

# **PRENATAL PAIN IN ALBUM MAKING PROCESS**

How To Anticipate and Understand  
Stressful Situations and whether We Can  
Learn Something from Childbirth

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## ABSTRACT

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In this thesis, the target is to map the situations and reasons why the pressure increases the closer the end comes in album making and how the production team could avoid stressful situations in advance. The final purpose is to make producers work more creatively and effectively. As a result, the artist's music can be more crystallised and make it more successful.

The thesis discusses the phases of the whole album making process briefly, and then the emphasis is a little more on the mixing phase. Because there was hardly any literature available of the mental side of the album making process, the main emphasis is in interviews and literature that handles the mental side of the other areas where is high pressure and expertise on the working process.

As comparing a song making process to a childbirth is so common, I wanted to take a specific look into this matter and try to find out, if something interesting could be found by juxtaposing the birth of a child to the birth of an album. Music making can be stressful, and the thesis discusses also how stress appears when a matter of life and death is at hand.

In addition to interviews with music professionals, I did an interview with an obstetrician and with a psychotherapist, who are experts in the treatment of the human mind in very stressful situations. I also compared a producer's occupation to a doctor's occupation and transilluminated what kind of similarities could be found and whether a music producer can learn a lesson from a doctor's way of handling the patient.

At the end of this thesis there is an example case. I was the producer in the production of Estado Novo album where I made observations of the mental side of the production.

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Key words: production, pressure, atmosphere, communication.

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**TERMINOLOGY**

DAW	Digital Audio Workstation
A&R	Artist and repertoire
In the box	Music is processed inside the computer, without any external equipment
Monitoring	Among audio engineers, the term monitor usually implies that the speaker is designed to produce relatively flat (linear) phase and frequency responses
Jump out of the box	To do something differently than usually
Delivery room	A room where babies are born
Wise guy	A cocksure, conceited, and often insolent person; smart aleck
Background tapes	Some artists play in sync with earlier recorded material in live situation
Sing back	Everything else but the vocals are pre-recorded in live situation

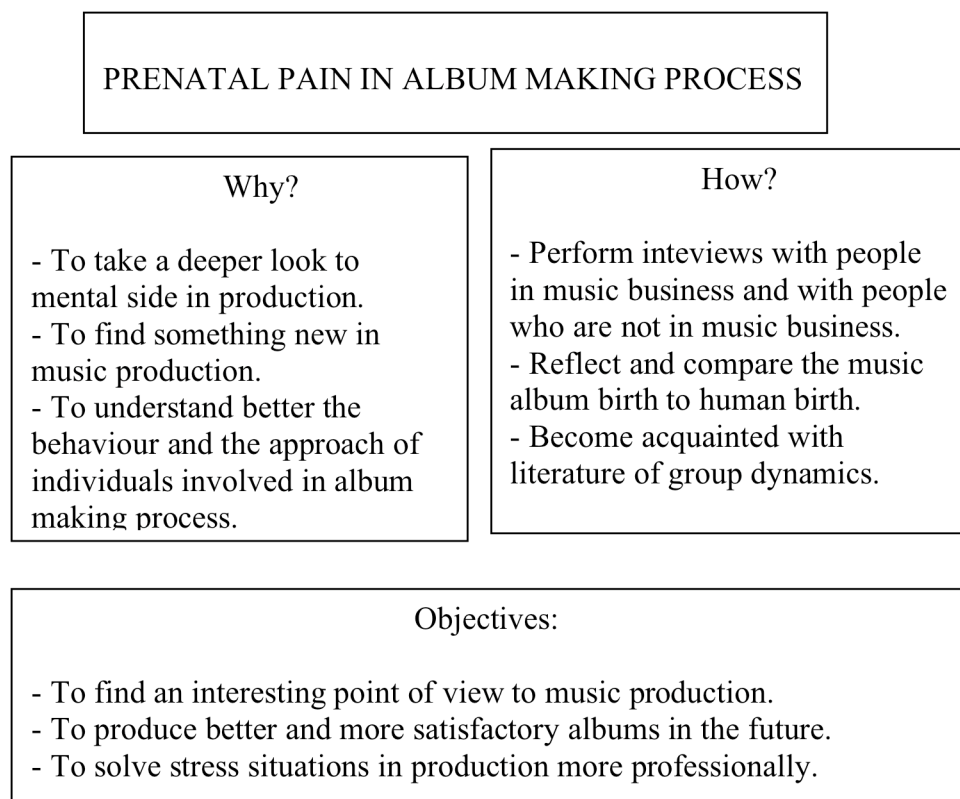
## 1 INTRODUCTION

I have noticed that the majority of the literature that deals with music production is focused on technical issues. It is nearly impossible to find any material which is focused on the mental side of music production. This is a clear grievance, because music production and music itself is emotional caring and communication. Stress and pressure belong inextricably to music production as it is creative team work, where every individual has his own visions and motives towards the result. A Recording Engineer and Producer Michael White (2014) describes music production this way: *The music production process itself is always unique to the artist. There is no single method, one could use, that would work for every artist. Most of these situations require years of recording and production experience to fully understand. Working in a commercial recording studio is absolutely the best way to gain this experience. By watching many different producers and engineers work their craft you be filled with a tremendous number of ideas for approaching the day to day problems that arise when producing music.* (White 2014.)

## 2 FRAME OF REFERENCE

### 2.1 Starting point

It is very difficult to define a certain point, when I started working on this thesis out. I was already familiar with some of the literature used as a source material. Although the recording equipment has totally changed since I started making records, one thing has remained the same and that is meeting people in a music production situation.



PICTURE 1. Frame of reference

STAGE	ESTIMATE TIME USED
Planning	70 h
Become acquainted with sources	30 h
Preparing the interviews	20 h
Carrying out the interviews	20 h
Editing the interviews	20 h
Reporting	230 h
TOTAL	390 h

PICTURE 2. Time management table

## 2.2 Presentation of the interviewees

In addition to making interviews with music professionals, it was clear from the beginning that I also wanted to interview also people who are not working in music industry, but who are working with people in situations, where stress and high pressure are involved in daily work. The people interviewed in this thesis are presented below.

### **Katja Hietanen**

Katja Hietanen is a psychologist and psychotherapist. She has a higher degree education on the specific psychotherapy for cognitive behaviour. She has a long experience in the work of the psychologist with young people and adults. She has worked in basic health care and as a school psychologist.

### **Vilho Hiilesmaa**

Vilho Hiilesmaa is an obstetrics, gynaecology and perinatology specialist. A doctor of medical science in 1982 specialised on epilepsy and pregnancy. He has written publications related to pregnancy follow-up, pregnancy diseases and medication,



ultrasonography and fetal research. He has also connections to music as he plays the piano and guitar as a hobby.

### **Juha Heininen**

Juha Heininen is one of the most experienced and respected audio engineers in Finland. Heininen has been involved as an engineer in over eight hundred albums. He has worked with Kauko Röyhkä, Don Huonot, Lauri Tähkä, The 69 Eyes and Mamba among others.

### **Jukka Puurula**

Jukka Puurula is a musician and he is known as a bass player of Don Huonot, which was one of the most important rock bands in Finland in the late 90's. Today Puurula has several projects, Itä-Saksa and Estado Novo among others. Puurula has also produced several albums and he is running a recording studio as well. He has also worked as a lecturer at Metropolia University of Applied Sciences.

### **Janne Saksa**

Janne Saksa is a studio owner and one of the most popular metal music producers in Finland at the moment. Janne has worked with bands like Mokoma and Stam1na. Janne is also a composer and he has written songs for many artists.

### 3 PROCEDURES IN MAKING A ROCK ALBUM

#### 3.1 Pre-production

Brown (2009) writes in his book about Rick Rubin's production methods: *Taking away any fears (artists) had about what they were doing and not let anything get to them to where they would soft-pedal anything in anyway* (Brown 2009, 8).

Today the role of pre- production has increased as the album sales have gone down in the past. It saves a lot of budget, if the artist has prepared well before entering the studio. In pre-production process the producer will take a closer look on all the material. Typical issues in pre- production are picking up the right songs for production, checking out the arrangements of the demo versions of the songs and planning the instrumentation. Also converting the budget to studio days, booking the right studios and hiring the right staff are typical tasks for the producer in pre-production. Sometimes the pre-production can take a lot more time than the recording session.

An analysis is needed at the beginning. The right persons have to be found to fill the right position. Before that, it needs to be clear what kind of skills each task requires in the production. The producer needs to have a network, where he can find the most suitable persons.

SWOT analysis can also be used as a tool in music production. The strength of an artist is something that has to be underlined in the production. Weakness is the opposite, so it is good to reduce the areas, where the artist might be weak. Opportunities are the areas, where the artist might grow. A very personal music style can be a huge opportunity for example. Threats need to be found out as well. If the artist sounds like some one else, it is good to drive the production into a more personal direction.

#### 3.2 Recording

*Music recording, physical record of a musical performance that can then be played back, or reproduced* (Marcus, L.M. 2014).

Recording is a very important phase in album an making, because the performance is done there. In many cases it is just the performance which makes a song hit or not. Usually the recording takes the biggest slice of the budget. The segmentation surely differs a lot case by case. In producing a normal rock album, it can be estimated that recording session takes 50% percentage of the budget and the other 50% can be used to the other phases. In most cases the whole band is involved in studio at the same time and a lot of creative work need to be done together. No matter how well the pre- production has been made, all the sounds need to be created, everyone has to know how to perform the songs the best possible way and the sensitive and fragile atmosphere has to be created by everyone involved.

*To make great recordings, the goal must always be to capture great performances. Great performances will transcend the recording techniques used. Sometimes a low fi recording captures the essence of a performance better than a squeaky clean full frequency one will. Playing with this concept, is truly the art of recording music. (White, M. 2014.)*

### **3.3 Mixing**

*Mixing is a complex and rich process that is both rewarding and frustrating (Cochrane, G and Gilder, J. 2012, 2).*

Mixing is a phase where all the recorded audio tracks will be mixed together. Mixing process is the last phase where artistic input can be added to the album. Also all the earlier delayed decisions must be done in the mix.

Today mixing can be a lot more than during the analogue era, where tracks where balanced after adding some effects. Now it is possible to still change the arrangement and also change takes, if needed. Anyway it is important to do all the editing work before the mixing session and concentrate just to mix the material together. These days mixing session is often done at a different location than the recording. It is very handy to send the multitrack anywhere through internet. When the files are in digital form and the most of the softwares fit together, it is easy to use any studio that might fit the project.

There is a phrase "let's fix it in the mix" which tells a lot. Surprisingly many artists prefer to leave the difficult decisions to the mix. The reason might be a wish to take some time to make up one's mind or some might want to remove difficulties at a later point to avoid conflicts in earlier recording phases. Also finalising can feel like real work and real work is not actually why people do it, it is not creative and inspiring enough (Hietanen 2014).

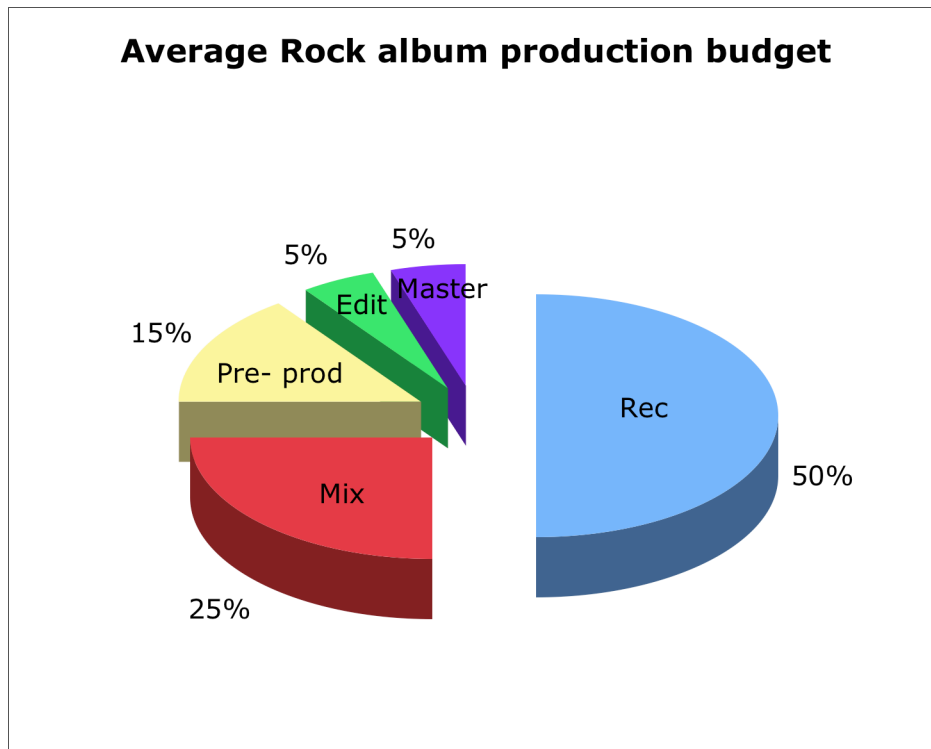
### **3.4 Mastering**

Mastering is the last creative step in the audio production process, the bridge between mixing and replication your last chance to enhance sound or repair problems in an acoustically designed room- an audio microscope (Katz 2002, 11). Mastering is a process which has become a more creative phase in last decades. Earlier the purpose of the mastering process was to finalize equalisation and levels so that music would sound as good as possible in vinyl records. Today you can make artistic things also in mastering. For example pauses and cross fades between songs can be very creative.

### **3.5 Post-production**

*Contrary to the name, post-production may occur at any point during recording and production process and is non-linear and nonveridic (Hodgson, J. 2010, 231).*

It can be difficult to say which processes are counted to be post production. At least some typical things which I count as post-production are creating "background tapes" for live situation, making bonus tracks to the album from demo versions of the songs or printing mixing without lead vocal tracks in case the artist will do "sing back" shows.



PICTURE 3:

A typical split of the budget between the various phases in rock album production.

## 4 MIXING PROCESS

*The music mixing process is one that involves a load of practice, listening skills and patience. A mix is like a house of cards that can easily fall apart with one misplaced sound. (White M. 2014.)*

I divide the mixing process into four different fractions. All these parts have a significant meaning. In pre-production all the fractions have to be observed carefully and the mix session must be produced well to maximize the result. The producer has to listen to the artist's wishes and take the budget into account. It is usual that the artist wants something else than the record label is willing to offer when the question is about the budget. It is one of the producer's key tasks to fit the visions of each party together. This is where the producer's experience steps forward.

### 4.1 Technical issues

The equipment used in mixing process has to fit the project as well as possible. It is important to choose the right studio when planning the sessions in pre-production. The studio has to have right kind of gear for the project. Maybe there is a need for analogue mixing console or a need for a great amount of outboard gear. Sometimes the most important thing can be that DAW can run a huge amount of audio and MIDI tracks. Also monitoring and acoustic factors can be at the centre when choosing the studio.

Music style has a big meaning when planning a mix session. Some studios fit better for producing rock music production than the others. The atmosphere has to be right. Sometimes a nasty and dirty studio can give just the right input to the result. I think that if the studio is too clean and sophisticated, rock musicians can start to feel slightly outside.

## **4.2 Artistic aspects**

In addition to basic mixing operations like balance, equalisation and echoes there are also other artistic things that have to be taken into account. For example, if there is a lot of recorded material, it can be difficult to make everything fit to the same picture. Sometimes one song can be better than the other, but it does not fit to the wholeness that well. Also the music might have been recorded in different studios with whole different equipment.

## **4.3 Economy**

One of the first things that has to be agreed on is the budget of the project. Although it is not the nicest part of planning for the most of music makers, it would be irresponsible if the producer does not take into account the budget carefully. In most cases, the producer is literally responsible for the budget. In pre-production it is important to plan the schedule so, that there is enough time for the mixing process. A lot of great work done in the recordings can become frustrated, if there is not enough time and budget for mixing. One unpleasant task of the producer can be the responsibility to keep the artist in the schedule during the recording phase.

There are huge differences when it comes to studio pricing. Sometimes it is smart to book a cheap studio and work without rush. Then there can still be an option to re-record something, pick up the right takes and play around with sounds. Sometimes an expensive studio which has great equipment or professionals who can join the project can meet the needs better. That can be an option if the recordings are done well and the sounds are made mostly ready before the mixing.

## **4.4 The people involved**

Eventually it is the people who make it all happen. In the end it is not the equipment, studio or budget which are the guarantee of quality, it is the people and their knowledge, visions, experience and personalities. Next, I will clarify the different roles of the main characters in the mixing process a little.

#### 4.4.1 Mixing engineer

Mixing engineer is the one who is physically working with the songs and interprets and converts the visions of the producer and artist into technical measures. According to Huber and Runstein (2005, 39) this job is actually best described as an art form, as both music and recording are subjective in nature and rely on the tastes and experience of those involved. In many cases the mixing engineer can be the producer as well, specially in lower budget productions. If the mixing engineer and the producer are at the same person, there are two sides in the coin: On the other hand, communication is surely direct and easy, but on the other hand one person has to do the job of two. Many producers have started as engineers as it is the best position to learn what the producers do, because they work very closely in mixing sessions.

#### 4.4.2 Producer

*Although the record producer has at times become an equal partner with the musicians in creating the recorded performance of classical music, in the popular field he is frequently in total command (Marcus 2014).*

Today there is so much information and influences around, that it can feel like a chaos. It is important that the producer is able to form a clear vision and can think clearly. The producer has to be the one who separates the things that matter from the things that do not. These things simply require experience, spiritual capital and creativity.

Ice hockey coach Juhani Tamminen (2000) writes: “A coach as a leader means, that the most important thing is to see the essential matters. I think that intelligence in coaching means the skill, how the coach can settle in the work at hand. A good leader stands out from the average so, that he focuses his energy on the essential, which is how to reach the best possible result with the resources that are in use at each moment.” (Tamminen 2000, 51.)



Although the producer is in charge of the mixing process, he does not need to be involved in the studio all the time. Whereas the mixing engineer has to take care of all the tiny little details in the mix and have a maximal peace at the workplace, the producer can have a lot of communication with the artist during the mixing process. The producer and artist build the common vision of how the mixing should sound in the artistic sense and then in many cases convert it to technical terms for the mixing engineer. The producer has to take care of that the mixing engineer is able to do his work in peace. The other side of the producer's work in addition to artistic work is the logistical side. During the mixing process one of the main responsibilities of the producer is to monitor the schedule and the budget. In earlier days it was easier, because the number of tracks was limited and the recall options to mixes were very limited. Today in the era of DAW, there are no limits in the number of audio tracks and it is easy to recall a mix afterwards, specially if the mix is proceed in the box.

Today, the producer and mixing engineer is often in the same person. Then the person has to take care of both areas. This can be very challenging. The mixing process requires full attention and concentration, but at the same time the person has to take care of communication and explain what the situation is. Also the atmosphere has to be taken care of. When the producer and mixing engineer is the same person, it is very important that he makes a clear schedule when to mix and when to communicate. The work flow has to be in order.

It is easy to think, that it would save the budget, if one person does engineering and production, but I have found that the efficiency is at a truly different level, if there are two different persons. Those two can monitor each other's work and if the engineer is working with some technical issue, the producer can hone the visions to the peak. In the costs of one studio day, there can be work contribution of two studio days. That means less studio time and studio costs.

#### **4.4.3 Artist**

*A music artist (commonly referred to as recording artist) is a musician who records and releases music often professionally, through a record label or independently. Working as a music artist requires an immense amount of mental and physical conditioning as*

*music artists continually live very erratic, nomadic and taxing lifestyles. Music artists face intermittent periods of unemployment, long nights in the studio recording music, travel constantly performing their music and also have to deal with the uncertainty of their income due to frequent rejections during auditions as well as competition for performance spots. Although it can be a risky profession, it is one of the most over-saturated occupations today. (Baskerville, D and Baskerville T, 2009.)*

The artist's position differs a lot from the view of the producer and mixing engineer. The artist is the one whose name will be on the cover of the album, artist has written the material and artist is the one who will go and perform the music live in the front of the audience. So where the producer and the mixing engineer are used to making albums and run the sessions, artist can be very famous and respected, but at the same time the artist can be totally inexperienced in the album making process. Therefore it is critically important that the producer and artist can construct a strong confidence. Artist, as a creative artist, can change his mind easily in the creative process. This belongs to the process and that is why the producer is needed to produce the product ready within the agreed time span.

The artist can also produce the session by himself. This can happen, if the artist is very experienced or if he is not experienced at all, when he does not know what producing is about. If the artist produces the mixing process, on one hand the communication is easy with mixing engineer, but on the other hand there is no one outsider to reflect the artistic ideas.

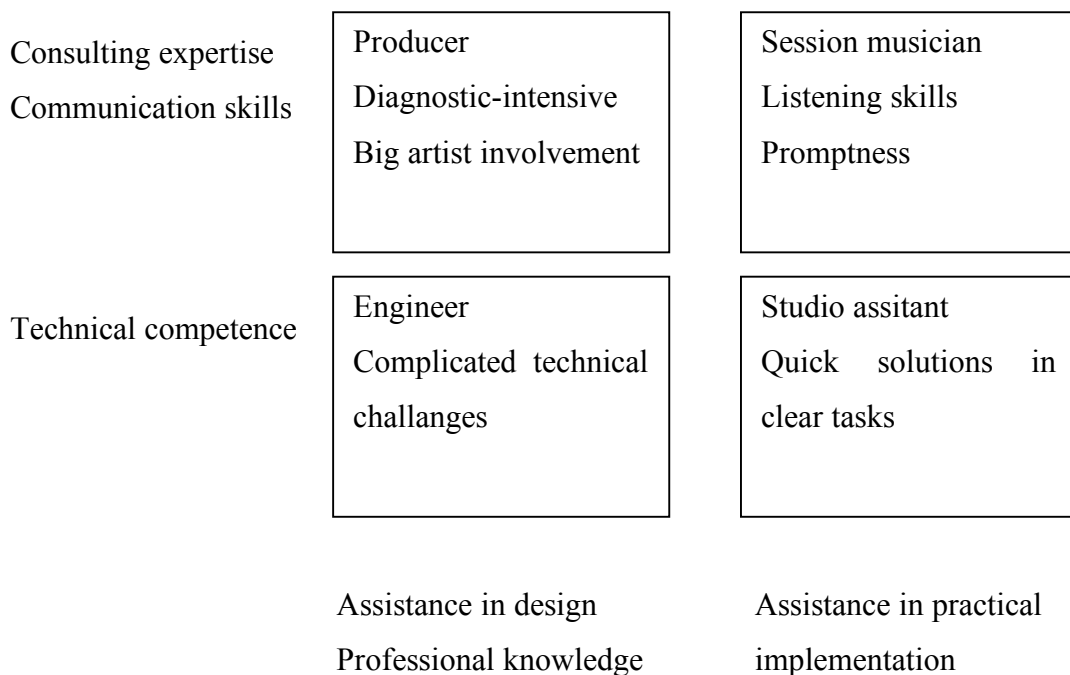
#### **4.4.4 The other people involved**

In addition to mixing engineer, producer and artist, there might be some other people around in the mixing sessions. It is typical that band members visit the studio every now and then. They can take a listen and give some positive energy to the ones who are running the mixing process. Depending on the case, sometimes it is important that the band members or session musicians are not hopping in and out in during the sessions. There is a risk that they get the artist nervous by giving comments of the material that is still under process.

Also A&R person can visit the mixing session at some point. Usually it is the A&R person who launches the whole album process, so it is understandable that he will take a part in the sessions at some point. Frith (1988) writes: “A&R is in response what music is released by the record label. In principle, all the decisions of the A&R are economical, so the calculations must be done carefully. They calculate the investment in relation to possible income.” (Frith 1988, 108.)

Unlike the recording sessions the guitar and drums technicians and roadies are rarely seen in the mixing sessions.

The nature of the tasks in the production team are different from each other. Some are more communication- and diagnostic-intensive and some are more pragmatic- intensive. The following diagram demonstrates the differences of the members in the production team in relation to artist. The picture is partly based on the model created by David H. Maister:



PICTURE 4: Nature of the functions in relation to artist

## 5 PRESSURE

”No pain no gain”. This phrase fits music production perfectly. If everything is smooth and nice, it might not be a question about rock music anymore which is known to be loud, dangerous and risky. But what is it that makes people stress in the mixing sessions, and why is the temperature rising? The album in the making is like your own little child and all of the sudden you have to let somebody else to care of him, so it is difficult to know how the other people will react to it, what kind of reception it will receive, what shall be done after this and what are the consequences (Katja Hietanen 2014).

Different parties can have very different reasons to stress in the mixing process. Artist can be worried about the music and how the fans might like the result. A&R might be concerned, if the first single is not found from the material and if the material does not feel good enough to sell enough. The question is often about this: The artist wants to have as big production as possible and create a piece of art with no compromises. The record company wants to sell as many songs and records as possible with as little investment as possible. If the material is artistically high quality, it is great, but the big sales are usually the primary. After artist and record label have found the compromise, one of the producer’s job is to maximise the aim of both parties.

As the producer has to produce the product, there can occur stress if the schedule seems to stretch together with the budget. I have even met contracts, where some kind of penalty payment is tried to be presented. The engineer can have stress, if the equipment of the studio is not working properly, or if he is not familiar with the equipment and connections.

Although the aim is to make great music together as a team, everyone involved are there because of surprisingly different motives. One of the key things to success in the process is to understand clearly the different roles of each team member.

## 5.1 Musical things

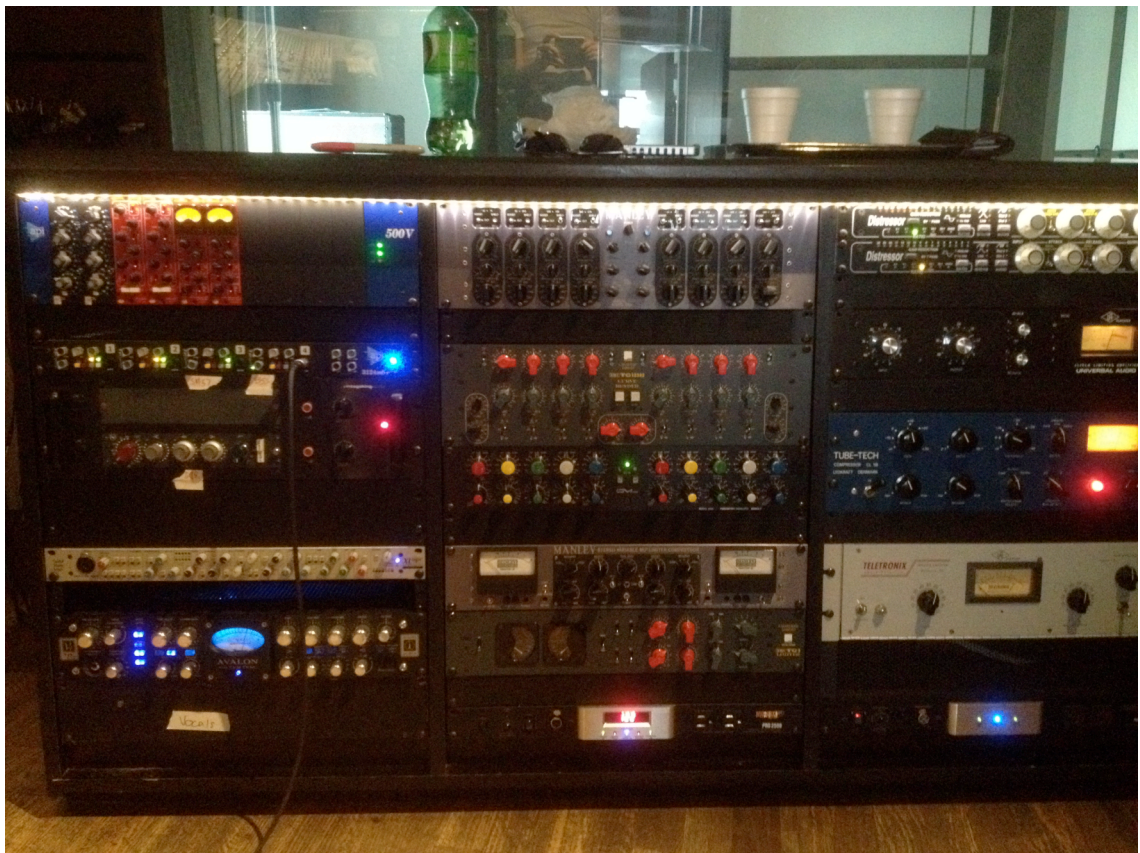
In music there is no right and wrong. So it is difficult to negotiate how to solve musical problems, because eventually it is all about taste. Like Brian Eno and Peter Schmidt write in *Oblique strategies*: What to increase? What to reduce? (Eno and Schmidt 1975.) The more people take part in writing the song, the more risks there are that at some point everybody's visions are not consistent anymore. "Musical disagreements" is one of the most used clichés, when a band is breaking up.

An artist can write the music by himself without making any compromises. The situation can get more difficult, if there are three song writers in a band for example: On the one hand everybody should be able to fulfil oneself and get songs and ideas to the album, specially if all the persons are founder members and they all have written material to the band earlier. On the other hand it is important to get only the best songs to the album, no matter who wrote the songs. One member can write three songs, which all are great and fit the picture, when the other member can write thirteen songs and none of them is good. In this case the producer comes to the picture and helps to pick up the most suitable songs to the album. In this kind of case, it is very important that the producer makes one thing crystal clear. Everyone in the band is important and respected, no matter if someone did not get his songs to the album.

## 5.2 Technical factors

It is very important that the producer can create a relaxed and creative atmosphere when working with artist. If the equipment of the studio does not work properly and technical problems cut the creative process all the time, it is clear that people start to get nervous. The producer and specially the mixing engineer have to know exactly how to use the equipment of the studio and how everything is connected in addition to how the monitoring works. Surely no producer or engineer can use every studio, and that is why it is important that the staff of the studio takes part in the sessions at least in the beginning. Surprisingly often the artists think that no matter which of the thousands of devices the question is about, the engineer can use it right away – because he is an engineer.

Monitoring is also an issue very often. The artist can say for example that there is not enough low frequencies in the mix. When the case is investigated, it is revealed that he is listening the mixes only with laptop speakers, ”because people listen to the music mostly with their laptops these days”. It is important that the producer can read between the lines what is the case.



PICTURE 5: Typical equipment used in the mix (Hiilesmaa 2014).

### **5.3 Economical issues**

It would be ideal to continue mixing as long as everybody involved would be 100% satisfied to the result, but it is possible only very rarely. The most of the producers have to monitor the mixing budget during the sessions. It is very typical that artist does not even know the time frame that can be used for the mixing process or he simply does not want to take the budget into account. In case the record company pays the production, the finance department of the label normally calculates how much the album might sell and gives the budget in relation to that amount. In case the artist will finance the production, which is often the case these days, it is much more straightforward. Instead of artist, record company and producer, there are only two parties, artist and producer.

### **5.4 Social matters**

Social matters are everything in a creative process. The team must be built so that everyone can work at their best. In a winning sports team, the first is strong, the second is fast, the third has a good eye for the game and the fourth is erratic. The same kind of dynamics is required from a studio team in making a music album. There must be synergy between the team members so that they can overcome all the challenges. The producer has an important role here. The producer has to build the production team where everybody shares the common goal, even if each member of the team has his own personal backgrounds and targets. Hietanen (2014) says that when stress and fear enter the picture, our aspect narrows. We cannot see things transparently and we cannot see the whole clearly. We cannot see our own ways of doing things widely enough. (Hietanen 2014.)

#### **5.4.1 Working with professionals**

It is surely difficult to define absolutely who is professional and who is not. With professionals I mean the ones whose main occupation is to make music. Is it easier to work with professionals in music? For me it is a lot easier. It is a lot easier to communicate with people using the same terms. In most cases it generates cool albums. (Heininen 2014.) On the other hand: If someone has decided not to understand the boundaries of

his own and somebody else's tasks, no higher education can help (Puurula 2014). Doctor Vilho Hiilesmaa has also interesting remarks about when he is working with other professionals in the field of medicine: If the process is carried out with a colleague, the job will be done together in a way. The patient is able to take partial responsibility of his own treatment. Communication is easier and many unnecessary things are left out. (Hiilesmaa 2014.)

#### **5.4.2 Working with amateurs**

It would be simple to think that it is naturally easier to work with professionals than with amateurs, but it is not that black and white. Where some professionals have seen it all, it can also mean that they are tired and unmotivated to work. The same old stories, touring and long term conflicts can reduce the artist's enthusiasm outstandingly. In many cases amateurs have fresh energy and creative madness blooms wildly. That kind of things can create a spectacular atmosphere. Katja Hietanen mentions that with professionals, the future can be more scary for the later albums, if the expectations of the audience are already certain kind. With the beginners the album making itself can be the case. (Katja Hietanen 2014.)

Sometimes, if the producer is experienced and the artist is not, a better result can be reached if the producer is also a beginner. An experienced producer can get frustrated and stressed working with beginners and that can cause lower quality of work. It can be frustrating for an experienced producer, if the artist cannot take an advance of producers capacity. On the other hand an incoming producer can have a huge drive in his work and that can produce very good drive and flow to the session.



## 6 CHILDBIRTH VERSUS RECORDBIRTH

Is it possible to learn a lesson from childbirth and apply it in record making? It is surprising, how many artists compare their song to kids. That is understandable, because the artist creates both, and it is exciting to see how they manage in life. Do they get a lot of friends or are they misunderstood? As often as songs are compared to kids, the album making process is compared to childbirth.

*“I’m not sick of any of them (The Rolling Stones songs). I love them all equally – just like my children, they are.” (Jagger 2007.)*

*“I love the songs I wrote. I believe in them as though they were my children. I want to see them grow. I want to see them accepted.” (Flattum 2014.)*

It is very usual that artists in interviews compare their songs to children and talk about the album born. It seems that songs and albums are really important to artists, often the most important thing in the world. But what is it that makes kids and children comparable?

### 6.1 The birth of a child

The long album making process culminates in the mixing process and it is usual that the album making takes even the whole year. Uncertainty and fear are seen very often at the end of the mixing process. To quote Heininen: Doubts are rising about the solution that have felt great at an earlier stage. Especially in case of longer projects: When pieces have been listened to hundreds of times, everything starts to sound a bit mild. (Heininen 2014.)

The tension starts right away from the beginning of pregnancy and increases towards the end. The final result is considered from the very beginning. Hope for the best, but pessimists fear the worst. (Hiilesmaa 2014.)



PICTURE 6. Delivery room. [www.hseinc.biz](http://www.hseinc.biz) (2014)

After a long intensive period of work comes to an end, emotions break through the surface. People act in a very different way from each other. Some stay composed and some are getting nervous from any little thing. It is also quite common that some start to allay the tension with alcohol in the studio. Childbirth is a fierce bustle for the uninitiated, I have had to suture father's scalp when he fainted and hit his head on the corner of the table (Hiilesmaa 2014). When your mind is stressed and you feel fear, you start to search threats, and your vision gets narrow. In that kind of mind set it is impossible to look at the product and doings objectively. (Hietanen 2014.)

## 6.2 Control the situation

To avoid the risk that the situation poses to the result in a negative way, it is important that the professional behaves in a right way in the situation. Good communication and mutual atmosphere of trust are the best means to ease the pressure (Puurula 2014). Good

communication and well organised working methods are key factors in a mixing situation. Also producer should read the people involved so that the situation does not become too stressed, as stress spreads easily. Specially if the producer gets nervous the situation is lost. One of the key tasks of the producer is to take care of that the right people are in the studio at the right time. The other key task is to see that the wrong people are not in the studio at the wrong time. An artist at the beginning of his career often wavers to show his talent to a strange person. As a producer the most important thing is to be encouraging. Sometimes it is smart to ask the other band members to walk off the control room, to assure peace at the workplace. (Saksa 2014.) Pressures belong to record making, like to every creative cooperation. One thing clearly makes things worse are too long workdays and too long periods of work in a row. Effective "gentlemanly days" and vacant weekends enable getting rid of the pressures and the general spirit remains fresh. (Heininen 2014.)

### **6.3 Doctor versus producer**

It is important that the artist feels that he is listened to carefully and that he gets enough attention. It does not work if the producer is focused only on his own visions. The producer must have psychological eye and situational awareness. From this point of view producers and doctors work consistently: The doctor's training includes psychology and how to handle people. But mostly the encounter of the patient is learned through the work, the hard way. The most of the patients feel stress before entering the doctor's practice, no matter if it is just a regular visitation. The patient must be listened to carefully. The anamnesis of the patient is over 50% of the treatment. The old doctor's refrain is: "Listen to your patient, he tells you his diagnosis." (Hiilesmaa 2014.)

## **7 EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT**

### **7.1 Postpartum depression “baby blues”**

Postpartum depression (PPD), also called postnatal depression, is a type of clinical depression which can affect women after childbirth. Symptoms may include sadness, low energy, changes in sleeping and eating patterns, reduced desire for sex, crying episodes, anxiety, and irritability. (Mayo Clinic 2014.) I have talked with many artists and surprisingly many are telling that they do not want to or even cannot listen to their albums afterwards. The artist surely addresses the audience with his art, but is it the result or the process which causes such emotions? If the production process has been painful, it is natural that the emotions of the artist can be dissonant. Although common sense says that everything has been done as well as possible, balancing with their own shortcomings and the feelings of inadequacy can still take away the joy of the work completed. (Puurula 2014.)

When you hear a song which you have heard at the age of thirteen, you get a certain feeling and it can link you to your grandparent’s home for example. So in the same way an artist, who has first created a song and he hears it afterwards, can link it to creative process which contained a lot of work, toil and splitting hairs. It can bring back that oppressive experience. But when someone else hears the same song, the experience can be totally different, because there is no link between the song and the creating process of the song. (Hietanen 2014.) To quote Puurula (2014), sometimes it can take years, before a record can listened to without physical pain. In this kind of situation producer’s role matters the most. The producer should be able to convince the artist about that the result is as good or even better than the sweat and tears poured out for it.

### **7.2 Emotions on the surface**

Emotions are impossible to meter, but it is impossible not to take them into account. If the artist has done for example five albums and there has always been stress in the end of the sessions, he starts to get stressed by reflex in the same situation. Psychotherapist Hietanen (2014) says that when our mind faces confluences in an earlier experienced

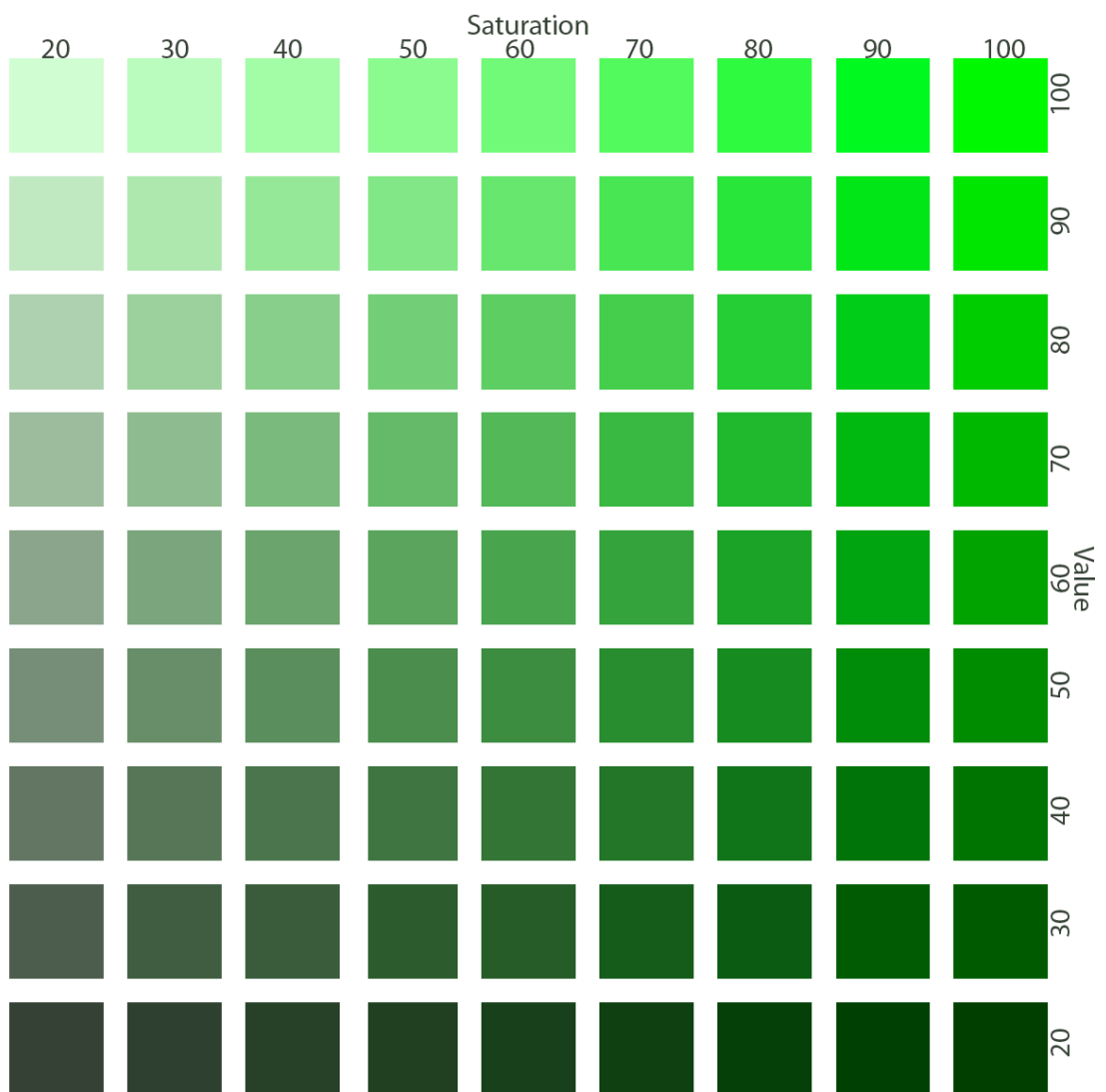
situation, next comes the feelings. Our mind anticipates the situations, so if an artist is working with his fifth album, the stressful feelings can creep onto the surface when the sessions are getting close to the end because of the experiences during the earlier sessions. First comes the feelings which start to control your thoughts. Then you start to steer your thoughts and think if there is something wrong in the process. So you end up going in circles. (Hietanen 2014.)

The pressure can arise, if you feel that the album is more someone else's than your own (Towle 2004) After having several sessions with various artists, I have noticed that the musicians act in the same way in the same phases of the sessions. It is very useful for producer to be able to anticipate how people will behave in each situation and it helps to make plans how on run the sessions smoothly. You can hate the process, but still the music works (Hetfield 2004).

## 8 COMMON LANGUAGE

### 8.1 Colourful expressions

I have faced countless times a situation where people have different expressions for the same things. And often they think their expression is the one and only used and everyone should understand the meaning of it. After all what means a rough, rancid or spongy sound? Or "Can you make the guitar sound more green, please"? I see the sounds like colours, they both have their frequencies, but unlike in hardware store you can not point your favourite colour in the colour chart. You can even have a piece of painted wood and take it home to see how it would fit to the decor at home. In sound you must first mix all the variables and then observe how it fits to the decor of the style of music.



Created by: Scott Williams

Picture 7: Could the guitar sound a bit more green? [www.scottwilliamsart.com](http://www.scottwilliamsart.com) (2010)

## 8.2 Musical terms

Most rock musicians do not possess formal education in music. They do not know the terminology and the technique of analysing music is missing too. Even the rock reviewers use the words broadly. Words like riff, melody and harmony are understood and used freely. (Frith 1988, 16.) I have noticed that using the formal musical terms can even add tension in the sessions as it is important that everyone involved understand clearly what is being talked about. That is why it is absolutely suitable to use just common words and try to coin new expressions to make things progress smoothly.

## 9 COMMUNICATION

When making the interviews for this thesis it became clear that communication is maybe the most important issue for having successful sessions. Understanding motivations of different parties is important as well as listen to everyone's point of views. You cannot hide it: Music communicates feelings and if the feeling is not right in the performance it is impossible to hide it in the mixing process. So that the process could work, everybody must be able to trust, that each one involved does his best. Business consult Jorma Sipilä (1995) writes that special services are usually performed together with specialist and customer. The customer has to take a part in the process to succeed in process. The customer has to give information and assist the specialist to succeed in it. A successful result is also a result of successful cooperation. The final product is also a description of a cooperation process between the specialist, the customer and the other parties involved. (Sipilä 1995, 30.)

### 9.1 Can success cover the poor atmosphere?

Some people in the business think that only good result matters and everything that has happened during the process in secondary. The good result can be big sales or good reviews for example and it is not that important what the team members felt during the process or what kind of atmosphere was prevailing in the process. Some might think that good commercial success means automatically success also in the process.

I have faced many artists who have had a great commercial success, but they did not feel that the process was rewarding and the communication during the process was not satisfactory. For many artists the process itself and self- realisation are more important, than the commercial success. It is important to succeed also in communication. No stunning studios or big names in the production team can cover that. A weekend in a low cost motel can feel much nicer than one week trip to a luxury hotel, if the atmosphere is not right. Good communication is crucial, if creative work will be done together in the long term.



If commercial success would keep the team or the band together, the ones with poor success would disappear and the ones who have commercial success would continue. This kind of thinking does not fit well to rock music. There are a lot of artists who have made a career for decades, but who never achieved commercial success. Those artists and bands continue, because their communication and creative process works well, not because they make their living out of it.

## 9.2 How to identify different personalities?

When starting the sessions, everybody are full of ideas, knowledge, expectations and emotional charge. Also everyone has some kind of preconception what kind of role each one in the process has. The trust can be created only with sufficient communication. Usually it is not enough to have conversations only about the project and its details. Also unofficial and more relaxed talks are needed, simply to get to know the persons who you are working with. All this simply takes some time.

Doctors can meet many persons in a day, there is no chance to get to know the patients in advance. So doctors must have a highly developed sense of different personalities and who get stressed easily. Based on a couple of phrases and eye contact, a doctor can analyse a person. The personality surely means a lot regarding how much a person stresses. In the long run, every doctor faces a couple of difficult patients, who have endless amount of questions. (and even stories of their neighbour's diseases...) And it is nearly impossible to take care of them during the time booked for them. There is a little innuendo in the doctor's phrase: "An old municipal doctor removed a chair from his office, because if the patient can sit, the game is lost." (Hiilesmaa 2014.)

Having worked with more than one hundred artists and musicians the sense of different personalities develops by itself. Puurula (2014) describes that interaction is always surprising. What kind of readiness the parties have for cooperation? How does the chemistry between two persons work? Sometimes it is only listening that makes it work. How you say things is often more important than what you say. Saying only "play better" is not always the best choice. (Puurula 2014.)

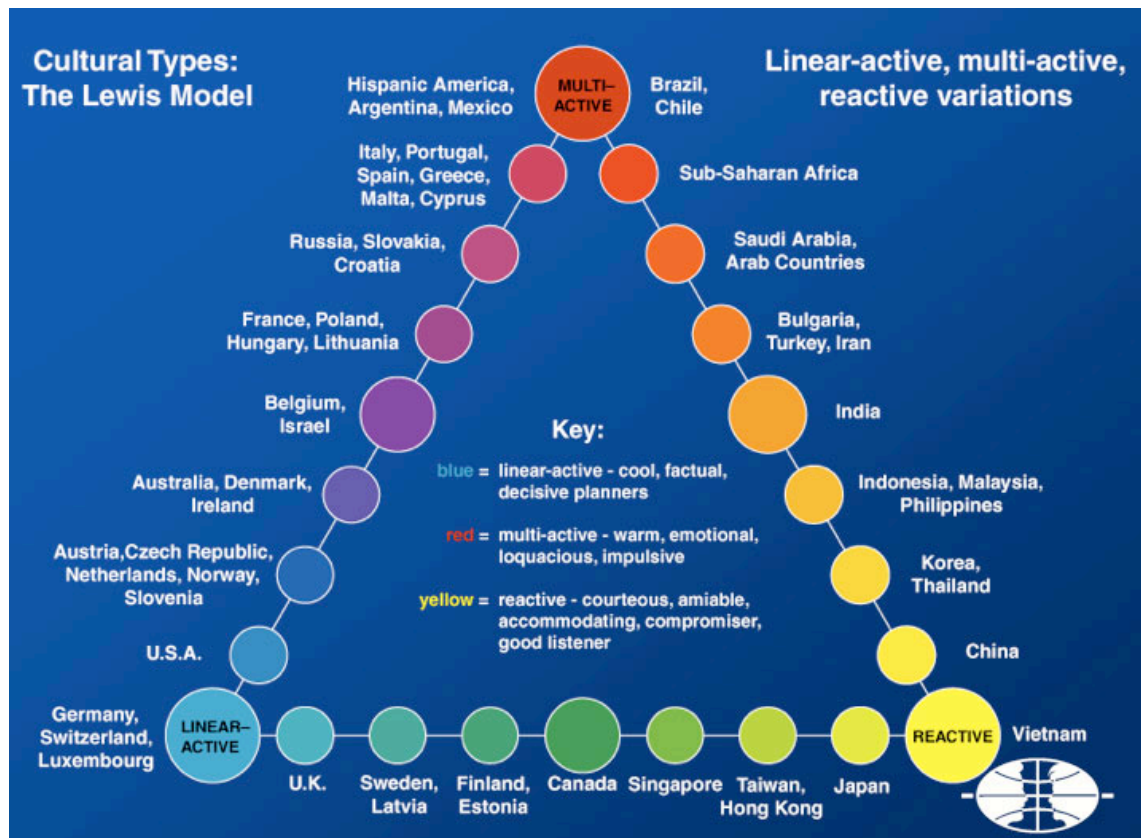
Artists and musicians are often colourful personalities and they have big egos. That is natural, because an artist needs to feel strong emotions when creating visions of his work of art. Hiltunen (2011) writes that leading personalities have their own challenges. It is clear, that leading a person who has similarities with your own personality is easier to lead. It is easier to get a grip of somebody in the emotional level, when you see a clone of yourself in your subordinate. Needs and attitudes are then known. It is more difficult for a person, whose personality differs from the leader's personality in every way. Then recognising motivation, needs and values is much more difficult. (Hiltunen 2011.)

### **9.3 Wise guys**

Today internet is full of knowledge, forums are filled with experiences of people, there are videos and many kinds of information. Does it happen that the patient starts to advise the doctor? Does that happen more often now than in the earlier days? Hiilesmaa (2014) points out that the doctor can be just one authority among others such as the internet, neighbours, relatives, sandpit pals, fortune tellers and horoscope. There are more these wise guys today than in the earlier decades. It is more difficult to get authority today than earlier. (Hiilesmaa 2014.) Unfortunately, all the sources are not reliable and reliable information can cause problems, if it is applied in a wrong situation (Puurula 2014). It surely happens sometimes, but in my experience the mixing engineer is trusted ultimately, that is why one has been selected to do the job! (Heininen).

### **9.4 Cultural differences**

During my career I have noticed that there are major differences between artists coming from different cultures. It is very important that the production team understands that behaviour can be different when working with people from different cultures. Music is a universal language which is usually easy to understand, but communication with artists with different cultural background can sometimes be more difficult. One major difference occurs when it comes to making decisions. Where Finns make decisions based on facts and stick to the resolutions once made, Greeks can skip the facts and open the resolutions easily next day.



Picture 8: The Lewis model illuminates how different cultures can affect behaviour.

www.crossculture.com (2014)

<b>LINEAR-ACTIVE</b>	<b>MULTI-ACTIVE</b>	<b>REACTIVE</b>
Talks half the time	Talks most of the time	Listens most of the time
Does one thing at a time	Does several things at once	Reacts to partner's action
Plans ahead step by step	Plans grand outline only	Looks at general principles
Polite but direct	Emotional	Polite, indirect
Partly conceals feelings	Displays feelings	Conceals feelings
Confronts with logic	Confronts emotionally	Never confronts
Dislikes losing face	Has good excuses	Must not lose face
Rarely interrupts	Often interrupts	Doesn't interrupt
Job-oriented	People-oriented	Very people-oriented
Uses mainly facts	Feelings before facts	Statements are promises
Truth before diplomacy	Flexible truth	Diplomacy over truth
Sometimes impatient	Impatient	Patient
Limited body language	Unlimited body language	Subtle body language
Respects officialdom	Seeks out key person	Uses connections
Separates the social and professional	Interweaves the social and professional	Connects the social and professional

Picture 9: The key variables between different cultures. [www.crossculture.com](http://www.crossculture.com) (2014)

## 9.5 Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence is an important factor when running a mixing session. The term has been brought out by American doctor of psychology Daniel Goleman in 1995. Before you can control your own emotions, you must recognise and understand the reasons for them first.

The logic in the concept of emotional intelligence is that to be proficient in dealing with emotions of somebody else, one needs to have emotional intelligence, which consists of recognising emotions, supporting thinking by emotions, analysing emotional knowledge and understanding alike controlling of emotions (Hiltunen 2011, 97). Everybody are different from each other. Some react to everything new and unreliable very strongly, where some are cool as a cucumber. In our background there are our own experiences of life and what we were born here. All the babies are different before they have any life experiences. Also our social skills are very different. (Hietanen 2014.)

In the process the producer should acknowledge everybody involved, no matter how big role the person has. This is a good way to create a relaxed atmosphere and build the trust. It can be a simple conversation, how each person sees the project and what kind of expectations he might have. Often these kind of conversations result in very good and fresh ideas. This also helps the producer to become acquainted with the team members better in a personal level. A small chat is always good to tune up everybody to the same level when starting a session.

Hiltunen (2011) describes how to perceive the emotional intelligence in leadership. Because human mind and emotions are really complex entities, it is impossible to give exact advice on how to act in each and every situation. The best way to try to understand the other is to ask "how do you feel?" That question is rarely heard from the chief. By asking that people can be habituated to openness, to identifying his own emotions, and to communicating feelings. However, honest answers can be received only, if you are able to tell how things are and how they feel. (Hiltunen 2011, 101.)

## 10 DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

Unlike many other fields of business, problems and difficulties are surprisingly rarely disassembled and analysed in the music field. Keeping the good atmosphere until the end seems to belong to show business. Even in *Titanic* – The legendary British passenger liner that sank in the North Atlantic Ocean in the early morning of 15 April 1912 – the orchestra was asked to play until the end by the captain. Also in *This Is Spinal Tap* (1984) – the legendary movie of the band, which loses its popularity – everybody is smiling in the record company’s celebrations, although the situation of the band is morbid. If you are missing the courage to step into the conflicts of the team, you are totally in the wrong business (Tamminen 2003, 87).

### 10.1 No pain no gain

Clashes can happen in a mixing process. Diplomacy!! (Heininen 2014). I have experienced that many artists like to leave the difficult decisions to the mixing process. They can be some song structures and sounds for example. In a way it keeps the atmosphere more relaxed in the recording situation, if there might be a conflict on the horizon. On the other hand, if the song structure is still open, guitar and bass sounds should still be re-amped and all the keyboards are only in MIDI when starting the mixing process, it is just too much to be nailed down in the mix. Many times stress and long sessions bring up the egos. A balance has to be found between the egos. You must cook up something cool, before someone else does it (Ulrich 2006).

One typical situation is that the producer must be a referee in conflict situations. Everybody should have the feeling that the producer is here for me as an individual. If the producer says ”his way to act is right and your way to act is wrong” there is a new conflict. The producer can create rules like when the feedback will be given and how it should be given. (Hietanen 2014.) Like in ice hockey a good team needs different kinds of characters. Some need to be fast, some need to be experienced. Hietanen (2014) says that it would not work if everybody were equal; there has to be different players. If everyone had a strong vision, it would not work and there would be clashes all the time. Someone has to be the one that leads the group. Things can go smoothly, but in stress

situations like in a stall or close to the end, the ways of behaviour are clearly visible. (Hietanen 2014.)

Because the question is about team work, it is important to understand that every opinion of each team member is important. That does not mean that each member should agree with it. The producer has to secure that this is possible.

Hiltunen (2011) describes the situation in negotiations: The emotions come out in negotiations unavoidably and exhaustion is always with the participants. Different aggressive moments and comments have to be proportioned right and responding must be done with patience. Even anger must be controlled. (Hiltunen 2011, 192.)

## **10.2 The customer is not always right**

Business consultant Jorma Sipilä (1995) writes about customers, who are not always right: Because of the big differences in expertise, service situations and selling situations are remarkably demanding. The impression of the needed service can be substantially between the customer and service provider. The customer can handle his own matters, but not the matters in special cases and the service provider cannot necessarily handle the customer's operational environment and the other details enough. The customer can also see the things impatiently and he can have strong opinions of things based on a superficial level of knowledge. (Sipilä 1995, 27.)

Sipilä (1995) writes also about selling a specialist service, which has a lot of similarities with selling a producer service: A specialist needs exceptional salesmanship to be able to sell exactly the right kind of solution that the customer needs. Very few of the specialists have been thinking that when they start working as a specialist, they also have started a very difficult sales work. (Sipilä 1995, 28.)

A diagnosis is crucially important when starting a new production, however the artist and record company rarely feel that diagnosis is important. According to Sipilä (1995), the customer should order a diagnosis or account about what he needs at first. In other kinds of services the customers define their needs by themselves and do not pay for the diagnosis. In the specialist service the diagnosis is usually the most demanding part of

the service. The specialists feel often that the diagnosis is not valued and the customers are not willing to pay for it. However we would be horrified, if a doctor would prescribe us drugs, without a diagnosis. (Sipilä 1995, 28.)

### **10.3 Tired**

Everyone who works with music usually appreciates his work. It is usual that artists would like to run the sessions like twenty hours a day. I have noticed that the quality of material is higher, if there are not too many working hours a day. One thing that clearly impairs the situation is too long working hours and too long working periods (Heininen 2014). It is good to leave the studio rather a bit too early than a bit too late. In this way everybody is hungry and excited in the next morning. The opposite is to work as long as there is power in the batteries. When you work with low batteries it is sure that at some point things are not bright anymore. It is crucial that wrong solutions made when too tired are avoided. There is nothing more discouraging than starting to take down yesterday's weak job. Brains are a muscle too, which needs resting time. You can not exercise your muscles at a gymnasium twelve hours constantly either.

Hietanen (2014) tells that tiredness is identical with stress situation in your system. When we react to something we can only see part of the things. The mind starts to repeat the same things and it is clear that nothing new will come up. If there is stress and tiredness, you cannot think creatively. You need space and a fresh mind to have creative ideas bubbling. By force you get no ideas. (Hietanen 2014.)





PICTURE 10: A modern mixing workstation: A computer, mixing console and couple of pairs of speakers (Hiilesmaa 2014).

## **10.4 Tight budget**

Tight budget and rushed schedules are typical reasons, if the atmosphere is getting stressed in the mix process. When all the previous phases in the production take a little more time and budget than originally agreed, the time of repayment breaks in the mix sessions.

If the session exceeds the schedule and budget, people involved are stressed and the quality is weak, it typically means that there is lack of know-how. The producer should be able to see the threatening crises in the horizon and report about them immediately and openly. It does not work if the producer acts like a cheerleader and tries up to keep the good feeling although the ferry is sinking. Surely, the producer can work with his own financial risk too, but still a professional way of working includes some kind of an agreed budget.

### **10.4.1 Self-financing**

Today it is very common that the artist takes the financial risk by himself. There are many positive matters. I have noticed that the material is usually better prepared and rehearsed. Also the business between the artist and the production team is a lot more straightforward than when dealing with some third party. The artist knows exactly how much budget is used in each phase of the production and the control of the budget makes the artist commit to the project deeper. All these matters make the artist also more independent in the artistic way, when there is no need to please the financing party.

The negative side is that artist is more tied on the business side, which can bother quite a lot. One of the most typical problem with artist is to connect the business side and the art side. It is also very rare, that an artist could invest to the project as much as a proper investment party, like a record company for example. Anyway a good music or a good album is not about the money, it is about the art.



PICTURE 11: It is not about the money and the gear, it is about the music. Bruce Springsteen's Nebraska album is made with Tascam portastudio. Toby Scott (2007) writes: *Teac (Tascam) 144, which had been out for a year or two. It was a simple, straight-ahead machine - perfect for what Bruce (Springsteen) wanted to do.*

Tascam Portastudio (Hiilesmaa 2014).

#### 10.4.2 Investor-financing

The most common investors are a record company and a publishing company of course. The investor can also be for example the management, the promoter, artist's father or a company of some other field of business. From the producer's point of view it can be more professional to make business with some company than with a rock band or a single artist. Also it can be nicer to just produce music with an artist, not to agree on the business deals. The record companies have normally bigger resources and a lot of know-how about how to launch the album. Also a competent A&R person from a record company can have a good sense of what the audience might like, because running a record company is about selling music. I have noticed that an A&R person can also be

an outsider in a good way. He can be close to the production, but not taking part on a daily basis.

A typical problem that occurs in working with a third party investor is that the investor gives a budget and artist might not even know how big it is. Then artist wants to have this and that studio, record "all the songs" and mix the material with no kind of compromises. It is all right if the production team and the studio are willing to be flexible. Stress can come up, when the producer have to point out how much studio time the artist's record company is willing to pay for the artist. This conversation is usually left undone between the artist and the record company, simply because it is not nice and it can risk the faith. This conversation is not necessary until it is absolutely necessary.

In principle there are two kinds of record companies. The ones that want to release the music they like and believe in and the others, which want to earn profit. Problems can occur, when the budget is just calculation and an album just an investment, that has only a little to do with music and art. Most artists do not see or believe in it. A typical problem with labels that are involved because of passions is that they simply do not have big resources. This is because they are not releasing music which could make big profits.

One of the first tasks of the producer is to lead the process and ensure, that both the investor and the artist understand what the scope of the production is in practice. If the producer gets into a situation, where he is like a referee, he has to try to find a solution to the conflict. If the producer or his own company has a conflict with some party, then a solution which satisfies both parties enough must be found in negotiations.

If the artist and the record company, for example, have agreed on the budget clearly together in advance and converted it into practice, a lot of stress can be avoided in the mixing session, because artist has had enough time to internalise the resources that can be used before hand.

An example: There was an English- singing artist whose father paid the expenses. There was only one condition: The album had to be sung in Russian too, because the father did not understand any English. So the album was published in English, but the artist's father got a special edition of the album with Russian vocals. Everybody was happy!

## 10.5 Second option

Does it happen that the doctor is changed, if the treatment is not what the patient expected? Hiilesmaa (2014) tells that this can happen if the confidence is lost or if the doctor speaks poor language because he is a foreigner for example. Sometimes a called "second option" is demanded. This happens particularly in the US. The insurance company or someone else who pays, wants an opinion of his own doctor. (Hiilesmaa 2014.) Communication seems to be usually the problem also in music production, if the producer or the engineer is changed: Losing the trust is usually a result from inability to mutual communication. The difficulties in communication can even cause the change of the partners in cooperation. Sometimes the reason to stop cooperation can be just the need to search for "something else". (Puurula 2014.) They are sad situations, and there can be many reasons for them. Usually it is not about the things that have been worked out "wrong" or "badly"; simply the common language has not been found. (Heininen 2014.)

## 10.6 Miscarriage

About 15% of pregnancy ends to miscarriage. This is of course a dreadful disappointment, specially if the pregnancy has lasted for a long time. On the rebound, the question is about the wisdom of nature, who aborts the ill pregnancies. (Hiilesmaa 2014.) Sometimes the album sessions can be discontinued. There can be various reasons, sometimes the creativity can dry up and lyrics are not born for example. Even the record company or a band line up can be displaced, which usually means a crisis. Puurula (2014) tells that usually the crisis has been solved in a triologue meeting between the artist, the record company and the producer. If the problem has been an individual character, there have been talks about the job description and possibly even talks about a reshuffle. Sometimes the threat of the interruption has even been a connective factor. (Puurula 2014.)

Usually there are no meetings after the album is ready, specially if the album has not received success. If the album has received success by selling gold for example, it is easier to meet and share the success together with the team. However, it would be good

to support the dialogical connection, even if the situation was very difficult. Puurula (2014) tells that low sales do not cause the pain automatically. If the artistic ambitions and the target of sales have not come true, some kind of disappointment can be manifested. The worst is, if only one person of the team is blamed. A sensible producer does not search for a guilty, but encourages to move ahead and seeks solutions to avoid problems in the future. (Puurula 2014.)

## 11 HUMAN CAPITAL

### 11.1 How to recover from a challenging case?

A long and demanding session means that there must be time to recover. Creative work especially requires a fresh mind and ideas. Hietanen (2014) says that flow and drive belong to creative work. It is usual that when things are running well, every one is like "keep on going, keep on going". However, it backfires easily after a while, when one's own resources has been pushed to the limit. However the point is how to control and handle your coping, when the drive is on. When the means are decreasing, the effective working periods are getting shorter and shorter. (Hietanen 2014.)

Do the doctors take a break after a challenging case or is the work more about routine? Hiilesmaa (2014) tells that a difficult case and a weak result can be emotionally demanding for a doctor. Fortunately the treatments of the serious cases are ruminated and resolved in meetings. This eases the spirit of the doctor in question. Sometimes on duty, the major decisions on the treatment must be done without external help, like emergency Caesarean sections. It is very unfortunate for a doctor, if the patient reports a complaint about a suspected malpractice. A doctor can of course make a mistake, but usually the question is about an inevitable complication. On the other hand, well-tended difficult cases bring self-confidence and the pleasure of working. The doctor's profession is still superb as popular hero-doctor TV-series prove, Ben Casey for example. (Hiilesmaa 2014.)

In music production the problems sound different, so how does the recovery of the music professionals happen? It seems that there are two main ways, either you take a break from working or - as a little surprise - working can be the best way to recover. Sometimes long sessions can fairly heavy, so a couple of days off could work. Anyway the work can be postponed seldom to get free time. On the other hand, finishing a heavy session can be relieving by itself, so starting the next session right after might not feel heavy at all. (Saksa 2014.) Puurula (2014) tells that especially after tough sessions it is good to have a break. Sometimes even a year is not enough. Sometimes a favourable project right after a tough one can work as a reviving process. Many same kind of challenges should not be taken one after the other. (Puurula 2014.) Engineer Heininen

(2014) has a clear opinion: It is good to just keep on working, not to stay mulling over too much (Heininen 2014).

Every one has their own ways to recover, there is no one right way. It should be in counterbalance to the work somehow. It should be some other kind of activities. One needs silence, the other needs exercise etc. Someone can use some intoxicants, but that only moves the recovery for later. (Hietanen 2014.)

## **11.2 Maverick or team worker?**

Even though mixing is a project where every party has to be observed, many engineers and producers prefer to do the actual work alone without artist's presence. I agree to this completely. There is no point in the artist sitting behind the engineer and saying like "the bass is too low" and the engineer answering "I know, but I am working with the EQ of the guitars now." The worst situation is that every member of the band passes by separately and gives some feedback. The producer should make it clear that the engineer needs silence to concentrate and afterwards there will be a certain moment when all the feedback is welcome.

After talking with artists about their sessions, surprisingly often there has not been any talks about the work flow. The artist can easily think that if he is not involved in guiding the engineer, the mixing process will go to a wrong direction. However when the engineer has set up everything and is familiar with all the material included, it is very easy and fast to make any changes to a mix afterwards. The case is often about the experience and trust. The artist is experienced and he knows how the process goes and so is the engineer; he knows what he is doing.

Earlier, during the analogue mixing era, everyone who wanted to have a word about the mix, had to get together and make the final decisions when the mix was completed to one stereo track. The recall options were very limited. In a way it was simple. Today it can be totally different. The recall options are unlimited and the questions can be more about how to stop the mixing, than how to make the mix better. Nowadays it is great, that everyone involved can take a copy and listen the mix when or where ever he likes. The own monitoring equipment can be used and the amount of the listening times are



unlimited in practice. It reduced the stress in the studio a lot, when there is no zero hour in the mix.

### **11.3 Reporting**

If the album is a success, it is naturally nicer to keep in touch with the parties afterwards. Nevertheless it would be professional to arrange some kind of debriefing and analyse the case also afterwards, despite the success. Often seems that it is easier to just let it be and try to live with disappointment. This kind of behaviour fits well to Finnish culture at least.

In the situation where producer and artist create another album or albums together, there are many good possibilities to exploit. The good working methods can be used again and the difficulties from the previous session can often be solved beforehand. Also it is a lot easier to decide, which equipment, instruments and studio should be used the next time for example. However there needs to be some analysis done first.

In childbirth the situation is very different, the cases are analysed accurately subsequently: the most serious cases are pondered in meetings weekly. In case of death, the reasons are investigated with multifold examinations. However, in half of the cases no comprehensive reason can be found. (Hiilesmaa 2014.)

## 12 THE PRODUCTION OF ESTADO NOVO ALBUM

At the end of this thesis I will pick up one specific case and see how the process went through and what kind of spiritual challenges there were. Estado Novo was a project, where I made notes how the process managed mentally along with production. There were many factors which made the production interesting in psychological way. Specially because the whole album was recorded in only three days. Next I will take a look at the production phase by phase and view through what kind of feelings there were during the process. I will also handle some technical points shortly to give a better picture of the production.

Estado Novo is not an actual band, it is a project that makes music together every now and then. The line up of Estado Novo is Teppo Haapasalo vocals, Kalle Sundström guitars, Jukka Puurula bass and recording and myself Hiili Hiilesmaa drums, mixing and production. The music style is somewhere in between 60's and 70's classic rock. The album contains also couple of fully acoustic songs.

Everyone in the group had their own personal challenges in advance. Haapasalo had to sing the whole album in one day which is a hard task for any singer. Puurula was mostly taking care of the recording along with the bass playing. Sundström had to search and use plenty of different guitar sounds and I as a drummer had to play each song from the beginning until the end at once. We used analogue tape recorder which makes punching in nearly impossible when recording drums.

### 12.1 Song writing process and demos

After writing songs couple of months it was time to create the first demo. Sundström had written a bunch songs and we got together and started to work with the arrangements. The working was very fluent as we have been working together in various projects earlier. We recorded a demo of ten songs very fast and very roughly. We used only guitar and drums in the first demo, because the idea was to let Haapasalo to write the lyrics and also write the melodies to the songs.

I noticed that if the first demo is recorded very carefully and all the details are very polished, there is a risk that somebody is getting marooned in some sounds or performances. It happens every now and then that the artist starts to deplore that this or that was better in the demo. It is surely possible in some cases to pick up a track or two from a demo, but usually it means only extra work and a lot of speculation. So I prefer very rough demos at the beginning of an album production.

The first mental challenge was to pick up the right songs to production. After making demos of fourteen songs we had to make up our minds which ones would be recorded to the album. In Estado Novo each member is equal, so at first we picked up the songs that everyone wanted to record. We had seven songs that each one wanted to be recorded. Then we still needed to find three songs from the set of seven. After a little conversation we simply voted and found the missing three songs.

## **12.2 Pre-production**

In case of Estado Novo pre-production was the most time taking phase of the whole process. At the beginning there was just an idea to make an album in the old way. So we decided to use analogue tape recorder in recording process and also use only vintage gear in recordings. Part of the idea was also to minimize the amount of tracks and keep the focus on good performance rather than in the amount of spice tracks. The vision was to make the album sound amateurish in a positive way and leave also some exciting sounding mistakes to the album. The idea was to create an illusion that the musicians are in the studio for the first time and everything happens very spontaneously. A lot of things were meant to be left in hands of destiny and to the recording moment itself. This kind of approach means automatically more spiritual tension.

All the members in Estado Novo have been making many albums using modern recording technology, but this time we wanted to see how it feels to make the recordings with the old equipment and also see how it effects to the music. We also wanted to make the record relatively fast and see what kind of effect it gives to the atmosphere. One interesting point was also to try to figure out how this kind of method feels, because everybody had to have a great take of each song at the same time. We had to capture the right moment to the tape. The group knew each other very well in advance which is very im-

portant in this kind of projects. If people unknown to each other try something like this, there will be a big risk that something goes wrong. The whole team must trust to each other, there is no extra time for debates or speculation.

Studio Mankku in Porvoo offered just perfect circumstances to this kind of production. The studio has analogue 24 track tape recorder, and recording console from 70's, a space big enough, vintage microphones, accommodation and sauna to name a few points. It was also important that the whole team would spend the whole period of time together to form a solid spirit. It always breaks the atmosphere, if people are coming and going during the session. In this kind of short session everyone was happy and able to stay in the studio over the whole session.



PICTURE 12: The idea was to minimize the tracks, so for drums there were seven tracks (Hiilesmaa 2013).

The idea was to create a feeling that the album could have been done in early 70's. So we were very picky about what instruments and equipment we would use. We wanted to use vintage equipment because of their sound but also because of the feeling they have. I ended up using my Maya drum kit from mid 70's. It is also my first drum kit, so it had a right kind of feel to the project. For guitar recordings we used a vintage Marshall set

from late 60's and couple of old fuzz pedals. The bass was recorded using Monster amp and the vocals were recorded by Neumann U47.



PICTURE 13: Fuzzy guitar sounds were in a big role (Hiilesmaa 2013).

However we had a feeling that the album would be too unilateral, if we were using very fuzzy sounds through the whole album. To avoid this feel we decided to record couple of songs fully acoustically. This decision was not very easy, because some wanted fully loud and electric album and some wanted more dynamics to the sound. Also we did not want to compromise anything so we needed some debate about the case. After the debate we decided to have one fully acoustic song and two acoustic intros on the album.

### 12.3 Recording

As we wanted to make the album sound like it had been done in one weekend, we ended up to make all the recordings in three days. Day one was for set up and sound check. Day two was for recording all the drums, bass and guitars. Day three was for vocals, backing vocals and for some little overdubs, like for percussions.

Also there are couple of acoustic songs in the album which we decided to work out at some suitable point during the weekend.

### **12.3.1 Day 1**

From the starts of the setting up, it felt very exciting and also very relaxing that we knew that there would not be too many microphones, too many alternative takes or tracks in the session. It felt very fresh that we were able to focus only to the most important things and to the most essential subjects. We also created the most of the final sounds in the recording situation, so it took a bit more time in sound check. At first it caused a little stress to use more time to sound check than normally, because we had booked only three days for the whole album session.

After all making the final sounds in sound check proved to be the right choice. Performing the songs together with the whole group at once felt really good when we had the final sounds in monitor headphones. Often in drum recordings there are only a click and a some kind of scratch guitar in drummers headphones. One challenge was that all the songs had to be played from the beginning until the end at once. Because we recorded the songs to analogue tape, there was no chance to punch in or punch out the takes. Otherwise there would have been a crack in the sound. We did not use a click track either, so there was no chance to pick up material from the other takes or from the other playlists.

When playing together live and recording at the same time, it is important that the set up is built to be relaxing and inspiring. Instead of using isolated recording booths we put all the equipment to the same space which was a big hall. The eye contact was also very important specially as the songs include some jam parts where nobody was sure how the song would develop.



PICTURE 14: Estado Novo set up (Hiilesmaa 2013).

A little hassle occurred as there was no line of sight from the control room to the hall where the songs were played. Anyway that caused only little delays in communication at the start of the recording sessions. We put speech microphones to each player to make the communication more straight forward.

### 12.3.2 Day 2

There were ten songs to be recorded. Because there was only one day to record all the songs, we knew that it would be a very long day. We expected that the recordings would take about sixteen hours. The songs were divided in three categories. The idea was to play the simple ones at first to create the feeling that the things are progressing fine. If the most difficult songs would have been the first ones, it would have been too risky to cut the relaxed feeling.

Secondly we picked up the most difficult songs. We had some good material on the tape already, so the atmosphere was relaxed and the moment was right to start working with the most difficult ones. Also all the musicians were already used to the monitoring and we were kind of warmed up in every way. The arrangements of these songs were mostly finished, but those had some parts which were simply difficult to play. The songs had tempo changes for example.

The last set of songs were the ones that were the most unfinished. The idea was to work out the most finished songs first and then use the time left with the unfinished ones. However the first seven songs took a lot of energy. The performances had to be very good and we also had to decide if the take was the one in case of each song. After recording about ten hours, concentration was not the best possible anymore and we started to make mistakes even in the most simple cases. So it was time to stop recording new songs and leave the missing two song to the last day. Instead of forcing ourselves to continue we decided to work out something less critical tasks, so we did some percussions and some special effects.

### **12.3.3 Day 3**

After working hard the previous day, we were a little stressed because we still had to record two songs with the whole band and also finish the arrangements of those songs. In addition to that there was a lot of work waiting as all the lead vocals had to be done. However the third day started well and the rest had done good for everybody. Haapasalo was again singing along and warming up his voice when the band instruments were recorded, so his voice was in a very good shape when we started the actual vocal recordings. Also a good thing was that Haapasalo had been singing along the whole previous day, so he had all the lyrics, timings and the other details finished.

To avoid unnecessary hassle I ended up to make the recordings together with Haapasalo, while the others were unloading the backline in the hall. To make the working process as fluent as possible we recorded each song twice at first. The first take was to see if there is still something that needs to be arranged or changed and the second take was the first real take. Using analogue tape recorder it is possible to punch in, not that



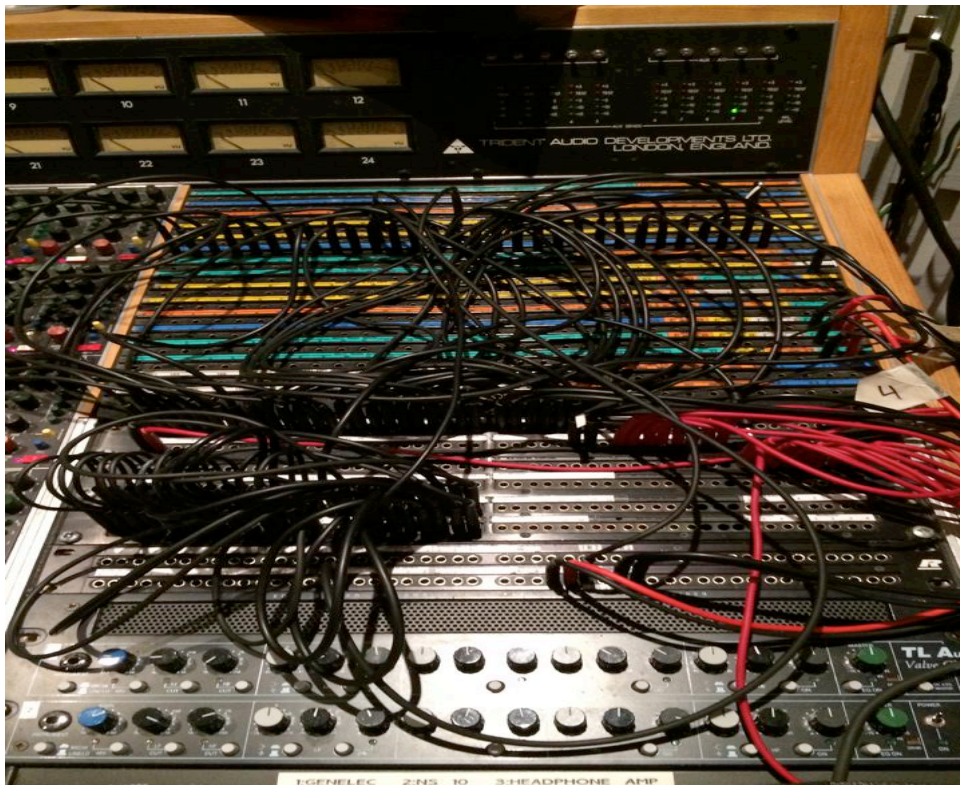
easily than with DAW, but sometimes verses or choruses were recorded separately. After having two tracks of lead vocals in each song, we still took a third take to each song just to make sure that we have everything.

Mentally it is very important that the vocalist knows exactly when he needs to do the vocal takes. This is important because vocals is so much about the feelings. I have seen in many sessions that the vocalist is getting frustrated after waiting his turn days or maybe weeks in the worst case. In this kind of method, where the vocals were recorded at once in the same session, was surprisingly many positive perceptions. When the vocalist has warmed up his voice it is easy to sing even four hours consecutive. In concerts the singers are singing usually couple of hours without a pause, so it is more about the mental preparation that about harassed voice. Also it saves a huge amount of studio time when there is no need to set up the microphones, pre-amps and monitoring several times. We used four hours for lead vocal recordings and we were done.

Before recording the backing vocals I had to choose the right lead vocal track, so we could match the timings right. I had made notes during the lead vocal recordings, so I found quickly the right tracks. The recording of backing vocals was very fluent as everybody were used to sing and proceed backing vocals. Also using analogue tape recorder it was fast, because there was no need to open each songs session separately, but the songs were in a row in a reel.

## **12.4 Editing**

In this kind of live recording there is basically nothing to edit. So it was really exciting that we could move straight to the mixing process and jump over the edit process completely. However, there was one phase to do before I could start the mixing process. All the tracks had to be transferred to DAW. This is usually a bit stressful situation, because it is done only rarely. We did not have much routine in doing it and also we had been working vastly the three days. Luckily there were enough inputs in DAW, so we did not need to set any synchronisation system in between analogue recorder and DAW. All the songs were transferred to one Pro Tools session which contained the whole album.



PICRURE 15: A lot of connections were needed when transferring the tracks from the analogue tape recorder to DAW (Hiilesmaa 2013).

## 12.5 Mixing

Some factors made the mixing process easy for me. There were not too many tracks and all the final sounds were created already in the recording process. I had also played the drums by myself so I was really familiar with the material. But in the spiritual side there were more challenges: I was mixing by myself, so sometimes it would have been good to have some feedback during the process. Also when mixing your own material it is just too easy to start to split hairs. The biggest threat was to start editing the relative rough performances of the songs, but that would have destroyed the whole idea of this kind of album. Naturally all the drum samples and vocal tuning did not belong to this kind of production. I found out that there were two ways to mix the album, very fast or very slowly.

## 12.6 Mental observations

I made several interesting and useful observations during the Estado Novo session what it comes to mental side of music production. When the material to be recorded is ready and the whole production team is mentally oriented, it is possible to make an album in a few days. This requires that everyone is very involved in the process. Working fast gives a certain flow to the process which fits perfect to rock music.

Despite we knew well what we were doing, the recording situation was very fragile. If anyone had started to question the decisions or the way of working during the recording process, it would have crashed the working flow easily. The live recording caused also some other interesting things. When certain mistakes are accepted and the certain moment of the recording can be felt, music starts to communicate in a different way. The music lives more and that grabs the listener differently compared to music which is completely edited and polished. Which way is better is up to the taste of the audience. At least as a musician in the album it feels exciting when you can hear all the moments that happened when the recording was going on.

Specially today when the recording budgets are tight it saves a lot of studio time and money, if the band is well prepared before entering the studio. However many artists are used to spend a lot of time in the recording process and it might be difficult to change the habits that are learned earlier. Here comes the mental side to the picture. The producer should be able to encourage the artist that it is possible to make an album relatively fast, if the team knows what they are doing. In addition to music production the producer should be kind of trainer that makes the artist believe into his skills and knowledge.

A good communication is very important. The conversation must be supported during the whole process, but it is also important that the continuous conversation does not cause compromises that can dilute the result. Also each one in the album making process should be aware of their personal roles in the process. Each one should be able to brainstorm freely, but if stress or pressure starts to appear the producer should take the lead in the process and calm the situation.

**Kotimaa top 20:**

1. Stam1na: SLK
2. FM 2000: Carina II
3. Tundramatiks: Ajo
4. Ghost Brigade: IV – One With The Storm
5. Kauko Röyhkä: Etelän peto
6. Jarkko Martikainen: Koirien taivas
7. Red Eleven: Round II
8. Estado Novo: Estado Novo
9. Timo Rautiainen & Neljäs Sektori: Toinen varoitus
10. Räjätäjät: Rock'n'roll painajainen
11. Jimmy Wasted: Kohtuukäyttäjän päiväkirja
12. Kiro: Kiro
13. Salaiva: Hänk
14. Kaaoksen ystävät: Loppu
15. Pietarin Speaktaakkeli: Rakkauteen
16. Atomirotta: I
17. CC33: Pig Safari
18. The Milestones: Higher Mountain – Closer Sun
19. Lost Society: Terror Hungry
20. Clark Kent: Passenger

PICTURE 16: Music critics in newspaper Keskisuomalainen ranked Estado Novo number 8 in top 20 Finnish albums in 2014 (Keskisuomalainen 2014).

### 13 ABOUT THE SOURCE MATERIAL

When writing this thesis, I found that there is hardly any written material about the mental side of music production. There are many kinds of books which are handling things like engineering, microphone techniques, musical side of the production and also the business side. I think there would be a good niche for a book, which would handle the psychological and social side of the music production. Surely music production is extremely case-specific, but still many problems and challenges could be solved by using the same approach. In addition, everybody's personal experiences are the main source for handling with these kinds of situations. This can make the generalization difficult.

Despite the fact that music production is very case-specific, I am sure that producers and other music professionals would be open to this kind of book project and tell about their personal experiences and opinions about this kind of subject. Today when music technology is relatively inexpensive and many artists are able to do recordings by themselves, this kind of publication would have a purpose.

## 14 DISCUSSION

In this thesis I handled different factors that can cause the stressful situations in album making process. I think that this kind of factors can be applied to many kinds of creative processes and to teamwork more generally. It is easy to think that working in the studio is about using technical equipment, because the work is mostly done surrounded by studio devices.

Today, the producer's work is a lot more international and a big share of the work might be done via internet without ever even meeting the artist, the role of good communication has increased a lot and the risk of communication breakdown has increased as well. Earlier, studio work was more about using the equipment and production tricks and running the whole session physically together with an artist. The communication was easier because there were less cultural differences and less remote work.

I was surprised by how great a meaning the communication has in the studio working process and how the communication needs to be supported all the time. The vision of the result should be as clear as possible for everybody involved and if the process is implemented keeping the result in mind, everything starts to look simpler. There should be good leadership and a clear production strategy. Otherwise the session can drift to reactive action, where the decisions are made by the terms of the current situation, not by the terms of the best possible result.

One of the most interesting findings was made, when the producer's work was compared to the doctor's work. The interview with psychotherapist Katja Hietanen indicates that people react to a stressful situation very much in the same way, regardless of what induces the stress. This is because stress is not only a mental, but also very much a physical reaction. The stress increases when mental and physical sides of a human are feeding each other.

The producer's work is similar to many other specialist work, where the customer or the artist do not know what he needs by himself. Here the producers work and doctor's work are very close to each other. At first there is a need for building the trust, then there has to be a diagnosis and when the problem is solved, the right kind of treatment

will be chosen. The more experienced and educated the specialist is, the bigger chances there are to find the right kind of treatment. The more similar cases the specialist has experienced, the better possibilities there are to find a solution to each situation.

I think that it would be good, if the mental side and communication skills were taken more into account in music production education, like doctors have in their education. Doctors have also their weekly meetings, where they open the difficult cases. Here is a big difference between doctors and producers. Where doctors work independently like producers, the doctors belong always to some community unlike producers. Most of the producers work alone in their studios and have no contacts to other producers. However it would be very fruitful for producers to get an opportunity to share their experiences with other producers and build support networks. Internets chat forums can never replace the face to face meetings.

Cross over seminars would be very stimulating, where for example a doctor, ice hockey coach, music producer, and a finance director would talk about creativity, because in a sense they all need to make art in their work. There would be chances to a very interesting observation of creativity and communication compared to a conservative music seminar where a producer, a promotor, a manager and an A&R guy ponder the current music marketing situation.

As the example case *Estado Novo* indicates, when the vision is clear it is easier to make single decisions in the album making process. It is also easier for everyone to prepare himself to the process mentally when the target is clear. The vision should be crystalised before the actual recording, then the stress and unwanted pressure can be avoided better.

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**APPENDICES**

Appendix 1. A CD of transcribed interviews:

Heininen, Juha. Interview 2.10.2014. interviewer Hiili Hiilesmaa.

Hietanen, Katja. Interview 7.10.2014 (wav -audio file). interviewer Hiili Hiilesmaa

Hiilesmaa, Vilho. Interview 13.9.2014. interviewer Hiili Hiilesmaa.

Puurula, Jukka. Interview 1.10.2014. interviewer Hiili Hiilesmaa.

Saksa, Janne. Interview 17.10.2014. interviewer Hiili Hiilesmaa.