



Music producer as a career choice

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ABSTRACT

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Music producers have always been strongly involved in the music industry. Producer's work used to be more of a mystery back in the day, but it is slowly coming more public. At the same time the competition gets harder and it is hard for a producer to get noticed.

Personal experiences, several books and articles about music production together give a profound insight about music industry from a music producer's aspect. The purpose of this thesis to open a door for people interested in the music production and give them understanding and guide towards this topic. The thesis narrows down to 4 song cuts' that where each song is one at a time deconstructed.

Key words: music producer, digital audio workstation, music publisher, record label

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GLOSSARY

DAW	Digital Audio Workstation
Hz	Hertz
KHz	Kilohertz
Hi freq	High frequencies from around 5k-20k
Hi-mid freq	Frequencies from 2-5k
Midrange freq	Frequencies from 250-2k
Low-mid freq	Frequencies from 60-250
Low	Frequencies from <20-60
EQ	Equalizer
Bus track	Audio tracks can be routed to busses (also known AUX channels/groups) to be controlled together as a group
A Cut	Commercially released recording of a song (SongTown 2017)
LFO	Low-frequency oscillator

1 INTRODUCTION

I have been always somehow interested in music. I grew up watching a lot of American rock/pop acts and used to record their music videos on VCR tapes from MTV. Both me and my father were also interested in finding out the background and producer/songwriter credits. Eventually, idolizing these bands and artists turned into a passion towards music and dream to make a living with music.

I found myself playing in bands and it felt right because we got to make our own music, play in front of people and be in a good company. Over time as we grew older I had to face the reality that first not all have the same goal in music. Eventually, our band split up and people went to seek for their own path. That meant that I also had to find another way to pursue the dream. That is where I found music production which eventually led me to study music production at Tampere University of Applied Sciences. Now, after years of hard work I have signed a publishing deal and traveling around the world doing sessions.

Music industry can be tough for upcoming producers. How to make a living out of it or get the credit that you deserve is a challenge. That is a problem even some of the top producers' face. An article by The Guardian (2015) explains a case by a producer called DVLP who has worked with artists such as Eminem and Rick Ross. He was suing Cash Money Records Co-Founder Baby for not paying for his beats. The source also tells that he once had a request for beats from a big-budget movie company against just getting exposure. Even that was a leave it or take it type of a situation. These kinds of cases are coming more common. Now that basically anyone can make album-ready beats and they are usually sold online, many rappers do also steal the producers' work without giving any credit. (The Guardian 2015.)

In this thesis, I will also write about building a producer's career from zero to an established producer. I will include my background story without giving away too much confidential information and about the 4 song-cut's that matter to me the most. I will try to cover the stuff I hope I would have known back in the days about production and the business.

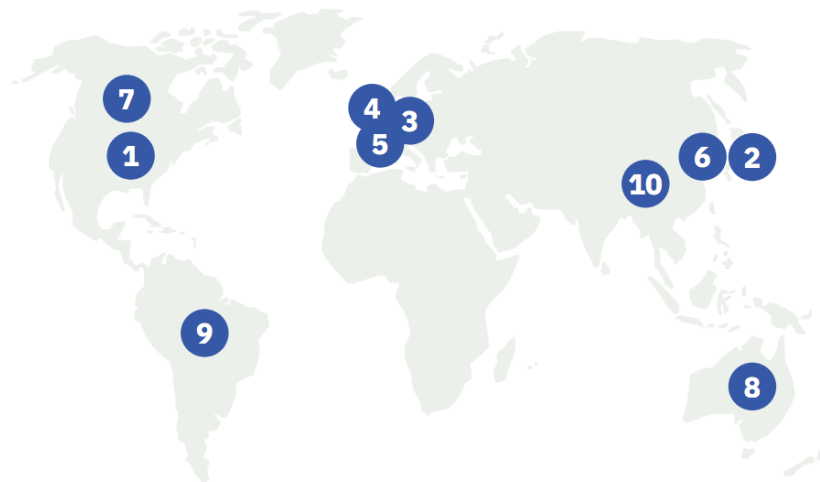
2 THE MUSIC BUSINESS

2.1 Music as a career

If you have chosen to have a career in music you become a part of the music business and understanding the big picture of that will help you to get forward. As a songwriter and producer Eric Beall (2009), clarifies this statement the industry is not only looking for songs, they are looking for hits. (Eric Beall, 10.)

You also need to understand the amount of competition that music industry has to offer since there are roughly 300,000 writer-members of the three primary performing rights organizations – BMI, ASCAP and SESAC. For a relief, there are different markets in the music industry and not every writer or producer for example are working in the same market-field. Usually those markets are separated by a country, but market can be divided further even by the genre. (Beall 2009, 9.)

TOP TEN MUSIC MARKETS 2017



- | | |
|------------|----------------|
| 1. USA | 6. South Korea |
| 2. Japan | 7. Canada |
| 3. Germany | 8. Australia |
| 4. UK | 9. Brazil |
| 5. France | 10. China |

PICTURE 1: Global Music Report 2018: Annual State of the Industry (Photo: IFPI 2017)

In his book, *Artist Management for the music business* Paul Allen (2011) explains that a target market consists of consumers and potential consumers with whom the artist's music connects both creatively and commercially. That is being the fans who have the willingness and means to purchase music, tickets, merchandise, and related ancillary products from the artist. This kind of a target market creates more of a specified segment of the larger general market of music consumers. Marketing segmentation means targeting smaller segment of a broader market. (Allen 2011, 70.)

However, the global markets are expanding and blending in with each other even more due to the rise of streaming. In IFPI's *Global Music Report 2018* it is stated that artists from outside those territories (and genres) traditionally dominant in the music industry can now reach fans all over the world in an unprecedented number of ways. (IFPI 2018, 23.)

Taking the success of Latin music as an example, it is happening because streaming is exposing a great song to a global audience. This kind of success would have not been possible earlier because the platforms that would provide the needed international exposure did not exist. (IFPI 2018, 23.)



PICTURE 2: Global Music Report 2018: Annual State of the Industry (Photo: IFPI 2018)

2.2 Networking

Despite the specialization of your career choice in music industry it all comes down to networking. To put this in other words, you will have to network your ass off (Herstand 2016). To give an example let's say that you are a producer and you have a solid instrumental. The next thing you would need is someone to write on it talking about topliner and a lyricist and after that you need also a singer to sing the topline. After the song is done you want it to get released so you will have to start pitching it to labels. At this point you might notice that there is a certain amount of people needed to make it happen meaning that we need to do a lot of networking. (Herstand 2016.)

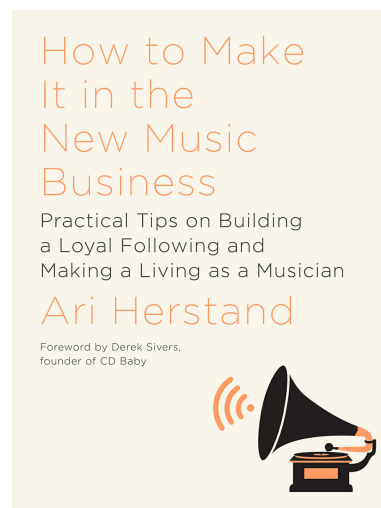
So, as now understood the music business can be tough. You might have a great song in your hands but without a proper network, team and legal advisors you will probably notice that your career is not moving forward. Donald E. Passman (2009), explains in his book *All You Need to Know About the Music Business* about building a team and the first person in your team would be almost always either a manager or a lawyer. He continues that even if you had a buzz going on around your project the major record companies do not listen to new artists' material unless it is submitted by a manager or a lawyer. (Passman 2009, 29-30.)

However, if you think you have interesting material one option would be to contact indie-labels or go fully independent. That is something that I have done with one of the projects I am working with. Getting to an official Spotify-playlist can be a challenge again without a person representing you that knows the editors. Thanks to social media I have been able to find cool artists to collaborate with and some independent Spotify-playlist curators to add my music to their playlists. (Spotify; Medium 2019.)

2.3 Building your career from zero – with personal examples

Before I started studying music production at Tampere University of Applied Sciences I already knew that my real passion was producing music. However, the real question was how to do it professionally since my only experience was grinding with my bands and making beats basically at home. During 2014, I met my current colleague Marcus Tikkanen with whom we managed to get one of our songs to Finnish Eurovision Song-contest called UMK. Song did not win the game, but I look at it as my first success in the music industry, giving me motivation to pursue my career as a producer. (Yle 2015.)

Soon after the contest and a few meetings with some of the Finnish industry people I soon realized that it was not the catapult for my career as a producer. I found myself back in the start. The book *How to Make It in the Music Business: Practical Tips on Building a Loyal Following and Making Living as a Musician* by Ari Herstand (2016), explains that a music career is not a sprint, but a marathon. So many young musicians think that they will “make it” within the first years of dropping their first single. You need to be realistic about your goals and pursuits. (Herstand 2016.)



PICTURE 3: How to Make It in the New Music Business (Photo: Ari Herstand 2016)

In 2015, I applied to Tampere University of Applied Sciences and focused on fine-tuning my production techniques meaning learning advanced mixing and mastering techniques. A year later in 2016 I attended a writing camp in Leeuwarden, the

Netherlands organized by school. That was my first proper co-write camp where I got to work with people that I did not know before. During the co-write camp I was invited to a co-write session with a Dutch band called The Cool Quest which eventually led me to getting a song cut 2 years after the session. According to their Facebook page the song is performed live all around Europe as the band is touring a lot (Facebook 2019). The band also performed the song live on 3FM which is one of the biggest radio stations in the Netherlands (Wikipedia 2018).

Talking about networking, the I was still an independent producer and artist with my project called Eeverest. Together with my colleague and the other half of Eeverest, Marcus Tikkanen, we started to work on songs and set up goals in regards of the project. We attended to Dancefair 2017 conference specialized in dance music in the Netherlands. It lasts for two days where the industry gathers together, showcases upcoming talents, arranges masterclasses and workshops, and demodrop sessions to offer our songs to record labels. We set up some meetings which eventually led us to get a first single signed by a record label for our project Eeverest which I will go more into detail later. (Dancefair 2019.)



PICTURE 4: Dancefair (Photo: Dancefair 2017)

Like mentioned earlier about having a manager or a lawyer to represent you a publisher is also to consider. Wikipedia (2007) explains that publishers ensure that the songwriters and composers get their royalty-checks when the compositions are used commercially. They also work to link up new songs by songwriters with suitable artists to record them and to get writers' songs a placement. (Wikipedia 2017.)

At the end of 2017 after working hard we slowly started to gather more interest from record labels and I eventually signed a publishing deal with Roseville Publishing in early 2018. Roseville Publishing is a joint publishing fund founded by multi-platinum songwriter Radboud Miedema that works as a partnership with Strenghtolt Music Group in the Netherlands (Instagram; Facebook 2019). During the year 2018, my publishers started organizing co-write sessions in Sweden and Finland. Most of the sessions I do together with my colleague Marcus. Working with other talented songwriters, artists and producers has been fruitful so far with some promising songs on hold. I have also started to get more and more cut's, which I will tell about later.



PICTURE 5: Signing a publishing deal with Roseville / Strenghtolt (Photo: Esa Ahonen 2018)

In late 2018, we started building the network even further. We managed to arrange sessions in Los Angeles with Grammy nominated music producers and writers. We connected so well that we now have a project in Los Angeles called Nightcvller. So far, we have had two trips to Los Angeles, but we are also working on songs remotely. The project has already shown a huge promise and the future will tell where it leads.



PICTURE 6: Nightcvller having sessions with Chris Hesse from Hoobastank and meeting with Sam Rivers from Limp Bizkit (Photo: Elias Rynänen, Brad Moxey, Michaela Catando 2018)

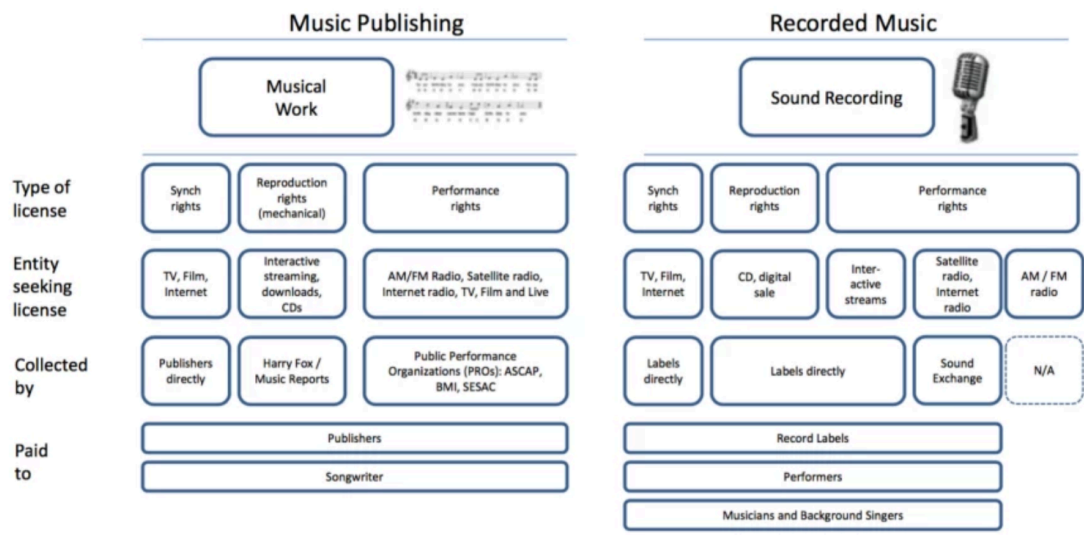
2.4 Publishing and copyrights

“The legal definition of a copyright is “a limited duration monopoly” (Passman 2009, 178)

For a songwriter or a producer copyright means that once you have a musical composition that can be for example be written down, or sung or played into a recorder, you have all the copyright you need (Passman 2009, 179). Copyright brings up the question about if you need a publisher or not. When talking about publishers' administration rights we talk about finding users, issuing licences, collecting money and paying the writer. (Passman 2009, 186.)

If you have managed to have a solid network in the music industry in regards of a platform for your releases and your copyright organization has interest or resources to collect your money it is possible to be independent. However, if you are an upcoming producer and a songwriter like I am trying to build up your international music career from Finland I would suggest you get a publisher. That way you can be sure that the money is collected and to let publishers help to expand your network in regards of arranging sessions as discussed before.

Passman continues that as a songwriter (or a producer), you may be interested in the music business, but your talents are best spent in working on the music. However, someone needs to take care of the business, and that's where the publishing industry came from. (Passman 2009, 186.) Personally, I can say that being signed to a publishing company has brought up great opportunities to work with people, making them new colleagues and friends at the same time. I have learned a lot when working side-by side with industry professionals. Also, when you are being signed to a publishing and have someone to represent you, the industry will also take you more seriously. Without a publisher, I would not have been able to go forward with my career or at least it would have taken a lot more time without having someone to speak and connect for me.



PICTURE 7: Licensing Framework for Music (Citi Research, U.S. Copyright Office 2018)

2.5 Publishing agreements

A typical publishing agreement would be that the publisher splits all income 50/50 with the writer. (Passman 2009, 187). Copyrights are paid via copyright organizations and their procedures might vary, but for example for me the organization is TEOSTO and they account copyright royalties every quarter year (Teosto 2019). Marcus Tikkanen (2018) explained in his thesis that when publisher works with other publishers they can have sub-publishing agreements without interfering with songwriter's share, so whatever the publisher is doing a songwriter will get the share that is in the agreement (Tikkanen 2018, 17-18).

As Wikipedia explains it exclusive publishing deals are usually done for a certain period. Being signed exclusively to a publisher means that any composition the songwriter/producer writes belongs to the publisher who is representing your share. In return for signing away exclusive rights to your songs the writer can get paid by the publisher a negotiated advance against future royalties. (Wikipedia 2019.)

2.6 Contracts for producers

According to an article A Guide to Contracts for Producers published on Sound on Sound by Richard Salmon (2008) a producer agreement contract provides the only real means of protection should the record label decide to switch the producers during the project, rework on your demos, or not pay you for your work (Salmon 2008, Sound on Sound).

In the article, Salmon writes that it is typical for a record label to fund the recording costs upfront. The producer provides a written assignment of ownership in the sound recording copyrights to the record label and that the artist is also called to do the same (Salmon 2008, Sound on Sound). Some that labels arrange remix contests for upcoming producers to have an opportunity of showcasing their talent and I have noticed that some producers question the rules when there is a require obtaining a permission to use non-cleared samples. Salmon (2008) states that it is not uncommon for the producers to do this because it is the record label which takes the responsibility for that and clearing samples might increase the total album budget (Salmon 2008, Sound on Sound).

In the article, Salmon talks about two types own main contracts for producers, the producer contract and production contract. The Producer agreement with a record label will state that the producer must deliver the master recordings to a technically and commercially acceptable standard. Producers are typically paid in combination of fees, advances and royalties. Under the production agreement, the recording costs are commonly subject to recoupment against artist royalties and only the royalty tends to work out lower than under a recording agreement. (Salmon 2008, Sound on Sound.)

According to Salmon the net profits are usually split in half with the artist meaning that where a major record label pays down a 20 percent royalty to the production company it entitles both the production company and artist to a 10 percent royalty. A standard recording agreement might also include that, by contrast, the 20 percent artist royalty might cause a 4 percent producer royalty reduction, leaving the artists 16 percent. (Salmon 2008, Sound on Sound.)

The second one called a production agreement consequently allows the producer to raise his pay by 6 percent and apply this royalty clause to more revenue streams than would be the case in a standard producer agreement. About the payment, Salmon writes that a producer should reserve the right to receive the payment and be directly accounted to the label where his artist is signed to. Accordingly, the production company should pay their artist within 30 days after receiving royalties from the label, provided with any costs and advances have been recouped. (Salmon 2008, Sound on Sound.)



PICTURE 8: “Under a production agreement, the producer might assume entire responsibility for A&R and recording tasks, simply handing over the master recordings to the label at the end of the process.” (Richard Salmon, 2008) (Photo: Sound on Sound 2008.)

3 PRODUCERS IN THE INDUSTRY

3.1 So, you want to produce?

“Making it in the music business is not about lucky breaks. It’s about hard work. If you want to succeed in music, you have to work harder than everyone else. You have to want it more than anyone else.” (Herstand 2016.)

In Avid’s article Anthony Gordon (2016) writes about 5 essential tips for becoming a successful music producer. In the first section, he talks about love and respect towards music. It is the single most important element to be able to achieve success as a producer. If you are in the game it just for the promise of money, glamour, or prestige, you might not achieve any of those things. (Gordon 2016, Avid.)

He emphasizes to love music and commit yourself to know as much as you can about it. Listen carefully to a million records until you understand what makes a certain song work and what doesn’t. It is important to keep the goal of always aiming for the best top production in every song you make. He advises to respect the whole process, and says that just maybe that will lead on to making something truly great. (Gordon 2016, Avid.)

As second, he mentions the importance of learning engineering and mixing skills. It may not be the only way to success, but many producers do have some background in engineering or mixing. To give you a stronger foundation on your productions when you are sitting in the producer’s chair making decisions about the direction of your track is to understand how different elements of a song work together. (Gordon 2016, Avid.)

The more time you spend in the studio, the more likely you end up meeting other industry people that you connect with, which might lead to you eventually producing for them. As an example, Gordon mentions a producer Noah “40” Shebib who was engineering in a studio in Toronto where he began working with Drake. After spending weeks auditioning and passing on hundreds of beats submitted by other

producers with Drake, he submitted one of his own beats to the rapper. One of beats ended up becoming the song called Successful. (Gordon 2016, Avid.)

So, for next Gordon talks about developing and maintaining relationships. Because the music business is built around relationships, how you treated someone five years ago usually has an impact on potential opportunities for you in the future. Using an example from early days, Jimmy Iovine who now is a producer and a chairman of Interscope-Geffen-A&M started off as a janitor in a recording studio. After working his way up, he ended up forming a relationship with a young musician named Bruce Springsteen. (Gordon 2016, Avid.)

At Dancefair 2017 music conference I went to a co-write masterclass held by Vocal Kitchen. In there, their multi-platinum selling songwriter, producer and vocalist Curtis Richa also talked about developing relationships and never underestimate anyone (Vocal Kitchen 2019). He told people to always treat each other the way you want others to treat you. I remember Richa saying that the next guy who brings you a coffee can be the next big thing. (Richa 2017, Dancefair.)

3.2 Equipment

What comes to needed equipment there are as many ways to go with this as there are producers in the world. Nowadays, to achieve top of the charts quality you do not need big studios to work in. Passman (2007) states that getting a good demo doesn't mean that you must go to great expense and with just relatively inexpensive multitrack recorders, synthesizers, and computer recording software. You can get professional standard sound in your bedroom. As an example, he told that a client of his used to have six record labels chasing him based on a homemade, four-track demo. (Passman 2007, 27-28.) Being in a lot of sessions around the world I have used to work in multiple environments producing and recording music in different sounding rooms with different pre-amps, monitors and, different microphones. Having some familiar equipment for instance even your own headphones with you for on co-write sessions in another working environment should make the process easier. That way you always check the mix with something you trust on.

“We need to know the technical inside and out so that we don’t have to rely on it, that is just second nature. I always tell people just know your DAW.” (Warren Huart 2016.)

I spend most of my free time in the studio getting to know my plugins, looking for sounds and creating ready channel strips to make the production process easier in the sessions. I also update my sample library by using Splice which is a cloud-based platform for making music and collaborating with others, but also offers a massive collection of presets and samples (MusicTech 2016).



PICTURE 9: Audio Technica ATH-M50x (Photo: Amazon.ca 2014)

According to Ndugu Chancler (2017) monitors and headphones are all tools of aid in bringing a quality sound to our ears but then it becomes necessary for you to befriend your ears as your most crucial monitoring source. In other words, the most important equipment when being a music producer are your own ears. That is one of the reasons what makes the progress longer since your ears will develop only with hard work and daily practice over time. (Chancler 2017.)

3.3 “Find your own sound”

In the article, Anthony Gordon (2016) talks about creating your own lane. He states that a lot of people can produce a record, but you want to be the person who can produce a record in a way that no-one else does. The producers who have really left a mark in musical history all have brought their own sense of individualism to their records. He separates the great producers into two camps. The first ones have a gift to tap into the essence of an artist or a band, helping them discover something they did not know they had. He continues that these are the producers who focus on capturing the most honest, vulnerable, and natural performances possible. Gordon mentions producers like Rick Rubin, Jack Douglas and T Bone Burnett as an example. (Gordon 2016, Avid.)

According to him the second camp consists of producers with their own signature sound. These people have their own recognizable musical aesthetic to the records they produce and they often contribute to the actual composition of the tracks. He mentioned Phil Spector who known for his “Wall of Sound” technique that was later adopted by artists such as Bruce Springsteen and The Cocteau Twins. Another producer he wrote about was Brian Eno whose productions for Talking Heads, U2, and Coldplay all feature his signature atmospheric synths and his use of “The Studio as a Compositional Tool.” (Gordon 2016, Avid.)

From my own experience, it is good to search for yourself musically and start from there. I have noticed that as you start to master your own genre you slowly develop your skills so that you can use them in other genres in a way you would have never done it before. Also at this point you start mixing sounds together making crossovers among genres. Part of finding your own sound can be also to find your own workflow when in a session or working alone from home. Your workflow has a remarkable impact on the outcome of the song or production and it will polish over time. The way I see it rules in modern music production and mixing are pushed back all the time and it mostly about experimenting.



PICTURE 10: Crafting the instrumental in Los Angeles 2018 (Photo: Radboud Miedema 2018)

“As a producer, you’re not only responsible for how your song sounds but how it feels. One of the primary concerns of any experienced producer is ensuring that a song’s groove is unique, fitting, and sufficiently exciting to get the crowd moving.” (Beall 2009, 215)

Marcus Tikkanen (2017) writes in his thesis *How to Make it as a Songwriter* from his own personal experience that if you yourself do not believe in the song you have written does not make other people to believe it in either (Tikkanen 2017, 6). In his thesis, Tikkanen talks more about songwriting, but the reference can apply to music production as well. To give an example, my productions usually start from an ambient sample or loop that I treat and after that I start to look for a chord pattern. When starting out a production I pay a lot of attention to the first sounds that I apply. They already need to give feeling to make you believe in the production and know how to proceed.

3.4 Setting up a goal

As slightly discussed earlier in this thesis, setting up a goal already in an early stage can eventually pay off and keep your focus in the right place. We all might have different goals as individuals. It may be winning a Grammy, performing at a certain venue or working with a certain artist.

Gordon (2016) closes his article with a statement that you must define what success means to you, then do what it takes to succeed. You have figure out what you want, and commit to making it happen. If your goal is to produce hits aimed at mainstream radio is your goal, Gordon advises you sell all your stuff, move to Los Angeles, and get to work. Then again if your goal is to become the best producer in your band so you can have the freedom to make records entirely on your own terms, you must commit to that goal and you can achieve it. Just never quit. (Gordon 2016, Avid.)

“I know plenty of people who do it for a living – every one of them is 100 percent committed to their craft and most of them never really considered doing anything else. That’s what it takes to succeed on that level.” (Gordon 2016, Avid.)

3.5 Co-writing: sessions and splits

Now there might be some differences in this part since some of the producers are also songwriters what comes to topline and lyrics. Some producers might also sing and you can in that case write music on your own, but it can be a lot faster and more fun together with another writer or in a group where comes the term co-writing. When doing a lot of co-write sessions with several people all over the world I have noticed over time that the way to achieve the best results is eventually to build your own network of the people you enjoy the most working with and where you get results from.

Music business is some way a number's game meaning that you must have a lot of songs on hold all the time and being shopped to A&R's since it might take years before a song makes a cut. However, quantity and quality rarely go hand in hand which might lead to the majority of the songs you write or producer to end up being only ok. (Tikkanen 2017, 9.)

“The better you are with relationships, the easier the co-write will be.”
(Stakee 2015, ASCAP)

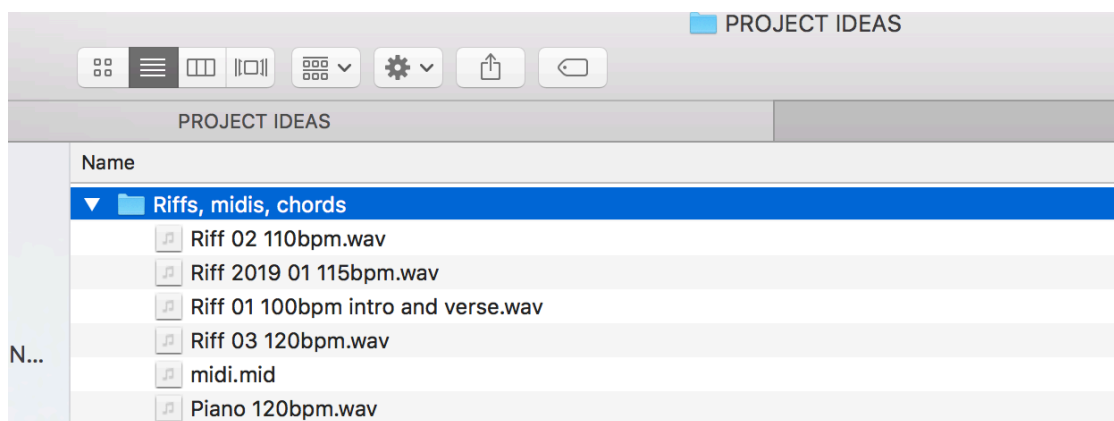


PICTURE 11: Session in Los Angeles (Photo: Radboud Miedema 2018)

Co-write sessions or camps can be either set up by your publisher or you if you already happen to have a network gathered. Co-write sessions are a good way to improve not only your production skills, but social skills when you get to work with other people in the room. Publishers try to set up sessions for their writers and producers with others who they think might connect well and whose strengths are complementary. (ASCAP 2003.)

Usually a session starts with just getting to know each other which might include listening to each other's music or talking what kind of music they would like to write. Jason Blume talks about preparation for a co-write sessions in BMI's article release in 2018 saying that he usually brings some song starts with him so that even though he would not feel the best on a session day he would still have something to contribute. (Blume 2018, BMI.)

Related to the song-starts package, Blume shares what the package might contain including for example song titles, lyric concepts, lines of lyric, melodies and melodic phrases, chord progressions, drafts of chorus melody and/or lyric, drum beats, instrumental hooks or/and a musical backing track (Blume 2018, BMI).



PICTURE 12: Example of an idea folder for co-write sessions (Photo: Niko Mansikka-aho 2019)

From what I have experienced from co-write sessions people usually have certain roles, so that there is a tracker (producer) doing all the tracking in the means of building up instrumental and recording vocals, a topliner who is responsible of the topline melody and a lyricist who takes care of the lyrics. These roles are directional and usually mixed up during a session meaning that they can vary and there is no right or wrong way to do it. (Teosto 2015.)

I have found trackers role very important in a session. The production related decisions that the tracker makes will immediately impact the overall feeling of the session and effect to the direction of the topline. Usually you hear a certain topline melody or a new chord progression that toplineers are playing with and it will feed your brain to come up with new ideas. I like to give songwriters their space when

they are writing. Usually we have such a good chemistry that I can trust them coming up with something that I like and people usually like the instrumentals that I'm preparing.

For the sessions, I have also prepared a vocal recording template with one recording track, a lead track with EQ, Slate Digital Virtual Mix Rack with temporary compression applied and optional bus send effects like reverb and delay. That way we can already have a nice sounding vocal track for playback. In addition, I also have a group of two dub-tracks for doubles panned hard left and hard right, a group of four panned tracks for harmonies and a filter track with old radio EQ-effect which is drowned to reverb if those kinds of hardly effected vocals are needed. Last in the project I have an adlib track. All the other tracks have also EQ and Virtual Mix Rack applied on them.

Sometimes the ideas might not work out in a session. Ralph Murphy, a famous Nashville songwriter behind multiple number-one hits has written tips for ASCAP has a good point about this scenario. He is saying that in a case where ideas don't work out, do something else whether it is talking about weather, golf or anything but not religion or politics. You might even book another day for writing. If you repeat the process without any success, you may better off as friends than frustrated co-workers. (ASCAP 2003)

Unless your publisher has negotiated or mentioned about it before the session, it is good to talk about the splits in before or at the end of the writing day to see if everyone agrees on the splits. Usually the copyrights are split equally, but there are rare cases where people are against equal splits. An exception on top of that would be if some producer or writer would be called to work on a certain part of the song and would in that case get a smaller cut. However, even those are negotiated and highly depend on the situation. (Teosto 2015; ASCAP 2018.)

4 MY 4 SONG CUTS

4.1 The Cool Quest, Everest – Level Ya Head

The story of this song goes back to 2016 when my school organized a co-writing camp in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands. During the first day one of the co-write tutors Ico Balt told us that he was currently working on an album with a Dutch band called The Cool Quest. During the day and feedback sessions me and Ico connected well. I felt like I got a grip of all his feedbacks regarding arrangement and production. At the end of the day he called me and invited me to write with the band and so I agreed.



PICTURE 14: Level Ya Head cover (Photo: The Cool Quest 2018)

What I really liked was that they provided some of their current demos and reference tracks from artists who they seek influence from. That information gave me guidance to do my background work looking more into the style of the band and where is it heading for. From that information collected I dived into my sound libraries putting together a template of samples and presets that work together and could fit the project. That is something that I do even today before a session with people that I haven't worked before with.

In a session, we came up with RnB downtempo track, with the kind of chords and groove that The Cool Quest was known for. The production kicks off with a pad-preset from Sylenth1 that I created for the session accompanied with a kalimba morph-type of pluck playing a riff. I created movement to the pad by automating LFO to make it sound more human than MIDI. One of the band's references was Flume, so I wanted to include some Flumes signature tricks of him adding lots of small detail to his productions. When going in to a verse you can hear a hard 808 fill while the pads strive under a high cut filter.



PICTURE 13: Session with The Cool Quest (Photo: Ico Balt 2016)

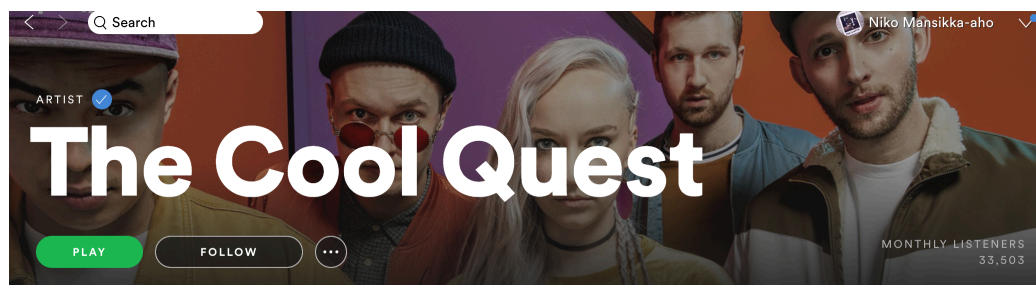
I had programmed drums in the production as a guide since I knew that it was a band act and they would anyways replace the drums later in the production. The nice thing that I like in this production is that we have chosen the few strong instruments as main elements. Most of the space in the production is filled with the main instruments and spiced up afterwards with some samples and atmospheric sounds. For example, there is one breathe sample that repeats throughout in random places during the song in the background.

I felt like the pre-chorus should calm down before the hook hits since even though Level Ya Head is a downtempo song I wanted the hook hit hard. I found some soulful piano chord samples on my computer that were already sounding a bit lo-fi and realized that they would fit the production perfectly. I made a chord pattern

from the samples I found according to the chord pattern in the song and since I like to pay attention to the small details I created a bridge in between the chords by reversing some of the samples to make the kind of interesting and moving transition from chord to another that you can hear in the song.

In the hook, you can hear a vocal choir doing a lick which was me singing to the MacBook's microphone at the cabin where we stayed. I remember distorting the vocal and adding a lot of reverb to push it more in the back. Otherwise the hook consists of same main elements that were used in the verses, but now with the synth filter wide open with active LFO automation the get this synth pumping effect. In the final production, the band played the acoustic and analog basses, my synths were accompanied with their of signature analogue synth sounds that they are using in the productions and live setups. They also added main guitar and created some atmosphere with guitars to the background.

To get traction for my own production/artist-profile Eeverest, my publisher suggested that the song would be released as a collaboration since the urban-style in Level Ya Head was close to the sound I wanted to aim for that time. The band and their manager agreed to that and I ended up with a credit on the artist line. I got 40% of the copyrights, but other parts of the agreement remain confidential.



PICTURE 15: The Cool Quest Spotify, monthly listeners (Photo: Spotify 2019)

The song was later performed live on 3FM which is one of the biggest radio stations in the Netherlands. Song was first released on mid 2018 as an album track, but was later released also as a single. The band currently has around 33,503 monthly listeners and have been touring all over Europe as mentioned earlier (Spotify 2019).

4.2 Tim Gartz & CÄHN – Just Another Story

This is a song that started out from a topline that was written by Swedish songwriters Tove Quick, Eric Wictor and my colleague Marcus Tikkanen. One of my personal goals as a producer has been able to improve my production skills and not stick to just one genre, but master all genres and that is something I find valuable when you are doing a lot of sessions with people all around the globe.

In 2018, me and Marcus started a dance-orientated side-project called CÄHN and Just Another Story was one of the first tracks produced for it. It all started with a topline and a guitar composition that really felt like a summer song. Since the guitar riff was so strong and dominating I wanted to keep that and vocals as the main elements of the track in general. I added a four on the floor beat, percussion and pads to fill the space and a bassline going with the bottom notes of the guitar.

Even though this was a dance track I wanted to use some of the pop production techniques in regards of balancing and treating the instruments. I used Fabfilter's MB-compressor side-chained usually around midrange and hi-mid range depending on the singer to the vocal and EQ in the guitars to give space for the vocal frequencies to make it stay on top of the track. To avoid the added synths and guitars frequencies clashing together I placed my additional synths carefully to play a different register and did some dips with EQ to make sure they were not clashing with each other.



PICTURE 16: Project for Just Another Story (Photo: Niko Mansikka-aho 2019)

The vocal chop that I used in the hook was chopped samples from Output Exhale plugin, which is a sample based plug ran via Kontakt player. It is processed with London Tube Saturation, FG Bomber and EQ's from Slate Digital Virtual Mix Rack, Logic's Clip Distortion and Soundtoys Little Alterboy with pitch and formant set to +12. To have a four on the floor pumping effect I simply added Kickstart plugin by Nicky Romero which is a quick tool for making and LFO pump for house tracks.

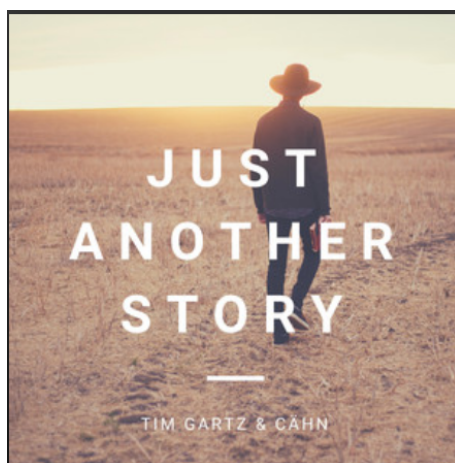


PICTURE 17: Just Another Story lead-chop processing (Photo: Niko Mansikka-aho 2018)

I usually start my mixing process with arranging the project. That means grouping, color-coding and naming every instrument before continuing to balance the elements of the track. After balancing I go through the elements with an EQ to get rid of harsh, boomy and any unwanted frequencies. I would pay attention to check your instruments around 200-350hz, 800hz-1,5Khz and 3,8Khz-4Khz since those are the frequency areas that I have found problematic in most of my productions.

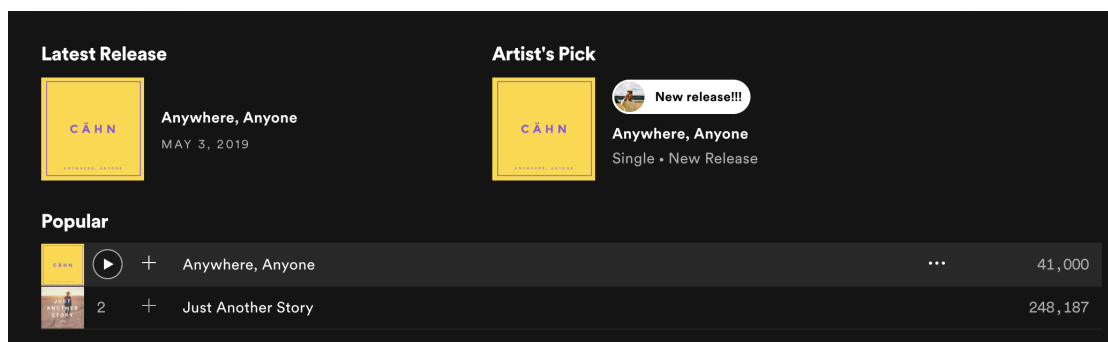
My mixing technique is so-called Top-down mixing which I read about from Step by Step Mixing: How to Create Great Mixes Using Only 5 Plug-Ins by Bjorgvin Benediktsson. In the book, he explained that top-down mixing is when you start mixing your songs with plug-ins on the master fader. (Benediktsson 2017.) Once I got a good sounding mix balance-wise and I cannot hear any frequencies piercing through the mix in unwanted way I start to the processing from my master channel by adding EQ, Tape Saturation, Compression and other plug-ins to give add colour to my mix.

Next to process would be the groups that I created where I usually have already channel strip presets for each instrument-group done in the past to begin with. Those presets consist of EQ, tape saturation and Slate's Virtual Mix Rack with at least a virtual mix bus and a compressor to glue the mix inside a certain group. Trying this technique, you will be surprised how little amount of processing some individual elements in a track need. Of course, there are exceptions when you go into live recorded elements such as guitars, drums and bass where they might need a closer look.



PICTURE 18: Just Another Story cover (Photo: Tim Gartz 2018)

After having a roughly mixed composition, I sent the files to a Swedish producer Tim Gartz who I met at Weekend Festival in Helsinki where he was playing (Facebook 2019). Gartz already had a solid profile with releases via Warner Music UK and Denmark, Armada and Tonspiel which you can see from his Spotify-profile (Spotify 2019). I liked some of his work and we connected well so we agreed on releasing it as a collaboration. He did some re-arranging to the project, added his signature sound to it and finished the mix.

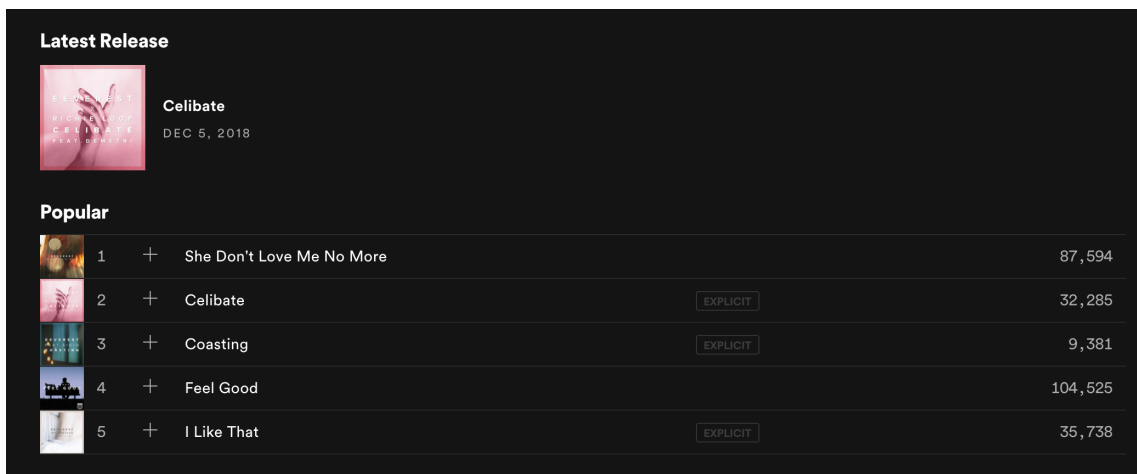


PICTURE 19: Just Another Story Spotify-streams (Photo: Spotify 2019)

Once the track was done his manager started pitching the song to various record labels and it ended up with two labels being interested in the track. We decided to go with Humble Angel Records which is founded by Kieron Donoghue, a Former Head of WMG's Global Playlist Strategy. (Billboard 2018) We ended up splitting the copyrights equally with the writers. Song is doing quite well on Spotify for a just launched artist project CÄHN currently at 248,187 streams. We recently released a follow up single, "Anywhere, Anyone" via the label same label.

4.3 Everest – Feel Good

This song is a very special one for me since it was the first song outside Finland ever released for the project. I started Everest together with my colleague and friend Marcus Tikkanen in 2014. The background story for the song starts when we attended to Dancefair 2017. We had arranged a meeting with the executives at Mixmash Records and luckily got them interested in the Feel Good demo. Feel Good got then later released via Mixmash Records sub-label FRNT. The song is currently at 104,525 streams which turned out good for a debut worldwide release.



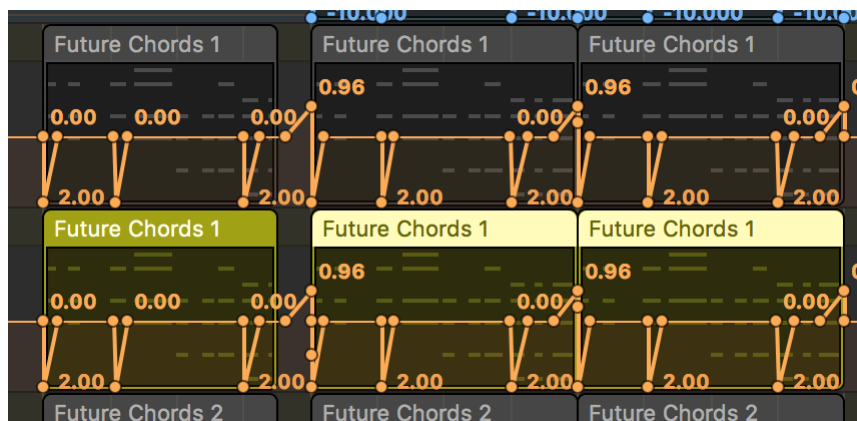
The image shows a Spotify artist profile for CÄHN. At the top, there is a 'Latest Release' section featuring the album 'Celibate' released on December 5, 2018. Below this is a 'Popular' section listing the top 5 tracks with their respective stream counts and explicit content warnings.

Rank	Track Name	Streams	Explicit
1	She Don't Love Me No More	87,594	No
2	Celibate	32,285	Yes
3	Coasting	9,381	Yes
4	Feel Good	104,525	No
5	I Like That	35,738	Yes

PICTURE 20: Feel Good Spotify-streams (Photo: Spotify 2019)

Instrumental is a combination of trap-influenced percussion and bass elements, combined with future bass-synths with raw indie vibe. The key elements of this track are those lo-fi drums, a weird sounding kalimba pattern playing a riff

through-out the song accompanied with a Mark III keyboard and a LFO auto-mated synth which is introduced in the first pre-chorus and continues to the drop. Synth has also a pitch bend automation going on making the synth kind of slide to the chord.



PICTURE 21: Pitch Bend Automation for chords (Photo: Niko Mansikka-aho 2017)

To emphasize the urban lo-fi theme in this track I used a vinyl crackle side-chained to percussion. Other than that, we used a very minimal amount of sample effects in this production which stays true to the urban lo-fi genre. The most layers we had was on the chorus for future chords. Mixing was done pretty much in a way that I wrote before, we saturated the groups with tape saturation and added glue compression. Some of the individual instruments such as kick, snare and basses were more processed in the mixing-phase. For kick and snare we used compression and parallel compression to make them stand out from the mix, same goes for the lead vocals. For bass, we also used parallel compression and multipressor so we avoid the bass going all over the place.



PICTURE 22: Feel Good cover (Photo: FRNT 2017)

Kalimba pattern that you hear playing through-out the song we decided to keep pretty much dry in regards of adding a lot of reverb since we already had a lot of it in vocals and hook synths. Almost by accident we made the kalimba sound even more interesting by adding a Microshift by Soundtoys to it creating a chorus effect. That way we achieve a big sounding kalimba-sound without drowning it to reverb or delays and it stays in your face through-out the song.

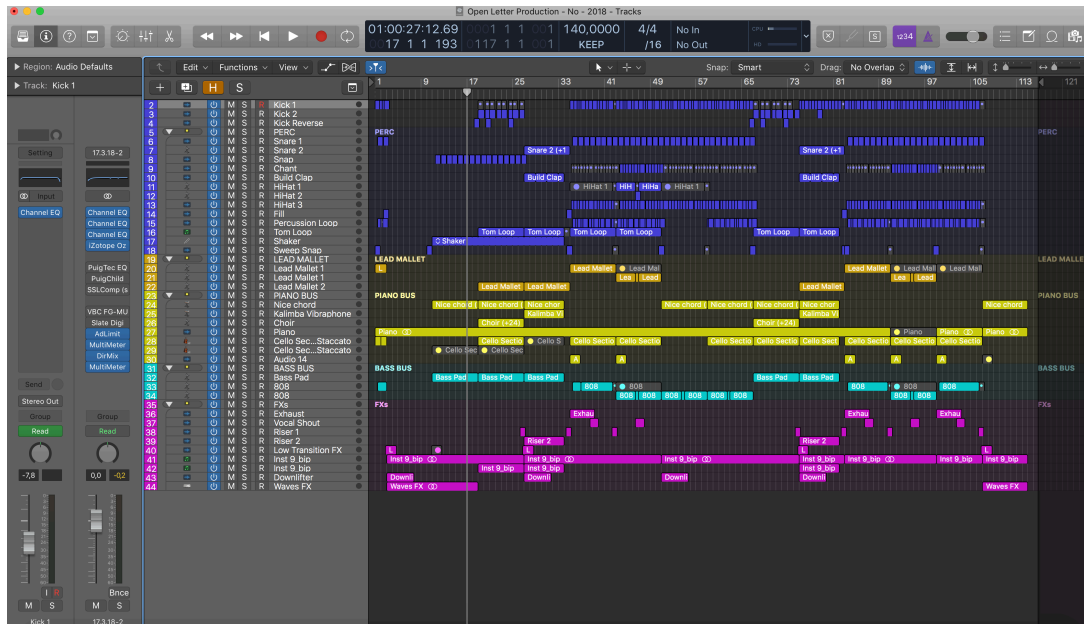
4.4 Bravo – Open Letter

This is a good example of networking that you can do on your own. After Eeverest song Feel Good was released a US rapper called Lucien Parker got in touch with me willing to collaborate on a song. We ended up making a track that we both like, but it has not yet been released. At that time, we were also looking for managements for our project Eeverest and decided to contact Lucien's (former) management since they seemed active on what they were doing. The manager liked our stuff and connected us with an artist and songwriter in USA called Bravo who was really enjoying the instrumental-package that we sent to him. (Instagram 2019.)



PICTURE 23: Open Letter cover (Photo: Bravo 2018)

The funny thing was that among all the beats he chose the one that I did not expect at all. It was an instrumental that was created on top of a song idea that we had had laying around for a couple years already and it was also maybe the second or third instrumental made around it. Bravo saw the potential and recorded his ideas of the topline for me in couple days and I wrote back that this sounds just like it was supposed to sound!

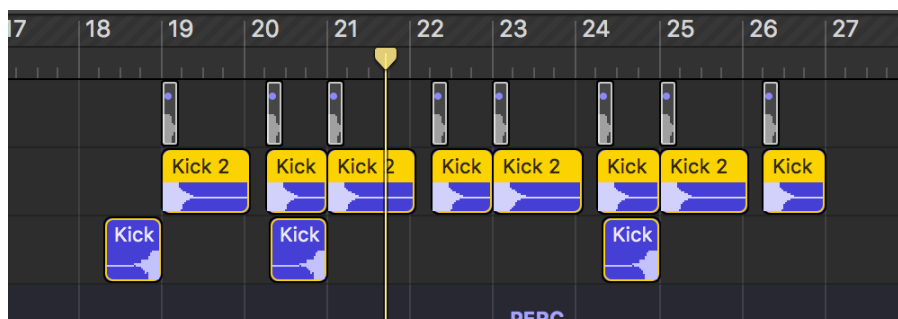


PICTURE 24: Open Letter Project (Photo: Niko Mansikka-aho 2018)

My biggest influencer when making the instrumental was Louis the Child because of their interesting compositions and use of sounds. Open Letter is atmospheric song that is focused on the hook-drop and vocals. Verses are kept open with just piano, snaps and on the second verse that follows the pattern of the hook-beat. Hook has a strong urban-type beat combined together with a heavily distorted 808 bass and a pluck-bell lead playing in a laidback, almost off the grid-vibe. To make the song interesting from the start I took the two bars from the hook instrumental and place it before the actual intro. Usually you can hear a four or eight bar intro in modern song productions so I think this is what made Open Letter to stand out from the masses.

Song from the verse to pre-chorus is mainly just piano, snap and atmospheric sounds including vocal chops and wave sound effects with strong vocals on top of the instrumental. It already sounded big to this point so I wanted to build up the

tension even more in the pre-chorus towards the hook-drop. Here's where I introduced orchestral drums in the background made in combination of Damage-sound library and massive kick samples. I reversed one of the kick samples in a way that it creates sort of a sweep leading to kick hits.



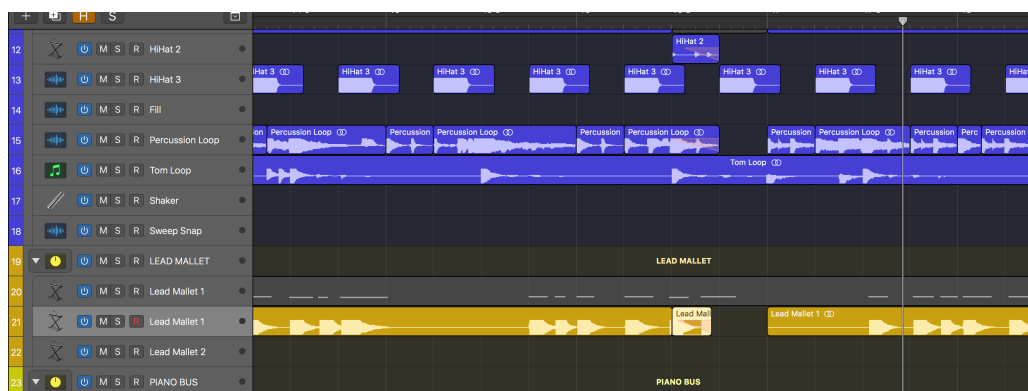
PICTURE 25: Demonstration of sweep kick effect (Photo: Niko Mansikka-aho 2018)

Because of the duration of pre-chorus there needs to be movement. In the half-way I drop out the orchestral drums and add more minimalistic elements such as a light bellpluck pattern and a trap snare roll accompanied with huge reverby claps. I used Endless Smile-plugin by Dada Life to build up the tension even more by drowning the percussion in to a huge reverb using the intensity knob of the plugin. For the hook, I wanted to create a laidback, but hard-hitting drum pattern. So even though the kick already comes in on the first beat I created an impact on the first snare that comes on the third beat of the first bar of the hook. When the snare hits, you can hear percussion loops and the orchestral drums kicking in at the same time.



PICTURE 26: Endless Smile by Dada Life (Photo: Niko Mansikka-aho 2018)

I am all about the details what it comes to the productions to give ear candy to listeners. I alternated the second part of the hook by creating beat stops to some of the instruments. This effect you can achieve by simply bouncing them to audio and making a slowdown automation with Logic's region settings where you can choose whether you want to do a fade in/out automation or speed up/slowdown automation.



PICTURE 27: Slowdown effect (Photo: Niko Mansikka-aho 2018)

I used the top-down mixing technique also for this song, mainly treating the master channel and group channels. Space for vocals is creating by adding multiband compression on bell leads and piano side-chained to the main vocal. The song was later released independently via AWAL with equal copyright split and it is now at 175,093 streams. Recently, I produced two new songs for him called "Fatal" and "Breathe".

Latest Release

Breathe
MAR 31, 2019

Artist's Pick

Free stickers @ thekidbravo.co...
Breathe
Single • New Release

Popular

1	+	Fatal	304,359
2	+	Friend Zone	1,152,290
3	+	Breathe	22,999
4	+	Open Letter	175,093
5	+	Feelin' Like	132,742

PICTURE 28: Bravo Spotify-streams (Photo: Spotify 2019)

In late 2018, our company Tonight Management was together with xtended music agency and Events365 involved in organizing an event at club Skohan, Helsinki called Drake Night. We brought US-artists Lucien Parker, Djay Mando and Bravo to perform on their European tour for the Drake Night-event. We also did some studio sessions while the artists were in Finland coming up with a song called Insecure, which will be released soon.



PICTURE 28: Drake Night-event, Finland (Picture: Events365)

5 DISCUSSION

Writing this thesis brought me back in time and got me thinking again of the reasons why I started music back in the days. It felt great to realize all the information that I have gathered during the years of working with music starting from nothing to become an established music producer doing shows, meeting new people and pursuing the dream of having a Grammy winning hit now even in Los Angeles. My musical journey has not been easy, but I am grown up and now more understanding and I know that patience is one of the keys in music business.



PICTURE 29: Parody about the music business (Photo: Shitty A&R)

A lot of recording contracts that are still written nowadays are centralized on physical sales which makes it more difficult to get paid from the cut's songwriters and producers get when today it is mostly all about streaming income. In addition, the challenge for producers to get paid or get credit has become more and more challenging. Getting legal advice on the contracts and negotiating can help and I advise everyone to run their contracts through a lawyer, but still things could be better. Luckily some companies like Spotify have been taking actions to turn the game to a better direction gotten involved giving more credit to songwriters and

producers by adding song credit-option to their streaming platform where people can see who is behind the song. (Spotify 2018).

Despite those facts, surround yourself with the people you feel comfortable working with. Working with a partner or a team makes it a lot more fun and you might not even find yourself thinking about all the negative stuff but if you do so, you still have a safe network behind you to talk with. Find your own path in the music industry and set up your goals already in the early stage to keep up the focus in making good music. I hope that people reading this can get confidence from this and use that in whatever they are doing.

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Tim Gartz, CÄHN – Just Another Story: Spotify

<https://open.spotify.com/track/3xeAmOntRmgn6Ud2gc2Dgy?si=BaY988m9S9uwo5ninXayzQ>

Everest – Feel Good: Spotify

https://open.spotify.com/track/64d7c31qg8iW9rTiSaf3H3?si=HmHDhpG-FRnabnEMvp_5uOQ

Bravo – Open Letter: Spotify

<https://open.spotify.com/track/2NQdKmKoiHX7aLldx4SkzF?si=2MK-vzANQX6T4-ixmJUQlg>