

Den praktiska delen av forskningen är en portfölj med fyra låtar, utvecklade mellan 2022 och 2024 i samarbete med producenter och låtskrivare från Sverige, Finland, Ukraina, Serbien och Tyskland. Varje spår representerar ett unikt kreativt experiment som kombinerar element som jazzinspirerad sång, funkinspirerade basgångar, rocktexturer, elektronisk produktion och popramverk. Dessa samarbeten syftar till att överskrida stilistiska gränser och erbjuda ett nytt tillvägagångssätt för popmusik som integrerar influenser och genremixningsexperiment.

Arbetet positionerar musik som en evolverande konstform och betonar att framsteg ofta sker genom okonventionella kombinationer och radikal experimentering. Det förespråkar också en kollaborativ kreativ process som prioriterar innovation framför att följa etablerade mallar. Även om referenser till ikoniska låtar och artister ger grundläggande vägledning, understryker arbetet vikten av att omforma dessa influenser för att skapa något helt nytt.

Denna forskning stöds av ett analytiskt ramverk som beskriver de kreativa och

produktionsmässiga processerna, inklusive demoversioner, produktionsskärmdumpar, singelomslag och intervjuer med samarbetspartners. Arbetet bygger på en omfattande lyssningsstudie som visar hur element har omkontekstualiserats i portföljen.

Genom att blanda olika musiktraditioner demonstrerar detta examensarbete hur genremixning kan leda till skapandet av avantgardistiska ljud och främja nya kreativa riktningar inom musiken. Det bidrar till diskursen om musikutveckling och erbjuder både en teoretisk utforskning och en praktisk tillämpning av genreexperimentering inom samtida musikproduktion.

**Detta praktiska examensarbete inkluderar betydande praktiska resultat som bör lyssnas på tillsammans med den skriftliga delen.*

Språk: Engelska

Nyckelord: kreativt samarbete, låtskrivande, popmusik

OPINNÄYTETYÖ

Tekijä: Oleksandra Polovynska

Koulutus ja paikkakunta: Master of Culture and Arts, Entrepreneurship in the Arts, Novia ammattikorkeakoulu, Pietarsaari, Suomi

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Tiivistelmä

Tämä opinnäytetyö tutkii innovaatiomahdollisuuksia nykyajan musiikissa erilaisten musiikkityylien ja tuotantotapojen tarkoituksellisen yhdistelyn avulla. Tutkimuksen keskeinen ajatus on, että uusia ääniä ja tyylejä syntyy vastakkaisten musiikkielementtien yhdistämisen kautta, mikä laajentaa taiteellisen ilmaisun rajoja ja haastaa perinteiset genreidentiteetit.

Tutkimuksen käytännön tuotoksena on neljän kappaleen portfolio, joka on kehitetty vuosina 2022–2024 yhteistyössä tuottajien ja lauluntekijöiden kanssa Ruotsista, Suomesta, Ukrainasta, Serbiasta ja Saksasta. Jokainen kappale edustaa erillistä luovaa kokeilua, jossa yhdistetään esimerkiksi jazzvaikutteisia lauluosuuksia, funkhenkisiä bassolinjoja, rockelementtejä, elektronista tuotantoa ja popin rakenteita. Näiden yhteistyöprojektien tavoitteena on ylittää tyylilliset rajat ja tarjota uudenlainen lähestymistapa popmusiikkiin, joka sisältää laaja-alaisia vaikutteita ja genreyhdistelykokeiluja.

Työ esittelee musiikin evolutiivisena taiteenlajina ja korostaa, että edistys tapahtuu usein epäkonventionaalisten yhdistelmien ja radikaalin kokeilun kautta. Lisäksi se painottaa yhteistyöhön perustuvaa luovaa prosessia, joka asettaa innovaation etusijalle valmiiden

kaavojen noudattamisen sijasta. Vaikka ikonisten kappaleiden ja artistien referenssit antavat perusohjausta, työ korostaa näiden vaikutteiden uudelleenkuittelun tärkeyttä täysin uuden luomiseksi.

Tutkimusta tukee analyyttinen viitekehys, joka kuvaa luovia ja tuotannollisia prosesseja, mukaan lukien demoversiot, tuotannon näyttökuvat, sinkkujen kannet ja haastattelut yhteistyökumppaneiden kanssa. Työ pohjautuu laajaan kuuntelututkimukseen, joka esittelee, kuinka elementit on uudelleenkontekstualisoitu portfoliokappaleisiin.

Yhdistämällä erilaisia musiikkiperinteitä tämä opinnäytetyö osoittaa, kuinka genreyhdistely voi johtaa avantgardististen äänien luomiseen ja edistää uusia luovia suuntauksia musiikissa. Työ osallistuu keskusteluun musiikin evoluutiosta ja tarjoaa sekä teoreettisen että käytännön sovelluksen genrekokeiluihin nykyaikaisessa musiikkituotannossa.

**Tämä käytännön opinnäytetyö sisältää merkittäviä tuotoksia, jotka on kuunneltava yhdessä kirjallisen osion kanssa.*

Kieli: Englanti

Avainsanat: uova yhteistyö, laulunteko, popmusiikki

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1. Introduction

Music has long been recognized as an evolutionary art form, constantly reshaped by cultural shifts, technological advancements, and creative experimentation. In the contemporary music landscape, genre boundaries are increasingly fluid, allowing for innovative combinations that challenge conventional categorizations. This thesis explores the transformative potential of genre blending as a method for innovating within the pop music paradigm. By synthesizing diverse musical elements such as jazz-inspired vocals, funk basslines, electronic production techniques, and rock textures, this research seeks to redefine the creative possibilities of pop music.

Grounded in both theoretical inquiry and practical experimentation, the study presents a four-song portfolio developed collaboratively with artists from Sweden, Finland, Ukraine, Serbia, and Germany. Each track serves as a case study in genre fusion, providing insights into the collaborative processes, production methodologies, and artistic decisions involved in creating boundary-defying music. The research highlights the importance of reimagining influences and embracing cross-genre experimentation as pathways to artistic innovation. Ultimately, this work contributes to the discourse on music evolution, offering a nuanced understanding of how genre hybridity fosters novel creative directions in contemporary music production.

Literature review:

This literature review synthesizes key contributions from each source, emphasizing their relevance to the achievement of creative musical directions and diversity in music genres. The selected bibliography explores a diverse array of topics in music, from songwriting and production techniques to the study of genres and creative processes.

Songwriting and Lyric Craft

Several texts in this list delve into the art and craft of songwriting, exploring melody, lyrics, and creative thought. Bell's *The Art of Songwriting* (2017) emphasizes the mindset required for successful songwriting, providing guidance on creativity and mental frameworks that aid

in composing original music. Similarly, Davis's *The Craft of Lyric Writing* (1985) and Pattison's *Writing Better Lyrics* (1995) contribute foundational advice for lyricists, focusing on structure, emotion, and storytelling within lyrics. Kachulis's *The Songwriter's Workshop: Melody* (2003) delves into the technical aspects of melody-making, analyzing what makes melodies memorable and effective. Together, these books frame songwriting as both an art and a technical craft, highlighting its importance in developing distinctive musical directions and diversifying sound.

Collaborative and Negotiated Creativity

Collaboration and negotiated creativity in songwriting and production are also key areas of focus. Bennett's (2011) paper on collaborative songwriting explores how shared creative practices shape music, emphasizing the ontological aspects of creating within groups.

...When two or more songwriters collaborate, they will share a desire for their song to be heard by others; this is frequently economically-driven, but also born of a creative and artistic goal - to make an object that communicates emotionally. (Bennett, 2011)

Tharp's *The Collaborative Habit* (2009) expands on this concept, detailing strategies for effective collaboration, while Walzer's (2023) study in the *Creative Industries Journal* brings a modern understanding of independent music production and the unique challenges creatives face when working autonomously. These works underscore the role of collaborative synergy in advancing musical diversity, particularly as collective input often yields richer, multifaceted creative outcomes.

Production Techniques and Studio Practice

The craft of music production is richly represented in works such as Burgess's *The Art of Music Production* (2013), Owsinski's *The Mixing Engineer's Handbook* (1999), and White's *The Sound on Sound Book of Production Techniques* (1995). These texts offer a technical perspective on production, covering everything from mixing and sound design to more general practices of the recording studio. Massey's *Behind the Glass* (2000) and Emerick's *Here, There and Everywhere* (2006) provide firsthand accounts from prominent producers, detailing their approaches to crafting hits. These works provide both a practical framework

and an insider's view of how production techniques contribute to the evolution of sound within various genres, offering practical insight for composers, arrangers, and musicians on achieving innovative textures and sonic landscapes.

Genre Studies and the Evolution of Music

The literature also explores genre as a dynamic element of music. Holt's *Genre in Popular Music* (2007) examines how genres are defined and evolve, while Cateforis's *The Rock History Reader* (2007) discusses the development of rock music and its impact on culture and genre conventions. Zager's *Music Production* (2012) includes a broader discussion on production across genres, emphasizing the importance of understanding different stylistic conventions when producing music. Warner's *Pop Music: Technology and Creativity* (2003) and Steinbrecher's (2021) analysis in *Popular Music* examine how technological advancements, particularly in digital production, have enabled new genres and reshaped existing ones. This body of work underlines genre diversity as a marker of musical progress, with each genre's evolution further expanding creative possibilities.

The Influence of Technology on Music Creation

The influence of technology on music production and genre is explored in texts such as *Future Sounds* by Kusek and Leonhard (2005), which discusses the intersection of music, technology, and cultural shifts. Warner's (2003) exploration of digital production technologies and Bogdanov et al.'s *All Music Guide to Electronica* (2001) illustrate how electronic music has emerged as a genre shaped by technological advancements. These works collectively underscore the essential role of technology in facilitating new creative directions in music, demonstrating how tools from digital synthesizers to modern DAWs have driven innovation.

Case Studies in Music and Cultural Reflections

Several sources offer focused studies of influential musicians and movements that illustrate the integration of diverse sounds and cross-genre pollination. Davis and Troupe's *Miles: The Autobiography* (1989) and Ward and Burns' *Jazz: A History of America's Music* (2000) reflect on jazz's evolution and cultural significance, while Muhammad and Alexander's *Inside the Music* (2012) captures the experiences of jazz drummer Idris Muhammad, exemplifying how

individual artists contribute to genre innovation. Serrano's *The Rap Year Book* (2015) dissects rap's history, documenting the genre's development and cultural impact through key songs. These case studies highlight individual contributions to genre expansion, illustrating how artists and producers incorporate diverse influences into new sounds and styles.

Song Idea

The primary idea of this work is a theoretical exploration of the possibilities for expanding sound boundaries and genre identity within compositions. When an artist seeks to refresh their sound and explore new musical ideas, I believe the solution lies in the application of a genre mix. An artist confined to the limitations of a single genre faces challenges in progressing and evolving their music. For this evolution to occur, it is necessary to integrate new elements or radically opposite combinations into the existing genre. By merging different genres, we achieve an unusual sound that is novel for both the artist and the listening market. Thus, through experimentation with genre combinations, we can discover innovative and avant-garde sounds. I believe this is how new genres have emerged throughout the history of music. When we encounter combinations of unusual genres that initially provoke our surprise, it recalls the times when jazz itself was music that challenged societal norms. Therefore, all new challenges are accompanied by the evolution of contemporary music.

The second theory underpinning this work is the collaborative approach to generating new ideas. Creative individuals frequently aim to break new ground, seeking inspiration in established examples or by reworking existing material. My theory suggests that the creative process should rely less on established references and instead emphasize experimentation with sound and style without overly adhering to existing models. While references can serve as a guide, they should be seen as mere markers for specific elements to incorporate into one's composition, rather than as stylistic templates or the foundational structure of a track. This approach promotes innovation, encouraging artists to create compositions that are unique rather than derivative.

1.1. Contents List of Practical Outputs

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2. Stockholm Syndrome (STK Syndrome)

Producer: Anna van Grimbergen

Topliner: Oleksandra Polovynska (Bad Sasha), Maria Lahtela

Lyricist: Anna van Grimbergen, Maria Lahtela, Bad Sasha

Performer: Bad Sasha

Backing Vocals: Bad Sasha, Maria Lahtela

Song Idea

The song “*Stockholm Syndrome*” serves as an intriguing case study in genre mixing, synthesizing elements from multiple musical styles to create a distinctive, radio-ready soundscape. Drawing inspiration from 1990s girl groups like Destiny’s Child, TLC, and En Vogue, the track invokes the era’s characteristic fusion of pop, R&B, and funk. This blending not only channels nostalgia but also aligns with a modern music production approach, resulting in a multi-layered composition that integrates rhythmic groove with emotional lyrical themes.

Participants

This song was done together with producer Anna van Grimbergen and top liner Maria Lahtela.

Anna Van Grimbergen is an emerging multi-genre producer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist originally from Stockholm, Sweden. Coming from a family with four generations of Russian classical musicians, Anna drew inspiration from everything from Beethoven to Bieber. Rebellious from classical music into a world of pop and dance music, Anna produces tracks that seamlessly combine genres of music. She has an incredible skills in vocal processing. Earlier mentored by famous Swedish producer Joy Deb. Recently Anna has collaborated with Max Martin, remixing two iconic tracks of Backstreet Boys and Justin Timberlake for Max Martin's musical & Juliet that will go on a national tour in 2024. Some of Anna's select co-producing credits include Ida-Lovas "Låt Hela Stan se På" featured in the

Swedish Qualifiers for Eurovision 2023.

Anna has recently been in the studio writing with THE HERREYS, Jasmin Kara, OOKAY, Sascha, FONTANA, Cassie Dasilva, LINNEY, Skyler Wind, Leah Culver, SCARLET, Klara Hammarström, UDO, Kiana, Orphée Noah, Albin Tingwall, Ida-Lova and others.

Collaborative and Adaptive Production Style

Anna's adaptability and collaborative spirit play a significant role in her production success. Her recent studio sessions with diverse artists like THE HERREYS, Klara Hammarström, and Orphée Noah highlight her willingness to engage in genre-blending and co-creative experimentation. Rather than imposing a singular style, Anna adapts her production to complement the artist's vision, skillfully enhancing their sound while maintaining her own artistic touch. This collaborative approach allows her to work fluidly across projects, from pop anthems to synth-driven ballads, ensuring each track resonates authentically with the artist's voice.

Moreover, her recent collaborations with Eurovision-level talents and electronic producers like OOKAY and Skyler Wind show her ability to pivot between different production demands—whether crafting radio-ready hooks, building danceable beats, or enhancing the cinematic quality of ballads. This capacity to adapt her style while upholding a high standard of musical integrity has positioned her as a sought-after collaborator in the industry.

Technical Skill and Innovation

Anna's background in classical music has endowed her with a strong technical foundation, which she leverages to innovate within modern music production. Her studio work frequently involves complex sound design, careful layering, and meticulous attention to sonic detail. She has an intuitive grasp of how to balance traditional acoustic elements—like piano and strings—with electronic textures, achieving a cohesive sound that maintains a sense of depth and dimensionality. This innovative approach was evident in her remix projects with Max Martin, where she used modern production tools to recontextualize classic pop songs, highlighting the timelessness of these tracks while bringing a fresh, sophisticated perspective.

In summary, Anna Van Grimbergen's production style is characterized by a unique blend of classical depth, genre fluidity, and a collaborative ethos. Her ability to integrate diverse musical influences, from Beethoven to contemporary pop, results in compositions that feel both timeless and cutting-edge. Her emphasis on vocal expressiveness, intricate arrangements, and genre fusion has made her a distinctive voice in the industry, blending the worlds of classical and contemporary music in a way that resonates with audiences across styles and generations.

Genre Fluidity and Artistic Versatility

One of Anna's defining characteristics as a producer is her genre fluidity. She is equally comfortable working across diverse genres, from electronic dance music to R&B and synth-pop. Her recent work includes collaborations with a wide array of artists, such as Ida-Lova, whose Eurovision 2023 qualifier "*Låt Hela Stan se På*" features Anna's co-production. In this project, Anna brings a layered approach that marries Sweden's pop sensibilities with the dramatic flair often seen in Eurovision entries, incorporating anthemic choruses and dynamic arrangements that highlight her adaptability as a producer.

In addition to pop, Anna frequently works with electronic dance and synth-pop artists, demonstrating her versatility and ability to infuse electronic tracks with warmth and depth. Her collaborations with artists like LINNEY, OOKAY, and Skyler Wind showcase her capacity to balance electronic elements with human emotion, maintaining an engaging rhythmic energy while allowing room for lyrical introspection. This blend of organic and synthetic textures allows Anna to craft immersive soundscapes that appeal both on the dance floor and in more reflective listening settings.

Fusion of Classical and Contemporary Elements

Anna's production style is distinguished by a seamless fusion of classical and modern genres, which allows her to approach popular music with an added layer of sophistication. Her ability to incorporate classical techniques—such as thematic development, counterpoint, and intricate harmonic layering—sets her apart in the pop and dance music world. This classical influence is particularly evident in her collaboration with Max Martin on

& *Juliet*, where she remixed classic tracks by the Backstreet Boys and Justin Timberlake. By revisiting these pop anthems through a classical lens, she introduced new textures and depth to the arrangements, allowing familiar melodies to take on a renewed vitality and complexity. These remixes exemplify her talent for reimagining and refreshing established sounds, transforming them into compositions that appeal across generational and stylistic divides.

Genre Mixing and Stylistic Complexity

The song's core sound is grounded in a funk-inspired bassline, clearly influenced by the work of legendary bassist Marcus Miller, particularly his powerful and intricate rhythms in songs like "*Power*" and "*Detroit*". This choice in bass gives the song a foundational groove that serves as both the rhythmic and emotional anchor, adding a soulful depth typical of R&B and funk. By intertwining funk bass with 90s-inspired R&B elements, the track evokes a hybrid genre often found in soul and groove music, a choice that enhances its emotional resonance and creates a sense of rhythmic propulsion.

Simultaneously, the song incorporates elements of synth-pop—a genre that producer Anna Van Grimbergen has extensively mastered. Synth-pop's digital soundscapes and synthetic textures provide an electronic contrast to the organic funk and R&B foundations, allowing for a creative tension between the track's analog and digital components. The synth lines are more than just embellishments; they contribute to an atmospheric depth, enhancing the song's contemplative nature and linking it to the introspective tones of 80s and 90s synth-pop. These electronic textures offer a refreshing counterpoint to the warmth of the funk bass, embodying a duality that is key to the song's sonic appeal.

Production and Collaborative Synergy

Each artist brought unique strengths and stylistic preferences, contributing to the song's distinct sound. Van Grimbergen's expertise in vocal production is particularly crucial, as she crafted the vocal treatments to emphasize clarity and depth, while avoiding the overuse of autotune. This approach aligns the track with the natural, expressive vocal techniques typical of R&B and soul, where the authenticity of the vocalist's performance is paramount.

By preserving a voice tonal richness and subtle variations in pitch, Van Grimbergen draws on the R&B tradition of focusing on vocal timbre and emotive quality, connecting the song to a lineage of vocal-centric, emotionally charged music.

The song's vocal processing further highlights emphasis on emotional authenticity. Rather than masking imperfections or smoothing vocal contours, she carefully accentuates the vocal nuances, making each line resonate with the intensity of live performance. This stylistic choice aligns the song with the R&B tradition of showcasing vocal personality, a technique that enhances listener engagement by foregrounding the voice as a storytelling instrument.

Instrumentation and Rhythmic Layers

The instrumental arrangement is similarly complex, combining guitar riffs, piano, and synth solos to form a textured soundscape that supports the song's thematic depth. Guitar lines add a subtle rock influence, providing rhythmic accents and melodic interjections that break up the synth's fluidity and add an organic edge to the track. Piano elements by Bad Sasha provide harmonic grounding, weaving in and out of the arrangement to create moments of reflective intimacy, while the synth solos punctuate the song with an energetic, danceable quality. Together, these elements create a soundscape that is both dynamic and cohesive, designed to captivate listeners while also encouraging active engagement with the song's layered structure.

The rhythmic interplay between these instruments contributes to the song's danceability. Each instrumental element is thoughtfully layered to contribute to the song's forward momentum, creating a groove that feels organic despite its stylistic diversity. This structural choice reflects a deliberate attempt to balance alternative music elements—such as the funk and R&B bass lines—with mainstream pop appeal, crafting a sound that is both fresh and familiar.

Lyricism and Thematic Depth

Lyrically, the song explores complex emotional terrain, employing Stockholm Syndrome as a metaphor for entangled relationships. The lyrics delve into the psychological effects of

romantic attachment, using themes of captivation and surrender to highlight the tension between autonomy and dependence. This metaphor not only enriches the song's narrative but also aligns it with the introspective nature of R&B and soul, where relational and psychological themes are often at the forefront. Lyrical contributions introduce layered metaphors that deepen the song's emotional impact, allowing listeners to interpret the Stockholm Syndrome metaphor in multiple ways, from literal to psychological.

This metaphorical approach mirrors the lyrical style of 90s R&B and soul, where artists frequently used storytelling to explore nuanced aspects of love and identity. By connecting Stockholm Syndrome to the realm of human relationships, the song invites listeners to reflect on the dynamics of attachment, control, and vulnerability, resonating with themes that are both personal and universal.

Commercial and Artistic Vision

The collaborative team's primary objective was to merge artistic depth with commercial accessibility, creating a track that could resonate on both alternative and mainstream platforms. By balancing the layered complexity of funk, R&B, and synth-pop with radio-friendly production techniques, the song successfully bridges the gap between alternative and commercial music. This balance is particularly evident in the arrangement and mixing, where genre-specific elements are woven together in a way that feels polished yet authentic, embodying a stylistic versatility suited for both radio and live performance contexts.

Lyrics Excerpt

How did I get (up) here?	I've been through this a million times
Confused, seduced	somehow u captivated my mind
Tried to stay on the ground,	
But my head's stuck on a cloud.	Losing my soul,
	Got fooled by the magic glow.
I've been living my life	Should I go,
Didn't want to realize	Heart says no.
Again again feel like I am	

Should I have known	(oh yeah, I've changed)
From all of the signs you show?	Got lost in the game,
Can't let go go,	For me it's not the same.
Stockholm Syndrome.	
	You got me again.

My friends tell me I've changed

Anna Van Grimbergen's audiography:

1. Boys (1999, Remix 2024). 'Larger Than Life' (Remixed by Anna Van Grimbergen & Max Martin) – Anna Van Grimbergen's remix introduces modern dance beats and a fresh electronic arrangement to the iconic pop anthem.
2. Justin Timberlake (2016, Remix 2024). 'Can't Stop the Feeling!' (Remixed by Anna Van Grimbergen & Max Martin) – The remix brings a high-energy dance vibe to the original pop track, embodying Anna's skill in transforming mainstream hits.
3. THE HERREYS (1984, Collaboration 2024). 'Diggi-Loo Diggi-Ley' (Collaboration with Anna Van Grimbergen) – A modern twist on a classic Eurovision track, with new electronic and dance elements.

90s R&B and Funk Influence

1. Destiny's Child (1999). 'Say My Name' – Known for its layered vocal harmonies and emotionally charged lyrics, "Say My Name" inspired "Stockholm Syndrome" by highlighting the expressive power of vocals in R&B, combined with a strong pop sensibility.
2. En Vogue (1992). 'Free Your Mind' – Fusing rock, funk, and R&B, "Free Your Mind" brings intensity and genre-blending that shaped "Stockholm Syndrome's" bold combination of musical styles and impactful vocal presentation.
3. Marcus Miller (1987). 'Power' – Marcus Miller's intricate and soulful bassline in "Power" inspired the funk-infused bass groove that anchors "Stockholm Syndrome." Miller's rhythm-driven style adds a dynamic layer essential to funk and R&B foundations.
4. TLC (1999). 'No Scrubs' – A hallmark of 90s R&B with its catchy hook and empowering message, "No Scrubs" influenced "Stockholm Syndrome" with its polished production and

smooth vocal delivery.

References in the song:

Modern Synth-Pop and R&B

1. Dua Lipa (2020). 'Levitating' – Combining pop, funk, and dance vibes, "Levitating" offers an example of how to fuse genres in a way that's commercially accessible, an approach echoed in "Stockholm Syndrome."
2. The Weeknd (2019). 'Blinding Lights' – This hit's blend of synth-pop and R&B with a retro 80s sound aligns with "Stockholm Syndrome's" intent to blend nostalgic and contemporary elements for a fresh sound.

Pop and Collaborative Production Styles

1. Backstreet Boys (1997). 'Everybody (Backstreet's Back)' – With its layered production and timeless appeal, this track aligns with "Stockholm Syndrome's" ability to evoke 90s nostalgia while remaining fresh.
2. Justin Timberlake (2016). 'Can't Stop the Feeling!' – A high-energy pop anthem, this song's upbeat, groove-driven style influenced "Stockholm Syndrome" in creating a danceable track with mainstream appeal.

Emotive and Story-Driven Lyricism

1. Alicia Keys (2001). 'Fallin'' – This soulful ballad explores complex emotions in relationships, similar to how "Stockholm Syndrome" uses R&B influences and introspective lyrics to deepen its emotional impact.
2. Amy Winehouse (2006). 'Back to Black' – Known for raw, confessional storytelling, "Back to Black" mirrors "Stockholm Syndrome's" approach to exploring complex emotional themes in relationships.

Conclusion

"Stockholm Syndrome" serves as a compelling example of genre fusion and creative

collaboration, exemplifying how diverse musical elements and influences can be synthesized into a cohesive and impactful composition. By blending funk, R&B, and synth-pop, the song strikes a balance between nostalgic homage and forward-thinking innovation. Its foundation in 90s R&B, paired with modern production techniques, creates a sound that resonates across generations, offering both familiarity and novelty.

The collaboration between the songwriters demonstrates the power of artistic synergy in shaping a track that is as emotionally rich as it is commercially accessible. Grimbergen's nuanced approach to vocal production, combined with her ability to seamlessly merge analog and digital textures, ensures the song retains an authentic, emotive core while embracing cutting-edge soundscapes. Her classical training further enriches the arrangement, adding layers of complexity and precision that elevate the track's musicality.

Lyricaly, "Stockholm Syndrome" explores themes of attachment, vulnerability, and emotional entanglement, using the titular metaphor to delve into the complexities of human relationships. The interplay of Maria Lahtela's introspective with the dynamic instrumental arrangement amplifies the song's emotional depth, making it a resonant and relatable narrative for listeners. This alignment with the storytelling traditions of R&B and soul further enhances the track's thematic and artistic integrity.

Ultimately, "Stockholm Syndrome" exemplifies the fusion of artistry and accessibility, demonstrating how thoughtful genre blending and collaborative creativity can redefine the boundaries of contemporary pop music. It stands as a testament to the potential of music to bridge styles and eras, creating works that are both timeless and innovative. Through its intricate production, emotional lyricism, and genre-defying vision, the song captures the essence of modern musical storytelling and sets a benchmark for future explorations in genre hybridity.

3. Freeway

Producer: Maria Boidin, DANOV

Topliner: Johanna Noelle, Fabian Stål, Bad Sasha

Lyricist: Johanna Noelle, Fabian Stål, Bad Sasha

Performer: Bad Sasha

BV's: Bad Sasha, Fabian Stål

Bass: Saša Stefanovič

Introduction

The concept for this song involves exploring the potential for rearranging the composition and creating an alternative version in a popular music format. At that time, I was beginning to shift from more alternative genres to those with broader popular appeal. This piece serves as an excellent example of a transition from alternative music to popular music. It illustrates how an alternative composition can be adapted to reach a wider audience, becoming suitable for radio broadcasting. Through the involvement of a producer experienced in popular genres, the song was effectively transformed into a more radio-friendly composition. This transformation is evident in changes to its structure, rearranged elements, and other key adjustments.

Concept and Idea

The song "Freeway" is a compelling exploration of emotional conflict, self-doubt, and the pursuit of clarity in a tumultuous relationship. Lyrically, it captures the feeling of being stuck in limbo, waiting for someone who is indecisive and inconsistent. The central metaphor of a "freeway" embodies the idea of speeding through life, trying to find direction amidst confusion and emotional noise. The recurring use of phrases like "motherfucking freeway" reflects frustration and the emotional toll of being lost, both literally and figuratively. The song contrasts moments of emotional exhaustion with a sense of yearning for resolution.

Participants: A Collaborative Effort

Maria Boidin was the primary producer behind demo of the "Freeway,". Includes Johanna Noelle and Fabian Stål, both experienced songwriters from Sweden. Their collaboration was part of a broader songwriting project, which aimed to connect producers from Sweden with artists from Ukraine.

I performed the vocals, made the idea of an arrangement, was a co-writer. Fabian Stål also contributed backing vocals, particularly in the choir section towards the end of the track.

This song marks another chapter in a creative partnership between diverse artists. Reflects the power of cross-cultural collaboration, which brought out both alternative pop and electronic influences in the song.

DANOV

Mykyta Bogdanov, professionally known as DANOV, is a renowned Ukrainian music producer and DJ. He began his career as part of the duo Ost & Meyer, releasing tracks on prominent labels such as Anjunabeats, Armada Music, Enhanced Music, and Ministry of Sound. Following this success, Mykyta spent years producing music for top Ukrainian artists, gaining a reputation for his high-quality mixing and mastering.

In recent years, he has found success with his new artist RAJA (Roman Hatskan), blending Ethnic Techno and Melodic Techno, with popular tracks like "1001 Night," "PORTAL", "CHANNELING," "ANIMAL", "MAMBA", "ZORA," and many more...

In 2023, Mykyta founded his own studio, DANOV MUSIC, in Berlin.

(<https://www.danovmusic.com/>)

Production by DANOV

"Freeway" was re-produced by **Mykyta Bogdanov**, professionally known as **DANOV**, a Ukrainian music producer renowned for his work in electronic music. DANOV transformed the track into a fusion of alternative pop with electronic, radio-friendly sensibilities. His expertise in blending different genres added a polished, modern edge to the production, enhancing its emotional resonance.

DANOV's background includes a wide array of experience, notably as part of the duo **Ost & Meyer**, where he released tracks on major labels such as **Anjunabeats**, **Armada Music**, and **Ministry of Sound**. In 2023, he launched his own studio, **DANOV MUSIC**, in Berlin. This move allowed him to expand his production repertoire, blending various musical influences such as **Ethnic Techno** and **Melodic Techno** under his artist name **RAJA**. His recent works,

such as “1001 Nights,” “PORTAL,” and “ZORA,” reflect his ability to incorporate deep, electronic soundscapes into modern music.

In “**Freeway**,” DANOV’s touch is evident in the balance between organic and electronic elements. His precise mixing, attention to sonic detail, and ability to layer dynamic synths with vocal performances give the track its modern radio appeal.

Genre and Style

“Freeway” blends elements of alternative pop and electronic music, creating a sound that is both accessible and emotionally impactful. The song sits comfortably within the sphere of modern pop but stands out due to its gritty lyrics and electronic production.

The **alternative pop** foundation provides catchy melodies and relatable themes, while the **electronic elements** give it an edge, ensuring it is suitable for both radio play and live performances. The combination of deep synths, driving beats, and emotive vocal delivery makes “Freeway” an anthem for those navigating the complexities of relationships, trying to find clarity amid chaos.

Background and Evolution of DANOV’s Sound

Mykyta Bogdanov, known professionally as DANOV, is a Ukrainian producer and DJ with a career rooted in the electronic music scene. Initially one-half of the duo Ost & Meyer, DANOV gained recognition by releasing tracks on some of the industry’s top labels, such as Anjunabeats and Armada Music, which helped him build a foundation in progressive and trance sounds. This early phase of his career honed his skills in high-quality mixing and mastering, setting him apart for his technical proficiency. DANOV’s transition to producing for top Ukrainian artists further broadened his style, blending electronic textures with regional influences and developing a production aesthetic that is both polished and emotionally resonant.

Fusion of Ethnic and Melodic Techno Elements

One of DANOVA's defining stylistic characteristics is his integration of Ethnic and Melodic Techno elements. His recent work with artist RAJA (Roman Hatskan) exemplifies this approach, where tracks like "1001 Nights," "PORTAL," and "CHANNELING" mix hypnotic, driving beats with traditional ethnic motifs. This blend of organic and electronic sounds allows DANOVA to create a sonic landscape that feels immersive and transports listeners into a deep, almost mythological soundscape. The inclusion of ethnic instruments and scales lends a timeless quality to his work, which resonates across different cultural and musical backgrounds. Through these collaborations, DANOVA demonstrates his skill in merging global sounds with techno's contemporary framework.

Artistic Versatility and Genre Exploration

DANOVA's range as a producer is underscored by his ability to traverse various sub-genres of electronic music. While primarily known for his Ethnic and Melodic Techno, he also navigates Progressive House, Deep House, and elements of Ambient music, creating an eclectic catalog that appeals to a wide audience. His collaborations with RAJA highlight his capacity to adapt and reinvent his style, crafting tracks that maintain techno's rhythmic intensity while incorporating melodically rich and ambient elements. DANOVA's adaptability ensures that his productions resonate in both club environments and more introspective listening spaces, showcasing his versatility in working with artists across different stylistic spectrums.

Technical Precision and Innovative Sound Design

DANOVA's background in professional mixing and mastering shines through in his work. His productions are marked by meticulous attention to sonic detail, with each track balanced to maximize depth and clarity. In tracks like "ANIMAL" and "ZORA," he employs complex layering techniques to create a full-bodied sound that incorporates both electronic basslines and acoustic textures. His experience with high-level mastering allows him to achieve a polished sound that is radio-ready, yet nuanced enough for discerning listeners. DANOVA's innovation in sound design involves a mix of traditional and digital instrumentation, enhancing his music's dimensionality and resulting in immersive, dynamic tracks.

Establishment of DANOVA MUSIC and Artistic Independence

In 2023, DANOVA established his own studio, DANOVA MUSIC, in Berlin—a city renowned for its vibrant electronic music culture. This move marked a significant step toward creative independence, allowing him to refine his sound further and take on projects that align with his artistic vision. With his studio, DANOVA has built a space to explore new sonic territories and collaborate with a diverse range of artists, reinforcing his reputation as a forward-thinking producer. The founding of DANOVA MUSIC also underscores his commitment to contributing to the global techno scene while maintaining strong ties to his Ukrainian roots, blending cultural authenticity with cutting-edge production.

Collaborative Spirit and Artist-Centric Approach

DANOVA's collaborations reflect a production style that is both adaptive and artist-centric. Rather than imposing a fixed sound, he tailors his approach to each artist, enhancing their unique qualities while infusing his signature depth and complexity. Working with RAJA has allowed him to showcase his ability to blend modern techno with rich, ethnic textures, crafting compositions that reflect both the artist's vision and DANOVA's own musical identity. His collaborative philosophy emphasizes mutual creativity and experimentation, making him a sought-after partner in the industry for artists looking to expand their sound while maintaining authenticity.

DANOVA's production style is distinguished by its combination of ethnic motifs, techno rhythms, and a strong technical foundation. His ability to blend global sounds with electronic frameworks results in a unique musical expression that feels both rooted and progressive. Through his Berlin-based studio, DANOVA MUSIC, he has cultivated a space for artistic innovation, positioning himself as an influential voice within the electronic music landscape.

Lyrics Overview

Verse 1 sets the stage for the listener, introducing the speaker's doubts and frustrations in their relationship. The indecision of the other person is palpable, with the line, "You don't make it easy, and I don't wanna leave it," encapsulating a sense of being trapped. The

pressure of unresolved issues surfaces as the speaker questions whether the relationship will ever move forward, hinting at the ultimatum “Might be now or never.”

The Pre-Chorus shifts the tone, deepening the emotional struggle. The speaker feels overwhelmed by the external and internal “noise,” heightening the tension. The plea, “Come pick me up, I’m on the motherfucking freeway,” is not just a literal request, but a cry for emotional rescue and escape from the chaos.

In the Chorus, the metaphor of the “freeway” takes center stage. Each line evokes a sense of isolation and confusion: “In the middle of nowhere,” “A never-ending Monday,” and “I’m the shirt that you don’t wear.” These images communicate feelings of insignificance and monotony, as though the speaker has become invisible in the relationship. The repetition of the freeway metaphor emphasizes the theme of being lost in both love and life.

Verse 2 amplifies the emotional complexity. Here, the speaker acknowledges the allure of the partner—“Looking like a rockstar” reflects admiration—but the uncertainty remains: “Just want us to be all in.” Again, the tension between desire and frustration surfaces as the speaker grapples with feeling “stressed out waiting for you.”

The Mid-8 section offers a moment of realization and defiance. The metaphorical “freeway” returns, but now the speaker acknowledges the futility of their struggle: “Seems like I brought a knife to a gunfight.” The imagery of being a “deer in the headlights” captures the overwhelming nature of the situation.

Lyrics:	U said u needed more time
	To figure out what you gonna do
U in it for the long run?	Put your shit together
Been thinking for a while but you	Might be Now or never
You don’t make it easy	
And I don’t wanna leave it	Started looking round for a way out
wanna leave it	Drowning in the noise getting too loud
	No I’m not okay

Come pick me up	Don't wanna sound desperate
I'm on the motherfucking freeway	Im getting Stressed out waiting for you
	Play me like a fiddle
Im in the middle of nowhere	stuck in the middle
A never ending Monday	
Im the shirt that you don't wear	Hand's up it's a motherfuckin freeway,
It's a motherfucking freeway	Guards down cause honey I ain't here to
	play Here to play no
Looking like a rockstar	Suns up, now I see it in a new light
See it In the way you shine	Seems like I brought a knife to gunfight
And everytime I'm falling	Deer In the headlights
Just want us to be all in	

DANOV's audiography:

1. Ost & Meyer (2012). '10 Days' - Notable for its ethereal soundscapes and powerful basslines typical of progressive house in the early 2010s.
2. Ost & Meyer (2013). 'Brittany' - Known for melodic arrangements, combining uplifting melodies with a driving rhythm.
3. RAJA (2023). '1001 Nights' - Features traditional ethnic motifs with deep, hypnotic beats, highlighting DANOV's signature ethnic influences.
4. RAJA (2023). 'PORTAL' - A fusion of ambient textures with tribal beats, creating an immersive auditory experience.
5. RAJA (2023). 'ANIMAL' - Deep bass and haunting synths evoke the dark yet melodic feel typical of RAJA's sound.
6. RAJA (2023). 'ZORA' - Combines a steady rhythmic beat with layered synths, showcasing the versatility of melodic techno.

References in the song:

1. Lana Del Rey (2012). 'Ride' - Explores themes of freedom, searching for purpose, and emotional escape, using driving as a metaphor for navigating life's challenges. Lana's lyrics

and melancholic tone reflect a desire to find solace while feeling lost, much like the “freeway” metaphor in “Freeway.”

2. Halsey (2015). ‘Drive’ - Using car and road imagery, “Drive” captures the feeling of emotional limbo and being drawn back to a relationship that feels both freeing and confining. Halsey’s lyricism aligns with the themes of frustration and yearning in “Freeway.”

3. Sam Smith (2014). ‘Stay With Me’ - Captures the conflicting emotions of wanting closeness but feeling unsure, reflecting the relationship turmoil and emotional exhaustion seen in “Freeway.”

5. The Chainsmokers feat. Daya (2016). ‘Don’t Let Me Down’ - With lyrics expressing a need for stability and fear of abandonment, this track mirrors the frustration of feeling lost and the yearning for rescue found in “Freeway.”

6. The Weeknd (2012). ‘Rolling Stone’ - Delves into themes of insecurity and the challenge of relationships under strain. The Weeknd’s metaphor of “rolling” reflects moving forward yet feeling stuck, similar to the “freeway” metaphor in “Freeway.”

8. Billie Eilish (2017). ‘idontwannabeyouanymore’ - Captures inner emotional conflict and self-doubt that can complicate relationships, resonating with the frustration and exhaustion expressed in “Freeway.”

Conclusion

“Freeway” stands as a powerful piece that reflects both personal and collaborative creativity. The song’s emotive lyrics, paired with DANOV’s polished production, capture the confusion and frustration of being stuck in an unresolved relationship. The use of the freeway metaphor, alongside raw emotional delivery, gives the song universal appeal, resonating with listeners who have faced similar emotional crossroads.

Ultimately, “Freeway” represents a meeting of talent across borders, where Ukrainian, French and Swedish influences come together to create a track that blends alternative, pop, and electronic genres. The song’s dynamic energy and introspective lyrics make it a modern anthem for emotional liberation.

4. Rising Summit

Producer: VAone

Topliner: Bad Sasha

Lyricist: Aleksandra Ninković

Performer: Bad Sasha

Introduction

“Rising Summit” is a collaborative piece produced by VAone, featuring vocals from Bad Sasha, with lyrics written by Serbian lyricist Aleksandra Ninković. The song is a distinctive fusion of Electro Pop and Bass House, showcasing an intricate balance of electronic soundscapes, emotive vocals, and deep, rhythmic bass elements. This track stands as an example of modern genre hybridity in electronic music, merging the melodic appeal of Electro Pop with the energetic and immersive qualities of Bass House. Through an analysis of its participants, genre influences, lyrical themes, and production techniques, this chapter explores how “Rising Summit” represents an innovative collaboration at the intersection of electronic and pop music.

Participants

The creation of “Rising Summit” involved three distinct contributors: VAone, who produced and arranged the track, Bad Sasha, the featured vocalist, and Aleksandra Ninković, who penned the song’s lyrics. Each of these artists brought a unique set of skills and influences to the project, resulting in a track that reflects both individual artistry and collective vision.

VAone, as the producer, played a pivotal role in crafting the sonic architecture of the song. His approach to blending genres like Electro Pop and Bass House demonstrates his ability to incorporate both melodic and bass-driven elements into a cohesive whole. VAone’s technical expertise shines in the arrangement and mixing, where the balance between synthesizers, bass, and vocals is carefully calibrated to ensure each component contributes to the track’s dynamic energy.

“Bad Sasha adds a layer of emotive depth to the song. Complements the electronic production with voice. Although I was new to the Bass House genre, my willingness to experiment with her vocal style enabled her to adapt seamlessly to the track’s unique blend

of genres. Her performance in “Rising Summit” reflects a collaboration that bridges traditional pop vocal styles with electronic music’s modern sensibilities.” VAone

Aleksandra Ninković (born 1987) is a Serbian lyricist with a diverse creative portfolio that spans multiple genres and languages. Having collaborated with a wide range of artists from different countries, Aleksandra brings a literary and narrative-focused approach to songwriting. Her contributions to “Rising Summit” reflect her ability to distill complex emotional and existential themes into lyrical form, making her an essential creative force behind the song’s thematic core. Aleksandra Ninković’s style often blends personal introspection with universal symbolism, a quality evident in the lyrics of “Rising Summit,” where themes of growth, struggle, and transcendence are explored.

Ninković’s broader work includes collaborations with artists such as Dub Revolution (Algeria) and Felix Reichalt (Germany), and she has increasingly developed her own artistic projects as a vocalist and producer. Her current endeavors include a jazz album, “Musings,” which draws upon her multilingual and multi-genre background, integrating jazz with influences from Latin, hip hop, and Balkan ethno music. In “Rising Summit,” Ninković’s lyricism adds a layer of intellectual and emotional sophistication, offering listeners both a personal narrative and a metaphorical exploration of self-transformation.

Genre Analysis: Fusion of Electro Pop and Bass House

“Rising Summit” is situated at the intersection of two prominent electronic subgenres: Electro Pop and Bass House. The fusion of these genres highlights VAone’s ability to draw from both melodic and rhythmic traditions within electronic music to create a dynamic and emotionally resonant track.

Electro Pop emerged in the late 1970s as artists began experimenting with synthesizers to craft pop music characterized by electronic instrumentation. The genre, epitomized by artists like Depeche Mode and New Order, is known for its catchy melodies, sleek production, and a focus on creating atmospheric soundscapes. In “Rising Summit,” Electro Pop’s influence is most evident in the song’s melodic structure and synthesizer use. VAone employs modern synth sounds to craft harmonic lines and atmospheric textures that support the song’s emotional arc. The clean, melodic quality of Bad Sasha’s vocal

performance aligns with Electro Pop's tradition of using clear, hook-oriented vocal lines.

Bass House, a sub-genre of electronic dance music (EDM), is marked by its deep, resonant bass lines and rhythmic intensity. Emerging in the 2010s, Bass House blends the foundational elements of house music—four-on-the-floor rhythms and syncopated percussion—with the heavy bass sounds and drops characteristic of bass music genres like dubstep. The driving bass line in “Rising Summit” is a key element of the Bass House influence, propelling the track forward and adding to its danceable energy. VAone's integration of these intense bass elements with the more melodic qualities of Electro Pop demonstrates his mastery of genre hybridity, ensuring that the track appeals to both pop and electronic music audiences.

This genre fusion provides “Rising Summit” with a unique sound that stands out within contemporary electronic music. The balance between melody and rhythm, bass and vocals, creates a song that is both emotionally compelling and sonically engaging, with the potential for crossover appeal across multiple audiences.

VAone:

The central idea behind this composition is to create a collaborative piece that blends electronic music with pop vocals.

The collaboration involved VAone and Bad Sasha.

In this production, VAone crafted the track “VAone feat. Bad Sasha – Rising Summit,” which merges elements of Electro Pop and Bass House. Inspiration for this track was drawn from songs such as Ytram feat. Elderbrook's “Fire” and GENESI's “Everything You Have Done (Meduza Edit).”

Electro Pop is a genre characterized by its fusion of electronic and pop music, utilizing synthesizers and electronic instruments to produce melodic and rhythmic soundscapes. Its distinguishing features include catchy melodies, clear and melodic vocal lines, drum machines, and electronic sound effects.

Bass House, a subgenre of electronic dance music (EDM), integrates elements of house

music with bass music. This genre is noted for its energetic sound, marked by intense bass lines, crisp rhythms, and powerful drums. Deep bass lines and pronounced drops are integral to Bass House.

The composition “Rising Summit” incorporates several key musical elements:

- **Synthesizers:** Modern synthesizer sounds were employed to craft melodic lines and atmospheric textures, which are emblematic of the Electro Pop genre.
- **Bass:** Powerful, deep bass lines underpin the track, contributing to the energetic rhythm and dynamic structure associated with Bass House.
- **Drums:** Clear, rhythmic drum patterns provide a solid foundation and accentuate the track’s danceable quality.
- **Vocal Samples:** Vocal phrases add dynamic variation and emotional depth to the composition.

Mood and Motif:

- **Mood:** The piece is characterized by an energetic, danceable quality, with futuristic and emotional undertones.
- **Motif:** The thematic focus centers on self-expression, joy, freedom, and the pursuit of new heights.

For the final mixing and mastering, VAone drew inspiration from tracks such as Ytram feat. Elderbrook’s “Fire,” Swedish House Mafia and Niki & The Dove’s “Lioness,” and Swedish House Mafia’s “Heaven Takes You Home.” These references guided the achievement of a polished, high-quality sound, ensuring a cohesive integration of all musical elements.

“I paid particular attention to the vocals,” VAone noted. “The vocal parts were recorded in collaboration with Bad Sasha, chosen for her powerful voice and professional approach. Her vocals not only stood out in their expressiveness but were also well-suited to the overall sonic landscape of the track. Furthermore, Sasha was open to experimentation, which I found particularly rewarding, as it was her first experience working in this genre—a fact that resonated with my love for sonic experimentation.”

This work exemplifies our shared ambition to forge a novel sound that balances the melody of Electro Pop with the vibrant energy of Bass House, with a strong emphasis on the precise processing of both instrumental and vocal elements. (Based on the messenger interview with VAone).

Aleksandra Ninković:

Aleksandra Ninković is a Serbian artist, born in 1987, starting primarily as a songwriter-lyricist, partaking in projects with other artists such as Bad Sasha (Ukraine) Dub Revolution (Algeria) Felix Reichalt (Germany) , etc. Sometime in between collaborations, she started developing her own vocal abilities and original style, now showing up as a vocalist, recording artist and a producer as well.

Her current endeavors include two of her own projects, first being “Apsolutiram” starting with the debut single “Perspektive” produced by Mario Milivojević, that was enlisted in Femixeta 10, and premiered in ‘Slušaj ‘Vamo” show on Radio Belgrade 202. Her latter project is the jazz album, “Musings” partially funded by SOKOJ agency, with the planned release in 2025. The album “Musings” is a multilingual and multi genre experience, with the jazz structure infused with latin, hip hop, swing, balkan ethno music and so on. Lyrics are written in Serbian, Spanish, English and Ukrainian.

Working style is usually adapted to each individual requirement, with few constant qualities. Creative aspect of work can be flexible in terms of songwriting starting off with the lyrics first and music composition second, or the other way around. In her arrangements she intuitively uses instruments to translate human experience into music, in addition to universal symbolism in her lyrics. However, she has stated, that there is a significant difference between her role as a songwriter and that of a vocalist. In her songwriting there is a different kind of creative freedom. The aspect of her work that involves working in a team is a firm but gentle leadership. She believes that at least 70% of success is gathering a team of musicians that are competent in their own field of expertise, and therefore, are able to bring their own original sound to the mix, rather than directing their every move. This is why she is usually open to suggestions, and willing to experiment, to find out what works best. Quality of the song is, a definite priority, still. A constant would be, that she is interested in the character of her associates, as well as talent, something that

she isn't willing to compromise on. This is to imply that "artistic eccentricity" isn't something she will needlessly tolerate, and that strong work ethic and personal and professional integrity is preferred at all times. (Based on the messenger interview with Aleksandra Ninković)

Lyrical Analysis:

The lyrics of "Rising Summit," written by Aleksandra Ninković, are central to the song's exploration of personal growth, struggle, and transcendence. The recurring imagery of a mountain or summit serves as a metaphor for the challenges one faces in life, as well as the rewards that come from overcoming them. In the opening verse, Ninković writes:

Rising summit before me
 Challenging climb, I am growing
 In my core - in my knowing
 I fight to hold on and to let go.

Here, the mountain symbolizes both the obstacles in life and the personal growth that comes from facing those challenges. The contrast between "holding on" and "letting go" reflects the internal conflict experienced by someone striving for self-actualization. Ninković's lyricism conveys a deep understanding of the emotional complexity involved in personal transformation.

As the song progresses, the theme of transcendence becomes more prominent, with references to enlightenment and spiritual growth. In the second verse, she writes:

Illuminated mountain, expanding
 At the gate of transcendence
 I bask in love - forgive & let go.

The imagery of an "illuminated mountain" and "the gate of transcendence" suggests a moment of realization or enlightenment, where the speaker finds peace through love and forgiveness. This spiritual dimension adds depth to the song's message, positioning it not just as a narrative of personal struggle but as an exploration of higher consciousness and

emotional release.

Ninković's lyrical style often incorporates universal themes, such as perseverance and self-belief, which resonate with a broad audience. The pre-chorus, "Trials can feel like a failure / Fall seven times, get up eight," is a direct reflection of this, encapsulating the resilience needed to overcome life's challenges. This motivational message is central to the song's thematic core, providing an empowering narrative for listeners.

Style and Production Combinations:

From a production standpoint, "Rising Summit" showcases a masterful blend of electronic elements, where synthesizers, bass, drums, and vocals interact in dynamic ways to create a cohesive and impactful track. VAone's use of synthesizers is central to the song's Electro Pop influence. Modern synth sounds are layered to create both melodic lines and atmospheric textures, lending the track its emotional weight and futuristic sound.

The bass in "Rising Summit" is equally important, grounding the track with a powerful, deep low-end that characterizes Bass House. This bass line not only adds rhythmic intensity but also serves as a structural foundation for the track, creating a sense of propulsion that drives the listener forward. The combination of the deep bass with the more melodic synthesizers reflects VAone's ability to balance contrasting elements, ensuring that the track feels both grounded and ethereal.

In terms of drums, the clear, rhythmic drum patterns in the track provide a solid foundation and emphasize its danceable quality. The rhythmic intensity of the drums complements the bass, contributing to the track's energetic, bass-heavy sound. This is typical of Bass House, where drums and bass work together to create a driving, club-ready beat.

Vocal production is another key element of "Rising Summit." Vocals are placed front and center in the mix, ensuring that her emotional delivery is the focal point of the song. VAone enhances her performance with subtle vocal effects and backing harmonies that add depth and texture to the overall sound. The clear, melodic quality of her voice complements the electronic instrumentation, making it accessible to both pop and electronic music audiences.

Conclusion: A Unified Vision of Collaboration

“Rising Summit” is a prime example of how collaboration can lead to innovative and genre-defying music. The combination of VAone’s production expertise, emotive vocal performance, and Aleksandra Ninković’s introspective lyricism has resulted in a track that blends the melodic appeal of Electro Pop with the rhythmic intensity of Bass House. This fusion of genres, alongside the song’s deep thematic exploration of growth and transcendence, sets “Rising Summit” apart as a significant contribution to contemporary electronic music.

By balancing melody, bass, and vocals, the track creates a dynamic and emotionally resonant experience for the listener, one that invites both introspection and movement. Ultimately, “Rising Summit” is not just a song; it is a testament to the power of collaboration and the creative possibilities that arise when artists from different backgrounds and disciplines come together to push the boundaries of genre and style.

Rising summit before me
 Challenging climb, I am growing
 In my core - in my knowing
 I fight to hold on and to let go..

Glowing presence commanding
 Illuminated mountain, expanding
 At the gate of transcendence
 I bask in love - Forgive & let go

Trials can feel like a failure
 Fall seven times, get up eight
 'Cause none of it matters until you - start
 To believe in yourself, yourself

Vision from above means changing your perspective
 Paradigm shifts in an instant
 Visions from above and everything is clearer
 Within you..

Reference track list:

1. Ytram feat. Elderbrook - "Fire" (2020): Merges deep house and ambient textures to explore themes of desire and introspection, with Elderbrook's emotive vocals enhancing the track's haunting, rhythmic soundscape.
2. GENESI - "Everything You Have Done" (Meduza Edit) (2022): Transforms GENESI's original into a high-energy anthem with deep bass and punchy percussion, paralleling the emotional intensity in "Rising Summit."
3. Swedish House Mafia and Niki & The Dove - "Lioness": Known for its anthemic synths and emotional depth, this unreleased track channels a cinematic atmosphere, influencing the immersive qualities in "Rising Summit."
4. Swedish House Mafia - "Heaven Takes You Home" (2022): Blends uplifting melodies and contemplative lyrics, creating smooth transitions and euphoric builds that inspired the emotional drive in "Rising Summit."
5. Aleksandra Ninković - "Perspektive": Explores themes of perspective and self-awareness with a poetic, introspective tone that aligns with the lyrical depth in "Rising Summit."
6. Aleksandra Ninković - "Musings" (Expected 2025): A genre-fusing jazz album with Latin, hip-hop, and Balkan influences, showcasing Ninković's narrative style that shaped the thematic elements in "Rising Summit."

5. Content Crime

Producer: Emil Nordström

Topliner: Bad Sasha

Lyricist: Bad Sasha

Performer: Bad Sasha

Drummer: Patrik Björni

Song Idea

The concept for this song emerged from a deeper exploration of the K-pop genre, which represents a highly versatile musical style. This genre is characterized by its ability to blend seemingly incompatible musical elements and genres within a single composition, creating a fresh and innovative approach to contemporary pop music. The idea behind this song was to adopt this methodology in arranging and adapt it into a more commercial and radio-friendly track format.

For this reason, the song incorporates highly diverse verses and choruses. The verses are influenced by soul music, while the chorus is sharp and even rock-oriented, creating a dynamic interplay within the track. To achieve this, producer Emil Nordström, known for his multifaceted approach, was selected. Nordström successfully managed to harmonize these contrasting elements into a cohesive and vibrant composition that stands out as both innovative and compelling.

Regarding the lyrics, they address sharp thematic and societal issues, utilizing a rich tapestry of metaphors and allegories. Additionally, the lyrics blend various stylistic approaches to lyricism, further enhancing the song's depth and originality.

The lyrical concept behind "Content Crime" reflects contemporary concerns about digital culture. The title itself suggests a commentary on the pressures of creating and consuming content in the digital age, addressing themes of overstimulation, the quest for attention, or the pitfalls of social media. The notion of a "crime" in the context of content creation hints at a critical or satirical take on the modern obsession with online visibility.

In terms of musical structure, the idea of the song is to balance minimalism with moments of intensity. The vision for the track included at least one minimalistic section, which eventually became the pre-chorus. This approach highlights the contrast between sparse, soulful verses and the more bombastic, layered choruses. The interplay between these elements could symbolize the highs and lows of navigating a fast-paced, content-driven world—the minimalism representing moments of clarity or isolation, while the full-throttle choruses represent the chaos and noise of constant online engagement.

Participants

The process of creating “Content Crime” was an effort between Bad Sasha and Emil Nordström, who co-wrote and produced the track. The collaboration was initiated in the autumn of 2023, as an expression of the desire to co-write a song. As a result, a close partnership was formed, where both participants contributed their unique creative ideas. The conceptual vision, setting the tone and mood for the track were done, while the producer played a critical role in shaping the song’s structure and sound. The collaboration was marked by a mutual respect for each other’s expertise, with the artist handling the arrangement and the producer handling the technical and musical execution. Both parties worked seamlessly together, with the producer mentioning that it was a pleasure to work with someone who had such a clear and defined creative vision.

The song exemplifies a productive working relationship, where input from both collaborators shaped the final product. Direction for the minimalistic pre-chorus and overall arrangement gave the song its distinct character, while the producer’s approach to mixing and layering instruments elevated the technical quality. The final product reflects both artistic identities, creative instincts, and technical and musical skills. The dynamic of this collaboration highlights the importance of trust and open communication in achieving a polished, cohesive sound that stays true to the artist’s vision.

Emil Nordström:

«Process of "Content Crime"»

Bad Sasha reached out to me in the autumn of 2023, asking if I would co-write a song with her. That’s when the process of creating our song "Content Crime" began. As reference

tracks, we used "Chicken Teriyaki" by Rosalia and "SOS" by Avicii.

When songwriting and producing songs in the pop genre, such as this one, I like to start "in the box," creating an initial structure consisting of drum and bass parts. In this case, Bad Sasha envisioned at least one part of the song being very minimalistic, so I kept that in mind from the beginning. This minimalistic part later became the pre-chorus.

I found a drum loop that served as the initial inspiration for creating the synth bass groove, which became quite dominant in the song and propelled the verses forward.

To mix things up and make the song stand out, I recorded a heavy rock guitar part in the chorus, aiming to surprise the listener. When composing, I try not to approach music from a purely theoretical perspective, as I find it can sometimes limit my decisions. Instead, I aim to enter a creative flow state, which was also the case with this production. Combining electronic and acoustic sound sources helps me achieve my desired sound.

Once the track, vocals, and lyrics were complete, I mixed the song, aiming for a clear modern sound with an emphasis on the vocals.

"Content Crime" was a true collaboration between Bad Sasha and me. She had a clear vision for setting the mood and arranging the parts of the song. It was a pleasure to work with her.

The final production of "Content Crime" consists of the following elements:

- Electronic Drums – Drum loop, programmed and triggered drums from the acoustic drum part
- Acoustic Drums – From chorus 1 to the end
- Synth Bass – In the verses
- Electric Bass – Saturated, tightly played to complement the electric guitar riff
- Electric Guitar – Heavily overdriven rock riff in the chorus, layered four times
- Acoustic Guitar – Picking pattern in the verses
- Synthesizers – Lead sounds in layers, plucked lead sound, arpeggiator, and pads
- Transitional FX
- Vocal FX
- Lead Vocals
- Backing Vocals & Doubles» (Based on the interview with Emil Nordström)

Music Genre and Influences

“Content Crime” firmly sits within the pop genre, yet it incorporates a wide range of influences that give it a unique edge. As a pop production, it follows many conventions of the genre, particularly in its catchy hooks, clear structure, and emphasis on vocals. However, it stands out due to the integration of diverse musical elements, drawing inspiration from different genres to create something fresh. Two reference tracks were instrumental in guiding the production process: “Chicken Teriyaki” by Rosalía and “SOS” by Avicii. Both of these tracks bring contrasting elements to the table—Rosalía’s song, known for its minimalistic, urban-influenced sound, and Avicii’s track, characterized by its electronic dance elements and emotive melodies. These references informed the combination of minimalistic electronic sounds with more complex instrumental layers.

The pop genre’s flexibility allows for experimentation with different styles, and this track takes full advantage of that. It incorporates electronic and acoustic elements, blending synthetic beats with organic instruments like electric guitar and acoustic drums. While the electronic drum loop and synth bass give the verses a driving, modern feel, the introduction of heavy rock guitar riffs in the chorus provides a surprising twist that diverges from typical pop expectations. This genre-blending approach speaks to the modern evolution of pop music, where producers are increasingly looking to fuse styles to keep listeners engaged and to distinguish their work in a crowded market.

Lyrical Themes and Song Concept

At the heart of “Content Crime” is a commentary on the intersection of love, social media, and the rapid consumption of content in the digital age. The lyrics reflect a longing for connection in a world dominated by fleeting interactions and curated online personas. The writing conveys the tension between real emotions and the performative nature of social media relationships. In the opening verse, she describes the experience of scrolling through endless posts, witnessing people vying for fame and affection: “Watching some wanted fame / And some wanted lovers / Those who needed to be loved.” This sets the tone for the song, highlighting the emotional impact of living in an environment where validation and love are often commodified.

The chorus, with its repeated plea for “fast love,” captures the urgency and superficiality of modern romance, driven by instant gratification and digital approval. The phrase “Give me that fast love” serves as a refrain, underscoring the song’s central theme—the desire for quick, intense connections that are consumed and discarded as rapidly as content on social media. The line “You are a permanent part of my content plan” further blurs the line between personal relationships and online presence, suggesting that even love can be strategized and packaged for public consumption.

In the second verse, the lyrics continue to explore this theme of performance and curation, with references to social media activities: “I wanna film in the club / I want to hide a small cam / I wanna come home at night / And till noon be awake.” These lines reflect the pressure to document every moment, turning even private or intimate experiences into sharable content. The mention of Lightroom (a popular photo-editing app) in the chorus reinforces the idea that even love and identity are mediated through digital filters, further amplifying the song’s critique of the modern content-driven world.

Idea of the Song

The concept behind “Content Crime” reflects contemporary concerns about digital culture, although the interview doesn’t delve deeply into the lyrical content. The title itself suggests a commentary on the pressures of creating and consuming content in the digital age, possibly addressing themes of overstimulation, the quest for attention, or the pitfalls of social media. The notion of a “crime” in the context of content creation hints at a critical or satirical take on the modern obsession with online visibility.

In terms of musical structure, the idea of the song is to balance minimalism with moments of intensity. Vision for the track included at least one minimalistic section, which eventually became the pre-chorus. This approach highlights the contrast between sparse, rhythmic verses and the more bombastic, layered choruses. The interplay between these elements could symbolize the highs and lows of navigating a fast-paced, content-driven world—the minimalism representing moments of clarity or isolation, while the full-throttle choruses represent the chaos and noise of constant online engagement.

Style Combinations and Production Techniques

“Content Crime” exemplifies a fusion of electronic and acoustic styles, an approach that adds depth and texture to the song. The production process started “in the box,” meaning the producer began with a digital framework, creating the basic drum and bass parts using electronic tools. This approach is common in modern pop production, where electronic software is used to lay down the foundational elements of a track. However, the producer did not confine the song to purely digital sounds. By incorporating both electronic and live instruments, the song transcends a purely synthetic feel and gains a more dynamic, hybrid quality.

The producer’s decision to add a heavy rock guitar riff in the chorus serves as a deliberate attempt to “surprise the listener.” This choice disrupts the more straightforward pop elements of the song, blending genres in a way that keeps the audience engaged. The combination of a driving synth bass groove in the verses and a saturated electric guitar in the chorus results in a track that crosses pop, electronic, and rock boundaries. This layering of contrasting elements—smooth, rhythmic electronic verses paired with explosive, gritty rock choruses—gives the song a unique character.

The layering technique is also central to the production. For example, the electric guitar part in the chorus is described as “heavily overdriven” and layered four times, creating a thick, powerful sound that dominates this section of the song. Layering, in this context, is a technique used to enhance the sonic impact of certain elements, making the chorus feel much larger in contrast to the minimalistic pre-chorus. Similarly, synthesizers are used in multiple layers to build up textures in other parts of the song, with lead sounds, arpeggiators, and pads contributing to a rich harmonic palette.

In addition to instrumental layering, vocal production played a key role in the song’s final sound. Both lead and backing vocals were carefully arranged to maintain clarity while also adding depth. The producer aimed for a “clear modern sound” with a strong emphasis on the vocals, which is typical of pop music but still allows room for creative effects, such as vocal doubles and transitions. These elements, along with transitional FX and vocal FX, provide a professional polish to the track, ensuring that it stands up against other contemporary pop productions.

Lyrics:

I was lying in my bed scrolling
 Watching some wanted fame
 And some wanted lovers
 Those who needed to be loved
 I heard so many tears and stories
 Ones not posted
 And I wanted to block that all
 Out of my screen and soul
 But then I met this handsome babe
 Love and a drop of pain
 In my highlights
 And I don't know how but
 You are a permanent part of my content
 plan

I wanna strike a pose for pic
 I wanna fix a pose for him
 I wanna do it in a Reel

All your love
 I need a fast love
 Give me that fast love
 Beg for the fast love
 Flash
 Give me that fast love
 Give me fast love
 I need a fast love
 Lightroom make up
 Here is a new shot
 Now is your turn
 Give me love on

Give me fast love
 Give me faster
 Faster faster
 Fast fast fast fast

Tastes like rose and lime
 Changed my soda to your wine
 You're my content crime
 To show our love in a profile would be out of
 line

I will never write things I'm thinking next to
 you

Babe, I wanna die
 In your arms, on your knees,
 I just want to be with you

I wanna film in the club
 I want to hide a small cam
 I wanna come home at night
 And till noon be awake
 Wait wait wait I will post a new story
 I have to take all the love and glory

The taste of rose and lime
 Brought me to another life
 In my content crime
 I realized my heart is not a place for fear but
 for light

I'm sure I'm doing right

It's not the end but a tear of a story

On my reverse side

What should I choose either love or glory?

Conclusion

The production of “Content Crime” is a testament to the effective blending of electronic and acoustic elements in modern pop music. Vision for the song’s arrangement, paired with the producer’s creative and technical input, resulted in a track that defies simple genre classification. Through the use of minimalistic electronic verses, dynamic rock-influenced choruses, and detailed production techniques such as layering and vocal FX, “Content Crime” stands out as a unique pop production. The collaborative nature of the project, along with the fusion of styles and influences, highlights the evolving landscape of pop music, where genre boundaries are increasingly blurred to create innovative, attention-grabbing sounds.

Reference track list:

1. Avicii (2019). ‘SOS’ – This track merges emotional pop with EDM beats, addressing themes of mental health and the pressure of living in the spotlight. Its melodic, uplifting feel alongside vocal line and its processing influenced “Content Crime,” helping shape its electronic and emotive style.
2. Charli XCX (2019). ‘Click’ – This song combines futuristic pop sounds with hyperpop elements, mixing glitchy beats and distorted vocals. Charli XCX’s lyrics address the fast-paced, attention-driven world, mirroring the themes of digital culture and overstimulation in “Content Crime.”
3. Lana Del Rey (2021). ‘White Dress’ – This song reflects on the pressures of fame and modern life, with Lana’s nostalgic tone conveying themes of innocence lost in a digital world. Its stripped-down verses and emotive vocals parallel the minimalistic pre-chorus in “Content Crime” and its commentary on digital life.
8. Rosalía (2022). ‘Chicken Teriyaki’ – Known for its minimalist beat and playful tone, “Chicken Teriyaki” captures an urban, rhythmic energy. Rosalía’s use of sparse production

and rhythmic drive in this track directly inspired “Content Crime” and aligns with its minimalistic approach in parts.

9. Rina Sawayama (2020). ‘STFU!’ – Mixing pop with heavy guitar and rock influences, “STFU!” tackles frustrations and confrontational emotions in a style that breaks pop conventions. Rina’s use of genre-blending and intense, unpredictable choruses aligns with “Content Crime’s” rock-infused chorus and layered production.

10. Troye Sivan (2023). ‘Got Me Started’ – Sivan’s “Got Me Started” blends pop with moody, lush production, featuring layered vocals and ambient textures. The track’s intricate production style and layered elements align with the hybrid production approach used in “Content Crime.”

6. Summary

This thesis demonstrates how genre blending serves as a powerful tool for innovation in contemporary music, offering both theoretical insights and practical applications. Through the creation of a four-song portfolio, this research highlights the artistic potential of synthesizing diverse musical traditions, breaking away from conventional templates to create compositions that are both avant-garde and accessible. The collaborative process emphasized in this study underscores the importance of synergy among artists, where diverse backgrounds and influences converge to produce fresh and dynamic sounds.

By integrating elements from jazz, funk, rock, electronic, and pop, this work redefines the possibilities of genre fusion, illustrating how such experimentation can lead to the emergence of new creative paradigms. Beyond its contribution to music production, this thesis invites broader reflections on the role of innovation and collaboration in artistic evolution. It sets a precedent for future explorations in genre hybridity, positioning music as a continually evolving medium that thrives on the interplay of tradition and experimentation.

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