



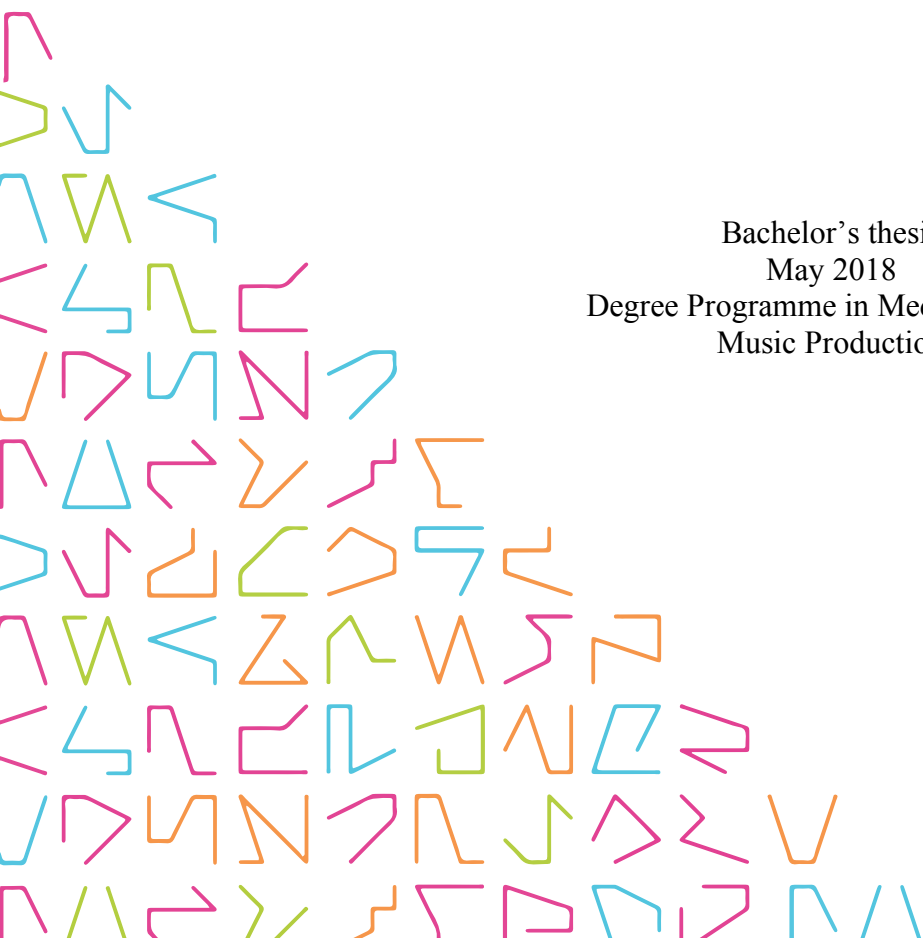
TAMPEREEN
AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU

I HEARD IT THROUGH THE FACETIME

Producing an EP for an International R&B Project

Mika Kurvinen

Bachelor's thesis
May 2018
Degree Programme in Media and Arts
Music Production



ABSTRACT

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Producing an EP for an International R&B project.

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This thesis discusses the production process of R&B music, international project management, cultural differences, personality theories and communication in the context of the thesis project. One main focus is producing an EP for an international R&B project named F.U.N.C. during 2015-2017. The goal is to describe every step of the production process, planning and management, as clearly as possible.

The thesis examines communication, paying special attention to different personality theories, and points out some of the challenges in international projects like distance, language barriers, misunderstandings and budget. Source literature stated that Internet and its digital communication platforms have made international interaction more approachable for everyone. It has also opened new horizons of public access to education and cultural resources, which can influence wider groups of people than ever before.

The findings indicate that digital era has bridged the gap between different cultures and reshaped the way we think about cultural and national differences. For example, this project in itself is a creation of our time, and would have not been possible without the Internet. However, this research also yielded conclusions on how Internet has failed to sufficiently replace the traditional way of communication and how face-to-face intercourse is still holding its strong position in building trustworthy and long-lasting relationships – both in business and life.

Key words: production, r&b music, international, internet, communication

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GLOSSARY

DAW	Digital Audio Workstation
Plug-in	A software component that adds features to an existing DAW. There are three types of audio plug-ins: those which shape existing audio samples, those which create new audio samples through sound synthesis and those which analyze existing audio samples.
Audio Frequency	Signals in the human audio range, nominally 20Hz - 20kHz
EQ	An abbreviation of “Equalization”. Equalizers are used in manipulating the loudness of specific audio frequencies to reduce unwanted sounds or enhance clarity.
Compression	A process of controlling the dynamic range between the quietest and loudest parts of an audio signal.
Preamp	An electronic amplifier that boosts signal volume to a desired level.
Synthesizer	An electronic instrument that generates sound through synthesis by manipulating an audio waveform with filters and envelopes.
Sampling	The practice of using a part, or a sample, from another sound recording and reusing it as a loop, an instrument or element of a new recording.
Loop	A repeated section of sound material. These sections are usually repeated to create longer patterns.

Scratching	A DJ technique of manually rotating a vinyl record, or a control vinyl, back and forth on a turntable to produce percussive sounds and effects.
Beat	A background music track in hip-hop and R&B music.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the Internet, international projects have become more common. Digitalization has encouraged international interaction, but it has also created new problems and challenges as a byproduct. Some people find themselves uncomfortable in this new environment, while others welcome this progress with open arms. People tend to have a need to pigeonhole every tiny thing in the universe, including ourselves. We are obsessively searching for differences rather than similarities. We need to define all small physical and mental details of a human being.

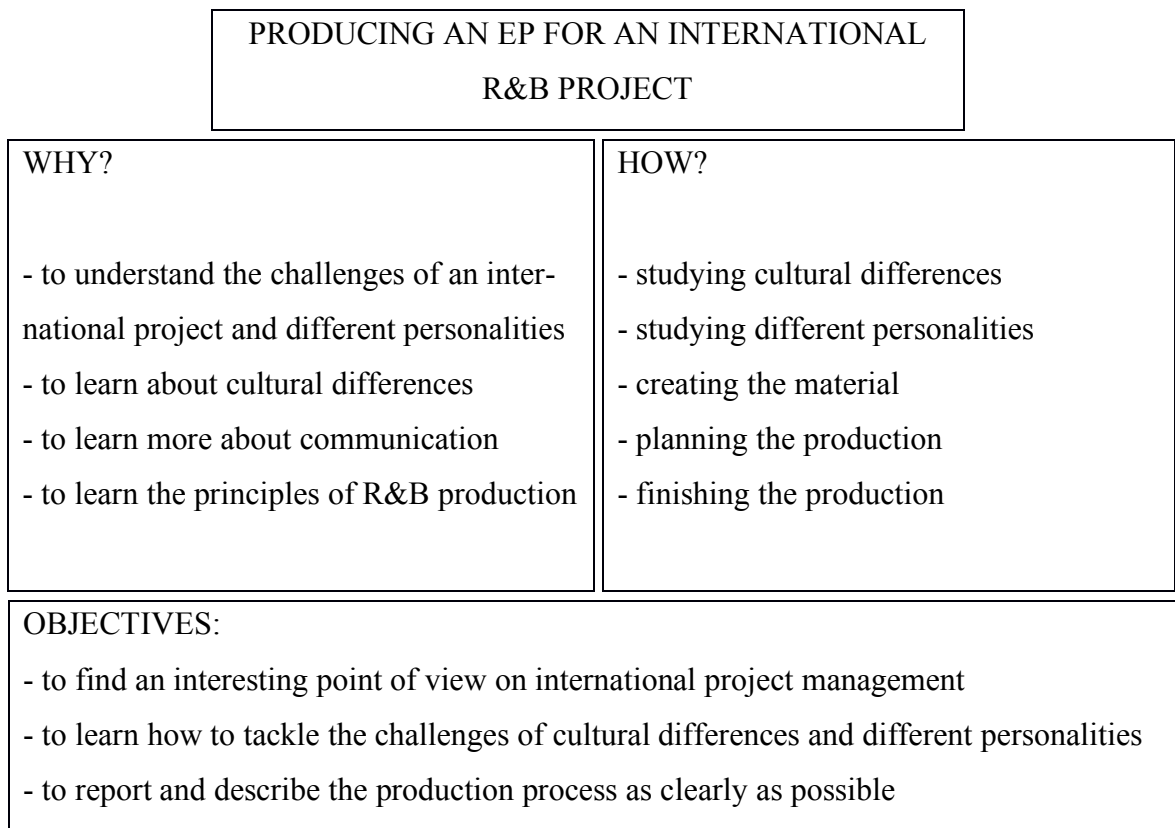
For this thesis I have studied few theories and models of different cultures and personalities. I want to understand the challenges of international interaction and learn, which is more dominant and defining factor in human behavior – culture or personality. To what extent does language barrier complicate the communication? How should you be prepared for international and digital communication and what kind of things you should be aware of? How can you build trust, maintain good relations and avoid bigger conflicts?

This project was also my debut as a producer in R&B music, so there was quite a lot of genre-specific standards for me to learn about composing, producing, song-writing, mixing and mastering. It was first time for me to work within an international project and mostly through the Internet, meeting each other rarely. It required disciplined communication, organizing, arranging, understanding and a lot of patience. My intention is to tackle the challenges of international interaction and observe digital communication. Has Internet succeeded in replacing traditional way of interaction between people? Is social media enough for a proper communication? How to manage an international project? Finally, I wanted to become a better and more self-aware producer.

2. FRAME OF REFERENCE

As technology evolves and international interaction is increasing, new tools and capabilities are required. New possibilities always create new challenges. One of the main goals of this thesis is to find proper tools for international digital communication and study how to maintain good relations and prevent potential conflicts in the international projects. The study also aims to understand different challenges of international interaction and encourage Finnish musicians to work abroad.

The thesis examines communication by using different theories of personality and studies of cultural differences as a framework for solving, which is more dominant in determining human behavior – cultural background or personality type. In addition to the theories, studies and my own observations during the process, I've used different music production books, magazines and digital sources as a background material to clarify my perspectives and support my arguments.



PICTURE 1: Frame of Reference (Mika Kurvinen 2018)

2.1 Theories of Personality

The most popular and widely used theories of personality are: The Enneagram of Personality, The Big Five Personality theory and Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.

The Enneagram theory categorizes the human psyche into nine different personality types: Perfectionist, Helper, Achiever, Romantic, Observer, Skeptic, Enthusiast, Challenger and Peacemaker. It strives to explain the inner workings and reasons behind human behavior. Enneagram tests are being used even at job interviews and the theory is widely used as a tool to navigate workplace dynamics and personal relationships.

(Baron & Wagele 1994, 15-16.)

Although this theory is being promoted in many respected conferences, seminars and books, it's not widely accepted within the academic community. Enneagram theory states that each person has multiple personality types, which are emphasized in different ways, depending on the situation. For example, in a stressful situation someone classified as a Perfectionist type may become more like a Romantic type, or in a relaxed situation more like an Enthusiast type. (Baron & Wagele 1994, 27.)

The idea of the Big Five Theory is that there are five major dimensions in all human characters. Any person can be given five scores that will tell a lot about the ways they are liable to behave through their lives. The big five personality dimensions are: Extraversion, Neuroticism, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness and Openness. (Cherry 2018.)

It's worthwhile to note that each of the five personality factors represents a range between two extremes. For example, extraversion represents a continuum between extreme introversion and extreme extraversion. People who are high on the openness continuum are typically focused on tackling new challenges, open to trying new things and very creative.

The conscientiousness continuum is about thoughtfulness, self-control and goal-directed behaviors. Highly conscientiousness people are usually more organized. Extraversion is defined by excitability, sociability, talkativeness, assertiveness, and high amounts of emotional expressiveness. People who are characterized highly in extraversion are usually more extroverts and socially active. Agreeableness includes features like kindness,

affection, altruism and trust. Highly agreeable are usually more co-operative, while the opposite side tend to be more manipulative and competitive. Neuroticism is defined by sadness, moodiness and emotional instability. Highly neurotic people have mood swings, anxiety and sadness. The opposite extreme tends to be stable and emotionally flexible. The Big Five traits are universal and cross-culturally applicable. (Cherry 2018.)

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) was created by Katharine Briggs and Isabel Briggs Myers. The background of MBTI was in making the theory of psychological types described by C. G. Jung understandable and useful in people's lives (The Myers & Briggs Foundation 2018). It's based on 16 different personality types, which Jung defined as stereotypes.

There are four main preferences at the heart of the Myers Briggs theory: Extraversion & Introversion, Thinking & Feeling, Sensing & Intuition and Judging and Perceiving. Extraversion and Introversion preference defines how a person focuses attention and is energized. Thinking and Feeling preference describes how a person evaluates information and makes decisions. Sensing and Intuition preference measures how a person takes in information. Judging and Perceiving is a person's lifestyle preference, whether it's more planned and organized or spontaneous and flexible. (The Myers & Briggs Foundation 2018.)

After examining the above-mentioned theories, I chose to emphasize Enneagram in this thesis. It seemed to be the most capable theory in describing the behaviors of different personality types and revealing the psychological motivations behind an individual's actions in the context of this project. Enneagram's greatest strength is to describe the behavioral tendencies of each personality type at different levels psychological health. It shows that every type has its own aspects of ineffectiveness and effectiveness.

2.2 Studies of Culture and Race

This thesis compares theories of personality together with the Lewis Model of cultural types and the Myth of Race study by Robert Wald Sussman.

The Lewis Model of cultural types is developed by a British linguist Richard D. Lewis. His ambition was to define and simplify inter-cultural analysis, with the aim to make communication easier between different cultures. The model places countries in three categories: Linear-actives, Multi-actives and Reactives. Linear-actives are structured and controlled. Multi-actives are emotional talkative. Reactives emphasize courtesy and tend to avoid conflicts. (CrossCulture 2015.)

Lewis Model can be used to analyze how different cultures are programmed and to identify similarities and differences between different cultures. According to Lewis (CrossCulture 2015), there are norms of how people from different cultures behave, and that these norms are deeply rooted.

The Myth of Race is a book written by an anthropology professor Robert Wald Sussman, and the study explores the concept of race. Sussman's (Sussman 2014, 2) main statement is that race has no biological basis, and that people still mistakenly believe that emotional features and intelligence could be traced to it. Sussman (2014, 11-64) explains the history of ideas about race and unfolds the concept of eugenics.

2.3 Starting point

There were many reasons to produce F.U.N.C.'s debut EP, but this project happened by accident. Sometimes people end up working together from different parts of the world, against all odds. We met on a song-writing camp, organized by TAMK and Minerva Academie voor Popcultuur in the Netherlands in 2014. There were five students from both schools taking part in the song-writing camp of five days. Each day we got a new genre assignment and person to work with. On the last day I worked with a jazz drummer who had never sung before. Luckily that day we had freedom to choose a genre for ourselves so we decided to try out a disco song. After eight hours of intensive song-writing, out of our comfort zone, we had quite unexpected combo together – a Finnish-Dutch R&B group named F.U.N.C.

Below is a time management table of the project. Hours on the time-table below are approximate estimates, since I didn't write down accurate notes during the process.

STAGE OF PROJECT	ESTIMATED TIME USED
Planning and creating the material	70 h
Getting familiar with the source literature	30 h
Pre-production (songwriting etc.)	70 h
Production (recording, premixing)	50 h
Postproduction (mixing and mastering)	20 h
Releasing (promo kit, digital release)	20 h
Reporting	170 h
TOTAL	430 h

PICTURE 2: Time Management Table (Mika Kurvinen 2018)

2.4 Introducing the Crew Members

Michelle Samba

Michelle Samba, also known as Chai Blaq is a Dutch/Congolese drummer-singer and since childhood she's been involved with different kinds of music as a drummer. For this project Michelle creates lyrics, melodies and a bit of sound. Besides F.U.N.C. she plays drums in the house band of famous Dutch comedy show. (Michelle Samba 2018.)

Mika Kurvinen

My musical background is in melodic soul-based hip-hop. Lately I have learned more of modern R&B and neo soul. I started my music career as a rapper and have published four solo rap albums with various Finnish labels and been featured on many others. Now I'm focusing equally on producing and rapping. (Mika Kurvinen 2018.)

Gabe Garskof

Gabe Garskof is a full time audio engineer at Engine Room Audio, New York. Working with a diverse set of genres at a top NYC studio, he has established himself with clients

including SZA, 50 Cent, The Neptunes, Unstoppable Death Machines, The Weeks, DJ Drama, Club Dogo, Mobb Deep, Angel Haze, Yung Thug, The Bergamot, Pool Cosby and Dark Sister. Gabe's passionate, musical approach, knowledge and collaborative attitude have placed him in the room with countless artists throughout his career. (Gabe MG 2018.)

Daniël de Keizer

Daniël de Keizer is an owner of a music consult company 'Eighty Five', based in Rotterdam, The Netherlands. He works as an advisor for artists, music companies and other organizations in project management, PR, internet strategy, social media, brand communications, strategy, A&R and event creation. In this project he worked as a manager. (Linkedin 2018.)

Lars Meijer

Lars Meijer is one of the dedicated mastering engineers of Wisseloord Studios in the Netherlands. He works mostly in the field of electronic music. (RecPlay 2018.)

3. PRODUCTION PLANNING

3.1 Searching for the Sound

Before we started writing any songs, we spent a lot of time discussing about music, building up reference playlists and searching for our sound. Me and Michelle come from totally different musical and cultural backgrounds.

Michelle is a Dutch-Congolese jazz-drummer, who has been playing in a wide variety of bands, genres ranging from happy hardcore, heavy metal, disco to jazz. Before this project, she didn't have much experience of singing, at least on recorded tracks. Her comfort zone was mostly behind the drum kit. I have been mostly doing rap music without that much of a knowledge about producing or writing songs for singers. Two things that we had in common, however, was our multiracial background and shared love towards R&B music. The combination felt so weird and unexpected, that it needed to be tried out.

R&B is an abbreviation of Rhythm & Blues and is used to describe music influenced by African-American blues singers since the late 1930s (Nero 2017). Throughout the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s the term used to describe different genres performed by African Americans such as blues, rock and roll, gospel and soul music. In the 1970s, however, it became a blanket term for different forms of soul and funk music. Some of the legendary R&B bands that are part of the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame are: Earth, Wind & Fire, The Isley Brothers, Sly & The Family Stone and Parliament-Funkadelic. (Simmons 2017.)

After the disco era at the beginning of the 1980s, the producers started experimenting with synthesizers and created more dancefloor-friendly sound. That's when Contemporary R&B was established. Some of the biggest influencers for Modern R&B were Quincy Jones and Teddy Riley. Teddy Riley created a new genre called New Jack Swing at the end of the 1980s by mixing hip-hop and R&B together. He was one of the first producers to add hip-hop beats underneath gospel harmonies and soul music. (Ward 2011).

Nowadays Contemporary R&B is a fusion of many different genres such as disco, soul, funk, EDM, bass music, house, dance and indie. Artists like Frank Ocean, Beyoncé, The Weeknd and Bryson Tiller are good examples of Modern R&B.

We had a vision of futuristic R&B combined with hip-hop, cinematic music and soul. Most of the reference tracks and artists were from Los Angeles, so we decided to find an American mixing engineer, who would be experienced in the sound that we were looking for. We planned that we would write, pre-produce and record all the tracks by ourselves, but reach out for help at mixing and mastering stage.

3.2 Work Plan

In the beginning we had quite unrealistic plans about finishing and releasing our debut album in one year. Original plan was to record all the songs in fall 2016, and send them to mixing and mastering. We agreed that we would release three singles before releasing the album. However there was many question marks about the process and we were doubting on the whole album idea, so we ended up releasing our first single 'Nectar' in November 2016.

We set up a shared Dropbox folder for all the instrumental sketches, demos, promo kits and plans. We chose Facetime and Skype as our communication tools and tried to stay in touch once a week to brainstorm together and give feedback to each other. We also formed a joint Spotify playlist for inspiration. The more we listened to the reference tracks the more our vision begun to grow and form. At that time both of us were still students and we had access to the studios and equipment. The biggest challenge was to meet up, since we were living in different countries. The easiest way for us was to work separately, have online meetings on Facetime and arrange one or two recording sessions per year, either in Finland or the Netherlands. Besides the distance, one of the major challenges as an upcoming independent act was a tight budget. At the same time we didn't want to compromise too much on the sound.

3.3 Budget

A budget estimates the capital expenditure and revenue expenditure of an entrepreneur or a company for one or more future periods. It's used for planning acquisitions, expenses, controlling operations, profit, and so forth. A simple budget plan contains at least an income estimate for future periods. (Accounting Tools 2017.)

There are many ways to fund and execute a project. It's very important to discuss about the budget before going too deep in the process. Usually in the beginning artists need to take the financial risk by themselves, assuming there's no record deal from the beginning. Luckily it had become much cheaper and easier to produce quality material in the home environment. You don't necessarily need expensive studio and huge production team for your project, thanks to modern technology. However it will take more time and effort to do everything by yourself, which will eventually affect the quality of your work.

Besides doing everything by yourself there are other options for funding your project like crowdfunding, scholarships, grants, residencies, loans or finding a record label or a publishing company. For us it was difficult to find any proper record or publishing company, since we were totally new act with no songs released. So we planned an optimal budget for our debut EP and decided to take the financial risk ourselves until we would find the right record label.

In the budget plan we counted in travel costs, equipment rent, studio time, mixing and mastering services, digital and physical release expenses, promo pictures, visuals, artwork, press release and promotional expenses. We didn't plan to hire a PR company or pay for being featured on any physical or digital magazine. As potential sources of income we counted in live concerts, streaming on digital platforms, copyright payments from radio airplay and AV, potential sync deals and sponsorships, and as last and the least - physical sale.

Our plan was to record the EP by ourselves and hire engineers for mixing and mastering. We wanted to release two or three singles. In the beginning we tried to fund our project in many different ways. One of them was Finnish crowdfunding platform called Mesenaatti. For our application we had to think of minimum and maximum target

amount, which we wanted to reach with our crowdfunding campaign. Our minimum goal was to get enough money for affordable mixing services and a vinyl pressing.

Crowdfunding is a form of financing in which people choose to fund an interesting project. Funders will receive some kind of service, experience or the end product of the project as a reward in return. (Mesenaatti 2018.)

EXPENSES	ESTIMATED AMOUNT
Travel Expenses (Finland – the Netherlands)	500 €
Equipment & Studio Rent	500 €
Mixing (max. 300 €/song)	1500 €
Mastering (max. 120 €/song)	600 €
Visual Art & Promo Pictures	800 €
Music Videos (2)	1000 €
Vinyl Pressing (500 pcs)	1700 €
Digital Release	100 €
Marketing	500 €
TOTAL	7200 €

PICTURE 3: Budget Plan (Mika Kurvinen 2018)

With our maximum target, 7000 euros, we would be able to finish, release and market the EP on our own terms and use the best available options for mixing and mastering. With our minimum target, 4500 euros, we would be able to finish and release the EP, but we'd have to save on visual art work, music videos or mixing and mastering services.

We preferred to work with a New York-based mixing engineer Gabe Garskof, who has mixed for artists like SZA, 50 Cent, The Neptunes and Mobb Deep. It's pretty difficult to find an experienced and R&B-oriented mixing engineer from Finland, almost impossible. Our music and sound is heavily influenced by American R&B singers and producers, so it felt natural to reach out for American mixing engineers, who would already have some experience of our genre.

I was asking offers from a few different Finnish and American mixing engineers. For my surprise it turned out to be more affordable to use a very experienced American mixing engineer (Gabe) than a Finnish one. I contacted him at SoundBetter website and he ended up mixing our first single 'Nectar', which got played once on BBC 1Xtra and plenty of times on Finnish National Radio YleX. We were very satisfied in working with Gabe and wanted him to mix the whole EP. Only problem was the budget, since he asked 300 euros for a song, which would make 1500 euros for the whole EP. Depending on the budget, we would need to think of other options as well. Some Finnish freelance mixing engineers that I've used to work with, ask 150 euros for a song. That would be our plan B, which would save 750 euros.

For mastering stage we planned to use somebody from our inner circle. We were looking for a mastering engineer, who wouldn't squash the sound with heavy compression and limiting. We ended up using a Dutch engineer called Lars Meijer, who has been working mostly with electronic music. He asked 120 euros for a song, which would make 600 euros for the whole EP. For visual art and promo pictures we set aside 800 euros. Michelle has background in graphic design, so it would be possible to save money on visuals if needed. Michelle designed the cover art for our first single 'Nectar' and will probably design the cover for the EP as well. However we still need to pay the photographer for the upcoming promo pictures.

Budget for music videos is 1000 euros. I have some experience of low-budget music video productions from my solo rap project. Usually the budget swirls around from 500 to 1000 euros per video. We decided not to spend too much money on the videos before we have a record deal. There are lot of talented video makers in our inner circle, so it would be most convenient to work with them. A production company called Visual Works made our first music video for 'Nectar' basically for free.

When it comes to releasing, it will be the most expensive part of the process, since we also prefer to have a vinyl edition of the EP. I did some research of different vinyl pressing plants in Europe and found the most affordable options in Estonia and Germany, based on my friend's recommendations. It's challenging to find a reliable place where price and quality meet your needs. It turned out that it would be most affordable to print 500 pieces instead of any smaller amounts. The difference in price between editions of 300 and 500 pieces was only 200-300 euros. Besides vinyl release, we will also release

the record on biggest digital platforms like Spotify, Apple Music, Deezer, Tidal, iTunes etc. For digital release we use Record Union, which is a Swedish digital distribution service. A world-wide digital release of an EP through the Record Union service costs only 20 dollars for one year (Record Union 2018). Record Union will also collect and pay royalties from digital streaming. It's undoubtedly more affordable to release music nowadays than before, but the revenues are also smaller than during the vinyl and CD era.

As last but not least, we are planning to spend 500 euros on marketing, mostly on Social media services like Facebook and Instagram. The era of digital music and the Internet have opened new marketing opportunities for musicians (Devumi 2017). With the right platform it's possible to promote in the different channels, all at the same time. Artists can get creative with promoting on social media, such as interacting with fans via live streaming. Nowadays it's much easier to have your music played and promoted. Only your imagination is the limit.

Based on my previous experiences, it's worth spending 100-200 euros per single to attract more audience and attention on Facebook and Instagram. To save money we probably end up using more of a guerrilla marketing. As an upcoming and independent act we need to grasp the attention of audience in more personal and memorable level.

4. KEY PRINCIPLES IN R&B PRODUCTION

4.1 Pre-production

Today it's pretty easy to prepare all the material for recording and production at home circumstances. Modern technology has given everybody an access to produce music. Naturally, some projects still demand expensive gear and bigger production teams, but depending on your preferred genre and sound, it's possible to *do it yourself*.

We considered various options such as if there should be more people in the production team or a ghostwriter. Pretty soon we realized that it would be most convenient for us to work on a creative side together only, and be in total control of the most essential parts of our project. Our division of labor was me taking care of the instrumental compositions and the production while Michelle wrote most of the lyrics and melodies. We brainstormed together on the concept.

Pre-production is usually considered to be a stage, where producer and artist go through different parts, instruments, aspects and technical preparation of the songs before recording session (Sound on Sound 2017). Pre-production is much about preparation. However, in modern electronic music such as hip-hop and R&B, pre-production is more or less vague. Thanks to the high quality of modern DAWs and home studios, demos are getting better and the need of pre-production has dramatically decreased. It is also typical to mix different stages of production. There are lot of different ways to produce R&B, but usually it's based on some type of sampling or borrowed chord progressions from older funk, soul or disco songs. As a matter of fact, searching samples could be defined as pre-production stage in hip-hop and R&B. Many hip-hop producers spend tons of hours in hunting loops and one-shot samples from vinyl records, sample banks, synthesizers and Internet.

Personally I prefer to use more obscure samples from different continents like East Asia, South Asia and South America with intention to sample instruments that I normally don't have any access to. It was a game-changing moment for me to realize that there was an ultimate sound library with any imaginable exotic instrument, voice or effect at my fingertips. Also it's less likely to get sued over less known original song.

Hip-hop producers have been under magnifying glass because of sampling and some of the original artists have been taking legal action, claiming copyright infringement. Sampling became popular in the 1980s, but in its broader sense it goes way back to the 1960s, when even the Beatles borrowed a piece of French national anthem La Marseillaise for “All You Need is Love” in 1967 (WhoSampled 2018). Before actual sampling there were lot of so called interpolations, when an element from one song was replayed or re-sung in another. Nowadays it’s still the best way to avoid any copyright issues, since nobody owns a chord progression or a rhythm pattern.

4.2 Songwriting

Songwriting is a broad concept, which includes writing lyrics, melodies, chord progressions and sometimes even editing an arrangement (Seydel 2016). Songs may be written by group members from the band or by staff writers employed by music publishers. Tasks are usually shared between a number of people. Previously songwriting process required skills to play piano or guitar to accompany with the lyrics. In modern era it requires knowledge of modern music technology such as DAWs, sequencers, synthesizers, not forgetting the business skills. Ironically, the more technology evolves, the more skills we need to master. It’s not exaggerated to say that music producers have turned into one man orchestras and production companies. As productions have got smaller and more flexible, the workload of an individual producer has grown significantly.

From a songwriting aspect, I mostly took role in writing melodies and helping with harmonizing the vocals. I didn’t write much lyrics, although I helped with the song concepts and chorus lyrics. Michelle wrote most of the lyrics and vocal melodies by herself.

4.3 Concept

In 1950, UNESCO issued a statement asserting that all humans belong to the same species and that “race” is not a biological reality but a myth (Sussman 2014, 1).

It turned out to be a funny coincidence that both of us were of *mixed race*. We decided to build a concept of the EP around that fact. Our niche is our style, which is fresh and

progressive R&B combined with various elements from different genres. We discussed that our multicultural backgrounds make us stand out from the rest and it would be good for the story and the marketing. F.U.N.C. is a statement, philosophy and lifestyle.

The core idea of the concept is to discuss being from a multiracial background. How to deal with those borders within yourself? Which half has more power? What does it mean to us and to the people around us? Is it about equality? How about our inner struggle between love and hate? Can a person be race-fluid in a same way as being gender-fluid? It's also about being strong-headed but heavy-hearted, because of feeling different and bullied as a child. How did all of this affect us?

5. PRODUCTION

Music production is the process of creating a finished music project. It covers most of the song-making process: choosing tracks to be recorded, contributing to song arrangements, manage financial costs of the project, hiring outside musicians, working together with the sound engineers and sometimes even mixing and mastering the whole project. (Knapfel 2017.)

5.1 Objectives for the Recording Sessions

After we were finished with the pre-production, songwriting and concepting, it was time to book the studio for the recording sessions. Once again, we had to take the budget into account. Since one of us had to travel to another country, travel expenses were going to take a big slice of the recording budget. In our original budget plan we had put aside 500 euros for the studio and equipment rent, and another 500 euros for the travel expenses. Usually 500 euros would cover only one full studio day, which obviously would not be enough for recording the whole album. However, we were prepared to work in a low-budget production and we only needed a space and the equipment to record vocals.

In many genres the recording stage takes up a large part of the budget, closer to 50 % (Hiilesmaa 2014). This applies especially to genres, where live instruments are involved in the recording process. Electronic music is an exception though, since usually the sound is already designed and created on DAW, synthesizer or a sequencer, and you mostly need to record vocals.

For reasons of convenience and the budget, we decided to record the first part of our album at Michelle's school - Minerva Academie voor Popcultuur in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands. It didn't cost anything to book the recording room, but the microphone selection at the school was pretty limited. Since there wasn't any expensive and high-quality mic preamps available, we wanted to choose the microphone carefully. We borrowed a few microphones at the school and rented one from elsewhere. We ended up recording all the vocals with JZ Black Hole microphone.



PICTURE 5: JZ Black Hole (Front End Audio 2018)

5.2 Recording

Recording of music is the process of storing sounds using electronic equipment so that they can be heard afterwards (Cambridge Dictionary 2018). Recording stage is probably the most sensitive and important part of the process. At this stage you capture the performance and set the mood. That's when you either make or break a song. It can be a very stressful experience, and it's producer's job to be aware of both technical and social issues and tackle them as they arise.

Producer needs to recognize the point when artist has worked too long and take care of arranging breaks whenever needed. *Positive encouragement is the key here, because as soon as you start to criticize a musician, his or her confidence is likely to suffer and the final performance will be worse for it* (White 2002, 21).

5.2.1 Vocals

Vocal recording is the process of storing a vocal performance using a microphone together with a preamplifier, an interface and software (White 2006).

After testing and selecting the right microphone, we gave a quick thought to some technical elements of the recording process and how many songs we should record per day. Our circumstances were quite modest, but the room in itself was acoustically good enough and there wasn't much of a room reverb. We were after natural but full vocal sound of modern R&B. For potential processing of tune of the vocals, we agreed not to use Autotune but Melodyne. We had booked the studio for five days and there was five songs to be recorded. We placed the microphone in the middle of the room together with the pop filter to reduce popping sounds and a microphone isolation shield to minimize the room reverb while recording.

We didn't use any effects or compression while recording. Personally, I like to record vocals raw. If the performance already sounds good as raw, it will sound amazing with the effects. However, sometimes it might be smart to add some compression or reverb while recording to make the singer feel more self-confident or get in the mood of the song. We had prepared demos of all the songs before the recording session and I had produced and pre-mixed the instrumentals as far as I could, and we used the demos as reference tracks for the actual session. I used Ableton Live 9 for creating the beats, but preferred Logic Express 9 for recording vocals and instruments, since it's more practical and faster in recording multiple takes in a row. When recording over same section of the timeline on the track, a take folder is created that contains all the recordings made on the track so far, which is handy when stacking tracks.



PICTURE 6: Example of a Track Folder in Logic Express (Mika Kurvinen 2018)

We had approximately 20 vocal tracks per song. For verse parts we usually recorded one lead track, two double tracks to be panned hard left and right, one adlib track and four different background harmony vocal tracks also to be panned left and right. We usually recorded at least three main takes of the lead track, after which we selected best parts from each take, phrase at a time. We used JZ Black Hole microphone for the lead vocal tracks.

5.2.2 Instruments

Since most of the background music was produced *in the box* with one-shot samples, loops and VST plugins, which usually lack depth and warmth, I wanted to enliven and enrich the sound by bringing in some “out-of-the-box” sound sources like finger bass, analog synthesizers and DJ scratching. Producing in the box means that music is processed inside the computer, without any external equipment (Hiilesmaa, 2014).

I asked my friend to play his Fender Jazz Bass, which we recorded simply through the DI input, since we didn't have any quality amp head and cab combination. After recording the signal through DI, I ran it through an amp simulator to get some color on the sound, since DI is just the clean signal. Of course, this was a budget solution, but was sufficient enough for the purpose.

I also blended different analog synthesizers to the mix. Some sounds I used as layers on the chord progressions that were played by different VST synthesizers. Besides layering chord progressions I also played few basslines and synth lead melodies only with the analog synthesizers. In total, there were six different analog synthesizers that I used: Polivoks, Korg M1, Roland SH-101, Roland Juno-106, Korg Polysix and Minimoog Voyager.

Polivoks is a duophonic, analog synthesizer manufactured and marketed in the Soviet Union in the 1980s (Ruskeys 2018). It is one of the most popular and well known Soviet synthesizers in the west. It has three outputs and one input, all of which are DIN sockets, including the headphone out. I had to purchase few DIN to Jack converters to be able to record it in to my DAW. Korg M1 is a 16-voice, 8-part multitimbral sample-based synthesizer and music workstation, manufactured by Korg from 1988 to 1995, and I used it for one particular house piano sound on the outro song.

Roland SH-101 is a small, 32 key, monophonic analog synthesizer from the early 1980s, which I used in few songs for synth leads and SFXs. The Roland Juno-106 is an analog polyphonic synthesizer released in 1984. It has virtually the same synth engine as the Juno-60, but in 106 they added extensive MIDI control to it, which made it one of Roland's first MIDI-equipped synthesizers. This one I used mostly for layering some of the chord progressions.

The Korg Polysix, which is a six-voice programmable polyphonic analog synthesizer released in 1981, I used for some stereo synth bass sounds and layering chord progressions. Last, but definitely not the least, was Minimoog Voyager which is a monophonic analog synthesizer released in 2002. The Voyager was modeled after the classic Minimoog synthesizer that was popular in the 1970s, and is meant to be a successor to that instrument. I recorded a few deep synth basslines and synth leads with it.



PICTURE 7: Korg Polysix Synthesizer (Jim Atwood 2013)

As a final touch on the EP, I asked my DJ friend to scratch on the outro song. It ended up being a one-and-a-half minute-long scratch solo accompanied by Fender Jazz Bass. DJ used the legendary direct-drive Technics SL-1200 turntables released in 1972, together with a DJ software called Traktor. We recorded the wet stereo signal from his DJ mixer straight to my sound card. I didn't need to do much to the sound, since he used EQ, reverb and delay effects already within his mixer.



PICTURE 8: Technics SL-1200 turntable (Amoeba Music 2013)



PICTURE 9: Traktor Scratch Duo DJ Software/Hardware Package (Native Instruments 2009)

5.3 Mixing

Mixing is a process, in which you take the recorded tracks and blend them together with different effects such as EQ, compression and reverb. The goal is to bring out the best in your multi-track recording by adjusting levels, dynamics, panning and time-based effects. The aim is to make everything fit and sit in the same mix. The final product of a multitrack recording is also known as the mixdown. The mixdown is the final step before mastering. (Landr 2017.)

For me adjusting levels between individual tracks and EQ are the most important parts of mixing. I tend to use already processed drum sounds and instrument samples, so I don't have to compress that much, if any at all. My part of mixing mostly concerned the instrumentals, since we decided to work with an outside engineer for final mixing of the vocals. I paid special attention to the volume levels, EQ, timing, saturation, stereo picture, reverb and delay of the tracks. Most of the plugins that I used for mixing were developed by Waves, Native Instruments, Brainworx and D16 Group. Besides plugins, I also used the built-in effects of Ableton Live like saturation, multi-band compressor and limiter.



PICTURE 10: Kramer Tape Plugin Adding Saturation to a Kick Drum (Mika Kurvinen 2018)



PICTURE 11: A Bit Crusher Plugin 'Decimort' by D16 (Mika Kurvinen 2018)

Although we worked with an outside mixing engineer, I did reference mixdowns of the songs. My responsibility in vocal mixing was to decide the levels, panning, timing and editing the tune with Melodyne before sending the multi-tracks for the final mixing. I ended up leaving all the effects on my instrumentals and some of the vocal effects, as well as the aux tracks. For the most part, vocals were sent unprocessed to the mixing engineer.

5.4 Working with an Outside Mixing Engineer

During my exchange studies at McNally Smith College of Music in St. Paul in 2016, I was introduced to a website called SoundBetter, which is a marketplace for recording studios, mixing engineers, mastering engineers and session musicians. On SoundBetter you can find engineers and musicians around the world by their specialties, budget, genre, credits and previous client endorsements (SoundBetter 2018). Scott LeGere, who was the chair of the Music Business Department at McNally Smith College of Music, and also a former studio manager of Prince at Paisley Park, told me about a few merited mixing engineers on the website.

I didn't know any competent Finnish mixing engineers, who would have mixed R&B, so we decided to search for one at SoundBetter. I sent a few requests to the different engineers and compared the prices. To my surprise, the price level of mixing jobs in U.S. was actually a bit lower than in Finland. After comparing various options, we chose to work with an American mixing engineer Gabe Garskof, who had previously mixed for significant hip-hop and R&B artists. We connected on the website, after which we communicated mostly by email. SoundBetter website required to pay Gabe the first half of the fee in advance, and the second part we closed out after receiving the final approved mixdown.

From the very beginning Gabe was a trustworthy, friendly and very professional partner. He sent us a pdf file about how to prepare our recording sessions for mixing. He asked us to edit the sessions before the mixing stage, so that there would be nothing extra on the audio tracks. He requested audio files to be time-aligned and to include both clean (unprocessed) and processed versions. He also asked to include an updated .wav or .mp3 of the rough mix we have been listening to as well as any ideas, inspirations, or references we had.

We were allowed to have as many revisions as needed, until we would be totally satisfied with the mixdown. In the mixing process of our first single 'Nectar' we ended up having three feedback rounds. I was able to point out clearly what kind of changes we wanted according to the EQ, reverb, delay and so forth. During the mixing process, Gabe also described closely different tweaks he did and the equipment he had used in the mix.

“I really like the song, and everything came out sounding amazing. I am very excited for you to hear this. The arrangement and production are very good, so I really just tried to compliment and enhance what was there. Starting with the drums, I ran everything through some tube processing to beef things up and add depth/punch. There is also some neve action going on with the kick/snare which add low end power. I wanted them to groove well, and punch as hard as possible without getting in the way of the vocals.

Once the drums were good, I mixed the vocals. I kept them very clean, adding some top end and clarity and a little bit of tube compression to add definition and control to the voice. As far as the vocal FX go, i kept them relatively dry to give a bare and intimate sound. There are a couple reverbs, and delays that come in for the bridge and outro.

The synths were very straight forward, and just needed some EQ and stereo widening to make space for everything. The bass was also very straight forward and the sound was great coming in. I added some mid-range to help on small speakers, and added some low end with Rbass to beef things up. As far as the master bus goes, we have a little bit of SSL compression and pultec EQ. There is about 3db of limiting on this song to get things to a commercial loudness. Crank it and enjoy!

I have attached two versions of the mix to look at. MIX1 is more drum heavy and punchy. MIX2 matches your reference tracks more, with the drums tucked and controlled behind the vocals. Let me know and once everything is set, I'll print the final full quality versions. (Garskof 2016.)

To work with an outside mixing engineer from another country was totally new to me. Despite of connecting only through the Internet and never meeting each other in person, I found this way of working very convenient. Gabe had very patient type of a personality, which was easy to relate to. Me and Michelle were both very satisfied with the end result. To use an outside mixing engineer gives you a freedom to concentrate only on creating music, which might be really useful in small productions. We've now built a trustworthy relationship with Gabe, and we are looking forward to working with him in the future as well.

5.5 Mastering

The mastering engineer has tremendous power, and with that power comes great responsibility (Katz 2014, 13).

Mastering is the last stage in the audio production process and its goal is to correct mix balance issues and enhance some sonic characteristics of a mixdown and put the final touches on it. Mastering is not simply compressing everything to make it sound as loud as possible. Professional mastering acquires to treat each and every project individually. The reason of most mixing and mastering mistakes is over-processing. (White 2002, 131-134.)

There is a big variety of mastering engineers with different approaches to mastering. Some of them have pretty straight-forward style with hard compression and limiting, and some have dedicated themselves to fight against “the loudness war”. The loudness war refers to the trend of increasing audio levels in music. However Spotify decided to reduce their playback loudness reference level from approximately -11 LUFS down to approximately -14 LUFS, which, in my opinion, was very good for both music producers and the listeners.

Me and Michelle preferred to work with a mastering engineer, who is gentle with the dynamics and doesn't over-compress the sound. We compared the works of different mastering engineers from both Finland and the Netherlands, and finally ended up choosing an electronic music-oriented Lars Meijer, who works at the Wisseloord Studios in Hilversum, the Netherlands. He treated our first single ‘Nectar’ with restraint and good taste, not squashing out the dynamics. We both were very satisfied with his work, and it's likely that we'll work together in the future as well.

6. COMMUNICATION

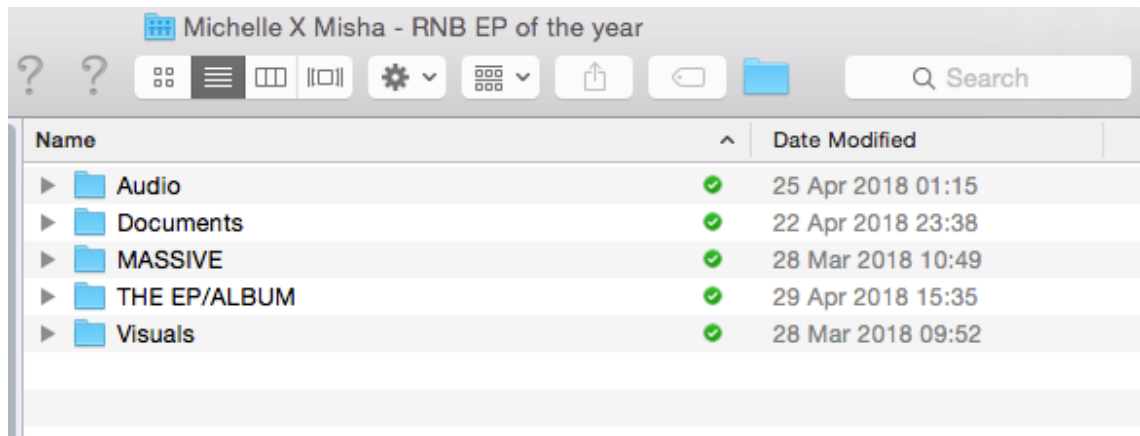
Whatever the culture, there's a tongue in our head. Some use it, some hold it, some bite it (Lewis 2006, 63).

F.U.N.C. has been the first international project for both me and Michelle. All of our previous projects were tied to our home countries and didn't require that much of planning, Skype calls or travelling. Every step in this project has been as unexpected as our starting point at the international song-writing week back in Leeuwarden in 2014. In the beginning there was lot of challenges to tackle regarding the project like: communication, distance, administration, cultural and personality differences. Active communication ended up being the most important factor in keeping this project alive.

6.1 Internet

From the beginning it was clear that our main communication tool would be the Internet. We had to accept the fact that we would not be able to meet each other very often, and that most of the songs would need to be written alone, separated from each other. This way of working was new to me, since I'm used to do music in the same space with the other band members.

After our first session together we set up a joint Dropbox folder with subfolders of Audio, Documents, Visuals, Promo Pictures and Plans. We tried to upload every single piece of sketches and ideas to Dropbox. If it wasn't on Dropbox, it didn't exist. For example, 'Documents' subfolder ended up being full of excel sheets, promo mail lists, song lyrics, press kits, invoices and summaries of our Skype and FaceTime meetings. We tried to keep everything as organized as possible. Dropbox was our main administrative tool, which we also shared with our manager Daniël de Keizer.



PICTURE 12: F.U.N.C.'s Shared Dropbox folder (Mika Kurvinen 2018)

To share our reference music with each other we set up a few shared Spotify playlists. Whenever we found an interesting song as an inspiration, it was added on one of the playlists. Creating and updating shared Spotify playlists was a good way to get to know each other better, especially music-wise. It was a crucial part of learning and finding our own sound based on the musical influences.

For connecting and keeping in touch with each other, we used Skype and FaceTime. Sometimes our online meetings were pretty challenging because of the slow Internet connection. I noticed that FaceTime calls were much more functional than Skype calls for some reason. From the beginning, we've tried to meet through FaceTime once a week for planning and giving feedback to each other. This frequency of meetings was working well for us.

After each FaceTime call we tried to write an overview of things discussed in the meeting and upload it to Dropbox. Other times it happened so that we just immediately forgot what we had agreed on at the meeting. It was very important to write all the things down and upload it to Dropbox to keep everything in check. Besides Skype, FaceTime and Dropbox, we also used Google Drive to edit press kits and bios.

7. CHALLENGES

During the project, especially in the beginning, we faced a lot of challenges – most of them caused by inexperience of international projects. We had some disagreements regarding the vision, commitment, releasing and communication inside the project. Sometimes lack of communication and personal assumptions caused disputes and once our band was even close to breaking up. It took some time to understand our differences. After all, we were a cocktail of four different countries and cultures: Finland, Ukraine, The Netherlands and Congo. Despite the cultural differences our main statement was to challenge racial prejudices and generalizations, and to support a united and multicultural Europe. We wanted to underline our perception that music doesn't have borders. Nowadays two persons from totally different parts of the world can have pretty identical musical background, thanks to the Internet. A kid from a small village in Eastern Finland might have grown up to African-American music and vice versa. It doesn't matter anymore where you *are from*. It's more about where do you *want to be*.

7.1 Living In Different Countries

The biggest and the most obvious challenge that we were facing was the distance. It turned out to be even more challenging than we expected. To build a good chemistry inside the band, it's important to spend some time together, "outside the duties" as well. Many times band members tend to build friendships instead of business partnerships. From my personal point of view that applies especially to the music field. Making music is very emotional and creative field of work, which is why it requires great trust between the band members and a relaxed atmosphere. Meeting often enough is important to become better acquainted on a personal level and to get everybody on the same page. It's good to have a conversation about how each member sees the project and discuss about different assumptions and expectations they might have.

Living in the different countries require special arrangements from both of us – whether we want to meet up in the Netherlands or in Finland. Since both of us have many other projects and busy schedules, we need to plan the meetings very early, also to book affordable flight tickets. Accommodation needs to be taken care of each time we meet. It would take approximately 400-500 euros for each trip, so we decided to meet only for

the recording sessions and live shows – whenever someone else was paying for our travel costs. For us not having that much of live shows at the moment, we have been meeting about twice a year – whenever we had enough of new songs ready to be recorded.

We took advantage of some showcase festivals to meet up like Eurosonic Noorderslag and Sonic Visions. We were selected to represent our schools at the Excite program, which is a “collaboration project between nine organizations from nine different European countries that exchange young musical talent across European Borders” (Excite 2018). Excite shows gave us a chance to meet more often and practice our live set together. We did one show in Luxembourg and two shows in Belgium for the Excite project.

7.2. Cultural Differences

“Culture is the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, encompassing language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts (Zimmermann 2017).”

According to a British linguist Richard D. Lewis (2006, 23), there is a “national norm” of how people from different cultures behave in various situations, and the norms do not change much over time. Lewis thinks there are clear trends, sequences and traditions. For example reactions of Europeans, Asians and Americans can be forecasted, justified and managed, to some extent. He thinks there are deeply rooted attitudes and beliefs, that resist sudden changes of values imported by multinational companies and globalization.

Lewis plots countries in relation to three categories: Linear-actives – those who plan, schedule, organize, pursue action chains, do one thing at a time. Germans and Swiss are in this group. Multi-actives – those lively, loquacious peoples who do many things at once, planning their priorities not according to a time schedule, but according to the relative thrill or importance that each appointment brings with it. Italians, Latin Americans and Arabs are members of this group. Reactives – those who prioritize courtesy and respect, listening quietly and calmly to their interlocutors and reacting carefully to the other side's proposals. Chinese, Japanese and Finns are in this group. (Lewis 2006, 35.)

The point of all of his analysis is to understand how to interact with people from different cultures. His book regarding the matter 'When Cultures Collide,' has achieved a status of "authoritative roadmap to navigating the world's economy", called by the Wall Street Journal.

People tend to think that there are major differences between people from different countries. I think it's good to study various cultures and maybe some type of predictions could be made on the basis of Lewis Model. However there is always a high risk of stereotyping and generalizing, since there is an endless number of surprising exceptions in the multicultural world. Some people might get insulted by prejudices and assumptions made only on the basis of their origins.

Also the amount of people of "mixed-race" keep growing around the world, which makes it harder to define the culture on a basis of nationality. In many countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, people with multiracial backgrounds make up the majority of the population. Even in many European countries they make up a sizable portion of the population. I don't think Lewis Model applies that accurately on the people of "mixed-race". For example I find myself and Michelle in between of Multi-Actives and Linear-Actives. Technically, all of us have more or less multiracial backgrounds after doing some genealogy research in your own family. I believe the behavior of individuals is more related to the environment than cultural or national background. I've learned that people are capable of quickly changing their habitual behavior and get used to new manners whenever required. For example I was totally comfortable to greet with cheek kisses after spending one week in the Netherlands, even though it felt pretty awkward at first.

Anthropologists have shown for many years now that there is no biological reality to human race. There are no major complex behaviors that directly correlate with what might be considered human "racial" characteristics. (Sussman 2014, 2.)

Description	Type	Needed to
task-oriented, highly-organized planners, who complete action chains by doing one thing at a time, preferably in accordance with a linear agenda	LINEAR-ACTIVE	organise, plan, see problems, analyse consequences, follow consistent policies, access rational thought, generate data, and challenge us objectively
emotional, loquacious and impulsive people who attach great importance to family, feelings, relationships, people in general. They like to do many things at the same time and are poor followers of agendas	MULTI-ACTIVE	generate enthusiasm, motivate, persuade, create a positive social atmosphere, access emotions, generate dialogue, and challenge us personally
good listeners, who rarely initiate action or discussion, preferring first to listen to and establish the other's position, then react to it and form their own opinion	REACTIVE	harmonise, act intuitively, be patient and see the big picture, think and act long-term, access feelings, listen, empathize and challenge us holistically

PICTURE 13: The Key Features Between Different Cultures (CrossCulture 2018)

7.3 Personalities

Personality means characteristic patterns of feelings, thoughts and behaviors that make an individual unique (Cherry 2017).

Before starting working on any project, it's good to have unofficial and relaxed conversations together to get to know the personalities of each other. Usually it takes more than one session, but the earlier you start the better.

I found more differences in our personalities than cultural backgrounds. According to the Enneagram of Personality theory there are nine personality types (Perfectionist, Helper, Achiever, Romantic, Observer, Skeptic, Enthusiast, Challenger and Peacemaker) and each person might have multiple personality types, which vary depending on the situation. For example someone classed as a One type may begin to think, feel and act more like a Four type when stressed, or more like a Seven type when relaxed. (Baron & Wagele 1994, 27.)

According to the theory, Perfectionist type get motivated by living his/her life "the right way" and develop him-/herself and the surrounding world at the same time. The Helper type, in turn, has a need to be loved and respected, and they want to express their feeling towards others. The Achiever type strives to be productive, achieve success and avoid

failures. The Romantic type seeks to express his/her feelings and to be understood, search for the meaning of life and avoid conventionality. The Observer type wants to know and understand everything, be self-sufficient and avoid being ridiculed. The Skeptic type is seeking for a sense of security, might be fearful and seek for acceptance. The Enthusiast type has a need to be happy, plan enjoyable activities, contribute to the world and avoid suffer and pain. The Challenger type strives to be self-confident, strong and avoid feeling him-/herself weak or dependent on something. The Peacemaker seeks for maintaining peace, merging with others and avoiding conflicts. Since especially the Peacemaker type has features from the other eight types, their personalities vary a lot – from tender and gentle type to independent and powerful type. (Baron & Wagele 1994, 21-129.)

It's interesting to examine this theory and its alleged personalities in the studio session environment. How would the Peacemaker type and the Perfectionist type get along with each other in best and worst scenarios? According to the theory, the Perfectionist type is loyal, committed, conscientious and helpful at its best. However, at its worst it can be critical, argumentative, meticulous and inflexible. Perfectionist type might have high expectations of others. The Peacemaker type, in turn, is kind, tender, restful, supporting, loyal and non-judgmental at its best. At its worst it can be stubborn, passive-aggressive, doubtful, over-conciliatory and defensive. It all comes down to the circumstances and the way of communicating with each other.

Enneagram theory gives guidelines on how to deal with various personality types to make interaction pleasant as possible. In the above-mentioned imagined situation the Peacemaker type should make sure to bear its own share of the responsibility, give credit and keep convincing the Perfectionist type, that he's/she's good just the way he/she is. It's also important to be fair and discreet, and considerately encourage the other person to relax after listening to his/her concerns. The Perfectionist type, in turn, should pay attention on how to make requests when asking for something. The Peacemaker type does not like expectations and pressure. It's also important to be patient with listening and giving enough time for making decisions, and not to exploit his/her helpfulness and kindness. Urging for action needs to be done gently and without judging. (Baron & Wagele 1994, 131.)

There are certain things that apply to each type such as giving a credit and praising. With Enneagram theory it's possible to pay closer attention to small details of human behavior and psyche. It doesn't make one a psychologist, but can definitely help in dealing with new people. The Enneagram of Personality has been widely used in business management and even in some job interviews. It's useful for understanding the workplace interpersonal-dynamics, self-awareness, self-understanding and self-development. However, despite its long history, the Enneagram theory is not widely accepted within the academic communities.

There are also other personality models like "The Big Five" and "Myers-Briggs Type Indicator". The Big Five, which is a competing model, claims to cover most aspects of personality with five major factors – Extraversion, Neuroticism, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness and Openness. Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), in turn, characterizes people by their attitude toward the inner and outer world, Extraversion and Introversion, and by their cognitive preferences (The Myers & Briggs Foundation 2018). These preferences are either "Perceiving" or "Judging". MBTI doesn't rule out the Enneagram theory – actually they can be combined to expand the system and achieve even more accuracy in understanding ourselves and the others.

I don't believe there can ever be a perfect and waterproof guidebook for dealing with different people, since there are so many unknown and unexpected factors that we can't influence. However, I do believe that besides the simple social rules and a common-sense, these theories apply universally and can provide more capabilities to avoid typical pitfalls in sensitive communication situations than culture-separated models.

8. RELEASING

You may be thinking of starting your own label, whether because no one else will release your records, because you want to keep ownership of your own masters, or because you think it would work out best financially (Dann & Underwood 2008, 72).

Originally we planned to have both digital and physical release of this EP. Besides releasing on digital platforms like iTunes, Spotify and Apple Music, we also wanted to make a small vinyl pressing of 300 pieces. After few requests to different vinyl pressing plants, the unit price turned out to be way more affordable in the pressing of 500 pieces than in 300 pieces. The best offer for the pressing of 500 pieces was 1700 euros. Unfortunately we didn't have that much of a budget in our own savings, so we were dependent on potential grants or publishers.

In the end, we wanted to keep control in our own hands and release this debut EP independently, which also meant a little cut in our original budget (Borg 2003, 99). After considering various options we decided to leave out the vinyl pressing and save more money for the marketing. Based on my previous experiences of vinyl pressings in this genre and era, they hardly produce any profit, even though vinyl sales have grown quite a lot from the 90s. It's still more of a cultural gift for vinyl aficionados and some kind of physical relic for ourselves as a memory.

By leaving out the vinyl, we saved 1700 euros. A world-wide digital release of an EP through the Record Union service costs only 20 dollars for one year (Record Union 2018). Record Union's "World domination" distribution plan includes 15 most current digital music services. It collects and pays royalties monthly from all the services. Of course we left that option open to order the vinyl pressing afterwards, if the EP would do particularly well and there would be enough people interested.

We are going to market the EP independently on various social media platforms and by guerrilla marketing, since we can't afford to hire an outside PR company. Guerrilla marketing in our case means using all of our personal media contacts, reporters, DJs and radio hosts to spread the word about the release. Our manager Daniël de Keizer has been

helping us with preparing and sending out press kits to various media outlets and planning the release dates. We are also reaching out to the different booking agencies to plan a small release tour in Europe around the release date.



PICTURE 14: Visual Design for F.U.N.C. (Tauno Sillanpää 2016)



PICTURE 15: Promo Picture of F.U.N.C. (Andres Fouché 2017)

9. DISCUSSION

In this thesis I've discussed electronic music production, cultural differences, personality theories in the context of an international project. Nowadays it's not uncommon to work on international projects through the Internet without ever even meeting each other. This has increased the importance and sensitivity of communication, since many details like body language and facial expressions are being left out from the conversation. In today's digital age the face-to-face communication seems to be fading and technology has changed the way people communicate. It hasn't, however, decreased the value of face-to-face communication – now it has actually been put on a pedestal. Like Tom Keifer once sang on Cinderella's hit song: "You don't know what you got till it's gone!" Now, more than ever, people are starting to realize the importance of traditional interaction and face-to-face communication. Working on this thesis has strengthened my views on the issue.

By studying various personality theories and models of cultural and national characteristics, I came to the conclusion that the biggest challenges of this project were differences in personalities and communication. Also the fact that neither of us speak English as a native language, had an impact on the way we communicated. Some subtle phrases might have ended up having a different tone and meaning when expressed by a non-native speaker. On the basis of my interpretation of the source material and my personal experiences throughout the process, I didn't find cultural differences having such an impact on the communication or the project itself.

In my opinion, defining cultural differences is many times based on prejudices and stereotypes of different cultures and nations, and it tends to generalize minorities. These kind of theories of cultural and national differences also fail to recognize the people of "mixed-race", which is a constantly growing group in Europe and is even making up the majority in some countries. According to various personality type theories, personality types seem to be universal and are not tied to any specific culture or a nation. It's impossible to define who's multicultural and who's not, since most of us have some kind of multiracial background. From my point of view, environment and childhood experiences have the greatest impact on an individual's behavior. People are very capable of adopting new manners and languages whenever the circumstances require that.

Internet has indeed made our world smaller and increased our access to information. It has not, however, succeeded in replacing the fundamental need for traditional interaction between people. Arguably the need might have grown even bigger during the digital era, when most of the social interaction takes place in social media, other virtual platforms, and smartphones. The Internet has tightened the cap between different cultures, and globalization is preparing one huge “world culture” in its melting pot.

From the production process I learned that you need a lot of active and clear communication about expectations of the project. It's simply not enough to write music together and hope that both of you are on the same page. Assumptions can easily lead to misunderstandings and disappointments, if not being discussed properly. In the future, I'm going to pay more attention on how to say things, especially in stressful situations. Depending on the personality type of your working partner, it's not as important *what* you say as *how* you say it. It's easier to get your wishes come true with the right words. This project has also taught me self-awareness and how to identify various personality types, which I can take into account in the future when communicating with new people.

This project was very useful and instructive – both musically and mentally. I learned a lot about producing and mixing from the production process, source material and the people that I worked with. I gained experience from every stage of record production, which I can use to my advantage in future projects. For an artist type of person like myself, it was also a great lesson about being more systematic and organized with project administration. Finally, I was very satisfied with the result, even though the process took more time than expected. We were able to achieve our personal objectives, although with a smaller budget and a few compromises. In the end, the band is still together and is putting its heart and soul into making more music.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Thesis project EP

F.U.N.C. – Nectar (Official music video)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hi_ZadPRJxU

Credits:

Vocals: Chai Blaq

Beat: Misha

Mix: Gabe MG

Master: Lars Meijer

Production Company: Visual Works

Written and Directed by: Simo Liukka

Cinematographer: Jukka Moisio

Producers: Ville Nikunen & Markus Malvisalo

Editor: Tommi Hietaniemi

Gaffer: Tommi Jokinen

Sound design: Akseli Soini

Grade: Marko Terävä

Make-up Artist / Special FX Make-up: Karoliina Viinikari

Actors: Heidi Lindén, Juha Uutela, Elias Salonen, Liisa Vääriskoski, Santeri Helinheimo-Mäntylä, Ami Hasan, Pauliina Sjöberg ja Juho Tolvanen

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