



Bare Bones

Producing an Alternative Folk album for No Fortunate Son

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Abstract

The purpose of this master's thesis is to describe, analyse and evaluate the process of producing an album for the Alternative Folk artist 'No Fortunate Son'. The thesis presents the production process with illustrations that show the songwriting, arranging, recording and production processes, and tests how different elements affect the outcome of the songs, such as headphone volume levels, re-recordings and how the use of a metronome influences the artistic performance.

The idea here is to show the process as transparently as possible. I invite the reader into my studio and lay my methods bare. In the appendix of the thesis, I have my studio diary where the reader can read my thoughts regarding the process and see how the project evolved day by day. In addition to the studio diary, I have a commentary on the diary. Our goal was to produce an album with a live feeling and a simple, authentic sound.

The thesis concludes with a thorough evaluation and reflection on the production process.

The album is mixed by Michael Mikander and mastered by Svante Forsbäck.
The album is available on all major streaming platforms under the title Bare Bones by No Fortunate Son.

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

Language: English

Key Words: Music. Production. Producer. Album. Artist.

MAGISTERSAVHANDLING

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Abstrakt

Syftet med denna magistersavhandling är att beskriva, analysera och utvärdera processen med att producera ett album för Alternative Folk-artisten 'No Fortunate Son'. I magisterarbetet presenteras produktionsprocessen med illustrationer som visar låtskrivande, arrangering, inspelning och produktion, och undersöker hur olika element påverkar låtarnas resultat, såsom volymnivåer i hörlurar, omtagningar och hur användningen av en metronom påverkar den konstnärliga prestationen.

Idén här är att visa processen så transparent som möjligt. Jag bjuder in läsaren till min studio och lägger fram mina metoder öppet. I uppsatsens bilaga finns min studiodagbok där läsaren kan ta del av mina tankar kring processen och se hur projektet utvecklades dag för dag. Utöver studiodagboken finns även en kommentar till dagboken. Vårt mål var att producera ett album med en livekänsla och ett enkelt, autentiskt ljud.

Magistersavhandlingen avslutas med en grundlig utvärdering och reflektion kring produktionsprocessen.

Albumet är mixat av Michael Mikander och mastrat av Svante Forsbäck. Albumet finns tillgängligt på alla större streamingplattformar under titeln Bare Bones av No Fortunate Son.

Denna magistersavhandling har en betydande praktisk del som bör lyssnas på i samband med den skrivna delen.

Språk: Engelska

Nyckelord: Produktion. Producent. Album. Artist.

MAISTERINTUTKIELMA

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Tiivistelmä

Tämän maisterintutkielman tarkoituksena on kuvata, analysoida ja arvioida prosessia, jossa tuotetaan albumi Alternative Folk -artisti 'No Fortunate Sonille'. Maisterintutkielmassa esitetään tuotantoprosessi kuvitettuna, ja siinä näytetään laulukirjoittamisen, sovittamisen, äänittämisen ja tuotannon vaiheet. Lisäksi siinä testataan, miten erilaiset elementit vaikuttavat kappaleiden lopputulokseen, kuten kuulokkeiden äänenvoimakkuus, uudelleenäänitykset ja kuinka metronomin käyttö vaikuttaa taiteelliseen esitykseen.

Tavoitteena on näyttää prosessi mahdollisimman läpinäkyvästi. Kutsun lukijan studiooni ja esittelen menetelmäni avoimesti. Liitteenä tutkielmassa on studiopäiväkirjani, jossa lukija voi tutustua ajatuksiini prosessin aikana ja nähdä, miten projekti kehittyi päivä päivältä. Studiopäiväkirjan lisäksi olen kirjoittanut kommentaarin päiväkirjasta. Tavoitteenamme oli tuottaa albumi, jossa on elävän tuntu ja yksinkertainen, aito soundi.

Tutkielma päättyy perusteelliseen arviointiin ja pohdintaan tuotantoprosessista.

Albumin miksaajana toimii Michael Mikander ja masteroinnista vastaa Svante Forsbäck. Albumi on saatavilla kaikilla suurilla suoratoistoalustoilla nimellä Bare Bones esittäjältä No Fortunate Son.

Tämä maisterintutkielma sisältää merkittävän käytännöllinen osuuden, joka tulisi kuunnella kirjallisen osan yhteydessä.

Kieli: Englanti

Avainsanat: Tuotanto. Tuottaja. Albumi. Artisti.

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1 Introduction

Producing. Recording. Arranging. Songwriting. Inspiring. Managing. Are all verbs that are heavily associated with making a record. The vast majority of people who are not themselves musicians or who have not made albums might think that it is quite simple, just hit a record button and then the art flows freely.

In the early days of recording there were separate engineers that managed the technical side of the recording process and the person that was the producer of the album was the one that was in charge of the process on the whole. Making sure that deadlines were held and that the record was delivered to the label¹. The producer also guaranteed that the work lived up to the expectations of the label. Nowadays it is expected that the producer can engineer and mix at the same time he or she produces the artist's album. The producer must also inspire the artist and tap into qualities the artist did not know themselves they possessed. With that said there are still "classic" producers around such as Rick Rubin. Producers that do not partake in the technical aspect but acts more like a guide and contributes with their experience and their "gut feeling"².

It is not uncommon to find a modern producer capable of producing, mixing³ and mastering⁴. The budgets for making records have become much smaller than what they used to be back in the day (Thall, 2006, p.24) (Borum, 2015, p.16). It is also very common that many artists record themselves the material and engage a producer remotely. Or finding a hybrid solution that something is recorded together with the producer and then sending over completing material to finish the production (Borum, 2015, p.133).

It is also psychological in nature, the relationship between the producer and the artist. A "good" producer can optimize the performance of the artist by enabling the perfect atmosphere for the artist to express themselves. Whereas a "bad" producer can jeopardize the whole project by misjudging the whole situation and in worst cases "mow down" the artist. With this said, I do not imply that the producer should be a "Yes Man" but someone who can read the artist and tend to their needs so they can do their best work yet. The "wrong" producer with the "wrong" artist can sink the whole endeavour. There are as many different producer types as there is a huge variety of personalities in artists.

Songwriting and arranging are also necessary traits of a competent producer. A producer might have to assist the artist in finishing songs or changing the arrangement, so it carries the song in a sufficient way. Some producers are heavily involved in the songwriting process and the arranging but there are also cases where the artist maintains absolute sovereignty over the art in question. Prior to the process the rules of the engagement should be laid out, so everyone is comfortable in their roles.

1 Record label.

2 Following your instincts or following your initial response.

3 Term for adjusting volumes and frequencies in a recording.

4 Process for enhancing the overall sound and maintaining sonic consistency.

The term “producer” is frequently used in music today. Everyone considers themselves a producer if they are recording and releasing music on for an instance on Soundcloud or YouTube. The role as a producer can be interpreted as such, no one has dominion over the term. It comes down to personal criteria what you yourself consider to be appropriate. If you partake in a production where there are economic incentives and expectations. The responsibility you hold as a producer is high. The label expects that the album will yield a certain amount of streams and sales. They also expect that the artist's fanbase will grow with the release. It is important to know your own competence. The music industry is a small place, and you are only as good as your latest work. A project gone awry can derail your career as a producer. Be mindful of what projects you take on so you know what you can deliver. With the privilege of the producer comes great responsibility. The privilege is that you will sit in the first row and capture never before heard art. Creating and enabling it to spring forth from the well of inspiration.

I have always been reluctant to call myself a producer. I know what the title entails and what the responsibilities are. Being the person that oversees the whole process that can at sometimes be quite chaotic. I have the greatest respect for the apex producers in the world that can deliver time after time and still have fun during the process. I have myself been part of projects where my band is being produced by an external producer. There are methods I have seen that I agree with and other methods that I strongly disagree with.

When I decided to do an album with 'No Fortunate Son' as my Master Thesis I did it because I wanted to do something different to what I usually do. I wanted to produce a genre I am only acquainted with.

We made up a plan on what type of songs we would include on the album. What themes we would include in the lyrics and very early on we knew that we wanted to call the album 'Bare Bones'. 'No Fortunate Son', the artist in question wanted a more “raw” sounding album than his previous works. This would also be his first full length album. We set out to write all new songs. To explore untapped potential and hearing sides of him that no one yet have heard. We both agreed that the finished product should have a runtime over forty minutes.

In March I had prepared the production with plugin⁵ purchases from different companies. I had expanded my plugin library manyfold and I had the idea that we would do most of the production “in the box⁶”. But after reading reviews and forums I decided to do a hybrid solution. I purchased first a Golden Age Audio Premier PRE-73 preamp⁷ which is a well-made copy of the famous Neve 1073 preamp. I bought it for recording vocals, the plugins could not emulate such a sound, so I deemed it necessary in the process. Two weeks after receiving the Golden Age Audio Premier PRE-73 I also bought another preamp. I wanted the similar quality when recording the acoustic guitar. After reviewing my options, I purchased a preamp from Warm Audio. The WA-TB12. It is a circuit modelled after the API 312, which is an all-time studio classic from the United States of America. A favoured circuit for recording guitars, bass, drums etc.

5 Digital emulation of physical recording equipment.

6 Producing, mixing and mastering completely confined inside your computer, without external equipment.

7 Preamp made for audio recordings.

I had now prepared my studio for the project. The artist brought his favourite microphone a Neumann TLM 102. A modern classic microphone, high quality and quite affordable. I utilized myself a Shure SM57 and a sE Electronics sE2200a II. For the majority of the songs, we had the Neumann on vocals, the sE on the guitar, SM57 on the neck of the guitar and then a line out from the internal microphone in the acoustic guitar. We also restrung the acoustic guitar with lighter strings and tuned it down a half step to differentiate the whole sound of the album compared to his earlier works.

We made an oral agreement in the beginning of the process that even if the experience would feel uncomfortable, we would still pursue different ideas and explore unknown potential. I assured that I would never force the process to become something that the artist would feel alienated towards. The idea was to trust the process and see what comes out of the experimentation. It was also important for me to not influence too much the material I was presented with. I wanted to retain the originality of the work. I only acted where I saw that it was necessary to alter the work. We wrote some songs together and on a few of them I only had to capture what they already were.

The books that have supported me in this project have been mainly 'The Creative Act' by Rick Rubin (Rubin, 2023), 'The Addiction Formula' by Friedemann Findeisen (Findeisen, 2015) and 'Try This At Home: Adventures In Songwriting' by Frank Turner (Turner, 2019). I have at the time of writing this listened through 'The Creative Act' two times and the other books once. I find the philosophical views of Rick Rubin on producing very appealing to me. His techniques for optimizing the milieu in the studio so creativity can thrive. The respect for art that Rubin holds is also something that inspires me greatly and the fact that he can stay inspired and humble after the long and illustrious career that he has had.

'The Addiction Formula' focuses mainly on "pop music". The book discusses different songwriting techniques and how to structure songs to maintain the listener's interest. The book also delves into analysis of "energy curves" and details how one can analyse own compositions. The book serves this thesis mainly for structure analysis.

Frank Turner's book is relevant due to the genre of this record. 'No Fortunate Son' has been greatly inspired by Frank Turner and in the sound of 'No Fortunate Son' you can clearly hear how his music has been inspired by Frank Turner. There are also similarities on the different lyrical themes and how Frank Turner writes his lyrics and how 'No Fortunate Son' writes his. Both artists also share a background in Punk and Hardcore music.

It is quite hard to define the genre of 'No Fortunate Son'. His earlier works have been very close to americana and had strong country influences. The EP 'Forest Sessions' which he recorded prior to 'Bare Bones' has a lot of folk music weaved into its fabric. After the artist and I had reflected more upon the matter of genre, we decided to call it "alternative music with folk influences". In our early discussions between artist and producer we discussed on how we would record the album and shape the overall style of the sound. We both wanted to make a more down to earth sounding record a "live⁸" feeling. So, many of the songs were recorded with both the instrumental and the vocal performances being recorded in one take. The bass was recorded afterwards without click⁹ and with great care so it would fit in with the acoustic guitar and vocals. Both vocals and guitars

8 Live music performed at a concert.

9 A Term derived from the sound of a metronome.

have imperfections in the final versions. The “mistakes” are part of the whole sound of the record, it is supposed to be imperfect. It contributes to the “live” feeling.

The research question that I have in mind is how the metronome¹⁰ influences the music of 'No Fortunate Son'. As I earlier mentioned we have recorded both the music and vocals simultaneously. We also opted to record those songs without “click”. The idea was to let the music flow freely as in a live situation. Songs such as 'Bare Bones' and 'Before It's Too Late' were recorded with click due to the arrangement. 'Bare Bones' features drums, bass, electric guitar, acoustic guitar, lap steel guitar, vocals and piano. With so many different instruments in the production, leaving out the metronome or “click” as we call it was not a realistic option. The metronome serves as a guide for the beat, so all instruments synchronize with each other. The song 'Before It's Too Late' is similar to 'Bare Bones' and features drums, bass, acoustic guitar, vocals, grand piano, strings and a horn section. The songs that were recorded with click were more challenging to get to the same standard as the songs that were recorded with no click. One can theorize that 'No Fortunate Son' easier taps into his artistry when he can play guitar at the same time. With only got the click and the backtrack to support him the experience might have felt so unfamiliar that it distracted him from performing his best. After a few days we re-recorded the vocals for both 'Bare Bones' and 'Before It's Too Late' and the vocals were performed in a much more convincing way. Still, the vocal performances of the click-recorded songs were not on par with the songs that were recorded in the non-click way.

2 Research questions and methods

2.1 Research questions

My research questions are the following. How does the metronome, which I will refer to as “click” impact the performance of 'No Fortunate Son'. Will it stress the performance or will it be left unaffected by the indication of the beat. The other research question is how a freshly written vocal performance will mature in the mind over a few days compared to something recorded on the spot.

2.2 Methods

I will use a hermeneutic approach to this thesis. I will produce, record, co-write the artist's album. I will keep a studio journal that I record after each session. In my work I will draw inspiration from 'The Creative Act', 'The Addiction Formula' and 'Try This At Home: Adventures in songwriting'. The results of the recordings will be discussed at the end of the thesis and the songs will be available on worldwide streaming services.

¹⁰ Device used by musicians for marking tempo and time signatures.

2.3 Terminology

Throughout this thesis I will use terminology derived from music production. I will footnote the terminology that needs explaining and the definition will be found at the bottom of the page.

2.4 Previous research and similar studies

Arnold, G. (2013). *Writing songs and writing a record: Inside the composition of an acoustic pop album*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Tasmania).

Kiiskelä, A. (2021). *Artistic decision-making and strategy in self-produced music production projects*. (Bachelor's thesis, Tampere University of Applied Sciences).

Chea, D. (2017). *Music production & self-producing: A case study*. (Master's Thesis, Berklee College of Music, Valencia).

2.5 Commentary on similar studies

The existing studies and theses on this subject are few. I would have liked to see more illustrations in the ones that I listed in section 2.3 and I would have liked to see the authors analyse more their decisions and not just go through their process. Still, I was glad to see that there was existing studies or theses relatively similar to mine.

3 Recording

3.1 Order of songs

The order of the songs in this thesis do not represent the final running order on the album. I chose to go through the songs in the order they were recorded. Why we started with the song 'Emigrantens Visa' is because we had done some earlier experiments with that song in the fall 2023 prior to our recording sessions in spring 2024.

3.2 Recording method

For the majority of the songs, excluding 'Bare Bones' and 'Before It's Too Late' I recorded the artist in “one take¹¹” while the “tape was running¹²”. I wanted to capture the “live” feel to his performance and replicate a concert setting. Recording in this way is directly inspired by Frank Turner's process (Turner, 2019, p.150,186). The songs that were recorded in that fashion were without click. We recorded 'Emigrantens Visa' without click for the album version, but the older version is recorded with click (metronome). Besides

¹¹ A term for recording a source one in its entirety and settling for it.

¹² Term derived from when tape was used for recording in studios. It refers to an active recording situation.

being inspired by Frank Turner I also was inspired to record like this by how Red Hot Chilli Peppers recorded their album Californication (Mixing Mastering Online, 2024, 3:08).

First in the recording chain we have the artist himself and his guitar. We had one microphone on the vocals, two on the guitar and then a line-input from his guitar. After that we had two preamps, one for his vocals and then one for the condenser microphone¹³ on his guitar. Both preamps went then into my SSL audio interface¹⁴. The line-input from the guitar and the dynamic microphone¹⁵ on the guitar neck went straight into my SSL audio interface. The setup of microphones on the acoustic guitar is inspired by how Fleetwood Mac recorded their acoustic guitar (Produce Like A Pro, 2024, 1:40).

In the DAW¹⁶ then I had two plugin emulations of preamps on the guitar input channel and on the dynamic microphone channel. The idea here was to enhance the signal and get some analog characteristics on the sound. I also utilized plugin emulations of compressors¹⁷, reverb chambers¹⁸, equalizers¹⁹, tape saturation²⁰ and delay²¹ on the projects where I wanted to enhance certain aspects of the sound.

Something also worth mentioning is that I used techniques from Rick Rubin's book 'The Creative Act' where you increase the volume in the headphones to get the artist so sing "softer" (Rubin, 2023, p.118). This can be heard on the songs 'Before It's Too Late' and 'Hard Enough' where the vocal performances are much more intimate and "vulnerable". I found it to suit the themes of the songs.

'Bare Bones' and 'Before It's Too Late' were recorded one instrument at the time. Since I can't fit a drum set into my studio, we wrote the song with MIDI²² drums. Due to the more advanced arrangement, we also used the metronome for recording everything and to make sure that everything was in sync. We recorded the vocals last for these two songs when the arrangement was adequate to support the vocals.

We re-recorded bass with Mats Ödahl on every song when we had finalized the songwriting process and when we were happy with the vocal performances. It was a

13 Condenser microphones are sensitive microphones with a great frequency response. Usually ranging between 20hz-20000hz. Condenser microphones are typically used in studio settings.

14 Computer hardware that converts an analog signal into digital information for a digital audio workstation and then back into an analog signal to be played back through headphones or loudspeakers.

15 A dynamic microphone is a less sensitive microphone commonly used at live concerts. The frequency response is narrower than a condenser microphone and the dynamic microphone does not need external power for operation.

16 Digital audio workstation. A computer program which can be used for music production, mixing and mastering.

17 Compressors are levelling amplifiers that are used to even out a signals dynamic range.

18 Reverb chambers add reverberation to a sound source. A dry signal which is enhanced with reverberation. Reverb as an effect adds depth and emulates the sound of a certain space.

19 Audio equalizers allow the manipulation of certain frequencies. Typically ranging between 20hz-20000hz. The faders on an equalizer allow the operator to adjust frequencies in decibels.

20 Tape saturation is a type of distortion derived from tape machines.

21 Typical echo effect in music terminology.

22 Musical Instrument Digital Interface. Digital information containing musical notes, timing, pitch and dynamics.

prudent move because Mats came in with a fresh and objective mind and could arrange his basslines, so they “served” the song in the best possible way.

Drums for 'Bare Bones' and 'Before It's Too Late' were re-recorded by Michael Mikander with Toni Nordlund on the drums. Toni has before performed on recordings with 'No Fortunate Son' and getting genuine drums instead of MIDI drums brought a greater depth to these songs.

3.3 Stylistic decisions

The greatest inspiration for this album was to have a raw and honest sound. By trying to preserve the live feeling with the minimalistic arrangements and the rough vocals we have succeeded in portraying this organic setting. However, there is one artist that inspired us more than others. That artist is Frank Turner. With a background in more aggressive music, Frank Turner changed his direction into folk music territory. Sporting unpolished vocals and live energy in his studio performances (Turner, 2019, p.211).

It is with Frank Turner's music back in my mind I have mixed and panned²³ the instruments in the way I have done on the album. The only thing I have done differently is that I have mixed the vocals louder in the mix than Frank Turner's songs. This is because I want the listener to be able to make out the lyrics and the story of the song simultaneously when they hear the song for the first time.

It is also possible that I have compressed the music more than what you usually do in alternative folk music but I did that so the sound would be more cohesive.

I myself have a background in the metal music scene since 2008 and in the last eight years I have been involved in metal productions with pop music elements. My sonic preferences in how the mix is set is inevitably influenced by this on a subconscious level.

Something worth mentioning is also that we wanted to avoid sounding like modern American country. We wanted to avoid the super polished sound and maintain the “diamonds in the rough” sound. With that said, there is nothing wrong with advanced productions and a polished sound, but it did not feel right for this occasion.

3.4 Artistic influences

The idea behind the title of the album 'Bare Bones' came in spring 2024 when I discussed the possibility of making a full album with 'No Fortunate Son'. He said that he envisioned a more honest and raw sounding production than his previous works. As I mentioned in the stylistic decisions section, Frank Turner was a great inspiration sound wise. Turner was also a great inspiration artistically. Frank Turner's “punk²⁴” attitude and confident stance was a nice source of inspiration to draw from to the creation of 'Bare Bones'. It was also very fitting because 'No Fortunate Son' has been a lifelong fan of Turner's music, both from the hardcore punk²⁵ era and the folk music scene that he is now endeavouring.

23 Moving and placing a sound source in the stereo field.

24 Music genre that emerged from rock music in the 1970's.

25 A subgenre of punk defined by its greater intensity, tempo speed and aggressive sound.

My choice colouring scheme does not have any logic behind it. I merely use it to ease identification.



Illustration 2: This is the mixer overview of 'Emigrantens Visa'.

This is the first song we recorded on the album with the artist's LOEF guitar. We had not yet changed the strings on the guitar to a lighter set and it was quite dominant in the mid frequencies, so I had to do some drastic adjustments when equalizing it.

On the bass channel I used the UAD plugin 'Empirical Labs Distressor' which is an emulation of the Empirical Labs Distressor Compressor from the 90's. It is a Swiss Army Knife of compressors, and it evened out the peaks of the bass. I had to do very small adjustments on the equalizer thanks to the bass player and the instrument's balanced sound.

The guitar tracks GTR LINE and GTR 57 are hard panned left and right to create a broad soundscape. I have the condenser set in the middle to add definition and low end to the sound. I chose to have the UAD API Vision Channel strip²⁷ on their channels to emulate an API preamp. The API preamp is very much akin to my WA-TB12 which is an API copy. This would make the source sound more cohesive. The condenser microphone channel has a UAD Manley Massive Passive EQ plugin to alter the frequencies on that track.

On the vocal track I used two plugin compressors to even out the sound. First the UAD 1176 with fast attack and slow release and then the UAD LA-2A which acted like a limiter, so it smoothed out the whole sound. The 1176 evened out the extremes in the dynamics and the LA-2A helped the track so sit in the mix. The UAD Studer Tape Machine plugin emulates tape saturation and gave the vocals sound a high sheen and some discrete distortion.

4.2 Hold On

This is the second song we recorded for the album. The artist was sitting in the couch of my studio and played the chords of the song. When I inquired about the origins of the song, he stated that it was a composition of his own. I was delighted that he had more songs that he had written prior to the session, and we decided to record 'Hold On'.

The lyrics tell about wishing to leave and start over again. A fresh start in life somewhere else. The lyrics are written by 'No Fortunate Son'.

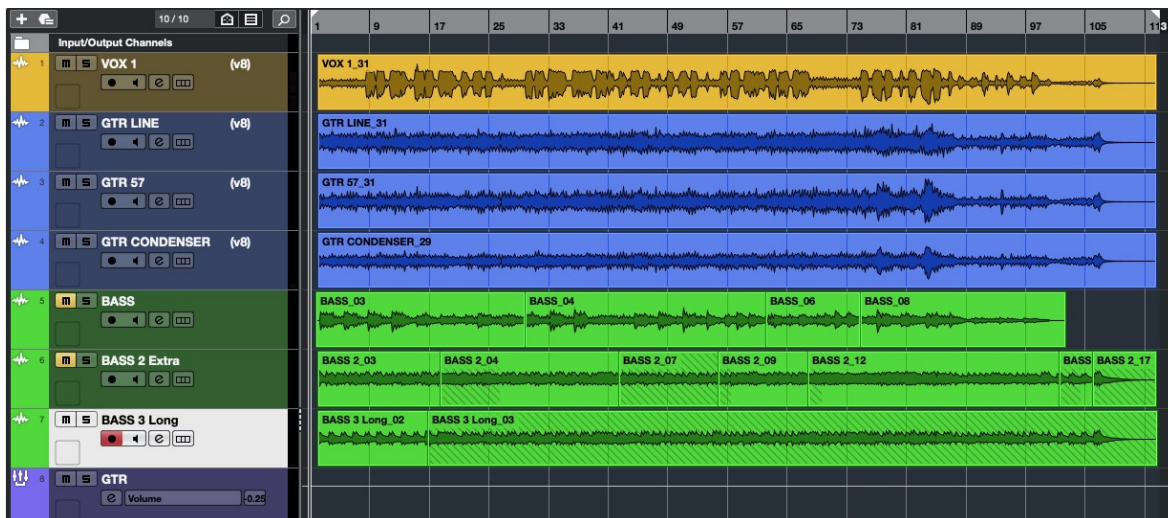


Illustration 3: This is the overview of 'Hold On'. It features 7 tracks with two bass tracks muted.

The song features seven tracks with three bass tracks. The original bass track is the track named "BASS" and the track "BASS 2 Extra" was an experimental take on how the bass arrangement could have been. We settled for the track "BASS 3 Long" because it suited

²⁷ A channel strip typically consists of preamplification, dynamic procession, equalization and output controls.

the song better. Here we also had to record the bass in segments to sync with the acoustic guitar and vocals.

This song is more aggressively performed and that is why the waveform²⁸ of the tracks are more even than the previous song. We can also see from this illustration that we did eight recording takes before we were happy with the performance.

I also utilize here a group track for the guitar tracks for the same reasons as mentioned earlier in this thesis.



Illustration 4: This is the mixer overview of 'Hold On'.

28 Graphical representation of sound vibrations.

We can here see the same arrangement for the guitar tracks in the similar fashion to 'Emigrantens Visa'. We can also see that the adjustments on the guitar tracks are much less dramatic because we had changed the string gauge on the LOEF guitar here and it sounded much more balanced with the lighter strings.

The 'Litte Plate' is a plugin made by 'Soundtoys' and it is an emulation of a plate reverb chamber. I favoured this plugin because it had a very organic²⁹ sounding character and it suited this project very well. I used it on guitar and vocal tracks throughout the album.

The UAD Studer Tape Machine plugin is also featured on the stereo out track because it gives a similar effect on the whole track as I mentioned earlier on its performance on the vocal track. Besides from the Studer I also have two UAD Manley plugins on the master track. The UAD Manley Massive Passive MST is a mastering plugin that I utilized as a demo master on the output track³⁰. The second one is the UAD Manley Variable Mu which is a stereo compressor plugin to "glue"³¹ together the whole sound. The final plugin before the Studer is the SSL Fusion Stereo Image plugin which I use to broaden the whole sound of the song. The inspiration behind using the Studier Tape Machine plugin was a YouTube video where they explained Dr. Dre's vocal chain (Sheen Beats, 2024, 4:08). The use of the Studer plugin on the master track is my own experiment.

Stylistically 'Hold On' is very close to the style of Frank Turner and we were influenced also sound wise from his productions. Especially the album 'England Keep My Bones' which I have included in my discography section in my thesis.

4.3 Colder

The artist in question 'No Fortunate Son' also known as Tobias Fagerholm packs a few surprises. I was under the impression that we only had one song ready to be recorded. Which was 'Emigrantens Visa'. He already surprised me with 'Hold On' but now he even had more unrecorded songs in his portfolio. I stated that every old song that he had should be recorded if they were good songs in my opinion.

The song is quite melancholic just like 'Emigranten's Visa' but there is a sarcastic hue to the whole song. The lyrics are written by 'No Fortunate Son' and the guitar arrangement felt to me quite humoristic, so I wanted to amplify that. Besides bass supporting the acoustic guitar I wanted a beat³² or a groove³³ in the song. So, we made a makeshift drumkit out of a Pringles can, a newspaper and the chin of 'No Fortunate Son'.

The Pringles can acted as our bass drum, the newspaper was our snare and the chin was scraped and replicated a shaker. Every element of the "drumkit" was recorded separately with a Shure SM57 microphone. Additionally, to accent the snare we added a "snap" which was a snuff box which we hit with a pen.

29 Term in audio production used for describing the opposite of manufactured and manipulated sounds or instruments. Usually used for describing sounds with analog character.

30 Output track or master track is the output stereo channel in your DAW or on your physical mixer.

31 Term used in audio production to make sound sources sit better together in the overall mix.

32 Term for rhythm.

33 Sense of swing or feel in the rhythm of the music. Can also be manipulation of time perception in the rhythm section.

This was a song where we recorded the vocals and the guitar simultaneously. We recorded the bass separately and the “drumkit” after that. I had to move around and edit some of the drum parts so it would sync with the rest of the arrangement. We stuck with the original “drum kit” on this song because it is the makeshift aspect of it that benefits the song in my opinion as the producer of the album. It adds to the “raw” sound of the 'Bare Bones' album.

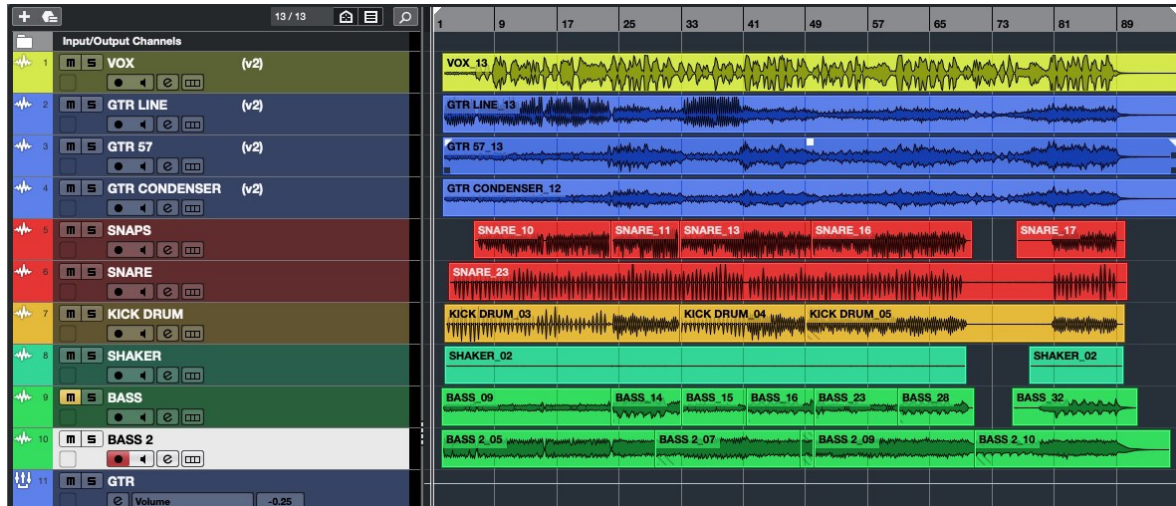


Illustration 5: The overview of 'Colder'. 10 tracks with the original bass track muted.

At first glance the shaker track appears to be empty but that is because the sound source is so low in volume that it is not visible unless one zooms in upon it. Contrastively the bass drum and snare track are much louder sources so we can see the peaks in the waveform. It is also visible here that we recorded two takes of the song before we were satisfied.



Illustration 6: The mixer overview of 'Colder'.

On the “drum kit” I had to do some drastic adjustments to the equalizer. I faced challenges with creating the snare sound. As I mentioned earlier, I recorded “snaps” on top of the snare track, so it helped to accent it. I also added the UAD API Vision strip plugin onto the channels of the “drumkit” to give it some analog character.

We can also see here a similar correction on the equalizer on the bass track. A very small adjustment because the sound source is so balanced.

The adjustments on the vocal track differ a bit from song to song. How much I cut in the low end of the vocals depend on the arrangement of the song. The more elements in the song, the more drastic cut in the low end on the vocals.

Something also worth mentioning is that I have all tracks levelled in such fashion that I retain a lot of headroom in my mix. This is helpful to retain the “organic” sound in the whole production, there's a lot of room for dynamics.

I told 'No Fortunate Son' when we recorded the song that except the influence by Frank Turner, there is definitely a great inspiration derived from the Swedish folk singer Cornelis Vreeswijk. There are a few songs on the album that have this vibe and 'Colder' is one of them. Even though Vreeswijk is originally from the Netherlands and grew up in Sweden he has got the same sarcastic vibe in his humour that we in Finland also resonate with. I have included a song by Vreeswijk in the discography because of his influence in 'No Fortunate Son's music.

4.4 Skies

The song 'Skies' was also a song that 'No Fortunate Son' had written years before this session. It started to dawn upon me at this point that we might have to discard our original plan/manuscript for what type of songs we would feature on the album. Since he had so many good songs that were unrecorded, I thought that they very well should be the mainstay of the tracks on the album.

We did not have to spend very long in the studio to record this song since he had played the song so many times over the years. We could focus on the vocal performance and differentiate the dynamics to make the song interesting. Giving it a very “airy” and atmospheric vibe.

The lyrics are written by 'No Fortunate Son' and they deal with coming to terms with mortality from a personal experience. The vocal performance on this song really turned out nicely. We got a beautiful open sound with nice raspiness in the voice here and there. I gained the vocal preamp a bit more discretely to retain the open sound.

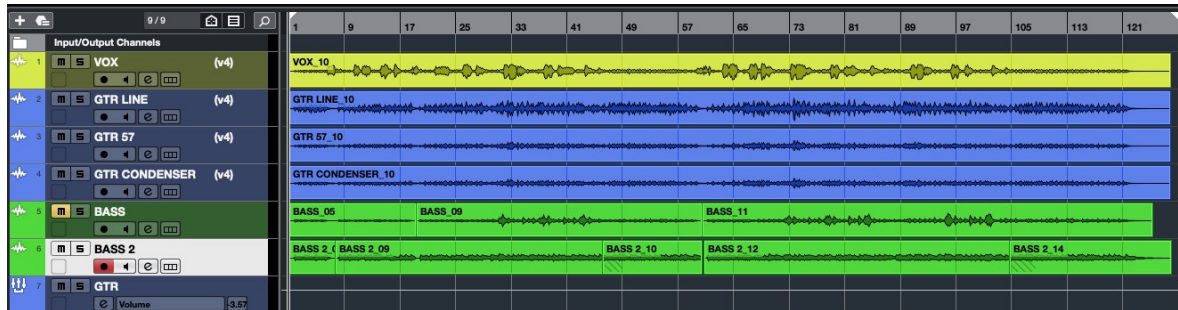


Illustration 7: 'Skies' overview of the tracks in the DAW.

The song is very minimalistic and features only six tracks. The original bass track which I played is muted. The bass track is recorded section wise as earlier songs on the album. We can also distinguish that we recorded the song four times before everyone were happy with the take. When recording simultaneously a vocal performance and a guitar performance it is not uncommon that one has to do many recording takes until you have a take that you are satisfied with. So, I am quite happy that we got it in four takes.



Illustration 8: 'Skies' mixer overview.

In this minimalistic arrangement I equalized differently the condenser microphone. I wanted to add more body to the sound, so I enhanced the low end and the mid frequencies.

The bass track has a minimal adjustment just as prior songs on the album.

On the vocal track we can see a drastic cut in the low end³⁴ but that was necessary to avoid interference between vocals and the other instruments.

Stylistically here we have a greater influence from 'The Tallest Man On Earth' in this song. As I mentioned earlier, this song has more of an atmospheric character than songs such as 'Hold On'. Also worth mentioning is that this song is a couple of years old, and it has matured in the mind of 'No Fortunate Son' over time. The vocal performance is very convincing, and it conveys deep feelings.

4.5 Hard Enough

In our original plan or manuscript for the album we featured an idea for a song about failed love or a relationship thrown upon the rocks. This song fills that role on the album since it tells the story about a breakup.

I insisted upon a change of the key of the song when we would record it. Since the topic of the song was very sensitive, I wanted to portray that with falsetto singing on the chorus. In this way 'No Fortunate Son' shows a vulnerable side of himself, and it benefits the song.

The lyrics were written by 'No Fortunate Son'.

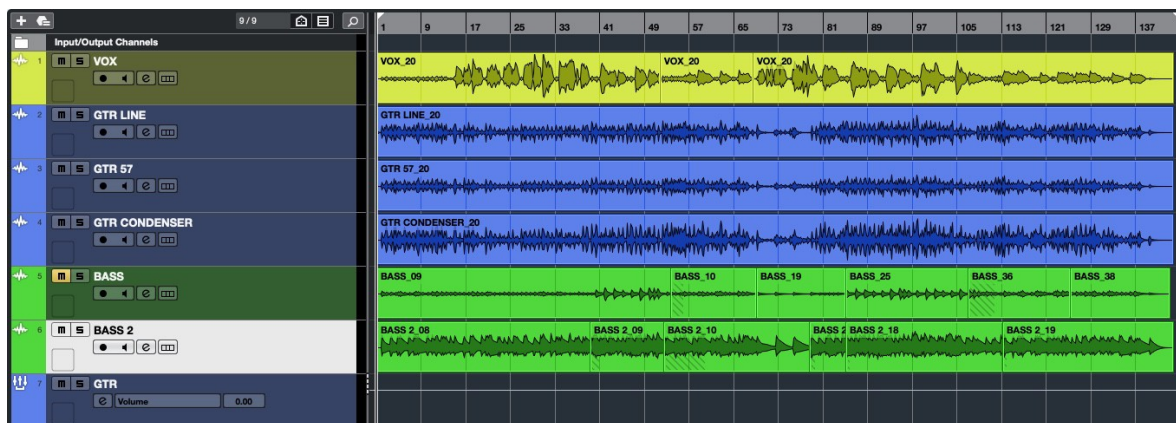


Illustration 9: Overview of 'Hard Enough'.

The project features six tracks whereas earlier I have muted the original bass track. The original bass track was low in volume because it mainly revolved around the lighter strings on the instrument without a compressor on the input signal. As earlier mentioned, the bass has been recorded in segments.

I had to gain the preamps harder on this song because everything was sung and played very softly. This resulted in beautifully detailed vocals that really enhances the “nerve³⁵” of the song. I learned however that gaining a preamp too hard that the guitar goes through will make the sound more narrow, so I backed the gain quite a bit on the preamp which the guitar went through.

³⁴ The term refers to the bass frequencies in the equalizer.

³⁵ Term in music used for describing urgency, intensity and sincerity.



Illustration 10: Mixer overview for 'Hard Enough'.

The equalizer on the condenser microphone for 'Hard Enough' is quite similar to the equalizer curve on 'Skies'. The reasoning here is similar to the philosophy behind the adjustments on the equalizer on the condenser microphone channel in 'Skies', - to add more body³⁶ to the sound of the guitar and enhance mid frequencies and low end. The two other guitar tracks also have a different equalizer curve where I have increased the

36 Term in music used for describing the whole sound of a sound source.

mid and treble frequencies. The idea was to help the guitar sound bigger when we had the capo³⁷ so high up on the neck.

The adjustments on the bass track is minimal as on earlier songs. Here also we can see that I have utilized the UAD Empirical Labs Distressor plugin to even out the extremes in dynamics.

On the vocal track we can see quite a drastic equalizer adjustment. This was to enhance the “brittle” sound of the vocals.

Initially we were thinking on recording this like a standard 'No Fortunate Son' song. However as earlier stated I wanted to enhance the topic of the song with the falsetto³⁸ singing. I trusted my initial response when the artist in question played the song back to me from my studio sofa and we made some changes in the arrangement. Rick Rubin is very adamant in the book 'The Creative Act' that one should follow one's instincts when producing music and the art comes first (Rubin, 2023, p.139).

4.6 Bare Bones

'Bare Bones' is the only song on the album that was put together by SPLICE loops. I structured the song with “dummy” acoustic guitar parts, guitar slides and “dummy” drums. This was the first song we co-wrote from scratch on the album.

When we had the structure of the song ready, we started to replace the “dummy” parts. First, we changed the drums to MIDI drums that represented what style of rhythmic patterns we desired for the song. Then we replaced the acoustic guitar with the artist playing every part himself. We also added an electric guitar to the arrangement to add more “grit” to the overall sound. The only things that were not replaced was the slide guitars and the piano in the last chorus.

We co-wrote also the lyrics for the song. The theme was honesty and dropping all pretences. The whole idea behind the album is to present a more genuine side of 'No Fortunate Son' so we tried to materialize that in the lyrics of the title track on the album.

The electric guitar was recorded through the artist's pedalboard into my Suhr Reactive Load IR and then through the WA-TB12 into my SSL audio interface. The Suhr Reactive Load IR simulates a readily miked guitar cabinet and the Bogner La Grange pedal on the artist's pedalboard emulates an old Marshall “Plexi” amplifier. To beef up the sound of the guitar I processed it in UAD Sound City Studios plugin. The UAD Sound City Studios plugin emulates the sound of the recording room and all of the recording equipment in the legendary Sound City Studios.

Something worth mentioning about the electric guitar being processed in the UAD Sound City plugin is that we are changing the sound quite radically. The plugin lets me alter and modify how the signal was recorded. Of course, it does not change how I have recorded the guitar physically, it is still recorded through a load box with impulse responses³⁹. However, the UAD Sound City plugin allows me in its emulation to alter the sound like it

37 Physical device used on guitar for altering tunings by pressing down all strings simultaneously.

38 Style of singing where only the thin edges of the vocal chords vibrate. Creating a higher pitch.

39 A load box is a device that acts like a dummy load for a guitar amplifier. Some load boxes come with impulse responses which are emulations of “miked” up guitar cabinet speakers.

would have been recorded in a room with actual microphones. This process changes the overtones and enhances the bass frequencies. There is a process I learned from Jeremy Borum's book 'Guerilla Film Scoring' where a film composer uses a string library⁴⁰ as foundation with a string quartet playing on top of it to add different overtones to the overall sound. Resulting in a more realistic sound on the strings⁴¹ (Borum, 2015, p.132). The method from 'Guerilla Film Scoring' is quite similar to how I have used the UAD Sound City Plugin.

I saw a picture on Instagram of someone recording vocals with two microphones, so I got curious and wanted to test this right away. I placed two condenser microphones in front of the artist when we recorded the vocals for the song. However, the results were not satisfactory, and I instead used only the track with the Neumann microphone. We re-recorded the vocals for the song later because the key of the song is E minor and it is apparently at the limit of the artist's vocal range. So, we recorded a new take when it had matured in the mind of the artist, and it resulted in a superior vocal performance to the earlier version.

When we had re-recorded all elements of the song and we revisited it later and listened we both agreed that the song would benefit greatly from having genuine drums instead of MIDI drums. The drums were recorded by Michael Mikander in his studio with Toni Nordlund on the drums and the result was satisfactory.

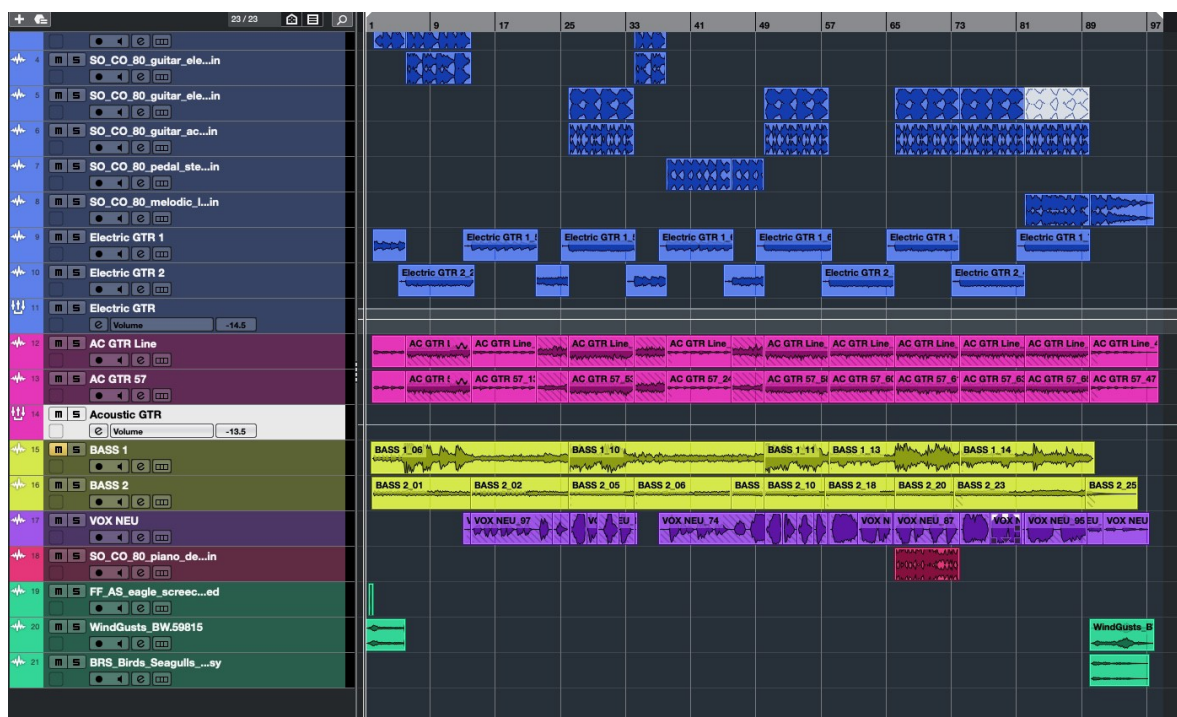


Illustration 11: Overview of the song 'Bare Bones'.

This is one of the more ambitious tracks on the album. The song needed a lot of certain elements to convey the story we wanted to tell. With the re-recording of the drums and bass we tuned down the “rock feel” of the song and brought it closer to the alternative folk music that 'No Fortunate Son' identifies with.

40 Plugin instruments.

41 Stringed instruments in an orchestra.



Illustration 12: This is the mixer of 'Bare Bones'.

The original bass track is muted and replaced with the re-recorded bass. Besides the UAD Empirical Labs Distressor plugin I also used the UAD Studer Tape Machine plugin on the bass track to give it a more distorted character.

Something else worth noting is that the equalizer curve on the vocals have a very different curve than previous songs on the album. This is because of the arrangement of the song and I found that cutting a little bit of the treble side and the low end of the spectrum made the vocals sit better in the mix of the song.

This is also the only song where we have only two microphones on the acoustic guitar. The condenser microphone would not have fit into this arrangement because of the multitude of other sources with a lot of low end.

Since this was a song featuring many more instruments than the other songs I utilized the Ozone 10 plugin for some mix assistance. I bypassed it though when we recorded so I mainly used it for listening analysis.

Something worth noting about 'Bare Bones' is that we implemented some methods from Findeisen's book 'The Addiction Formula'. We increased "intensity" and raised the energy on the second verse compared to the first verse (Findeisen, 2015, p.8). Practically speaking, there were more elements and the energy behind the vocal performance was greater than the first verse.

4.7 Two Empty Hands

The level of sarcasm and dark humour in this song is quite apparent when you hear it. We really wanted to bring out the typical pessimistic humour from Ostrobothnia with all elements in this song. In many ways it is like a second part to 'Colder' but the story is different.

Like 'Colder' we have a similar arrangement, vocals, guitar, bass and our makeshift drumkit made up of a Pringles can, the newspaper and handclaps. We chose to only use those two elements from the “drumkit” on this song.

We had moved around microphones since we had different microphone positions on 'Bare Bones' so I had a lot of out of phase issues with the microphones but after repositioning and phase-inverting I got everything back into phase.

The lyrics are written by 'No Fortunate Son' but I modified some phrases to optimize flow and sarcasm. We also felt to enhance the sarcasm with premiering the kazoo in a 'No Fortunate Son' song. The kazoo is truly an instrument that divides opinions, some people love it and some people absolutely hate it. We feel that it brings a Monty Python-esque quality to the song, like having an extra character or guest artist on the song.

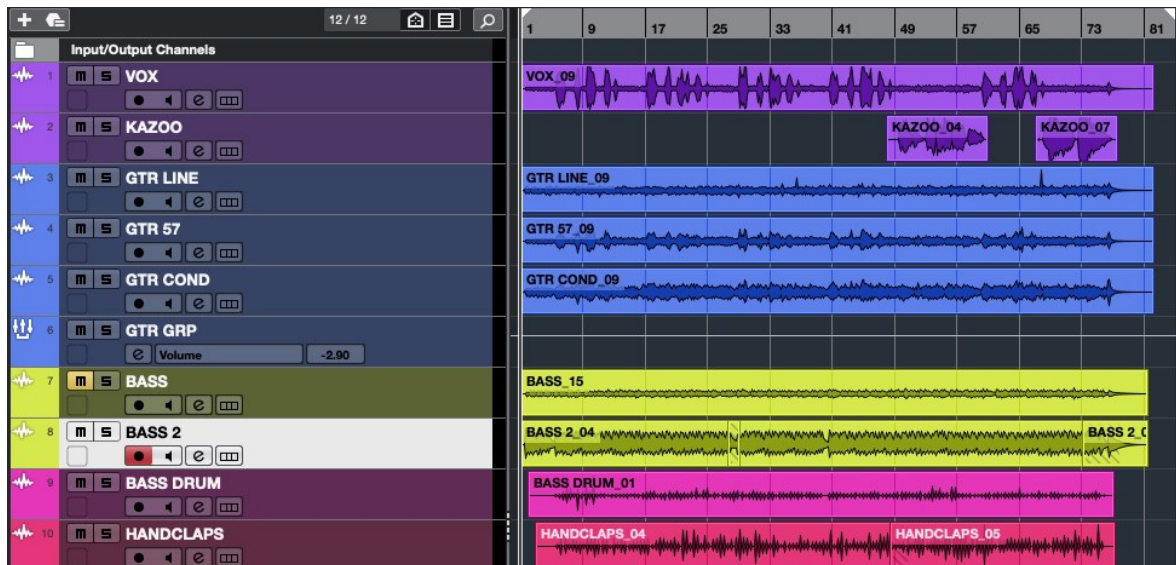


Illustration 13: The overview of 'Two Empty Hands'.

As illustrated here we can see that we had to record the bass and handclaps section wise. This due to being a song without a metronome. The original bass track is muted. The kazoo was recorded with the same microphone and preamp as the vocals.



Illustration 14: Mixer overview of 'Two Empty Hands'.

Some things here are different to prior songs. The order of the plugins on the master bus⁴² is different from prior songs. I swapped around the order of the SSL Fusion Stereo Image plugin and the UAD Studer Tape Machine plugin to see if it affected the sound. However, I could not detect any noticeable difference on the overall sound.

The kazoo channel has the same plugins as the vocal channel, but the two last ones are swapped. This is purely accidental and not done on purpose. The difference on the equalizer between the vocals and kazoo is also very apparent. Both channels have been cut in the low end, but the kazoo has been boosted in the mids and the vocals have a boost on the treble side.

On bass we see the usual adjustment to the low mid section. The bass had a pronounced “honkiness⁴³” right there which was just too obscene for the overall sound.

Just like the song 'Colder' this song echoes the influence by Cornelis Vreeswijk in the sarcastic characteristics in the song. The addition of the Kazoo feels like something

42 Master bus is another word for output channel.

43 Term used in audio production for excessive mid frequencies. Can be perceived as a nasal sound.

Vreeswijk could also have featured in his creations. The way 'No Fortunate Son' plays the guitar on this song also feels similar to the playing style of Vreeswijk.

4.8 Before It's Too Late

We had in mind in the original manuscript for the record that we wanted a certain type of song dealing with a most private matter. I will not divulge into what we wanted the song to deal with, but one can make their own assumptions if you listen to the song or read the lyrics.

We co-wrote the song and the lyrics. We wanted it to feel very intimate and small in the beginning and then let the song grow all the time until the big crescendo⁴⁴ in the end.

I had the vocal preamp gained much harder than other songs because the artist sings much softer here than other songs. Still, it sounds very open and “airy” while bringing out the details in his voice.

For the last chorus I made a whole string arrangement with horns and a brass section⁴⁵. I used different string libraries to enhance the overtones⁴⁶ and thus trying to make it sound as genuine as possible. I panned every instrument to where they sit normally in an orchestra from the conductor’s point of view. I linked all orchestral instruments to a group track where I then used the UAD 69 Helios Preamp and EQ plugin to emulate an orchestra recorded through a vintage⁴⁷ console.

The cherry on top was when I processed the whole group track in the UAD Sound City Studios plugin. It both felt and sounded like an orchestra from an old western movie and that suits the 'No Fortunate Son' brand very well! I was very careful with how prominent the orchestra would be in the mix. I did not want it to turn out as a musical and potentially parodying the artist. It had to feel very serious and genuine. Especially for a topic as urgent as the story behind the lyrics.



Illustration 15: 'Before It's Too Late' overview of tracks.

This is the other song on the album recorded with click because of the arrangement. Everything has been recorded section by section. This is also the other song where we

44 Gradual increasing intensity towards the climax.

45 Metallic wind instruments in an orchestra.

46 Resonant frequency above the fundamental frequency of a sound.

47 Vintage in music refers to old equipment. Usually high-quality equipment with nostalgic qualities.

recorded genuine drums and that helped to tie together the song to other 'No Fortunate Son' songs.

The orchestra is hidden in the "Orchestra Folder" because of the amount of instruments. It was a lot easier to navigate the song when they were inside that block instead of having them cluttering the project overview.

When recording the MIDI string orchestra, I used the click as guideline, but I intentionally played a bit before the click so when the swell of the strings rose to its apex, the climax was on the beat.



Illustration 16: First half of the mixer of 'Before It's Too Late'.

This is the first half of the mixer of the song. I utilized the SSL Native Drumstrip plugin here along with the UAD Empirical Labs Distressor plugin on the demo drums to make them sound adequate for the song production. Another SSL plugin that debuted on this production is the SSL Guitarstrip plugin which I used as a second guarantee against phase issues when grouping guitar tracks. The plugin in question has an advanced phase correction built which was very helpful.

Like on the song 'Bare Bones' we re-recorded the drums at Michael Mikander's studio with Toni Nordlund on the drums. When we replaced the midi-drums with genuine drums the organic side of the song was enhanced, and the human element gave more life to the rhythm section.

Note the same correction on the bass track as earlier songs.

Even if the song is quite massive with the orchestra, I could fit in the condenser microphone on the acoustic guitar. I did not have to cut any low end and I could instead increase certain areas in the mid section on the equalizer.

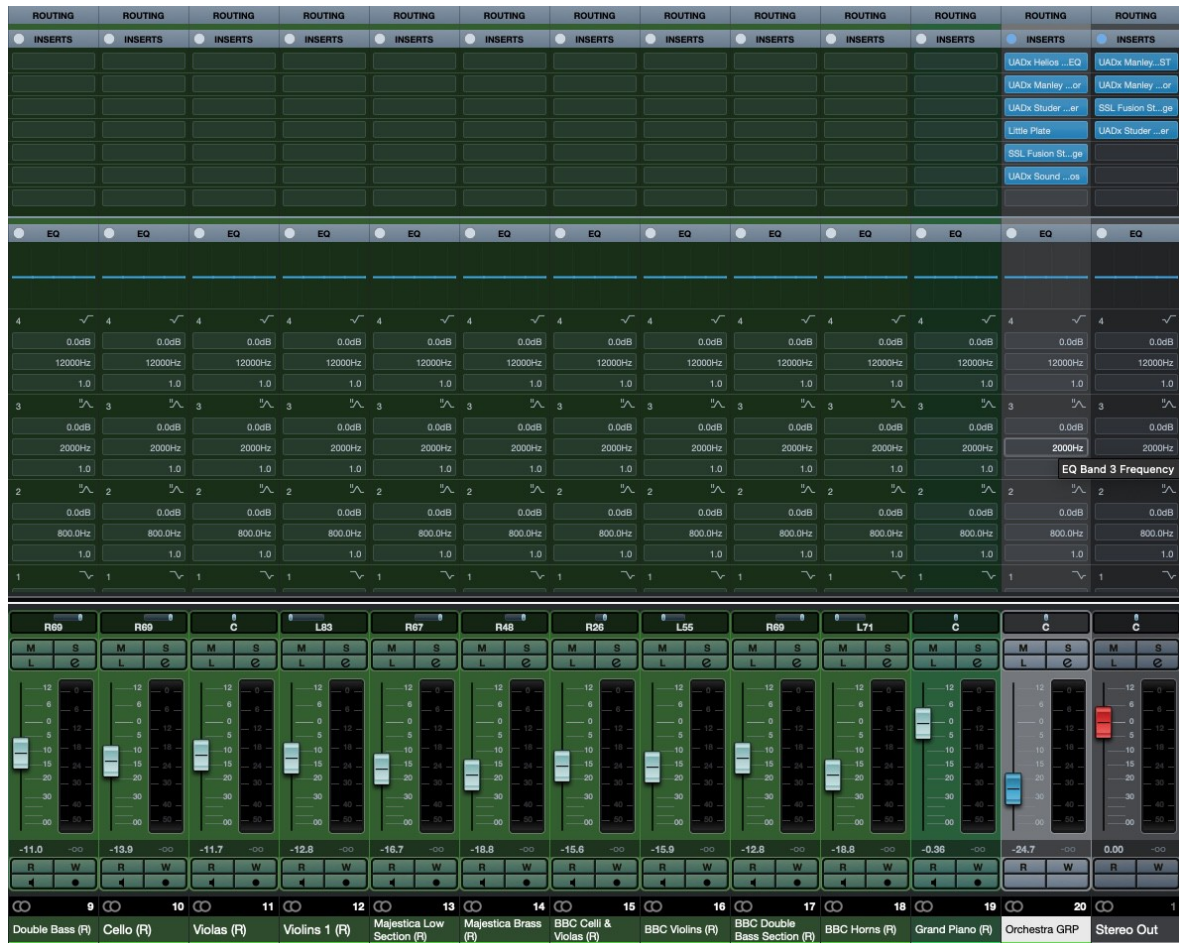


Illustration 17: The second half of the mixer from 'Before It's Too Late'.

This is the mixer overview of the orchestral side and the master bus from 'Before It's Too Late'. We can see here how I have panned all the different sections of the orchestra. We can also see that the "Orchestra GRP" has the UAD Helios 69 Preamp and EQ plugin, the UAD Manley Variable Mu Compressor plugin, the UAD Studer Tape Recorder plugin, the Little Plate plugin, the SSL Fusion Stereo Image plugin and finally the UAD Sound City Studios plugin on the group channel.

I did a similar process on the strings as I did on the electric guitar in the song 'Bare Bones'. I grouped the strings together and manipulated the sound characteristics of the strings combined. I also utilized the exact process from 'Guerilla Film Scoring' when you use different string libraries to enhance the overtones of the string orchestra (Borum, 2015, p.132). The only difference here is that I did not utilize live players performing the strings. I merely altered the overtones and the overall sound through the UAD Sound City Plugin.

We can also see that it is mixed very low into the mix compared to other tracks. My vision was that the orchestra should be felt rather than heard in the last chorus. Giving weight to the other instruments in the last chorus.

Like the song 'Bare Bones' we utilized the “energy curve” philosophy from Findeisen's 'The Addiction Formula. The second verse and chorus are notably more “energetic” than the first verse and chorus (Findeisen, 2015, p.8). However, we increase the energy even more in the end with the addition of a string orchestra into the arrangement.

4.9 Johnny Fiveshooter

Now here we have an accidental song title. We named the song 'Johnny Fiveshooter' because the artist broke his high e-string on the guitar. This impacted also the sound of the guitar on the recording when there is no high e-string on the chords. It was a happy accident, and the sound served the song, which was a bit more aggressive than the rest of the tracks on the album.

The lyrics on this song are written by 'No Fortunate Son'.

We had moved around the microphones when we recorded 'Before It's Too Late' so I had to deal with some certain phase issues with the microphones, but I got it solved again with the phase inverters on the preamps (Brakes, 2018, p.80).

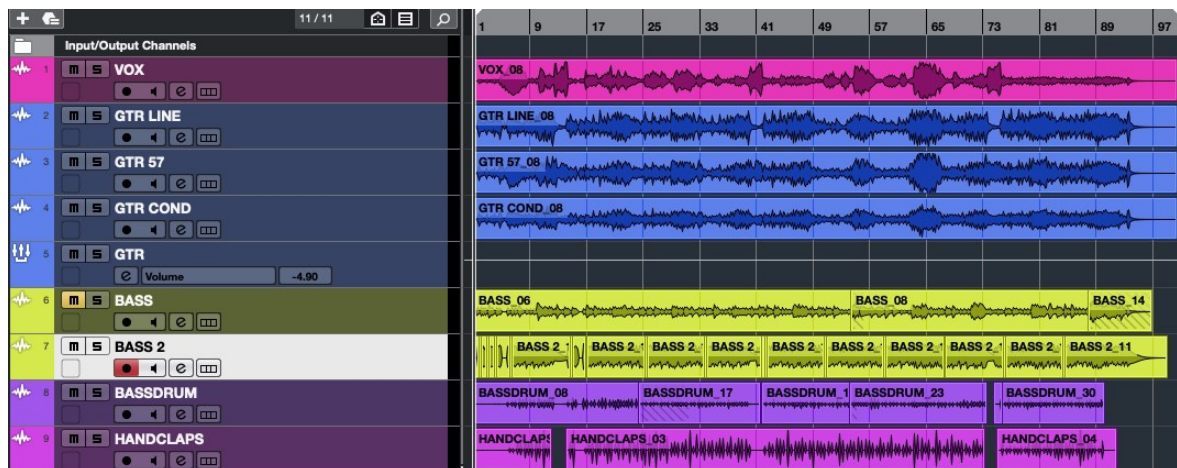


Illustration 18: The overview of 'Johnny Fiveshooter'.

We utilized here also the makeshift drumkit with the Pringles can and handclaps. The vocals and the guitar have been recorded simultaneously without click so the rest of the instruments have been recorded section by section and some of the bass drum hits have been moved around to sit better together with the rest of the instruments.

The original bass track is muted and the track “BASS 2” is the re-recorded bass track.

We can see on the waveforms that the song is set in a certain dynamic throughout the song. We did small variations in the dynamics on some of the parts of the song, but it felt like the song needed to go on like a steam train. One can use the methods from Findeisen's 'The Addiction Formula' and analyse how the energy curve increases throughout the song (Findeisen, 2015, p.8). It is minimalistic changes, but the biggest changes lie in the intensity of the singing and how the artist is playing his guitar.

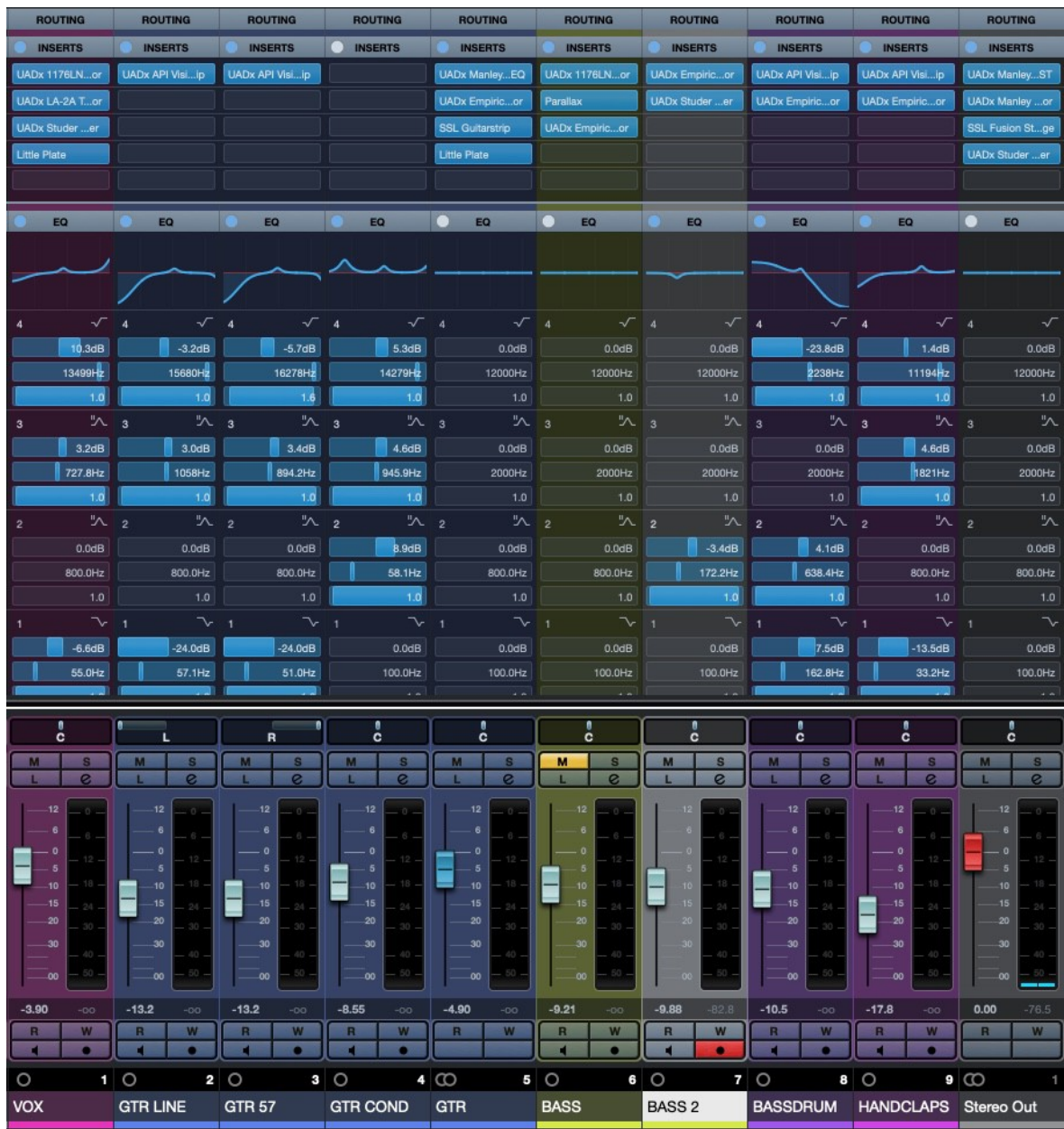


Illustration 19: The mixer overview of 'Johnny Fiveshooter'.

Since the song only features vocals, acoustic guitar, bass and the “drumkit” I did not cut so much low end from the vocal track. It felt to me that the vocals needed the extra body in the arrangement. I had the same philosophy with the condenser microphone on the guitar, I have boosted instead of cutting anything in the equalizer.

The “GTR LINE” and the “GTR 57” channels have been cut in the low end because the dynamic microphones can't capture that register but also to avoid accidental clutter since the “GTR COND” channel contains the low end of the acoustic guitar.

For the “GTR” group track I also used the SSL Guitarstrip for making sure that everything was in phase.

The bass track has the same adjustment as the other songs on the record.

Stylistically this song feels most like a traditional country song. One can argue that there is influences from Chris Stapleton and Johnny Cash on this track.

4.10 Madeleine

We did proper preparations for recording this song. We wrote the lyrics and the song completely the day before the session and I sent the artist home to practise the song so we would be able to focus on the performance fully.

The lyrics tell a story about unfortunate circumstances that hinder a relationship to carry any further and “Madeleine” is the embodiment of all these relationships that have gone awry.

We had restrung the high e-string on the LOEF guitar for this song. It would be the last acoustic song that we recorded for the album.

I had no phase issues with this song because we could use the same setup with microphones from 'Johnny Fiveshooter' that we had recorded two days prior to the session with 'Madeleine'.

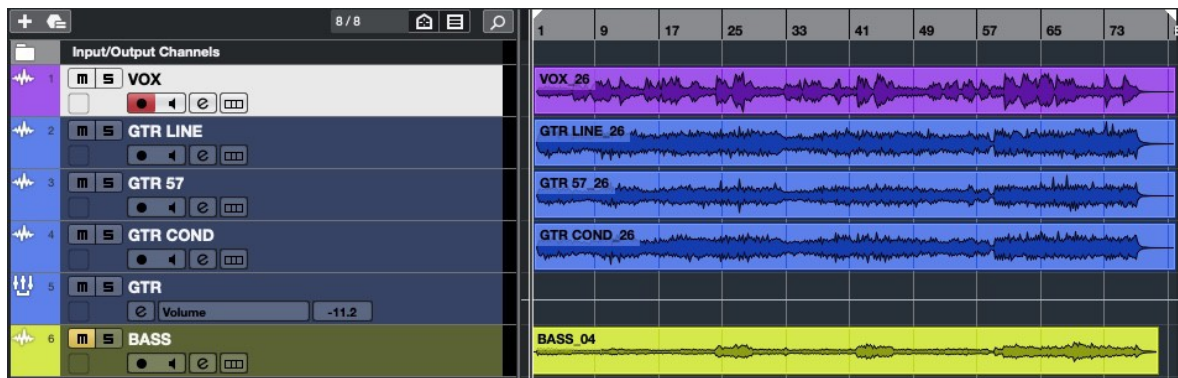


Illustration 20: Track overview of 'Madeleine'.

As we can see here the original bass track is muted. However, we felt that the bass did not bring anything to the arrangement. The song felt like it worked best with just vocals and the acoustic guitar.

I had to gain the vocal preamp more carefully on this song because I wanted a nice open sound on the vocals. Contrastively I had the preamp more gained on 'Johnny Fiveshooter' to create a more “vintage” sounding vocal track.

The chords of 'Madeleine' were more challenging to play than other songs on the album, so we had to do many takes before we got everything right. The reason why there are no “v1” or “v2” on the tracks is because the version we got recorded is the only one we got right and the only one we were satisfied with.

'Madeleine' is also an up-tempo song. We both agreed that we needed a faster song onto the record so we could keep the set of songs interesting. Even if the song is about failed relationships the song does not feel melancholic, it feels rather bittersweet and hopeful even.

Like the song 'Hold On' we have stylistic similarities with Frank Turner's music on this song. “Madeleine” is a fictitious character which we have used to embody the story of this song. Frank Turner has also written song about a fictive woman, the song Josephine (Turner, 2019, p.250). With 'Josephine' in mind we were inspired to write 'Madeleine'.



Illustration 21: Overview of the mixer from the song 'Madeleine'.

Because of the minimalistic arrangement I enhanced the low end on the acoustic guitar condenser microphone to get more “body” to the sound. The SSL Guitarstrip plugin is also featured here as an insurance against phase issues.

This was also a song where I did minimal adjustments in the low end section on the vocal track.

An observation worth making is that I have through the whole album had the vocals set very high volume wise. This is because I prefer to have very prominent vocals so one can hear them properly and follow the story in the lyrics.

4.11 Where Roads Meet

This will be our intro track for the whole album. The name 'Where Roads Meet' is a variation on “Crossroads” to avoid sounding like every blues or americana artist in the industry⁴⁸.

The whole idea of the song was to let 'No Fortunate Son' jam on the electric guitar and say certain phrases here and there. I wanted as much of it as possible to be improvised.

A happy accident was that the artist played so hard on the electric guitar that it almost sounds like there is an acoustic guitar in the mix. This happened because I had the vocal preamp gained very hard and the strings from the electric guitar bled⁴⁹ into the vocal microphone.

I processed the guitar track through the UAD Sound City Studios plugin to add more “body” to the sound. It gave a more round⁵⁰ character to the electric guitar and made it sound more organic at the same time. The process on the electric guitar is identical to what I did on the track 'Bare Bones'.

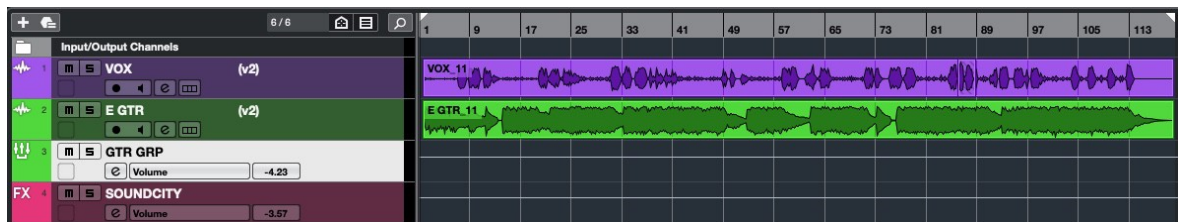


Illustration 22: Overview of 'Where Roads Meet'.

This is the most minimal track on the album with only two tracks. The electric guitar track is very even and dense because the distortion is derived from guitar pedals. There is one edit on the vocal track from the prior version “v1” that we liked better than the “v2”.

⁴⁸ Music industry.

⁴⁹ Term in music production used for sound sources intruding where not intended while recording.

⁵⁰ Description for bass dominant character.

The image displays a mixer overview with five channels, each with a unique color theme: purple, green, grey, red, and dark grey. The top section is divided into 'ROUTING' and 'EQ' sections for each channel.

Channel	Routing	EQ 4	EQ 3	EQ 2	EQ 1
1 (Purple)	UADx 1176LN...or	1.8dB @ 15389Hz	5.0dB @ 675.3Hz	-2.7dB @ 200.0Hz	0.0dB @ 100.0Hz
2 (Green)	UADx LA-2A T...or	0.0dB @ 12000Hz	5.0dB @ 814.3Hz	0.0dB @ 800.0Hz	0.0dB @ 100.0Hz
3 (Grey)	SSL Native Ch... 2	0.0dB @ 12000Hz	0.0dB @ 2000Hz	-2.7dB @ 189.1Hz	0.0dB @ 100.0Hz
4 (Red)	UADx Sound ...os	-7.5dB @ 2698Hz	-2.5dB @ 799.2Hz	-13.3dB @ 172.2Hz	0.7dB @ 47.3Hz
5 (Dark Grey)	UADx Manley...ST	0.0dB @ 12000Hz	0.0dB @ 2000Hz	0.0dB @ 800.0Hz	0.0dB @ 100.0Hz

The bottom section shows fader levels and channel names:

Channel	Fader Level	Channel Name
1	-3.57	VOX
2	-5.56	E GTR
3	-4.23	GTR GRP
4	-3.57	SOUNDCITY
5	0.00	Stereo Out

Illustration 23: The mixer overview of 'Where Roads Meet'.

From the mixer overview we can see that I have bypassed the Little Plate plugin on the “GTR GRP” because the UAD Sound City Studios plugin has its own reverb built in the plugin.

On the vocals I used a lot more reverb from the Little Plate plugin because I wanted a more ambient sound to the song.

Very little low end has been removed from the song because it features very few tracks.

5 Click versus no click, summary

My main research question was that how the use of the metronome or “click” would impact the music we recorded. My findings in this project were that the songs that were recorded with click would feel more “pushed” with the artist singing before the beat instead of singing laid back.

There can be many reasons why I got these results. It might be that the artist is not used to play music or record to a metronome. A newly written song that has not been rehearsed that much can also be the cause of the vocals rushing.

The songs 'Bare Bones' and 'Before It's Too Late' were recorded with metronome. The song 'Emigrantens Visa' has a demo version that was recorded with click but that is a version I did not record.

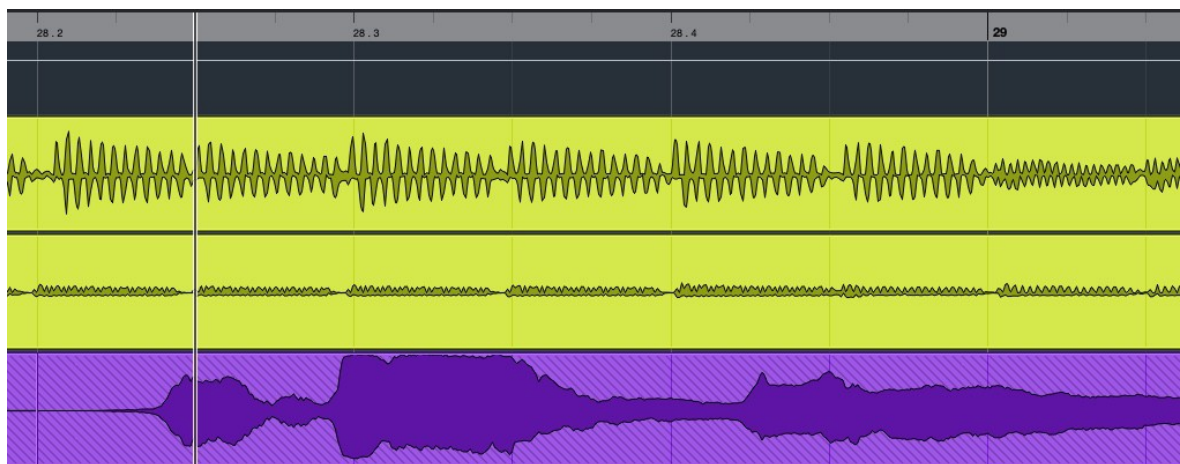


Illustration 24: Pushed timing on the vocal track of 'Bare Bones'. The vocal track is purple. The marker is placed on the first word.

As we can see from this screenshot the vocals are being sung before the beat. That is not automatically something undesirable for music broadly speaking but in the case of this certain song makes the vocals feel a bit “pushed”.

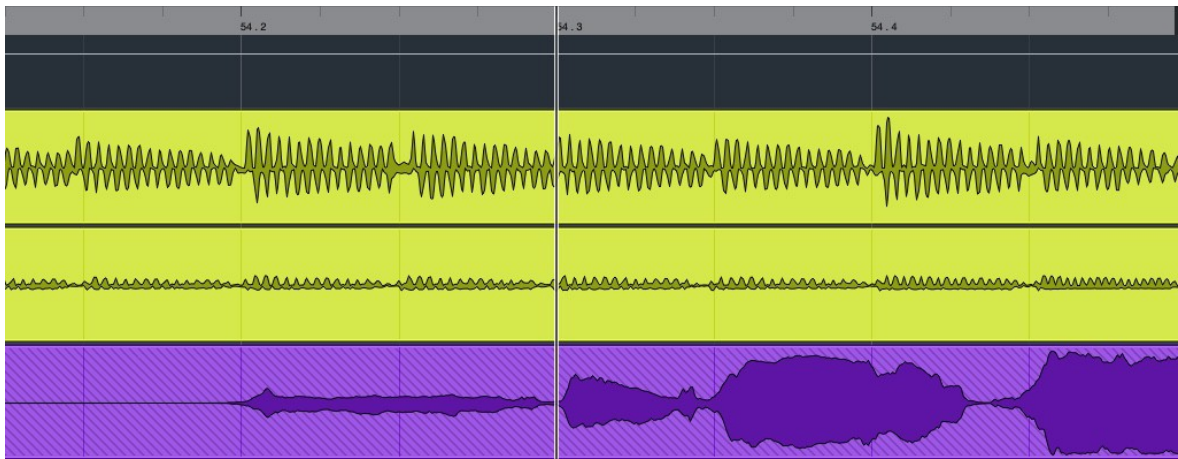


Illustration 25: Laid back timing on the vocal track of 'Bare Bones'. The vocal track is purple.

Here we can see on the picture that the vocals are more “laid back” and sit nicely behind the beat. This sounds and feels more “relaxed” than when the vocals are “pushing”.

The reason why this section turned out like this might be that the vocals on that section felt less complex to the artist than the other parts.

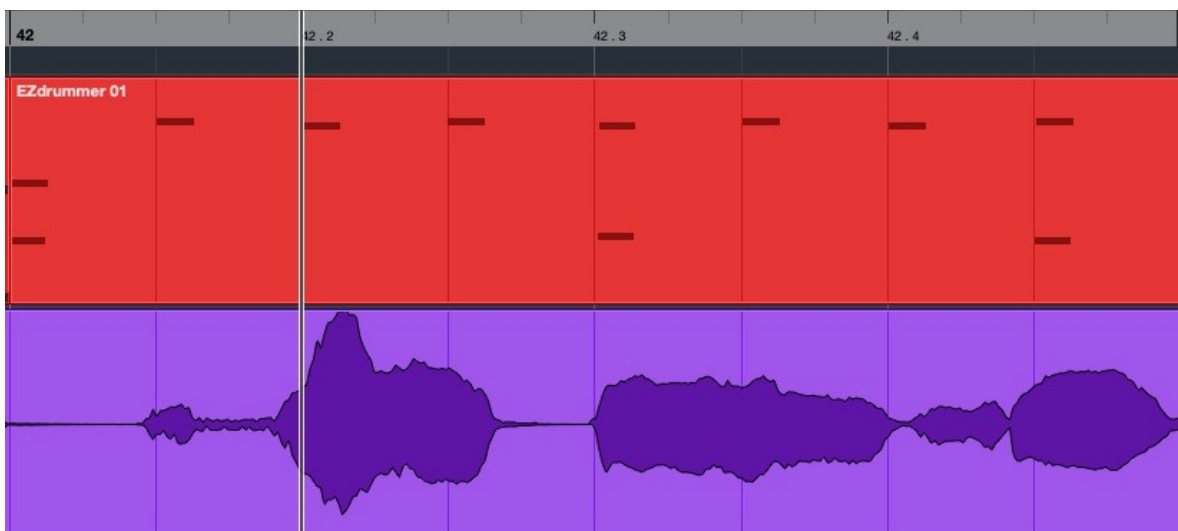


Illustration 26: Pushed vocal timing on the song 'Before It's Too Late'. The vocal track is purple. The marker is placed on the beat of the track.

This picture is from 'Before It's Too Late'. The timing is not as rushed as on the song 'Bare Bones' but it is a bit “pushed” compared to the laid back track from 'Bare Bones'. Overall, the vocals on this song feel more “calm” and sit better in the song. I had to edit and nudge the vocals on the last chorus on 'Before It's Too Late' so it would serve the song better. The edit was though minimal because I did not want to alter too much the original performance. The album's name is 'Bare Bones' after all and it is supposed to be more akin to a diamond in the rough than a modern pop production.

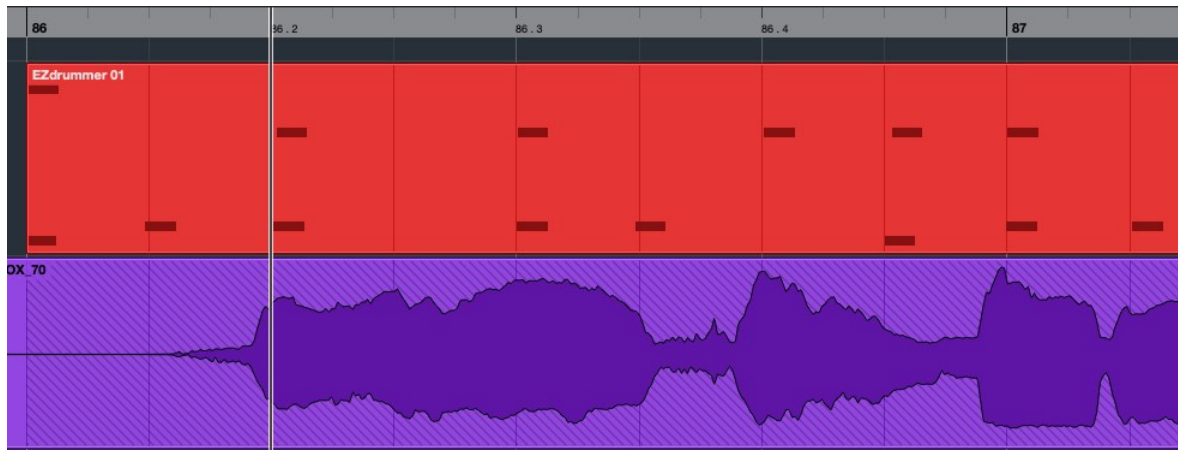


Illustration 27: Minimally pushed timing on the song 'Before It's Too Late'. The vocal track is colored in purple. The marker is positioned on the beat of the song.

The picture shows us a minimal “pushing” on the vocals.

The reason why the vocals on 'Before It's Too Late' are less “pushed” than the vocals on 'Bare Bones' might be that we recorded 'Bare Bones' before 'Before It's Too Late'. The artist might have been more accustomed to the click now than the first song.

Another reason can also be that the key of 'Before It's Too Late' was much more suitable for the artist. So, the vocal range was never pressed as much as on 'Bare Bones'. The vocal performance is also much more mellow than what we have on 'Bare Bones'.

There seems to be a stressful effect on the artist by the metronome. However, it can't be ruled out that if the artist would be more acquainted with a metronome's presence the results would be different. The other songs that were not recorded with a metronome or “click” had a natural beat to them that suited the songs nicely. They had a “live” vibe⁵¹ to them, which was the goal of this production.

My second research question was that how the material would mature in the artists head over a few days. The song 'Madeleine' was written the day prior to the recording session and if felt much more secure technically speaking so we could focus on the artistry.

We re-recorded the vocals of 'Bare Bones' and 'Before It's Too Late' because we felt that we could improve the vocal performance. I have older versions of the songs in storage, so comparison is possible.

The song 'Emigrantens Visa' had a version that had been recorded prior to this album production. That song had been recorded with click and that version comes across to be a bit “stale” in my opinion. We re-recorded that song without listening to the older version to see how it would come about. The version of the song we have feels more organic and natural. This method is inspired from Rick Rubin's book 'The Creative Act'.

I am also very satisfied that we could complete the recording and production phase as fast as we did. The first song was recorded in May and the last one in the end of June. I was inspired by the efficacy artists used to have back in the day when they went into the studio. Studio time was very expensive, so they tried to complete everything as fast as possible. A good result of working diligently and efficiently in the studio is that you tend to focus only on the most important features of the song. In other words, you avoid overanalysing the material and keep things simple.

⁵¹ Atmosphere.

I am also very happy with how the songs turned out. We got a full-length album written and produced with strong compositions. The reception from people that have heard the material before the release has been mostly positive. Songs such as 'Colder', 'Two Empty Hands' portrays a beautiful sarcastic side of 'No Fortunate Son' and then songs like 'Before It's Too Late', 'Skies' and 'Hard Enough' show the deeper themes in the artist's music. The overarching theme was to keep everything just like the title of the album: "Bare Bones". The raw honest sound was our goal from the start with heartfelt lyrics to describe inner conflict and resolution.

I have included in my submission of my thesis a folder with early versions of the following songs: 'Bare Bones', 'Before It's Too Late' and 'Emigrantens Visa'. The early version of 'Bare Bones' is the third version from our production session. It is also the first version to feature vocals recorded. The earlier versions of 'Bare Bones' were instrumental. I included the second version of 'Before It's Too Late' and like 'Bare Bones' the second version of 'Before It's Too Late' is the first version to feature vocals. The version of 'Emigrantens Visa' included in the submission folder is the click version. This version is also produced and recorded by an other producer. This version was the first recording of 'Emigrantens Visa' and it demonstrates how differently the song manifests itself with and without click.

6 Improvements for future recordings, summary

What I would like to do differently for a future production with 'No Fortunate Son' is that I would like to record all elements simultaneously. I accomplished that already with the song 'Madeleine' that was just compiled with vocals and acoustic guitar.

All other songs had bass recorded separately after the vocals and guitar were finished recording. It was simply not possible for me to play bass at the same time I was monitoring audio levels and the quality of the take. So, for future productions I would like to be able to record at least vocals, acoustic guitar and bass at the same time. The ideal would be to record also drums at the same time, but I will need a bigger studio for that.

Something also worth pointing out is that I will definitely allocate more time for the recording process for the next production with 'No Fortunate Son'. If the artist can rehearse the songs after they have been written, we can focus more on the artistry of the performance. There is a charm in recording something that has been written a moment ago but many artists such as Frank Turner rehearse the music for a long time before they record the song onto an album.

I will definitely use a metronome on future productions with 'No Fortunate Son' but that would probably only be used for songs that need recording done separately. I will also need to expand my outboard gear collection with physical compressors and more preamps to be able to record more audio sources simultaneously. The ideal would be to have a hybrid studio with both plugins and genuine preamps on the most important audio sources.

7 Discography

Cornelis Vreeswijk – Somliga Går Med Trasiga Skor – Tio Vackra Visor och Personliga Person (1968)

Frank Turner – Eulogy – England Keep My Bones (2011)

Frank Turner – Peggy Sang The Blues – England Keep My Bones (2011)

Frank Turner – I Still Believe – England Keep My Bones (2011)

Frank Turner – Rivers – England Keep My Bones (2011)

Frank Turner – I Am Disappeared – England Keep My Bones (2011)

Frank Turner – English Curse – England Keep My Bones (2011)

Frank Turner – One Foot Before The Other – England Keep My Bones (2011)

Frank Turner – If I Ever Stray – England Keep My Bones (2011)

Frank Turner – Wessex Boy – England Keep My Bones (2011)

Frank Turner – Nights Become Days – England Keep My Bones (2011)

Frank Turner – Redemption – England Keep My Bones (2011)

Frank Turner – Glory Hallelujah – England Keep My Bones (2011)

Tallest Man On Earth – The Gardener – Shallow Grave (2008)

Tallest Man On Earth – Looking For Love – Henry St. (2023)

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Produce Like A Pro (2024) Record Like Fleetwood Mac With Ken Caillat and Marc Daniel Nelson. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/LTI8vQnI8w4?si=f4iIR1XKxusfwNi2>

Sheen Beats (2024) Dr. Dre's Analog Vocal Chain \$71 000. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XW9_HpwEPz8

Appendix

BARE BONES STUDIO DIARY

Emigrantens Visa

1.5.2024

Bare Bones' memo 1. First song recorded of the album 'Bare Bones'. We had phase issues with the microphones due to the amount of mics in the room. I inverted the polarity on a few of them and I got rid of the problem. Came to the conclusion that I shouldn't drive the input gain to hard on the PRE-73 because it begins to distort too much.

I went with a 4 microphone solution with this song. One condenser mic on the vocals, a Shure 57 on the guitar neck, a condenser on the body of the guitar and then a line input from the guitar itself. The vocal mic goes through a GAA PRE-73 which is a Neve 1073 copy that suits vocals very well and the condenser mic on the guitar goes through a Warm Audio TB-12 which is a copy of the API 312 circuit. The Shure SM57 goes into my SSL Interface and so does the line input from the guitar. The line input and the SM57 have the UAD API vision strip on them to emulate a preamp.

I opted for close-micing on the vocals since I wanted it to feel very intimate. It also brings a lot of detail and "throat"-sounds that flatter the production.

This version was recorded without click since one earlier version of the song was recorded with click. This version without click feels a lot more organic and relaxed. It also feels more sincere and storytelling than the earlier version with click.

Hold On

3.5.2024

Bare Bones' memo 2. We recorded a song today called 'Hold On'. Before we even started, we restrung Tobias' acoustic guitar with a lighter string gauge to make it sing better and to even out the mids of the instrument. It was a bit too nasal earlier and tricky to equalize. Now the guitar sounds more open and is easier to work with.

After that we had some issues with the hardware, one of the op-amps on the WA-TB-12 quit working. Luckily the other op-amp on the TB12 worked so we could carry on. I will keep a close eye on the unit how it behaves further on (works fine at time of writing).

We also opted to record the song without click. Later this summer we will try to record this one also with click to see how that impacts the recording. I also had a close-mic solution for the vocals on this one because I wanted to bring out the details of his voice.

Colder**9.5.2024**

Bare Bones' memo 3. We recorded the song 'Colder' today. It is an up-tempo song which felt quite humoristic so we added a Pringles can as bass drum, a newspaper as snare and Tobias' bearded chin as shaker. This is the first song where I tried to use the UAD Studer tape machine on the master. It gave the whole sound a nice shine and glued the mix together. The use of the Studer was inspired from Dr. Dre's vocal chain.

Skies**10.5.2024**

Bare Bones' memo 4. Here I also used the UAD Studer tape machine on the master. It did really lift the whole mix to a new level. It is very small things we are talking about, but they make a whole lot of difference in the end. So, we recorded the song 'Skies' today and I applied the Studer already for the beginning and it helped us to do the song quickly and everything sounds clear.

Hard Enough**12.5.2024**

Bare Bones' memo 5. We recorded a song about a break-up today. Instead of going with the standard format when he sings and play hard, we went for a more brittle style of playing and singing. This is the first time he ever sings falsetto on one of his songs and I felt that it shows more his vulnerability and that suits the song.

We had phase issues with the microphones today because they had been moved since the earlier sessions. So, I had to figure out how to get everything back into phase again. Otherwise, a smooth session and we made interesting arrangement decisions for the song.

Bare Bones**26.5.2024**

Bare Bones' memo 6. I spliced together a demo of the song. The artist was out partying, but I dutifully sat on that Saturday in my studio and put this song together. The song features a lot of pedal steel and slide guitars. Things that would take years for me to learn to play properly so thank you Splice for existing.

The song feels a bit too slick at the moment, but we will rough it up next time. I think I will change the drums to a cajon or something more rough to keep it more in the sound of No Fortunate Son. This is the first song to feature No Fortunate Son playing electric guitar.

10.6.2024

Bare Bones's memo 7. I tried to change the drums to cajon but they were too much flamboyant and not simple enough to support the song. I instead used my midi drums from EzDrummer. The song feels now much more raw and not too pop which was a worry of the artist. The good thing with Splice is that it expands your chord progression ideas since they are ideas not of your own. We recorded a rough version with electric guitar, but we had to call it a day.

Bare Bones' memo 8. We recorded our own acoustic guitar on the song today. Two mic solution, SM57 and the line input of the guitar. UAD API vision strip on both of those. I didn't add the condenser because it would not fit in the mix on this song. When we had recorded the acoustic guitar, the whole song was more coherent and felt more as a No Fortunate Son song.

After the acoustic guitar we re-recorded the electric guitar through my pedalboard. This time the artist had tried out a few licks on his own, so we got good takes today. The song is now ready to receive a vocal arrangement, and I will try out a two-mic solution on the vocals. I want to see if I can dub the vocals like that so I can maintain details in his voice. All in all, good progress. I think we will finish the album prior to Midsummer's Eve.

Bare Bones' memo 9. We recorded vocals today for 'Bare Bones' with two microphones. It did not yield expected results. I did not have any phase issues, but it did not sound good how I had it set up. Instead, then I opted for the one mic solution, Neumann and the PRE-73 did the job marvellously. We will re-record the vocals later because this song is very challenging to sing. (I learned afterwards the proper technique for that setup, you gain one microphone hard for intimate verses and one softer for more powerful singing.)

17.6.2024

Bare Bones' memo 18. We re-recorded the vocals today on the song 'Bare Bones'. I added the UAD 'Studer Tape Recorder' plugin on the vocals to enhance presence. The song had matured well, and the artist could deliver a much more heartfelt performance this time. I had to edit the pitch in 'Variaudio' on some phrases because the key of the song is quite high. I also added the UAD 'SoundCity' plugin on the electric guitar and it helped it to sit better in the mix.

Two Empty Hands**11.6.2024**

Bare Bones' memo 10. We recorded the song 'Two Empty Hands' today. Minimalist setup with guitar, vocals, bass, handclaps, bass drum and a kazoo! The kazoo gave a nice sarcastic sound to the song, emphasizing the "Monty Python" factor of the song. The guitar was recorded with three microphones, and I had the Neumann through the PRE 73 on vocals. The addition of the kazoo is funny, some people hate it and some love it. It demands attention and opinions.

Before It's Too Late

11.6.2024

Bare Bones' memo 11. We have now recorded the instrument side of the song 'Before It's Too Late'. We have also written the lyrics today and arranged the song. Three microphone solution on the guitar, vocals through Neumann and PRE-73.

I made a whole string arrangement for the last part of the song, featuring double basses, cello, violas, violins, grand piano and French horns. It was a challenge to mix it in because I did not want to make it sound like a parody or have some musical vibes. I wanted it to feel genuine and something that belongs in the sound world of 'No Fortunate Son'. I mixed it first like an orchestra and panned all instruments into the sections where they sit in an orchestra setup seen from the conductor's perspective. After that I routed the whole bus through a UAD 'Helios 69' console plugin, I wanted it to get some "old school" character. Then I compressed the whole thing through the UAD 'Manley Variable Mu' stereo compressor plugin. The next step was the SSL Stereo Image plugin to widen the sound. The final step was adding reverb and sending everything through the UAD 'SoundCity' plugin that emulates the legendary studio 'Sound City's recording room. The UAD 'Studer Tape Recorder' was added on top to add shine.

When I applied the UAD 'Sound City' plugin upon the orchestra it melded together the whole orchestra. It sounds like an old western movie soundtrack. Feels just like home in the song.

Later same night we recorded the vocals for the song, and it turned out great. I gained the PRE 73 hard so the artist could sing very softly and intimately. It really brought out great detail in his voice and it serves as a great contrast to the songs where he sings much harder. We were done with the recordings at 3 in the morning. It was the only all-nighter on this production.

17.6.2024

Bare Bones' memo 18. Re-recorded the vocals for 'Before It's Too Late'. We changed some of the lyrics to change the perspective to focus fully on the artist's perspective. The vocal performance was much better now and had matured well over a few days.

Johnny Fiveshooter

12.6.2024

Bare Bones' memo 12. Yesterday we recorded 'Johnny Fiveshooter'. We prepared the session the night before after the vocal session of 'Before It's Too Late' so this went smoothly. The artist had broken one of the strings on his guitar the day before and it suited the sound of this song, hence the name 'Johnny Fiveshooter'. A minimalistic setup for the song with vocals, guitar, bass, bass drum and handclaps. The vocals and the guitar were recorded in the same way as the majority of the songs on the album.

Madeleine**13.6.2024**

Bare Bones' memo 13. We prepared the song 'Madeleine' today. We wrote it together, fixed the chord progressions and the lyrics. I sent the artist home to practise the song so we can record it tomorrow.

14.6.2024

Bare Bones' memo 14. 'Madeleine' was recorded today. We had to run many takes to get this one right since the guitar parts were challenging to perform while singing. We left out the bass on this one because it did not contribute to the song at all. It sounded best in its simplicity.

Bare Bones' memo 16. A note about 'Madeleine'. I increased the low-end of the guitar on the equalizer since we did not feature a bass on that song. It helped the song to sound more "grounded" and more "full sounding".

Where Roads Meet**14.6.2024**

Bare Bones' memo 15. We have now recorded the intro to the album. The song is called 'Where Roads Meet'. The song only features vocals and electric guitar. We wanted it to feel very free so we just "rolled the tape". I coloured the vocal track heavily with compression, tape saturation and reverb. The PRE-73 was gained much harder even though he sings quite loud on the song. I wanted to have analog distortion from the preamp to make it sound "dirty".

The electric guitar was recorded through his own pedal board with a Klon-type pedal into a Bogner La Grange preamp with slapback delay and spring reverb. The signal then went into my Blackstar AMPED 1 pedalboard amplifier and then finally into my Suhr Reactive Load IR which emulates speaker cabinets. I tried out the UAD 'SoundCity' upon the track in my DAW (digital audio workstation) and re-miked the cabinet there. The result was astounding, it made it feel much more realistic than standard Irs (impulse responses). The sound became much more "analog" and it "took" its place in the mix much better than without the 'SoundCity' plugin.

A happy accident was that the guitar strings of the electric guitar are heard on the vocal track. It almost sounds like there is an acoustic guitar also in the arrangement. I think this helps the song to fit in even more to the style of the album.

Re-recording bass**18.6.2024**

Bare Bones' memo 19. We re-recorded bass on the songs 'Bare Bones' and 'Before It's Too Late' with another bass player than myself. This was a good choice because he gave a fresh viewpoint how to approach the bass arrangement on the songs. The songs fit now much better into the whole sound of the album and lessened a bit the "rock" element that I subconsciously colour to the production. We will continue on Thursday with the rest of the songs.

20.6.2024

Bare Bones' memo 20. All songs were revisited, and I made adjustments to the vocal chains, so they have a similar character through the album. I also adjusted the master chain and made sure that they also matched each other.

We re-recorded the bass on the rest of the songs with our session bass player. He added nice lines that supported the guitar and the vocals. On some songs I simplified his lines so the song would not feel too "busy". The most important thing is the vocals and the lyrics. The mission of the arrangement is to help carry the story of the artist. The bass was recorded through the bassist's own pedal board into the Warm Audio TB-12. The API styled circuit suited well for tracking bass. I applied UAD 'Empirical Labs Distressor' upon all bass tracks on the album.

I will now prepare the tracks and send them for mixing. Michael Mikander and Mika Paananen will record genuine drums on the tracks 'Bare Bones' and 'Before It's Too Late' because the MIDI drums sound too hollow and too generic in the production. The album will be mastered by Svante Forsbäck at Chartmakers when it is mixed.

Commentary

Overall it was a very smooth production of the album. We had prepared story lines for the album in advance and we wanted to do this in one month. The first song was recorded on the 1st of may and the last recordings were done 19th of June. If all the sessions had been done in a row we would have finished the recordings in 3 weeks.

For me it was important to get everything recorded in a short window of time. I wanted to capture the feel and the essence of the songs when they were as new and exciting as possible. On songs such as 'Bare Bones' and 'Before It's Too Late' we had to revisit the vocals because they were the most challenging to perform both technically and emotionally. They are also songs performed with click because of the arrangement of the songs.

If you compare these songs where he sings and plays acoustic guitar simultaneously and the songs where he first plays the guitar and sing separately you can definitely see a difference on the performance. I theorize that the guitar feels like a “shield” or something that gives him courage to more effortlessly tap into his artistry. We had to work much more on the vocal performance when he did not play guitar at the same time. I also observed that the artist in question “rushed” much more with click and sang more “on time” without click.

When I initially made up my mind to produce the album for 'No Fortunate Son' I had a “mix-in-the-box” solution in mind. Meaning that I would only utilize plugins for the production and nothing external except instruments and the microphones. I decided in April after “researching” on YouTube to purchase the Golden Age Audio Premier PRE-73 which is a Neve 1073 clone. I was amazed how this almost organically gave me a “million dollar” sound on the vocals. A short time afterwards I purchased the Warm Audio TB-12 for recording the guitars. It had a similar effect on the guitar sound. I am very satisfied how the outboard equipment helped me to shape the sound at its source so we could focus mainly on the performance and the artistic side of the production. Instead of searching for “the sound”.

I used extensively plugins by Universal Audio (UAD) and Solid State Logic (SSL) for the production. On vocals I used the 1176 and the LA-2A compressors and on guitars, bass and drums I used the Empirical Labs Distressor. I will definitely purchase the 1176, LA-2A and the Distressor compressors as physical equipment for my studio because they are my absolute favourites.

What equipment a producer will utilize is very personal. Some favour the “mix-in-the-box” solution because you can bring that “studio” with you anywhere and it is of course much more affordable than owning physical units such as preamps, equalizers, compressors etc. I personally favour a hybrid solution where you draw upon the strengths of both worlds. The UAD Manley plugins I have used on the production are probably something I will never own due to their high cost. So, they will probably be featured in the future on my productions as plugins. The same can be said for the UAD Studer Tape recorder due to the maintenance of a tape recorder.

Initially we had planned to write only new songs for the album. That was because I thought the artist did not have un-recorded songs in his repertoire. After we had recorded 'Emigrantens Visa' he played a song in the sofa of the studio. I asked who's song it was

and he replied it was his own! I insisted that we should definitely record any un-recorded songs he's got if they all held that standard. That song was 'Hold On'. It is heavily influenced by Frank Turner and it influenced the rest of the album. The artist was also satisfied to record "old songs" that he had never released or properly recorded. It is worth to remember that even though one self might see songs such as these as "old", they are still new for the audience.

When I produced 'No Fortunate Son' I wanted to produce him as I would myself like to be produced. I only interfered where I absolutely felt that I need to. I wanted to be as discrete as possible and not influence too much where he was going. A commentary I received from a colleague was that it is clearly heard who has produced the album. So that is an insight that still if I am trying not to intrude, I still colour the whole sound of the album. A nice comment also from the artist was that he felt safe to express himself in the studio with me. That is very important to me that everyone I work with in my studio feels relaxed to perform their art. An example of where I chose to intervene was how to tune his guitar. We used open tunings on 'Hold On' and on 'Hard Enough' which have never until now been featured on a 'No Fortunate Son' recording. The guitar was tuned a half step down from standard E to Eb. I also insisted upon the use of thinner gauge strings because it helped the guitar to sound more open. It behaved similarly as my electric guitars. The only challenge it posed was that the artist had to be more gentle with his left hand when he pressed the strings to avoid intonation issues.

When working with 'No Fortunate Son's album I have learned a lot about producing and also about the technical side of recording. I had to do a lot of phase inverting on the preamps to get the microphones back into phase with each other. The microphones that went straight into my audio interface were moved around to find a spot where they were in phase. I also found that I prefer to drive the input gain on vocals much more than on instruments. I opted to use much more discrete gaining on guitars than on vocals because they sounded much more "open" when I instead increased the output on the preamp.

Another insight of myself is that I had to discover for myself how to utilize compressors and equalizers in my production. My colleagues have much more experience from mixing and mastering from their studies at Nailthemix, which is an online mixing community. I am quite stubborn myself and I had to "discover" for myself how to use the equipment. Now I can understand them much better and ironically the settings on the compressors I used for the vocals are apparently classic settings for the 1176 and the LA-2A.