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Music Collaboration in an Online Environment: Technologies, Roles and Creativity

by

Jan Nepomucen Pietrzak

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

The University of Huddersfield

July 2021

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Abstract

Collaboration has played a key role in the music production process throughout history. The emergence of the internet and internet-based technologies, in conjunction with the constantly-evolving practice of record production, has opened up new ways to engage with collaborators around the globe.

This thesis studies the creative practices present within the art of record production in a collaborative online environment, exploring how technologies and professional roles impact the creative process. The practice-led approach of this project, aided by phenomenological and autoethnographic methods, looks at the various contributions of collaborators, as well as their thoughts, feelings, and reflections on the online-based creative process. A series of interviews with the participants enables the examination of individual experiences as perceived by the persons involved.

Contained within is a review of current research into the art of record production, focusing on areas of creativity, online collaboration, and professional roles. The text then analyses the data collected through the interview process, firstly examining the participants, their roles, and resulting expectations, followed by an inspection of individual musical projects developed throughout the course of the study. These findings are then discussed and situated within the context of relevant existent research. The text concludes with a commentary on the practices of music collaboration in an online environment and offers advice for future projects in this field.

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Table of Contents

Copyright Statement.....	2
Abstract.....	3
Acknowledgements.....	3
Table of Contents.....	4
List of Submitted Work.....	6
1. Introduction.....	7
2. Literature Review.....	10
2.1 Creativity and Online Collaboration.....	10
2.2 Professional Roles.....	15
2.3 Summary.....	17
3. Methodology.....	19
3.1 Mixed-Methods Design.....	19
3.1.1 Phenomenology.....	19
3.1.2 Autoethnography.....	21
3.2 Collection and Interpretation of Data.....	21
3.3 Summary.....	25
4. Analysis.....	27
4.1 The Participants.....	28
4.2 Role Identities and Expectations.....	28
4.3 The Musical Projects.....	35
4.3.1 'Aphrodite's Thorn'.....	35
4.3.2 'Drowning Astronauts'.....	37
4.3.3 'Greenhouse'.....	40
4.3.4 'Kanye Type Beat'.....	43
4.3.5 'Poppy'.....	46
4.3.6 'Race You To The End'.....	48
4.3.7 'Sakura'.....	50
4.3.8 'St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church Blues'.....	52
5. Discussion.....	55
5.1 Creativity in an Online Environment.....	55
5.2 Technological Restrictions.....	57
5.3 Evolving Practices.....	58
6. Conclusion.....	60
References.....	64
Bibliography.....	64

Discography.....	70
Appendices.....	71
Appendix 1 - Interview 1.....	71
Producer/Co-Producer 1 (CP1.1).....	71
Engineer 1/Instrumentalist 1 (E1/I1.1).....	78
Engineer 2/Instrumentalist 3 (E2/I3.1).....	88
Instrumentalist 2 (I2.1).....	94
Songwriter/Composer 1 (SC1.1).....	98
Songwriter/Composer 2 (SC2.1).....	106
Vocalist/Artist 1 (VA1.1).....	111
Vocalist/Artist 2 (VA2.1).....	116
Appendix 2 - Interview 2.....	122
Producer/Co-Producer 1 (CP1.2).....	122
Engineer 2/Instrumentalist 3 (E2/I3.2).....	127
Instrumentalist 2 (I2.2).....	132
Songwriter/Composer 1 (SC1.2).....	136
Songwriter/Composer 2 (SC2.2).....	142
Vocalist/Artist 1 (VA1.2).....	146
Vocalist/Artist 2 (VA2.2).....	150

List of Submitted Work

'Aphrodite's Thorn' - stereo audio - 3 minutes 15 seconds

'Drowning Astronauts' - stereo audio - 4 minutes 13 seconds

'Greenhouse' - stereo audio - 2 minutes 34 seconds

'Kanye Type Beat' - stereo audio - 3 minutes 32 seconds

'Poppy' - stereo audio - 4 minutes 18 seconds

'Race You To The End' - stereo audio - 5 minutes 12 seconds

'Sakura' - stereo audio - 3 minutes 20 seconds

'St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church Blues' - stereo audio - 3 minutes 47 seconds

Audio files can be accessed at:

<https://soundcloud.com/j-n-pietrzak/sets/music-collaboration-in-an-online-environment-technologies-roles-and-creativity/s-uVwVfSP6lcu>

1. Introduction

Collaboration has been an integral part of music-making for as long as music has existed. One could argue that music in its very nature is a collaborative phenomenon, whether this is a tangible collaboration between several musicians working together; a performer and their audience; or a less obvious, 'hidden', collaboration between the musician and the manufacturer of their equipment; or between a composer and their inspiration. Taking these ideas into account, it is hard to imagine any instance of musical creation or performance that could not be, at least in some way, collaborative.

As long as creative collaboration has existed it has also evolved and is constantly evolving still. With the emergence of the internet and its ascent to the prominent role it plays in our society today, it was perhaps inevitable that the art of record production adopted these new technologies to create novel, innovative creative practices in order to keep up with the changes and challenges of the modern world.

The aim of my research is to examine the necessary and complex interactions between creative and technical challenges faced by the individuals navigating this volatile and ever-changing landscape of music collaboration. I examine the ways in which the participants' personal experiences inform their approaches to collaboration in relation to their present situations and experiences, as well as the projects they are faced with within the context of an online-based work environment. In no way is this a definitive guide to online collaboration, nor was it ever meant to be, but more of a holistic insight into the thoughts, actions, and reactions of a group of individuals involved in the creative process. This study is an attempt at transcribing and translating the inner workings and intricate interplay of collaborative musical activity in a way that is useful to both practitioners and scholars alike.

My research project studies the involvement of multiple individuals from a variety of different roles and their interaction with the creative process. These individuals were involved in the creation of eight musical projects through which I examine various elements of online collaboration. In order to investigate these aspects in the

most utilitarian way possible, four key areas of interest were identified in relation to the various processes found within the context of online creative environments. Firstly, my research aims to examine how online collaboration informs and affects the creative approaches of the individuals involved in the project. Secondly, I investigate the ways in which access to technology and other resources impacts the participants' productivity and creativity. Thirdly, I aim to determine the key challenges of shifting from a face-to-face setting to an online collaborative environment. Lastly, my project studies how different roles within the art of record production approached online collaboration. To establish a more concrete set of criteria through which I was able to analyse and discuss my findings, four research questions were derived from the above-mentioned points.

1. How does online collaboration change the creative approach?
2. In what ways does access to technology and resources affect productivity and creativity?
3. What are the key challenges of transitioning to an online-based collaborative environment?
4. How are different roles defined within the online collaboration process?

The primary method consists of a series of interviews with all of the participants, which were then transcribed so that relevant thoughts, feelings, and experiences could be extracted and analysed. As a participating party, I also draw on my own personal experiences of the creative process in order to provide another angle.

This thesis is organised into four main chapters. Chapter 2 examines existent academic knowledge in the fields of creativity, online collaboration, and professional roles found within the art of record production. Chapter 3 addresses the methods used for this study, including practice-led research, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), and autoethnography. Here, I include details of how these methods were applied to my project, information about the interview process, and how the collected data was organised and analysed. Chapter 4 then uses the collected data to identify and process key information about the participants, their contributions, comments, and reflections. This chapter has been divided into three sections. 4.1

provides a brief overview of socio-demographic information extracted from the interviews. 4.2 explores the roles of the individuals involved within the context of pre-established ideas as well as their own expectations. 4.3 looks at the outcomes of each of the resulting eight tracks in more detail. Next, chapter 5 frames the gathered information within the wider academic discourse, relating my project back to texts established in chapter 2, and uses these elements to answer my research questions. Finally, chapter 6 describes my project's findings, how these can be applied practically to inform and improve the relevant practices, and identifies what further research needs to be conducted in the established areas of significance to the online collaborative process.

The subject area of my research coincides with times when online collaboration could be viewed as one of the most important areas of development for the art of record production. With the undisputed effects Covid-19, and the resulting restrictions, have had on the creative arts, now and in the future, we must look to new practices and technologies in order to forge new paths for these collaborative activities to prevail. I hope that my study can illuminate the ways through which these processes can begin to take place.

2. Literature Review

In this chapter, I contextualise my study and situate its aims within the wider academic discourse, acknowledging existent key research in the field of record production, with the aim of setting out a clear path for new knowledge to be acquired. Record production has a long-standing history in popular music studies and has been acknowledged in many studies throughout the years (Belz, 1969; Gracyk, 1996; Théberge, 1997; Zak, 2001). The art of record production has since become a major field in the study of popular music, with an academic journal of the same name collecting many works in this field (Frith & Zagorski-Thomas, 2012; Zagorski-Thomas et al., 2020). The subject area has also seen the release of a series of books on 'Perspectives in Music Production', covering a range of topics in the field, several of which can be found referenced throughout this thesis (Hepworth-Sawyer & Hodgson, 2016; Hepworth-Sawyer et al., 2019; 2020; Shelvock, 2020). Two key areas have been identified in order to outline my approach. The first sub-chapter forms an introduction to accepted concepts and models in the fields of 'Creativity and Online Collaboration', through which my own creative research can be viewed and apprehended. The ideas presented within this sub-chapter relate directly to creative practices, collaborative approaches, and technologies. Following, 'Professional Roles' establishes the key facilitators of the creative process as well as useful forms of classification, which can be used to form a better understanding of the interactions and relationships involved in the creative process. The knowledge identified from the texts discussed in this sub-chapter, helps to establish a foundation by which my participant's involvement can be assessed.

2.1 Creativity and Online Collaboration

Creativity has often been seen as an otherworldly and perhaps even undefinable concept, to a point of romanticisation. Such views have played a pivotal role in establishing the commonplace fantasy of the 'musical genius', something that has

been debunked by many defining studies into the practice (Weisberg, 1993; McIntyre, 2012). Csikszentmihalyi's 'Systems Model of Creativity' (1996) establishes a foundation through which we can begin to understand the phenomenon of creativity. According to this model, three conditions must be met for creativity to occur. An individual receives a set of rules and practices established by the 'domain'. New content must be created by the 'individual' within the context of the 'domain'. When a new variation has been created, it must then be accepted for inclusion into the 'domain' by the 'field' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999, p. 315). It is therefore not solely the individual that is responsible, but rather a series of events surrounding the individual and their interactions with the wider context which determine the emergence and acceptance of creativity. McIntyre's extension of the model (2011) goes further to define these parameters within the field of songwriting, which can reasonably be extended to the art of record production. The 'domain' is simply the song or composition in question - the product of creativity; the 'field' embodies the social and cultural influences dictating the context of the creative content; and the 'person' can be identified as the individual driving or experiencing the process (McIntyre, 2011). A further revision to the model has been created to accommodate the overlap between the components and processes originally proposed by Csikszentmihalyi, acknowledging that these systems rarely occur in isolation and constantly feed into each other (Kerrigan, 2013, p.114). This revision reinforces the complexity of relationships between the systems involved and helps to contextualise them within the subject of record production, setting out a much more intricate model, albeit one much closer to the true nature of the creative practice. These elements set the groundwork for a more informative and analytical approach to creativity within a popular music context, and have been used by several popular music researchers such as Bennett (2011), Martin (2014), and Thompson (2019), amongst others.

To better understand the inner-workings of creativity in an online environment, one must first examine the driving components of musical collaboration in the wider context of popular music. Zager (2012, p. 7) suggests that a standard set of factors can be identified in music production: the artist, producer, engineer, and an A&R (Artists & Repertoire) representative. This proposed notion of the integral role of

collaboration in the music industry implies that most decisions in the production process are indeed collaborative (Zager, 2012, p. 23). While it is apparent that Zager's point comes from a more traditional business-driven view of music production, this statement opens the door to the argument that modern music production can in fact be a collaboration between any combination of the parties involved - an idea I aim to directly explore through my research.

Numerous studies reinforce the idea that collaboration is an inherent aspect of popular music creation. Bennett (2011) examines the effects of collaborative practice on songwriting, exploring the benefits of it as well as identifying several models of collaboration that can be used to categorise approaches experienced by collaborators. Bennett argues that the inclusion of a co-writer increases the chances of the songwriting process being successful, as it adds an extra stage of approval leading to further development (2011). The increased chances of creative success could also be attributed to the spontaneity that often comes from working with other individuals, as it helps to establish the creative outcome as a major driving force within the project (Koszolko, 2015).

This idea of novelty and excitement acting as a driving force seems to be prevalent when we start honing in on collaboration within an online environment (Moir et al., 2019, p. 202). Th  berge makes a case for online collaboration as a technological solution to the issue of isolation, pioneered by amateur musicians (2004, p. 777). Using internet-based tools and technologies has since become common practice throughout popular music, and not only in its creation but also in its distribution (Th  berge, 2004). It is not only within the professional realm that valuable knowledge can be found on the subject. Indeed the semi-professional and amateur may also offer important insights into the practice's relevance in modern music-making.

Koszolko (2015) acknowledges the growing importance of remote digital workplaces and inspects key elements that enable this practice not only to exist and evolve but to become a viable alternative. When it comes to online collaboration tools, an important distinction must be made between synchronous and asynchronous technologies. Koszolko (2015) studies the capabilities of Remote Music Collaboration Software (RMCS), focusing his research on tools available to individuals

involved within this process and how these might have shaped the emergence and development of remote collaboration as a commonplace practice. Whilst it is essential to acknowledge the existence and significance of these tools, one must also acknowledge that new software, and new software capabilities, arise at a rapid pace - Digital Audio Workstations (DAWs), as well as countless telecommunication applications, make sharing musical ideas in audio format easier and more widely accessible than ever before. As Théberge's observation on the influence of amateur participants suggests (2004, p. 777), we should not focus solely on the tools used by the informed professional, but also on the preference of those still new to the practice. Cremata and Powell suggest that each unique collaboration should be encouraged to find its own preferred method of communication. Many students in their study opted for more familiar options like text messages, emails, and video calls (Cremata & Powell, 2015, p. 309). My research does not impose any particular mode of communication over another, allowing participants to determine their own preferences through their engagement with the projects. This allows methods to develop more organically so a more useful observation can be made about the social aspects of online collaboration.

These technologies are an integral aspect of online collaboration, not only as communication tools but also as enablers of creativity. For example, in electronic music production, a producer's creativity can be seen as a product of the relationship between the individual and their technological toolkit (Hepworth-Sawyer et al., 2019, p. 182-183). Due to the rapid evolution of popular production and communication software with audio sharing capabilities, such as Discord, Skype, and Zoom, online music collaboration is no longer the new frontier, it has become a common practice amongst creative individuals. My research aims to examine this idea more closely, drawing on the experiences of a range of individuals to gain a better understanding of how these new environments are shaping the way music is created.

Within this new context, the work environment can become an afterthought. Due to the theoretical disconnection between collaborators, each working within their own individual physical space, it is all too easy to get sucked into a view that prioritises collaborative technology and overlooks the evident significance of the

environment. The focus must be expanded to include all factors that could contribute to the overall process and outcome. The idea that the physical environment plays a prominent role in online collaboration is not a new one, however - it is something that has been at the forefront of research into new technologies and practices (Théberge, 2004; Thompson, 2019). As Kerrigan's revision of the systems model of creativity suggests (2013, p. 114), we must not fall into the trap of looking at each element in isolation, but rather attempt to understand the relationships between these factors to truly appreciate the complexity of creative practices.

A new form of collaboration comes with a new set of challenges and obstacles. There are several technological constraints to consider when examining the efficiency and overall effectiveness of such practices. Firstly, it is important to acknowledge the role of the internet itself, as many of the interactions will depend on it. Internet upload and download speeds, and the potential audio and video glitches resulting from these, are often unavoidable hurdles of working in an internet-based environment (Hepworth-Sawyer et al., 2019, p. 194-197). It is important to mention the potential global inequalities resulting from the heavy reliance on internet connections, as many geographical and socio-economic areas around the world do not have access to such commodities. Secondly, we must understand that working with a certain set of tools can lead to certain stylistic biases (Koszolko, 2015) - in this case, a largely digital environment may favour genres already familiar with this 'field'. As such, electronic music styles that make extensive use of digital tools as part of their creative processes, such as EDM and hip hop (Hepworth-Sawyer et al., 2019, p. 20), should naturally emerge as better suited to deal with these challenges. By not placing any stylistic constraints on the projects or participants, this study will provide more insight into how different music interacts with the online collaborative process.

2.2 Professional Roles

With the involvement of collaborators comes a set of relationships and interactions between the individual, their role, and the process. Most of these roles are centred around facilitating content creators - in this case, roles such as songwriters and composers. Perhaps the most studied role in music production is that of the producer. The role of the producer can be summarised as simply the person in charge of translating the artist's vision into the finished product (Hepworth-Sawyer, 2009). Howlett (2012a) extends this definition to that of a mediator between the artist, technology, and industry representatives. Whilst this is helpful in establishing a baseline understanding of the role, we must dig deeper to examine its true complexity. The existence of several types of producers is a concept prevalent throughout this area of study. The role of the producer can vary vastly and can be classified according to different sets of criteria: musical genre, experience level, location, technology, and other aspects of popular music creation (Burgess, 2013, p. 7-9). Genre and technology, in particular, seem to be widely accepted as defining aspects of music production (Frith & Zagorski-Thomas, 2012; Martin, 2014; Hepworth-Sawyer et al., 2019). These factors will be particularly relevant when studying online collaboration, as Koszolko (2015) points out certain technologies can lead to stylistic biases within the creative process. Burgess's categorisation defines six types of producer: 'Artist', 'Auteur', 'Facilitative', 'Collaborative', 'Enablative', and 'Consultative' (Burgess, 2013). It is important to acknowledge these categories are not mutually exclusive and several labels can often apply to a single individual. The 'Artist' category represents artists who produce themselves; the 'Auteur' signifies a creative approach to music production which often incorporates songwriting, performing, recording, and even mixing; the 'Facilitative' producer is one who enables and supports the recording artist's creativity; the 'Collaborative' producer can contribute creatively and works closely with the artist, more as a member of the team than a clearly defined leader; the 'Enablative' producer is closely related to what we now associate with A&R - scouting out artists and material, and creating a conducive environment for the production to take place; lastly, the 'Consultative' producer fulfils the role of a mentor, taking responsibility for the overall image and

direction of a larger project or community. These categories establish a clear set of criteria by which involvement in the production process can be classified and assessed. Whilst Burgess's intention may have been to establish a clearer way of defining the role of the producer, this classification system can also be extended to other creative roles.

The producer will often seek out and employ session musicians to help fulfil the artistic vision (Reisman, 1977, p. 65). Hannan (2003, as cited in Campelo, 2015) identifies two types of session musicians - the 'creative player' and the 'excellent sight-reader'. The 'creative player' will usually work closely with the creative content to establish a concrete basis for the track, usually as part of the rhythm section. The 'excellent sight-reader', often with a classical music background, performs a much more technical role and is expected to deliver perfect performances according to the vision of the original creator. This idea has since seen development, the role of the session musician will often overlap with other roles, primarily that of the engineer. Session musicians will often be expected to act as sound engineers for the recording of their own parts (Herbst & Albrecht, 2018a; 2018b).

The engineer is a role often perceived as a facilitator of creativity (Thompson, 2019). Traditionally, the engineer was seen as a technical role with an expert understanding of studio technology, whose job was to guide the producer through the technical aspects of music production (Reisman, 1977, p. 66). In more recent times, the role of the producer and the engineer has often been fulfilled by the same individual, leading to a blurring of lines (Pras & Guastavino, 2011). Schmidt Horning points out that whilst it is now much easier to acquire the tools required for these highly technical tasks, a certain level of tacit knowledge and experience is required in order to perform this role to the desired standard (2004). It is just important to examine the prior experiences of the individuals involved then, as it is to study their tools. Perhaps the engineer's key task is to ensure that the audio quality is of the highest possible standard (Schmidt Horning, 2013). This is usually achieved through recording and mixing of the projects (Thompson, 2019, p. 176). Whilst originally mixing was closely connected to the musical performance, perhaps similar to that of an arranger or conductor for the recorded media, the evolution and increasing complexity of technologies available to the mix engineer has allowed them to

develop their own unique approaches (Phillips, 2016). In order for the engineer to successfully convey the overall mood and emotional context of the music, they must listen to and understand the project, identifying essential elements of the creative content as well as issues with the recording (Izhaki, 2009, p. 113). Such a close involvement with the musical content suggests that the role of the engineer can often be highly creative, as well as technical (Zak, 2001, p. 163; Thompson, 2019, p. 176). This idea can be traced back to the work of Kealy (1979), who suggests that the studio should be seen as another instrument that can be used creatively as well as technically.

When considering the significance of various roles within the creative process, it is essential to acknowledge the gender disparity of the music industry. The male-dominated nature of the industry has been a topic of debate for many decades (Frith & McRobbie, 1978). In recent years there have been several studies into the reasons behind this lack of representation (Wolfe, 2012; 2020; Raines & Strong, 2019; Hepworth-Sawyer et al., 2020;). Wolfe (2012) explores the effects of access to technology and the 'home studio' on the involvement of women in music production. Wolfe (2012) argues that self-production practices of female artists, perhaps similar to the 'Artist' classification identified by Burgess (2013), could be playing a significant part in addressing the inherent gender imbalance. Whilst not a core focus of my study, it is important to bear in mind the existence of this imbalance when studying the field and the individuals involved.

2.3 Summary

The literature review has revealed a number of areas in need of further study. Whilst several useful models for understanding creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; McIntyre, 2011; Kerrigan, 2013; Thompson, 2019) and the many roles (Hepworth-Sawyer, 2009; Burgess, 2013; Schmidt Horning, 2013; Herbst & Albrecht, 2018a,2018b;), there is a significant gap in the study of music collaboration which addresses the complex relationships between these elements within an internet-based context. Thus, a closer inspection of these complex interactions must

be at the forefront of my research and a level of immersion will be required in order to examine this on a more individual scale (rather than general). Théberge's acknowledges the importance of the semi-professional and amateur influences on these practices (2004), making a diverse cross-section an important aspect of any useful study into this field. My methodology aims to make use of these points in order to provide a new angle and a thorough insight into these elements and their intricate interplays within an online context.

3. Methodology

3.1 Mixed-Methods Design

This study followed a practice-led approach (Smith & Dean, 2009), using practical creative work as the main means of acquiring data and knowledge. The aim of the practice was to generate data that could, in turn, be analysed and then used to inform future projects. Using a practice-led method enabled a shift in focus, away from solely the written word, to a combination of experiences, processes, and reflections working in conjunction with academic frameworks and analyses. This can enable the establishment of practically applicable knowledge, which can further be used to enrich the field of study beyond the academic context itself (Hawkins & Wilson, 2017). Rather than focusing on a single method, I decided to employ several methods as this helped to mitigate some of their respective weaknesses and limitations. My study explored the collaboration between myself and various participants who engaged in a variety of record production-related tasks, yielding a total of eight musical projects. Whilst the musical projects are worthy of acknowledgement, these were mostly used as a data source and the tracks themselves were not a focus of my research. The interests of my research instead lie with the perceived experiences, thoughts, feelings, reflections, and challenges of the individuals involved.

3.1.1 Phenomenology

Phenomenology was a fitting method for my research. As Denscombe highlights, phenomenology emphasizes the importance of aspects such as subjectivity, interpretation, feelings, and attitudes (2010, p. 93-94). As I was concerned more with individual experiences and different perspectives rather than any idea of objective reality (Creswell, 2013, p. 20-21), this approach seemed fitting to the goals of my

project. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) seemed best suited to my goals as it is primarily concerned with focused small-scale studies (Smith et al, 2009).

IPA is committed to the detailed examination of the particular case. It wants to know in detail what the experience for *this* particular person is like, what sense *this* particular person is making of what is happening to them.

(Smith et al., 2009, p. 3)

Deciding on IPA as a method for my research, I followed the guidelines outlined in *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis* (Smith et al., 2009). IPA's primary concern is with the particular, and this operates on two levels. The first level is the commitment to the particular, which highlights the importance of systematic analytical depth. The second level is concerned with understanding the phenomena as perceived by the participants (Smith et al., 2009, p. 29). These two levels are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In fact, they can often feed into each other forming complex relationships and interactions between them and thus creating the need for a double hermeneutic approach which allows the double interpretation of these two elements (Giddens, 1986, p. 284). This shifts the focus away from solely the researcher's interpretations and establishes a more meaningful dynamic between the field and the subjects. As such, it is more useful to think of the knowledge gained from phenomenological studies as transferable theories, rather than indisputable empirical statements (Smith et al., 2009, p. 51).

IPA identifies one-to-one interviews as common practice for data collection in phenomenological studies. These usually take a semi-structured format. This provides a foundation for the information being gathered but leaves room for participants to explore their own thoughts and experiences in detail (Smith et al., 2009, p. 57). Denscombe states that interviews allow the interviewee to bring up topics of personal significance to them, providing a useful insight into what they consider to be important or relevant (2010, p. 99-100). This is something that links directly to my next method of autoethnography and the 'general-to-specific' approach (Chang, 2008, p. 62).

3.1.2 Autoethnography

Whilst the focus of my study was predominantly on the participants and their perceived experiences, as a partaking party in the practical elements of my research, I decided to include elements of autoethnography. *Autoethnography as Method* (Chang, 2008) helped formulate a useful outline of the kind of data I wanted to collect about the participants. The 'general-to-specific' approach (Chang, 2008, p. 62) seemed most appropriate to my project so I decided to use this as a guide for how I would approach my data collection - my broad topic of interest was online collaboration, which broke down into specific information I wanted to attain from the participants. Heewon Chang (2008, p. 65) acknowledges that including co-participants in the study 'broadens the database', however, he specifies that 'the research focus is still anchored in your personal experience'. As my research primarily focuses on the participants' experiences, autoethnography was not used as my main method but rather as a way to inform the inter-personal aspects of the projects. Autoethnography, rather than simply ethnography, enabled me to immerse myself in the creative experience, and as a practitioner in the field, gave me opportunities to examine and understand the interactions and the processes that lead to them. This offered a more useful insight into the perceptions of the participants rather than the 'outsider looking in' approach many studies exploring music production have taken in the past (Hepworth-Sawyer et al., 2019, p. 13).

3.2 Collection and Interpretation of Data

In order to allow a thorough examination of each individual, IPA studies are generally concerned with small sample sizes (Smith et al., 2009). I decided to start with eight participants. The primary reason for this was to include a meaningful variety of different roles within the projects, to allow the exploration of how different speciality fields might alter the way collaborators interact with the creative production process. This number enabled useful comparisons to be made, whilst still

keeping the sample size relatively small and, as IPA is committed to detail, having too many cases can pose a greater risk than too few cases (Smith et al., 2009).

It is important to note that only seven participants took part in the musical projects and second interviews, as one participant was unable to continue with the study. As the eighth participant (E1/I1) did not withdraw from the study and the information gathered from his initial interview included useful and relevant information, I have enclosed a copy of the transcript in the 'Appendix 1' and have used the data in my analysis where it was applicable.

Following the phenomenological approach, the personal information of each participant was left for them to disclose at their own liberty, leaving them to deem what information they considered appropriate or relevant to their experience. This means that rather than working with concrete factual data, the focus is on the participants' own perceived identities, thoughts, feelings, and reflections.

The participants came from a variety of speciality fields which allowed a wider cross-section of individuals that might become involved in online collaboration to be documented. The roles were broken down into five categories, with the aim of having at least one 'representative' for each of these. These categories were as follows:

- Engineer (E)
- Producer/Co-Producer (CP)
- Songwriter/Composer (SC)
- Instrumentalist (I)
- Vocalist/Artist (VA)

As many practitioners in the musical world do not restrict themselves to a single area of expertise, participants were allowed to fulfil multiple roles. Interestingly, both participants who opted to fulfil multiple roles chose the roles of 'Engineer' and 'Instrumentalist'. This could be linked back to the idea that in recent years the role of the session musician has evolved to incorporate elements of sound engineering (Herbst & Albrecht, 2018b).

Throughout this thesis, I use these roles as a way of identifying individual participants. Each participant is represented by a unique code consisting of the original role they were asked to fill and a number - e.g. Songwriter/Composer 1 will be referred to as SC1; Engineer 1/Instrumentalist 1 will be referred to as E1/I1, and so on. Each interview is further identified with either number 1 for Interview 1, or 2 for Interview 2. Interviews are therefore referenced in the format of SC1.1 - meaning Songwriter/Composer 1, Interview 1.

Capturing and understanding the thoughts and experiences of the individuals forms a major component of my gained knowledge and appreciation of online collaboration and its inner workings. Conducting interviews before and after the production process not only enabled a direct insight into the individuals' perceived expectations and dynamics but also provided an opportunity for reflection and feedback on their unique experiences.

Two interviews were conducted with each participant - one before the creative process, and another after. These interviews were conducted with my collaborators in order to gather a wide range of information; not only data that I considered relevant but information which the interviewees themselves thought could be of significance to the study and the 'field'. Conducting an interview with each participant once the creative process was completed established accounts and recollections of their experiences and feelings on the project - elements which were the focus of my methods of research (Denscombe, 2019, p. 100). The interviews were conducted following a semi-structured style, enabling a level of improvisation and allowing room for the participants to 'think, speak and be heard' (Smith, J. et al, 2009, p. 57).

The first set of interview questions was designed to establish a baseline knowledge of the participants, their identities, and previous experiences. To maximise the relevance of the data collected, four key areas of discussion were identified. These were as follows: background - cultural and musical; role - including recollections of past projects; work ethic - preferences regarding environment and process; and expectations - pre-established notions of their involvement with the study and their role. Focusing on the individuals, their identities, and unique experiences, enabled the findings to be understood and analysed within the

framework of Csikszentmihalyi's 'Systems Model of Creativity' (1999), making use of McIntyre's extension of the model (2011) to situate the study in a more contemporary academic context. The second set of interview questions focused on extracting the unique perspectives of the individuals and so these were left more open-ended than in the first interview. The participants were asked to recount their feelings and reflections on the finished projects, the collaborative process within an online setting, any differences or similarities in approach, as well as thoughts on ways of improving this practice.

Each interview was initially recorded in an audio format. The duration of the first interviews averaged at 24:31 (*mm:ss*); the shortest being 15:45 (VA1.1) and the longest 46:51 (E1/I1.1). The second set of interviews averaged at 21:52; the shortest of these was 14:28 (VA2.2), and the longest 29:31 (SC1.2). The audio recordings were then transcribed manually and edited in order to make them more concise, omitting any discussions irrelevant to the study. As my primary interest was in the content, I did not transcribe linguistic details. The interview schedules and edited transcripts of all interviews can be found in the 'Appendices' section (p. 63).

To ensure an efficient and purposeful way of extracting information from the interview transcripts, a three-layer coding system was devised using the qualitative content management software Citavi. The first layer presented itself organically through the nature of the interviews - all quotations were therefore divided into Interview 1 and Interview 2. Although this is an obvious categorisation, the foci of both interviews, and the difference of topics covered in them, made this essential to the data interpretation process. The second layer of categorisation was created in order to establish points of discussion and comparison for the thesis. Firstly, every interview answer or quote of relevance to my research questions was assigned with multiple keywords outlining the general ideas explored within. This allowed me to honour the individuality of each participant and their views before identifying themes and trends between them (Smith et al., 2009). These were then used to establish a set of categories. These categories were revised and refined throughout the coding process as new ideas emerged. Eventually, each quote was classified with one or more of the following categories (a visual representation of the data coding system can be seen in *Figure 1*):

- Upbringing & Education
- Musical Influences
- Previous & Current Experience
- Role & Expectations
- Work Ethic & Environment
- Online Collaboration
- Technology
- Production Process

The practical element of my research ran for around twelve months - from January until December 2020. Over the course of my research, seven of the participants took part in a number of individual music production processes, which resulted in eight original pieces of music. These projects, including any contributions from participants, finished musical content, and general commentary on the products and processes, form a collection of data providing valuable information individually, as well as enabling observations of trends, similarities, and differences between them.

3.3 Summary

Through the combination of these two academic methods, my study can be broken down into three key aspects: the participants, their roles and expectations, and the resulting musical projects. The interview process will allow a thorough inspection of the involved individuals and provide a multitude of perspectives, creating a diverse data pool. My own involvement as a participant, enabled by the autoethnographic approach, allows a greater level of immersion which should result in a less disconnected and thus a deeper insight into the process. The data was coded using the system shown in Figure 1 and the analysis has been laid out accordingly.

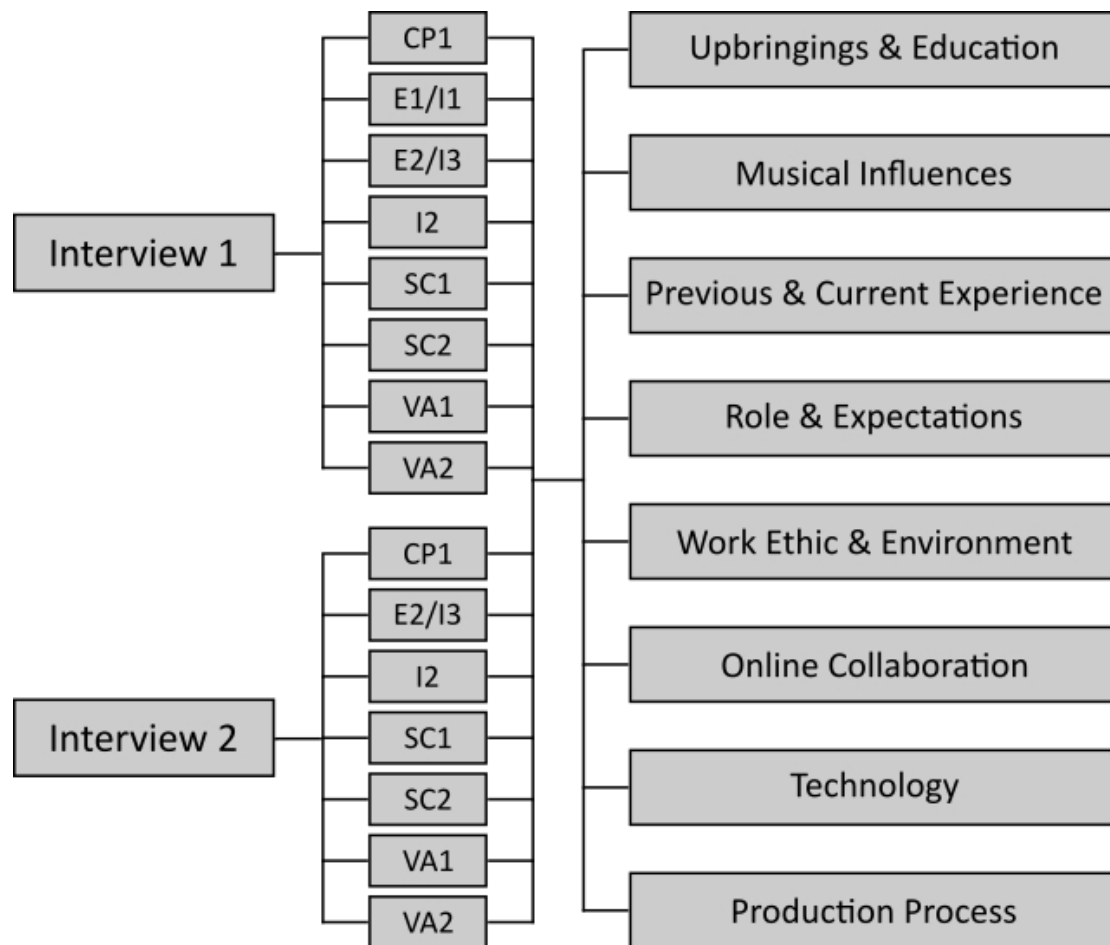


Figure 1

4. Analysis

The aim of my research was not only to identify key challenges for collaborating in an online environment but also to determine how these aspects affect the participants' productivity and creativity. To leave sufficient artistic freedom for myself and the individuals involved, no predetermined concept was enforced throughout the projects. This allowed creativity to happen naturally and with minimal prompt, and ideas to develop organically which resulted in concepts emerging throughout the creative process. Whilst this collection of material is largely made up of individual and independent pieces of music, some common themes emerged from the collaborative nature of the work.

Most notably, 'Aphrodite's Thorn', 'Poppy' and 'Sakura' represent examples of conceptual work developed as a result of the collaborative process. These tracks share a common theme, conceptualised by myself and CP1 prior to my research. Each of these compositions takes inspiration from a flower and draws influence from the connotations usually associated with it. Whilst the vague concept existed before the commencement of this project, it only came into fruition as a result of collaboration between the participants in this study.

As no musical concepts were enforced during the creation process, the genres and stylistic aesthetics of the projects were left open to the experience-based influences of the individuals involved. This allowed the creative material to be shaped by the collaborations and collaborators, their musical backgrounds, and any other relevant external factors.

This chapter provides an insight into the creative process, the participants, and their contributions, experiences, and reflections. It analyses the findings and frames them within the context of the research, relating back to online collaboration and its perceived effects on process and outcome. Firstly, I explore the role identities and their influences on the creative content within the context of online collaboration, establishing common trends and themes relevant to the study. Each track is then examined individually, providing insight into influences, contributions, and overall success, referencing the applicable participant comments.

4.1 The Participants

It is worth noting that the participants involved in the project were aged 20-30, and all of the participants mentioned having some form of higher education. Four out of the eight participants who participated in the first interview mentioned a social class as part of their personal background; two identified as working-class (E1/I1, I2), and two middle-class (SC1, VA1), with VA1 also acknowledging his parents' working-class backgrounds. All of the participants identified their nationality; four British (CP1, E1/I1, SC1, VA1), one British-Chinese (VA2), one Portuguese (E2/I3), one Bulgarian (SC2), and one American (I2). Every participant has had some form of musical education, and two participants come from classical music backgrounds (I2, VA2). Four participants mentioned being involved in some kind of music-related professional work, including self-employment (E1/I1, E2/I3, SC2, VA2). Whilst gender wasn't a focus of my research, and none of the participants mentioned their gender identity in the interview process, I assessed seven out of the eight participants as male and one as female based on the binary male/female experience. However, this may not accurately reflect the individuals' true gender identities and thus should not be taken as such.

4.2 Role Identities and Expectations

When the participants were approached about taking part in the study, they were asked to fill one or more specific roles. This was a means of ensuring a wide range of individuals with varied skills and levels of experience within different fields and music in general. There is an interesting observation to be made about the way these individuals chose to identify with their roles. Several of the participants mentioned the importance of branding as a form of unification with their assigned or chosen role. E1/I1 points out that branding yourself with a role or title is essential in establishing a common understanding of expectations (E1/I1.1), describing this as a

'foundation level of skill' being offered. VA1 takes this idea further by suggesting that someone's lifestyle itself can be enough to establish their role (VA1.2).

The role of the producer is potentially the broadest and hardest to define, something that has been the focus of several academic studies. Explorations of producer roles and modes have been explored in works of Hepworth-Sawyer and Golding (2011), Burgess (2013), and Frith and Zagorski-Thomas (2012), among many others. Howlett (2012b, p. 190) identifies the role of the producer as an interface between the artist, the engineer, and the business. It is essential to acknowledge the complex and ever-evolving nature of the record producer; for the purposes of my research, the role adopted a relatively open definition in order to keep individual experience at the forefront. This allowed each individual to be guided by their own tacit knowledge acquired through their experience of the field and the undertakings within it (Schmidt Horning, 2004) - as each individual's skill set is based on a unique set of experiences, as would be their actions and expectations in relation to their own role and the roles of others. The role of the producer is, at its core, to ensure the artist's vision is successfully transferred and translated into the finished product (Katz & Hepworth-Sawyer, 2009, p. 27). This statement broadly defines the role of the producer and their purpose throughout my research. As CP1 points out, the expectations associated with this role can take many forms dependant on the genre (CP1.1).

It almost depends on the genre, (...) with grime tracks, the producer is just the person that made the beat potentially some time ago, and then Stormzy is the rapper. But it's become so blurred at this point because the role of the producer is also the mix engineer and the recording engineer.

(CP1.1)

This introduces the idea that the role of the producer often encompasses composition and engineering. Especially in electronic music genres, many artists often refer to themselves as producers as it more clearly presents the idea that they produce their own music (Burgess, 2013, p. 9), suggesting that they are more than just composers or songwriters. The reluctance to use the term 'composer' could also

be tied to the elitist connotations associated from classical music, and ‘songwriter’ often being associated with band-based music. In some genres this is simply attributed to the role of the producer which links back to the idea that different genres have different stylistic requirements (Burgess, 2013, p. 7). These expectations can also be heavily dependent on the artist they are working with and their own experience of music production (CP1.1), as every participant introduces their own unique set of tacit knowledge (Schmidt Horning, 2004) creating an intricate web of understanding and expectations. An example of this would be the producers’ engagement with sound design and mixing found within electronic music genres such as hip hop and EDM (Hepworth-Sawyer et al., 2019, p. 20). Martin (2014) quantifies these factors into a helpful equation by which the expected level of a producer’s involvement can be estimated. The equation takes into consideration two spectra: the configuration of the artist (scaled from solo artist to full ensemble), and the artist’s experience level (Martin, 2014, p. 160). The qualitative nature of these aspects results in an overlap between creative and technical duties, not only for the producer but also the artist. This idea of overlap between roles is one worth acknowledging, and one that relates back to Burgess’s idea of the unique production needs of artists (2013, p. 7-8).

There are two clear places we can look to investigate the involvement of the producer role and its impact on the projects. Firstly, as an acting producer for all eight of the musical projects, I was able to gain an insight into the creative and interpersonal interactions between myself and the other participants. Secondly, we can look to the commentary and experience of CP1, who fulfilled the role of producer and co-producer on three of the projects - ‘Poppy’, ‘Sakura’, and ‘St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church Blues’. Looking at the two original compositions we collaborated on (‘Poppy’ and ‘Sakura’), it is immediately apparent that the existent overlap of roles played a big part in the creative process. Both, ‘Poppy’ and ‘Sakura’, were written by myself and CP1 without the assistance of a dedicated composer or songwriter. Our active involvement in the creative process aligns with Burgess’s idea of the ‘Auteur’ producer (2013). Electronic music producers rely on their unique sets of tools to create and shape their musical output (Hepworth-Sawyer et al., 2019, p. 182), which will usually take the form of a collection of hardware and software

technologies (Butler, 2014, p. 93). The production of sequenced electronic music is usually a combination of several processes, such as composition, arranging, and mixing, happening simultaneously (Izhaki, 2009).

The 'Songwriter' or 'Composer' can be summarised as someone who creates the musical content of a song. This can include (but is not necessarily limited to) melodic, harmonic and rhythmic ideas (Bennett, 2011). SC1 also believes that lyrics writing is a big part of songwriting (SC1.1), and perhaps it is this which differentiates between 'Songwriter' and 'Composer'. SC1 also states that songwriting can often include arrangement and sound design, aspects which, dependent on genre, he acknowledges can also be associated with the role of the producer (SC1.1), as pointed out previously by CP1 (CP1.1).

there's a lot of overlap with production nowadays. It's a good overlap though because it means you can get more collaborative with those elements.

(SC1.1)

SC1 suggests that, due to varied individual perceptions and levels of experience, this overlap can enable new forms of collaboration (SC1.1) as previously unexpected common grounds can be established between producer and their collaborators. A good example of this can be found in my analysis of 'Drowning Astronauts' where, due to the nature and the style of the project, SC1 was closely involved with the sound design process - in electronic music, a task often associated with the producer (Shelvock, 2019). The blurring of lines can occur between most combinations of roles and refers back to the idea of increased accessibility to professional technologies eroding clear distinctions between roles (Pras & Guastavino, 2011), which I found to be a prevalent theme throughout my research.

SC2's experience of composition is largely rooted in film music, offering a different view on this creative role.

when I first tried to dabble in composing, like film and game music, I was always leaning towards the John Williams style of bombastic orchestras. But as time went on I started to realise that, first of all, it's a bit outdated, and second of all,

it very often ends up drawing attention to itself rather than the picture. (...) I think the role of the composer is to make a piece of music that fits with the picture so well that when you're watching it, you don't notice it

(SC2.1)

SC2's expectation as a composer might better be compared to the role of a 'Facilitative' producer (Burgess, 2012), or even that of a session musician who works to service the project, with less focus on self-expression.

For the purposes of my study, as most recordings were carried out independently by the musicians (Herbst & Albrecht, 2018b), the engineer role focused primarily on the technical aspects of mixing. The role of the engineer can be broken down into several steps, in this case largely centred around post-production. Firstly, it was the engineer's job to listen, analyse and understand the projects being mixed - this was to provide the engineer with an idea of the direction in which the production should be taken. By identifying these vital elements, the engineer can get to work on transforming the content into something closer to the finished product (Izhaki, 2009, p. 113). As Thompson suggests (2019), such close involvement with the creative material shifted the focus of the engineer away from solely technical aspects, and closer to that of an overseer of the sonic content. E2/I3 also highlights the importance of a good working relationship and a mutual understanding between engineers and the artists they're working with, comparing it to the role of a good session musician.

your job is really to capture the band or the artist, just make them sound like what they want to sound like. (...) you do need to keep the main band sound intact, you can't really put your own twist on everything. (...) It's the same [as an instrumentalist] then, you need to do the song justice, you can't stray from what the writer puts down a lot (...) But it depends really on whoever wrote it, if they're up for someone putting their twist on it, then obviously go for it

(E2/I3.1)

E2/I3's take on the role of the session musician seems to be situated somewhere in between the 'creative player' and 'excellent sight-reader' (Hannan, 2003, as cited in Campelo, 2015). He believes the role of a good session player is not only to service the music but also to be able to engage with it creatively if the project calls for it. I2 suggests that this two-category system doesn't necessarily represent the perceptions of session musicians themselves (I2.1).

I think I always throw a little hint that there's more to me as a whole than just classical stuff because I think when someone sees a viola they don't automatically think 'oh, they like Aphex Twin'

(I2.1)

By I2's account, it could be argued that this simplification of the musician role could be problematic, not only for the musician but also their collaborators, as without a mutually accepted definition the expectations of both parties are at risk of not being met. I2's expectations, like E2/I3's, fall somewhere in the middle and perhaps offer a more productive foundation for the role, stating that a session musician is 'someone who can adapt really well, who is really good technically but also has some good creative vibes' (I2.1). Although my study uses a separate label for the vocalist role (Vocalist/Artist), similar ideas seem to persist.

as a vocalist, you've got to be able to have a lot of adaptation to you and be able to not necessarily sing how you want it but how other people want, and I think that's what makes a good vocalist.

(VA2.1)

Despite different backgrounds and areas of expertise, the expectation of adaptability is one that appears to be consistent throughout 'Instrumentalist' and 'Vocalist/Artist' roles. This potentially offers the most useful insight into what can be expected of these roles and their contributions to the collaborative process. As VA1 points out,

whenever you jump in a studio, or a booth, with someone new it's going to be different. (...) It's going to be a learning experience, a growing experience. Getting used to how each other work and finding the best ways to work together.

(VA1.1)

It is perhaps more helpful to think of these individuals as highly adaptable musical facilitators, whose role is not only to service but also to drive the creative process and fulfil the vision of the artist, not dissimilar to the role of the 'Facilitative' producer (Burgess, 2013).

4.3 The Musical Projects

4.3.1 'Aphrodite's Thorn'

Participant	Contributions
Myself	Composition, Vocal Performance & Recording, Production, Mixing
SC2	Composition, Arrangement, Sound Design, Creative Direction
E2/I3	Guitar Performance & Recording

'Aphrodite's Thorn' is a combined compositional effort of SC2 and myself. It also features contributions from E2/I3 in the forms of a guitar solo and guitar samples. The composition and its lyrics were inspired by the storytelling aspect of post-hardcore and hip hop. SC2 drew inspiration from the psychedelic trance duo Infected Mushroom (SC.2), whose music influenced a lot of the synthesised sounds heard throughout the track, such as the bass synth (00:46) and the top-line synth (01:10). The concept behind this piece is a story of a slowly disintegrating relationship which is reflected through the cold and fragile sounding production, with a lot of harsh distorted sounds coming in and out of focus during the more chaotic sections.

The track leads off with a pulsing synthesiser and an auto-tuned vocal reinforced by further synthesiser chords. These make up the bulk of my own contributions to this track. The intro leads into a heavy beat which slowly descends into an unstable chorus of glitch sounds supported by a four-to-the-floor kick drum pattern. SC2 took charge in the shaping of most of the track from 00:46 onwards, proposing the structure as well as the sound design, rhythmic and melodic ideas. As SC2 mentions, he started the project with some goals in mind - writing a bassline that would fit with the material I originally composed and creating a better sense of structure to break up the flow of the piece (SC2.2). The last section of the track (02:18) features a guitar solo by E2/I3. When I first started composing this piece and incorporated the original drums (00:46), I knew I wanted to incorporate another live element into the piece to provide some contrast with the largely synthetic arrangement. I looped the chords from this section and sent them to E2/I3 to record a solo over. E2/I3 had to tackle this differently from his usual approach to writing solos due to the unusual chord

progression. E2/I3 mentions that the track required the use of transcription software, such as TuxGuitar and GuitarPro, to make sure the solo fit with the composition as it allowed E2/I3 to transcribe the piece and notate the solo (E2/I3.2). This left less room for improvisation but ensured all of the notes fit in the intended scale and unusual chord structure.

The finished piece fell short of my own and SC2's expectations, as the plan was to have vocals throughout the piece, which proved to be impossible due to time constraints. SC2's previous experience with collaborative projects has been mostly fruitless, meaning he still considered the project to be relatively successful.

I think when it comes to writing a song, say if I'm with a band and we just start playing it, I think the structure and a more finished idea of it in my head will come faster because I'm with other people who can play the other parts. (...) When it comes to online, and not just online but working in front of a computer, I think it takes me a little bit longer to get the structure of something down.

(SC2.2)

This idea echoes Koszolko's belief that asynchronous collaboration can be less fluid than synchronous (2015) and poses the question of how these two approaches can shape the creative process and its success. SC2 believes that collaboration played a pivotal part in the creation and shaping of this project, as the track features many of his ideas which proved to contribute a great deal to the overall perceived aesthetic of the track. SC2 states that the finished product would have most likely been completely different were it an individual effort from either of us (SC2.2). All parties involved agree that having a more reliable way of receiving live feedback from other participants would have helped the creative process and created a better sense of teamwork (E2/I3.2). This lack of synchronous communication, and any push for it, could be attributed to the distractions associated with professional work outside of the collaboration and the convenience of working alone. A wholly asynchronous approach can negate any extra stress or pressure that might result from planning such methods remotely. This could also be a matter of personal preference and habit, as E2/I3 mentions that it is perfectly normal for them to work

on projects without real-time consultations (E2/I3.1). However, the asynchronous approach did pose some additional challenges. For example, E2/I3 brings up a situation where his guitar solo recording was accidentally time-stretched by the default 'Warp' setting in Ableton Live, stating that a form of live feedback would have meant the mistake could have been caught earlier on in the process (E2/I3.2). SC2 made a suggestion for improving the online collaborative process by setting up a shared drive where all collaborators can upload their work - an idea taken from his professional involvement in video game sound design, which he believes would improve communication and flow of creative ideas between individuals. E2/I3 even goes as far as to suggest that online collaboration improved his workflow when working on the guitar solo as he could sit down and write it in his own time without the added pressure of studio time constraints (E2/I3.2). This kind of practice has already been identified as a common occurrence for session musicians (Herbst & Albrecht, 2018b). While having a designated studio space could have been useful if the guitars were to play a more prominent role in the piece, E2/I3 believes that this was not necessary for this project and mentions the positive impact working in a familiar environment had on his creative output (E2/I3.2).

Individually, the sections present interesting ideas however, these quite obviously reflect somewhat different visions of the track. This outcome seems to be a direct reflection of the challenges mentioned by the participants. Overall, the finished project comes across as somewhat disjointed which establishes a potential link between the perceived cohesion of the track and a lack of synchronous communication methods.

4.3.2 'Drowning Astronauts'

Participant	Contributions
Myself	Arrangement, Sound Design, Production, Mixing
SC1	Composition, Arrangement, Sound Design, Vocal Performance & Recording, Guitar Recording

'Drowning Astronauts' is the first of two tracks written by SC1. The project is composed and performed entirely by SC1, and produced by myself. SC1's original

inspiration for the composition came from the track 'Zzzonked' by Enter Shikari (2009), as well as Björk's vocal style and lyrical flow, along with Pendulum influencing some of the initial synthesis design used by SC1 in the demo version of the track. The production is largely comprised of synthesisers, samplers, and features vocal and guitar performances from SC1, exploring concepts such as harshness and heaviness through its heavy use of distortion and compression whilst maintaining clarity and separation between instruments. Distortion is often associated with aggression, power, and emotion as well as perceived energy and loudness (Mynett, 2017, p. 9) - concepts which I wanted to get across through my production. My approach to mixing this track was influenced by artists such as Marmaduke Duke (2009) and JPEGMafia (2019a). My aim was to use hypercompression to completely alter the relationship between transient and decay to the point of sounding completely unnatural - contributing to the perceived 'harshness' of the mix. Extreme examples of this effect can be heard on many JPEGMafia tracks such as 'Thug Tears' (2018) and 'Beta Male Strategies' (2019b). The track makes extensive use of dense percussion and experiments with inter-instrumental rhythms featuring a range of kick drum sounds playing interlinked patterns throughout. SC1 takes an unusual approach to the arrangement with the piece following an A-B-C-B-D-E structure, the chorus being the 'C' section and only appearing in the track once.

The track was originally composed by SC1 in its entirety and proposed to me in the form of a demo recording. A lot of the sound design had been completed prior to my involvement with the project, which provided a great starting point - I was able to hear SC1's intentions for the instrumental and through some discussion, we were able to analyse the key aspects of the production. Having received and listened to the demo, I set about recreating and improving some of the sounds; due to the intricate nature of SC1's composition, there was a lot of consultation during the sound design process. For example, SC1 insisted on the importance of the interlacing rhythms played by multiple kick drums - something I initially overlooked when deciding on the kick drum sounds. In some instances, we even decided to keep some of the original sound design, the build-up heard in the intro being a prime example (00:00). This seems to place SC1 role almost in the 'Artist' producer role established

by Burgess (2013). In a lot of cases, the synthesis of sounds was a massively collaborative effort. To make sure we were both happy with the work I was doing, we ran several 'streaming' studio sessions using Discord and Skype. As SC1 points out, this wasn't an ideal solution as streaming audio online resulted in lost fidelity (SC1.2), however, it enabled live discussion and feedback to take place which further increased SC1's influence over the production process. In comparison to 'Aphrodite's Thorn', for example, this enabled a much more interactive process and thus perhaps yielding a more successful outcome.

the thing we were doing, where you were producing and streaming it. I think that's not necessarily a brilliant thing, but it's the best that we could do under the circumstances. The issue with it is that as good as streaming is, it's never perfect - there's always going to be that lower bit rate, when the internet drops out it goes all glitchy (...) so bounces were really useful to get around that.

(SC1.2)

The arpeggio guitar part heard in the last section of the track (03:24), is directly attributed to restrictions and limitations imposed by online collaboration and suggests that the nature of the work environment did not hamper creativity; SC1 goes as far as to suggest that the restrictions enforced creativity as limited access to professional studio space and a wider range of collaborators led to more creative solutions. The lack of pressure to incorporate live performances enabled experimentation with production tools in order to achieve effects which would have been significantly more difficult with live musicians (SC1.2). This idea builds on McIntyre's suggestion that good songwriters can use musical restrictions to fuel further creativity (2001). Working remotely also restricted the participants' access to recording facilities and equipment, slowing down the recording process. In the case of SC1, vocal recordings were most affected; SC1 acknowledges that working in a noisy environment often stifled productivity, as he was forced to wait until any external distractions had passed (SC1.2).

Overall, the collaborative process was a success - the tracks flows well and sounds more cohesive than 'Aphrodite's Thorn'. It is worth noting that the creative process

for this project included some synchronous interaction, creating another possible link between synchronous and asynchronous methods and perceived creative success. The only disappointment coming from SC1's own perception of his vocal performance. It is difficult to know whether this was exacerbated by the online nature of the project, as SC1 cites this feeling to be a common occurrence for him - 'I have this thing with my vocals where after a while if I come back to them, I usually hate them' (SC1.2). Aside from this small discontentment, SC1 lists two key elements of the online collaboration which provided satisfaction throughout the project and upon its completion. Firstly, the inherent nature of online collaboration allows interaction between almost anyone in the world, which can often lead to working with individuals from different backgrounds and various levels of experience. SC1 states that the ability to work with and hear the varying aesthetics rooted in the involvement of several individuals provided unrivalled opportunities for comparison of working practices and their results.

There's an abstract thing that really satisfies me which is the difference between the two different types of mix. I absolutely love being able to hear how different people produce music.

(SC1.2)

Secondly, SC1 stresses the way in which collaborations can influence and inspire further productivity and creativity beyond current involvement. SC1 cites several projects and concepts these collaborations have inspired, including projects directly inspired by the tracks we worked on together during my research study (SC1.2).

4.3.3 'Greenhouse'

Participant	Contributions
Myself	Composition, Arrangement, Sound Design, Lyric Writing, Vocal Performance & Recording, Production
VA1	Lyrics Writing, Vocal Performance & Recording
E2/I3	Mixing

'Greenhouse' is a stylistic rap track, written and produced by myself, featuring vocals from VA1 and myself, taking inspiration from mumble rap tracks such as 'Polo Socks' (Francis, 2017), 'going down!' (XXXTENTACION, 2018), and 'Acid at 7/11' (Yung Lean, 2020). This project features an effects-heavy mix from E2/I3 which, as he noted in the second interview, strays from his usual genre and mixing style. As I took on more creative role for this project, this was a good opportunity to observe how the involvement of a separate mix engineer would affect the outcome. This project provides a good example of how the role of the producer and engineer can be kept clearly separate - whilst I, as the producer, worked heavily on the compositional aspect and acted as more of a creative overseer, E2/I3 became responsible for more of the technical aspects of production as the engineer. The composition follows a simple B-A-B-A-B-B structure, with the hook (B) playing a prominent part in the track. The aim of this project was to create a light-hearted, humorous take on the genre; the lyrics offer an exaggerated and almost parodical approach to the notoriously drug-related genre tropes (Petridis, 2018), helping the song portray a playful and energetic attitude. For my own vocals, I wanted to explore the heavy processing found on a lot of mumble rap records, and incorporate simple melodies and lyrics typical of the genre (Waugh, 2020).

I initially started the creative process by myself, jamming out vocal ideas to various instrumentals and trying to establish some melodic and lyrical ideas. Once I had a vague vision for the hook, I went on to make a beat that would work within the stylistic context - the musical ideas had to be simple to leave space for the 'anthemic' vocal performance I had planned. Knowing that VA1 was a rapper (VA1.1), this project was the perfect opportunity to work with him, so I made a rough recording of the hook along with the instrumental I had started creating and sent this to VA1 to see if he was interested in contributing a verse to the track. Once I had VA1's confirmation, I set about completing the rest of the composition, leaving a section blank for VA1's verse. The project was also sent to E2/I3 for mixing - sending the project to both of my collaborators simultaneously meant E2/I3 could work on the creative aspects of the mix whilst VA1 wrote and recorded his contributions. VA1 states that being able to hear the fully developed composition aided his process as it meant that once he got familiar with the track by listening to it over the course of

several days (VA1.2) he could tap into his experience as a battle rapper and writer (VA1.1) to develop his part. This type of collaboration seems most similar to Bennett's 'demarcation' model which encompasses an asynchronous collaborative method where a participant is asked to contribute an original part for a partially finished composition (2011). VA1 then recorded his own verse and sent the recording which I then forwarded onto E2/I3 to incorporate into the mix. As such, this track was completed using solely asynchronous methods.

VA1 claims that working online is now standard practice across many fields. Services such as Fiverr enable people to offer their creative services to anyone with internet access, using a simple search engine and category system to match people's needs. This provides an easy way for previously unrelated individuals to connect in an organised and deliberate fashion, making outsourcing harder to attain services, such as niche instrument specialists or performers, more accessible. VA1 also suggests the internet has drastically changed the way we go about learning, and how this contributes to the self-perpetuating cycle of online content creation (VA1.2).

It comes from a point where we're collaborating online before we're even producing anything because most of our generation is now learning through the medium of YouTube and watching other people who know how to do whatever they want to do, do it better. (...) It's the easiest way to absorb a massive amount of information in a short time.

(VA1.2)

Both of my collaborators on this project state that the online setting may have played a part in speeding up the whole creative process. VA1 believes a big part of this can be attributed to a lack of need for major time commitment, as he could work on the project from home without having to plan full days to fulfil his contribution, allowing for a more spontaneous approach during the writing process (VA1.2), which links back to Koszolko's idea of spontaneity acting as driving force of collaboration (2015). VA1 theorises that face-to-face collaboration in a joint physical environment would have yielded different results, but does not believe the final outcome was of lesser quality due to working remotely (VA1.2). E2/I3 believes being

able to work in a familiar environment and be involved with projects he may not normally have been given the opportunity to work on resulted in a boost in productivity as it provided a new challenge for him (E2/I3.2). E2/I3 also addresses the challenges he encountered in the mixing of home recordings.

Some of the material wasn't the best of quality and I had to approach it in a much more scientific way - not very creative, just trying to save something (...) I guess that is a negative aspect of working remotely. If I was there I would have said 'we're tracking with something else' or at least 'we're tracking in a different room'.

(E2/I3.2)

The implication of E2/I3's point seems to be that an engineer has less control over the overall audio quality of the project when working remotely. As a producer and a composer for this project, I found the involvement of a designated mix engineer somewhat freeing as it allowed me to focus more on the creative decisions and performance, loosely echoing SC2's thoughts on working as part of a band with specific responsibilities (SC2.2). Whilst all participants expressed their satisfaction with the finished results, some disparity between the vocal styles and recordings can still be heard, bringing up the question of whether the contrast would have been as stark had the writing and recording sessions happened synchronously and in-person. It is essential to observe that this directly obstructs one of the engineer's key roles as discussed by Schmidt Horning (2013), but feeds back into Herbst's and Albrecht's observations of session musicians and their participation in engineering tasks (2018b).

4.3.4 'Kanye Type Beat'

Participant	Contributions
Myself	Composition, Arrangement, Sound Design, Production
SC2	Composition, String Arrangement, Keys Performance
I2	Viola Performance & Recording

'Kanye Type Beat' is an instrumental hip hop track heavily influenced by the work of Kanye West, tracks such as 'Ultralight Beam' (2016) and 'Blame Game' (2010), as well as lo-fi hip hop tracks such as Bishop Nehru's 'Again & Again' (2018) and Joji's 'Pills' (2017). This project was a collaboration between myself acting as a producer, songwriter and engineer - or an 'Artist' producer (Burgess, 2013), SC2 who worked on the string arrangement and keyboard solo, SC1's bass recording, and I2's viola recording. The track features heavy use of sampling as well as making use of live instrument performances. This piece aims to merge these two musical worlds to create an organic yet very robotic sounding soundtrack, which I achieved by playing around with where I placed the drum hits in reference to the grid and using uniform drum samples throughout. Experimenting with these aspects of the beat helped achieved an off-kilter groove (Russ, 2009, p. 354). The composition follows a B-A-B-C-B structure and relies on repetition and looping whilst playing around with rhythm and groove. The constant piano sample which plays in the background throughout almost the whole piece provides the backbone and establishes a droning and dreamy atmosphere - comforting rather than challenging the listener.

As soon as I heard the piano sample (00:00), which reminded me of 'Blame Game' by Kanye West (2010), I knew I wanted to create a track in a similar style. Taking inspiration from West's extensive use of sampling (Burns et al., 2016, p. 159), I decided to incorporate as much audio into the project as I could. Knowing that SC1 was also a bass player, I decided to send a rough demo of the beat to him and asked for him to record some bass loops which I later chopped up and arranged in the project - this provided the backbone of the composition. SC1's contribution to the project resembles Hannan's description of the 'creative player' (2003, as cited in Campelo, 2015). Once I had picked the rest of my samples and arranged them into a basic structure, I sent the project onto SC2 who listened to the track and played his ideas over the top (SC2.2). This resulted in the keys solo (01:58) and the string arrangement heard throughout the whole track (00:05 onwards). Once I received these contributions from SC2, I decided I wanted to take the string idea further. As I knew I2 is a viola player (I2.1), I got in touch and asked him to record some of the parts of the string arrangement created by SC2 so I could layer them together, as

well as some solo viola parts to sample for the verse sections. Once I received these recordings, I incorporated them into the project and mixed the track.

I2 recollects the difficulties he had to overcome due to the online nature of the project, citing issues with access to a recording environment, and dealing with distractions and background noise (I2.2). I2 also points out the two sides of working remotely; he believes this practice makes time management easier as there is no need to coordinate multiple people, however, it also leaves more room for procrastination as there is no imminent time or social pressure (I2.2). SC2 seems to echo this sentiment:

I expected myself to be a little more active with it, but I wasn't. (...) I guess this is a thing that I've always had with online collaborations - I always either forget about them or procrastinate them a lot.

(SC2.2)

SC2 suggests that working in a face-to-face environment can also provide additional motivation and inspiration as all participants can be responsible for smaller elements more closely related to their area of expertise, giving working in a band as an example (SC2.2). This kind of dynamics could perhaps be replicated through synchronous remote methods however, this would pose new challenges to overcome such as the syncing of live performances and moderating several participants which can be a lot more challenging due to varying internet speeds. All collaborators on this project are generally satisfied with the results, with I2 stating that the track surpassed his expectations:

I always associate any sort of remote recording projects with disjointedness even though that doesn't happen all the time. I think this goes to show that it can be super cohesive and sound really tight and good.

(I2.2)

I2's main source of dissatisfaction comes from the lack of designated workspace and struggles with technology (I2.2). SC2's feedback concerns the arrangement of

the track, suggesting that the composition would benefit from a lead vocal part (SC2.2) which were a part of my original vision for the composition. Although I think the finished project makes a good instrumental track, it would certainly sound more complete, and thus successful, with the inclusion of vocals. This ultimately came down to an initial lack of inspiration which eventually led to running out of time. Through this, we begin to see a pattern suggesting that online collaboration can suffer from a loss of drive, sometimes making it difficult to finish projects.

4.3.5 'Poppy'

Participant	Contributions
Myself	Composition, Arrangement, Sound Design, Lyric Writing, Vocal Performance & Recording, Production
CP1	Composition, Arrangement, Sound Design, Mixing, Production

In 2019, CP1 and I conceptualised an album where every track would draw inspiration from traditional, historical, and cultural connotations of specific flowers to create a unique 'bouquet' of music. The project was delayed due to both our involvements in other undertakings so, when the opportunity came around to work together again, we knew we wanted to work on something within this concept. Having the ability to work with individuals from a wide range of cultural backgrounds offered many options for this project as we could draw on influences from our collaborators' unique experiences. 'Poppy' is one of the tracks we created with the 'bouquet' concept in mind. This project is a complete collaboration between CP1 and myself; initiated by a beat idea I came up with, this evolved into a joint composition with both of us heavily influencing the structure, rhythm and harmony. Like a lot of my own solo work, 'Poppy' mostly fits into the experimental and lo-fi hip hop genres. The production makes extensive use of sampling and audio manipulation. The track follows a simple A-B-A-C structure, with the lyrics taking on a narrative role, exploring themes of addiction and instability, which are reflected in the instrumental through the constantly shifting beat and harmony. To achieve this feeling, we experimented with incorporating different grooves (Russ, 2009, p. 354), specifically shifting between an on-the-grid and a swung beat. Having the beat follow the vocal

flow helped to situate the lead vocals as the source of this instability. A good example of this can be heard around 01:12 where the groove changes to a swung rhythm and then back into a double-time on-the-grid feel (01:19).

The creative process for this project began with the piano sample heard at the start of the track, which became the basis of the chorus sections. As I wanted there to be a big contrast between different sections of the track, I then picked out the guitar sample (00:43), which came to be the primary sound for the verse sections. Once I'd laid down a basic structure using these samples and a drum beat, I sent the project over to CP1 to develop the instrumental further. CP1 mentions his goals for the track were to incorporate some heavy audio manipulation (CP1.2), which can be heard throughout the track, primarily affecting the piano and guitar samples. Once CP1 had some ideas, we planned and carried out several streamed studio sessions using Skype and Discord. During these sessions, we organised the present material into a structure we could later build on using more asynchronous methods. Once the basic structure was down, I set about writing the lyrics and then recording the vocals using my home set-up. After recording the vocals, the process evolved into a back-and-forth dynamic of CP1 sending ideas over a cloud-based file sharing service and myself providing feedback on the mix, showcasing an asynchronous approach (Koszolko, 2015). Throughout this process, we both suggested multiple creative ideas for furthering our concept. A key idea that made it into the final composition can be heard in the slow degradation and introduction of distortion heard in the second verse (02:29), leading to a noisy crescendo before dropping back into the outro (03:42). CP1 points out that the text-based feedback was an unusual approach to co-producing for him, as it allowed less real-time interaction between us than he would normally expect from in-person collaboration (CP1.2).

the main thing was then having to work through your comments by text, which is different than how we've been able to do it before. By me being the co-producer, having you in-person would mean that you'd work more directly on it

(CP1.2)

Going into these projects, CP1 made it clear that he works best with other people and struggles working in isolation (CP1.1). He further echoed this sentiment when reflecting on the production process, stating that being forced to work in a specific environment hampered creativity (CP1.2). Interestingly, CP1 states that it is standard practice for him to work from home, especially when working as a producer, implying that the lowered level of productivity came more as a result of restrictions on social interaction and movement due to lockdown. This is an important observation as it establishes a potential disparity between working remotely under ‘normal’ circumstances and under lockdown restrictions. CP1 goes on to talk about how online collaboration can make it more difficult to obtain high-quality recorded material due to limited access to recording facilities and equipment (CP1.2) - something previously mentioned by E2/I3 in relation to ‘Greenhouse’ (E2/I3.2). As a result of this, CP1 cites not being able to finish ‘Poppy’ as the biggest disappointment of the project as we both had envisioned a more melodic hook for the chorus (A) sections which, in the end, we were unable to accomplish in time.

4.3.6 ‘Race You To The End’

Participant	Contributions
Myself	Production
SC1	Composition, Arrangement, Lyric Writing, Various Performances & Recordings
E2/I3	Mixing

‘Race You To The End’ is SC1’s second compositional contribution to the study. This track is more clearly rooted in a rock context with the composition’s heavy reliance on guitars and drums. This posed an interesting challenge for the individuals involved in the project in the form of creating a band-based track with limited access to recording facilities and musicians. This led to some compromises being made for the sake of practicality, primarily in the domain of drum recording. As we didn’t have access to a drummer or a recording studio, drum programming and editing became a major collaborative element of this production. Whilst the drums are synthetic, the vast majority of the other instruments are live performances, including vocals,

guitars, bass and piano, all of which were performed by SC1. This project is also E2/I3's second mixing effort. The drums are heavy-hitting and punchy throughout, and choruses are densely packed with live instrumentation. The composition makes use of a more commonly used structure format found in many pop and rock songs (Winterson & Harris, 2014), however, it offers an unexpected turn in the climactic section (03:54). Rather than ending on another chorus, this section is a development of the same musical idea heard in the bridge (02:20). The mix is relatively dry throughout, letting the arrangement of layers determine the textural quality of the track. This makes the bridge section (02:20) a lot more distinct as the track breaks down to a slow drowned-out build-up which eventually leads back to the final chorus.

Similar to 'Drowning Astronauts', 'Race You To The End' was selected by SC1 and myself from a group of demos SC1 had prepared prior to anyone else's involvement. This meant that the bulk of the composition was already done and the main tasks were to unpack the track and plan the parts that needed to be recorded, as well as any arrangement changes to better fit the production style. Due to the online nature of the project, the recording process fell largely to SC1, putting a lot more emphasis on the original creator of the composition and allowing a greater sense of creative freedom (SC1.2). Once the guitars and vocals were recorded, SC1 sent the audio onto E2/I3 to start mixing. Once E2/I3 had finished an iteration of the mix, he would send it over a cloud-based sharing service to myself and SC1 and we then proceeded to give written feedback. This process was repeated several times until all parties were happy with the state of the mix. Using multiple programmed MIDI instruments, most prominently the drums, meant that creative compositional decisions could still be made throughout the production process. For example, after hearing the first version of the mix, SC1 and I suggested simplifying the kick drum rhythm in the first verse (00:12), to create a greater sense of development between the verses. This would have been impossible, or at least very difficult, to do with a live drum recording.

Overall, everyone involved was pleased with the results of this project (E2/I3.2 & SC1.2). The track comes across as coherent and stylistically appropriate which perhaps makes it one of the most successful projects. This could, to some extent, be

attributed to the more conventional form. Although, SC1 believes that face-to-face collaboration can sometimes be more efficient and lists distractions as a reason for this, suggesting that working in an environment normally associated with relaxation and leisurely activities can lead to a dip in productivity (SC1.2).

I'm essentially stuck in my room (...) where I relax, where I play video games (...) You've got this double mindset in one space, which I don't think is particularly good for me because I end up ignoring what I should be doing and start doing other things.

(SC1.2)

The key feedback from both participants was to do with the efficiency of working remotely. E2/I3, again, suggests that a way to receive live feedback could help to speed up the production process and enable the participants to have more direct input (E2/I3).

4.3.7 'Sakura'

Participant	Contributions
Myself	Composition, Arrangement, Sound Design, Lyric Writing, Vocal Performance & Recording, Production
CP1	Composition, Arrangement, Sound Design, Mixing, Production
VA1	Vocal Performance & Recording

'Sakura' is the second track written by myself and CP1, following the 'bouquet' concept. Just like 'Poppy', 'Sakura' fits predominantly into the experimental and lo-fi hip hop genres. This track also features a vocal performance from VA2, delivering a melodic hook based on a haiku by the Japanese poet Kobayashi Issa, written in 1821 (Lanoue, 2000). The concept for the track comes from the association of cherry blossoms with kamikaze pilots in World War II (Parry, 2019). The lyrics tell a story of a young kamikaze pilot set in an alternate dystopian reality and follow their final thoughts and recollections before carrying out their mission. The production has a thin and distant tone to it to reflect the sombre mood of the track which follows an

A-B-C-A-B structure. VA2 delivers a haunting and eerie rendition of Issa's haiku, achieved through drastic high-pass EQ and long reverbs.

The basis for this composition was initially developed from a long audio recording put through a granular synthesiser. I and CP1 sifted through the whole granulated audio file and picked out snippets that we wanted to use for the track. We then organised these into a rough structure and started arranging the beat out of different drum and percussion samples. We wanted the instrumental to be dreamy but sombre to fit with our concept. This was later reinforced through CP1's creative use of delays, reverbs, and compression. Once the basic idea for the beat was in place, I started to write the lyrics. The verse I wrote initially, which now appears in the second verse of the track (01:52), helped to further set the tone of the track. With a clear direction for the composition, CP1 went on to write the vocal melody for the chorus (00:54, 02:31). Knowing that VA2 spoke conversational Japanese (VA2.2), we wanted to put this skill to use and further tie the lyrical and musical content back to our initial inspiration. CP1 and I researched several haiku artists and picked out three haiku we thought embodied the theme of our composition. We then proposed these to VA2, who helped us decide on the haiku that best fit the phrasing of the melody CP1 had written (VA2.2). CP1 then sent the project to VA2, to record her vocal part. Once this stage was complete, CP1 mixed the project. Throughout the mixing process, we organised several streaming sessions using Discord and Skype, where CP1 consulted me on mix decisions and made edits based on our discussions. Eventually, we decided it was better for CP1 to send exports of the mix online so I could listen at higher fidelity on my own set-up and provide more accurate text-based feedback.

CP1 feels this slowed down the production process as he was forced to wait for my written comments and then implement these by himself. Despite this, he believes this may have helped to keep the comments shorter and more concise and encouraged an approach more closely focused on microelements of the mix (CP1.2). VA2 seems to echo CP1's thoughts on communication in this online collaboration, stating that working face-to-face helps her stay more engaged with the project, whereas working remotely resulted in a somewhat disconnected feeling - once she sent back her vocal recording, she felt that her part in the project was finished

(VA2.2). Nonetheless, VA2 believes this type of collaboration is common in her field of work as a session vocalist, further reinforcing Herbst's and Albrecht's identified overlap between the session player and sound engineer (2018a; 2018b).

for a vocalist, this kind of remote working is actually standard now. So, if you don't have the technology to remotely record yourself and send it off nowadays, usually you're not going to get as much work (...) As long as I have a microphone, I'm good to go (...)

(VA2.2)

Though pleased with the final results, VA2 felt that more dialogue before and after her contribution could have encouraged a more dynamic and involved working relationship (VA2.2), a concept previously acknowledged by Koszolko (2015). The lack of communication can possibly be attributed to the busy lives of the persons involved and it highlights the importance of planned forms of communication. This observation reflects similar thoughts and feelings mentioned by SC2 and E2/I3 about the need for a better communicational solution (E2/I3.2 & SC2.2). CP1 discusses that a better audio quality streaming solution would also help to address this issue (CP1.2) as this would make synchronous interaction more reliable.

4.3.8 'St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church Blues'

Participant	Contributions
Myself	Arrangement, Vocal Performance & Recording, Production
CP1	Arrangement, Sound Design, Mixing, Production

'St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church Blues' is a cover of a track with the same title by the post-hardcore band La Dispute (2011). The project was largely directed by CP1, with myself providing vocals and filling a secondary producer role. The track also features SC1, playing bass guitar in the final section of the song (02:24). The idea of covering this track stems from CP1's and my own enthusiasm for the post-hardcore and emo genre. This, combined with my experience of delivering

aggressive vocals, created ample opportunity to explore our shared interests. CP1's previous experience of working in this genre, most notably the track 'False Steps' (DatZiss, 2019), gave us the confidence to explore this further. Our version of the track takes a more electronic-based approach, bringing together CP1's production and sound design with live performances from myself and SC1. The production features a wide range of synthesised sounds but retains the structure and musical content of La Dispute's original composition.

As this project was primarily led by CP1, he took charge of re-creating the instrumental, primarily using synthesis. CP1 also decided to outsource a bass recording from SC1 who recorded the bassline and sent it across for CP1 to incorporate into the project. CP1 played guitar in the final section of the track (03:05). These contributions from CP1 place him quite firmly in the 'Auteur' producer role (Burgess, 2013). Once the instrumental was programmed and recorded, CP1 sent me a bounce of the project to record vocals over, which I recorded in my home studio. I sent over five takes of each section for CP1 to select the takes he believed worked best. CP1 suggests that the vocal editing was made easier by working remotely as it mitigated the potential pressure and multiple opinions that might happen as a result of face-to-face collaboration. He even goes on to say that 'vocal cutting was easier to do by myself because it's very much just a "brain-off, just-do" kind of thing' (CP1.2). Once all editing had been agreed upon, CP1 mixed the project, consulting me throughout the process.

CP1 comments on the online collaboration process, stating that due to the convenience of file-sharing, which potentially led to more consultations than would happen in person, the feedback process was extended time-wise, however, it also helped to make the points more concise and focused (CP1.2). This could be attributed to the reduced time pressure aspect, as collaborators can listen to the track multiple times and refine their feedback before sending it back to the person in charge of the process.

the feedback was shortened and condensed by having more bounces (...) this was very much: ping a transfer, listen, small changes, and then repeat that. And I don't know which one is a better situation. (...) in one way, the criticism is

extended by having fewer bounces and going over that with a fine-tooth comb, whereas this was more so 'let's keep working on it'.

(CP1.2)

As mentioned in the other projects, CP1 believes the main area of the online collaboration needing improvement is the ability to experience the same sound simultaneously through lossless audio streaming (CP1.2), something that has been echoed by multiple participants throughout the projects.

Overall, the track comes across as finished and flows well although, this can largely be attributed to the fact of it being a cover of a pre-existing song. The creative process for this project was also made simpler by having more straight-cut roles - CP1 was largely in charge of the instrumental whilst my role focused mostly on the vocals. Whilst there was some overlap as we both provided feedback for each other, this could be an indication that much stricter role definitions work better in an online environment.

5. Discussion

5.1 Creativity in an Online Environment

To gain an understanding of the creative impact that the online environment had on the working relationships, we can begin by looking at the working relationship between myself and CP1, both working as acting producers. CP1 makes an interesting observation on how the shift to an online environment altered his input from any initial expectations. Similar to Cremata and Powell's study (2017), communicating through non-verbal means seemed to be the most common option for most participants (CP1.2; E2/I3.2; VA1; VA2). CP1 suggests that communicating via text messages caused the focus of his work to shift more towards the mixing side of production (CP1.2), as he theorises that working in a physical environment where face-to-face interaction can happen allows all involved parties to have a greater influence on the entire process; meanwhile, in a setting where collaborators are forced to work independently, the responsibility of making real-time decisions falls to one person, with feedback and dialogue primarily taking place away from the main working environment (CP1.2), or asynchronously (Koszolko, 2015). In most cases, the participants didn't believe this had a notable negative impact on the quality of the finished product. CP1 does make a case for the overall process being slower because of this, a view shared by SC1 (SC1.2). Other participants, however, had a different view. VA1 and E2/I3 both stated that they felt working in an online environment improved time-management aspect of the process (E2/I3.2; VA1.2).

There are several aspects that can be observed within my study in relation to creativity in an online environment. One must acknowledge that with the change in creative practice, comes a new set of restrictions. On this topic, SC1 makes an important point about restrictions breeding creativity (SC1.2), something previously discussed by McIntyre, who implies that constraints placed on a good songwriter can fuel further creativity (2001). Again, a similar idea is echoed by Shelvock in relation to technological constraints imposed by music production technologies, stating that boundaries exist for all musicians (2020, p. 26-27). Koszolko (2015) seems to support

this idea, suggesting that these new forms of expression, in this case as a result of new restrictions, between collaborators, can yield unexpected results. The existence of this is evident in my research, with several participants acknowledging the process took some unanticipated directions and offered unusual opportunities (E2/I3.2; SC2.2; VA2.2). The elements mentioned by these participants are concerned with the creative content, such as genre expectations (E2/I3.2), and unexpected performance contributions (SC2.2; VA2.2). This could also be a reflection of Koszolko's suggestion that the spontaneity associated with collaboration can lead to a prioritisation of musical outcomes driven by the individuals' creative visions rather than a pre-determined set of criteria (2015). It can be argued then that if an individual was to develop a sufficient level of expertise in the field of online collaboration, these technological and social restrictions would be no more significant to the creative process to the participants than that of a vocalist's voice or a drummer's ideal drum kit (Shelvock, 2020, p. 26-27).

E2/I3 points out that working on 'Greenhouse', a rap track, opened up a lot of room for creative decisions as he felt there was a lesser expectation of 'clinical and clean' sound compared to the metal and rock genres that he is used to working in (E2/I3.2). This presents a clear example of tacit knowledge (Schmidt Horning, 2004) being obtained through creative practice where the individual's skills and experience are tested resulting in a new understanding of previously unexplored territory. Although the musical direction and genre will most often be determined by the artist, or the 'Artist' producer (Burgess, 2013), it is essential to be acknowledged and understood by all collaborators in order to accurately 'service' the track (Harding, 2012, p. 91). Misunderstood expectations can often prove to be a significant setback for all individuals involved, therefore a common understanding must be reached in order for the production to be successful (Martin, 2014). E2/I3 cites the quality of the personal and working relationship with their collaborators as a key factor in determining the success of the project (E2/I3.2).

The inherent existence of restrictions leads to another key observation - that the lack of prominent real-time interaction changes the collaborative creative process significantly. SC1.2 points out that practices such as 'jamming', which can happen spontaneously in shared physical environments, do not have a direct equivalent in

the ‘field’ of online collaboration (SC1.2; McIntyre, 2011). SC2 uses the example of working in a band to suggest that face-to-face collaboration can be more efficient (SC2.2). However, for a large portion of the projects in my study the majority of creative interactions between collaborators happened asynchronously, and often independently. CP1 addresses the effects this had on his creative process (CP1.2), suggesting that it resulted in a shift away from a ‘Collaborative’ role, and more towards the ‘Auteur’, or perhaps even a ‘Facilitative’ producer (Burgess, 2013), leading to the conclusion that asynchronous methods can drastically change the work-flow and contributions of roles and participants resulting in a completely different working dynamic (Bennett, 2011; Koszolko, 2015).

5.2 Technological Restrictions

The lack of real-time interaction was mentioned as one of the key technological challenges by several participants (CP1.2; E2/I3.2; SC2.2). This is something that we tried to address with CP1 and SC1 by running live ‘pseudo-studio sessions’ - screen-casting, and audio sharing the projects over Discord and Skype. The received audio quality within these programs was relatively poor, making it very difficult to comment on sound design and overall mix quality. CP1 and SC1 both listed reduced audio quality as the main reason for failure of this method (CP1.2; SC1.2), something previously observed by Campelo and Howlett (2013). Attempts at accessible synchronous methods seemed to prove mostly unsuccessful, which led to participants leaning more towards an asynchronous approach of sharing files and creating new versions of projects, closely reminiscent of Koszolko’s idea of ‘remixing’ (2015), as a way of developing creative material (Bennett, 2011). This leads us back to Koszolko’s (2015) acknowledgement that within a cloud-based environment, it may be more useful to think of ‘jamming’ as an element of an asynchronous songwriting process.

To further examine the technological implications of online collaboration we should look to the most technical role within the study - that of the engineer. Although the effects of this collaborative model seem less direct for the engineer, it

still posed some challenges. E2/I3 refers to the impact of their collaborators' restricted access to recording facilities as a key drawback to working remotely. Lack of direct control over the recording equipment and environment can curb the general quality of material the engineer has to work with, something E2/I3 addressed in relation to 'Greenhouse' (E2/I3.2). E2/I3 suggests that the inclusion of sub-optimal recordings can lead to a necessary change in approach, from creative to technical, in order to bring the perceived quality up to the desired standard (Schmidt Horning, 2013).

As SC2 points out (SC2.2), many of the technologies used throughout this study are already deeply embedded into many of the roles. Especially in the domain of electronic music, it can be argued that Digital Audio Workstations (DAWs) have become a quintessential tool for producers, engineers, and songwriters alike (Théberge, 2012; Bell et al., 2015; Hepworth-Sawyer et al., 2019). As such, it must be acknowledged that many of these individuals were, at least to some extent, familiar with the technologies used for transitioning to an online-based environment. Perhaps the most important restrictive technology then is the internet itself. All of the participants involved in this research had constant internet access which enabled them to engage with the technology freely. However, it cannot be ignored that this perceived universal ease with which everyone was able to participate in this creative process would not be possible without unlimited and unrestricted internet access.

5.3 Evolving Practices

One of the key challenges of transitioning to an online-based collaborative environment came from the lack of a designated creative space. Several participants cite distractions linked to working from home as an obstacle throughout the process (I2; SC1.2; SC2.2). These distractions can be split into two categories. The first category can best be described as conflicting associations of the individual with a particular space, usually to do with professional work or relaxation (SC1.2; SC2.2). The second category represents external distractions associated with living space, predominantly those of background noise (I2.2; SC1.2). The latter of these relates

directly back to some of the reasons ‘professional’ studios were originally invented (Théberge, 2004). However, it is also important to acknowledge that some participants found working in a familiar environment more stimulating (E2/I3.2; VA1.2). E2/I3 suggests that working in a comfortable space not only reduced stress but also improved his technical decision-making as he was familiar with the acoustic qualities of his room (E2/I3.2). Similar thoughts have been expressed by participants of Kaloterakis’s study (2013).

Relating the participants’ roles back to the online setting of this study, it is important to acknowledge the shift in experiences and expectations within their field of work. Some roles and individuals were more adversely affected by the shift away from face-to-face interaction than others; it is just as important to acknowledge the constants as it is to identify the differences. E2/I3 suggests that his working environment, for example, remained largely unchanged by the online aspect of the study, however, due to the decentralised nature of the collaborations (Théberge, 2004) the focus of his role shifted more towards that of a mixing engineer. This most likely came as a result of session musicians taking on the role of the recording engineers for their own sessions (Herbst & Albrecht, 2018).

Various participants state that collaborating remotely in an online environment is already commonplace in many areas of record production (E2/I3; VA1.2; VA2.2). This can be traced back to the evolving role of the session musician identified by Herbst and Albrecht (2018b). Interestingly, both of the ‘Vocalists’ appear to share this sentiment, VA1 even suggesting that it extends beyond just collaboration and into the field of education (VA1.2). As Cremata and Powell proposed in their study (2017), it is reasonable to suggest that online collaboration can help establish, foster, and grow new creative communities and, through joint explorations of creative processes and evolving practices, participants can share their knowledge and experiences to establish new common grounds.

6. Conclusion

The findings contained within this project provide an insight into the technologies, roles, and collaborative creativity in an online environment. In this chapter, I address my findings within the context of the research questions and identify areas of my study needing further investigation.

1. How does online collaboration change the creative approach?
2. In what ways does access to technology and resources affect productivity and creativity?
3. What are the key challenges of transitioning to an online-based collaborative environment?
4. How are different roles defined within the online collaboration process?

Firstly, we can observe that most creative interactions between collaborators throughout all eight projects followed an asynchronous approach. This establishes a shift in creative approach for most participants who acknowledged the significance of live in-person aspects such as 'jamming' and the influence of instant feedback between participants. Whilst some attempts at synchronous collaboration were made in a handful of the projects, all individuals involved were highly critical of the perceived effectiveness of this approach and in all cases reverted back to asynchronous methods. Interestingly, some of the participants who didn't opt for any synchronous interaction throughout their involvement with the projects mentioned real-time feedback as an area they believe would have improved the collaborative process. Perhaps then, it is not that asynchronous methods are inherently more successful or synchronous methods unwanted, but synchronous technologies need more careful planning and consultation to have the intended effects.

This observation leads to my second key finding. Aside from synchronous technologies, the majority of technological obstacles seemed to be rooted in individual access to relevant resources, such as designated recording spaces and

equipment. Due to the nature of these elements, technical processes like recording and mixing were most affected. As a result, performative roles, such as the 'Vocalist/Artist' and 'Instrumentalist', and technical roles, such as the 'Engineer' and in some cases 'Producer/Co-Producer', were forced to find novel solutions to these challenges. It is important to acknowledge that despite the occasional technical shortcomings, most participants were relatively familiar with the tools and technologies used throughout. This should not be taken for granted, however, as not all potential collaborators will have applicable experience in this field and so should be treated on an individual basis. In future online projects, it may be beneficial to create an account of the potential technological restrictions of all participants. This may include identifying each individual's access to specific spaces, microphones, and other resources. This could at least help to establish more accurate expectations of potential contributions, not only creative but technical, which may, in turn, allow preventative measures to be put in place by and for the relevant parties.

As addressed by several participants, communication tools were a key aspect of transitioning to an online-based environment. Several individuals favoured text-based correspondence for several processes. Text-based feedback communicated via text message or social media was generally praised as it established a clear record of comments and criticisms which was used by the participants throughout the asynchronous creative and technical processes. However, as noted earlier in this chapter, several participants provided feedback on this subject, citing the lack of real-time feedback as a key drawback of the online environment, as opposed to face-to-face collaboration. It is important to acknowledge that whilst verbal communication plays an essential role, face-to-face collaboration also allows non-verbal communication methods such as eye contact, facial expressions and body language, which are much harder to replicate remotely. Of course, tools such as emojis and GIFs (Graphic Interchange Format) can often be adequate substitutes however, they are not direct equivalents of in-person non-verbal forms of communication and thus require further study in order to establish their effectiveness. Based on this observation, a combination of text and speech-based communication would potentially provide a better balance, however, as each participant has individual and unique preferences it is perhaps best to

address these as such. SC2 offers a noteworthy suggestion for this in the form of a shared cloud-drive where individuals could upload their versions of projects and comment on each other's contributions. While this does not necessarily address the real-time aspect of the feedback, it does potentially provide a more interactive and engaging form of communication.

My final observation relates to the roles of the participants. Based on the experiences and comments of the participants involved in my study, there seems to be a pattern of increased creative influence on the musical content for the vast majority of roles. Several participants from various roles mentioned they felt a greater sense of artistic and creative freedom and as such were able to express their creativity more freely. This perception could perhaps be linked to the asynchronous nature of the approaches used throughout most of the projects. The absence of direct real-time input from their collaborators may have caused a decrease in perceived creative pressure from other participants, in turn providing a greater sense of creative freedom. Acknowledging the presence of such pressures can relieve some of the restrictions and related stress, leading to a better understanding of creative drivers, for remote as well as face-to-face collaboration. It is also important to consider the potential positive effects such pressures can have, as these may inspire individuals to strive for better performances in order to satisfy their collaborators' expectations. However, this, as with any phenomenological study, is entirely based on the experiences and perceptions of these particular individuals and, as such, should not be treated as a universal statement.

My observations should provide some useful insights into several aspects one might expect to encounter when collaborating in an online-based environment, and how to better anticipate and plan for these interactions. Overall, a deeper understanding of individual expectations and technologies prior to engagement with creative collaboration can only improve the experience of the participants and further the success of the outcomes.

The study of online collaborative practice is still a relatively new field and, as such, many of its components require further investigation in order to establish a clear set of guidelines. Firstly, further research needs to be carried in order to gain a more thorough understanding of the relationship between synchronous and asynchronous

collaboration and how these practices can best be applied to the creative process. Especially as synchronous technologies change and improve, this will be a key area of interest with significant implications for the evolution of online collaboration. Furthermore, many participants identified communication as a key area for improvement. A more quantitative study into online communication systems and their applications in the art of record production must take place to better examine the validity of the trends found within my research. This should closely look at text-based and speech-based tools as well as the relationship between them and the creative process, as well as non-verbal methods mentioned earlier in this chapter. Lastly, it is essential to bear in mind the ever-evolving nature of creative and technical roles within the art of record production, meaning that constant review of these roles and their impact on the practice will be essential to developing further knowledge in this field.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Interview 1

Producer/Co-Producer 1 (CP1.1)

10-Jan-2020

Interviewer Can you briefly describe your cultural background for me, please?

CP1 So, I was brought up in South London, in Bromley, which is about a 30-minute train journey to central London. And, (I) was brought up in a semi-religious family – so, my mum’s super Christian, and my dad is atheist. (...) I’ve lived in Huddersfield for the last five years, mostly, like, consistently not going home a whole lot so, I feel like I have shifted culturally to a more northern feel. But, as I said, southern upbringings.

Interviewer Yeah. What musical genres and styles were you exposed to whilst growing up? (...)

CP1 (...) Early on was very much just radio. Like, radio or music videos that were on before TV started. But, radio was, like, Capital or Heart, and that was it. So, a lot of, sort of, like, big ballady songs was what I really did enjoy. I used to stay up and try to listen to either ‘Secret Lovers’ by... Oh, I can’t remember. [sings] (...) or ‘Lonely’ by Akon.

Interviewer [laughs]

CP1 (They) were two distinct memories I had of, like, staying up past my bed time to listen to tunes. But, yeah, so it was mainly radio and... (Be)cause my parents would listen to music but I don’t feel like they had a huge amount of influence (be)cause my dad really likes Deacon Blue, and my mum’s... they’re both big Queen fans. And I do really enjoy Queen, less so Deacon Blue, but they wouldn’t play a whole lot around the house, so after a point, I just found all my musical stuff myself. But, with what I was saying about the music videos before – TV was on – ‘*Boulevard of Broken Dreams*’ was one of them, and, so, I asked, it must have been super close to the release of that, but I asked for it for a birthday or Christmas present, and my grandparents went into HMV and said “is this suitable for

child aged..." however old I was, and they were like "noooo...". So, I was so close to getting into Green Day earlier than I did, but then, I feel like my main discovery of what led me to my musical taste now was my mum's nurse training friend, her son was in a band who covered Arctic Monkeys and that kind of thing. And, he gave me his iTunes collection, which had all of *American Idiot*, had some Snoop Dogg, had Eminem. They're the main three. (...) Like, Green Day and Eminem, I feel like where the branching off points. Also, Guitar Hero 3 was a big one.

Interviewer Yeah, yeah. I think for a lot of people our age.

CP1 Yeah, for sure. Because I hadn't been exposed to rock music that much because my parents don't really enjoy it. There were so many songs on that that then led me down a path.

Interviewer Yeah? (...) Who was the first artist to make you take interest in actually making pop music? (...)

CP1 I feel like that would probably be when I was, like, (be)cause I was in a lot of bands in secondary school, and that was when I started making music for myself, and, so, Green Day was always the sort of, like, centre point of that, I think. But, like, The Killers as well. They were probably the main two influences for that band. But, like, I hadn't really thought about that. I think I'd always had an interest in making music for myself, but hadn't really sort of thought in my head "why?", but I guess, it's also just playing music. (Be)cause I played violin from the age of, sort of, eight. And, so, I think by playing music you start to then think about creating it yourself, but I'd write, like, stupid violin pieces as a kid as well. Yeah, I don't know if it's a specific artist, it's more just the act of me getting into music.

Interviewer Okay. (...) Can you briefly talk about your musical education?

CP1 So, I have a Grade 8 in viola...

Interviewer When did you start studying viola?

CP1 It was in Year 3. Oh no, sorry, viola was in Year 10, I started violin and then viola was Year 10. So, I did up to Grade 5 on violin, and then Grade 8 on viola. (I) sung in church choirs and, like, at school was my singing background, and then eventually led to singing in a couple bands. And (I) then started learning guitar in secondary school.

Interviewer Yeah, okay. What is your experience of working with other people?

(...)

CP1 I feel like I work better with, like, someone else as an influence. Like, I'm not great at self-leading myself, like, I like to have someone else to have as a target, kind of thing and so, like, in bands especially, I like bouncing ideas off people and feel like that creatively influences me more than having my own thought. My immediate response to making something is to send it to someone that I was... this kind of thing, which in a band is much simpler (be)cause that's sort of what it is, but from a production role, in this case co-producing, that's exactly what that is - it's sort of, creating and then bouncing backwards and forwards.

Interviewer And, can you tell me a little bit about your current involvement in music?

CP1 So, I'm doing a Master's by Research in Music, which is taking a pre-existing viola piece and adding two different accompaniments to it, and seeing how the performers react to that. So, I'm creating a Max patch that reacts to how the performers are playing, and then one of my own creations - like, an electronic piece that sits behind the viola performance, as opposed to the pre-existing piano piece. I'm also playing bass in a prog band, and viola for a pop band. And, then, I still sing in church choirs occasionally and, occasionally, I will sit down and sort of play around in Ableton, I guess, which is my main creative thing at the moment.

Interviewer Okay, cool. So, bringing it back to your role as a Co-Producer in this project, can you give me your definition of 'producer'?

CP1 It almost depends on the genre, (...) with grime tracks, the producer is just the person that made the beat potentially some time ago, and then Stormzy is the rapper. But it's become so blurred at this point because the role of the producer is also the mix engineer and the recording engineer. It possibly also depends on the band or the person working as well, (be)cause I think Everything Everything list themselves as producers on their album, which would be that they'd still influenced the process itself. But, like, there will be producers that will help the band write the music which is, like, more of a producer than a recording engineer, but the lines are very much blurred.

Interviewer Yeah, for sure. And, at what point, if at all, did you start identifying as a producer?

CP1 I think, like, under my <name> pseudonym, like, that's my producing thing (be)cause, making beats, as I said, I refer to as producing in

that genre. (...) Possibly less so on my IP album because I was also composing that and doing the overall thing and it was a different project but that, also, maybe could be viewed as producing because I had the sort of main creative role and then (I) was getting people to record the thing that I set out, rather than recording something that someone else had set out.

Interviewer And, as a producer what is your experience of working with other people?

CP1 So, it's mainly with you, as the <name> project but I think that is... unless I'm forgetting something. I guess when I was working at <name> studios I did a bit of producing, when bands would come in and I would suggest stuff as they were recording but that's, sort of, minimal production, because there would be a recording engineer there and I'd be sat behind not giving, like, full creative... but if I heard something and (I) was like "well, that would be cool to do" then that, but yeah, the main part is...

Interviewer And on your IP project as well, maybe? Like, directing what other people were playing and...

CP1 Yeah, true. For sure. But it was more so just sending them the parts that they played. Like, I think(...) again, I'd refer to what we do much more as a producing thing than that was.

Interviewer Okay. So, moving on from your role as a producer, what is your preference of working environment? (...)

CP1 I like being near enough people, I don't like being in a place where I'm isolated. I like to be able to get up and stretch my legs (...) but I think that's the most important thing for me - not being locked in place, being able to move around. (...) Easily distracted is possibly not the best word for it but I work best when I'm able to be distracted.

Interviewer [laughs] Yeah. With regards to inspiration, how do you maintain interest in a project that you're working on?

CP1 So, if I've started the project then it means that I'm interested. (...) The bell curve of interest is very much a thing - that you can find that you lose interest as a project's going on but I think the important bit is that then the ending and getting the project completed is the main inspiration for me, for getting stuff done, is to then see it out in the world, kind of thing, and so that brings you through this sort of middle bit of minutiae, you then, can then push on to a finished product, which is the main important thing

(be)cause otherwise why start a project if you're not going to finish it.

Interviewer Okay. And when you're working on a project, do you set yourself challenges or goals to complete?

CP1 So, I don't like setting myself goals (be)cause it stresses me out and makes me over-think what I want to be in it, and so I don't want to think too much about that kind of thing, and then I'll just end up focusing too much on doing those goals and then by stressing out too much about that I won't want to do it and it'll lead me down that path. Erm. And I feel like that's the case for most things, I don't verbalise or write down goals because then if I haven't ticked that box then I'm stressing about not ticking that box, whereas maybe that is the most important thing. (...) I'll probably have goals in my head, but, like, I won't write them down. (...) Like, relating to the inspiration thing, I'll push through (be)cause I want to get it done rather than having, like, set goals.

Interviewer Yeah. And what about challenges? Are there any challenges you set yourself when you're starting a project that you want to achieve?

CP1 I think the main challenges (...) will be at the start of the project rather than during. It'll be that I've wanted to include something like, be it that I've got a new plug-in and so I started creating something with that, or found an instrumental. (...) Or, for instance, when we did <song name>, you came to me and said "oh I want to do a chill thing". (...) Possibly, I'd shown you Potsu's beat or Joji, or something like that and so, I'd been listening to Potsu a lot (...) and maybe not thought about creating a beat like that, but then you verbalising that you wanted to do that in that sense then led me to be like "well, yes, of course I want to do something like that" and then that led me on. So, it's less so challenges during, it's more so that challenges will maybe start of the process that it leads down.

Interviewer Okay, yeah. So, linking back to your role as a producer, do you think there are certain expectations your creative output must meet?

CP1 I guess, the expectation comes from the person that you're working with, because you're the producer you're possibly taking something that they'd maybe slightly formed and then bringing it up to a full finished project so, they have to be pleased with it because, otherwise, what's the point in producing? Like, they could have produced it themselves. (...) But, also, you've got to allow for your own expectations as well. You don't want to be producing something that you're not pleased with because at the end of the day that's your image. And, also, beyond any sort of higher power

thing, if you're not pleased with something you're doing then why do it.

Interviewer Yeah. How do you manage your expectations against the expectations of others?

CP1 So, I think if I'm showing something to the greater world it means that I'm super pleased with it. (...) I'll start a lot of projects very slightly and the ones that, sort of, carry on to even being slightly fleshed out are the ones that I am super sure are going to be important, so I already know going in to, like, the fully fleshed out projects that are even worth showing people that I'm proud of it. So, by my pride, I'd hope that others... So, again, relating back to the previous question - it's sort of knowing yourself that you're proud of the output then by showing people, I don't know for sure that they'll enjoy it, but I feel like I can rely on it being a preferable opinion because I've pushed through.

Interviewer Okay. (...) What are you expecting to be some of your key contributions to this project?

CP1 I'm almost not entirely sure, just from the fact of... it could be anything, and I think that's the most interesting part of it - (it) is that we've discussed a few prior points but we haven't really really delved deep into that and so this could spawn anything, and I think that's the most exciting thing, (it) is not knowing what the end product is going to be because if we did then it is sort of takes some of the sparkle out of it, and it might dip that middle interest even more. Whereas, if we don't know where this final piece is going to lay then that makes it really exciting to see where it does.

Interviewer Okay, and last question. How do you think this project will differ from previous projects you have collaborated on, and do you think there are any ways in which it will be similar?

CP1 So, similarities will be, I mean, almost all of the electronic producing I've done has been working with you, so that will form similarities just from the basis of that working relationship. But, the previous works have been more... especially <song name> is a more "silly" track, whereas maybe because it's working for a Master's project it feels a bit more sort of weighty, I guess. I mean, that might not be an influence on it, but I guess in my head that's sort of there so it might form some of the creative choices, who knows. But from what we've talked about, the sort of overarching idea of it is a lot more mature, and so that will be the main shift. Whether the instrumentals will show this, and that's where my main role being in the instrumentals. But, like, I know for sure that lyrically I imagine it

will lead to a more mature route than we've done before.

Engineer 1/Instrumentalist 1 (E1/I1.1)

8-Jan-2020

Interviewer Can you firstly give me a bit of a cultural background to yourself?

E1/I1 Yeah, so, I was born and raised in working class white British household. (...) (I) got into music pretty early through the skateboarding scene, through being a skateboarder and people recommending me things like Linkin Park and Sum41, and then quickly fell into an indie rock functions band scene, which is... from the working class attitude of things, that's where the band thing came from. It was just a case of getting in, getting practising, just doing it. That's how I conceptualised how to learn scales and harmony and things with other people. But other than that, yeah, it was just sort of, like, we were just doing bands to make a bit of money for the weekends and just getting it done kind of attitude. So, yeah, a lot of American rock and British indie rock growing up.

Interviewer (...) Maybe, you can talk a little bit about any styles that you were exposed to earlier, before your skating, like through your parents or family?

E1/I1 So, parents... it's an interesting mix up (be)cause my dad was a straight punk, he was going to Dead Kennedys gigs, and saw the Sex Pistols, and things like that, so there's always been guitar heavy music in my life. One of my earliest musical memories is The Smiths on tape, so I think as my dad got older he sort of got more into the British indie rock scene as well. From my mum's side it was like Robbie Williams and Take That, and super commercial pop music, and I think those two things collided basically in car journeys, it's where we would listen to music all the time, and that was... I was raised with two sisters as well, so it was, you know, Britney Spears, Pink, Avril Lavigne, and then every now and again me and my dad would get to chime in with a Linkin Park record, or Busted, for sure. I mean, what British kid didn't get raised with Busted, you know? So, all that kind of thing. And then, as I got into my teen years, it was very much the rebellion of Slipknot and Avenged Sevenfold, which I had to actually adjust... I remember distinctly having to adjust to the screaming vocals, I didn't like them at first, but just more and more... And then, I ended up in a really toxic stage where it was, like, "death to all but metal", but really competitive amongst guitar players and other musicians in school. Who was trying to shred the hardest, who was trying to riff the hardest. Really really competitive guitar-based, like, thing, and we'd all come in with, like, "oh, this track's heavier than yours". [laughs] Share it over bluetooth on phones and things

like that. (...) I mean, I still love metal, I still love pop rock. I've never fallen out with anything, really. Whatever I've listened to I've kept in my, sort of, like, library of personal music. But then, going towards college, everybody was into funk and disco, and your Stevie Wonders, and your Snarky Puppies, and a bit more fusion kind of thing. I think that was just because that was the first time I was exposed to classically trained musicians. One of my best mates there was a classically trained bass opera singer.

Interviewer Oh, okay.

E1/I1 But he was the guy that was getting me into Stevie Wonder and Motown, and things like that. And from there it just got weirder and weirder. [laughs] It just got weirder and weirder. But yeah, I've always been progressively exposed to more genres, and as a bass player, first and foremost, I've always enjoyed adapting to things. Because in my mind it's only 12 notes on a fretboard, so I can use those 12 notes in any style I want, (that) was the ultimate goal.

Interviewer Cool. And was there a particular artist that first made you become interested in making pop music?

E1/I1 Hmm. Good question. (...) Yeah, so, I think Linkin Park gave me that, when I found, like, a YouTube video or watched Saturday morning TV and they were live and I was like 'I want to be in Linkin Park, I want to play guitar in Linkin Park'. [laughs] (...) I think that was probably somewhere in between Linkin Park, Metallica, and I kind of want to say Korn. [laughs]

Interviewer [laughs] Okay, fair enough.

E1/I1 [laughs] (Be)cause I remember that my first bass had to be a 5-string, (be)cause the guy from Korn and the guy from... Yeah, it was nu metal. Nu metal wanted me to play (be)cause it's kind of simple and accessible in the sense that quite often it's just two notes. Like, the riff is two notes and it's a semitone apart. So yeah, I think nu metal bands were a very accessible way for me to think that I could play bass guitar. And Metallica just because (...) guitars had become available at school and it was the same time I started listening to Metallica, and other people playing guitar listened to Metallica. It was just, like, "let's learn Enter Sandman" or whatever.

Interviewer Cool, that's interesting. Can you briefly describe your experience with musical education? (...)

E1/I1 Tumultuous, turbulent. Yeah, I had a real attitude to it that came from... it came from these first bands that I was in, and we were just

learning from tabs or by ear, or whatever. (...) So, very early days it was just, like, there was a guitar club but it was more the older, the Year 10s and Year 11s, when I was in Year 8, showing me a riff from wrestling or a nu metal riff. I remember learning the Bautista theme tune from WWE at one point. That was literally the first thing I learnt. And then, like, 'Smoke On The Water'. So, it was quite a lot of older peers in the guitar hang sessions at lunch times. Then, (I) discovered tabs, which sort of... I mean, I had like a big binder book full of tabs - a completely unnecessary amount of printing (be)cause it was quite often just the same riff over eight pages. [laughs] Yeah, tab was very much, like, my self-learning tool. And then, it was the internet, just finding random pages. (I) taught myself how to look after the bass. Erm. I didn't really use video. I still, to this day, don't watch people play a lot to learn something. It's very much tab. And then, it was a case of a lot of sources on the internet were saying tab's bad because it doesn't have rhythm. (...) Rhythm was one thing that I lacked right up until coming to uni, actually, that's always been my weakest one. Possible because of it. So, what I would then do is sit there literally going up and down every single note chromatically and then figuring out "oh, that's a G, that G is in this song, this song must be in G". It was probably in C. [laughs]

Interviewer [laughs] Close enough.

E1/I1 [laughs] Yeah, it's part of it. And then, it was just, again, going back to that working class attitude of just going to practice and getting it done. The guitar player and singer in that band was really brash and arrogant, and didn't believe in tuning his guitar. He was that kind of guy, you know, he just believed in, sort of...

Interviewer "Believed in the music"? [laughs]

E1/I1 Yeah! [laughs] Yeah. He'd just play a chord and if it worked, it worked; if it didn't, it didn't. I could see from the way he was playing it was very reactionary so he might actually play a wrong thing (and) quickly fix it. But, in that band is when I learned to conceptualise keys and melody. And it was a lot of, you know, your Oasis, your 'Chelsea Dagger', and just party indie rock tunes. But, just through the repetition of doing it in a band room I began to familiarise with keys, and what keys were, and how chords worked, and what notes did and didn't fit in songs. It wasn't until college level that I started to look at reading but I really really resisted. I was like "no, man, just use your ears" but slowly and gradually chipped away at it and sort of didn't really come to fruition until first year of uni, which was when I was 21. The thing that unlocked it for me was it was the first time I had a bass tutor, and he broke down rhythms for me - how to read rhythms - and that was, like, a big moment for me. Like a

“Eureka” moment, because up until that point I hadn’t been reading rhythms, I was just trying to read the melodies. And I was just kind of like “why was I never taught to do this from an earlier age?”, you know, if I learned to read rhythm first. And then pitch, to this day I still wing it if I’m reading. I just guess. I’m like “that looks like a third, yeah, I’ll play a third”, yeah, I still guess, but always using my ears, always being aware of the key signature and where I am in that.

Interviewer Yeah, cool. (...) What is your experience of working with other people?

E1/I1 (...) I’ve been fortunate in that I got to work with a lot of people, and that’s just going to jam nights or just speaking to people, having friends that trust me to dep for gigs. (...) Yeah, generally it’s positive. You do get that fear or awkwardness when you’re playing with a new person but there’s kind of like an unspoken connection, especially between drummers, and probably because I’m a rhythm section player. Erm. I think I learned fairly early on that the key is to listen to other people, and then, progressively, if you want to do something fancy, progressively add those ideas in. (...) Yeah, sometimes you do have to think about how you approach talking to someone if something is not quite right. And that’s just, again, like a character thing, you’ve just got to spend time getting to know a person or testing the character, asking some questions. Like, I said to a drummer, like, a week or two ago that the cymbal was too loud, and it turns out he was just in a bad mood. (...) He did kind of put the face on but also, eventually, quietened down as well. And it wasn’t after the fact that I said “you know, I wasn’t trying to be awful to you”, and he just went “well, don’t worry because I realised I was just in a bad mood”. So, there’s things like that can maybe dampen a rehearsal or something, but I think if you just go in with a good attitude and say it with a smile people generally relax a little bit... (...) Yeah, a bit of humility on all accounts, just go in with a good attitude. One thing I found (was) that, working for myself, composition was a thing that I fell out of love with. Not sure why. But, changing the theme from instrumentalist to engineer, I found that I had a knack for listening to people’s demos and getting the idea of the song. So one thing I’ll do is, if I’m beginning to produce someone, I’ll ask, you know, where did this song come from? What is the emotional... what is the meaning behind this song? I feel like that’s, for me, always been a good way of breaking down the barrier between an artist in the studio and myself as someone who’s mixing or engineering it. I think some people don’t necessarily expect that question (be)cause it can be looked at as quite industrious, can mixing and recording - it’s a technical challenge, but I like to blend a little bit of the creative side, you know. Like a good example I have of that is a track from <name>’s record, and it’s not got any vocals,

it's instrumental music so the initial emotional intent is only implied through the music. So, I had to ask him, and it was a good job that I did ask him (be)cause I probably would have mixed it very differently. (...) He didn't realise that that was the sound that he wanted, and then when he heard it he was like "oh mate, I love it, don't change it", and obviously I'm a mix engineer so I changed it. [laughs] Only slightly, though. (...) So, things like that, I think that's a good example. Yeah, it's a people-person business and (...) I'm not a people-person. I think music's definitely raised my social abilities quite a lot. All of these stories that I've given have always been connected to meeting other people and learning as a group, or just experiencing as a group.

Interviewer Yeah, that's really interesting. (...) Moving on, more towards what you do now. Could you tell me a little bit about your current involvement in music? (...)

E1/I1 Yeah. At this point I'm trying to make a go at being a freelancer full time, I would say I'm freelancing part time in reality, and it's come through contacts and people that I used to play with many years ago and there was just an opportunity for a Dep musician for a couple of gigs as a Queen tribute band, and right now I'm just going where the money is. (...) But, as a by-product of that, the company that runs their show now want me as an engineer because they know what my background is.

Interviewer Oh, okay.

E1/I1 (...) So, that's where I'm at right now, and then the door's open on the mixing business. I think what my next step is I need to go and seek people. (...) I'm just going to have to embrace that musical extroversion that I've gained and try quell the introverted side, and just sort of spread my wings a little bit. Right now, it is just a case of going out and meeting people, and making contacts and having the conversations, and seeing what comes of it. It's a bit of an awkward playing field.

Interviewer (...) How would you define the role of a good engineer and a good instrumentalist?

E1/I1 I think both, it's probably going to sound really dumb, but listening is a key factor for those things. Probably something I should have mentioned in the last question is that I'm looking at it very much from a working perspective, and I think I've just got it instilled into from being from a working class background that that's just the way to go and I'll always have that drive. (...) Yeah, I think to be a good listener is my key role. I've done the years experience to be

proficient at bass and be proficient at mixing. The learning phase for me is not over, but I've got the skills to make me capable of what I want to do, or what I think I want to do. But, I can use those skills in a technical sense perfectly fine but if that's not what an artist or client wants then what's the point? I've got it wrong. So, the real thing is listening to what the criteria is. And, like I said before with <name>, sometimes I think of producing and mixing as a top down thing, kind of want to see the bigger picture - like the song and its emotional intent, and what the final product's going to be, and then go macro and design the sounds. (...) And then zoom out again. Same with bass as well. Sometimes you just get in your own head, you've just got to be aware of what the other instruments are doing, what the intent of the song is. Yeah, I think those are the most important factors. It's like you've got to be in and out of body experience at the same time. You want to be in it physically doing the thing, but you also kind of need a second conscience going "what's everybody else doing, how does all this fit together as a bigger picture".

Interviewer Yeah, and that comes from listening and being aware of the goal.

E1/I1 Yeah, it's a tricky one.

Interviewer What made you start identifying yourself as an engineer and an instrumentalist?

E1/I1 [laughs] Stubbornness. (...) It was a drive and a motivation thing. I think I never really believed in if you imagine it or... You know that sort of mentality - if you see yourself where you want to be in ten years time kind of thing. I never really believed that but it just got to a point where it's such a delicate industry, you know? You can be working really hard one month and you can be absolutely quiet the next month. (...) If I'm putting it out to the universe, it might come back to me. It's a bit of a conceptual idea.

Interviewer Like, if you start saying that you are that, then you are that?

E1/I1 Exactly, yeah. That's exactly what it is. And people don't know that I'm doing what I'm doing unless I brand myself. It was kind of a branding thing of saying I am an engineer. The thing that gave me confidence to do that was having four records out - four EPs that I mixed and I could have a Spotify playlist and say "look, that's my CV". So, being able to evidence it was actually the key thing that made me step out and say it. And again, with bass, it doesn't have a CV but it comes with a word of mouth caveat, it's just knowing the people. I wouldn't have got the gig with Queen (tribute band) if I didn't do a Muse tribute nearly seven years ago, (be)cause it was the

same contact. (...) When the opportunity came, it came.

Interviewer (...) What is your preference of working environment?

E1/I1 Ideally it would be Chairworks Studios in Leeds. [laughs] A full scale studio with a huge mic locker and all the outboard gear you can dream of. (...) But, you've got to be adaptable. From one side, the instrumentalist thing is a gig and I've slummed it in some really really horrible venues. (...) I've literally played to a man and his dog. (...) And, it's like, carrying gear upstairs or everybody is really drunk and stumbling into you as you're trying to load out, or stumbling into you as you're playing. (...) So, yeah, the ideal situation doesn't exist really. If you go to a gig and there's a nice monitor set up - you're happy away. (...) For the studio, dare I say, anywhere counts because we're in the age where the technology allows it. So, if the guitar player I'm recording plays the best sat on his sofa at home, I'll go to the sofa at home and we'll just record there. If that's where I'm going to get the best performance out of that person, we'll do it. (...) So, with a vocalist I was working with - vocals are one of those that, in the studio, they're the first thing to suffer if a person's not comfortable, and it just so happened that we had spent two days in the studio recording and tracking three songs, and it came to the vocal day and it just wasn't happening. I think it was hay fever season so he was suffering with hay fever, and his voice wasn't so well. I don't think his voice was actually not so well, but it was a really big mental barrier. And the performances weren't awful, the performances were technically accurate. (...) It just wasn't the performance that he knew he could do and I knew he could do as well. So, what we did then in that situation is (...) we all got in the vocal booth and we did group vocals (be)cause at least we did something then. It just got to a case of two weeks had past and it was like: what are we going to do about these vocals? And I said "where did you do all the vocals for your last record because that's brilliant". (...) And it was at home on a Rode NT1A, and I just said to him "if that's where you're going to sing best - do that" and two or three weeks later it was done. When tracking performance is paramount, and the environment doesn't matter to me, I've just got to get the work done. (...) I'm not precious about being in a studio. (...)

Interviewer (...) How do you maintain interest in a project?

E1/I1 Knowing when to stop with that project. I call it saturation. Sometimes I just get saturated with a mix, and I've done it before where I'm working on a mix or learning a complicated riff and at that point my muscles in my arm are just numb, or my ears are just numb and I've carried on mixing through it, or I've carried on playing

through it, and I've been in physical pain the next day, or I've listened to the mix the next day and it's just been trash. [laughs] (...) Yeah, managing your physical and mental capability if working on something (be)cause when you just get into something I don't think you appreciate how intensive it is, so yeah, just checking in on yourself. (...) Using the last example with the vocalist, it was actually beneficial that we took two weeks off because I'd mixed the instrumental but I was worried that the vocal wouldn't fit in (...) and it just so happened this time, one of the songs we got really lucky and the vocal just slotted straight in, and the other track needed a bit of reworking but I don't know that I would have been able to identify that it needed a reworking (...) if I didn't have a break from it. (...) Yeah, maybe taking a week or a couple of days off from one project, meddling in another project, or laying the groundwork for another project and then coming back to it. (...) Inspiration has eluded me for a long time and that is probably where I lost my drive to compose. I'm probably just a bit too self-critical in that I'll write something and then be like "oh, somebody else did that before - bin it". Whereas, other people don't necessarily have that fear, people that are a bit more artistic than myself. They do it for their own intentions that I can't describe. (...) But, if I hear something and it's grooving or vibing, or it's just got a nice colour to it, (...) that generally drives me on, which I think comes from being a bass player in a sense because the bass isn't a lead instrument, you're serving the song. If you have got to play the most boring part, you've just got to play the most boring part, and that's the same sort of attitude towards mixing and engineering. You've just got to serve what needs to be done and what the mood of the song is. That's where I get my inspiration from - other people. (...)

Interviewer When you're working on a project, do you set yourself challenges or goals that you want to complete in that project?

E1/I1 Work flow has been a big one recently. I've had different iterations of templates now, so I made the first template and imported a session and then found that it was quicker than before but it had a few quirks so I rebuilt. (...) Work flow is an important one for me right now. (...) I usually don't want to spend more than an hour and a half on an initial mix, I would probably like to get that down to an hour. (...) And I think learning to mix quicker, just because of ear fatigue. (...) And not being too critical about decisions. I kind of had that forced into me when I started doing a couple of live sound gigs and the only criticism I got from the lead engineer was that I need to make my EQ decisions quicker. (...) For the instrumental side of things, the competitive streak never really went away. (...) For me, if it challenges me then I'll embrace the challenge to get it done but right now I'm not seeking out challenges from that. (...) But, I know

that I have the tools from bass tuition that I know how to break it down. (...) I've been nervous if other people I've not necessarily trusted to get it right. (...)

Interviewer Do you think, as an engineer and as an instrumentalist, there are certain expectations your creative output must meet? (...)

E1/I1 I think as a foundation level of the skill that you're offering... (...) if a builder did a bad job, the builder did a bad job - in the same way that applies to music. I'm coming from a point where I'm trying to work and be a professional in music. A bad job is a bad job so the expectation is to know your tools. (...) If gear is going to go wrong, you've got to have the attitude to manage people's expectations as well. There is just a baseline expectation, technically speaking. Creatively, I think that just goes back to the listening and interpreting what people want from their songs. Sometimes, that's just a case of you have it or you don't. For example, the acoustic record that I did recently I chose the drummer for that very specifically. (...)

Interviewer (...) Are there certain things you're expecting to be your key contributions to this project? (...)

E1/I1 (...) I think if you've got a decent understanding of the person, or a decent relationship, I'm comfortable in suggesting musical ideas. (...) It's more a case of: let's try and add this layer here; or, sometimes, people write a demo at home but don't necessarily understand how bass sounds, because the way you program it in MIDI is different to the way it sound. So, it may just be a short suggestion like what if I change the octave on this note, without overstepping. It's kind of a balance you've got to find, (...) you don't want to push someone's breaking point but you've got to find what level of input they're comfortable with. So, again, this parameter is defined by the client. (...) I think the point I'm trying to say is you've got to test the waters with these things. (...) Creative expectation is an interesting one and I think it just adjusts and it all comes down to that initial couple of conversations that you have with someone. (...)

Interviewer (...) Cool, last question. How do you think project will be different, and how do you think it will be similar, to your previous projects that you've collaborated on? (...)

E1/I1 I can't really answer that (be)cause I don't know what the project is. That is the answer, that we should go and have a cup of coffee and see what tracks we're going to make. The only thing that I would say is that I'll do the same thing that I do every time, which is try to come at it as a professional, and just hopefully have fun with it, and

make something enjoyable and have a good time making it. That's the ultimate goal, really. (...)

Engineer 2/Instrumentalist 3 (E2/I3.1)

5-Feb-2020

Interviewer Can you briefly describe your cultural background to me, please?

E2/I3 Yeah, so, I lived in Portugal until I was about 12, I think. (...) I always grew up around loads of music. My dad always listened to rock and grunge, and stuff like that, so I feel like that paved my way into metal, if you see what I mean? From then, I just went into Metallica and stuff and I'm obviously now I'm into really heavy music. My mum was always on the side of Brazilian music, stuff like that, so it's quite Latin and jazzy in a way. I went to jazz festivals when I was a kid, which was cool, which didn't really... I wish I knew how to play jazz but I'm not very good at it. [laughs] I guess it does have a technical aspect to it though, so hopefully that shines through in my playing a bit now. There's not a lot of musicians in my family, there was an uncle that I never met that was a musician but I always thought it was really cool that my uncle was a bassist in a punk band, but I never got to meet him, but I always saw pictures and thought that was well cool, I want to do that. So, that kind of also pushed me into that. Another weird thing actually that I think is worth mentioning, I was always into video games, and I picked up Guitar Hero before I started playing guitar and that really got me into playing guitar. Even when I got my first lessons, my tutor was already like "your dexterity is already really good on your fingers because of Guitar Hero", I was like "okay, that's interesting". [laughs]

Interviewer (...) What musical genres and styles were you exposed to whilst growing up? (...)

E2/I3 Yeah, like I said, bit of everything really, but mostly rock, metal, grunge. My dad liked Metallica but I really delved into metal by myself. The school I went to, there was a big following of deathcore, it was really random. [laughs] We were all really into Bring Me The Horizon and stuff, (...) it was trendy at the time to like that. So I think that really influenced me because I'm still into that stuff. Yeah, that was about it. And, like I said, my mum's side of things was more like Brazilian and Latin stuff but yeah.

Interviewer Who was the first artist to make you take interest in creating popular music?

E2/I3 I've got to say Metallica really. When I picked up the guitar, they were the band I wanted to learn all the songs. I learned like the

whole of the Master of Puppets album, then I was just trying to rip it off with my first songs. So, I think Metallica.

Interviewer (...) Can you talk a little bit about your experience with musical education? (...)

E2/I3 Yeah, it's weird actually because I did do music at school but I never got interested in it at all. (...) It just never really clicked for me, I wasn't that good at it either, I was really bad. I did like the whole recorder thing, it was just awful. I just didn't like it but then, like I said, the Guitar Hero thing, then I picked up guitar and I went to a private music school and then I was really into it. So, I guess, the normal education music didn't really do it for me, but the private one, which was more one to one, I was really into. (...)

Interviewer (...) What is your experience of working with other people musically?

E2/I3 I've had good and bad really. I feel like in a band I quite like it, I like bouncing off other people's ideas, I think that really works, it worked really well for [band name] for a bit until I stopped really enjoying doing that type of music; [band name 2] was really good, we were constantly bouncing off each other, I think that was probably the most creative process, it was really good how we did that. (...) Engineering-wise, I don't like it. [laughs] Especially mixing, like at uni when we had mixing groups, I just feel like because it's not as creative, there's still a creative element to it obviously, but it's a lot more technically focused, I guess. I don't know, it's just a bit frustrating when you see people doing things that you totally do not agree with, which you have to be open minded but when someone's boosting 500Hz on a kick drum I was just like "please, just let me do it". [laughs] (...) So engineering-wise, not a big fan. In the recording process I quite like it as well, actually, but I think in the mixing I like to be by myself when I do it. (...)

Interviewer (...) Can you tell me a little bit about your current involvement in music?

E2/I3 Yeah, so I did a placement year at [recording studio], I still get to go back there quite often. I've gone back like three times since I finished uni, just as a self-employed engineer. I'm still mixing stuff on the side as well, I'm building my business on it a bit now, I still need to do my website. (...) Yeah, I'm still getting quite a bit of mixing work. (...) I'm playing guitar with [name]'s band. (...) We're playing a gig in May, so we're not constantly gigging but we're constantly practising. (...)

Interviewer (...) Could you give me your definition of what an engineer is, and

what your definition of an instrumentalist is?

E2/I3 I think, engineer, your job is really to capture the band or the artist, just make them sound like what they want to sound like. I think that is basically the job. I guess you could have an influence on what they sound like as well, like when I was at [recording studio], I saw quite a lot of engineer-producers having quite a big influence on what the final product was but essentially I think you do need to keep the main band sound intact, you can't really put your own twist on everything. (...) It's the same [as an instrumentalist] then, you need to do the song justice, you can't stray from what the writer puts down a lot because (...) I feel like that's just a bit rude. But it depends really on whoever wrote it, if they're up for someone putting their twist on it, then obviously go for it, but yeah, I think it depends really.

Interviewer What made you start identifying as an engineer and an instrumentalist? (...)

E2/I3 Well, in the guitarist sense, it's because it's basically the only instrument I can play. [laughs] (...) Yeah, it's just because it's the first instrument I picked up and it kind of stuck. Engineer, it really only came about in second year of uni, I wasn't even that into it when I came to uni, I was more focused on just playing guitar and then I just kind of grew to love it while I was at uni. (...)

Interviewer What is your preference of working environment? (...)

E2/I3 If I'm recording as an engineer I like it to be really chilled out, I do not like stressful environments at all. I just like everyone to be really chilled out. I think that comes from [studio name] because that was the first big sessions I did and it's just such a chilled out vibe that it just works really well. If there's people just bickering all the time it just doesn't work, and we did have a few sessions like that, and you could tell the end product wasn't as good. (...) Mixing, I like to just be by myself and just get on with it, in my room, and just mood lighting I guess. (...) Not mix too loud, I quite like mixing quiet, because then you turn it up and it sounds even better. [laughs] And then, as a musician, I guess just a rehearsal room with other people, or if I'm practising just in my bedroom with a click track just going at it. (...) Practice in a band, I like to have a room that's kind of big, I don't like to be super cramped, a room with a drum kit is always nice, decent PA system just so we can all hear each other clearly basically, I don't like being in a space where everything gets muddled up by bass or something. In a recording studio, to record I always like a big room if I'm doing drums, because I just kind of go for that big rock sound when I tend to do things. Vocals, I like to

have a dead room, also in the actual control room I like it to be quite dead, I'm not really bothered about the size. I guess a medium sized room would be nice, if it's super tiny it also sounds a bit weird sometimes. (...)

Interviewer How does the environment affect your productivity?

E2/I3 Right, yeah. If I've got a lot of distractions then it's no good, I try to put my phone away when I'm mixing because I just look at YouTube videos and that's no good. I just spend hours EQing a snare drum because of a bloody YouTube video. Yeah, I just try to not have distraction. Like I said, mood lighting to get me inspired, I guess. I like to listen to other stuff while I'm doing things as well, as a reference and also to get me inspired, so I constantly stop what I'm doing and go on YouTube and stick another song on just to kind of reference and see if I'm not doing complete bollocks. (...) Yeah, if I'm not straying too far from what I want to do, basically.

Interviewer How often do you find yourself collaborating with other creative people?

E2/I3 Quite often, I'd say. Especially with the [name] band, everyone's super creative. Yeah, it's mostly as a musician though, as an engineer not really. (...) Because if you're recording bands that's still collaborating, isn't it? Yeah. (...) Every job you do as a musician is a collaboration, really, when you think about it. I guess the only thing that isn't is just practice, because that's just you better yourself, but everything else I'd say is a collaboration.

Interviewer When you're working on a project, how do you maintain interest? (...)

E2/I3 I think not overdoing it as well, so say if I'm mixing - I do this all the time though, it's really bad - not mix for like five hours straight, take a break and let your ears rest for a bit, step away from it so you come into it with a fresh perspective as well so you're not just blind to whatever you did, so that definitely helps. But yeah, just overdoing things, (...) you just get fatigued after a while, so yeah I think just taking breaks helps.

Interviewer When you're working on a project, do you ever set yourself challenges or goals that you want to complete? (...)

E2/I3 I set deadlines for stuff (...). I kind of think "yeah, I need to better this snare sound", I guess that could be said as a goal. Yeah, so I just think of it objectively like "what's wrong with this mix". When I take a break, let's say I took a break of one day, I go back to it and I listen

to it and I'm just like "what's wrong with it, what do I not like about it", and then I set the goal as whatever I need to improve and then, hopefully, by the end of that mixing session I've made that better. As a guitarist, (...) practice I guess, I'll say I need to learn this song and then I just work at it.

Interviewer Do you think as an engineer/instrumentalist there are certain expectations your creative output must meet?

E2/I3 Yeah, I feel like you get proper judged as an engineer. [laughs] If you put out something that doesn't sound on par with at least like the radio, let's say the radio, (...) but I feel like people proper judge you. I judge mixes as well, I'm just going to put it out there. It's a bit mean but everyone does it I think. (...) Yeah, I feel like you get judged loads and I feel like that actually helps to better yourself though, if someone says that sounds shit. Which most people don't, they're not going to be like "that sounds shit", but I feel like that drives me to make sure that what I put out is actually decent and that people won't just turn around and say "ugh, that sounds horrible". [As an instrumentalist] Yeah, same really I'd say. For live, I feel like it's quite a thing as well, if you're sloppy then people are going to be judging you. (...) Constructive criticism is always good, I reckon, so I can take it.

Interviewer How do you manage your expectations against other people's expectations?

E2/I3 I kind of put my expectations first. If I'm happy with it, at that moment I don't really care what everyone else thinks. [laughs] I do want the feedback but yeah, it's a difficult one really. Say I'm really happy with where the kick drum's sitting in the mix and then someone comes in and says "that's way too quiet", but then I go back and listen and I'm like "no, I'm actually happy with that", and I compare it to all my references and stuff, I'm just going to leave it. I'm very glad that they gave the feedback but if I think in the end that it's alright, then I think I'll still go with my gut instinct. (...) I'll probably go back to it and that that person was completely right, [laughs] that does happen sometimes.

Interviewer (...) What are you expecting to be some of your key contributions to the project?

E2/I3 Some dank riffs. [laughs] Some good guitar playing obviously would be would be good. I'd like to be involved with it in the mixing side, I think that's probably where I most have interest in the engineer side of things. I like recording but mixing is my main thing, so I'd quite like to be involved in the mixing of things.

Interviewer (...) How do you think this project might be different to other projects you've worked on previously?

E2/I3 I think we'll working with a variety of different artist, it's not a set group every time, so I think it'll be quite interesting to see how we all come together and do stuff. It'll be good.

Instrumentalist 2 (I2.1)

20-Jan-2020

Interviewer Could you briefly describe your cultural background for me, please?

I2 Yeah, so I am from the US and I moved here [UK] when I was 18, so my schooling set up was a bit different than from here. I'm from a pretty working class family and they were pretty concerned about me going into music but I just did it anyway. [laughs] Yeah, I've always really been into music and knew that that was what I wanted to do. My earliest memory is actually listening to a song that had lyrics and not actually understanding language yet, I didn't know what was going on but I was like 'oh, this is cool, I like it'. [laughs]

Interviewer What sort of music were you exposed to whilst growing up? (...)

I2 My parents played a lot of country music and 80's music because that's what they were into when I was really young, but then since I grew older in my pre-teens and teens I listened to all sorts of stuff but mainly indie rock and electronic stuff. My first concert was actually Radiohead with Caribou supporting and that's like my claim to fame. [laughs]

Interviewer (...) Was there any particular artist that you listened to that made you become interested in making pop music?

I2 Yeah, I think for me it was Nine Inch Nails/Trent Reznor just because the production of it was so cool and all the layers were so interesting that I was super interested. So, it was kind of more of a production based interest rather than traditional pop song which is kind of what I do now as well.

Interviewer (...) And could you talk a little bit about your experience with musical education? (...)

I2 Yeah, started viola when I was 10 years old because we had a string quartet come into our school as a cultural enrichment thing and they had options for lessons as well and, to be honest, I just did it because I thought it'd be a fun thing to try, I didn't actually plan on playing it for a decade or anything, and I'm really grateful that I had that kind of exposure to it because I really wouldn't have thought to pick that up, it really changed my life a lot. (...) I did orchestra and lots of solo competitions and things and that went on throughout high school and yeah, I saw a private teacher once a week for eight years which was really helpful. It helped with all the technique and

really encouraged me with performance and just overall music stuff. (...) I had an orchestra after school thing, it was mainly outside of school but I definitely was lucky to have some elements still in school because it was really helpful to meet other people as well who were also into it.

Interviewer (...) What is your experience of working with other people creatively?

I2 Definitely in university I've done that a lot more on an instrumental level, like I did do orchestra and stuff like that but for now, for when I'm doing my Master's, I've done a lot of work on people's songs and releases and things, and again string quartets. I actually just did a weird one where I was working with this Chinese folk band with someone who is on The Voice and I didn't speak Chinese and it was really fun. But yeah, just all sorts of weird little things like that. I haven't really done a ton of composing with other people but I've done a lot of playing on things where I've kind of composed my own thing but not the whole song.

Interviewer (...) Is there anything else that you're currently doing?

I2 (...) I'm mostly doing production based stuff, just kind of solo. (...)

Interviewer (...) Can you give me what you think your definition of an instrumentalist is?

I2 (...) I think when you say session musician I think of someone who can adapt really well, who is really good technically but also has some good creative vibes.

Interviewer (...) When did you start thinking of yourself as an instrumentalist or a musician, or a session player? (...)

I2 I think some sort of payment definitely made me think a little bit differently, actually being held accountable I guess. [laughs] Also, just physically being in studios with people is kind of a different mindset where it's like I have a specific job to do and it's exciting.

Interviewer Okay. (...) What is your preferred working environment?

I2 Yeah, I actually kind of struggle a bit with how I like to work because I don't really enjoy working alone on things because I really like having things planned and ultra prepared because I'm kind of a perfectionist, and I don't want to mess up things in front of other people, I guess, and I feel like this can be attributed, just personally but also a bit on musical background, because in the intense string

world there's some values that I feel like are pushed on people where (...) there's a clear right and wrong and there's sort of an attitude of go away and practice and then someone will listen to you. (...)

Interviewer And how does the environment affect your productivity?

I2 I think I'm a lot more willing to take risks and be more creative when I'm just on my own which has not really helped in a lot of ways because it is really good to collaborate with people so, I just think my overall comfort levels can determine how I'm willing to take risks. (...)

Interviewer (...) How often do you find yourself collaborating with other creative people? (...)

I2 Probably not as often as the average music person. I do every so often but sometimes it just stresses me out a bit. [laughs]

Interviewer When you do collaborate, what sort of form does this usually take?

I2 It might be kind of sitting in a room and just trying to come up with a song and some ideas and stuff like that. Similarly, it can be in a studio environment which is kind of improvised. It's a lot improvising rather than like actually playing concrete stuff.

Interviewer (...) How do you maintain interest in a project that you're working on?

I2 Yeah, that's a good question. I think sometimes just taking a break from it and working on something else can really help because I can tend to work on things for too long and then not be able to see what it is any more and what originally drew me to it. That's my number one way. Or having someone else take a listen to it and see what they think might help.

Interviewer When you're working on a project, do you ever set yourself challenges or goals to complete (...)?

I2 Yeah, definitely. I'm very much goal-oriented and will have weekly or monthly goals. During my IP [tutor name] actually used to make fun of me because of how structured it was, every day I had an exact goal. [laughs] (...) I usually do deadlines like that where I'll be like this week maybe I want to have all of the EQ done and maybe then the compression done. So pretty specific, but I do find that just the nature of working I will sometimes stray from it. (...)

Interviewer (...) As an instrumentalist, are there any expectations your output has to meet?

I2 (...) So, I think when I work on music with people who come from a non-classical background, which is most of the time, they can kind of put me on a pedestal a little bit which is flattering but also I feel like more of a result of how society views "high art" and "low art". (...) In reality, I have the same amount of skill as someone who's been playing a pop instrument for the same amount of time as me. Yeah, there's always a little bit of a framework with that, I think, in terms of the area of the instrument that I play, but in terms of just general instrumentalist-type thing, I think people want the normal music stuff of technical stuff being good but also being creative and doing something new with it.

Interviewer And how do you manage your expectations against other people's expectations?

I2 I think I always throw a little hint that there's more to me as a whole than just classical stuff because I think when someone sees a viola they don't automatically think 'oh, they like Aphex Twin' and whatever. [laughs] 'Oh, by the way, pop music is good'. [laughs]

Interviewer (...) What are you expecting to be some of your key contributions to the project?

I2 I think I probably represent a more traditional classical kind of background which can be compared to someone who maybe is more on the pop side of things. Yeah, I think the collaboration will be a bit different in that regard, because I think in the pop world it's kind of like 'hey, let's hang out and make some music', where in the classical world it's kind of like 'go alone in a room and improve' or something like that. [laughs] I mean, there is orchestra but it's not really the same as just having fun with your friends...

Interviewer How do you think this project will be different and how do you think it will be similar to other projects you have collaborated on in the past?

I2 (...) I think what I would think a little bit before with the classical versus pop thing, I would kind of expect with collaboration leaning towards people finding it easier in that sense of pop, but also, I guess it depends on how social people are as well, because I find that I'm a socially... I don't know what the word is, person, so that definitely doesn't help. [laughs] But also, musical background, obviously is a whole thing. (...)

Songwriter/Composer 1 (SC1.1)

2-Jan-2020

Interviewer So, firstly, if you could give me a brief description of your growing up and your cultural background.

SC1 Oh, okay. So, I come from (a) middle class white family. Yeah. (I) went to, like, a normal-ish school. Yeah, I'm not really sure how to describe much of... I don't really have much of a background.
[laughs]

Interviewer Fair enough. Are there any cultural tendencies in your family that you feel like...?

SC1 Well, I guess I'm northern, aren't I? So, I guess that's part of my culture.

Interviewer Yeah.

SC1 Although the only real thing that comes out of that is a lot of drinking.

Interviewer [laughs] Well, that might have some sort of effect.

SC1 [laughs]

Interviewer So, what musical genres and styles were you exposed to whilst growing up?

SC1 Mainly alt rock. That was my primary genre that I was exposed to. Stuff like Muse and Linkin Park, and all that. But I also, I guess, stuff like impressionism.

Interviewer Oh, okay.

SC1 (Be)cause my dad loves Debussy, so... A lot of early synth music as well, (be)cause my dad loves that as well.

Interviewer Yeah.

SC1 (I) didn't really get much from my mam's side in terms of, like, music, (be)cause I think mostly my mam would listen to stuff like Girls Allowed. Which is not exactly what I listen to. [laughs]

Interviewer [laughs] Do you there's, like, a clear distinction between the music

that you were introduced to through your dad mainly and music that you discovered yourself?

SC1 Yeah, a little bit, yeah. Although, I found more similarities, like, the further down that I got. Like, I found that I tend to like a lot of the stuff that he likes. Erm... like, yeah, I've been to see a few of his old bands with him and stuff, and (they're) pretty good.

Interviewer If you can remember, who was the first artist to make you take interest in the creation of popular music?

SC1 Probably Linkin Park. [laughs]

Interviewer [laughs] Yeah?

SC1 Yeah, second album Linkin Park was probably the first thing that actually interested us.

Interviewer Do you remember what it was about it that...?

SC1 It was specifically the song 'Faint', because it mixed, like, erm... it had, like, strings in the background just being used as a part of a rap metal song and it was my first sort of introduction to, just, genre bending on just a silly level.

Interviewer Yeah. And is that something that has become important to you in your music?

SC1 Yeah, definitely. Yeah.

Interviewer Can you briefly describe your experience with musical education?

SC1 Right. Erm... So, in school I wasn't particularly fond of the way music was taught, to be honest. A lot their, like... Especially for, like, when I was at A level we had pieces that we had to, say, you had to write a piece and you were marked solely on composition. They would get you (to), like, do a rough recording of it, obviously. But then, you would be marked on the recording quality and stuff, even though that wasn't part of the mark scheme. Like, it just didn't make any sense. [laughs]

Interviewer Was that GCSE Music?

SC1 That was mainly A-level. GCSE I did alright in, (be)cause it was basic theory and stuff like that, which I do find important, to be fair.

Interviewer Yeah.

SC1 Like, just basic ear training and stuff like that. So that you can, you know, tell – well, that’s a 7th chord, and stuff like that. Erm. Although, I wouldn’t be able to tell you nowadays what all the different dances are. [laughs] Rumba, and samba, and all them. I can never remember the differences. [laughs]

Interviewer Yeah. [laughs] And what about your degree?

SC1 In terms of what? Just, in terms of how I feel about it?

Interviewer Yeah, and what you studied, and what you found was useful.

SC1 I found pretty much everything useful about my degree, to be honest. Even the parts where, like, I wasn’t necessarily enjoying a class or something. I was still learning something from it. But yeah, I learned a lot about songwriting. Specifically, about pop songwriting. Mainly from Toby (Martin). (I) learned a lot about just lots of stuff. Even in first year, analysis stuff was actually kind of useful later on. So, yeah, I don’t know, just a lot of stuff about music. [laughs]

Interviewer Yeah. [laughs] Well, that’s good. And what about any musical education outside of school?

SC1 Well, I did my grade 8 bass, so that, I guess, counts.

Interviewer So, did you take lessons for that?

SC1 I did in school, but I didn’t actually for about the four-five months leading up to it. Up to my actual exam. I didn’t take any lessons. I just sat and practised by myself.

Interviewer Okay.

SC1 Yeah, that was a good experience.

Interviewer Yeah? Cool. So, moving on from education – what’s quite important in this project, and the focus of this project is working with other people. What is your experience of working with other people in music, or creatively in general?

SC1 Say if it was, like, during school and stuff, I used to hate working together with people.

Interviewer Why was that?

SC1 I don’t know. I just, I always would feel like I work better alone. But

since I've started music, and especially with the amount of focus that's on, like, people who are able to produce, people who are able to mix, that sort of thing, I find it a lot more beneficial to work with someone who is genuinely an expert on it rather than trying to do everything yourself.

Interviewer Yeah, okay.

SC1 Yeah. Especially since I've come to uni I've had only positive experiences working with people.

Interviewer And do you find that you've learned a lot from working with other people?

SC1 Yeah, definitely. Yeah. I mean, I've learned how to operate a studio and stuff from it so yeah.

Interviewer Moving on to your role in the project. Firstly, can you tell me a little bit about your current involvement in music and what you're currently doing creatively?

SC1 Well, currently I'm mainly songwriting, so writing a lot of songs. [laughs] Just recording rough demos on Pro Tools and yeah, that's most of my musical involvement at the minute – is just (...) writing, purely. A little bit of creative production, I guess, to make sense – add a little bit more interest in but nothing that you would class as, like, classical production, I guess.

Interviewer I guess that, kind of, comes in as part of songwriting nowadays.

SC1 Hmm, yeah.

Interviewer If you had to describe what a songwriter or a composer is to someone, what definition would you use?

SC1 I'd say... That's a hard question.

Interviewer How would you define your own role?

SC1 I guess, I write the notes of the music. [laughs] And structure it. Although, the structuring can be production as well. There's a lot of overlap between production and writing nowadays.

Interviewer Yeah.

SC1 Erm. So yeah, I'd say mainly it's writing the actual melodies. Writing the rhythms that make the backdrop of the piece. Sometimes it can

involve a bit of sound design. So, a bit of getting your sounds to sound how you want them. What instruments to use – I guess instrumentation as well, and arrangement.

Interviewer Yeah, I guess that comes back to the overlap that you were talking about.

SC1 Yeah, there's a lot of overlap with production nowadays. It's a good overlap though because it means you can get more collaborative with those elements.

Interviewer Yeah. And what made you start identifying or thinking of yourself as a songwriter or composer?

SC1 That I mainly... I guess (be)cause I used to focus a lot on lyrics. I still do focus a lot on lyrics, and lyrics is a very... like, lyrical content is very much in the songwriter side of things. You wouldn't necessarily see that as a role a producer would take up, or something. So, I guess, that's primarily the reason that I ended up classing myself as a songwriter.

Interviewer Yeah, that makes sense. And, strictly as a songwriter, what is your experience of working with other people?

SC1 Positive, to be honest. The only times I don't enjoy it necessarily as much is when it feels like, if someone's not really involved in the collaboration. That kind of annoys us a little bit, but, I mean, you can't get everyone to be working on your projects all the time.

Interviewer Yeah. And are there any key projects that you've worked on as a songwriter that you feel have changed or educated the way you work as a songwriter when you're working with other people?

SC1 Yeah, probably the IP (*Individual Project*), (be)cause that sort of showed us how to work with a producer properly and not, like, I don't know... Keeping your ideas, but not being invasive to their production style and stuff, and just making sure it's a balance of the two.

Interviewer What is your preference of working environment?

SC1 I love working at home mainly. Just somewhere comfortable. I don't tend to get distracted by social media and stuff, so I can just sit and work and not worry about that sort of thing, which I know a lot of people do have that problem.

Interviewer Yeah.

SC1 Somewhere quiet is pretty important for me.

Interviewer Okay.

SC1 And ideally if I'm doing singing and stuff, I want it to be somewhere soundproof, but that's kind of hard to come by unless you're literally soundproofing your house. [laughs]

Interviewer [laughs] Yeah, cool. How does the environment affect your productivity?

SC1 Quite a bit. I'd say if I'm in an environment that I just can't work in then I can't work, I just struggle with it. Like if I was in a noisy environment and I was trying to come up with, like, a melody or something, I'd have no idea how to do that because I'd be too busy focusing on the noise around us.

Interviewer Yeah.

SC1 Although, the noise around us might inspire us to make something like, an ambient piece or something but, yeah, the environment very much shapes what I end up doing.

Interviewer And do you think there's a correlation between the kind of environment you work in and the kind of music or ideas you come up with?

SC1 Yeah, definitely. Yeah, yeah. Like I was saying before, if I'm in a situation where I can't necessarily write melodies and stuff, I'll write ambience. If I'm in a situation where I don't really have access to, say, all my usual musical tricks and stuff, I'll end up writing some nonsense electronic music. [laughs]

Interviewer [laughs] Okay. How often do you collaborate with other creative people? (...)

SC1 Quite a lot now. I mean, it's pretty much all I do now. I'm in... I've got two bands and so, as much as I can be working on those, I'm working on those.

Interviewer Yeah.

SC1 And then my solo stuff as well, I guess. (...) Well, my solo stuff isn't even solo stuff (be)cause I'm working with people on that so, yeah.

Interviewer Inspiration can be hard to come by, sometimes. How do you

maintain interest in a project that you're working on?

SC1 I mean, sometimes I don't. [laughs] Sometimes I just scrap projects. If I'm not feeling particularly like I'm enjoying what I'm doing, I'll see if it's (be)cause of the music, usually, and I'll start again with something new. And then, I might come back to it, like, a year or so later and then rewrite it and it might be much better then or it might be completely useless. Actually, that's what I did with <song name>, that's the only reason that song exists. It's because I went back and rewrote it. But yeah, mostly for inspiration I tend to just draw off, mainly, current events, which seems a little cliché but it's an easy source of inspiration if you're really lacking anything. And then stories and stuff, you know, usual songwriter tricks.

Interviewer Cool. And when you're working on a project, do you set yourself challenges or goals to complete?

SC1 Yeah. (...) I'd start by saying "okay, I want to put in the bridge today", and then I put in the bridge. Or, I might say "okay, I want to completely restructure the song", and I'll completely restructure the song. Usually, I won't stop until at least that's done, and then, once I've started doing stuff, once I've started the workflow I can, kind of, continue on into other, like, just other ideas I might have, (be)cause I'll have a few on the way. And that's usually the majority of my creative output comes from that sort of phase of it, I guess.

Interviewer Yeah. And do you ever set yourself challenges or goals before you start a project, that you want to achieve throughout the project?

SC1 Yeah, definitely. Like, a main theme to the piece, and stuff. (...) With the song <song name> (...) the whole concept of it was based on getting a load of people to, just, make them sing a line without knowing how everyone else sings the line. Which is, that's kind of just like an idea that I built the whole piece around – built the lyrics around it, built the, like, groove around it, and stuff. So, yeah, I do have centralised themes to my pieces, I guess.

Interviewer Yeah. Do you think as a songwriter there are certain expectations your creative output must meet?

SC1 Yeah, there's a lot of expectation towards being pop, which I kind of get (be)cause it means that people will listen to it but it's also kind of frustrating because I want to create what I want to create. I don't necessarily want to be limited by having to go in one direction or another.

Interviewer How do you manage your expectations against the expectations of

others?

SC1 I don't know. (...) I know what I want, and I usually just slightly balance that with what I think everyone else would want. [laughs] Not much, but enough to keep peoples' interest I guess.

Interviewer So, it's almost a compromise?

SC1 Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I guess that's how I do it.

Interviewer Okay, that's interesting. What are you expecting to be your key contributions to this project?

SC1 Writing some of the music. [laughs]

Interviewer Yeah, that would be useful as a songwriter. [laughs]

SC1 [laughs] Lyrics, I guess. I can write some lyrics. Yeah, anything up to basic production and stuff. Like, structuring. All the stuff I listed for songwriting, I guess.

Interviewer Yeah, yeah.

SC1 Yeah, I can do basic production stuff as well, just don't expect any good mixing from me. [laughs]

Interviewer No, no. It's just, I want to see what your vision of what you'll be doing is.

SC1 Oh, okay.

Interviewer And, how do you think this project will be different from previous projects you have collaborated on? If at all. Bearing in mind, (you'll be) working with a lot of different people from different roles and different musical backgrounds.

SC1 Yeah, I don't know, to be honest. You never really know how a collaboration is going to work until you're thrown into it, I guess. I guess, mainly it's – (we'll) have to wait and see.

Songwriter/Composer 2 (SC2.1)

2-Feb-2020

Interviewer Can you briefly describe your cultural background for me, please?

SC2 So, I'm originally from Bulgaria. I came here about four years ago. Musically, Bulgarian traditional music is very specific and very different to what you might be hearing here in the UK. Although, personally, I don't think I got a lot of that influence because growing I was mostly a punk rock kind of kid. I had a punk rock band and all that stuff. So, I don't think it's impacted me that much, apart from, every now and then, when I write something I might lean towards more Eastern style harmonies rather than the traditional Western harmonic structures, if that makes sense. (...)

Interviewer (...) What musical styles and genres were you exposed to whilst growing up? (...)

SC2 Yeah, so, growing up one of the first musical genres that I got introduced to was just rock music, (...) my dad and uncle and other family relatives listened to bands like AC/DC, that kind of stuff. Also, in Bulgaria we have this very popular genre called pop folk which is like modern pop music but with lots of traditional elements, but that wasn't something I enjoyed as much because it's kind of trashy but, in a way, it's still influenced the way I hear things, because they have interesting rhythms, and obviously different harmonies. (...) And then, later on, I got exposed to punk rock, metal music, and that kind of stuff.

Interviewer Yeah, cool. Who was the first artist to make you take interest in the creation of popular music?

SC2 Erm. I want to say Metallica. Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer (...) Can you describe your experience with musical education?

SC2 Well, my musical education is pretty much just university. When I was growing up at school, we didn't really have any music subjects, we only had (it) up until Year 9, and then after Year 9 we just didn't have it at all. That wasn't even actually music, it was more like music history, specifically Bulgarian music history. So, at uni it was obviously like a completely new thing for me, and I just learned a ton of stuff in a fairly short amount of time. I very quickly learned how to use sequencers and generally use a DAW, and also learned lots of technical terms about music production. Also, in my spare

time, because I wanted to do film music and game music, I tried to educate myself in music theory but I didn't really get that far apart from knowing how to stay in the key that I'm writing in. [laughs]

Interviewer (...) What is your experience of working with other people? (...)

SC2 So, to be honest, I don't think I've collaborated with people ever since I came to uni. So, yeah, growing up obviously I had a band, and the way it worked was - I had the idea for what the song is like, I would explain it to everybody else, and we'd play it until it worked. And, after that, I was mostly just writing on my own computer, so my collaborative experience isn't particularly wide. Currently, I'm working on an EP and I'm looking at performers rather than collaborators to compose with, so what I'm trying to do now is just find people to play some parts for me and record some loops, and then I'll make whatever I want out of them, essentially.

Interviewer (...) Could you tell me a little bit more about your current involvement in music?

SC2 Yeah, so currently I'm working on my own EP, and also, at my work, I'm taking part in designing music systems for how music is meant to be played in a video game, but it's not really writing the music itself, it's more like designing the systems under which the music is going to be heard so it's kind of different.

Interviewer (...) So, a bit more about your role as a composer. How would you define the role of a composer?

SC2 Well, I guess that opinion, for me, has kind of changed to before. So, initially, when I first tried to dabble in composing, like film and game music, I was always leaning towards the John Williams style of bombastic orchestras. But as time went on I started to realise that, first of all, it's a bit outdated, and second of all, it very often ends up drawing attention to itself rather than the picture. Unless it's Star Wars, where in Star Wars it just works, but nowhere it really does any more. So, now, I think the role of the composer is to make a piece of music that fits with the picture so well that when you're watching it, you don't notice it as much. The picture and the sound have to be one, they shouldn't be separate, I think. And I think that should also be the case with video games. Yeah, I think that's what I think about the composer's role at the moment.

Interviewer (...) What made you start identifying as a composer? (...)

SC2 Not too sure. I think at the point at which I decided to stop writing songs, and trying to write music for a film or a game, that was the

point where I decided to call myself a composer. But now, I guess, you could say I'm leaning towards songwriting, because, as I said, I'm working on my own EP and I want that EP to stand on its own, so I'm not making it for a game, or a video, or whatever. So, in a way, I suppose I'm going back to being a songwriter, but then the stuff that I'm making doesn't really fit into a song structure, it's more like song-composition kind of thing. So, I'm kind of in the middle, I guess.

Interviewer What is your preference of working environment?

SC2 Just at home, in my home studio. That's where I usually like to write. (...) Yeah, mostly just at home. I used to like writing at uni as well, when I had to, but now it's just - go home, turn my set up on, and just see what comes out.

Interviewer And how does the environment affect your productivity?

SC2 Well, if my room is untidy I will probably be a little bit less productive. [laughs] So, I try to keep it a little bit tidy so that I don't get distracted by things.

Interviewer Cool. (...) How often do you find yourself collaborating with other creative people? (...)

SC2 Well, I've worked on a few films, I think it was two short films for the uni society. (...) I suppose now at work, I'm constantly working with other people who are creative, like sound designers and other audio coders. So, I guess, now, it's pretty much every day but it's kind of different because it's work. Yeah.

Interviewer Okay, cool. (...) How do you maintain interest in a project that you're working on?

SC2 That's a very good question that I'm not entirely sure how to answer because it's something I struggle with. For example, the EP that I'm working on now, I wrote some of the songs last summer (...) and I feel like I'm trying to keep that vibe alive and that sort of keeps me interested in it, but then there's an element where enough time has passed that I'm not the same any more. So I'm trying to figure out how to keep the original idea while also staying relevant to myself with the tracks that I'm working on. And I think one of the things that I'm trying to do, as I mentioned earlier, was to talk to performers that I know and ask them to record some stuff for me based on the tracks that I've shown them so I can remake the tracks a bit more. (...) I keep trying new things until there's no new things to try.

Interviewer Do you set yourself challenges or goals to complete whilst your working on a project?

SC2 Well, I used to set myself a challenge to release a one minute piece every day but that was more sort of practice. Now, I've given myself a New Year's resolution to release my EP by the end of the year, so we'll see how that works out. Generally, I guess it would be kind of like a deadline to finish something.

Interviewer Yeah, okay. Do you think that as a composer there are certain expectations your creative output must meet?

SC2 Erm. Personally I haven't had these, most of the time when I've done things for other people they'll be just like 'go crazy, do whatever you want'. I suppose, actually, the last short film that I worked on, I had one idea and the director had another idea where he wanted to make it funny rather than sad, which I kind of disagreed on. So, sometimes you might have conflicting ideas for how you want to emotionally carry something, because that's what the music does in many cases. And, also, very often somebody (a director) might do a temp track on their thing, get very used to it, and then be like 'yo, can you make this, but not this'. [laughs]

Interviewer Yeah, I get that. So, how do you manage your expectations against the expectations of others in those cases?

SC2 I sort of just say 'yeah, sure, it's your thing'. If I don't manage to get my point across too well, and they don't agree with it, I'll just be like 'yeah, sure, it's your thing' and I'll try and make it according to your vision, because at the end of the day, as I said, the music is meant to support the picture, and the person making the picture has the vision for it.

Interviewer Yeah, so I guess in your case it's mainly tailoring to their expectations.

SC2 Yeah, which is why I'm working on an EP now because I want to have only my expectations and my big ego. [laughs]

Interviewer Yeah. [laughs] (...) What are you expecting to be some key contributions to this project? (...)

SC2 (...) I suppose I'm not too sure because until we start working on it I won't really know... Obviously, what I expect, is that we're probably going to be working remotely because of the fact that I live in Cambridge, you live in Brighthouse. Yeah, I suppose what I expect it will probably like - I make one thing, show it to you, then you make

something with it, show it to me, and we sort of go back and forth, sending stems, and that kind of stuff, just seeing where it goes. That's kind of what I expect of it.

Interviewer And how do you think this project will differ from previous projects you have worked on?

SC2 Well, it will differ from the fact that, first of all, I haven't collaborate with another musician in a while to actually write something, and second of all, just the fact that it will be like working remotely, that will be an interesting thing to try, I suppose.

Interviewer Yeah, definitely.

Vocalist/Artist 1 (VA1.1)

7-Jan-2020

Interviewer Can you briefly describe your cultural background to me?

VA1 So, I grew up in West Yorkshire, Huddersfield, always been here. I mean, I moved away a bit for uni but most of the time I've been in Dub Y (*West Yorkshire*) and that's always been a part of it for me. Like, I've a tattoo on my arm of West Yorkshire, and that came from hip hop as well, from a collective in Dub Y. I guess, I was raised in a middle class household but my parents come from working class so they embedded those ideals inside me, rather than, you know, I'm not some posh dickhead. [laughs]

Interviewer [laughs] Yeah.

VA1 (Who's) going to be snobbing about the place. I'm still from Yorkshire at the end of the day. But yeah, I mean, I grew up listening to a lot of music. Music's always been a big part of it for me, so that's influenced, like, the cultures that I've become involved with, even if I'm not from them. You know a lot of black culture, hip hop, grime, all their comedians and actors, and stuff. That's all my ball park so....

Interviewer Yeah. So, what musical genres and styles were you exposed to whilst growing up? Whether that be by your parents or yourself.

VA1 Quite a lot. Erm. My dad was really into, like, a lot of ska and stuff like Madness and The Specials. Bit of older rock, too. Stuff like... Like, none of my family were really into rap music, which is what I ended up at. But, erm, but all sorts, yeah. My sister introduced me to a lot of music. So, like, I first listened to dubstep (be)cause of my sister and probably my first rap album was through her as well. But yeah, there was like a whole diverse mix. And I still listen to a whole diverse mix of music today, even though I only rap. I don't make rock music but I still listen to a lot of rock – Nirvana, Sex Pistols, etc.

Interviewer Who was the first artist to make you take interest in making popular music? (...)

VA1 Probably Public Enemy.

Interviewer Okay. [laughs]

VA1 Yeah. [laughs] Or something from that era. Big Wu-Tang fan as well, Tribe Called Quest, all the old school hip hop brought me to it. I'd say there was probably a step of, about three or four years ago, when Wretch 32

and Bugzy Malone, and all those storyteller type artists had a different influence on me. (I) guess that changed the way I make music, but originally it was probably the OG hip hop heads.

Interviewer Yeah, yeah. Cool. Can you briefly describe your experience with musical education? So, like, any music lessons, or music at school. Anywhere where you were taught by someone else, or taught yourself.

VA1 Well, the first time I ever rapped was in, I think, like, year 9 music class. (We) did fucking 'Miami' by Will Smith as a class. [laughs]

Interviewer Oh, okay. [laughs]

VA1 Yeah, rapped in inverted commas. Other than that, I never took music as a GCSE. I did do music tech for a year at college, which was cool. I just dropped it (be)cause I needed to focus on the other stuff. Other than that, like, it's just all been doing shit on my own time, really. Figuring things out, playing around. No formal education.

Interviewer Cool, yeah. Nice. And do you have any experience working with other people?

VA1 A little bit, yeah. It's been a while but when I was 16, my first proper recording in a studio was with another rapper from around here – someone who went to the same school as me so that was, yeah... So, I've collabed with people before. We wrote the track together and did a hook together. It was kind of, like, a back to back thing, so...

Interviewer Yeah, cool. Can you tell me a little bit about your current involvement with music? What you're currently working on.

VA1 Right now, I'm working on an EP called <name>, which is going to be my first public release. (Be)cause I've made a lot of music over the years, but I've never really got anything up to that level where I'm happy to release it. So, yeah, I mean the title says it all, and that. It's just going to be everything you need to know about me. So, I've been fucking around with production and beat making but mainly, I'm a rapper.

Interviewer Yeah. So, what made you start identifying yourself as a rapper or a vocalist? (...)

VA1 That's a tough one. I don't think I would have ever introduced myself as a rapper, even if I personally identified with it, until, maybe, four or five years ago. And then, I think it was probably when I did my first battle, (be)cause I've done a lot of battle rap as well. Like, if people at events came up and spoke to me I'd be like 'oh yeah, I'm a performer, I'm a rapper', or a battle rapper, even, because I did more battle rap for a few

years than I did music. So, I guess, that was probably when I said to people 'oh, I'm a rapper', and whatever. [laughs]

Interviewer So, as a rapper, (...) what is your experience of working with other musicians, or other creative people?

VA1 Sure, so, other than, like I briefly mentioned I'd done a song with another rapper before, in terms of other creatives... God, I mean, this could go outside of music very easily (be)cause I'm a very creative person in general so, I work on lots of collaborative projects. Stuff like game design, where I might need art from people, or... I mean, even in terms of rap I've collaborated with... every single battle I've done is essentially a collaboration.

Interviewer Yeah, yeah. (Of) course.

VA1 I mean, I've done about, I don't know, twelve-fifteen battles – somewhere around that number. And, everyone one of those, even if I don't prepare it with the other person... You know. People get a wrong, like, view on battle rap. They're like 'it's just two guys, like, dissing each other, they're going to get into a fight'. Yeah, we stand there for nine minutes and talk shit about each other, and then we go and have a pint together. So it's kind of collaborative in that sort of way.

Interviewer Yeah, absolutely.

VA1 Especially some other ones, I've done battles where it's one round acapella, one on grime, one on trap. So, that's kind of collaborative, (be)cause we had to pick the beats together – me and the opponent. So, yeah. And I've done a couple of two on twos, but they were mainly drunk freestyles. [laughs]

Interviewer [laughs] (...) What is your preference of working environment when you're doing musical stuff, if you have any?

VA1 Either my room, or the studio. I can do it anywhere really. Anywhere where the inspiration takes me I'll write down bars. I'll write bars on the bus, on a walk, if I'm making out with a girl and a bar pops into my head I'll stop and write it down on my phone. [laughs] That's just life.

Interviewer [laughs] How do you find that the environment affects your productivity?

VA1 I tend to work best when I'm at home, to be honest. I know a lot of people struggle with that but even outside of music, at uni and shit, I worked best from my bedroom, (be)cause I can just chill, listen to some music, or, if I'm making music, listen to the beat as I'm going and not have anyone interrupt me. So, yeah, I mean, I guess, I just need a bit of

space, and enough time...

Interviewer Cool. So, sometimes it's kind of hard to find inspiration, and you'll be chasing inspiration, or whatever. How do you maintain interest in a project that you're working on?

VA1 I guess, you've just got to force yourself to focus on it. Erm. I mean, I've had a lot of long term projects. So, I generally just try and convince myself – okay, so, if I'm writing a book, you got to write 10 pages a day until it's done. If you're making a song, you've got to have an extra 16 bars a day recorded, or whatever it is. Just force myself to do it and if I ever think I have writer's block – write about writer's block – that's something to write about. There's no such thing. I think it's a myth, really. If you've got writer's block then you're not much of a writer, are you? [laughs] Like, the whole point of it is that you're meant to be creative and have things to say so, there's always something to talk about, even if the thing to talk about is not having anything to talk about. [laughs]

Interviewer Yeah, cool. I get you. (...) Do you set yourself challenges or goals whilst you're working on a project?

VA1 Yeah, I do, I do. Not always, I mean, sometimes, especially if it's just a personal thing for me, then it's just – do it whenever I want to do it, but if it's something, I know needs to get done, or I want to focus on it as a potential career path, or anything like that, then yeah. I think it's important to have an aim, at least to, like, at least when I wake up in the morning say "right, I want to do this today", and then go and do it, and make sure I actually do it. I don't think I'd get anything done if I didn't tell myself to. [laughs]

Interviewer Yeah. Do you think as a rapper or a vocalist there are certain expectation for your creative output?

VA1 (...) I mean, the thing that you most often get is when you meet someone at a party, or a club, or a bar, or whatever, and you're just chatting and you're like "oh yeah, and I rap" and they're like "oh, rap for me". I mean, yeah, that's fine, I can usually just do it on the spot but, if it's, like, a crowd of people and there's music playing already, I'm not going to, like, rap over fucking ABBA or something. [laughs] I mean, I say that, I've rapped over some sketchy shit before. [laughs]

Interviewer [laughs] Yeah?

VA1 And, also, I can't rap when I'm drunk. So, that's my pet peeve – if someone comes up to me in a smoking area of a club and is like 'Oh, you're a rapper? Yeah, yeah, yeah. Drop something. Do a verse!' and I'm

just like 'What? But I'm fucked'. [laughs] I guess, that's one expectation that people have, they're just like 'Oh, you can do it all the time. Rap about this, right now'. Like, I can freestyle a bit, but I'm no Juice Wrld.

Interviewer How do you manage your expectations against other peoples' expectations?

VA1 Erm. I mean, if I tell them to have low expectations then they're going to be pleasantly surprised. Does that make sense? [laughs]

Interviewer Yeah, yeah. Cool.

VA1 So, I don't hype myself up, is what I'm saying.

Interviewer Yeah, yeah. Moving on to, sort of, more about this project. What are you expecting to be your key contributions to the project?

VA1 Well, I'm going to hopefully spit some bars. [laughs] That's the aim. Priority number one. If the process of writing a song together, either working on the instrumental or the lyrics, hopefully that'll like... I don't know, I don't want to say help, influence... That might influence the way you're writing as well, the way you're flowing, or punchlines and shit. (...) Obviously, I've been rapping for a long time, listening and watching battles as well, and that's a whole different side of things that a lot of rappers don't have access to, but that helps a lot, because it's kind of like spoken word in a way, (be)cause it's usually acapella – so, you have to learn to, like, manage your flow without a beat, and then when you hear a beat it's a lot easier to get onto it. And, also, like, the punchline thing of – like, it's cool to just say stuff that rhymes, and you can do multi-syllabic rhyme schemes very easily, but you have to say something. So, I always make sure I'm saying something, like, clever, or funny, or deep, or whatever. So, hopefully, like, some of that might brush off on you, or any of the other artists if we end up doing collabs with multiple people.

Interviewer Yeah, cool. And, final question – how do you think this project is going to be different, and how do you think it's going to be similar to other projects that you've collaborated on in the past?

VA1 Well, a way it's going to be different, I guess, the most obvious way is – I haven't work with you on music before. So, like, whenever you jump in a studio, or a booth, with someone new it's going to be different. Right? It's going to be a learning experience, a growing experience. Getting used to how each other work and finding the best ways to work together. The way it'll be the same is – shit, I'm still just rapping at the end of the day. [laughs] Or making beats, or doing whatever it is that I know I can do.

Vocalist/Artist 2 (VA2.1)

2-Feb-2020

Interviewer Can you briefly describe your cultural background to me, please?

VA2 (...) I would definitely describe myself as a first generation British-Chinese, so obviously my parents came over from China and I'm the first of the generation to be born here. So, technically, I'm more culturally British than I am Chinese, it's probably like a 60-40 split. (...) And then, obviously there's going to be those stereotypes of when Asian parents raise you, you kind of learn instruments when you're young. You literally just learn every single instruments, so that's how I had piano and violin in my repertoire from a really young age. And I've kind of just stuck to that and I'm still in music now, so, I guess, that's where culturally I was pushed into music in the first place. They never expected me to carry it on, because usually you get to some point and then you go into some other academic, but then I went down the music route. (...)

Interviewer (...) What musical genres and styles were you exposed to whilst growing up?

VA2 When I was younger it was literally only classical music because that's what the board of music wants you to learn because that's where the fundamentals are. But then, I guess, as I was growing up I started getting exposed to, you know, you watch films, you play games, (...) and I watched a lot of anime so a lot of my musical inspiration actually comes from music from the Far East.

Interviewer Okay, cool. Who was the first artist to make you take interest in the creation of popular music? (...)

VA2 (...) I guess, growing up it was my dad's influence, because he was super big into The Eagles, and The Beatles, and stuff like that. So, that was when I'd listen to it in his car but it didn't make me think I want to do this creatively. It was, kind of, as I was growing more into university. That was when I was kind of like 'oh yeah, I guess this is a lot more interesting than classical', because I was definitely more like 'classical, classical, classical' way up until I was 18 and entering uni. And it's because in uni it was like, you know, where you have loads of other people who are definitely into that kind of stuff that you start becoming interested in that. And it's also probably when I started actually singing properly, because I used to do this stupid voice where I wouldn't sing properly - I'd sing in a Chinese accent because I was way too embarrassed to sing properly. And then, when I was 16, I think that was when I thought 'you know what, I can actually sing, I'm going to try singing properly' but it was 18 when I

though 'okay, I can do this', I guess. [laughs]

Interviewer [laughs] That's interesting. (...) Can you briefly describe your experience with musical education? (...)

VA2 So, basically, my mum enrolled, both, me and my brother into piano lessons from, I think I was roughly 4 years old, and usually both of us had half an hour lessons but my brother didn't actually enjoy his lessons so they got transferred to me, so it ended up becoming hour lessons. So, I think that probably sped up how fast I was picking up piano as well. And then, I think it was around the same age where I was learning violin in primary school. It was still private lessons but during school time. Piano was more after school time (...) but violin was always during school time. (...) I went to a private primary school, so I don't know whether that had an impact, I don't know whether state schools usually have music class lessons. (...) In secondary school, I still carried on private lessons - piano and violin - and then I took it for GCSE, so that kind of doubled more time into music lessons in school time. (...) I took Music and Music Tech for A Level. Yeah. So that was when I got into the more technical side of music. And then went into uni doing Music and Sound for Image, that was when I stopped doing private lessons. (...) And once you hit Grade 8 there's kind of no point unless you want to be a performer.

Interviewer So, what is your experience of working with other people? (...)

VA2 (...) I feel like where I'm at now, in [company name], working with other people with the same mindset is a lot easier than it is working with other people who aren't necessarily always on the same wavelength as you. So, I'd say, as a vocalist, (...) at the moment I'm actually doing a lot of singing for [company name], a few different pieces, there's a few that's been out, and I'm working with [name]. So, I'm doing a few pieces for him, for something. (...) Usually, when I ask what kind of style do you want, because I can vary the tone slightly depending on what they want, (...) sometimes they'll say 'we'll just do a couple of runs with you just picking with your artistic [instinct]', and then usually I will give them a lot of different variables, because obviously I know how the editing process works so I'll be like 'okay, I'll give you another take like this just in case you want to fade it together'. (...) So, in terms of that, being a vocalist is kind of smooth running, as long as you're on the same length and you know what they want to get out of the piece. As long as it's communicated properly it's usually quite straight forward.

Interviewer (...) Could you tell me a little bit about your current involvement in music?

VA2 (...) I've been doing a lot of ethnic singing, as they say it. Ethnic singing. So, it's just using a lot more embellishments. A lot of ethnic singing has a

few cracks, I don't do it amazingly because I actually come from a pop singing background, but it's just for the type of music that I make, and for the type of singing people want on game soundtracks or film soundtracks, it's usually just vocalisations rather than having lyrics. So, at the moment that is definitely the style that I lean towards more, in terms of what I sing like. (...) At the moment I'm actually doing a lot of arrangements, that's basically kind of what my role is at where I'm working. It's just taking a piece and arranging it into the style of said game. So, for example, recently we did a collaboration with Coalition [Studio] for Gears of War, so we had to make their theme tune into a Sea of Thieves arrangement. So, it's just being able to take different stuff, like a melody line, and make it definitively Gears of War but also definitively Sea of Thieves. (...) I've been doing a lot of game related stuff so there's so moments that I've been working on chip-tunes as well. (...) And now I'm working on a personal album project, which I'm actually decided on what the approach is going to be but I want an album at the end of the year.

Interviewer Cool, that's interesting. (...) Can you give me your definition of a vocalist?

VA2 That is a deep question. [laughs] (...) I feel like it depends on if you're a vocalist for yourself or a vocalist for other people. So, if you say you're releasing something that's written by you that's essentially for you, then you can interpret it however you like, but I feel like when you're working for other people you've got to remember that this is their piece, sometimes what you say is a suggestion but what you say doesn't always go. So, I feel like as a vocalist, you've got to be able to have a lot of adaptation to you and be able to not necessarily sing how you want it but how other people want, and I think that's what makes a good vocalist. (...) Yeah, be adaptable, essentially. I feel like range doesn't really matter too much as long as you are able to deliver emotionally. (...)

Interviewer (...) What made you start identifying as a vocalist?

VA2 Honestly, I started identifying as vocalist the moment I actually had a credit on something. [laughs] Yeah, because I feel like until you really have a credit on something, there's nothing that proves that you are a vocalist. I feel like, for me, you can be the most amazing vocalist but if you have no name to your work at the moment, it's hard to say 'yes, this is my portfolio'. So, before I would never consider myself a singer. Throughout uni I never considered myself a singer, I'd say it's a hobby. (...) It's only recently, when I did a few projects, that I was like 'okay, I can call myself a vocalist now', when people actually request 'can you do vocals for me please', not like 'oh, can you quickly hum this line and we're going to overlay something on top', like, replace you. (...)

Interviewer (...) What is your preference of working environment? (...)

VA2 (...) I guess, usually I prefer, for vocals, remotely working. Yeah, because sometimes I feel like there's the added pressure when someone's watching you, just because I feel like depending on the tune that you want to try something new but you don't necessarily have the confidence to try it because you don't know if it's going to actually work, whilst when you're remote you can take as many tries as you want and send the best ones or try something new without being self-conscious. (...) Yeah, because I find when I'm recording I would think back to it and I'd be like 'oh I could have done this section better' when I've had the composer sit in front of me recording it. (...) I feel like when I remote record, I always get the best take. (...) As long as there's a table, because I've worked in hotel rooms before and it is really awkward to work in, it just doesn't put you in that right creative mindset. Or if you're working on just your laptop but in a busy area, (...) I completely cannot concentrate because I'd be too busy thinking about what I look like in public. In your room, it doesn't matter. You can have your leg up, you can be bloody naked doing your work if you wanted to. [laughs]

Interviewer And how does the environment affect your productivity?

VA2 I feel like, usually, when I'm in the zone, I'm in the zone. When I'm working, I know that I'm being paid to work so I can't procrastinate, whilst when I'm doing stuff in my free time I have more of a leniency to maybe... every two hours I'll take a break, go for a wander, and watch an episode of something before coming back but definitely when you are being put under pressure productivity boosts up because you know you're meant to be working, whilst when you're working on your own stuff you have the leniency so, productivity doesn't go down but it fluctuates more, I'd say. (...)

Interviewer (...) How often do you find yourself collaborating with other creative people?

VA2 If I'm honest, I don't actually collaborate with other people very much if I have a choice. If I could have a choice, I wouldn't, just because I feel like a lot of the time collaborating with other people is like a really big faff, especially if it's something I could do myself. It sounds really narcissistic, I know. (...) For example, say, if I wanted vocals in my piece I wouldn't go out and search for another vocalist, I'd just find myself. If I wanted a recorder in my music, I would just learn the recorder myself and play it, rather than go out and find a professional recorder player. (...) I think it's just a personal thing that I feel like sometimes it takes more time to collaborate with someone rather than just do it yourself. Even though, I have found, that I did collaborate once, I worked with [12] and I asked him to do a recording of a viola solo for me and it actually worked really well in the piece, but the only problem is the time because then

obviously the other person needs to find the time to do the recording and send it to you. Whilst, you know when you're really into a project and you really want something done immediately and you don't have that kind of thing when you're collaborating with other people, which is another big reason why I don't tend to collaborate, it's just the waiting process, (...) if not I'll lose inspiration.

Interviewer (...) How do you maintain interest in a project that you're working on?

VA2 (...) I think it's just setting an end goal and having a deadline always works for me, because once you have a deadline you don't have that moment of 'oh it's alright, I'll just do it in a week's time because I don't have a set deadline', so always when I have a project I work to a deadline. For example, with a group of friends, we're making a game at the moment and we want to get the ball rolling on this game so that we can all do something and we've set a month's deadline for the prototype. So, the moment we set one everyone started actually thinking about doing stuff, and we'd got a whole Trello board with tick boxes of 'you've got to this, this, this'. (...) It's just to get a ball rolling, so I always set a deadline for stuff. So, whenever I do a recording, or I do something for people, I always ask 'when do you want it by?'. And if a lot of them say 'oh, it's not urgent so we don't really have a deadline', I'll be like 'just give me a deadline anyway' so that I get it done. (...)

Interviewer Do you set yourself challenges to complete when you're working on projects?

VA2 Yeah! So, you know how I mentioned that I want to do an album by the end of the year. So the challenge is that I want to enter the Ivor Novello Rising Star Award, so that's the end goal. So, that's the deadline, that's the inspiration, that's the challenge of the year, so that's what I'm working towards. (...)

Interviewer As a vocalist, do you think there are certain expectations your creative output must meet? (...)

VA2 (...) I feel like, this is from my perspective, if someone tells me they're a vocalist, I automatically expect like Whitney Houston level vocalist. [laughs] (...) I think I have different expectations for when people say they're a vocalist and when they're a singer. So, for me, a singer is, say, the Whitney Houstons, like the Beyonces, like the people with the massive ranges, you know, like divas. (...) If someone says a vocalist I automatically imagine background singers. People that do less commercial stuff is what a vocalist is to me. (...) So say, when people ask me 'do you sing?', I'll be like 'no, I'm not really a singer, I'm more of a vocalist', it's really weird. It's because I feel like vocalist is a more formal term and singer is a more casual term so I always link singer to me like

the 'everyone wants to be a singer' kind of thing. Vocalist is something that's been trained. (...)

Interviewer How do you manage your expectations against the expectations of others? (...)

VA2 (...) It's really weird because if someone expects you to do something and you're expecting to do something else and I'd be like 'well, haven't you looked at my portfolio?', but then on my part 'have I not checked the brief properly?'. So, it'd be like a really unfortunate turn of events, where everyone has just misunderstood each other but then I feel like, at the end of the day, if it's something that's completely out of my ability, I'd just be straight up front and be like 'I don't think I would be able to pull off what you expect', but if I say I have another suggestion, like say there's someone else that who'd be able to exactly give you what you want, I'd be like 'why don't you ask this vocalist over here because she's exactly what you want?' because that's not something I'll be able to provide. (...) It's like I'd be going in thinking I'm giving you breathy ethereal vocals and then they actually want me to do screamo. [laughs] I feel like honesty is the key. I'd rather point you to someone else that'd be able to give it to you rather than do a crap job at it.

Interviewer (...) What are you expecting to be your key contributions to the project?

VA2 Giving you vocals! [laughs] (...) Probably if there are some written melody lines, there will be some stuff that will be difficult for a vocalist to do, maybe you should tweak it. (...) The usual problem is, when you collaborate, either ranges, where it's just completely out of a comfortable range and it ends up being like an octave higher, and it doesn't quite sound as the person who created it wants it to be and it's a completely different timbre; (...) so, it'd be more like providing information on my range, or like 'this would sound even better', and breathing space as well. Breathing space is really hard because what I'm working on at the moment, there's a lot of long sustained notes and I was just like to the composer 'this is really hard for a vocalist to sing, and if you want this to be performed live, this is really hard, you're going to have to some kind of breathing space'. I'd say information is what I can contribute, really.

Interviewer Last question, how do you think this project will differ from previous projects you have worked on?

VA2 (..) Maybe, I feel like I'll have more of an input in terms of creative direction. I don't know. Before it was just like 'here's a melody line, sing it'. Yeah.

Appendix 2 - Interview 2

Producer/Co-Producer 1 (CP1.2)

4-Dec-2020

Interviewer Let's start off with a general question. What do you think of the finished results?

CP1 I'm really proud of them. It feels like 'Sakura' especially we finished ages ago, and so when you sent through the tracks it was my first time listening to it for a while. I don't know if that's my favourite but I think they've all got something to them. There's something interesting about each one and they each stand out (...). Which, in this sort of project, is the ideal - that they each have a bit that I looked at and thought 'yeah, we succeeded at that, and it was cool'. I think, given how we did the process, it took longer than other tracks that we'd done to get to the same point, but I think it hasn't knocked the quality of any of them. They're still the sort of tracks that we'd put out at any point, but the through route was longer because of, mainly, not being able to work on it in person and having to rely on messages and et cetera to sort it out.

Interviewer How did you approach your role for this project?

CP1 I think I approached it in the same sort of way as I always have done. (...) We've worked together on a few tracks before this and I don't think anything changed really between previous projects and this, so it was just the learned role. (...) I guess, the main thing was then having to work through your comments by text, which is different than how we've been able to do it before. By me being the co-producer, having you in-person would mean that you'd work more directly on it, whereas this was a lot more just me doing it myself and having to work out what specifically it was that you wanted from me, rather than being able to work more directly. (...)

Interviewer How would you say the role you fulfilled differed from your initial expectations?

CP1 I guess it's linked to what I said for the previous question, in that I thought it would be a lot more 'co-' rather than just me working by myself on a lot of the things and sending through bounces, as opposed to being in person and working together on the projects. I don't know how much that would have changed anything, it just felt

different to be working on it solo. I guess, in the past it's been that I've made a beat or something and then we've gone from there. (...) They both had started before it got to me doing the nitty-gritty, which I guess that was the main thing that felt different. But that was less so because of expectation but more so because of the situation of lockdown.

Interviewer (...) Do you think collaboration helped shape the projects?

CP1 For sure. Again, linking back to the previous question, those were both beats that we linked together on. I think I said in the first interview that I struggle starting ideas by myself, I like to have someone to bounce off with and then it's easier once a baseline is set to then go with it, whereas the initial start is more difficult. (...)

Interviewer (...) I actually think we started 'Poppy' during lockdown, I don't think we had any in-person sessions on 'Poppy'. (...) So, bearing that in mind, what are your thoughts on how we started that project compared to how we started the ones that we started before lockdown and before we started working online?

CP1 I think it felt similar, because there was a starting point, and I guess they each had a starting point in a different way. 'Poppy's starting point was that you'd created this beat and then sent it over and said 'expand on this', and then that's how I fleshed it out into a full track. (...) It would have been both the guitar loop and the piano loop that you sent through, and that fills out the whole of the rest of the track that I then manipulated to become the rest of it. So, everything was in place it was just me expanding on it. But then, with the start of 'Sakura', again, I think that was based on an instrumental that you'd... oh, it was the synth chords.

Interviewer I think it was a sample that I manipulated, it was a really long recording, and I remember we listened through the whole recording and picked out loops that we wanted to use.

CP1 Because I think you'd done it in short amounts of time and then I time-stretched it and then that's how it got this warped thing. (...) Then, obviously, 'St. Paul' is a song already, and so that was the start point of that. (...) So, it felt the same because there was some sort of set start point, even during lockdown. (...)

Interviewer In what ways did online collaboration force you to work differently to your usual habits?

CP1 As I said, it's having to do stuff by myself, that I just wasn't used to. At the time I was working with [name] on a track, and I live with

him, so he could just be here to help out on stuff, so then it felt even more different going over to stuff for this and not being able to do it in person. We tried (...) streaming audio, we did a couple sessions of that but, again, you couldn't really hear what the quality was like and I had to do it through headphones which isn't usually how I do my producing anyway, so that very much changed it.

Interviewer How would you describe your level of productivity on these projects, in relation to your productivity when collaborating face-to-face?

CP1 (...) It was definitely a slower process. I don't know whether that's because of (...) having to every time bounce out, send to you, wait for feedback, and then go. (...) But I think lockdown hampered overall productivity anyway, and so I think whether I had to bounce out the tracks or not it would have been a slower process. (...) And also having to do my own Master's project hampered productivity and I think we would have got through the tracks a lot quicker had we been able to do it in-person. I think that's also because I do just work better with people, and so knowing that I had to just do that myself maybe even subconsciously hamper productivity a bit.

Interviewer You mentioned (...) about when we tried doing some live streaming pseudo studio sessions. (...) What other technological challenges did you face when completing your part of the project? (...)

CP1 Potentially we would have used uni studios a bit more instead of me producing here (at home) and I guess my computer isn't as powerful as ones that we might have used, and so that potentially hampered things, but it was more towards the end of the projects it took a bit longer to load but that's not the end of the world. (...) The main technological thing was, like you said, the pseudo studio sessions.

Interviewer Were there any aspects of the collaborative process that you thought were made easier or improved due to working remotely?

CP1 I don't think the collaborative process was improved. Sometimes it is nice just to get on with stuff yourself. (...) Potentially, vocal cutting was easier to do by myself because it's very much just a 'brain-off, just-do' kind of thing, which then the situation is extended by having the double opinion of that. (...) Then, the flip side of it is, once I'd done the vocal cuts, I then had to send them to you to yes or no them. (...) So, although the initial part of that might have been shortened, it's then extended by the having to bounce out thing. And, semi-related, I've noticed that for this project I had so many more bounces that I did, which I think absolutely is because of the nature of that, that I did have to send through so many more things than I usually would.

Interviewer I guess, that potentially being a result of not being able to have real-time feedback (...).

CP1 Yeah, although equally maybe the feedback was shortened and condensed by having more bounces. Because, usually when you're doing it, you'll do a bounce and then listen to it for ages on various different things, and then come back to it. Whereas, this was very much: ping a transfer, listen, small changes, and then repeat that. And I don't know which one is a better situation. What I'm saying is that, in one way, the criticism is extended by having fewer bounces and going over that with a fine-tooth comb, whereas this was more so 'let's keep working on it'. I guess, there's very much the two sides to it.

Interviewer (...) Did your working environment change because of restricted access to any facilities you would normally use?

CP1 I think, as I mentioned, the uni situation. But, also, most of the time I am just doing stuff on my own software anyway, mainly because I've got the plug-ins I know and like producing on. (...) I don't know how much we would have used uni anyway. And, for previous projects we've mainly done it off my computer. Yeah, unsure really.

Interviewer What impact do you think the environment you were forced to work had on your creative output?

CP1 Not being able to go out and do normal things, and then come back to my working environment was the main impact. I work better at night, so knowing that I can do stuff during the day and then come back and be here and work is my ideal situation. (...) During the day, especially in early lockdown, the only option is to go for a walk for a bit. (...) In comparison, pre-lockdown, I'd be going into uni to do band practices, or things for my own Master's, or teaching, and then come back later in the day and do my own personal work here. (...) I think the forced "I am here all the time" definitely did hamper creativity. (...)

Interviewer Reflecting on your experience of the project, how would you improve the online collaborative process if you were to do it again?

CP1 The way I'd improve it is potentially impossible, in that the idea would be that we both have lossless audio. Well, lossless audio, control over the project, and a way for me to hear stuff through my speakers and that not impact upon your side. And that's three things that we need very future technology to sort out, probably. Even just from the fact of you talking to me coming out of my laptop, and the audio from Ableton coming out of my speakers, then you will just be

blasted twice by the audio. So, those would be the things but they are not realistic aims, potentially but those were the main things that were annoying about doing it that way, so that's what I'd want to change.

Interviewer Last question, what were you most and least satisfied with throughout the project?

CP1 I think most satisfied by that we did some really cool stuff with both of the projects. There's some audio manipulation that I'd wanted to do for a while that I then got to do in this. And I think the beats particularly are really cool. I guess, least satisfied is that 'Poppy' isn't fully done, and that we haven't got the sung vocal for 'Poppy'. (...) Especially, listening to it in comparison to 'Sakura', which is fully fleshed out and done and has that vocal, it would be a lot more satisfying to know what the 'Poppy' vocal would be. (...) It's just because of not being able to get people to record in a way that we then would want to release. (...) That's definitely the not satisfying part - it's having a piece that we know eventually will have more on it.

Interviewer So, would you say in some cases it's almost impossible to fully finish projects with online collaboration?

CP1 Potentially not a downside in a normal situation where people would be able to go to a studio and still send through that audio. That can still be done online, it's just purely for the fact of we can't confirm studio quality from people's houses. (...) So, in this current online environment that's something that's changed.

Engineer 2/Instrumentalist 3 (E2/I3.2)

19-Jan-2021

Interviewer Let's start off with quite a general question. What do you think of the finished results?

E2/I3 I really enjoy it. I thought going into it it was going to be quite challenging, especially with the genre the stuff, because I'd never mixed stuff like the trap one ('Greenhouse'). But I'm quite happy with that turned out. (...) I used lots of references to guide me, because obviously I'm not very used to mixing stuff like this. I feel like the mix is quite genre appropriate, so I feel like I did alright with that one. The solo was quite cool as well, but it was quite a weird chord progression so I remember having to make a loop on TuxGuitar or Guitar Pro and having to work out what notes work over what chords, I remember that being quite challenging but also quite happy with how it turned out in the end. SC1's tune - it was quite daunting at first because he sent me a load of printed effects which I didn't really know what to do with. I've just never had to deal with printed effects before, but I feel like it turned out pretty good too.

Interviewer How did you approach your role for these projects?

E2/I3 I feel like I approached the engineering as I would normally. I always just mix at home. (...) As an engineer in the studio, I'd be recording, that's when I'd be dealing with the bands face to face but when I'm mixing I like to do it by myself. (...) I approached the trap one slightly differently, I feel like I went more creative with it than I would normally, because I normally go more clinical with my mixing whereas that one I feel like needed a bit of 'dirt' to it. I went more creative and tried different stuff to make it more genre appropriate, like saturating the kick loads and stuff like that. Whereas, I'm used to mixing metal where I don't do stuff like that, I just try to make it sound clinical and clean. I'd say the trap one I approached more creatively. (...) For the SC1 one, it was more like a normal mix for me because it's got that metal or rock element - it's more traditional instruments, so I approached that like I would a normal mix. For the solo, like I said, it was tricky because of the weird progression. I didn't just sit down and noodle, I had to think about what I was doing. (...) Normally, when I'm writing a solo, I just loop the progression and noodle on top of it, and whenever something good comes out I just make note of it, but for that one I had to draw notes in by hand and then learn how to play it.

Interviewer (...) How did the role that you fulfilled within the project differ from your initial expectations?

E2/I3 (...) I feel like it all went pretty smooth and I was expecting it to go smooth because a big part of this stuff is getting along with the people you're working with and being on the same wavelength, and I feel like we all are pretty much. So, I feel like all of the feedback was pretty easy to take and it was a pretty smooth experience all around. So, in terms of that, it went exactly as I was expecting. I'd say the trap tune was actually easier than I thought it would be, because I thought it was going to be so different that it's going to sound absolutely horrid or it's not going to be genre appropriate at all, but it was actually quite doing that because it gave me a bit of a morale boost that I can mix other things too. Overall, it went pretty much as expected I reckon.

Interviewer And do you think collaboration helped the projects?

E2/I3 Oh yeah, definitely. It wouldn't exist otherwise, because it's a blend of everyone. (...) SC1's tune would have sounded completely different if he mixed it, because when he sent me all the printed effects he wanted quite an open sounding mix with loads of reverb and stuff, and I just approached it in my own way. I was like 'I actually like this really dry', and then I sent it to him and he said he quite liked it too. It was a different take on it but he did enjoy it. Yeah, I feel like everyone has their own little input into things and it shows.

Interviewer In what ways, if any, did online collaboration force you to work differently to how you usually work?

E2/I3 In terms of engineering, not very differently because I normally just get bands to send me stuff online anyway. (...) It's very much a solitary job anyway.

Interviewer Would you say that's standard practice?

E2/I3 For me, yeah. I know it's not for everyone, but for me it's very much standard practice. I just get in a room, do my thing and then send it to the bands and whatever feedback they've got they can just give me revisions. For the solo, in a band aspect I would be in a rehearsal room working out so that's quite different. I wouldn't say the online aspect affected me too much. (...) I especially think, because in this day and age of it being so easy to share stuff online, like send projects back and forth, it's becoming less and less of an issue doing stuff online. You can easily record an album and never see the people you are recording the album with. There's quite a few bands

that do that anyway - Periphery record all their stuff in different countries and then mix it all. That's all just online, it's pretty cool how people can do that nowadays.

Interviewer (...) How would you describe your level of productivity on these projects, compared to the level of productivity you experience when collaborating face to face?

E2/I3 Maybe face to face is a bit easier to remain motivated. When you're on your own you have to make yourself sit down at the computer and do it. Not so much for this project but I have had stuff where it's just dragged a lot. (...) For this one, it was pretty easy to sit down and get through it and I feel like I was pretty productive with it. Do you think I mixed it quickly?

Interviewer What I'm most interested in is whether you felt there was difference between your productivity on these projects and how productive you normally are.

E2/I3 I think maybe there was a bit of a boost in productivity because there was stuff I hadn't really done before - especially the trap one, again. I wanted to challenge myself so I feel like that boosted my productivity - I was like 'let's try this, something new'.

Interviewer (...) Do you think online collaboration opened up those opportunities, that maybe would be harder to make happen otherwise?

E2/I3 (...) Possibly, yeah. (...) I don't really know how I'd get into mixing stuff face to face. I don't really do that, I always do stuff online anyway. People just approach me online. But yeah, for this project specifically, I wouldn't have got that chance to mix trap really - no one would have approached me to do that because they've never heard me do that. This project specifically did give me that opportunity.

Interviewer What technological and inter-personal challenges did you face when completing your part of the project, in relation to it being an online collaboration?

E2/I3 (...) My solo got stretched out. [laughs]

Interviewer Maybe, that's something that if we were both in the room whilst that was being recorded it would have been less likely to happen.

E2/I3 Yeah, that's a good point actually. Obviously, I would have caught that straight away. Whereas you didn't quite notice it straight away,

and I didn't hear it until right at the end. (...) If you had sent it whilst you were mixing it I would have caught onto it before.

Interviewer So, not having a way to provide instant or live feedback was a challenge.

E2/I3 Yeah, I think that's a good point to make.

Interviewer Were there any aspects of the collaborative process that you thought were made easier or improved due to working remotely?

E2/I3 Just the fact that you can send stuff back and forth is easier. It would have been a lot more difficult to get the tracks from SC1 on a hard drive and then mix it. (...) Even recording the solo is easier online, I was allowed to write the solo on my own machine and send over to you in 20 minutes. It's just easier doing it online, as opposed to having to go to a studio, write it, record it. Whereas I could just do it all from the comfort from my own home.

Interviewer (...) Did your work environment change because of any restricted access to any facilities you normally use?

E2/I3 In this aspect no, I don't think so. Maybe if we were tracking more guitars, we would have gone to a studio, but for a solo I could have even given you a DI and then you could have re-amped it. I guess that was more up to you really. (...) Okay, maybe for tracking the solo, if we were going all out, I would have gone to a studio just for the choice of amplifiers whereas here I'm a bit restricted with what I've got in terms of amp simulators and stuff like that. But for the mixing, no. I've not been restricted, that would have been my normal work environment anyway.

Interviewer What impact do you think the environment you worked in had on your creative output? (...)

E2/I3 My cat strolling in from time to time, just give him a stroke and get a bit more motivated. [laughs] I feel like if you're in a comfortable environment there's less stress. You can be free to do your own thing. I feel like you're more in the zone if you're in a comfortable environment, if you know what I mean. (...) Also, because you know the environment you're in, you know you're making better choices. If I was in a room that I didn't know the sound of, some of those choices might have sounded good in that room but then it wouldn't have translated in an environment that I was comfortable in.

Interviewer Reflecting on the overall experience, how would you improve the online collaborative process if you were to do it again?

E2/I3 Maybe, like you said, a way of having live feedback on the tunes so we could catch on to little things that happen in the process. (...) I think everything else went really smoothly.

Interviewer What were you most and least satisfied with throughout the project?

E2/I3 I think most satisfied is the trap song. I feel like the overall thing went really well, and better than what I was expecting. Least satisfied - I'm not too happy with SC1's mix, having reflected on it. Not that I'm not too happy, it's just quite a weird mix of genres. I don't know if I did it justice. (...) There wasn't a reference mix that I could listen to and be like 'yes, this is what it needs to sound like'. I had to approach it as a bit of a new thing, and I don't know if I accomplished it very well. (...)

Interviewer Do you have anything else you want to mention?

E2/I3 (...) [about VA1's vocal recording on 'Greenhouse'] I'm guessing he recorded it at home so, he obviously had physical constraints of not going to a studio, so that impacts my mixing. Some of the material wasn't the best of quality and I had to approach it in a much more scientific way - not very creative, just trying to save something, and I feel like that actually ended up quite good. (...) I guess that is a negative aspect of working remotely. If I was there I would have said 'we're tracking with something else' or at least 'we're tracking in a different room'.

Instrumentalist 2 (I2.2)

15-Sep-2020

Interviewer (...) What do you think of the finished results?

I2 I really like it. Was this all done remotely?

Interviewer Yeah, so this was mostly my composition and SC2 wrote the string part and the synth solo which I then sent onto you to record viola on.

I2 Yeah, I thought it sounded really cohesive. I always associate any sort of remote recording projects with disjointedness even though that doesn't happen all the time. I think this goes to show that it can be super cohesive and sound really tight and good.

Interviewer (...) How did you approach your role for this project?

I2 (...) I think for my role in the song I was taking influence from any sort of hip hop-ish plus string thing I've heard, like some Kendrick stuff and The Roots sometimes. I was kind of thinking of doing open harmonies, kind of like jazzy sounding, but obviously it isn't fully jazz-ish but it isn't fully pop-ish either. (...) General role - I guess, I really tried to listen to the song carefully and see what I could add that would be interesting rather than adding things to add things. I wanted everything to have a role in the song, so a lot of internal editing happened.

Interviewer How did the role you fulfilled differ from your initial expectations? (...)

I2 I think it was pretty similar to what I expected, because what normally happens is someone will have a part in mind and then I'll play over it but then they'll say 'add your own thing to it, do harmonies or anything', so I was comfortable and happy doing that. I guess, normally people don't say add your own thing, so that was nice. [laughs]

Interviewer Do you think collaboration improved the results of the project?

I2 Yeah, I think you can tell that there's multiple perspectives in it. That's sounds weird to say but it just sounds well-rounded and I couldn't have come up with some of the stuff in there. So, yeah.

Interviewer (...) In what ways, if any, did specifically online collaboration force

you to work differently to your usual habits?

- I2** This is not as relevant, but the whole technology aspect of it was changed, and so it was all me doing it alone which I kind of liked but I'm also just bad at working with people. [laughs] Yeah, I think with online stuff a lot of times people already have their ideas set in stone. (...) People have ideas and they're already a bit realised, whereas when you are coming up with stuff in-person it's all maybe on the same level of theoretical ideas that haven't been put down yet, so it's different to work with people who already made decisions about what they like and what they want. So, the process was a bit faster and maybe made me think about it a little bit less in a way. (...) It's like a different kind of creating a song.

Interviewer (...) How would you describe the level of your productivity on this project compared the productivity you experience when collaborating face-to-face?

- I2** I think it was easier to procrastinate a bit with this, because I really did want to do it but there was no one right there who was waiting for it, so that's something to keep in mind for the future - to make sure I don't procrastinate things because it's easy when it's just in a folder. [laughs]

Interviewer Yeah, that makes sense. (...) What technological (...) and interpersonal challenges did you face when completing your part of the project? (...)

- I2** Technologically, I was actually moving at the time so I didn't have the right cables or anything. Yeah, that was just a little bit different than a studio setting because it was just me (...). I like having another person to bounce ideas off at the time has helped in the past, because when you're alone you're just making all the decisions but it could just take one comment from someone to say 'have you tried that an octave down' or something and it's suddenly way better.

Interviewer So would you say it's hard to get instant feedback in this sort of collaboration?

- I2** Yeah, I did kind of miss that instant feedback, and it kind of made me second guess a little bit because I was the only one deciding this so what if it's not good. (...)

Interviewer (...) Could you talk a little bit more about what aspects of the collaborative process were made easier or improved due to working remotely?

I2 I think general time management was easier because when everyone is in one room deciding things you have to have the okay with everyone, everyone is kind of adding their own things to it, and creatively it can be a little bit draining to make a ton of decisions with people and work with people. Not in a super bad way but it can just take up more mental energy, whereas compared to just doing your own thing it's like you play something, then you like it, then you got it. [laughs]

Interviewer (...) Did your working environment change because of restricted access to any facilities you would normally use?

I2 Yeah, I normally would be in a big-ish studio and have someone working with me tracking it. So, yeah, I was just in my flat, recording with a SM57 which never sounds great on viola but that's the only thing I had, with my interface which just kept shutting off so I kept having to start and stop and it'd get really annoying. (...)

Interviewer Do you think that your working environment had an impact on your creative output?

I2 Yeah, I found it hard to focus in my flat in general, just because there was so much noise and there was all these boxes around. (...) Maybe I could have come up with slightly different if I was in a more peaceful environment, I still focused well and I always get into it when I'm playing, but yeah, there was a lot going on.

Interviewer Reflecting on your experience of the project, how would you improve the online collaboration process if you were to do it again? (...)

I2 If we wanted to have it be a bit more like creating in person, we could set up some sort of group chat for everyone who was involved, so they can give some instant feedback where you could send an idea and they could say... That's if you are trying to replicate the in-person thing but if you are just liking the remote thing then I think it works well just how it is.

Interviewer (...) What were you most and least satisfied with throughout the project?

I2 Most satisfied with the end result - I think it sounds really good, and least satisfied - at the time was my own playing and technology was getting really annoying, wishing that I was in a proper place to do stuff, but that's preventable. (...) And noise and distraction.

Interviewer Any final thoughts on the project that you want to add?

12 I think this is one of the first collaborative viola things I've done, I'm finding that it's made me want to do more, to be honest. I liked the process.

Songwriter/Composer 1 (SC1.2)

18-Jan-2021

Interviewer (...) What do you think of the finished tracks?

SC1 I really like them. They are good. [laughs] Obviously they're very different in style, and I feel like I definitely lean more towards suiting one style than I do the other but that's also probably because it's not necessarily as fun to write in both. (...) I like the ending of 'Drowning Astronauts' quite a bit, with the glitchy guitar thing. I like the cleanness of it, it's quite a clean track. I say clean, not clean as in undistorted, because it's definitely distorted. [laughs] (...) I liked working on the intro - the build-up - as well, although it is essentially just a glorified riser it is still quite fun. (...) In terms of 'Race You To The End', I really like the 'wall of sound-iness' of it, especially during the choruses and the ending because that's something I can't accomplish. I don't know how to do that. It also helps that that song is complemented by my vocal style a bit more, because I don't really have the vocal chops for electronic music as much. Either that, or it might be something to do with processing, I'm not sure. (...) I'm very happy with them. I think I'm still going to do a little bit of tweaking here and there, but I'm overall 90% of the work is done on both of them, which the point you want songs at really.

Interviewer How did you approach your role for this project?

SC1 Well, since I was a songwriter or composer, I get to sit at the front of the process - I get to make the initial thing and then just give it to other people and say 'it's your problem now'. [laughs] (...) It was actually interesting working with you and then working with E2/I3 because you were doing the producer-y stuff on 'Drowning Astronauts', meanwhile E2/I3 was just doing the mixing. (...) I think I undervalued how much sonic change happens in mixing because the way I produced 'Race You To The End' was not what I'd call 'good'. It was very my style but it was... I imagine the production actually was okay because it's the same production, it's just mixed different. (...) Meanwhile, with you, you actually had a part in creating the sounds that I wanted. So, I remember us working on the bass line and changing the amounts of distortions and stuff. It was more collaborative I think, with E2/I3 it was just - I send it to him, he does what he does, he sends it back, we come up with any points that we have then he does it again - so, it's less interactive.

Interviewer How did the role you fulfilled within the project differ from your initial expectations?

SC1 Well, I thought I'd be seeing people originally, so that was a pretty big change in what I was expecting, because there was no outsourcing recording; I was recording everything in my room which is good, it's got me into a habit of recording in my room which I definitely needed. I think I didn't expect it to have as much control as I did. I'm grateful for it because I like to be able to control the direction of where my songs are going. (...) I guess I did kind of expect it because I'd worked with you before, I knew how it would work with you. If I was working with anyone else, I'd probably expect it to be more like how it was with E2/I3, where it's just - send it back and forth until everyone's happy with it. Yeah, it's an interesting way of writing.

Interviewer Do you think collaboration helped shape the projects?

SC1 Yeah, 100%. They would not be anywhere near as good as they are now. Like I said, I wouldn't have been able to do the bass stuff and the cleanness that you brought, and I wouldn't be able to do whatever it is that E2/I3 does. He's just got this thing that he does with guitars that I just don't understand. [laughs] (...)

Interviewer In what ways, if any, did online collaboration force you to work differently to your usual habits?

SC1 Definitely the thing we were doing, where you were producing and streaming it. I think that's not necessarily a brilliant thing, but it's the best that we could do under the circumstances. The issue with it is that as good as streaming is, it's never perfect - there's always going to be that lower bit rate, when the internet drops out it goes all glitchy and stuff, and that definitely did halt me being able to hear perfectly what was happening, so bounces were really useful to get around that. With E2/I3, because of the way he operated with it, where it was just send it over and wait until he's done it, there wasn't really much change to how I believe you'd do it in person.

Interviewer How would you describe the level of your productivity on this project, in relation to productivity you experience when collaborating face to face?

SC1 I think I probably collaborate a little more efficiently face to face, but that could also be to do with factors from just generally this year as well, so I don't necessarily want to put that on the online aspect of it. I'm essentially stuck in my room the whole year pretty much, and my room is also where I relax, where I play video games and stuff. You've got this double mindset in one space, which I don't think is particularly good for me because I end up ignoring what I should be

doing and start doing other things. That is probably the biggest hurdle I had.

Interviewer (...) Can you think of any other technological or inter-personal challenges you had to face when completing your part of the project?

SC1 I think one thing I'm really bad at is saying exactly what I want sometimes. I'll sort of hint at it and not be 100% forward with it, when I just need to tell people what I want. I guess, I did that with Pete for a while and I think I did that with you with the pads throughout the tune. (...) I need to actually say what I'm hearing in my head, I need to put that down earlier in a way that people can understand. Maybe make a structure map or something, where I've got - in the intro I want these elements, in verse 1 I want this to happen, (...) that sort of thing. I think that gives an impression of the flow of the music as well which I do struggle with sometimes. (...) Yeah, the only time I used reference tracks during the mixing phase initially, and eventually E2/I3 just decided to scrap all those anyway - he just wanted to mix it differently. I'm still not sure what the style is that he settled on but I like it.

Interviewer Were there any aspects of the collaboration process that you though were made easier or improved due to working remotely?

SC1 It's hard to tell, really. I can't think of any immediate ones because nothing huge changes aside from (...) if someone's playing a synth in the same room and that gives you an idea - that's the level of difference that it makes. I might have come up with this idea anyway but I can't tell without actually testing it out like that. (...)

Interviewer (...) I'm wondering if your work environment actually changed because of restricted access to any facilities you would normally use?

SC1 Yeah, probably. I'd say that's probably true, if I had access to uni stuff I would definitely be recording in uni because it's just infinitely better than recording at home, obviously. In an actual studio space. One of the problems I had was that one of my neighbours loves to mow his lawn once every two days or so, so I'd be waiting an hour everyday to record vocals and quite often I'd just give up (...).

Interviewer Would you say there were specific phases where those changes became more apparent?

SC1 Yeah, definitely. (...) My dad works from home so any time he's on a

call I can't record, especially vocals or cymbals (...). There's definitely elements of working here, rather than working in a studio, that would have restricted my time of performance. Also, I've got less access to different mics and stuff to play around with, which isn't necessarily a bad thing - it means that I get to really hone in on how this one sound good, which I think I might have worked out how to get my vocal processing a bit better now from this project. I've looked back at what I did on 'Race You', because they're my favourite vocals that I've done for a long time. I did harmonies a lot, the harmonies fill out space that just doubling doesn't seem to fill out, but then there's the actual processing itself which just melds everything together. It's a strange environment to be working in but it's useful.

Interviewer What impact do you think the environment that you worked in had on your creative output?

SC1 Less access to instruments, but restriction isn't a thing that I think is a bad thing creatively - I think restriction kind of enforces creativity. I mean, look at what I did with the ending of 'Drowning Astronauts', that was taking a guitar line and chopping it up (...) and then stitching it together however I felt as an arpeggio. That's about as creative as I'd usually be. See, the problem is, if I had another instrument that I was picking up, I'd have to work out how to use it for one, so that would take a while, and once I found a sound I like I would just use that sound - there wouldn't anything particularly clever about what I was doing with it. Not that cleverness is necessary, it's not necessary at all but I think that sort of element of creativity is what makes it fun for me.

Interviewer Reflecting on the whole experience, how would you improve the online collaborative process if you were to do it again?

SC1 (...) I'd like to try doing a song where I do the thing which I did with E2/I3 where I just throw it back and forth and just wait for the response, because I feel like in those sorts of scenarios you get such a big leap between each iteration that you're not focusing on tiny things, you're actually focusing on what you should be listening to. But, then again, I might be completely wrong with that, I have no way of knowing, which is why I'd like to try it. I think if there was a better way of doing the streaming thing, that would also be interesting because it's very good for getting the general gist of what you're doing but if you really want to hear the stereo space or something, you're never going to get that from streaming, it's never going to sound right. (...) It's a strange way of working. (...) Probably structuring, I guess but that's more just my fault in general, I should have structured anyway, even if I wasn't doing it online.

Interviewer I guess, it can be a bit more difficult to plan things when you know you're stuck in this environment.

SC1 Yeah, that could come back to, again, being a room which I don't usually do this sort of thing in. But I'm starting to get used to doing it, which is good, it obviously makes us more productive.

Interviewer (...) What were you most and least satisfied with throughout the project?

SC1 I know my least will be my vocal performance on 'Drowning Astronauts', I think. I have this thing with my vocals where after a while if I come back to them, I usually hate them. (...) So, I'd like to probably re-do those. I might even try different processing and send them pre-processed to you. (...) There's an abstract thing that really satisfies me which is the difference between the two different types of mix. I absolutely love being able to hear how different people produce music. (...) E2/13's got this classic rock sort of production, heavy on the wall of sound, the bass guitar is quite low, the vocals are very forward, stuff like that. But then, I jump to your production where it's super clear. (...) It's clarity, that's what I mean. Your production has the clarity and focus on individual parts, so 'Drowning Astronauts' has a lot of very busy percussion in it, and that percussion doesn't work if it's produced wall of sound style. (...) What would be interesting is if you took your style of production on the stuff that needs to have the clarity and put that over E2/13's style production and pads and stuff so that you get those wall of sound moments. (...) That's probably the abstract thing I like the most.

Interviewer So, in a way, the thing that you find the most satisfying is the inherent part of collaborating with different backgrounds and different perspectives?

SC1 Yeah. Within different genres as well, which is a huge thing I think. See, I jump all over the place with genre so I think there's definitely a balance to be had somewhere with all the styles. (...) I really enjoy the aspect of collaborating with different people in different styles. (...) It's been an interesting project. It all comes out of nowhere, doesn't it, this sort of thing. (...) I could talk about where it's taking me thought-wise, where I want to go next with these songs. I've already got album worth of material that still needs finishing. Then, I've got these two new songs, one of which - 'Race You To The End' - is part of a bigger selection of more rock focused songs which will probably end up being an album. That was a kind of self-imposed limit on creativity to make myself try and find somewhere in rock

that actually hasn't been explored because, let's be honest, it's a pretty beaten down genre nowadays - it's been done a lot. Meanwhile, 'Drowning Astronauts' has brought me into experimenting with more electronic music a little bit more in-depth than I used to, so, I've started playing with synths more. Just recently I made a tune that I think would fit really well with it. I'm not sure how it's going to end up. (...) It's sort of put me in this thought process of - 'this is a genre I can explore, I'm going to explore this genre'. (...)

Songwriter/Composer 2 (SC2.2)

21-Jan-2021

Interviewer (...) What do you think of the finished results?

SC2 Yeah, I think the finished results are pretty cool. I especially like 'Aphrodite's Thorn', I think that was the one that I contributed the most material to, which is probably why I liked it more. Yeah, I really like the sound of that and just the general weirdness. I was especially surprised by the guitar solo at the end which I think works very well. (...) For the other one, (...) what I really liked was the beat itself and how it's at the same time off the grid and robotic which is something I don't really hear very often and I think it works really well with it, with the vibe of the track. I think something for both tracks is that I think they would both be cooler with vocals and that's something that we talked about before this. (...)

Interviewer How did you approach your role of these projects as a composer?

SC2 (...) The first thing I did was listened to the material that you sent me and then just played over the stuff that you sent me. (...) With the 'Kanye Type Beat' especially, I pretty much just played over the stuff that you already sent me and tried to add to what you already had. With 'Aphrodite's Thorn', I had a few different things that I wanted to do which was to make a cool bass line, so that was like a sound design thing, where I just tried to make a cool sounding bass that would fit with the material that you sent me. (...) I, also, did most of the stuff in terms of the timeline, or at least the bit in the middle, so I pretty much wrote that and I tried to do a verse chorus structure which just repeated twice. (...) When I was writing that verse chorus structure I was trying to break it up a little bit by the parts not being exactly like an easily discernible four beat thing that happens four times and then the other thing starts. I tried to break them up, I think the verse is a 12 bar thing, I'm not even sure how many bars it was, but I tried to play a little bit with the bar structure of the two parts. In that part I also wanted to add a lead bit with the synth, which I thought sounded really cool, and that was also a sound design bit because I just wanted to make something sounding very metallic, obviously high. (...) I think an inspiration for this would be something like Infected Mushroom's lead synths. There was a lot of Infected Mushroom in this now that I think of it, because the chorus bit is also very Infected Mushroom-y. Yeah, that's kind of how I tried to approach it - just make the structure of it and then add more things to it.

Interviewer And how did the role you fulfilled differ from your initial expectations?

SC2 I guess, maybe, I expected myself to be a little more active with it, but I wasn't. (...) I guess this is a thing that I've always had with online collaborations - I always either forget about them or procrastinate them a lot. That pretty much always happens when I have to do some kind of collaboration. (...) When I initiate a collaboration with someone else, the exact same thing happens, or the collaboration just never finishes. (...) Working online is kind of weird, for me at least, or maybe I just haven't perfected it. (...) This might be the only online collaboration that I've done with someone that's actually got kind of a finished product. (...) I guess this time, because it was a Master's thing that just had to get done at some point, is probably why it got done. [laughs] (...) Yeah, I'm sitting on a five song EP that I was meant to release last year but I didn't release. I don't know how close I am to finishing it but it's not very close. I keep being unhappy with the stuff I have, re-writing and changing shit.

Interviewer (...) Do you think collaboration helped shape the projects?

SC2 Yeah, I think so. Especially with 'Aphrodite's Thorn', the one that I contributed more to, I think the fact that we both worked on it and you wrote the beginning and then wrote a little bit, I think if you did the whole thing on your own that would have been a completely different song, or if I did the whole thing on my own that would have been a different song as well.

Interviewer In what ways, if any, did online collaboration force you to work differently to your usual habits?

SC2 I don't think so, because usually when I work I just open up Cubase and just make a lot of stuff and that's what I did this time as well, so I don't think it was that different to what I normally do. (...) Yeah, because most of the people we know make their music on a computer, even though maybe some of them are players, they're still in front of a computer playing the guitar and just using a computer all the time. So, obviously when you're doing an online collaboration you're going to be using a computer so, I think that kind of makes sense.

Interviewer (...) How would you describe the level of your productivity on these projects in relation to the level of productivity you experience when collaborating face to face?

SC2 (...) I think when it comes to writing a song, say if I'm with a band

and we just start playing it, I think the structure and a more finished idea of it in my head will come faster because I'm with other people who can play the other parts. (...) When it comes to online, and not just online but working in front of a computer, I think it takes me a little bit longer to get the structure of something down. So, following on from my previous answer, my process isn't very much different to whenever I'm working normally on a music project right now, (...) so I think the productivity is probably about the same, so I guess not very productive. [laughs] I'm just being honest about it.

Interviewer (...) Were there any aspects of the collaborative process that you thought were made easier or improved due to working remotely?

SC2 I think what I liked was that we just sent each other stems and there would be a little bit of a difference between each revision that we sent each other back, and that was kind of cool. Otherwise, I don't really have any other thoughts on it.

Interviewer (...) Did your work environment change in any way because of restricted access to any facilities or resources you would normally use?

SC2 No, not really, because I just work in my room with my stuff so it didn't really make a difference.

Interviewer And what impact do you think that environment had on your creative output?

SC2 I don't think there was any difference. (...) I think definitely my work environment being just my room makes it hard for me to get inspired because I work in the same place that I'm trying to be creative or relax. (...) In terms of how it influences my work flow, I think working and writing in front of a computer, and just making everything on a computer, kind of makes my music sound like it was made on a computer, if that makes sense. The structure of it, like the 4 beat repetitive stuff - that's been something that's been really hard to get rid of. (...) When I introduce some instruments into what I work on, which is almost a different environment because I'm just looking at the instrument and writing as I'm playing, that produces better results, I think. (...) The work environment thing is hard to explain for me because that's always just been the environment that I'm in. The big change is that I'm in that environment 24/7 pretty much because of lockdowns and having to work from home.

Interviewer (...) Reflecting on your experience of the projects, how would you improve the online collaborative process if you were to do it again?

SC2 Maybe, something that would improve online collaboration is some form of a shared drive. A shared cloud drive where collaborators put their updated versions in with a short description of what's been done, because that organises things a little bit and when you need to find the thing you need it's just always there. I think that would definitely improve online collaboration. The inspiration for that idea comes from working on big video game projects where you have some sort of version control where everyone adds things to and shows the changes but obviously that can't happen with audio files. (...)

Interviewer (...) What were you most and least satisfied with throughout the project?

SC2 I think most satisfied was the bit that I wrote in 'Aphrodite's Thorn'. Least satisfied - I think, my lack of activity and engagement with the project. I think I could have engaged more, I said that already. (...) It was fun to work on.

Vocalist/Artist 1 (VA1.2)

9-Dec-2020

Interviewer What do you think of the finished result?

VA1 I think it's dope man. I think I fucking killed it. (...) Yeah, I think it's a good piece, I love the mix and stuff on it. (...) The beat's dope, our verses... I wrote my to parallel yours in a way. I think it works really well just as a full piece. I played it to a few people, most people are like 'that sounds sick'. You happy with it?

Interviewer Yeah, I'm happy with it. (...) It's obviously quite light-hearted and silly and fun.

VA1 Yeah, not every track needs to be serious and right now people need some uplifting.

Interviewer (...) Talking about your role within the project, how did you approach that for this track?

VA1 We met in the studio last time we had the interview. (...) Then, you came to me with 'Greenhouse' as it was at the time, and I think you already had a verse and a hook down by the time it came to me. So, at that point it was about listening to the material that was already there, making sure I was familiar with it. Thankfully your flow is quite easy to catch. If I was working with someone who was going all skippy and jumping all over the beat, it might be more difficult to adjust that quickly, but I knew everything you were saying straight off. I don't think it took very long, it just sort of happened. (...) I had bits and pieces of the verse already in my head. (...) It wasn't put together or anything. (...) I wanted to jump on the track and have my presence known when I came in. (...) That's where the opening came from. (...) Yeah, it just came from there. And the whole food thing. (...)

Interviewer How did the role fulfilled differ from your initial expectations?

VA1 (...) I don't think I really had much expectations. (...) I try not to think too much about things, so when there's something I know I can handle, which you know, I've been spitting since I was 'yay' high, so I know I can handle that. I try not to worry about it and see what happens if the situation is going right - and it seemed to be, it seemed to be until the point where it's done. (...) So, I didn't really expect any one thing in particular, I expected to make a piece of music and that's what we did.

Interviewer (...) Do you think the project benefited from being a collaboration?

VA1 Yeah, definitely. (...) When we were talking about shit, just messaging 'oh, I've got this idea, I've got that idea, I've got this bar'. If you ever send me a bar, I'm going to send you back 8 bars taking the piss out of it. I came up off battle rap so that's just me. That sort of dynamic goes back and forth to make an organic experience. (...) Yeah, it's easy working with someone who is creative and able to articulate and express what they want to with the same capability as I can.

Interviewer (...) In what ways, if any, did online collaboration force you to work differently to how you normally work?

VA1 Not really. I'm from an age where everyone does shit from home. (...) I've been thinking about building a mini vocal booth at my house. (...) Yeah, working at home is the normal now. I'm just used to it, especially in current times, but I was used to it anyway because I was at uni and then I was freelancing and writing things over Fiverr. (...) It comes from a point where we're collaborating online before we're even producing anything because most of our generation is now learning through the medium of YouTube and watching other people who know how to do whatever they want to do, do it better. And that's fine, that's how I learn. It's the easiest way to absorb a massive amount of information in a short time. That is online collaboration because everything you pick up from them is transferring into your own work. (...) And usually those types of people that are watching those videos and then producing the stuff will want to put out content and talk to the people who were listening to their content, and it all just links together - that's social media. (...)

Interviewer How would you describe the level of productivity on this project compared to the level of productivity you experience when collaboration face to face?

VA1 I guess the difference is if we were face to face, we could have probably gone in the studio for a full day, made the beat, dropped our verses, done the hook together, maybe done some adlibs over the top. (...) It'd be easier to get it in sync. I guess if we were together we could have had a bit more hands-on. I don't think we struggled though, I think because your verse is quite open, it left me a lot of room to work with. It was kind of a call and response thing for me. I don't think we struggled with not being in the studio, but if we were, a different track might have come out of it.

Interviewer (...) Do you think any aspects of the collaborative process were improved or made easier because of working remotely?

VA1 It saves time. You don't have to dedicate that full day, you can just do a bit. You sent me your part of the song, I listened to it a bunch of times

maybe for a week or so. I listened to it a bunch of times, but that 2 minute slot once every day or so is not going to interfere with the life that I'm living. It's different. At that point, I'm writing my verse whenever I'm going outside for a spliff break or whatever it is I'm doing. (...) When I had the verse, it took like half an hour to record the verse. So yeah, I guess it's quicker in a way. (...) All the production - mixing and mastering - that's what takes time. It takes a lot of time and effort, spitting verses is easy. (...)

Interviewer (...) What impact do you think the environment you worked in had on your creative output?

VA1 That's sort of answered by what I just said. I wrote most of my bars whilst I was outside in my gazebo smoking - that's the environment. I recorded it inside, in a quiet room where I am now. I guess the environment that I work in is the environment we were trying to replicate in the feel of the song. I don't know if that was intentional, but I think that's just me in general most of the time. (...) But that's an environment that's conducive to writing rap songs anyway. (...) Living the lifestyle of a rapper makes you a rapper. (...)

Interviewer Reflecting on your experience during this project, how would you improve the online collaborative process if you were to do it again?

VA1 This is probably not the answer you are looking for. (...) Personally I would really love to work with a dope female singer. (...) If I'm working with someone I'd really like them to bring something different than I am. You did that with the way that you flow, so it worked. But a lot of rappers, I think if I step on a track with them, it's just about out-barring them, whereas if I was working with a singer who was doing a bit of the hook or whatever, doesn't even have to be a female singer. I think I'd just really like to work with a singer. (...)

Interviewer So maybe what you're saying is that if you were to do this kind of collaboration again, you would want to work with people who fulfil a different role to you so you can bounce off them?

VA1 Yeah, not that we didn't, we did. I just meant if I was doing it again. (...)

Interviewer (...) What were you most and least satisfied with throughout the project?

VA1 Most satisfied with 'I walk in like fuck it, get me a 10 piece bucket'. Everyone I've played the track to just bangs off that line. (...) I can picture it at a gig or something and that's how I come on stage (...). That's it - energy. And that's what I always try and bring with my music. Even if I'm doing a deep thing, I still try to bring that energy and hit those pockets maybe you weren't expecting to bring something lively to the

performance or the record, and I definitely got to do that here so that's definitely what I'm most satisfied with. (...)

Vocalist/Artist 2 (VA2.2)

13-Aug-2020

Interviewer Could you give me some of your initial thoughts on the finished project?

VA2 It sounded really good. I didn't expect the rap in the beginning because all I knew that we were doing on that was a vocal track so it came as a really nice surprise but overall I think it worked really well. I wish there was virtually more rap in it. There could be a bit more at the end just to lead off or something but that's because I really like the rap.

Interviewer Could you give me a bit of information on what your approach to your role took?

VA2 Yeah, so the role was to provide vocals for this track that you were doing. The other thing that I was giving a lot of feedback on was, because you were using the Japanese language and I speak conversational Japanese, and you used a haiku for it, just to see if it would fit and it would flow. I think initially the melody line was phrased in the wrong way with the lyrics, which I mentioned and then we tweaked it around a bit. That was basically my role.

Interviewer [...] That was something you didn't initially expect to be doing.

VA2 Yeah, I didn't expect it. I thought it was just going to be standard English but I guess the theme for this song was you guys' imagination or whatever you visualise so whatever, I just go with the flow.

Interviewer Do you think the track benefited from being a collaboration?

VA2 I'd say it benefited because you were using a different language, I was able to guide you so that it sounded the most natural because if I didn't it would have sounded a bit jarring because it wouldn't have made sense in the language. So a native speaker would have thought it doesn't make sense. So, in that sense it benefited, but as a whole, because I was just giving vocals, it didn't necessarily need to be a collaboration, it was more like 'do you know if you can record vocals for me?' kind of thing.

Interviewer How would you describe your level of productivity on this project compared to if you were collaborating face to face?

VA2 I'd say if it was face to face I'd be a lot more connected to it. Because this was more remote, it was more like once it was sent off, that was my job done. Then I could just leave it to you guys to do your thing and do your creativity on it. [...] If it was face to face we could have definitely collaborated more on what kind of tone of voice do you want, how do you want me to sing it, because I think when I sent it, it was more what I would think it would be like, meanwhile if it was face to face you could be like 'do you know if you could do that vowel more like this, or don't do that vocal break in there'.

Interviewer So, in a way, would you say it made room for your artistic expression?

VA2 I would say yes but I feel like as a vocalist I should do what the producer of the song is imagining. So, I don't know. Maybe because I feel like it leaned less towards a collaboration and more towards me giving my voice for you to use. I wanted to give something that wasn't what I imagined but what you imagined. If I didn't have any criticism I guessed it worked but if you came back to say can you not do this and do this, I would have happily re-recorded. But, to be fair, that's on my part as well that I didn't ask for too much direction either.

Interviewer Do you think there were extra challenges because of the project being an online collaboration?

VA2 To be honest, there was no technological blockade on how we were doing things. If I'm honest, for a vocalist, this kind of remote working is actually standard now. So, if you don't have the technology to remotely record yourself and send it off nowadays, usually you're not going to get as much work, so it makes no difference to me. As long as I have a microphone, I'm good to go, because it's not as if I need to edit anything. I snipped the takes and sent it off to you but I didn't need to do any processing.

Interviewer It's almost like a profession that is perfectly suited to this sort of collaboration.

VA2 Yeah, a hundred percent. The only thing that would be some kind of blockade if the microphone wasn't the kind of sound that you're looking for or the person didn't know where to place it, but that comes with experience.

Interviewer Do you think there were certain aspects of the process that were made easier because of working remotely?

VA2 I'd say that once I sent it off, it was off. That made it easier. It wasn't as if if I bumped into you in the street and then I would be like 'how's it going' and that would put pressure on you, put pressure on me. It was more like, if you needed me then you'd message me, if not then here it is. It's a very clear cut.

Interviewer Did your working environment change at all because of restricted access to any facilities you would normally use?

VA2 No, because it's a simple task for us vocalists. Just a microphone and an interface, and a DAW.

Interviewer And I guess, like you said, that's almost something that is expected anyway.

VA2 Yeah. Unless the other person has the money to be like 'let's book out a studio and you come here this time and date'.

Interviewer How would you improve the online collaboration process if you were to do another project like this again?

VA2 I guess just more feedback on both parts, I'd say. That's the only thing I can think of. Yeah, just a bit more dialogue. Just a quick sentence to say that we're still working on this.

Interviewer What were you most and least satisfied with throughout the project?

VA2 I'm just really neutral on it, I don't have a most and least satisfied. I'm really satisfied with the final product because it sounds really good. Yeah, no qualms about it, it works. I'd say least satisfied just on feedback, but then it's also on both parts because I didn't ask about it either. But also, I don't want to pressure you guys because I know once you'd finished it, you would send it to me.