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Production Culture and Sonic Identity in Popular Music

A practice-based investigation into how the social, cultural and logistical conditions of songwriting and music production shape sonic identity.

Christopher Richard Johnson

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Est. 1841 | YORK ST JOHN UNIVERSITY

School of the Arts

January 2026

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Abstract

This research investigates the link between the social, cultural and logistical conditions involved in popular music production, and the resulting identity that can be perceived in the finished recordings. It is a practice-based study in which I explore the creative processes of the music producer through the practice of songwriting and producing records in a variety of contexts. The practice is understood and articulated through the theorising presented in this thesis, and throughout the study, practice and theory co-constitute one another through iterative cycles of production and reflection.

I propose that collaborators on a music production project experience an identifiable culture that is a composite impression of the social, environmental, technological and methodological factors involved, and that this production culture affects the sonic identity of the record and the messages it communicates. I explore the agency of the music producer in shaping this production culture, and how the tone of the collaboration is present in the character of the produced music. Through the creation of new songs, I evaluate a range of collaborative writing models and the effect the writing model has on the song's development, considering the cultural themes and social narratives the songs emerged from.

I draw on Bourdieu's concept of habitus (1977) to define a framework for interrogating the micro-social environments of collaborative music production projects, and for analysing the factors that construct and evolve the production culture. The research identifies and examines intersections between the musicology of production, sociology, perspectives on collaboration, theories of creativity, and the psychology of Self, to synthesise new models to better understand creative practice in music production.

The findings are articulated in the submitted creative artefacts and the theoretical ideas and models presented in this thesis.

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The Practice

This is a practice-based PhD where exploration is carried out through the practice of producing records. The practice is understood through the written theorising, which in turn informs the practice in a co-constitutive relationship. The submitted creative artefacts are the outcome of the practice and incorporate the findings from the study.

Albums

***Smoke Rainbows – Music Minds Matter* – Various Artists**

Submitted as a vinyl album, and as digital versions of the audio files, credits and artwork. Accompanying live performance videos of each track are included in the digital folder and are available here: https://tinyurl.com/y426fnc6

***The Unravelling* – Halo Blind**

Submitted as a vinyl album, and as digital versions of the audio files, lyrics, credits and artwork.

***Studio 2* – Mostly Autumn**

Submitted as a CD album, and digital versions of the audio files, credits and artwork.
Accompanying live performance videos of a selection of tracks are included in the digital folder.

Single Tracks on Albums

***The Undertow* – Mostly Autumn**

Submitted on the CD album *White Rainbow,* and as a digital file with the lyrics, credits and album art.

***The Diamond* and *Side Effect* – Mostly Autumn**

2 tracks submitted on the CD album *Graveyard Star: Limited Edition,* and as digital files with the lyrics, credits, and album art.

Video

Silver Glass: Reproduction

Submitted as a video file, with lyric sheet.
Also available on YouTube as *Silver Glass: A live solo version with Chris Johnson from Mostly Autumn / Halo Blind*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5ZmK7qwRyU]

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

There is something about music that connects on a deep human level. Something that tells us about ourselves and how we're feeling, somehow making sense of the world with messages that both validate who we are and give promise of who we could be. We detect sophisticated layers of meaning in the tones and textures of recorded music. Listening to great records in my formative years was a vital emotional and psychological experience that filled me with questions: “Who made this? How did they *do* that? How is it doing this to me?” and it set me on a journey of discovery that I’m still on. I was given a Yamaha PSS680 keyboard with small sized keys and worked out playing basic chords and melodies. It had drum pads along the bottom and you could record your patterns into it and play along. I quickly upgraded to a Yamaha PSR500 which had full size keys and let you programme bass lines, chord sequences and drum parts for different song sections all separately, and then trigger them at the right time as you perform the song. Then Cubase on an Amiga 500 gave me better programming and editing resolution. I saved up my earnings from a Saturday job in a record shop and bought a second-hand Tascam Porta One 4-track tape recorder and a Realistic PZM microphone from Tandy and I was away, creating Prince-esque songs all on my own in my bedroom instead of doing my homework. When I was old enough I joined a band and discovered the complex brew of emotions that working on music collaboratively involves. The dynamic created by the blend of personalities, cultural influences, politics, moods and egos of a group of young guys trying to express their experience of life in a collective noise was exhilarating and aggravating in equal measure. We’d rehearse as a full band once or twice a week, with whoever had written a song playing it to the rest of the band and then everyone gradually playing along and working out their parts. This was how it worked for all the bands I was in during those years, and you can hear that composite mess of culture, process, personality, technology and community in the tapes we made. It sounded like us, like the lives we were living in the York music scene. Doing this became part of my identity.

Then there was a shift. Technology facilitated easier ways for the songwriters to come up with parts themselves and send them to the band for each member to work on individually. We multi-tracked everything and so didn’t need to rehearse as often with the full band which fit better with busier lives, but the changed process changed the personality of the music and the sense of shared endeavour and ownership. I noticed how the altered approach in our practice was affecting the feeling of being involved and how the personality of the recorded music seemed to be affected by the same flavour. I was curious what effects other approaches to collaboration and music production

would have. What are we hearing in records that give them an identity, and how does that emerge from the combination of processes and people involved?

Rock mythology has many origin stories of classic albums, perpetuated in music journalism and interviews with artists, that highlight the conditions of production and how they manifest in the mood and identity of the record. The harrowing tale of Captain Beefheart's *Trout Mask Replica* (1969), produced in isolated, cultish conditions with an abused band on the brink of starvation that resulted in the abrasive, angular and disorientating album (Fricke, 2019); Bob Dylan hanging out with The Band and recording hundreds of songs in their basement by way of therapy following his motorbike accident, eventually released as the rickety, rootsy and energised record *The Basement Tapes* (1975)(Heylin, 2014); Led Zeppelin moving production from a studio to a cold and dank country house seeking a more creative atmosphere and coming up with *Led Zeppelin IV* (1971), making use of the ambience of the lobby for John Bonham's legendary drum tones (Rolli, 2021); Radiohead finding creativity and focus for *Ok Computer* (1997) experimenting with samplers, tape splicing and delay units in a 16th century mansion whose resident ghost kept them in a state of perpetual awakedness, and creating the sound of pre-millennial angst (Price, 2021)(Buxton, 2025).

The research presented here investigates that link between the social, cultural and logistical conditions involved in music production, and the resulting identity we perceive in the finished recordings. This is a practice-based study in which the main mode of investigation is through the production of records. The creative artefacts themselves incorporate the major insights from the research, and I use introspective study of my lived experience as the producer of the records to draw out theoretical ideas and models submitted in the chapters of this thesis.

By producing the records I examine how the logistics of the production sessions affect the produced music, from the details of how and where pre-production sessions are organised, to the physical arrangement of musicians on a studio floor during tracking. Drawing on Bourdieu's notion of habitus (1977) I explore how the character of a record is shaped by the micro-social environment of its production, who is involved, what are their relational dynamics and the codes and patterns of their collaboration. I investigate the influences of cultural factors on their creative contributions, from how the songs are written and developed, the cultural and biographical conditions from which they arise, how ideas are assessed and how audiences are considered, to the effects of recording in culturally significant spaces.

Aims and Research Questions

The aims of the study are therefore:

- to explore various models of collaboration in music production
- to gain deeper understanding of creative processes in music production
- to examine the link between the 'personality' of the production process, and the 'personality' that can be read in the final product

My research into these areas is influenced by writings on the musicology of production that explore the producer role, in particular Burgess (2013), Frith and Zargorski-Thomas (2012), and Massey (2000, 2009), in conjunction with researchers looking at how meaning is present in recorded music, such as Moore (2012) and Zak (2001). Investigating the creative processes of production led the research into the cultural and psychological areas of creativity, drawing on Csikszentmihalyi (2013), Amabile (1983, 2013, 2018), Barthes (1977) and Rhodes (1961) and how such theories are applied in the musicology of production by McIntyre (2009, 2012, 2019), Bennett (2011) and Thompson (2019). The research necessitates introspective observation of creative practice and its entanglement with authorship, and therefore engages with literature on songwriting by Bennett (2013, 2011, 2012) as well as philosophical and sociological approaches to identity and Self (Heidegger, 1967; Goffman, 1959). Patterns of collaboration proposed by John-Steiner (2000) are considered in the context of social structuring and its effects on identity, drawing on Bourdieu and the notion of habitus (1977).

The initial research revealed space within the musicology of production for an introspective autoethnographic study where these complex areas and their intersections can be considered in the field of one mind as it goes about its creative practise. Writing about collaboration in music technology in 2004, Dillon notes:

> "Since the late 1970s various researchers have investigated how the 'qualities of the environment' or situational factors that arise through social, cultural, institutional and environmental discourses are interpreted and in turn influence our definition of creativity and the creative process. A number of music researchers also stress the need for a greater understanding of the complex socio-cultural underpinnings of musical creativity in collaborative settings. Despite this recognition, there remains a lack of understanding about how meaning and context are created when composing collaboratively."
>
> Dillon (2004, p.146)

Since Dillon's writing the increase of autoethnography as a respected form of inquiry opens a gap for a reflective study in this area (Edwards, 2021). Bennett (2012, 2013) offers insights specific to creative processes of songwriting but there is still little investigation of this nature into the full production journey. The research questions that this practice-based approach addresses are:

1. How do different approaches to collaboration in music production affect the creative contributions of the participants and the final product?
2. How can the social and logistical arrangements of a production be considered to deliberately shape the aesthetic of the final product?
3. How do creativity, Self, and artistic persona interact through the processes and cultural domains of music production?

Methodology

The aims and research questions focus on the 'feeling' of being involved in a production process – the composite psychological and emotional rendering of the people involved, how they collaborate, the environments and processes, and the aims and themes of the project. The methodology therefore must allow opportunity for deep immersion in all creative, social, technological and cultural aspects of the production so that the lived experience can be analysed against existing literature allowing theories and models for understanding production practice to emerge. Ellis, Adams and Bochner define autoethnography as "an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse personal experience in order to understand cultural experience" (2011, p.273). Research that uses this approach "displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" (Ellis and Bochner, 2000 p.739) which is appropriate in addressing the research questions for this study.

I use an autoethnographic approach with my position as a songwriter, musician and producer embedded in professional practice. By engaging in the writing and production of records in different social, cultural and physical environments the lived experience of the creative producer can be observed. This provides deep psychological access to creative processes, with mindful observations of thoughts and emotions and the factors affecting them. Simultaneously and retrospectively, I analyse the experiences using research literature from multiple fields whilst considering the effects on the resulting records. This forms an iterative cycle in which practice and reflection co-constitute one another. I examine theories that emerge from these analyses and propose models to address

the research questions and illuminate areas of music production practice that are currently underexplored.

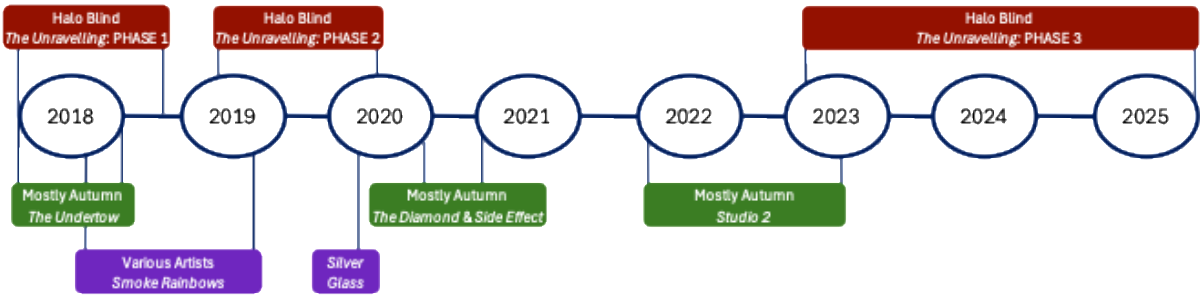


Figure 1.1 A Chronology of the Practice.

A timeline of when the projects were in production and the order they were done in.

This practice-based PhD leverages my professional production work as a basis for reflective inquiry, synthesising models and frameworks to analyse practice, guide subsequent projects, and evaluate distinct collaborative and production workflows. Summarising the journey of the practice is useful to demonstrate how the methodology developed, how the practice led to the theorising, and how the various models from the study emerged and were refined through iterative cycles of practice and reflection. The earlier projects identified various factors in response to the research questions that were subsequently incorporated into analytical frameworks that could then be applied and developed through the later projects.

The project that runs as a continual thread through this study is my work with Halo Blind that produced the album *The Unravelling* (Chapter 7). The project became overextended as a result of being a core vehicle for my research, and by changes in the band members' circumstances, and by the disruption brought by COVID-19. It is therefore split into 3 distinct phases in the chronology. The starting point was a sense that Halo Blind might be able to produce more interesting material, with more motivated band members, if the songwriting was more collaborative. I wanted to investigate the concept of persona in produced music, and disrupt the band's previous writing model to create a better sense of 'us' in the final product. Therefore, the research practice began with Halo Blind Phase 1, the initial development of and trialling of various models of collaborative songwriting. This would begin to address the first research question of how different approaches to collaboration affect participants and the final product, and focus attention on the interactions between creativity, Self, and persona as posed in the third research question. Participating in the trials, analysing the outputs, and reflecting on my own creative responses produced rich data and insights that informed the

development of the Halo Blind project into Phase 2, and contributed to subsequent Mostly Autumn projects which form much of the practice in this research (Chapter 6). The evolution of persona was considered in the context of the artist's cultural context, and their relationship with the audience and their previous works. This is expressed in the Production Cycle of a Producer-Artist (Figure 4.2) and the research incorporated philosophical approaches to understanding the construction Self and its intersection with creativity and authorship (Heidegger 1967; Escudero 2014; Foucault 1969) which were drawn into subsequent projects.

The interplay between creativity, process, and Self was further explored during the production of *The Undertow* for Mostly Autumn. This expanded the study by interrogating what happens to artistic persona and expression of Self through the songwriting process when writing material from within an Other's perspective. Observing how decisions were made by the solo songwriter in this context contributed to the DAW-Based Track Writing Engine (Figure 4.1) and provided deep reflections to do with the importance of shared social contexts, and the influence of internalised Others and wider cultural domains on the creative process.

The results of the Halo Blind Phase 1 trials and *The Undertow* were considered through social and cultural perspectives, incorporating ideas of how doxa and social capital can affect collaboration, and how the logistical arrangement of a production affects creative output. This provoked the second research question: how can the social and logistical arrangements of a production be considered to deliberately shape the aesthetic of the final product? The findings from the practice so far were incorporated into a draft map of the Production Habitus (figure 2.1), which catalogues the ecosystem of multiple elements effecting creativity in music production in a single model. It draws on Bourdieu's notions of habitus (1977) and theories of creativity (Ambile 1983; Csikszentmihalyi 2013; Barthes 1977; Rhodes 1961).

The emerging Production Habitus led the research to consider the contributions of producers who have no composer, performer, or sound engineer role in a project, what Burgess has called the 'enablative' producer type (2013), and how they can shape sonic identity from this hands-off position. I explored the 'process' and the 'product' as interrelated concepts and research focussed on how a production process can be deliberately 'authored' by a producer to be then 'read' by the participants to produce an intended aesthetic outcome. This was interrogated through the *Smoke Rainbows* album project where I undertook the producer responsibility but had no musical role in writing or performing the material (Chapter 3). By restricting the producer role in this way, the

second research question could be meaningfully addressed. The sonic identity was shaped through careful thematic development, clarity of the social and aesthetic aims, leveraging of cultural capital, consideration of motivation and ownership, designing the day-to-day logistics, and the tone and format of communications. Through this project, the Production Habitus model became more solidified, and the Consolidation Points Framework (figure 2.2) was created as a tool to demonstrate where the enablative producer can influence aesthetic and sonic identity, and for drawing attention to aspects of a production process that may otherwise have gone unconsidered.

Findings from the Halo Blind Phase 1 collaborative writing trials, as well as new understanding gained through the *Smoke Rainbows* project and the developing Production Habitus model, demonstrated complex interactions between creativity, motivation, and the social, cultural and logistical conditions of a production. Following this, Phase 2 of the Halo Blind project involved recording sessions at Abbey Road studios, leveraging the cultural capital of the studio and the short recording window to motivate the band's creativity to develop lean, well-rehearsed arrangements in preproduction. This phase shifted the collaborative focus from songwriting to track writing, Zak's 3rd layer of composition (2001). The findings developed Production Habitus further with more focus on microsocial cohesion and the health of the participants.

The study then turned more psychologically introspective during the period of the COVID-19 lockdowns which enforced massive logistical restrictions to musical collaboration. Following from *The Undertow* and how it was written from within an Other's perspective, ideas of collaboration with internalised Others and their intersecting creative systems were considered in the solo project, *Silver Glass: Re-production* (Chapter 5). Reflections on this used the structures of a holarchy of nested creative systems, as suggested by McIntyre (2019), to interrogate flows of influence on the psyche of the artist at work, and tested the how Production Habitus can be applied in small, solo projects. This structured approach to reflecting on the project facilitated deep interrogation of psychological creative processes to address the research questions.

Producing *The Diamond* and *Side Effect* for Mostly Autumn (Chapter 6) investigated how patterns of familial collaboration (John-Steiner 2000) affect the social micro-culture and how this in turn has an impact on motivation and creativity, and these observations enriched the Production Habitus conception further. These projects contribute significantly to the study's findings in answer to the first research question, how do different approaches to collaboration affect the creative contributions of the participants and the final product? The Consolidation Points Framework was

now a helpful analytical tool in identifying and evaluating aspects of the production process that were less successful.

As a more developed model now, Production Habitus was applied as a planning tool in the production of *Studio 2* for Mostly Autumn (Chapter 6). This used the findings from the previous projects to design a logistical and social production process that would embed specific aesthetic qualities into the product, with consideration of the band's usual production processes and flows of capital within the collaboration. Production Habitus was considered in everything from initiating the project, planning the pre-production and formulating the communications, to conducting the recording sessions, mixing, and collaborating with the mastering engineer. The Production Cycle of a Producer Artist model provided a framework to consider how the project could fit into the cultural and career context of the band, and the DAW-Based Track Writing Engine offered a perspective for examining creative decision making during the post-production stage. This approach of utilising the theoretical models in the practice and the reflection facilitated in-depth exploration of creativity, collaboration, persona, and how the social and logistical arrangements can be considered to deliberately shape the aesthetic of the final product, as a developed response to the research questions.

Halo Blind Phase 3 (Chapter 7) demonstrated the challenges to creative continuity, the artistic Self, motivation, collaborative cohesion and sonic identity when a Production Habitus is stretched and adapted over several years. Conducting the practice and driving this extended project to completion underlined the importance of committing to a shared product vision in the earlier phases, which was overlooked during the Phase 1 collaborative writing trials. It increased the emphasis of ritual on the social microculture of bands, and demonstrated the importance of momentum on creativity. The completed project could now be read through all the theoretical models in addressing the research questions. Synthesising outcomes from the Phase 1 collaborative writing trials and the resulting sonic identity of the completed album produced a spectrum of track-writing models, plotting collaborative openness directly against producer-songwriter control.

Significance

The research addresses a gap in the literature of the musicology of production and collaboration theory and offers insight into how meaning is collaboratively constructed in produced music. By way of demonstration some of the research conducted for this PhD has been published as solely authored chapters in the book *Coproduction: Collaboration in Music Production* (Wilsmore and

Johnson, 2022) as part of Routledge's *Perspectives on Music Production* book series. The research contributes to the literature on co-writing records, synthesising theory from Bennett (2011), Zak (2001), McIntyre (2009, 2012, 2019) and Csikszentmihalyi (2013) and offering multi-layered insights into the collaborative creative processes in the cultural field of music production. The models proposed in the research have practical applications in collaborative creative settings, providing tools and techniques for planning production processes and an analytical lens for reviewing them. The models also have substantial pedagogical value, supporting the teaching of collaborative production and providing analytical frameworks that illuminate critical aspects of the process, social and cultural environments that can otherwise be overlooked.

The autoethnographic approach focuses attention on psychological and socially derived constructs of identity and Self, and the emerging theory is developed around the experience of being involved in a collaborative process. Therefore, the research has relevance in fields where the intended outcome is not focussed on the produced artefact, but on the positive impact on the wellbeing of people engaged in the process, for example in community building projects, mental health support, and social integration initiatives.

Chapter Overview

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on creativity and collaboration in order to consider them in a music production context. I draw on theories of creativity from cultural, social and psychological perspectives and consider the effect of the environment and how participants' individual creative spheres interact in collaborative projects. I adopt Bourdieu's conceptualization of habitus (1977) as a way of understanding the sociological effects of groups of people collaborating on a creative project, and use notions of doxa, capital and fields to explore behaviours and creative contributions in the social micro-cultures of production projects. I propose a model that I term Production Habitus (figure 2.1) to map out factors that affect creative contributions and suggest they can be assembled with an element of control by the producer in pursuit of a deliberate aesthetic. Elements of Production Habitus are presented in an alternative format in the Consolidation Points Framework (figure 2.2) which focuses analytical attention to points in a production process where multiple elements are combined into singular.

The concepts explored theoretically in Chapter 2 are investigated practically in a large scale, multi-stake holder project, the production of the album *Smoke Rainbows – Music Minds Matter* (2019) which forms part of the practical submission of this PhD. Chapter 3 is a detailed analysis of this

project from my perspective as producer. The project involved 12 acts recording live performances in Abbey Road in aid of the charity Help Musicians UK. The case study follows how the factors that make up the Production Habitus were considered in production planning and execution, and how a production culture was developed and maintained to guide the project from initial idea to completed product. I was not involved in the songwriting or musical arrangements for this project which provides greater interrogative focus on the influence of the facilitative and enablative producer types, as defined by Burgess (2013).

Chapter 4 focuses on the artistic persona of a producer-artist and how it is developed through the process of writing and producing songs. I examine song writing and production for how and where meaning and track identity are created, considering the influence of internalised collaborators, the project themes, and the character of the production process. I propose a cyclical model to outline the psychological and creative processes of contemporary songwriting practice (see figure 4.1: The DAW-based Track-Writing Engine). I explore philosophical notions of Self and the intersection with authorship to consider how the producer-artist curates a persona from a multiplicity of Selves to inhabit their productions. The evolution of an artistic persona across multiple projects is expressed as The Production Cycle of a Producer-Artist (figure 4.2) to scrutinise where intended messages are formed and evaluated.

The concepts in chapter 4 are investigated through a case-study in Chapter 5. It is a video of a single song, *Silver Glass* (Johnson, 2020), produced in the lockdown conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic. The chapter focuses on collaboration with internalised Others in an otherwise solo project, with a Production Habitus deliberately constructed to facilitate specific creative and aesthetic aims. I use McIntyre's (2019) conception of interconnected creative systems to articulate a holonic structure that is then used as a framework to interrogate the cultural and social influences affecting the solo producer at work.

Chapter 6 presents several autoethnographic studies of my work as songwriter, musician and producer in the band Mostly Autumn*,* reading the practice through the analytical frameworks developed in earlier chapters*.* It is split into three sections. Part One focuses on the writing and production of the track *The Undertow* (Johnson, 2018) with specific observations on the effects of the social narrative backdrop and thematic direction of the album it was produced for. Part Two considers the tracks *The Diamond* and *Side Effect* (Johnson, 2021) and how they emerged from the cultural conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic. Analysis focuses on the dynamics of familial

collaboration patterns (John-Steiner, 2000) and the logistics of music production practice, and how Covid 19 affected them. Part Three examines the production of the entire album *Studio 2* (Mostly Autumn, 2023), in which the Production Habitus model is further refined and applied as a planning tool. This album represents a significant shift in the way Mostly Autumn usually operates, and the social effects are studied with reference to Bourdieu (1977). The cultural capital of Abbey Road is a significant actor in the production planning, affecting the motivations of the band, the aesthetic direction, pre-production activities and creative contributions.

Chapter 7 follows the production of *The Unravelling* (Halo Blind, 2026). Numerous models of collaborative songwriting are developed, practiced and analysed with reference to cultural fields, creative motivation, and the development of the band persona. The effects of the pre-production activities on the dynamics of the band are scrutinised revealing Turner's (1974) concept of ritual camaraderie as a significant factor that had not been adequately considered in earlier projects. The writing and production processes are evaluated through the models from earlier chapters, with the physiological, psychological and emotional states of the musicians having greater prominence in the recording sessions.

Chapter 8 is the conclusion to the study, and offers a summary of the practice, identifying how the various models of the study emerged and developed. The practice is evaluated for its contributions to cultural domains of the UK music industry and progressive rock, and the theoretical models developed through the practice are shown to expand several areas of theory within the musicology of production, pedagogy and creative collaboration.

CHAPTER 2: Creativity, Collaboration, and the Production Habitus

> "Social interaction involves two or more people talking or in exchange, cooperation adds the constraint of shared purpose, and working together often provides coordination of effort. But collaboration involves an intricate blending of skills, temperaments, effort and sometimes personalities to realise a shared vision of something new and useful."
>
> Moran and John-Steiner (p.11, 2004)

Overview

This chapter considers how the creativity of people involved in a music production project is affected by the music production process. It investigates how different models of collaboration and different approaches to the technology and environments involved in the production affect the aesthetic of the final produced work. In particular it examines the links between the *personality* of the production process, and the *personality* of the final product. In attributing personality to a production process, we are concerned with the array of social, environmental, collaborative and technological factors that combine to lend a project a particular impression, or vibe, that is experienced by its collaborators whenever they are working on it, or even whenever they engage with it, however briefly between sessions. This project culture contains its own doxa, its own set of rules, codes, expectations, relationships and methods (its habitus) that are generated by the collaborators and managed by the producer. I argue that it profoundly influences the creative contributions of the collaborators, from motivating positive attitudes to the project to nurturing creative performances in the desired aesthetic direction. I investigate how the vibe of this project culture, or the *personality* of the production process, is present in the vibe, or *personality*, of the final product.

As much as production practice centred on the DAW allows a solo creator a great degree of artistic control, there remains the creative need for collaboration on musical productions in many projects. If a producer-songwriter is to nurture their intended project themes and meaning through the production process, they must be able to communicate it effectively to their collaborators, explicitly through language or implicitly through the strength of meaning carried in their own contributions. For example, in considering the choices made by a mix engineer, Marrington discusses their responsibility to identify and align with the intentions of the artist and so bring their own creative and technical skill in delivering that artistic vision (2016, pp.199-210). Therefore, in managing the contributions of collaborators, questions of artistic, social and commercial best practice are

presented for the producer. For instance, if a musical performance is present in a recorded product then it is representing a musician's creative contribution. However, if the part being played was composed by the producer-songwriter to be performed by the musician and then edited and manipulated in the production process, the creative personality of the musician being represented is affected, and so too their motivation to take part. The social context of many bands traditionally holds that the musicians each compose their own parts, and their performance of the part is imbued with their authentic personality and contains their individual statement of meaning that contributes to the overall perception of the track. If this process is hampered by the mediation of the technology, the sonic tinkering of an engineer, or the requirements of a producer-songwriter who has written all the parts themselves and views them as essential components of the track, then what happens to the value of the musician's contribution? How do these considerations in the production process affect the character of the finished product? In such a scenario, the producer, enabled by the DAW to assemble all such elements alone, must be careful to leave space for the contributions of their fellow collaborators or face them losing interest in a project that does not represent their individual artistry adequately enough, and being limited by the lack of input from other creative individuals. The production model, therefore, must be carefully constructed to consider and enhance the defined artistic persona of the band; the individual creative Self of each collaborator; the artistic temperaments of the band members; the motivation of each collaborator; the expectations of the intended audience; and the meaning of each song.

In studying creativity in music production, McIntyre adopts Csikszentmihalyi's systems model of creativity (McIntyre 2009, 2012, 2019). This sees creativity happening in the interrelations of a three-component cyclical system consisting of a cultural body (the domain), a social group (the field), and an individual. The domain is a body of knowledge containing a set of rules, codes, expectations and requirements particular to that domain, for example the domain of pop music. The individual – let's say a pop songwriter - having been steeped in this domain, has learnt its rules so well that they become second nature. They have developed a 'feel for the game' and know instinctively where the middle eight should come. This individual is then able to use their domain skills and knowledge to create something novel, like a new song, and offer it to the field, a social group who hold the knowledge of the domain and act as its gatekeepers - for example, pop fans, commentators, record labels and music journalists. If the field accepts the individual's new work as 'a new pop song' with something fresh about it, it enters the pop domain which is then altered by the novel addition, and in this way the domain is able to grow and evolve (Csikszentmihalyi 2013, pp.28-29). There is an interesting point about limitation here. In examining the relationship between entrenched domain

knowledge, a social field and the prospective creative individual, Kerrigan notes that "an individual's ability to make creative choices is both enabled and constrained by the structures they engage with" (2013, p.144). In our pop song example, the composition and production choices available to the artist are limited by the underlying aim of having the resulting music accepted by the pop audiences and commentators. Simultaneously, such external defining of boundaries can be necessary to enable a creative response for the producer-artist, even when working alone with their internalised collaborators (see Chapter 5).

However, a genre-based illustration of the systems model is overly simplistic when scrutinizing collaborative creative contributions of ensemble projects, and when studying the complex social, environmental, musical, technological and psychological factors involved in music production. McIntyre clarifies that rather than a generalised system such as the one described above we are instead dealing with a complex network of interconnected systems:

> From this perspective there is an engagement with a deeply multifactorial, non-linear, interconnected and scalable set of systems which extend vertically, up and down, system within system within system. These are also deeply and horizontally interconnected with related domains and fields.
>
> McIntyre (2019, p.70)

He draws on the ideas of Arthur Koestler (1975 [1967]) to express these interconnected systems as *holons*, identifiable whole parts with their own unique identities that are themselves made up of sub-ordinate other parts, and that in turn simultaneously constitute part of a larger whole (Edwards, 2013). This perspective of proximate nested systems creating a complex network of inter-related domains and fields is more useful to us in examining the collaborative creative process of music production. It views creativity not as the result of a single system but of many inter-related and intersecting ones. It presents the discipline-specific skills, knowledge, instincts and aesthetics of each collaborator and their influences as distinct wholes that are brought together for the purposes of the project, and just as a mix engineer applies aesthetic judgement to the manner in which they bring together individual audio tracks, so a producer must apply considered artistic judgement to the manner in which they bring together the collaborators and the creative systems, or holons, that come with them.

It is a goal of this chapter to investigate how this deliberate assembling of these constituent whole

parts and their accompanying systems is performed by the producer as they select the personnel and organize the conditions for their production.

Bourdieu and Habitus

To examine the relationships between the skills, habits and dispositions of each collaborator, and the culture that is set up by the producer for a project, we can use Bourdieu's conceptualization of habitus (1977), briefly summarized by Costa & Murphy:

> Habitus is socialised subjectivity that agents embody both individually and collectively, through the interrelationships they establish in the social spaces to which they belong. Habitus encapsulates social action through dispositions and can be broadly explained as the evolving process through which individuals act, think, perceive and approach the world and their role in it. Habitus thus denotes a way of being.
>
> Costa & Murphy (2015, p.7).

Bourdieu proposes habitus as a model for understanding society, a construction of how society in all its structuring rules and prevailing habits operates between people. It refers to "the set of dispositions and meanings that people gain through socialization" (Gaventa 2003, p. 8). It is in the relationship between social structures and the tendencies of behaviour and thought that exist within them:

> [Habitus…] expresses first the result of an organizing action, with a meaning close to that of words such as structure; it also designates a way of being, a habitual state (especially of the body) and, in particular, a predisposition, tendency, propensity, or inclination.
>
> Bourdieu (1977, p.214).

As such we can understand habitus in terms of the relationships between a person, the rules of the social environment they inhabit, and others operating in the same group. The shared actions, conceptions and world-view that emerge from the rules of the social structure have an effect on emerging dispositions of those in the group (Smith, 2020). As a leading interpreter of Bourdieu's work, Wacquant describes the concept as a mediating construct, that is "the ways in which the socio-symbolic structures of society become deposited inside persons in the form of lasting *dispositions,* or trained capacities and patterned propensities to think, feel and act in determinate ways" (Wacquant 2016, p.65).

Our music producer, in drawing together the collaborators and organising the spaces and resources of a project is in effect arranging a micro-socio environment where the effects of habitus can be considered to shape the aesthetic of the project. Although Wacquant makes it clear that habitus "is not a self-sufficient mechanism for the generation of action" (2016, p.64), the producer can have an awareness of the existing effects of habitus in their collaborators and make their production decisions accordingly, and creatively.

Wacquant identifies and examines two types of habitus. Primary habitus is to do with early childhood experiences and the social habits, knowledge and understanding that is acquired through immersion in familial environments with no deliberate effort of learning. A secondary habitus on the other hand, is "any system of transposable schemata that becomes grafted subsequently, through specialised pedagogical labor that is typically shortened in duration, accelerated in pace, and explicit in organization" (Wacquant 2014, p.7), such as the habitus acquired through studying and practicing music technology. This secondary habitus will be crucial to the music producer as they selectively assemble their actors.

For Bourdieu, a core concept of habitus is the capital that exists in social resources, be it material, cultural, social or symbolic capital (Navarro 2006). A resource that has a social power value or status, functions as capital. If it has a cultural or symbolic significance that affects the social structures and the way people operate around it, it has capital. For example, Abbey Road Studios has a cultural capital that affects the behaviours of musicians that record there. A well-connected music manager could have social capital due to the network of influential people they have access to. Social and cultural capital are significant in a competitive society as non-economic forms of power, and for Bourdieu the struggle for power is central to all social arrangements (Navarro 2006). Therefore, a music producer with an awareness of the capital inherent in their collaborators, and in the objects, institutions and physical environments brought into a project, can have an influence in shaping behaviours and creative responses. This includes the channels selected for communicating messages within the project, as some messages benefit from the weight they acquire when communicated on an emailed document with a well formatted header due to the inherent symbolic capital. Other messages will be better communicated with the less formal, lighter touch of a personal text message, where the deliberate absence of certain types of capital communicates its own meaning that extends the words in the message.

Capital and how it is awarded value and distributed in a social group is an important structuring

element in defining one grouping as distinct from another. This is another part of Bourdieu's theory, the idea of 'fields.' These are the social and institutional arenas in which people compete for capital, and where they exhibit the dispositions of their habitus (Gaventa 2003, p.9). For example, a successful music producer may have cultural and social capital in the field of the music industry, earned through a catalogue of respected work and the network of contacts they have built up throughout their career. They would hold a power that other members of the field, other people working in music production, would recognise and respond to. The same person would be unlikely to hold the same capital when operating in a neighbouring cultural field, say that of television production, and so the limits of the capital, or power distribution, can define the limits of the field.

Related to habitus is Bourdieu's understanding of 'doxa' which refers to taken-for-granted norms and beliefs, or 'common sense.' As a set of unchallenged assumptions, doxa is both a source and a manifestation of power (Gaventa 2003). It happens when the limits of power are constantly encountered through life and so become social divisions, ingrained patterns of thought that inscribe as a social order, "a 'sense of one's place' which leads one to exclude oneself from the goods, persons, places and so forth from which one is excluded" (Bourdieu, 2010, p.473). For Bourdieu, doxa is "an adherence to relations of order which, because they structure inseparably both the real world and the thought world, are accepted as self-evident". If habitus is a construction of how society operates and the way people operate within it, doxa can help us understand why.

In his research into creativity and popular music McIntyre (2009, 2019) uses 'habitus' in relation to the specialist internalised habits and knowledge an individual has acquired, much like Wacquant's secondary habitus, and the opportunities to apply them in a 'field of works.' He presents it as a similar concept to the individual being immersed in the body of knowledge of a domain in Csikszentmihalyi's systems model. However, the notion of a short-lived secondary habitus is also useful to us at a micro level in conceptualising the production culture that emerges for a single specific project, and that the producer attempts to shape. The overall creative social space generated in which participants become aware of 'ways of doing things' that pervade the project and in a large sense, define it. In using habitus and Bourdieu's related concepts of capital, fields and doxa as tools to explore the production culture of a project we can scrutinise the multiple agents, systems and holons at play, "…taking into consideration its complexity as a container of practices imbued in the objective and subjective contexts of the phenomenon under study" (Costa & Murphy 2015, p.8).

The Production Habitus

I propose the term Production Habitus to refer to the composite creation of the producer when they 'write' the logistical production process; assemble the team with their internalised domains, doxa and inherent capital; stimulate creative motivation in the participants; form and manage the social environment and micro culture surrounding a project; and select, design or manipulate the physical production spaces. It involves a conceptual bubble that surrounds a project; notions and ideas that permeate it; capital and habitus that are expressed within it; emotions that the participants feel whenever they interact with it. It affects their motivations, cognitive processes, behaviours and contributions in a way that the essence of the Production Habitus becomes embedded in the final product. It is useful here to consider John-Steiner's integrative type of collaboration (2000, p.213), which describes an intense, short lived form of collaboration based on commitment to a shared vision. In many fields the social rules and cognitive processes attached to these collaborations emerge organically. The notion of a Production Habitus in music production describes the deliberate shaping of these factors to create an aesthetic quality to the collaborative project that becomes embedded in the resulting product. For Burgess' (2013) Enablative or Consultative producer types who are characterized by a hands-off role when it comes to the composition, performance or engineering of a project, and who are more concerned with "…sourcing the talent and material and creating conditions in which a successful recording could take place" (Burgess 2013 p.15), the creation and maintenance of the Production Habitus could be their primary, and crucial creative contribution.

However, if the producer wishes to create the best conditions for creative contributions within the Production Habitus of a project, they will need to consider wider theories of creativity beyond the individuals involved, their nested creative systems, and the effects of capital and doxa.

Considering Conditions for Creative Contributions

In researching the social psychology of creativity, Amabile has suggested other key influences of creativity focusing on external events from the social environment, personality traits, generic creative skills that can be taught, and factors that affect an individual's motivation in approaching an activity. She proposed the Intrinsic Motivation Principle of Creativity (1983, 2013, 2018) which states that "the intrinsically motivated state is conducive to creativity whereas the extrinsically motivated state is detrimental" (Amabile & Pillemer 2012, p.7). Across multiple studies it was observed that participants were more creative when motivated by the act of doing the task itself. They would derive value in finding it satisfying, stimulating, fun, or interesting and this would enhance creativity.

Lower levels of creativity were found when participants were more extrinsically motivated, for example by payment, the promise of reward, the prospect of evaluation, or the awareness of surveillance. These findings suggest a detrimental effect of certain types of capital on creativity. If the motivation is based on material capital in the form of monetary reward, or the cultural or symbolic capital that may be transferred or awarded by another in the form of praise or evaluation, then creativity suffers. This implies a complex relationship between capital and creativity. On one hand, it suggests that people are more creative when given freedom from the daily struggles of competing for capital in Bourdieu's fields, that they can express themselves better outside the doxa of their usual habitus. On the other hand, the acquisition of cultural capital by the validation of one's works by respected others is a core motivation of the musical artist presenting work to the field for consideration, such as in the systems model.

This relationship between intrinsic motivation and creativity has been further investigated by Liu, Chen and Yao (2011, in Amabile & Pillemer 2012) who found harmonious passion to be a more effective motivational mechanism. Harmonious passion, as proposed by Vallerand *et al* (2003), refers to the internalisation of an activity that a person enjoys doing and feels is important to their life to the point where it becomes part of their core identity, fulfilling a basic human need for autonomy and freedom of choice. An example would be a person choosing to spend their time regularly playing the guitar in the pursuit of musical excellence, and so having 'guitar player' become part of their core self. Liu, Chen and Yao (2011) found that harmonious passion, as a stable form of intrinsic motivation, can be a strong predictor of creativity. Therefore, in arranging the logistical structures and personnel in a music production scenario, the producer seeking creative contributions from the project participants should prioritise engaging them in activities in which each participant is personally intrinsically motivated and making space for their harmonious passions to be practiced.

Amabile integrated the principle of intrinsic motivation into the Componential Theory of Creativity (1983, 1996, 2013, 2018). This model describes four components that are required for a person to produce creative work. Three of these are psychological components of the individual. The first is the domain specific skills and expertise of the individual, such as their technical aptitude in the particular domain. The second refers to their creativity-relevant processes, which include personality traits and cognitive approaches to problem solving, flexible thinking styles and open-mindedness. Some of these skills and related techniques can be taught and developed, such as mind mapping, reverse thinking and brainstorming (Smith 1998). The third psychological component is intrinsic task motivation, as discussed above. The fourth component, external from the psychological components,

is the social environment which we can consider through our examination of habitus. Amabile (1983) cites accounts of how seemingly mundane events or details in the immediate social environment have had detrimental effects on creative work: “For example, in a letter to a friend, Tchaikovsky (1906) described the devasting effect that simple interruptions could have on his work” (Amabile 1983, p.357). Similarly, Einstein reports becoming de-motivated by the structures of formal education:

> ...the fact that one had to cram all this stuff into one's mind for the examinations, whether one liked it or not. This coercion had such a deterring effect upon me that, after I had passed the final examination, I found the consideration of any scientific problem distasteful for an entire year.
>
> Einstein 1949, p.17 (cited in Amabile 1983, p.357).

Research into the social environment has focused largely on the social structures of organisations and their effect on the motivation of employees. This social environment includes those extrinsic motivators that have been shown to have a detrimental effect on creativity, such as evaluation, reward, praise and surveillance. It can also include factors that stimulate intrinsic motivation and lead to more creativity, such as positive challenges, diverse collaborations, and open work structures that promote freedom in carrying out tasks (Amabile & Pillemer, 2012).

The Componential Theory of Creativity provides a useful framework for examining how a music producer makes creative choices about the team they assemble and the social environment they create around a project through the messages implied by their communications, behaviours, their own creative contributions, and their approaches to leadership of the project. In a general summing up of the theory Amabile suggests that “creativity should be highest when an intrinsically motivated person with high domain expertise and high skill in creative thinking works in an environment high in support for creativity” (2013, p.136).

However, the theory does not address the influence of other environmental factors that are important in music production, such as the physical spaces that form a major part of the social, psychological and sonic tone of a project. Partly in response to the Componential Model’s limitations in regard to the physical environment, McCoy & Evans (2002) investigated the influence of specific interior design elements on creativity. The study identified five characteristics of the physical environment that predicted greater creativity: “(a) complexity of visual detail, (b) view of natural

environment, (c) use of natural materials, (d) with fewer cool colors used, and (e) less use of manufactured or composite surface materials" (McCoy & Evans 2002, p.409). These findings are interesting when considering the design aesthetic and lighting tendencies of recording studios, especially where the choice of studio, or indeed the design of a temporary production space, is a critical creative contribution of the music producer.

We will also need to focus more on the aural environment, particularly as experienced by musicians as they perform. For example, Williams (2012, pp.113-127) notes how the aural space of a headphone mix has a particular effect on how intimately musicians respond to each other during performances, and how the studio environment can set up a sort of hierarchy of monitor mixes with individual musicians' mixes becoming subordinate to the engineer's control room mix. In the habitus of this common recording studio situation the engineer has an unspoken cultural capital that gives them power in their studio field, and some of this capital is transferred to the control room mix. The musicians have less capital whilst in this specific studio field, and so do their headphone mixes. Such social power lines can have an effect on the performer and therefore the performance, and it's not uncommon for trust issues to develop when a musician asks for a change to their mix, the engineer obliges and the musician hears no change, or worse an exaggerated change that they interpret as frustration on the engineer's part. Developments in studio connectivity have addressed this situation, with systems such as the M-48 Roland mixer allowing each musician to control their own mix directly, disrupting the arrangement of capital in the studio during the tracking phase of a session. Affording some control to the musicians is giving them more space for their intrinsic motivation to activate. They can quite privately, even self-indulgently, construct their own aural world relatively free from the dominance of the engineer, spending more time in their mental creative zone by crafting their own experience. This will affect their performance.

Similarly, the way the studio space is set up to allow sightlines, or not, between participants during takes will have an influence. Musicians will perform together differently if they can see each other, for example a bassist and drummer rhythm section will be able to predict and follow accents and nuances in each other's performance if they can see the heft and swing of each other's bodies as they play. A vocalist may emote more expressively if they are aware of a small supportive control room audience, or conversely may need to feel completely unobserved in order to twist themselves in the right shapes and movements to produce the desired emotional performance. Such elements need to be considered for their effect on creativity and musical performance.

Moreover, small but potentially significant elements of the social environment can fall beneath the Componential Model of Creativity's level of scrutiny, such as Tchaikovsky's unwelcome interruptions, or the effect that having a large bowl of fresh fruit in the control room of a studio has on the musicians booked for the session. Also, by focusing on the cognitive processes of the individual the theory does not consider their physiological state which is something the producer can have an effect on. Working hours, accommodation, meals, break times and supplies of refreshments are all within the control of the producer and will affect participants' energy and stress levels, as well as their general health, which is likely to affect creativity and performance.

In an earlier analysis of the study of creativity Rhodes (1961) observed an overemphasis on the creative individual and suggested an alternative multi-dimensional approach. The four P's framework categorizes creativity and directs analysis toward the *person*, *process*, *press* and *product* involved in a creative endeavour, and how creativity occurs at the confluence of these aspects (Garcês *et al* 2016). The *person* category includes the personality, attitudes, intellect and skills of the individual. The *process* is about the stages involved in creativity, including the thinking process and the progression of an idea as it develops. The *product* is the idea when it is realised in a tangible form, although Rhodes suggests a hierarchy whereby the idea has greater creative capital than the product, pointing to legal structures around patents and copyright to demonstrate. The *press*, or environment, relates to the environment where the creativity is situated. Rhodes points out that inventions don't occur in a vacuum, but rather in response to a social need and on the back of existing technologies and components that the inventor draws together. The four P's framework has become a main reference in the study of creativity. Jordanous argues that it enables an "inclusive and encompassing approach to the study of creativity, accommodating multiple relevant perspectives" (2016, p.165). In studying the creativity of music production and the aims of a music producer to elicit creative contributions from their collaborators, the four P's framework provides a broader perspective than the Componential Theory in that is includes examination of the *product*, defined as the tangible embodiment of the creativity. We could also include the physiological state of the individual in its broader definition of the creative *person*. Studies of the *press*, or environment, that have used the four P's framework have focused on the cultural, rather than the physical environment (Garcês *et al* 2016; Jordanous 2016). This suggests the concept encompasses the wider cultural domain of the systems model, as well as the more immediate social environment of the Componential Model. In Jordanous' interpretation (2016) the press/environment is bi-directional, involving the influence the social environment has on the creator whilst in the process of creating, as well as the influence the social environment has on the creator after the product has been publicised and feedback has been

given. This concept could be articulated as a cycle as the creator makes things, submits them to the culture, becomes affected by the feedback, and then makes the next thing and so on. A cyclic framework is useful in considering the persona of a music producer working within a cultural system and responding to the public reaction to their works through creative input into subsequent works. I will explore this in Chapter 4, *The Artistic Self and the Cycle of Production.*

Authoring a Process

I suggest that the considered bringing together of selected collaborators, the communication methods used, and messages contained therein, the selection of spaces and production methods, the considered arrangement of capital, and the focused manipulation of production situations, environments and conditions, all constitute a production culture and a micro social environment that is dynamically authored by the producer. To state this notion considering Barthes' ideas (1977), I propose that the production process itself is a text that is 'written' by the producer drawing from a vast repository of existing codes and signs, which is then 'read' by each collaborator. The codes and signs may range from norms and beliefs of primary habitus - general systems understood by the layperson, such as language, topical themes, and logistical arrangements, to those of numerous secondary habitus – the more technical or specialist domain matters able to be understood by collaborators due to their previous immersion in music and production, such as production methodologies, musical terminology and specific acoustical or equipment details. The manner in which the producer 'writes' and controls the production culture and its processes creates meaning in the mind of the collaborator: a feeling, understanding, or 'vibe' of the project which affects the collaborator's professional and emotional connection to it. This connection in turn affects their intrinsic motivation, behaviour and creative performance on the project and it is therefore of profound importance. Each collaborator represents a unique multiplicity of intersecting fields and domains that they have been steeped in, and that play an important part in shaping their aesthetic and their creative persona, and in influencing their contributions to a project. The producer's handling of the project's culture will involve discussions, activities and arrangements that selectively foreground and background these internal domains, guiding the overall creative direction of the project, even when the producer is working alone and is only dealing with their own internal brew of networked cultural systems (see Chapter 5). This project culture that is authored by the producer is the Production Habitus.

To state this in terms of the four P's framework, the producer makes creative decisions, drawing together and influencing various components to design a project for an aesthetic goal. They recruit

the *person*(s) with the desired domain skills, creative thinking styles and attitudes, and stimulate in them creative behaviours and intrinsic motivation. They arrange the *processes* and stages of progression, keeping clear communications and logistics appropriate to the project's aesthetic aims through the development of the production. They arrange the *press*, social environment, or place, in their selection, arrangement or design of the physical studio spaces, and in their management of the immediate social environment surrounding the production. The results of these choices are crystalised in the *product*, whose effect on the wider social environment, or domain, is perceived as the end goal during the production, and whose ultimate existence represents the embodiment of the creative efforts of the participants, stimulated, guided and combined by the producer.

Foucault (2011 [1969]) proposed the notion of 'transdiscursive' authors to explore the concept of individuals who author "a theory, tradition, or discipline in which other books and authors will in turn find a place" (2011, p.534). Without claiming quite such an impact in the 'writing' of music production processes and micro cultures, the notion is still useful in proposing that the considered assembling and manipulation of elements in a highly individualised music production scenario can be understood as an authoring process which produces "the possibilities and the rules for the formation of other texts" (2011, p.534). That is, predictable patterns could emerge in the activities of the producer; repeatable models of effective practice in a Production Habitus that can be modified for subsequent use in other projects.

It is worth noting at this point that the producer's 'writing' of the Production Habitus is continual and dynamic throughout the production, responding to changing situations and the aesthetic progression of the work accordingly. Much of the core project design will take place in the early stages so that the overall logistics and aesthetic direction are established, but there will inevitably be room left for adaptation and variation to allow collaborative creativity to flourish. I want to be clear that this dynamic writing process is more than just the logistical tasks of booking resources and personnel. We are interested more in the creative act of bringing such things together for a particular artistic goal; what lies behind each of the producer's decisions and *how* each task is performed in a deliberate manner to stimulate meaning in the mind of each 'reader,' or collaborator.

The producer's 'writing' of the Production Habitus is therefore critical in creating the aesthetic of the product. Their assembling and shaping of the network of creative systems, or holons, will be influenced by their understanding of each interlocking part and its structures of cultural and social capital. This implies that a producer is advantaged if they have a broad understanding of each subset

domain or secondary habitus, and how they interface and interlock, such as songwriting, drumming, sound engineering, studio management, coaching, programming synths, singing, scoring for strings, tuning-up guitar amps and so on. And indeed, an open understanding of what they don't understand about each constituent field and holon will be equally important in composing a creative production culture that maximises collaborative creativity whilst directing the project toward its aesthetic aims. Viewed through the four P's framework (Rhodes 1961) which examines creativity in the confluence of person, process, press/environment and product, the deliberate crafting of the process and press, plus the careful assemblage of the persons will have a clear effect on the product.

Figure 2.1 illustrates the core constructs that make up the Production Habitus. They are all elements that are considered, selected and dynamically assembled by the producer in a deliberate manner to create the conditions for a specific aesthetic result. They create the cloud of understanding around a project, affecting the psychological, creative and emotional spaces within each collaborator which will emerge in their creative contributions and ultimately be embedded in the final product. The concept synthesizes ideas presented in established theories of creativity. The '*person*' from Rhodes four P's theory (1961) is extended to '*persons'* and includes consideration of the holonic arrangement of nested domains internalised within each collaborator (McIntyre 2019; Csikszentmihalyi 2013). The *persons* element also considers each collaborator's creative thinking skills, as suggested in the Componential Theory of Creativity (Amabile 1983), as well as their physiological, psychological and emotional states. Rhodes' '*process*' (1961) is incorporated into the Production Model element, in how the production tasks are allocated and sequenced, and in how the collaborator's contributions are arranged, received and managed. In using the concept of a Production Habitus, the '*product*' from the four P's framework has an equivalent in the Project Definition element. Once established this will guide all the other elements. More than the physical audio product alone, the Project Definition includes the wider aims of the project, such as social or commercial intentions, as these join with the visualised product in affecting the creative contributions of the collaborators as they work toward common goals. Rhodes' '*press*' is a similar concept to Amabile's 'Social-Environment' component (1983), and in creating the Production Habitus these are split into two contributing elements. The Social Micro-Environment concerns the conventions, rules, interactions and communications that emerge at a specific project level, rather than in the wider social domain. Including the Physical Environment element allows the producer to consider the effects of the studio layout and design, as well as the arrangement of things in the space and how these things can be manipulated to affect creativity for a specific aesthetic audio result. Amabile's Intrinsic Motivation Principle (1983) is considered in both the Motivations and the

Ownership elements. The motivations of the collaborators can be considered from several perspectives, and in creating the Production Habitus the producer should be sensitive to the personal and professional investments each collaborator is making to the project and how they will affect motivation. Whilst intrinsic motivation has been shown to be beneficial for creativity, the legal and social structures in the music industry demand that Ownership be considered as a core motivational factor. Some ownership issues can be seen as extrinsically motivating in their connection to monetary reward, but the sense of ownership an artist has over their work goes beyond this. It can be a validating factor in the make-up of their identity, a core part of their harmonious passions (Vallerand et al 2003). Moran and John-Steiner also note that "identification with one's work is a powerful motivator in intellectual and artistic work" and so can be a source of tension in collaborative projects when apportioning credit (2004, p19). Ownership is a separate consideration in the creation of a Production Habitus for a music project and therefore warrants its own space in the model.

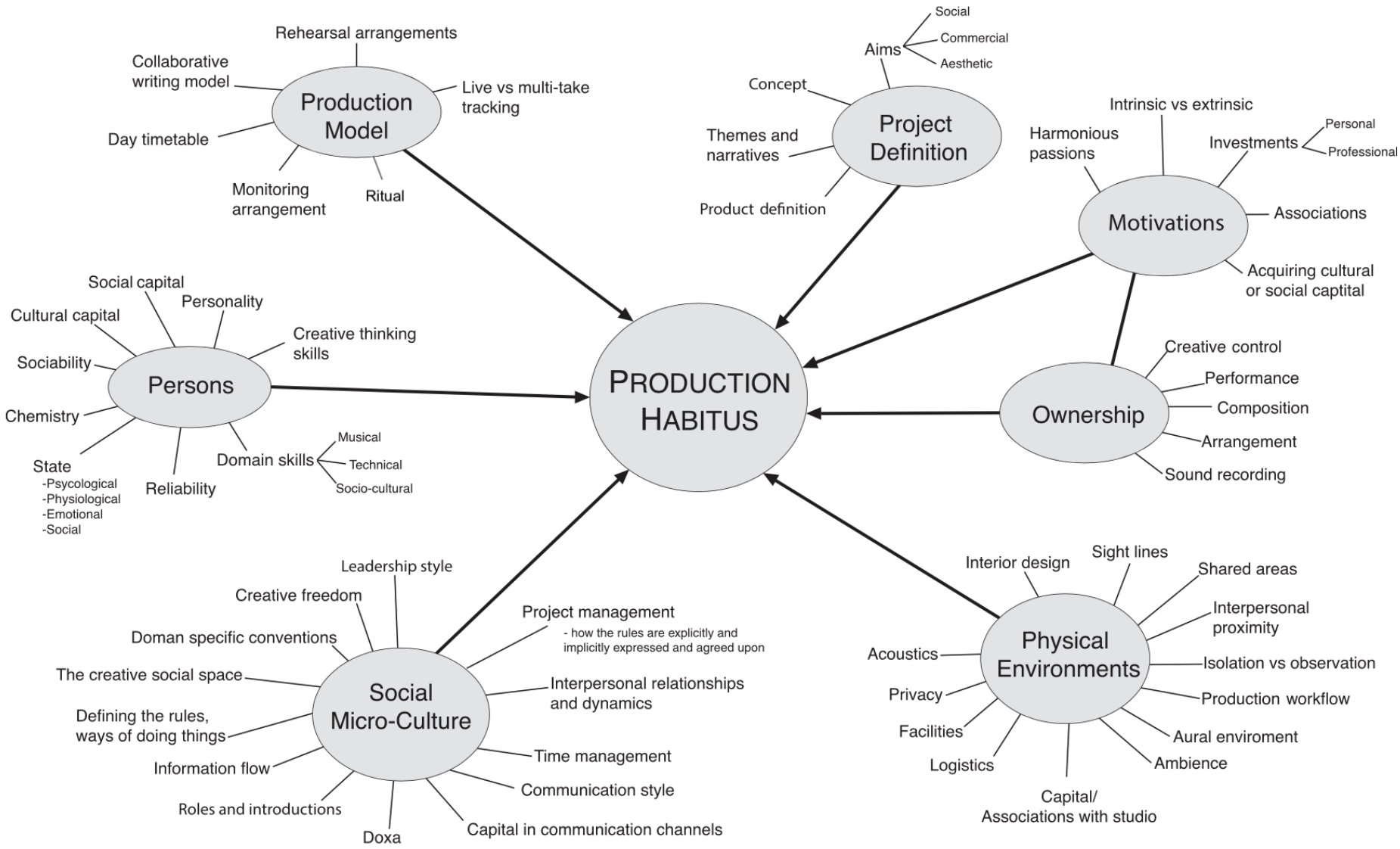


Figure 2.1 Mapping the Production Habitus

Consolidation Points Framework (CPF)

A helpful framework to examine Production Habitus, or even to guide efforts in setting one up, is the Consolidation Points Framework.

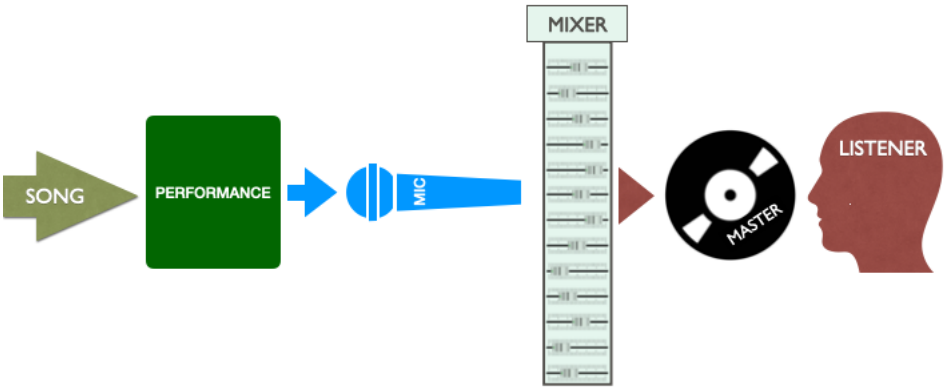


Figure 2.2 Consolidation Points Framework (CPF)

This focuses analysis on moments in a production where disparate elements (multiple) are assembled and combined into a whole (singular) that is passed on to the next stage. In doing so, our attention is focused on the non-musical contributions of the enablative producer and how they have constructed the Production Habitus to embed aesthetics into the product and create meaning for the listener. To begin at the end of the chain:

LISTENER: I will discuss in Chapter 4 how the meaning of a produced work is created in the mind of the perceiver, with reference to Barthes (1977) and Eisenstein (1947). For a music product, this is the listener. The kaleidoscope of messages in the audio are experienced in tandem with whatever other information the listener is aware of about the music and artist, from word of mouth, reviews, journalism, album artwork and so on. All of this disparate information is filtered through their life experience, habitus, domain knowledge, world view and general disposition and a composite meaning is formed, a single impression or understanding of the product. We are interested in how the producer can influence the elements involved in this expanded experience of the listener encountering the final product.

MASTER: During the mastering process the final mixes of all the songs are sequenced and combined into a single tangible product with the intention of them being perceived in the singular: the 'album.' The mastering engineer is only included in the Production Habitus at a late stage and will need a condensed briefing from the producer to guide how they shape the audio processing and track

sequencing to create the desired audio experience of the album.

MIXER: The most overt representation of combining multiple elements into one in music production practice. The mixer (the person and the console) takes the audio from each channel and balances it into a single audio rendering of the song that we can call in the singular, the 'mix.' However, what is being blended is not just audio. It includes personalities, moods, relationships and meanings that have been expressed in the performances and programming. The mix process includes the deliberate selection, foregrounding or blending of all these conceptual elements. Mixing is such a complex process with infinite creative variables throughout that the mix engineer needs guidelines and constraints to understand the project and properly achieve its mix goals. Many of these general guidelines come from the mixer themselves, from their personal aesthetic, itself the composite of multiple internalised domains from mix practice, audio engineering, the wider domain of contemporary music and so on. However, the more specific constraints will come from the mix engineer's understanding of the project before it gets to them and its aims once they pass on the mixes. These things are communicated within the Production Habitus and are usually in the control of the producer. At the mix stage, the production team is often reduced to just mix engineer and producer, so it is in the role of the producer to maintain the Production Habitus and induct the mix engineer into it.

MIC: The mic captures and combines many elements into a single signal that is routed to the mix console and/or recording device. By examining these elements and assessing the control the enablative producer has over them, we can better understand the construction of the social, technical and physical environments that form part of the Production Habitus. To illustrate, we can consider a single kick drum mic and what it captures, starting with the drum itself. Choices are made over the drum's dimensions, materials, manufacturer, beater, tuning, dampening, skins and overall condition that are within the producer's control as they source the instruments for the session beforehand, and then collaborate with the engineer and the drummer when setting up on the day. Then there is the physical acoustic environment the drum is in, how the room is arranged for performance, the position of the drum in the room, and the position of the mic on the drum which will all have been agreed in collaboration with the engineer within the Production Habitus. The mic will also capture bleed from other instruments that are recorded in the same room at the same time as the drums which is a result of decisions made in the production design and process. The producer will have arranged for instruments to be recorded separately or together; for some musicians to be able to perform in the same room and others to be isolated. The drum sound captured by the mic is

a consolidation of these factors, with various people's skills, aesthetics and judgements at play. They are collaborating within the Production Habitus and are managed towards a specific goal by the producer. The mic represents a physical node in the Production Habitus where all these carefully considered factors are rendered into a single audio signal.

PERFORMANCE: This is perhaps the Consolidation Point most susceptible to influence from the Production Habitus. It combines the skill and artistic personality of the performer with their understanding of the project and their general state in the session. They will be affected by emotional, psychological, social and biological factors and these will in turn affect the performance. It is within the control of the producer to design a Production Habitus that is aware of many of these factors: removing potential stressors; providing refreshments; ensuring adequate breaks; making space for people when they need it; controlling the ambience and social vibe; recruiting suitable personalities for the project; being sensitive to social capital and power relations; keeping everybody informed and generally making sure everybody is looked after. Other logistical matters of production design will find their way into the performance, such as how many people are present to witness the performance, the time of day the performance happens, and how long is allocated to get the performance right. Monitoring is another important factor. For instance, the decision for a performer to monitor static elements such as a click track and pre-recorded guide tracks, or to record more things simultaneously and monitor the live performances of the other musicians, will have a major effect. Similarly, having everybody share a single mix can produce more sympathetic performances than everybody having separate mixes, which can alter their focus and lead to more self-conscious performances within an ensemble. On the other hand, we explored earlier how giving a musician control over their monitoring can have a liberating effect from a studio hierarchy that can facilitate creative performances. Altering the balance and vocal processing in a singer's headphone mix can fundamentally change their performance. Some artists benefit from time and physical space to 'get into character' leading up their performance, where they can do the creative and psychological work required to focus on the meanings and persona they wish to express. Many respond to subdued ambient lighting in the studio, or interior design features that mark the studio as a safe creative space. All of these are elements of the production process, part of the Production Habitus that can be considered and manipulated for the project aims. They are consolidated within the performer and emerge as a single event – the performance.

SONG: Fundamentally, the song can be considered to combine lyrics, harmony and melody into a single format that communicates meaning. On some projects, the songs will be the starting point and

the themes of the Production Habitus will emerge from them. On other projects, the themes of the Production Habitus will inform the songwriting, or the selection of songs. More than just fitting an album concept, the songs will be selected or written with the logistical limitations and opportunities of the project in mind. The persons and organisations attached to the project could also affect song selection by way of their symbolic capital. In our CPF framework the 'song' also includes the arrangement which combines the separate instrumental parts into a single musical piece. The effect of the Production Habitus on the arrangement varies greatly on the project. In democratic band projects where the parts are worked out collaboratively between the members, a form of Production Habitus will exist before the project reaches production. Social dynamics and power relations; favoured rehearsal spaces; time commitments; live performances; arrangement habits and access to technology will contribute to a definable 'way of doing things' that define how the band develops material. A producer coming in to collaborate with such a band can use the existing habitus as a starting point for the Production Habitus, or even dispense with it deliberately to refresh the band's creativity. In short, the raw musical materials of melody, rhythm and harmony are articulated in the arrangement and combined with lyrics into a single entity that we encounter as the song.

The Consolidation Point Framework is intended as a tool to focus analysis when practically dealing with the multi-layered constructs and concepts of the Production Habitus. It should facilitate consideration of all the key points of a production in a more structured and accessible manner.

CHAPTER 3: The Production Habitus of *Smoke Rainbows*



Figure 3.1 The cover of the album Smoke Rainbows – Music Minds Matter (artwork and sleeve design by Steph Jones and Scott Jones, 2019)

Overview

The previous chapter proposed Production Habitus as a way of understanding the non-musical contributions of music producers. We examined the considered assembling of people, environments and social conditions to create a culture that would best suit a project's goals and produce the desired outcome. To investigate this concept practically I devised a collaborative studio-based music production project as a case study that this chapter will examine. My role would not include songwriting, arrangements or performance so I could instead focus on the creation of the Production Habitus and observe its effect in action. Much of the work to establish the Production Habitus happened in the early planning stages of the project and by examining the considerations and the choices made we can analyse the conscious design of the Production Habitus, how it was shaped and maintained, and how its essence is rendered in the resulting musical product, the album *Smoke Rainbows – Music Minds Matter* (2019).

Creating the Production Habitus: PROJECT INITIATION

Certain elements for the environment of the production were in place before the project was devised. That is, every year the York St John University Music Production students take part in a week of professional projects at Abbey Road Studios as part of their developing production experience.

Studio 2 in Abbey Road was already booked for this, which is of course world famous as the studio that produced nearly all the Beatles output as well as landmark recordings by Pink Floyd, Oasis, Radiohead and Kate Bush (*Studio Two – Abbey Road Studios,* 2020). I was able to secure four days for this booking in 2018, which meant the dates in February, the prestigious studio location and the presence of students were fixed elements in the planning that I would be able to design a project around.

A number of key drivers seemed immediately important that would affect the kind of project I could devise to maximize the exciting opportunity of having Abbey Road Studio 2 for four full days. Firstly, the project needed to produce a real commercial product such as an album that would be physically released. Defining the product commercially early in the process would set a target for everybody and mitigate against the possibility of the project being perceived as less professional due to the involvement of students. Secondly, it should provide opportunities for talented artists that wouldn't usually get the chance to record at Abbey Road. A result of the mechanics of commerce in the music industry is that many highly talented individuals are never commercially successful enough to get the funding or support to perform in such a prestigious venue, and so this project could enable them to demonstrate their talents at a high level. Thirdly, it should have a moral, human angle and aim to somehow contribute something positive in the world. This is partly from a personal sense of social responsibility when given opportunities like this, but it would also play a part in defining a common motivation amongst all the participants, and a solid theme that could focus their contributions and help define the product and shape its release strategy. It would be an element to bring everybody together emotionally and conceptually, something to give powerful cohesion to a collaboration of many people who do not yet know each other. Finally, it needed to provide a valuable hands-on experience for the students.

The fact that these thought processes were happening even before the project was devised shows that the intrinsic motivation of the participants was already being considered as the Production Habitus was conceived. The social environment of the project was deliberately being formed with positivity, camaraderie and social justice as guiding principles that would influence the behaviours, motivations and creative contributions from that point on. In our map of the Production Habitus (Figure 2.1, Chapter 2) it is the Project Definition component that is being created: the commercial, social and aesthetic goals of the project, along with the vision for the final product.

The initial idea drawn from the guiding principles was to partner with Karousel Music, a not-for-profit collective of artists, music management and publishing, to produce a commercial album that would give 12 talented emerging artists on their roster the opportunity to record in Abbey Road, Studio 2. They would rehearse with a house band in preproduction rehearsals and perform one song each live in the studio for a 'Live at Abbey Road' style album. The house band format would give the producers some control over the musical arrangements and ensure a sonically coherent product. It would also go some way in addressing the logistical challenge of recording an album with 12 different artists in just four days, as the band and backline would remain relatively static for each artist. The album would be for the benefit of the Music Minds Matter campaign, which is a mental health awareness and support service for musicians run by the charity Help Musicians UK.

This proposal was pitched to Chris Sheehan, the director of Karousel Music, who agreed to join the project as coproducer with me. The idea was developed in subsequent discussions between the coproducers before approaching any artists. It was understood that we had to have a fully developed idea of the project before pitching it to any artists. We wanted to be able to describe the finished album, outline how the sessions would run, detail the commitment required of everybody and give an impression of what it would feel like to be involved. This meant some extensive aesthetic and logistical planning, but also close consideration of the position of the artists, processes which we can understand as designing the Production Habitus – the practical, creative and social bubble that the project would generate and thus inhabit. The first communication with potential artists would be crucial in shaping their emotional perception of the project, as the coproducers extended the Production Habitus beyond their initial pre-production inner circle. Understanding this importance meant that the first contact with artists was seen as a major milestone in the production, with the planning ramping up towards it.

Developing the Production Habitus: PRE-PRODUCTION

The initial house band format was dropped early on, partly due to logistical difficulties in arranging adequate pre-production sessions over the Christmas period, but more importantly to widen the opportunity to artists with their own bands and to allow them greater control and ownership over their contributions. This transfer of creative control from producer to artist is again linked to notions of the artists' intrinsic motivation, and in retrospect it would have been difficult to ask independent artists to agree to alternative arrangements of their songs and an unfamiliar band without a more collaborative and time intensive pre-production process. However, the responsibility for being properly rehearsed would now be with each artist rather than the producers, which would mean

careful construction of the Production Habitus so that it just became understood as a 'rule' within the project's socio-environment that you arrive at the studio well prepared and very well-rehearsed. This implied 'rule' can be linked to Bourdieusian notions of power and the inherent cultural capital involved in a music project involving multiple artists. Although the sessions would be carefully set up as nurturing rather than competitive environments, the artists' efforts to perform their part well in the project and to be judged favourably by the collaborators and eventual audience, could be interpreted through Bourdieu as a covert attempt to gain cultural capital (Navarro 2006). Demonstrating artistic skill under pressure and in the culturally significant environment of Abbey Road could acquire for an artist a measure of power in their particular field within music. However, this perspective needs to be balanced with an artist's intrinsic desire to simply play well, as well as the effect of their morals on their actions in a project with charitable aims. Bourdieu has been criticized for downplaying the role of personal ethics and morals in social judgements (Lamont 1992; Sayer 2005; Ignatow 2009).

The Production Habitus would now have more of a role in addressing the issue of how to combine so many diverse artists into an album with a coherent sonic personality, given that the producers' pre-production input into the musical compositions and arrangements would be entirely hands-off. The alternative logistical arrangements to make the quick turnaround between acts possible was to arrange a static backline, instead of a house band, that all the artists would share. This could be pitched to them by likening the studio floor to a festival stage, where bands share the drum kit and amps. The language here taps into the doxa of festival performance and again forms part of the Production Habitus, the artists' domain awareness evoking notions of camaraderie and a team spirit, the excitement of live performance, and hectic but stage-managed changeovers, as well as prompting festival etiquette like starting and finishing your performance within your allocated time slot. The selection, cost and high quality of the backline would be taken care of by the producers, but with the technical details and an element of choice around guitar amps and keyboards communicated to the artists well in advance so they could feel confident in the project and be keen to take part.

I had initially thought that the opportunity to record for free in Abbey Road would be enough motivation for many artists, but in considering their position more closely realised that we were asking quite a lot of them. They would need to make themselves and their musicians available midweek, which could cost in days off work, childcare, travel and musician fees. We were also asking them to spend enough preparation time with their bands to be able to perform instantly brilliantly in

front of seasoned Abbey Road engineers and a group of unfamiliar students pretty much as soon as they hit the studio floor, which is at best intimidating and at worst a significant barrier to creativity that we would have to manage. And we were not paying them for the sessions. This dynamic made us think more generously about the offer we could make to the artists, and this in turn affected the timetabling we were drawing up for each day. 12 artists across four days meant we would have to produce three artists per day. If we worked from 10:00 until 19:00 we could give each artist 3 hours whilst still allowing time for travel and warm up in the morning. We anticipated that the first hour in each 3-hour block would be mainly setting up, getting everybody comfortable and sound checking, and the last 30 minutes would be listening back and packing down before the next act. That left around 90 minutes for actual tracking, in which we could record more than one song if the artist was rehearsed. In order to offer the artists more from their involvement we could gift them some Abbey Road production time by agreeing that the first song they recorded would be for our project, but they could use the remaining time to track another song with the same equipment and engineers. They would get to keep the second recording as a multitrack ProTools session to do with whatever they wanted, with no strings attached. That is, they would fully own the copyright in the sound recording and be allowed to exploit it however they wished whilst keeping any monies generated. In making these adjustments to the timetabling and the planning process, the motivations of the participants are affected by allowing the artists more control over the time they have in the studio and more control over the aesthetic of their work. The nature of the motivation is important here, as the arrangement should stimulate intrinsic motivation and provide an opportunity for the artists to engage in their harmonious passions (Amabile & Pillemer 2012; Vallerand et al 2003). The offer would likely affect the preparation efforts of the artists, and it projects a positive image of the producers and the institutions partnered in the project. It tints the Production Habitus with a notion of camaraderie and goodwill which would hopefully become embedded in the final product.

These arrangements could be quite significant for independent artists used to funding their own productions and balancing the risk of it not selling with their drive to make original work. From a systems model perspective, artists are creatively constrained by the rules of the domain and the expectations of the field, which implies that when self-funding a production, higher levels of originality can equate to financial risk. Bennett describes this as a paradox for the songwriter "…who is trying to create an original work in a highly evolved, market-driven, and tightly constrained creative palette" (2011, para.1). The design of our project shifted most of the financial and commercial pressures away from each artist and gathered it into a collective pool where the institutional partners underwrite the overall production costs, and all the contributors share a common interest in

simply making the best product they can for the aesthetic and charitable goals. The artists' contributions become all about their performances, and they have none of the usual pressures of post-production, product design, manufacture, promotion or sales to worry about. In this way the design of the Production Habitus is balancing pressures and removing concerns in a way that allows the artists the freedom to focus on their performance.

Therefore, in our initial communications with the artists we would need to be very clear about the plans; who was getting what, how the project was being funded, licensing and ownership rights, the involvement of the charity and the university, and the level of commitment we were looking for, in order to foster a Production Habitus that would stimulate the appropriate behaviours, motivations and creative responses. This first communication would also be crucial in addressing a significant concern with this sort of 'various artists' project, which is: how can we combine 12 diverse artists onto an album and still give that album a coherent aesthetic personality? This relates directly to the second research question in this thesis, *how can the social and logistical arrangements of a production be considered to deliberately shape the aesthetic of the final product?* The studio set up and static backline would be a sonic factor here, but more importantly the project's core charitable aims would inform the themes and messages expressed in the song selection and performances.

Music Minds Matter (see www.musicmindsmatter.org.uk 2020) is a mental health support service dedicated to helping anyone in the music industry who is experiencing tough times. It was launched as a helpline by the charity Help Musicians UK in December 2017, just a few months before the studio dates of this project and was selected as a cause that everybody on the project could feel closely connected to. The effect of the presence of the charity in the Production Habitus is exemplified by Chris Sheehan, coproducer, in a press release about the album:

> Musicians are the first people to stand up and raise money for charity, even when they're struggling to make ends meet themselves. But who raises for them? We felt it was about time we did something for those musicians who need the help that this remarkable charity gives (...) We passionately believe in the work Help Musicians UK does for our musical family, and we hope people out there will join us in raising money for the charity's vital service Music Minds Matter, which has become part of the album's title.
>
> Chris Sheehan (quoted in Bemrose, 2019)

The powerful message of camaraderie and ‘musicians helping musicians’ was threaded through conversations and communications around the project, and so affected the Production Habitus profoundly. The mental health support concept became a theme that directed the selection of tracks for the album. The artists would be briefed on the charity and asked to contribute a song that was somehow related to going through or getting over challenging times. We felt it a strong enough concept to define the album, but loose enough to be open to interpretation by the artists. Many songwriters would have songs that would fit, and in writing a new song or going through their catalogue to select an appropriate song to contribute, the artists would be undergoing creative and psychological processes that embedded them in the Production Habitus and connected them to the project goals. This would further ensure aesthetic and thematic coherence across the tracks.

A benevolent label, Monks Road Records, was also approached and they agreed to fund the mixing, mastering and manufacture of the vinyl release of the album. The label’s presence on the project and their support for the artists involved and charitable cause reinforced the emerging Production Habitus and its defining themes of social justice, and would influence participants' contributions and motivate them in three key ways. Firstly, the commitment to release the album on vinyl defines the product that will emerge from the Production Habitus in a concrete manner that is easily visualised. It will be an enduring artefact that all artists will be part of - a momentary collective preserved in a physical object. Secondly, the vinyl format supports the heritage and audiophile aesthetic we were going for. It taps into domain awareness of independent labels and artistic authenticity. However, pressing music onto vinyl is often prohibitively expensive and financially risky to produce for self-funding artists, meaning the format itself lends quality to the project and provides additional motivation to be involved. Thirdly, the financial commitment from Monks Road demonstrates a confidence in the project that will reassure and motivate the artists.

We were a little cautious in how to allocate meaningful roles to the students without putting off the artists. With no disrespect to the students, the artists would want to feel confident that their Abbey Road performance, carefully composed, invested in and rehearsed, would be recorded by professional Abbey Road engineers and not be hampered by the input of less experienced student engineers. The solution was to employ the students as artist liaisons. Each artist would be allocated a liaison who would be their first point of contact leading up to the session and on the day. This is a role often found in music festival environments where multiple artists need to be guided through initially confusing locations and arrangements, introduced to people they would be working with, and made aware of what’s going on. The artist liaison is a first point of contact, smoothing the way

for the artist, making them feel informed and comfortable, removing obstacles to creativity and addressing any queries that arise. As the specifics of the liaison responsibilities were being devised the importance of the role grew and the potential effect it could have on performances became apparent. The liaison would be the main point of contact between project and artist, and therefore largely responsible for how the artist perceived the project. How they thought and felt about the project after communications with their liaison would affect their commitment, creativity and behaviour in preparing for the production and their performance on the day. The Production Habitus could therefore be largely defined in those liaison–artist relationships.

This meant the liaisons would need an in-depth understanding of the project to be able to communicate the themes, plans and agreements effectively. They would need training and guidance in order to portray an appropriately professional but friendly tone in their emails, and instruction on how to respond to certain enquiries. Miscommunication could alter the Production Habitus from how it was intended and result in less appropriate responses and performances from the artists. Therefore, the liaisons were briefed accordingly in a classroom setting, with the tasks divided into pre-production communications and on-the-day production assistance. A rough schedule was proposed for rolling out the pre-production communications, and guidance given for looking after the artists on their studio day.

Communicating the Production Habitus: FIRST CONTACT

With most of the plans in place a selection of potential artists was agreed upon and they were invited to take part with the initial contact coming from co-producer Chris Sheehan as he was well known to many of them already. These relationships were vital for the artists' first impression of the Production Habitus and represented a core part of Chris' role on the project, leveraging his social and symbolic capital in the field of independent music that the artists were being drawn from. They know him to be trustworthy, and that he has a reputation for looking after artists' rights and striving to create better conditions in the music industry on their behalf. The existing positive personal connection the artists had with Chris was a foundational building block of the Production Habitus. It was a package of trust and goodwill that would positively taint the artists' experience of the project whenever they engaged with it. The pitch Chris brought to the artists for this first contact was carefully agreed beforehand to paint the project with the desired aesthetic, including highlights of the plans to date. A key phrase used to communicate the production aesthetic and logistical arrangements was 'live at Abbey Road.' This phrase would hopefully trigger an array of ideas and interpretations, drawing on the artist's existing Abbey Road domain knowledge. It has a linguistic

capital, a certain cultural value in the field of recorded music that participants would respond to (Thompson, in Bourdieu 1991, p.18). They would visualise the iconic studio, recall the many 'live at Abbey Road' videos that have been produced with well-known artists, and mentally place themselves within the scene. We hoped the phrase would conjure ideas of quality, heritage, great acoustics, vintage mics and instruments, and the highest recording expertise available. Another key pitch phrase imbued with symbolic power that we used was 'think Later with Jools Holland but without the audience.' This could elicit similar ideas of musical quality in live performance, but with an added implication that the acts have been carefully curated and selected because the producers believe in their talent. We hoped this would motivate the artists by communicating both our expectations of them, and our confidence in them.

When enough artists had expressed an interest a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was circulated as a semi-formal document amongst all parties. This document was a very important part of establishing the Production Habitus, gathering together in one place the aesthetic and logistical plans, as well as outlining the goals for each party and the commitment everybody was agreeing to. It defined the end product, the 'live at Abbey Road' festival approach, and the agreement to give the artists the opportunity to record a second track for themselves. As part of the aesthetic planning, the MOU included reference to the famous heritage keyboard instruments available at Abbey Road, such as the Mrs. Mills piano, the Challen upright, the Hammond organ and the famous Steinway grand, in order to encourage artists to consider using them in their arrangements and therefore bolster the desired aesthetic. In these ways the MOU served not just as a project definition document, but as a blueprint for the Production Habitus in its first physical form. It set the social and stylistic tone for the project, outlined the logistical arrangements, and established structures of capital and motivation that would affect the collaborators' approaches to being involved. Follow up communications throughout pre-production developed this tone to encourage the intended behaviours and performances in an effort to imprint a sense of the Production Habitus in the produced audio. We hoped artists would prepare well and bring their best game, that they would be excited to be involved but feel relaxed that everything was well organised and in control. We wanted their arrangements to consider the Abbey Road environment and to favour organic tones and textures that made the most of the studio's facilities and instruments, keeping to ideas around authenticity and of brilliant performances being captured in the best way possible that are evoked by the cultural capital in the name 'Abbey Road.' We hoped their performances would be soulful, inspired by the history of the studio and the themes of the album. Our communications used phrases such as 'live at Abbey Road,' 'musicians helping musicians,' 'beautifully maintained heritage instruments' and

‘recording at the most famous studio in the world’ to foster these ambitions. In short, the MOU and pre-production communications were designed to make everybody feel well-informed, valued, looked after, and creatively motivated.

Preserving Production Habitus in Pre-Production

The plan was to have one main point of contact between the artist and the project running up to the session, and this was to be the liaison. However, despite the carefully arranged sequence of emails the liaisons sent to introduce themselves, gather technical riders, and distribute logistical updates, the artists often tended to by-pass them and approach the producers directly. This was largely down to many of the artists already knowing the producers personally or being introduced during the MOU stage of the project and defaulting to their more familiar communication channels. This is understandable given the students’ low level of cultural capital. It is possible the liaison role in pre-production was viewed as artificial, as though part of the cost of being involved was to go along with the student-as-liaison scenario whilst seeking more confident communications from the coproducers. The liaisons collected technical riders and line-up information from most acts but as the dates of the studio sessions approached, the coproducers took on more of the artist communications. It became clear that this was needed to preserve the Production Habitus as artists sought quick and reliable responses to any questions that arose, and the coproducers were best placed to remove any potential stressors and logistical obstacles. The presence of the liaisons during this process was still important in setting a tone for the Production Habitus. The tight organisation and the social and educational goals created structures that the artists were aware of that would still influence their perception of the project. It arguably established a more robust communication network and facilitated a coherent Production Habitus, so that every time the artist engaged with the project in pre-production a consistent tone was presented.

A challenging aspect of the Production Habitus that needed to be addressed in pre-production was to control the flow of people through the studio, managing the expectations of the participants in advance. This would include considerations to do with the physical environment, the social environment and the aural environment of the recording sessions. With the students and production team already based in the control room it could quickly get out of hand if artists invited guests or a full entourage to witness their Abbey Road session. The control room is not a big space to have more than a few people in, and the presence of others not fully involved in the production can quickly lead to unhelpful levels of chatter that distract the producers and artists. In this project, there was also an educational factor whereby the students needed to be able to observe the Abbey Road engineers,

which required a certain amount of space to move around the studio and a lot of concentration that is easily lost with the presence of visitors. Most importantly, the distraction to the artists themselves would be unacceptable if every time they heard the control room environment over the talkback mic, it sounded noisy and indifferent to their efforts. However, a certain amount of traffic through the control room would be unavoidable given the multi-stakeholder design of the project and the need to keep significant influencers excited about it and personally connected to it so they would support post-production and promotion efforts going forward. Significant guests from Help Musicians UK, York St John University, Karousel Music, and Monks Road Records would be welcome in the control room due to the capital they were bringing to the project. Additionally, journalists and other key influencers who could help promote the project would need access to get on board with what we were trying to achieve. It represented a challenge to be able to invite people into the bubble of the project, our carefully designed and maintained Production Habitus, without their very presence upsetting it. For these reasons the pre-production communications with the artists set up a rule and a plea for understanding that they should only bring musicians who would be playing with them, and that we were unable to host friends, partners, managers and other guests.

The late stages of pre-production added the Abbey Road engineering team to the collaboration, and they were brought into the Production Habitus by an initial conversation with the lead engineer, Paul Pritchard, in which all the aims and concepts of the project were communicated. It was imperative that the engineers had a full understanding of the Production Habitus at this point as they would play a major part in rolling it out on the studio days. Paul and his team would be instrumental in designing and controlling the Physical Environment and the flow of activity through the studio days to match the Production Model and our aesthetic intentions. They would play a major role in managing the overall stress and comfort levels of the artists in the manner in which they communicated with them during set up and their performances, thereby affecting the 'Persons' element in our model (see Figure 2.1, Chapter 2). Important parts of the project's Social Micro-Culture during the studio sessions would be defined and communicated through the engineers' behaviours and conversations. Therefore, following the initial conversation on Project Definitions, in-depth discussions took place between Paul and I to design a studio layout that would achieve the acoustic and logistical goals whilst stimulating the creative energy, social chemistry and considered performances that we hoped would define the project's aesthetic.

Production Habitus in the Studio Sessions

The night before the session, Paul and his team began the studio set up. The key factors in arranging the space were the live performance Production Model, the need for quick changeovers, and the desire to keep all the musicians comfortable and happy, removing any obstacles that might keep them from performing their best. Line-up and technical information had been collected from each artist and these were considered in designing the layout of the studio floor in a way that would suit each act with the minimal amount of adjustment between each one. Monitoring and sightlines were considered paramount, alongside the need for isolating the drums from the main room and baffling amps and keyboards where necessary. The drums would be set up in the largest booth but with clear sightlines through the booth's glass doors to the area where the bass players and singers would be in the main room. The main live room was effectively halved so that the space the musicians would play in would keep them quite near to each other, at a proximity they would be used to, to elicit coherence in how they play off each other as a unit. We felt the separation we could achieve in the large space by spreading them out across it would be felt too much in the performances, and that keeping to dimensions more similar to a large festival stage would provoke a comfortable performance atmosphere more conducive to expressive, confident and focused performances.



Figure 3.2 The studio floor layout. Only half the floor is used with clear sightlines between everyone. The guitar amps are boxed in the cubic row of baffles behind the guitarist. The

bass position is bottom left, marked by the personal monitor mixer, and the drums can't be seen here, in the booth off to the bottom left. Much more detail can be seen in the videos produced in the session, available at https://tinyurl.com/y426fnc6

Free-standing baffles were positioned in a loose semi-circle that would be the back of the singing position, and also the effective limit of the performance space at halfway along the studio floor. The desire for an open space with clear sightlines meant we didn't want to fully enclose the vocalists, but we needed to control the acoustic effects from the large room entering the live side of the cardioid vocal mic, as well as baffling the grand piano. A keyboard station was assembled next to the singing position, with the Steinway grand piano, the Hammond organ, the Fender Rhodes and a Nord stage piano in a cluster with each instrument mic'd or DI'd ready for use. The Leslie cabinet was positioned way back in the room using the built-in wall baffles to create an enclosure and give it some isolation. Bass players would play in front of the drum booth with clear sightlines to the drummer and the singer, with the bass amp in the smaller booth. Small baffle enclosures were built in a row to isolate a selection of classic guitar amps giving guitarists a choice of tones with minimal set-up changes between acts. The guitarist playing position was in front of them. An area of space was left open opposite for artists that were bringing string sections, and the chairs, music stands and monitor feeds would be ready for them.

Each playing position had a personal monitor mixer, fed by sub mixed stems from the control room. This allowed each musician control over their headphone mix without having to keep asking the engineers to make adjustments, which was an essential factor in facilitating the rapid set up required by our production model. Williams (2012) has pointed out that personal monitoring systems like this remove a potential source of tension between musician and engineer, and it is another area in the Production Habitus where a sense of Ownership becomes important. The musician is not reliant on the engineer in shaping the audioscape they will inhabit for the performance but can control it to a large extent independently without disrupting other tasks going on around them. However, Williams also argues that such systems can be detrimental in fine tuning arrangements, as a musician who hears an offending note in another's performance can deal with it without conversation and risk of conflict by turning them down in their individual mix, thus leaving the problem undiscussed and unresolved. For our project, we were relying on all such refining work to have been done by each artist in their preparations as a result of the Production Habitus created around the project and their responses to it. The inclusion of the personal monitoring system also addressed some of the considerations in the 'Persons' element of the Production Habitus by considering the social and

psychological state of the performers. Being able to quietly control their personal headphone mix removed the social stress of publicly requesting a lot of minor adjustments which may be needed to feel comfortable, but which the very act of asking for could be perceived as fussy. It also facilitated the musician in creating their own audio space to disappear into in the midst of a busy set up and sound check. A private audio 'backstage' where they can mute everyone else and quietly run through their part, doing the creative and psychological preparation needed to 'get into the zone' before the recorded performance.

This basic studio design considered the technical requirements of all the artists and could be quickly adapted to accommodate them in the short turnarounds between recording slots.



Figure 3.3 An adapted set up, with the chairs for a string section visible at the bottom of the image. Note also the addition of a 3-sided booth on the left, assembled here for a saxophonist.

With all the elements for the Production Habitus carefully considered, designed and assembled the coproducers' role in the studio sessions became more hosting and stage management to ensure everybody was introduced, felt comfortable, and knew what was going on. The liaisons assisted here, meeting their artists on arrival and showing them the studio before loading their gear directly onto

the studio floor where they would be introduced to the lead engineer, Paul, and shown their playing positions so they could make themselves comfortable. They were given a quick tour of the studio and shown the shared green room area at the back of the control room, a single room where everybody could leave their coats and bags or have conversations without disrupting the session. The Production Habitus was continually reinforced in the small talk as participants meeting for the first time discussed the project, their part in it, and shared positive reflections on the project and its potential impact. The PR effort of the project began in earnest in the studio sessions, and everybody was encouraged to post about the sessions on their social media pages. It was recognised that social media posts on the more well-known artist's channels would add value to the project, and that other collaborators could gain cultural capital in this new association. This aspect was viewed very positively, as the project's commercial and social success would benefit all involved as well as the causes of social justice that they support. In accordance with the sense of camaraderie baked into the Production Habitus, the tagging details of the partners and the charity were printed out and displayed in the control room so that everybody's posts could be mutually beneficial. The spirit of camaraderie is demonstrated on the record in a spontaneous moment when all the artists, engineers, students and staff who were about at the time were invited onto the studio floor to contribute a gang vocal for the outro of *Where the Light Goes* (see 3:50 – 5:14 on track 11).

The effect of the Production Habitus, was evident in the preparation most of the artists had put into their contributions. A consistent aesthetic tone had been successfully established through our careful communications and consideration of the artist's motivations, the symbolic capital of the studio, and the social and charitable aims of the project. The artists selected songs with open arrangements and generally low tempos that could showcase the emotion in the vocals and lyrical messages. They were incredibly well rehearsed and had gone to great lengths to prepare their songs specifically for the project, adding live string sections or hiring additional session musicians where necessary, and performing sensitively to define the aesthetic of the record. The arrangements allowed space for the natural organic tones of the acoustic instruments to shine in the hallowed space of Abbey Road studio 2. This can be heard in the final product. For example, more than half the tracks base their verse arrangements around lightly picked guitar to create a very open soundscape (see tracks 1, 2, 5, 6, 9, 11, 12); five artists made heavy use of the Steinway grand piano as prompted (1, 3, 4, 8, 9); and four artists brought additional musicians to play parts scored for strings (1, 5, 10, 11). The performances were delicate, sensitive and confident throughout, and the concentration is often audible in the focussed, slightly tentative delivery. The whispered count in to track 2; the delicate acoustic guitar, piano and brushed drums that introduce track 1; the carefully paced piano and

hushed vocal against the hand-played drums in the first verse of track 3; and the simple 4 note phrasing of the picked guitar against the sustained ambient cello line in track 11. These outcomes address the second research question: *how can the social and logistical arrangements of a production be considered to deliberately shape the aesthetic of the final product?*

The successful completion of the project in such demanding conditions, producing 24 songs from 12 different artists with complex line up changes within 4 days, is in itself a positive outcome from the social and logistical arrangements. In response to the carefully set up Production Habitus, artists were respectful of their time slot and keen not to overrun, they were graceful and amiable in their social conduct, and keen to contribute in the shared endeavour of the project. It is interesting to examine the one exception to this to interrogate what might have been different in the way they interpreted the Production Habitus.

Analysing a Failure of the Approach

We had attempted to control the numbers of people in the control room by explaining to artists about the limited space and the need to give the students and engineers the chance to concentrate. Most artists understood and only brought musicians with them, however one artist arrived with a large entourage and set up camp in the green room in a way contrary to our spirit of camaraderie. They had not prepared an arrangement with the 'live' aesthetic we had asked for, instead augmenting drums and guitar with a heavily layered pre-recorded track for many of the backing vocal, percussion and synth layers. We felt the aesthetic guidance we had been communicating had not been received, missing the goal to make use of heritage instruments and acoustical opportunities the studio afforded. Similarly, this was the only artist to push the limits of the allocated time slot by continuing to play extra songs after several versions of the two agreed ones had been completed. When this became apparent, the presence of their manager made it a little more difficult to intervene, setting up a communication structure that demanded a firmer tone that was outside the Production Habitus we wanted to maintain.

In analysing why this artist and their team did not display quite the behaviours and attitudes we had tried to elicit, and why they had seemingly missed so much of the essence of the Production Habitus, we can suggest it was because they had been recruited to the project via a slightly different route. Most of the artists were carefully curated by the producers and were connected to Karousel, the not-for-profit musical collective managed by Chris Sheehan. In selecting the artists, Chris considered the moment they were at in their career and how they would approach the Abbey Road project

opportunity. Some were early career independent artists who had built the right level of momentum to be able to perform at a high level, but who had enough experience to recognise what being part of the project could mean for their careers. Some were at a later stage in their career and would appreciate the unexpected chance to record at Abbey Road, perhaps when they had never had the chance to when their career was at its height. As most artists were connected to Karousel they were also familiar with its community spirit and of being in situations where multiple artists were in shared situations, needing to help each other out for the benefit of everyone. These artists approached the project with a reverence for the studio and an enthusiasm to be part of a multi-artist album with its stated aims. Our errant artist was previously unknown to the producers and included at the request of one of the other stakeholders. This alternative path to the project meant that the artist was not subject to the same considerations as the others in selection, and could not benefit from having a previously established understanding of the producers' personalities. They were more in the dark. The line of communication between the producers and the artist was longer, and so messages about the nature of the project were filtered through a support team surrounding the artist. We can postulate that much of the social and conceptual frameworks of the Production Habitus were lost in this chain of communication. Their career was at a moment where their support team would be arranging a lot of opportunities and exposure for them and giving the artist a lot of encouragement to build their confidence. In this context, with the artist's immediate social environment filled with confidence building messages from their team, our project could be viewed primarily as another career building opportunity, with our actual project ethos and aims largely overlooked. They brought with them their own existing Production Habitus, with a social micro-culture supported by the team who arrived with them. This effectively acted as a bubble that shielded them from the effects of our Production Habitus and as such, they approached the project with a different attitude than the others involved.

This highlights the importance of the producers' role in selecting the 'Persons' for the Production Habitus. It shows by comparison how successful the curation of the other artists was, and how much consideration of their career, dispositions and sensibility is needed to craft a coherent aesthetic. We can also consider the challenges of the communications needed to generate the Social Micro-Culture. Our approach failed to get the right messages across when they needed to pass through a support team who perhaps had an alternative agenda for their artist.

Production Habitus in Mixing

The principal decision around mixing the album was deciding who was going to do it. Early conversations focused on the budget, who we might already know that would be sympathetic to the project aims and so give us a good deal, and who might be available that had a good reputation for mixing records. Our ambition for the audio quality of the mixes was very high. We felt that given the world class quality of the recording situation, the mix had a lot to live up to and so we wanted to source a mix engineer with an established reputation and sufficient cultural capital in the field whose involvement would further enhance the actual audio whilst elevating the project's standing in music industry circles. By the time the recording sessions came around we hadn't yet selected anyone to mix, but we had a much deeper understanding of the Production Habitus and therefore the selection criteria for the mix engineer had become more nuanced. We had been enjoying a strong working relationship with Paul, the recording engineer in the sessions, and the notion of a 'name' mix engineer became less important. Paul's mixing skills were unknown to us, but he knew the material and project aims intimately having been immersed in the Production Habitus and this had a high value. In the sessions we saw that he was a brilliant audio engineer, and he was a very positive presence in the social micro-culture. He was a core part of the conversation when we were discussing tonal aesthetics during the sessions, and so it just 'felt right' that he should mix the album. This sense was so strong that it overcame our concerns that as Paul works at Abbey Road, hiring him to mix also meant spending mix budget hiring another Abbey Road studio, the Gatehouse, for a few days. This would shorten the time for mixing to just three days, which we rationalised suited the 'live on the studio floor' aesthetic. The mixing sessions happened a month after the recording sessions and keeping the production at Abbey Road gave a continuity for the producers. Having been away from the studio for a month and being busy with other projects, walking back into the same building to return to this project had the effect of physically putting us back into the Production Habitus. The project aims, the social dynamics and the intended aesthetics were instantly refreshed and activated in our awareness. The symbolic capital of working at Abbey Road continued to have an effect on us throughout the mixing.

If we consider our Consolidation Points Framework (CPF) from the previous chapter, we can understand that the mixing process combines much more than just audio. With the coproducers in attendance, Paul's task included blending the personalities, meanings and moods expressed in the performances with the project's mental health message, its defined aesthetic goals, the acoustic sound of Abbey Road Studio 2, and the comments from the coproducers. We were considering the artists' positions and predicting how they might react to certain mix decisions that foregrounded one

instrument over another, or that enhanced or diminished the natural acoustic of the space. Conversations would keep referring back to the 'live aesthetic' and the product definitions we had made in constructing the Production Habitus early in the process. The mix needed to stop short of correctional editing or overly processing sounds in order for the 'liveness' to be overtly audible. There was a need to enhance the organic nature of the tones and performances, to keep the occasional shuffle or count-in that signalled it was all recorded live, as well as to produce a vintage warmth and smoothness that would satisfy our conceptions of what an 'Abbey Road' sound should be. We were essentially consulting our domain knowledge, aurally imagining what it should sound like, and then attempting to communicate this image, sometimes with objective technical terminology ("Pull out about 3db at 200Hz and slow down the attack on the 1176"); sometimes with shared domain references ("Drier than Solid Air – closer to Joni Mitchell on Blue – but keeping the John Martyn warmth") and sometimes with more creative, subjective language ("It needs to sound more yellow and dustier"). We were comparing and negotiating our individual aesthetics through conversations sited within our shared domains of production, songwriting, music technology and popular music, and shaping the tones of the product toward our coproduced idea. In this way the 'mix' included processing and balancing the nested holons and domains of the coproducers into one aesthetic that the product would embody.

There were also considerations around the sequencing of the album which led to us selecting the second song recorded for some of the artists, the one they recorded for themselves in the remaining session time rather than the one they had intended for the album. This meant that we could address sequencing issues where the album felt like it needed more energy at certain points, or shorter songs at others, and it enabled us to avoid the inherent risk of producing an overly downbeat album due to the mental health subject matter. Of course, this was done with the artists' consent, and it allowed us to address a limitation in the project planning which had meant that we didn't hear demo versions of all the songs before the recording sessions. The short turnaround on the mixing still allowed time for the artists to comment on the first mix, requesting amendments before committing to the final mixes. In this way they could remain part of the Production Habitus, able to contribute to postproduction. It is interesting to note that most artists were considerate and kept their requests simple, mainly addressing broad level changes that reflected intentions in the arrangements that we had missed. I suggest doxa from the Production Habitus to do with camaraderie, a shared understanding of the multi-artist project, not wanting to be overly precious in this situation and knowing the project's time and budgetary limitations prevented artists from commenting as much as

they would have done in projects where the creative ownership of the final sound was more with them.

Production Habitus in the Product Preparation

The project's social aims came to the fore in preparing the actual product, with the main focus being on the vinyl version of the album. Copyright issues prohibited us from using the phrase "Live at Abbey Road" in the title, and many potential names that would summarise the mental health aims of the project in a short snappy phrase were floated and discussed. The name needed to balance these social aims with fresh language that would be appealing to a popular music audience. Most of our suggestions were dismissed for sounding overly 'worthy' or just not interesting enough, until Chris Sheehan recalled a lyric from back when he was a songwriter that used the phrase 'Smoke Rainbows.' He explains in the liner what that meant:

> Writing songs was my way of turning darker times back to colour so that it might help both myself, friends and strangers; but eventually the colours ran out. It's often only human warmth and contact that brings us back from the monochrome.
>
> Chris Sheehan (2019, *Smoke Rainbows* liner notes).

This concept of a desaturated rainbow was communicated to Scott Jones, the art director for the project who had been attached from the beginning and so was immersed in the Production Habitus and fully aware of its aesthetic and social aims. As the album was aiming to raise funds and awareness of the Music Minds Matter mental health service for musicians, Scott wanted to extend the musicians' collaboration into the visual artwork. Each artist would draw or paint a line on paper that represented their life in music to date. Scott would then combine these lines into a sort of collective consciousness that became a 'rainbow' for the album cover art. Using heat reactive thermochronic ink, this 'rainbow' appears completely black until you hold your hand on it, whereupon the body heat melts the black away to reveal the colourful collage of lines underneath (see figure 3.4). The idea being portrayed is that darkness associated with mental health issues can be lifted with human contact. This was an unanticipated but brilliant demonstration of one of the core research interests of the project, which was to investigate how the essence of a Production Habitus can be rendered in the final product. The visual interpretation of the project's social aims and the camaraderie of the social micro-culture are blended with the personalities, histories and creativity of all the participants into an interactive physical artwork.

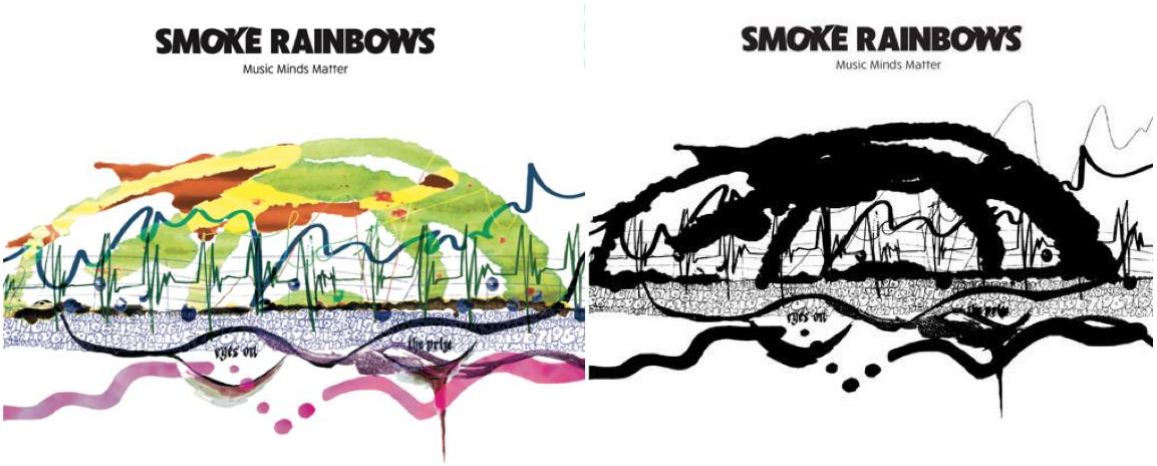


Figure 3.4 The heat reactive thermochronic cover of the vinyl album. The image on the right is how the cover appears normally. When heat is applied, such as with human touch, the colours are revealed as shown on the image on the left (artwork and sleeve design by Steph Jones and Scott Jones, 2019).

Notions of high quality that we built into the Production Habitus are also present in the rest of the graphic design package, where the back of the record sleeve is pure white with a simple message in an elegant font printed in the centre: 'Music Minds Matter.' The organic, classic recording aesthetic of the studio is represented on the inner sleeve, which features photos from the sessions processed with a vintage tone and subtle film scratch filter.

This project was perhaps unusual in its particular multi-stakeholder, multi-artist dimension. However, by using the concept of Production Habitus as proposed in Chapter 2 it is possible to manage the detailed planning needed to create a coherent set of goals to mobilise the participants, and to produce a coherent product at the end. By considering the project definitions first and then the motivations of the possible participants we were able to build a production process that enabled creative and appropriate responses. Drawing on and merging our own domain knowledge as musicians and producers we were able to use language and communications to define a social micro-culture and a way of doing things that the collaborators could buy into. We were sensitive to the capital in the studio, the stakeholder institutions and in the people working on the project and this allowed us to shape the feel of being involved in the project so that we could attempt to stimulate desired behaviours and encourage those ideas that worked with the project goals. As a model for designing and for thinking about a coproduced project, Production Habitus draws creative attention

to important components that may have otherwise gone overlooked or undervalued. It maps an ecosystem of factors that effect the character of a recording, and so addresses the second research question, *how can the social and logistical arrangements of a production be considered to deliberately shape the aesthetic of the final product?*

CHAPTER 4: Artistic Persona in the Music Production Process

Overview

This chapter considers how the creative persona of a producer-artist is affected in the practice of writing and producing songs. It examines the stages of music production, suggesting that they are better understood in cyclic rather than linear models. It investigates internalised forms of collaboration and uses of technology in contemporary song production and how they affect the producer-artist's development of their creative Self.

The technical and cultural contexts of modern music production present a landscape in which artists can exercise detailed control over their output and its distribution. The Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) and the accessibility of digital marketing and distribution platforms provide the tools for artists to produce music independently and present it to the world as their unique creation, the product of their artistic persona. This artist-producer is often a sole creative able to fulfil multiple creative, technical and entrepreneurial roles within a production, from the composing the initial musical idea to tweaking the final mix, and as such the production journey presents countless opportunities for them to develop and express an artistic persona in the sonic worlds they create and the music products they inhabit. They can distil elements of their visual stylings, personal history, musical influences and world view into a curated artistic Self that is represented in their production sound. In Burgess' typology of music producers these self-producing artists can become auteurs defined by "the unique personal identity with which they infuse their productions" (2013, p.10). In considering their creative practice however, we must be careful not to reinforce the idea of the artist working completely in isolation, crafting their sonic art during moments of fevered inspiration in communion with their muse. The critiques of such romantic mythology around record production are examined by McIntyre (2012) who sees creativity more as "the emergent property of a system in action" (2019, p.69) and demonstrates comprehensively across numerous writings that creativity in popular song production is better understood as the result of collaboration, even if the collaborators are unseen and unmet actors in a wider cultural system that the producer is working within (McIntyre 2019, 2012, 2008, 2011). Therefore, in order to examine the emergence and development of the producer's artistic persona we will first need to consider more collaborative and distributed approaches to understanding creativity.

Distributed Creativity

One perspective on how such distributed collaboration could occur was presented by the pioneering

Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein. He identified the consciousness of the spectator as the site where meaning is created, but discusses this creativity as a collaboration with the text's writer in which the writer attempts to guide the spectator's response, and in which the spectator's contribution is dependent on their unique history and disposition:

> In fact, every spectator, in correspondence with his individuality, in his own way and out of his own experience – out of the womb of his fantasy, out of the warp and weft of his associations, all conditioned by the premises of his character, habits and appurtenances, creates an image in accordance with the representational guidance suggested by the author, leading him to understanding and experience of the author's theme. This is the same image that was planned and created by the author, but this image is at the same time created also by the spectator himself.
>
> Eisenstein 1947 (quoted in Gruber & Davis 1988, p.261).

Barthes places more emphasis on the reader in his discussion of 'The Death of the Author' (1977) and reduces the creativity that can be credited to the author. Barthes' scripter, thereby, combines many previously existing elements from a cultural store into a 'tissue of quotations' (1977, p.146) rather than authoring a unique text from scratch. Like Eisenstein, Barthes identifies the mind of the reader as the real site where creativity occurs and meaning is assembled, as it is the space that "holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted" (Barthes 1977, p.148).

This perspective would suggest our producer-artist has little agency at all in the creation of their works, as noted by McIntyre (2009, 2012) who instead sees the individual producer-artist as an active part of cyclical system, drawing from and contributing to a dynamic cultural and social sphere with each new creative contribution to it. Drawing on confluence approaches based in psychology and sociology he cites Hennessy in asserting:

> Creativity cannot be separated from the societal and cultural contexts in which it arises [and] only with the adoption of a truly integrated systems perspective can researchers hope to ever understand the complexities of the creative process.
>
> Hennesey 2017 (in McIntyre 2019, p.69).

McIntyre adopts Csikszentmihalyi's systems model of creativity to illustrate this. An individual

acquires the body of knowledge of a cultural grouping, or 'domain,' that they are immersed in, learning its particular rules, expectations, habits and requirements. This individual is then able to use this ingrained knowledge to create something that offers novelty to the domain. A social group, the 'field,' holds the body of knowledge of the domain and assesses the individual's creative contribution. If it is accepted then it enters the domain, which is now slightly altered by the new addition (Csikszentmihalyi 2013, pp.28-29). Subsequent contributions to the domain will be prepared by individuals whose ingrained knowledge would have been modified by the new addition, and so the cycle continues with the domain mutating and evolving with each new contribution in a Darwinian progression of cultural development. Applying the systems model to the discipline of music production, we could say for illustration that the cultural domain is a particular musical genre that represents the entire body of produced works in that genre, say, prog rock. The field is then the fans, music press and communities that hold the body of knowledge of prog rock and comment on it, and the individual is an artist who, having immersed themself in prog rock and learnt its structures, rules and production traits to the point where they come naturally, produces an original prog rock song that follows the rules enough to qualify for admission into the prog rock domain whilst simultaneously offering something novel. If the fans, prog rock communities and music press accept this new song with its novel addition it becomes part of the prog rock domain, contributing to the overall evolving body of prog rock productions.

If we rewind to the conception of the song, and consider the circumstances that affect its composition, then we can examine how the producer-songwriter begins to construct and curate an artistic persona that will be presented to the domain through the song. In band collaborations, this constructed Self must navigate the production process and survive the addition of the other band members artistic personalities who now share the produced audio artefact as a vehicle on which it will be presented to the audience. To endure intact the producer-songwriter's persona must combine successfully with the others to present an enhanced version that will be accepted by the intended audience. This would be the band's artistic persona, a recognisable creative and commercial entity.

However, with the establishing of the DAW as a songwriting tool (Bennett 2018; Strachan 2017; Marrington 2011; 2016; Miranda 2012), the roles of producer, songwriter and musician have become blurred, and the producer-songwriter can now work in isolation to produce the meaning of a track before presenting it to the rest of the band. As well as shaping their own creative persona they are shaping the meaning of the song in complex layers of sound that are far more expressive than lyrics, chords and melody alone. Indeed, as indicated by Zak (2001, p.27) the 'song' may not exist until

various signifying timbres, musical parts, spatial effects and other elements not traditionally considered as 'songwriting' are present.

On Persona

At the start of his study on the meaning of popular song(s), Allan Moore suggests that for many of us, music and what it means to us personally will be a factor in defining who we are (2012, p.1). He is concerned with how pop song productions are communicating meaning to the listener. What factors in the aural landscape they present are conveying messages to the listener, from traditional musical domains such as melody, form and harmony that are inherent in the songwriting, to factors more attributed to the manner of their production, such as timbre, space, and vocal tone? In his book, Moore addresses these questions from an analytical position as listener and musicologist and offers a wealth of detailed case studies from the past century of popular song(s).

In analysing how listeners connect to a song and identifying what the main conduit of communication might be, Moore suggests that it is primarily through the persona of the vocalist, "…an artificial construction that may, or may not, be identical with the person(ality) of the singer" (2012, p.179). This persona must in some way become known to the listener so that they can interact with it in experiencing the song. The vocal, as it exists within the track, must carry sufficient information to allow us "to construct the persona of the individual to whom we are listening, on the basis of the track we are listening to" (Moore 2012, p.180). In analysing this embedded information, the semiotic coding of the recorded voice is explored by Frith who points out that we don't just hear recorded voices as isolated phenomena, but "...we assign them bodies, we imagine their physical production" (1996, p.196). The recorded voice then, becomes an index of gender, age, ethnicity, class, as well as attitude and character. These attributes form a personality in the understanding of the listener that they can then interact with. This singer-personality that the listener constructs is also affected by factors outside of the recorded track that the listener may or may not already know about the singer in question, from images of their physical appearance and visual stylings in the artwork or online, to how they come across onstage, in interviews or in other media stories associated with them. Moore terms this composite real-world identity the *performer* and discusses it as distinct from the *persona* which is the voice the performer assumes when singing (2012, p.181). He examines the relationship between the persona embodied in the vocal and its environment (the accompaniment) and focuses on the meaning that can be derived from the ways this relationship is handled, not just in the parts as they are written musically, but in the complexity, timbres and spatial characteristics of their sound worlds (2012, p.187). This would suggest that there is a quality intrinsic

to the produced song that communicates a unique character that is a result of the vocal persona and the manner in which the accompaniment is arranged around it. At a simplistic level, we could say that crafting this *production character,* or the track's personality, is one of the core roles of the producer, and that overseeing the manner of the contributions of various collaborators on a project and handling all the required logistical, technical, musical and social arrangements should be carried out in service of this craft. In illustration, Zak examines the sonic distinctiveness of particular instrumental, spatial and production timbres unique to the situation in which a track was produced. He proposes that a recorded song contains three compositional layers: the song as it could be transcribed on a lead sheet; the arrangement as the written instrumental parts; and the track, which is the sound recording itself, a set of "specific performances and sounds, of fixed timbral and sonic relationships that the listener experiences" (2001, pp.24-25). Zak's position that the track as a sonic artefact is 'composed' in a creative process related to, but distinct from, the composition of the song and the arrangement, brilliantly draws attention to the concept of the track as a text that is authored in the collaborative production process:

> Compositional decisions are based on or influenced by a similar set of factors, which include technical competence, aesthetic belief, the needs of personal expression, a sense of style and language, a feeling for form and dramatic narrative, familiarity with other works, and so on.
>
> Zak (2001, p.38).

The song and the arrangement are encountered through the track which has its own deliberately crafted identity, or personality. He goes on to examine well-known individual tracks and identifies examples of 'sonic character' that define the tracks' personality, such as the twelve-string guitar tone of the Byrds' version of *Mr Tambourine Man* (1965), pointing out that such "striking sonic character adds a further dimension of sensory meaning to the pitch and rhythmic elements of the musical part, creating a comprehensive formulation of musical substance" (2001, p.60). In our consideration of persona and how it is expressed in an audio artefact created by the producer-artist, we can use Zak's three compositional layers as a framework. That is, we can ask how is the artist-producer's persona expressed in the songwriting; how is it handled through the arrangement; and how is it present in the committed performances, timbres and soundscape that represent the definitive, produced work?

Zak's work examines the aural production character of produced popular songs and how particular recorded performances and sounds can gain a layer of meaning as triggers of association tied to a

particular artist, producer or genre, and Moore's work investigates what this meaning could be and, more importantly, *how* the sounds are meaning what they mean. This all provides a useful starting point for an exploration of song writing and track production that considers the meanings and character communicated in a recorded song as intended by the producer-artist working alone, and the factors involved in artistic persona and its links with track personality. In this chapter and the next we will be concerned with the persona of the solo producer-artist and how it develops; the themes of the project; the influence of different internal collaborators; the character of the production process; and how it all comes across in the final product. Chapter 7 expands this to include the creation of a band persona where the producer-artist is working with more direct creative collaborators, through the autoethnographic study of the production of an album with the band *Halo Blind.*

The Stages of Production and the DAW-Based Track-Writing Engine

In considering the emergence of an artistic persona in music production, and how it sits in the character of the production culture or 'habitus', it is important to examine the creative, logistical and technical processes of production, and how they cluster into activities that progressively develop the musical material. In production musicology these are often described in a staged linear process (e.g., McIntyre 2012; Hepworth-Sawyer and Golding 2011), starting with the composition of the material and leading through its development and the logistical organisation of the project in pre-production, then to the committing of performances and timbres in the production stage, and then on to the balancing, sweetening and preparing of the material for market in post-production. It is a staged model familiar to many forms of media production.

It can be difficult to describe to the layperson just what it is that music producers do, and the pre-production – production – post-production linear model can be useful to help explain our activities, or even to help the freelance producer in costing their services to clients. However, it has become a less relevant logistical model for the modern DIY producer, as the creation of their music rarely follows such a staged linear workflow, and so it is not a useful analytical model for scrutinising the creativity of writing records in any depth. The emergence of the DAW as a songwriting tool is a much-discussed factor in the blurring of boundaries between the stages of production (Bennett 2018; Strachan 2017; Hepworth-Sawyer and Golding 2011; Miranda 2012; Marrington 2011; Marrington 2016). For many rock and pop producers the composing of a track is now such an amorphous process that the boundaries between the stages have lost logistical significance. A producer may well be performing tasks traditionally grouped into the mixing post-production stage

long before the song has an established structure or harmonic sequence. Similarly, creative tasks that are traditionally considered pre-production are now commonly delayed until near the end of the production process. For example, the lyricist may need to hear the complex interaction of the musicians' performances, and the personality and emotion they portray when carefully balanced against each other in the mixing process, before he or she can draw out the specific meaning of the song and write the right lyrics. As Zak (2001) has discussed, the very impetus to write the melody and lyrics to create 'the song' from the layers of musical material may only be generated after the producer songwriter has been inspired by a blending of rhythms and timbres achieved by applying particular effects and mixing techniques more traditionally associated with post-production.

In studying collaborative songwriting environments Bennett (2011) contends that six processes are involved in developing musical ideas – stimulus, approval, adaptation, negotiation, veto and consensus. A stimulus idea is presented by one writer which is then either approved, vetoed or adapted by the other. If both agree the idea achieves consensus and is included in the song as it develops. If vetoed the idea may be negotiated or further adapted. I suggest an adaptation to Bennett's stimulus-evaluation framework to deal with producer-artists working on their own.

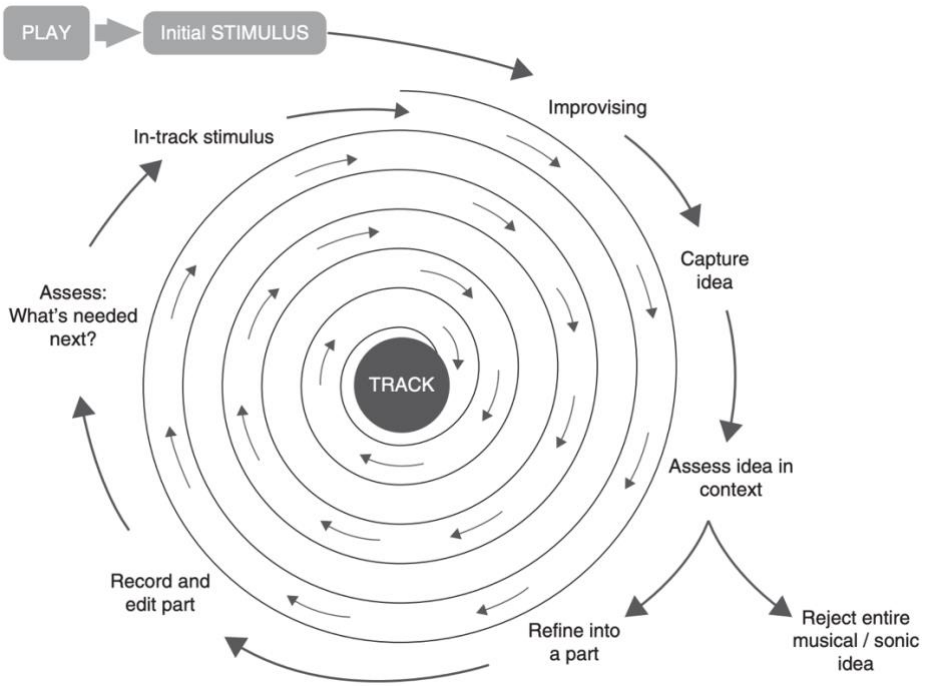


Figure 4.1 The DAW-based Track-Writing Engine

The DAW-based track-writing engine (Figure 4.1) is a similar process of experimentation, assessment and rejection that is driven by stimuli. A stimulus is identified following a period of play, usually on an instrument or time spent messing around in a DAW. Countless other ideas have been instantly rejected until one is judged to have something special about it. This idea is developed through improvisation and further play until a point where it is captured and saved so it can be remembered. This kick-starts the engine and the entire track-writing process. The captured idea is usually assessed, refined again, and recaptured, all with a sense of excitement that the idea has merit. This developed idea now becomes the stimulus for the next idea as the artist assesses what the track needs now, for example another instrumental part to harmonise that last one, a lyric idea, or a particular timbre or feel that can be achieved through processing and effects. The new idea then goes through the same process of play, assessment, rejection or development until it becomes the stimulus for another idea. In this way, subsequent stimuli are self-generated by the engine and on a good day the artist can achieve flow, the state of being completely involved in an activity that is challenging but intrinsically rewarding: "You're right in the work, you lose your sense of time, you're completely enraptured, you're completely caught up in what you are doing" (Csikszentmihalyi 1996, p. 121). One idea stimulates the next and the cycle continues with ideas being assessed, rejected or refined until a complete track is created. Working in the DAW in this way, any process associated with pre-production, production, and post-production is up for grabs at any moment of the track creation. The track develops horizontally on the timeline in terms of its song form structure, but it simultaneously develops vertically on the timeline, where the rhythms, arrangement, density and timbre are crafted depending on what the current stimulus inspires or demands.

It is worth noting here how these moments of inspiration are the driver of the track-writing process, but we need to examine more closely how the producer-artist decides which ideas are good and why they have value. Gruber & Davis propose a constructionist evolving systems model and use the metaphor of a lightning strike in a thunderstorm to illustrate how sudden moments of creative insight are better understood as part of a complex system in which knowledge, skills and dispositions build up in the creative individual over time, progressing and interacting and at times producing a flash of insight (1988, pp.243-244). If we adhere to Csikszentmihalyi's systems model perspective to scrutinise this 'inspiration' we might see that it happens when the producer-songwriter hears something in their work-in-progress that they judge is novel and exciting whilst remaining aesthetically acceptable to the field. This moment of recognition where the producer-artist identifies a musical idea or sonic nugget that excites them is critical, both in providing a stimulus to drive the creative process – that crucial intrinsic motivation - and in forming key components in the sound

world that determine the product's character and carry messages about the artist's persona. From their position as an artist steeped in the bodies of knowledge of multiple intersecting discipline-specific fields and domains, their judgement of what is novel and exciting will be largely dependent on the particular combination of fields and domains that they have interacted with, mediated through their social origins, the cultural scenes they are located within, their age, gender, and any other personality determinants that could have an influence on their artistic taste. Many DIY producers have hard-drives full of half developed material that has stalled, as for whatever reason the flow of creative excitement dried up, leaving the work suspended between production stages in a state of being partly written, partly arranged and partly mixed. It will likely sit there waiting for a new stimulus to come along, such as an appropriate new commission for which the work can serve as a starting point, or a new inspirational moment generated somewhere else in their ongoing creative practice that motivates them to impose a structure to the work, commit to the core message, write the lyrics and finish the damn thing.

The blurring of the staged production process is not new or specific to DAW-based production practice. Even before the widespread adoption of the DAW, hip-hop producers would create complete beats that contained specific hooks, rhythmic arrangements, timbral relationships and mix balances long before a structure or lyrics were considered. A beat would then be circulated in hip-hop communities on CDs, DAT or cassettes in the hope of inspiring an artist to create a song to it (Alexander 2007). Even in genres more associated with a 'song first' approach, such as guitar-based pop or country and folk, it had long been the practice of many songwriters in the days before the DAW to use 4-track cassette recorders like the Tascam Porta 1, or later multi-tracking standalone workstations like the Yamaha AW16G, to fix arrangements and timbral relationships into specific ideas and meanings early in the compositional process. Zak cites Sting here, who wrote in 1983, "I make the best demo I can, singing and playing guitar, bass, piano and drum machines. I get a good version so that people will see its potential" (Zak 2001, p.27). It is fair to surmise that Sting wanted his collaborators to experience the song as he envisaged it, presenting it complete with the emotional content and meanings carried in the relationships between instrumental parts and tones fixed in the arrangement. His collaborators would hear the fully arranged song and attribute meaning to it in their own minds (Barthes 1977) that could be assessed and discussed so that decisions could be made to progress the song. In essence, the collaborators perform the duty of a test audience for the song, not just as lyrics, melody and chords, but as a fully written track. Well before the DAW it was a common anecdote amongst rock communities that specific sounds and performances from a multi-track demo could not be re-created or bettered in the studio production stage and so were

lifted directly from the demo tape to survive into the final version. The demo part was deemed to have a particular inimitable quality that we could reasonably label character: something special that happens when a musician is performing the part for the first or nearly first time, before they become overly familiar with it and the performance loses its edge, straying close to recital when their fingers move across the instruments with practiced ease rather than the concentrated, energised focus achieved when the part is new to them.

This aspect of studio performance has been commented on by Daniel Lanois during his interview with Massey (2009). He describes how Emmylou Harris has never bettered her original vocal take from the guide tracking stage on another day:

> That's where it all gets mysterious, because it's all beyond measurement; if it's the same mic and the same vocal chain and the same woman in the same room, then it should be the same…but it's not. That's where you get into psychology and spontaneous combustion and freshness and all those aspects.
>
> Daniel Lanois (in Massey 2009, p.22).

As well as these difficult to quantify aspects, the practicalities of writing at home and recording in an expensive studio produce other characteristics that can make a demo part more desirable than a polished studio part. In a lot of projects, the demo parts are recorded with less effort put into the means of capture so as to get the ideas recorded quickly, such as using the first microphone that comes to hand, recording in a noisy environment, or with a sub-standard instrument. However, these can be the very things of happy accidents that can occasionally produce the most characterful, creative parts.

Perhaps a key difference with the contemporary DAW is the functionality to use the exact same DAW session used for writing and being able to take it into the studio for the production process as a blueprint for tracking the final, more collaboratively scrutinised performances and tones. This makes it easier for characterful demo parts to survive into the final version but could also constrain the creativity of the collaboration by presenting the easiest option of replacing the demo parts one by one in an overdubbing process that favours the songwriter's exact arrangement ideas, limiting the potential part-writing contribution of the other musicians. Such a production model also limits the reactive and dynamic performances achieved when musicians record their performances simultaneously and is in danger of producing sterile music that lacks a performance spark and fails to

deliver the desired project meaning, aesthetic or band persona. The producer should be aware of such dangers when designing the production process or creating the Production Habitus. This is explored in depth in Chapter 7.

As the technology allows more and more compositional freedom (songwriting-wise and track writing-wise) to dip into any stage of the production process without the need to have completed previous stages, perhaps the value of conceptualising a linear staged view of the production process is as a self-reflective tool for the producer-artist. It doesn't represent an actual timeline of progression, but it does provide a structure to the record writing process that can help identify boundaries, such as an end point to an activity, and maintain a sense of positive development and progression towards a goal. Rather than representing a series of dependent tasks in a temporal process, a linear model can offer the producer a framework with which to evaluate their work and their production culture (or carefully constructed Production Habitus), focusing on areas of quality control and ensuring room for collaborative creativity to flourish. We can still use adaptations of the linear model as tools to zoom in to identify key production decisions and scrutinise the collaboration at each point, considering the flows of influence and action throughout the production. However, in placing a production as part of a wider system that includes interaction with an audience, an alternative model is required to better examine the development of artistic persona through a cyclical production process.

The Production Cycle of a Producer-Artist

If we set our interrogative focus at the level of a single project by a producer-artist, we can map out a cycle of record production that broadly describes the creative production process undertaken and how it results in a product with a distinct character (Figure 4.2). This would allow us to track the persona of the producer-artist through a project production cycle, examining where and how production personality is formed, whilst acknowledging that the transition between the stages described is fluid and complex. The persona will track back and forth between the stages, being affected by anticipated happenings in later stages and considerations from earlier stages, rather than step smoothly from one to the next, but the general progression will occur clockwise around the cycle.

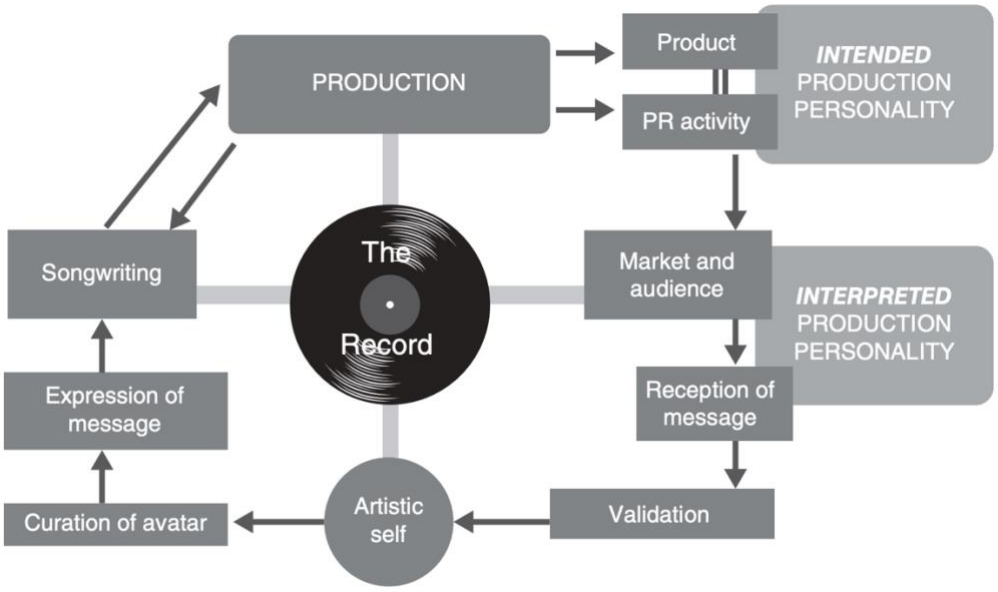


Figure 4.2 The Production Cycle of a Producer-Artist

This model of a Production Cycle (Figure 4.2) articulates a holarchy, or a hierarchy of holons (McIntyre 2019), and opens up the various stages of production for scrutiny of their constituent parts to consider where intended messages are formed and decided upon, how they are expressed through the three layers of record composition proposed by Zak (2001), and how they stimulate meaning in the perception of the audience. It assumes that the artist has some back catalogue, although this could be just demo tracks they have played to friends, and defines key stages in the music production process where artistic identity is affected. The 'record' in the middle represents the artefact whose creation is the focus of the production. This artefact, whatever the format, will ultimately carry the artwork and its embedded messages to the audience. Any collaborators' personas will share this vehicle to get their artistic contributions out into the world and it is the producer's ultimate responsibility that this is achieved as successfully as possible.

We can start to examine the above Production Cycle from any point as it represents an ongoing process, including previously produced work and works to be produced in the future. I have chosen to start with the Artistic Self, winding backwards through the cycle slightly to outline how this entity is partly formed from experiences of previous works, the market's response to it and the subsequent levels of validation experienced by the artist. We will examine the identity of the artist, and how it can be understood as a multiplicity of Selves.

The Artistic Self and The Curation of Avatars

In his exploration of Heideggerian notions of self, Escudero (2014) identifies three main multidisciplinary contemporary approaches to understanding the Self. The Functionalist and Buddhist approaches discount the notion of the Self, suggesting instead that ongoing cognitive processes of self-representation are being mistaken for a distinct whole entity. The second approach, the Hermeneutic approach, views the Self as an evolving life-long project in which we construct a narrative Self through the stories we tell ourselves and others, and the stories others tell about us:

> In other words, our actions achieve intelligibility in a narrative sequence which provides insights on our character traits, the goals we pursue, the values we endorse, and our different ways of living. In the frame of this narrative and temporal sequence, the story of a life continues to be reconfigured by all the truthful or fictive stories that a subject tells about him- or herself. Our life undergoes a constant process of reconfiguration. Life itself, as Ricoeur poetically formulates it, is a "cloth of woven stories."
>
> Escudero (2014, p.9).

The third approach, the Phenomenological approach, links the sense of Self to our experience of the world as experienced first-hand through our senses. It presents the Self as being fundamentally immersed in the conscious experience of things, as being a part of how we sense and interpret the world. This is similar to Heidegger's notion of Being-in-the-world. He views the Self as being inseparable from the experiential flow of living in the world, of being "the unchanging inner reality of the person" (Escudero 2014, p.10). According to Heidegger the experience of Being-in-the-world inevitably includes the adoption of cultural and social norms which inherently renders the Self into an inauthentic existence. One must embark on a life journey towards authenticity by becoming Self-aware, breaking with the entrenched conformity and becoming responsible for one's own Self (1967 pp.166-168). The notion of authenticity is a much-discussed feature of popular music discourse strongly linked to concepts of artistic identity (see Shuker 2017; Weisethaunet & Lindberg 2010; Barker & Taylor 2007; Butler 2003; Moore 2002; McGee 2007), so Heideggerian ideas of an authentic Self are useful considerations in discussing how an Artistic Self emerges in the make-up a person's identity.

In considering the concept of 'author function,' Foucault recognises the existence of several Selves at play simultaneously and that our conceptions of the author operate on them as a plural entity, rather than on a distinct individual (2011 [1969]). In his discussion of signs within a text that refer to the

author, such as first-person pronouns, he demonstrates that they refer not to the actual individual, "…but, rather, to an alter ego whose distance from the author varies, often changing in the course of the work" (2011, p.533). Whilst Foucault was focusing on literary works, this aspect of author function is useful in discussing song production, where the first-person character in a song is commonly a fantasy extension of the songwriter or artist playing out a narrative or expressing distilled ideas in service of the song's message. Artist alter-egos are a mainstay of popular music and plenty of artists such as Prince, David Bowie and Eminem, have used theatrical alter-egos to widen their creative expression, explore different areas of the human experience and keep their output fresh. However, in most produced songs the voice that is present in the work comprises several more subtly affected versions of the real individual singer-songwriter. The notion of author function on multiple Selves becomes more complex as we consider the subtle layering of identity within the artist-producer who presents themself as the creator of a produced song. One Self is the voice or character in the song, crystalized in time and emotion and limited to the messages in the song; another Self is the scribe behind the lyrics, deliberating over the precise language the character will use; one Self is the musical arranger; another the audio engineer; and another Self is brought to the work by the audience in their previous understanding of the artist-producer from past works, journalistic writings or social discussions around the artist and their field. For Foucault, these entities can be encountered simultaneously, and the notion of authorship is distributed among them.

The concept of multiple Selves inhabiting the same body is discussed in philosophical writing and clinical psychology (Braude 1995; Rovane 1998; Gallagher & Radden 2011; Ryle & Fawkes 2007). The *Journal of Clinical Psychology* devoted its entire January 2007 edition to the notion, in which Dimaggio and Stiles explain:

> Each person comprises multiple facets or voices, each possessing its own characteristics, expressing different emotions, and taking distinct perspectives on events and social interactions. As the various parts surface, the person acts and feels differently, processing information differently (Tooby & Cosmides, 1992), anticipating different reactions from others (Baldwin & Main, 2001), and displaying new action tendencies and constructions of meaning.
>
> Dimaggio & Stiles (2007, p.119).

This alternating of multiple Selves depending on the situation is a process which Cognitive Analytic Theory terms 'contextual multiplicity' (Ryle and Fawkes 2007, p.165). Although much of the clinical

psychology research focuses on cases where the inner multiplicity of a person is extreme to the point of disorder, perhaps we can borrow more generally from these approaches to the Self in understanding the emergence of an Artistic Self. The individual whole Self, as a being defined through its experience of the world through bodily senses and interpretive cognitive processes, becomes more self-aware by accumulating experiences over time and reflecting on them. From this position of Being-in-the-world it strives toward a more authentic existence by rejecting cultural paradigms more and more, formulating its own way of doing things to become an individual expressing itself in the world creatively. Through experiencing interactions with others and adapting to various roles in reciprocal social relationships (Ryle & Fawkes 2007, p.165) the Self becomes multi-faceted in order to best approach differing situations. It accumulates narratives about itself that reflect its thoughts, deeds and encounters, and defines its inner dialogue through repetition. It continually curates these stories and expressions in its interactions with the world and others to present as a Self with a unique identity, propelling its life along a trajectory of defining and redefining itself. Each individual's conception of who they are is developed in these processes, which result in a complex contextual multiplicity of Selves that is simultaneously a single person, able to reason from differing viewpoints and conduct inner dialogues between Selves. For Gallagher & Radden, "the confusion and complexity found in the usual psyche are a valuable part of human nature, suited to the moral categories and social institutions we cherish" (2011, p.561).

An artist then, as a person operating in the world, can be considered to represent a complex embodiment of their social and geographical backgrounds, ideologies, education, influences, tribal affiliations, relationships, career to date and other defining factors acquired through life. Of the multiple Selves that develop in this person, the Artistic Self at times steps to the fore and creates work that contains messages expressing elements of itself to the world, such as attitudes, emotions, narratives and views that articulate the individual's experience of the world through their art. It can be seen as distinct from, or at least a variation of, the complete personal Self in that it is a selective concentration of it, a distillation of qualities that represent the individual's artistic journey and that comments on things from the selective viewpoint of the Artistic Self. Parts of the personal Self are emphasised, de-emphasised, fabricated or ignored in the emergence of the Artistic Self, which is brought to the fore when engaging in their art.

The Artistic Self itself can also be perceived as a contextual multiplicity. The Me that strides confidently onto a stage at a gig is a different Me to the one that hunches over a piano, chewing a pencil and agonising over a lyric. And it is a different Me again that connects various bits of

equipment together searching for a particular tone. These Selves are not simply task dependent. The Me that worked on Solo Album 2 is a different one to the Me that works on Solo Album 3, partly due to the different thematic content of the works, and also due to the passage of time between projects and the inevitable personal and artistic development that has occurred. This newer Me is also changed in a manner more directly relevant to my continuing artistic output by the very experience of producing the earlier album, as I have lived through and learnt from the production and distribution cycle. I know how I felt about how the work turned out, and how it was received by the audience and the critics in the field, and therefore I can reflect on creative decisions from an informed position. I can embrace or ignore comments from Others, including inner-Others; I can alter production practices to better elucidate, or veil, my artistic messages; I can direct my time and efforts more efficiently toward aesthetic goals; and I can better consider the position of the audience from an earlier point in the production based on their reaction last time, either by carefully preparing the material to be more accessible to a particular genre listenership, or by hardening my stubborn artistic resolve that deliberately disregards the market's response. Importantly, I will be conscious of my emotional and rational responses to the reception the previous album garnered from the market. Not just if they liked it, but if it connected with them emotionally, or if they understood it. There is a need for the Artistic Self to get feedback for its efforts, and to know that the artistic expressions broadcast in its work were received by another. Such feedback can come from anywhere in the field: press reviews, personal messages, radio plays, social media likes and comments, inclusion on playlists, or interpersonal face-to-face conversations. By monitoring at least some of the impact of its work, the Artistic Self looks for validation, and the level of validation and subsequent confidence as an artist is affected, for better or worse. Hence, with each new project the Artistic Self is necessarily changed in an iterative cycle of development.

At the point of engaging in a new work the Artistic Self will have an awareness of itself that is other to the version it is presenting to the world; the world-facing version is an avatar of the actual Artistic Self, carefully curated to portray the artist in a particular way. We can cite Goffman here, who's influential book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life,* first published in 1959, used the metaphor of the theatre to suggest how an individual interfaces with the social world. Individuals can be seen as actors on the stage of social interaction, each performing multiple roles for the benefit of their audience (1990). He uses the term 'impression management' to describe how the individual presents an idealised image that is appropriate to the social interaction, exhibiting behaviours and a physical appearance that prevents the embarrassment of themselves or others (Crossman 2019). A psychological 'frontstage' and 'backstage' are distinguished with the frontstage being the

performance area, where the deliberate version of Self is exhibited in the individual's interactions with the world; and the backstage being a private mental preparation space where the mask can come off and where mannerisms and artefacts of social performance are selected and practised, "It is here that illusions and impressions are openly constructed" (Goffman 1990, p. 112).

Goffman's ideas have been used in more recent years to examine how individuals manage the wealth of data about themselves online and in social media interactions (Bullingham & Vasconcelos 2013; Crossman 2019; Hogan 2010; Jenkins 2010). The concept of avatar construction through a process of data curation is widely discussed, in which the individual presents an online self greatly enriched by photos, videos, biographical postings, selected web articles and memes. Bullingham and Vasconcelos' study (2013) found their participants' online personas could be embellished or exaggerated for the purposes of creating a more interesting social narrative. They might split the online Self between social media platforms to present several bespoke, slimmed down versions, each designed to best fit the particular platform. Or they might adapt their online persona to conform to the conventions of a particular online social space. Hogan (2010) distinguishes two types of self-presentation in the online world: 'performances', which refer to live online interactions with others; and 'artefacts', which involve the exhibition of curated digital objects that represent the Self to the online world. Goffman's front/backstage analogies can extend to this contemporary online presentation of Self, in that social media spaces are the frontstage; and the private user area of a social media portal, the desk area where the individual works on their personal computer, and the psychological space where language and actions are considered before enacting, are backstage.

There are obvious commercial reasons for an artist to project a particular image online, linked to their audience's expectations and any mythology they want to create around their artistic persona. We have seen how listeners construct an idea of a recording artist by combining the physical characteristics suggested by the sound of their voice on record with whatever other associated media they have encountered (Moore 2012). For the majority of artists, this other associated media will be encountered in online environments, dominated by social media. It follows, then, that Goffman's notion of 'impression management' is at play in the artist's frontstage and backstage actions in their management of their online presence. The Artistic Self presents an online version of itself, or avatar, that projects to the world an idea of the artist that is desired. It does this in its performances in online interactions with others, and in its curation of digital content that populates its online spaces. The topics discussed, views expressed and tone of voice evident in online conversations, combined with the photos, videos, design work, links and memes exhibited in online

spaces controlled by the artist, contain a wealth of meaning that is interpreted by the audience into an idea of who the artist is and what they are about.

This active curation of an online 'social' avatar is a continual activity in the lives of most DIY artists. However, in the early stages of a new project the artist is focussing on particular themes, concepts and ideas that will define the new work. The Artistic Self is exploring, considering the new subject of its artistic attention from various angles, searching for a voice with which to comment on it from. It is engaged in conversations with its inner-Others, defining a perspective for the new work, and allowing different inner qualities, stylings, attitudes, dispositions and viewpoints to amplify or diminish until the most appropriate incarnation of the Artistic Self is settled upon. It is preparing itself for the coming project. This process could be taking place without the artist deliberately controlling it, or even being aware of it happening. Unconscious responses to Being-in-the-world could be shaping the Artistic Self in a particular way, building up over time until the artist feels a need for a creative outlet. It could also happen quite quickly following a commission or other external stimulus to start a project, but there is commonly this need for an incubation of the Artistic Self; a reflective period in which the artist focuses on their Artistic Self, favouring it over the many other Selves and reconnecting after a period of inactivity in this particular art, however short or long. An accelerated version of this activity can be found in actors as they enter the final minutes before stepping out onstage portraying somebody else. Photographer Simon Annand has focused on this moment in actors' work, photographing many actors over a 25-year period (Annand 2019; Thomas 2019). He shot his subjects during the 30 minutes before going on stage as they underwent the process of moving into another Self and literally stepping from a private backstage to a public frontstage, where they met the audience as someone else:

> Whatever theatre actors do during the day, each evening they go on stage to give a performance as 'somebody else'. The dressing room is a physical space that allows for concentration and privacy so the psychological negotiation between the actor and this fictional character can take place. When 'The Half' is called over the loudspeaker backstage, it is the start of a 35-minute countdown to facing the audience and there is no escape.
>
> Simon Annand (2019).

Although the 'character' they must adopt is 'fictional' and indeed written by the play's author and developed collaboratively with the director and company, the analogy with a recording artist negotiating with a version of their Artistic Self is clear. They are preparing and operating a frontstage

character, or avatar, from the psychological backstage of the inner Self. Many of Annand's photographs reveal intensity, gravitas and concentration on the faces of the actors as they do their inner work. They also reveal the intimacy of the backstage space that they each have arranged for themselves to do the work in, which we can consider through the lens of the Production Habitus when discussing production environments (see Chapter 2).

The 'Curation of Avatar' node in the above music production cycle (Figure 4.2) represents this process of the Artistic Self redefining itself for the coming project, forming an 'in-project' avatar. This is distinct from the audience-facing 'social' avatar as it describes the version of the Artistic Self that is socially and creatively engaged in the project, who will explore the themes and express itself through every avenue of the artform. It is the version that the collaborators will encounter, the artist at work with their materials, more informal with their appearance and behaviours away from the views of the audience. In Goffman's dramaturgical approach we can say that the 'in-project' avatar performs on the frontstage in all social environments to do with the creation of the project, in the studio, in the rehearsal room, and in communications with collaborators. The 'social' avatar performs on a more polished frontstage for the wider online audience outside of the project's inner circle and is more tightly curated for its largely PR role. Both versions of the avatar share a backstage space, in which the Artistic Self can prepare behaviours and social materials for them, unobserved by any audience. The avatars will develop over time as the artistic perspective for the new work becomes more established, but they receive a step change at this point in an artist's production cycle, when the themes, contexts and Production Habitus of a new work are being defined. The 'social' avatar will lag behind the 'in-project' avatar in its design, aesthetic and demeanour, not fully catching up until the project is in its later stages and the ideas, themes, overall sonic impression and artwork coalesce into a tangible product character that will be announced to the world in the promotional activity surrounding the release.

I have the notion that moments of intense human connection between artist and audience occur when the door separating the frontstage from the backstage is momentarily blown open, revealing all the mess, complexity, and truth of the human experience in a flash of deep interpersonal communication. Such moments are likely to endear an artist to their audience, and to encourage attributions of authenticity, but the artist-producer must be wary to keep them brief or risk being overly sharing and off-putting to the audience. Backstage only holds excitement and mystery so long as it is only ever glimpsed, and rarely visited.

CHAPTER 5: *Silver Glass: Re-Production*

Overview

The previous chapter presented the producer-artist as a multiplicity of Selves that are curated into an artistic persona during the production process. Even when physically working alone, I have discussed how collaboration occurs with inner-Others as the artist engages with various interrelated systems and domains as they create their work. This chapter examines these ideas and the Cycle of Production through an auto-ethnographic case study. It analyses the deliberate assembling of the Production Habitus and its impact on the final artefact, the development of an artistic Self through the Cycle of Production, and the effect of internalised Others as the artist makes their creative decisions whilst producing music.

Artistic Self in the Cycle of Production

I was in the middle of producing the album for the band Halo Blind in which I co-write and sing the majority of the material. There had been an extended break in the activities of this album project as the world first locked down for the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020, and the disruption to the Production Habitus meant I lost momentum and creative focus whilst dealing with the other professional and personal matters the pandemic created (see Chapter 7). I needed to reconnect with the project and with my artistic Self in order to get back into a creative mindset, and to stimulate the part of that contextual multiplicity that considers the audience's position deeply when assembling tones and performances into messages that will be understood by others. Before committing to edit and performance aspects of the ongoing Halo Blind production, I felt the need to wind back through the production cycle, reacquaint myself with the continuing narrative and trajectory of thoughts that define and redefine my Artistic Self, and seek artistic validation and authentication from an audience (Ryle & Fawkes 2007, p.165). Removing the barrier between front and backstage could be a way to achieve this.

My most well-known song is called *Silver Glass* which I originally wrote and produced for the classic prog rock band Mostly Autumn on the album *Heart Full of Sky* (2007). This original version is included as Appendix 4. It was the first song I sang lead vocals on for the band and has since become a mainstay of the band's live shows, and it has been sampled many times by hip-hop and dubstep artists around the world (for a few examples on YouTube see MrSuicideSheep, 2013; TheRealHipHopChannel, 2010; SOURDIEZELDVD, 2009). The song was originally written to comfort my mother when her sister was terminally ill in hospital, and it seeks to offer comfort and solidarity

to those in similar situations. During the height of the Covid-19 pandemic it was prohibited to visit sick relatives in hospital, denying many families the chance to say goodbye to their loved ones. At the same time people were looking online for alternatives to attending live music events for their cultural interactions. It felt right to produce an emotionally raw, 'live' version of this song to reconnect with the audience and perhaps offer those families in our fan community who had sick relatives an element of connection and solidarity. My intention was therefore to use the audience's familiarity with *Silver Glass* and their existing understanding of its meaning and its status in the Mostly Autumn repertoire, and to site this within an authentic, stripped-down re-production of it to promote a sense of community, connection and solidarity in our fan-base at a socially distanced time. In doing so I hoped to refocus my artistic Self for a period of further creativity by reflecting on my past works and stimulating my sensitivity to the position of the audience. I would record it live, film the performance, and offer the video to the Mostly Autumn audience via YouTube.

Creating the *Silver Glass* Production Habitus

The logistical creation of the Production Habitus for this project was primarily personal and psychologically internalised, as I would be the only person physically involved in the production. This allowed me to go about the production being mindful of my own reactions and thoughts, able to make arrangements with the physical environment, project themes and motivations that would optimise my physical and psychological performance state, bringing about the best conditions to perform under. The only physically present human collaborators in the production were my partner and daughter who contributed a vital element in creating the Production Habitus by agreeing to leave the house for an hour. Whilst a seemingly trivial contribution, they understood my need for privacy when performing emotional material. Even if they sat completely silently in another room of the house, my awareness of their presence and the possibility of them overhearing my vocal attempts would have affected the way I sang. Another key factor in creating a habitus around this mini project was formulating a meaningful social and artistic intent, an artistically valid reason for doing it that would motivate creativity. We have explored in Chapter 2 the importance of project definitions, particularly when the project has a social aim, and we have seen through Amabile's Intrinsic Motivation Principle of Creativity (1983, 2013, 2018) that creativity is greater when participants are intrinsically motivated by the very act of performing the task at hand. Extrinsic motivation, such as the promise of reward or the prospect of being observed, is detrimental to creativity. At a time when a lot of musicians were streaming live performances from their homes quite casually, my less-than-confident performer Self needed the motivation it gets from feeling the work has deep meaning and social value. This is a trait absorbed from the Mostly Autumn doxa (or

'way of doing things') and the aura of deep meaning would help the work fit into the Mostly Autumn domain and be accepted by the audience. The sensitive nature of the social intent, plus the emotional content of the song, plus the fact that I had never played it before with solo piano accompaniment, created a fragile quality to the cognitive processes of the Production Habitus that I wanted to be present in the finished artefact. This kind of fragile performance can feel self-conscious and vulnerable as the artistic Self does the psychological work of getting into the appropriate performance character who can communicate the messages and the musical work of developing the vocal delivery, and so I'm grateful to my family for leaving me to it. I wanted 'fragile and vulnerable' to make their way into in the finished product, but not 'self-conscious.'

We agreed a time in the afternoon when they would go for a walk for an hour, the maximum amount of time deemed appropriate by the government for outdoor exercise at the time (Clark 2020). The duration is an important detail, as it is an external factor that dictated the production process. I would need to get the technical preparations completed enough beforehand so that the hour could be spent focusing on getting into the right psychological performance space and then recording the actual performance. The time of day was another important factor as the performance time needed to consider mealtimes, energy levels and vocal condition. I know that I can't sing very well for about two hours after a meal, and I perform best when I'm hungry. My vocals are always best in the evening after the days' worth of activity has warmed them up, but this wouldn't work with the household routine so the afternoon was the compromise. I would skip lunch and set up the studio before they left so that I could maximise the window I had to perform in.

The song was recorded live at my project studio desk and filmed inexpertly from three angles by the main desktop iMac, a phone propped up against one end of the keyboard, and a laptop positioned at the other end. The video cuts between these three angles, with the iMac front-on view filtered to black and white in the editing software. The performance position at my studio desk is the closest physical representation of my artistic Self's backstage area, and I am wearing whatever scruffy t-shirt I pulled on that day, rather than the more formal black shirts the band tends to wear for our quite lavish projection-heavy stage productions. I didn't tidy or light the room for the videos, but I did close the curtains to reduce some glare and give the performance a more intimate, closed-in aesthetic.

Backstage and Authenticity

By revealing this genuine 'backstage' to the audience I am showing them 'behind the scenes at Chris' studio' images that maybe one or two people might be mildly interested in, but more importantly I

am briefly removing the barrier between physical and psychological frontstage and backstage to communicate more directly with the audience in a way that is perceived to be unmediated by the usual gloss and packaging of produced music. For them to be able to relate to this performance and for it to have meaning for them, they would need to believe in it as an authentic artistic expression and this factor had an effect on the production decisions. The audio set up was a simple vocal mic through an LA-610 channel strip going into Logic X with a Lexicon reverb, and I'm playing a Native Instruments piano. To keep the aesthetic 'live' no mixing at all happened after the performance. I had a few rehearsals and then recorded a couple of takes and picked the best one. The finger clicks at the start of the video, originally done to allow me to sync the audio with the footage from the three cameras, were left in as a cue to prompt notions of a live unedited performance. The aesthetic intent of the high-quality audio but pretty ropey video was to produce an honest and authentic version of the song that would help communicate its message, slightly re-purposed for the Covid-19 lockdown situation. I could have spent a lot more time on the video, researched how to make it look better, sourced better cameras, lit the room properly or even staged a more attractive scene, but such efforts would diminish the message, effectively keeping the 'frontstage/backstage' division more intact, and potentially undermining the fragility at the heart of the performance.

These production decisions can be viewed through Moore's (2002) work on authenticity, which highlights the importance of the relationship between an artist and the audience, with the artist rather than the work being ascribed as authentic by the audience when certain criteria are met. His 'first person authenticity':

> …arises when an originator (composer, performer) succeeds in conveying the impression that his/her utterance is one of integrity, that it represents an attempt to communicate in an unmediated form with an audience
>
> Moore (2002, p.214).

He also cites the argument made by Taylor (1997) that an expression '…is perceived to be authentic if it can be traced to an initiatory instance' (2012, p.213). For the re-production of *Silver Glass* the core messages of comfort and solidarity and the artistic motivation in itself would hopefully be understood as having integrity. The exposed aesthetic of the live performance production and the Production Habitus designed to achieve it are comparatively streamlined and unaltered by the mediation of post-production processes. An audible demonstration of this is where poor vocal tuning has been left uncorrected, such as the phrase at 1:01 – 1:05. The distance from the initial expression

of the message to reception by the listener is small, and indeed demonstrates 'an attempt to communicate in an unmediated form with an audience' (ibid). Moore's 'first person authenticity' can also be considered in the means of distribution. The video was posted to YouTube, which allows the inclusion of contextual information. It was posted with this description:

> A live, solo version of Silver Glass from lockdown. I wrote this song for my Mum at a time when she was having to comfort her terminally ill sister through her final days. We recorded it with Mostly Autumn for Heart Full of Sky in 2006. Revisiting it now from lockdown thinking of all the families unable to visit their loved ones in hospital.
>
> Johnson (2020).

Including this message with its biographical notes is likely to increase the ascription of authenticity as it prompts the audience to consider '…that there is an Other present who *means* what he/she says' (Weisenthaunet and Lindberg 2010, p.477). The listener's experience of the performance is informed by the description they most likely read on accessing it. The integrity of the messages in the production and the relationship between performer and audience are highlighted, and so seep into the listener's understanding of the work as they encounter it. By considering the audience in this way, I am collaborating with an internalised version of them, learned through my immersion in the Mostly Autumn domain.

Moore's 'second person authenticity' occurs when 'a performance succeeds in conveying the impression to a listener that that listener's experience of life is being validated, that the music is "telling it like it is" for them' (2002, p.220). This idea was threaded through the intention of creating a production that would help people feel connected. The whole world was in lockdown, everybody feeling the strangeness, isolation and fear of the situation and unable to leave their homes, and it was very much an experience shared by everybody likely to see the video. The very act of producing something transparently from within the limited production environment of the home was 'telling it like it is' for the audience and therefore likely to be deemed authentic. There is much more to investigate about how production expectations and quality control in all media were affected by the lockdown, from TV panel shows being produced with every panellist in their own homes, to the innovative meta comedy series *Staged* (Dir. Evans 2020) which took place entirely in a video conferencing environment, but it would be outside of our focus here.

In these ways, the design of the Production Habitus was key in facilitating the right kind of performance and the desired aesthetic of the production, which substantiates the second research question, *how can the social and logistical arrangements of a production be considered to deliberately shape the aesthetic of the final product?* The vocal performance is confident but has the intended fragile quality, illustrated at the end of some lines, such as at 1:18 and 1:44 when second note of the words "..side" and"…bed" soften to an airy falsetto. The basic 'live' recording setup, scruffy homely visual, and uncorrected performance moments, such as the clanking wrong note in the left hand at 5:01, add an authentic sense to the aesthetic. This ensures the viewer can perceive the core messages as having integrity, which helped in focussing on my relationship with the audience and stimulating my artistic Self out of hibernation.

Structures of Internal Collaboration

I began the actual production by spending some time playing through the song on the piano, making adjustments to arrange the music for solo piano and vocal as until then it had always been performed with the dramatic instrumentation of a large rock band. At the same time, the vocal mic was set up and I was making adjustments to its positioning, and to gain, EQ and compression settings on the LA610 channel strip that was driving the vocal tone. I was also crafting the Native Instruments piano sound I was using, and trying out several reverb and delay options, effectively creating the tones I wanted simultaneously with arranging and rehearsing the piece so that the performance could be recorded live with no mixing required afterward. This process followed a scaled down version of the cyclic DAW-based Track Writing Engine from the previous chapter (Figure 4.1). The entire piece was not arranged, then rehearsed, then performed, then mixed in a linear fashion, but rather each aspect was being developed in parallel, with one sonic event inspiring a tweak to another until the final production timbre emerged as one: mix, arrangement and performance gestures and all.

We can use Chapter 2's discussion of Csikszentmihalyi's Systems Model (2013), and McIntyre's notions of interconnected, scalable systems conceptualised in holonic structures (2019) to examine my decision making here, how creativity is happening in the process, and how the artistic Self is being affected as a result. McIntyre outlines the domain, field and individual of the systems model and then clarifies that creativity happens in not just one system, but in the interplay between many interconnected, scalable systems:

> From this perspective there is an engagement with a deeply multifactorial, non-linear, interconnected and scalable set of systems which extend vertically, up and down, system within system within system. These are also deeply and horizontally interconnected with related domains and fields.
>
> McIntyre (2019, p.70).

The notion of multiple nested systems creating an intricate network of intersecting domains, fields and individuals allows us to consider how creativity is happening through a process of internal collaboration within the artistic Self (see Figure 5.1).

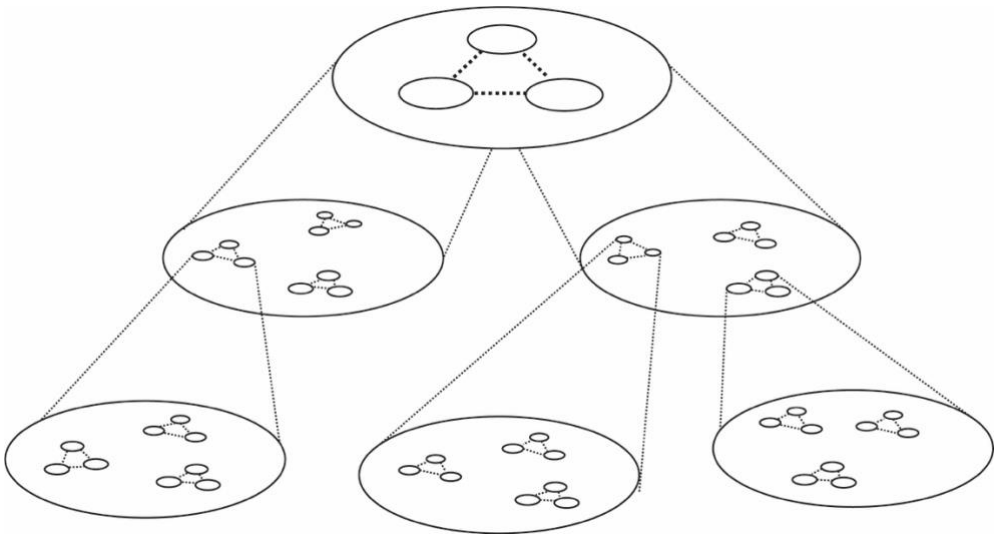


Figure 5.1 A holarchy of nested creative systems.

> One holon is one creative system comprising domain, individual and field, like the one seen at the top level in the diagram. Each system is in itself whole, whilst simultaneously making up part of other systems. This structure allows us to analyse the relationships between the systems, interlinked horizontally and vertically, as we drill down through the layers of the holarchy.

I suggest that for the *Silver Glass* re-production involving one physically present contributor, there are three vertical levels of systems worthy of scrutiny, each consisting of several interconnected horizontal systems.

For example, the rearrangement and rehearsal involved a lot of play and evaluation, with musical and performance ideas assessed against my own internalised domains. In his analysis of David

Bowie's *Heroes,* Thompson (2019) demonstrates the Systems Model in action in the related domains of performance and studio engineering. He suggests that Bowie constructed his vocal performance by using his internal knowledge of the studio vocal performance domain (2019, p.161). That is, he evaluated his creative ideas against an internal notion of whether or not other singers and producers, as well as the audience, would accept them. Thompson goes on to examine how the producer, Tony Visconti, was simultaneously using his internalised domain of studio vocal recording to assess the more technical aspects of microphone selection, room acoustics and the creative use of equipment, in making his engineering decisions (ibid). In the case of my *Silver Glass* re-production, the process included a similar internal consultation with horizontally intersecting domains of general popular music such as vocal performance, piano arrangement and sound engineering, but with the individuals in the systems being different aspects of the same artistic Self, rather than different people. From the holonic perspective, this represents the top level of the structure (see Figure 5.2).

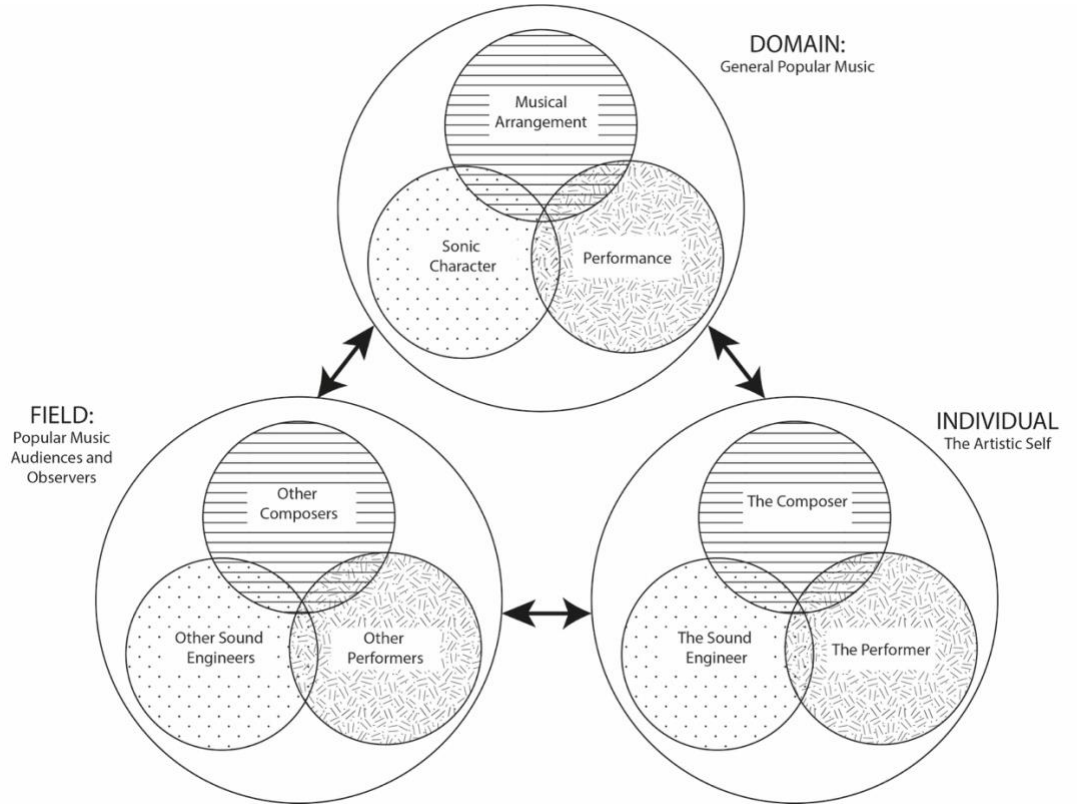


Figure 5.2 Interconnected Systems of general popular music at the upper level of the *Silver Glass* re-production holarchy. The Individual is the artistic Self, active as a contextual multiplicity concerned with preparing work for the domain of general popular music as well as its horizontally intersecting sub-domains. The *composer* Self is affected by the sub-domain

> of popular music arrangement; the *performer* Self is dealing with the sub-domain of pop music performance; and the *sound engineer* Self is concerned with the sub-domain of pop music sonic character. The field here is also multiple, as the artistic Self considers the field as a whole whilst simultaneously focusing on sub-groups within it.

If we zoom in a bit to continue down the holarchy, it can be said that a number of micro-domains are nested within the large domains; other psychological processes at play that contributed to the evaluation and evolution of ideas. The first nested level below the more general system of 'all popular music' is the specific system of 'Mostly Autumn music', as I imagined and anticipated the approval or otherwise of the very niche audience who are familiar with the song already. For example, in an attempt to offer something refreshing to the audience who are the field in this nested sub-system, I decided to include the song's gentle coda, which is on the original (Appendix 4, 06:11 – 07:06) but has never been part of the live band version as it disrupts the progression into the next song in the set when played in a rock concert setting. This live arrangement ending can be heard on the *Studio 2* version of *Silver Glass* that is also submitted as part of this study. From the final piano chord at 5:30, a string part continues a mournful melody that usually sets up the next song of the concert. However for this solo version, I replaced the ending with the original piano coda, audible from 5:36 to the end. I was confident the niche audience would recognise and welcome its inclusion due to my familiarity with the domain and my sense of the field. The "I" that was making these decisions, the individual in the system, was that version of my artistic Self that is active when engaged in Mostly Autumn activities. Having worked with the band for many years, this Self is well steeped in the domain of 'Mostly Autumn music.' It has worked on a lot of music, played many gigs, read many reviews, and in social settings where it needs to interact with fans and journalists, it has sent out its public facing avatar - the curated Chris-from-Mostly-Autumn version of itself that it shares with strangers - and gathered audience reactions through direct conversations. This understanding of the micro-domain of 'all Mostly Autumn music' and the knowledge of its related field facilitates creativity at this niche level of the holarchy (see Figure 5.3).

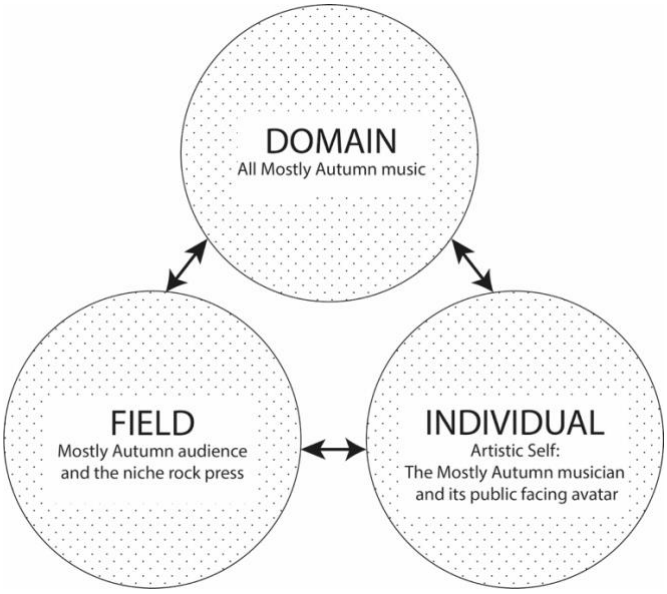


Figure 5.3 The niche system of 'all Mostly Autumn music' at the second level of the Silver Glass re-production holarchy. The domain is defined by previously existing Mostly Autumn work, with the field being Mostly Autumn fans and the journalists that comment on the progressive rock niche that the band occupy. The Individual therefore, is the part of my Artistic Self that is active when working with the band, and it public facing avatar.

Parallel to this is the more behind the scenes system of 'Mostly Autumn Production Habitus.' This contains detailed knowledge of the social rules, technical habits, and production processes normally followed in the band's production activities (Figure 5.3). In this system, I am the individual band member creating something outside of the usual Mostly Autumn modus operandi, which involves decision making from the band leader, rough demo productions, quick rehearsals and a specific tracking model in a specific studio. Here, I am working outside of this model to present something new to the rest of the band and associated production personnel, who are the Field in this system, in the hope that they will happily be associated with the new production and it will be accepted into the band's collected works. Simultaneously, the hope is that my production process is accepted by the team, which would widen the possibilities for the band's future output (see Figure 5.3). The existence of this internalised 'Mostly Autumn Production Habitus' system affected my musical and technical creative decisions. Much of the band's output is informed by a 'from the heart' aesthetic which elicits ideas of the authentic expression of raw emotional themes, and this is partly achieved by a quick tracking process where takes are assessed far more on their emotional content than their musical or technical perfection. In the established 'Mostly Autumn Production Habitus' this is largely a function of the studio the band uses. Fairview Studio is built around an Otari Radar II recording

system (Fairview Recording Studio, 2026). Designed as a direct replacement for tape machines, the Radar system does not have the advanced editing capabilities of a modern DAW. On its release in the 1990s its converters were highly regarded by engineers moving from tape to digital systems as they achieve the high-quality warm sound associated with analogue systems. The workflow is also similar to tape in many ways, one of them being that the unit only offers a single layer of undo (Robjohns 1999). This imposes the limitation of destructive recording whereby early takes cannot be kept, recalled and compiled later as we would by using a DAW. As with tape, if you record over a take it's gone forever. In this way the limitations of the technology used in a normal Mostly Autumn production forces discipline in performance and decision making in the studio. Once a performance feels right it stays, with little or no overdubbing or editing, and this classic rock production process imprints on the band's studio output. At home, I was using Logic X for my production, but my internalised domain of 'Mostly Autumn Production Habitus' and in particular the Fairview studio workflow directed me to limit my editing options and focus my performance. In the end I rehearsed until I was confident enough, then hit record on the Logic X and three cameras. I reviewed the take, noted a few areas to improve and performed the whole song a second time. This second take was better so I used it, with no corrections and no audio editing beyond cutting out the shuffling sounds before and after the performance as I go round the cameras turning them on and off. In this way I am making production decisions based on the usual Mostly Autumn doxa in order to imprint that particular essence from the process onto the produced artefact and have it accepted by the other Mostly Autumn personnel familiar with the process. Much of the rest of the Production Habitus, such as presenting a home performance, including just solo vocal and piano, an attempt at showing 'backstage', and the distribution method, are new to the Mostly Autumn way of doing things. They represent my novel contribution that I judge to be well-considered enough to incrementally advance the domain by opening up new approaches to how the band produces and presents material to the audience (Sternberg, 1999).

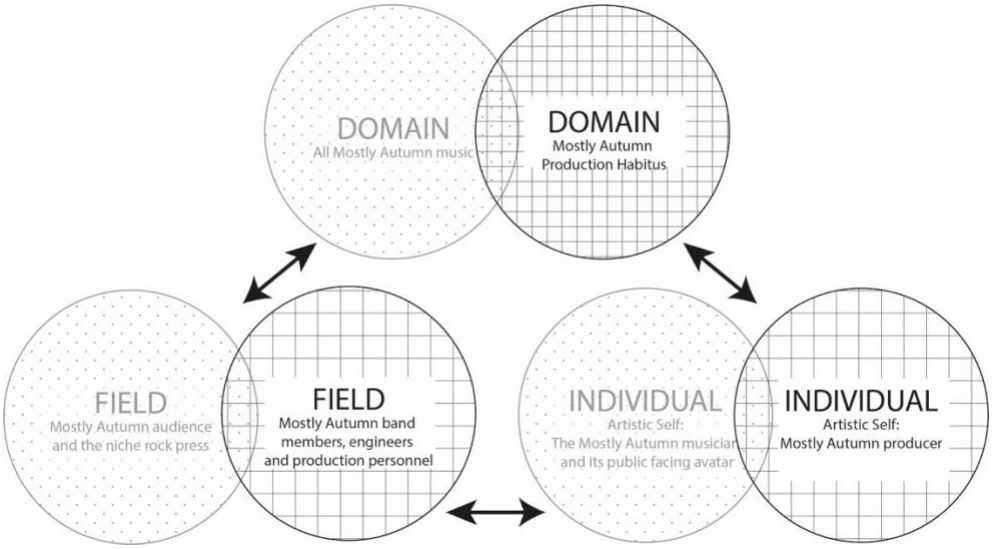


Figure 5.4 Parallel systems at the second level of the Silver Glass re-production holarchy. Horizontal to the system of 'all Mostly Autumn music' is the system 'Mostly Autumn Production Habitus,' whose domain contains all the social rules, production workflow, environments and ways of doing things that normally govern a production. The field is made up of band members, engineers and crew that will assess my production methods, and the individual is the producer part of my artistic Self that normally works as part of the Mostly Autumn production team.

Descending further into the holarchy, a deeper nested level involves a more personal consultation with inner-Others; mental traces of specific significant Others in the band. For example, although I played the piano on the record 13 years ago, the piano part has since almost exclusively been performed by the band's keyboard player, Iain Jennings, and it is his subtlety adapted performances of it that I am most accustomed to singing to in the frequent live performances. This influenced some of the nuances of the arrangement and performance as I felt it would affect both Iain's and the audience's acceptance of the production. For example, the core riff from the beginning is played with more velocity than the original, the tempo is slightly higher, and the style has greater weight and emphasis on the passing notes and runs between phrases (see 3:43 – 3:50 for an illustration). Similarly, the band's leader, Bryan Josh, and second keyboard player Angela Gordon, tend to encourage me to sing with more vulnerability than I do in other scenarios, and their influence was at work as I practiced the vocal, gaining confidence from the feedback I was getting from these physically absent and psychologically internalised collaborators to use a more fragile delivery than I do in the live performances. These influencers were not the actual Iain, Bryan and Angela, but projections of them summoned into my consciousness during the creative process. They represented

specific aspects of the real people built from my relationships, knowledge and experiences of them through years of friendship and musical collaboration, but only existing in this particular form during my creative process producing a piano and vocal version of *Silver Glass*. If I was working out guitar parts for one of his songs, another projection of Bryan would be involved, but it would be a modified one with a different set of criteria to assess ideas against. The Systems Model loses some significance at this level. If a domain, field and individual are all psychological constructs within the same person, it is perhaps a less useful model in understanding creativity. The field is not in a position to admit contributions to the domain and so it cannot evolve. However, the projections of these significant Others borrow social and cultural capital from their real-world counterparts, as I found my inner dialogue responding in kind to their imagined reactions, and therefore they do have significance in the Production Habitus and their influence is audible in the finished production. The artistic Self is also affected by the influence of these unseen collaborators and can evolve at this level of the creative holarchy (Figure 5.5).

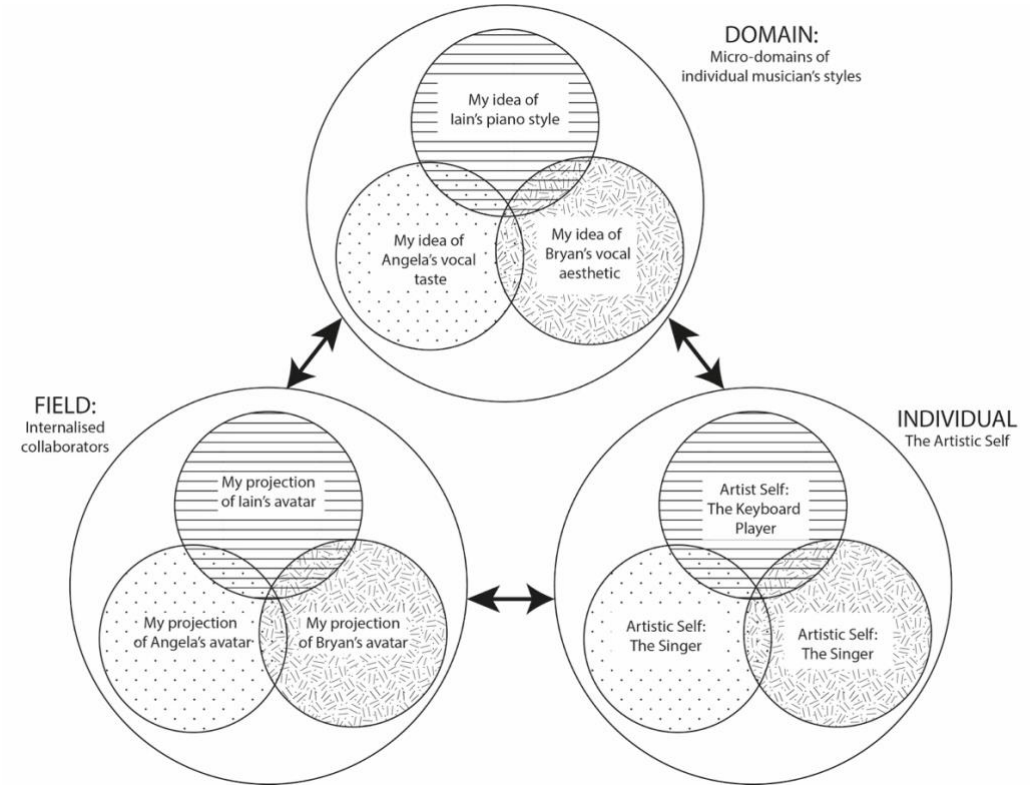


Figure 5.5 Interconnected systems of internalised collaboration at the 3rd level of the *Silver Glass* production holarchy. The Artistic Self, both as singer and keyboard player, is affected by its previous experience of fellow collaborators' styles and dispositions, and its consultation with mental projections of them. The produced artefact and the artistic Self are changed in the process.

Conclusions from *Silver Glass* re-production

In such ways the structure, performance, production, and Production Habitus are very much the result of a collaboration, even when working alone in the physically and socially isolated environments involved in producing music in the Covid-19 lockdown, and any collaborative actors are internalised social groups or projections of individuals. This demonstrates the relationship between confluence theories of creativity discussed in Chapter 4, and collaboration, presenting an examination of a psychological perspective to address the first research question, *how do different approaches to collaboration in music production affect the creative contributions of the participants and the final product?*

We could track the artistic Self through the Production Cycle of a Producer-Artist as it sought to reconnect with an audience and prepare for new creative work by manipulating the frontstage/backstage dynamic, both literally and psychologically. The Production Habitus remained a crucial consideration, even on a one-person project, as the project goals, physical environments, time of day, artist motivations, and social micro-culture all had an audible effect on the product, most noticeable in the intimate vocal tone and performance. The social and cultural capital of the artist and the source material within the field of Mostly Autumn were consciously handled in a way to better connect with the audience, and therefore make the project more successful in achieving its aims. The perspective of the holarchy of interconnected systems models is useful to observe the effects of internalised collaborators, although it gets messy as we delve deeper in the psyche of the artist. The concept of the Production Habitus is more useful at this level, as we can better observe the effect of cultural and social capital, and friendship, on the artist at work.

A final production decision to move this small project to its aesthetic and social goals was the method of distribution. It was uploaded to YouTube without fanfare and the link posted on the Mostly Autumn Facebook page. This group doesn't have many members, but the video had been viewed 477 times in the first 24 hours, and the positive comments left on YouTube and in the Facebook group suggested that it had achieved its aims from the audience's perspective. From my perspective the project successfully re-energised my artistic Self and helped me focus on aspects of performance, presentation and production that consider the audience more than I had been doing working in isolation.

[The video this chapter refers to, 'Silver Glass: A live solo version with Chris Johnson from Mostly Autumn / Halo Blind', can be viewed at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5ZmK7qwRyU]

CHAPTER 6: Mostly Autumn: Portfolio of Contributions

Overview

Mostly Autumn are an original British rock band. The music is a blend of progressive rock, classic rock and folk, with orchestral elements. Although the style has developed over the band's 30-year career the core influences include Pink Floyd, Deep Purple and Fleetwood Mac. They are known for blending epic soundscapes with emotional lyrics and strong musicianship, and they have built a strong fan base as an independent band through extensive touring and powerful live performances. They are established as senior figures in the UK prog rock scene, and were nominated for best UK band and album of the year for *White Rainbow* (2019*)* in the Progressive Music Awards 2019 (Prog Magazine, 2019). Five recent albums placed in the top 10 Independent Album Breakers Chart and in January 2026 their compilation 'best of' album, *The Clock Ticks On* (2026), reached number 3 in the UK Official Rock & Metal Albums Chart (Official Charts, 2026). The band regularly perform across the UK, France, the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany, and at personal invitation have supported Steve Hackett, Jethro Tull, and Uriah Heap, as well as Ritchie Blackmoore's Rainbow show at Genting Arena and Bryan Adams' Murrayfield Stadium concert. Each of the 14 studio albums to date has a specific concept, but the band's core narratives explore life, loss, and nature. The main creative driving force of the band is Bryan Josh, the lead guitarist, songwriter and co-lead singer. Bryan defines the concept for each album and writes the bulk of the material. Much of the band's emotional 'from the heart' message and character is delivered in Bryan's expressive guitar solos.

My role in Mostly Autumn is to play rhythm guitar, keyboards, to sing a few songs, and to write and produce one or two songs for each album. My position as a producing songwriter and musician in the Mostly Autumn organisation presents multiple opportunities to investigate creativity and collaboration in music production for the purposes of this study. Several songs have been written and co-produced for Mostly Autumn studio albums in which the interaction with established patterns of production and capital can be interrogated from my position of a songwriter contributing to an other's vision. I have also taken the role of producer on one full 'live in the studio' album (*Studio 2,* 2023) that has allowed me to examine how changes in the usual Mostly Autumn doxa affect creativity and the personality of the produced record. This chapter, then, will use the ideas and theoretical models presented in earlier chapters to read my Mostly Autumn based practice through, focusing on Production Habitus and the development of the artistic self through music production cycles. It is separated into three parts to examine my contributions to the albums *White Rainbow* (2018)*, Graveyard Star* (2021), and *Studio 2* (2023).

PART ONE

White Rainbow



Figure 6.1 The cover art for *White Rainbow*
(Art and design by Suzanne Bielby, 2018)

White Rainbow – album by Mostly Autumn [AUT0351]
Limited Edition released 17th December 2018

Contains the track "The Undertow"

- composed, arranged and produced by Chris Johnson
- performed by Chris with members of Mostly Autumn
- part engineered by Chris at Nautical Studio
- part engineered by John Spence at Fairview Studio
- Mixed by John Spence with Chris at Fairview Studio

Project Context

In November 2017 Bryan's closest friend and former guitarist in the band, Liam Davison, died very unexpectedly. This sent shock waves through the band and its extended social sphere. We had a gig booked at The Citadel in St Helen's on the day we got the sad news, but rather than cancel it was

decided not to disappoint the many fans who had bought tickets and travelled, but that we would do the gig in Liam's honour. As he was a prominent member of the band for many years, it would be very meaningful for the audience at the gig as well. This concert was a profoundly emotional and bonding experience for the band and crew as most had been friends with Liam for decades. The band shared a grieving process over the next few weeks and months that would help define the social group, deepening relationships and extending the Mostly Autumn story with this sad chapter in its history. Liam's passing and how it impacted on the group's lives and relationships would affect the social micro-culture and therefore our subsequent collaborative musical output, most immediately the album *White Rainbow* (2018). In our study of production social environments and processes and how these conditions have a character that imprint on the final product we can say that the Production Habitus for the next studio production was already textured by this critical event before the album had even been defined.

It was a few months after Liam's passing that Bryan told the band that the next album, *White Rainbow,* would be a tribute to him. This simple notion clearly defined the concept, theme and narrative of the project, establishing guiding principles that would construct a framework for the Production Habitus in the understanding of the people who would be contributing. The aesthetic for the project, and of Mostly Autumn in general, is well articulated in Bryan's message in the eventual liner notes, intended to be read just before listening to the opening tracks on the album, *Procession* and *Viking Funeral*:

> A dear old friend and fellow musician of 38 years, not to mention 18 years with Mostly Autumn, once expressed to me his love for the idea of a Viking funeral, "you know, when they fire the flaming arrow and it ignites the boat." I loved Liam more than words can describe, as did many, so it only felt right that we give him one last send off in the best way we know, straight through the heart of Mostly Autumn, so join us on the lakeside....
>
> Bryan Josh (*White Rainbow*, 2018)

The commercial aim of the album would be the same as any other Mostly Autumn studio album, and that is to sell enough CDs to support the continuation of the band and its independent label. It would be presold to fans as a special edition double CD from the band's website, before the standard single edition CD would be distributed worldwide by Nova. However when considering the Production Habitus, and how the aims of the project affected the social grouping and our sense of what we were doing, far more prominent in the discussions around the album were its personal message and

emotional aesthetic aims. The motivation for everybody in this family-type collaboration (John-Steiner, 2000) was much more about doing justice to celebrating Liam's memory than it was to anything else. A weight of shared loss, respect, deep friendship and honour palpably characterised the production process and would be imprinted on the album we created.

Songwriting within the Production Habitus

Around October 2018 Bryan invited me to contribute a song to the album. The highly personal concepts and motivations, and the established social and logistical production processes of the band had a significant effect on my songwriting process and the production of the song *The Undertow.* I would have to write authentically from my own perspective, but shape it through a significant other's persona in order to frame the song in a way it would fit into the Mostly Autumn canon, and into the very personal concept of this album.

The established pre-production model for Mostly Autumn involves Bryan writing and arranging very full sounding demos and inviting various members to the studio late in the process to contribute their parts. At the point of inviting a song from me, he was still generating initial musical ideas and so could not give me any demos to listen to guide my song development so that it would fit with material he was working on in parallel. I could only be guided through my immersion in the Production Habitus with its themes and social micro culture. I knew the concept of the album, the title, and the intended emotional messaging but could yet not reference any of the other songs in development for the album. This presented a writing challenge relevant to my investigation of artistic persona in music production.

As band leader and executive producer Bryan holds a position of operational authority, but his influence in the Production Habitus of a Mostly Autumn studio production is more to do with social and cultural capital. The 'Mostly Autumn' sound and character is really an extension of Bryan's persona, and the aesthetic and heartfelt messaging emerges from the power of his creative and social contributions and their effect on everybody else. This is evident in the consistency of audio identity, message and musical stylings throughout the band's back catalogue despite quite drastic changes of line up. In writing for a Mostly Autumn album there are genre touchpoints to consider, but whilst writing to express emotive ideas in a manner that will cohere, I became aware of deeper layers of more textured influences and references. I was incorporating elements of sonic and aesthetic personality borrowed and adapted from my understanding of Bryan's creative persona as expressed through Mostly Autumn. We explored in chapter 4 how when hearing a record the listener

constructs ‘persona’ largely from the vocal performance and its relationship to its sonic environment. This is composited with other things the listener may or may not know about the singer in question, including media interviews and images of their physical appearance (Moore, 2012; Frith, 1996). As a close collaborator and friend, I have a much more personal and nuanced perspective in this case, but even so I found in my writing I was considering a constructed persona of ‘Bryan’ rather than the actual person. My mental version of Bryan’s artistic persona is made up of musical influences, arrangement preferences, topical patterns across his back catalogue, shared experiences and conversations, and a range of political and spiritual viewpoints.

I have produced songs for Mostly Autumn before, and the writing process has considered the relevant domains of rock music, the niche domain of the band’s back catalogue, and the artistic personality of the band and its leader. However, this time I was considering an internal, modified version of Bryan’s persona that needed to be affected by the grief he felt for the loss of his friend, and all the other possible emotions that such life and death experiences create. There was an increased sense of weight and a need for raw emotional honesty that affected my creative choices. My work with Mostly Autumn also carries its own identity and aesthetic features that are recognised by the audiences and that they will be expecting. Plus, at the heart of Mostly Autumn as an entity is an authenticity of emotion, unmediated by current musical trends and contemporary music technology, that is vital to the song writing and development. So my song needed to authentically embody the Mostly Autumn version of me, as filtered through a heightened version of Bryan, and communicate the textures and concepts of complex emotions associated with our grief that were swirling around in the Production Habitus.

The song that emerged is *The Undertow*. What follows is a timeline of development through the composition and production process. This is to examine the considerations and influences that were having an effect throughout the song's creation.

A Process of Development

Improvising alone on a guitar and capturing brief ideas on a portable recorder happened several years previously as part of my general practice as a songwriter. Individual fragments of ideas from such creative sketching sessions are archived for potential future use.

The need to write a group of new songs for a Halo Blind part of this PhD prompted a review of these archived ideas which can often be a successful impetus to get moving on a new song. Something

about a 2-bar picked guitar sequence in one of the ideas resonated with me so was developed further by writing a harmonising part. This represents the Initial Stimulus in the DAW-based track-writing engine outlined in chapter 4. The musical idea was extended into a longer chord sequence, at this stage within a Halo Blind aesthetic direction. I am the lead writer and producer in Halo Blind, and so I was rejecting or accepting ideas in the track writing process based on quite different domains of music to Mostly Autumn, consciously referencing previous Halo Blind albums and playing to develop my own artistic persona in whatever direction the process took me.

At still only a few bars of music, a reverse delay was added to a guitar that seemed to fit with a general sense of the Halo Blind sound, without thinking too much about it at this stage. I noticed that I was developing a core emotional landscape with an understanding that I would assess it later and let that dictate the eventual song message. This 2 guitar sequence endured through the song's development to form the intro in the final product (00:00 – 00:42).

The next day Bryan invited me to write a song for *White Rainbow*. I was already immersed in the Production Habitus of the album, despite simultaneously working on Halo Blind material, and felt qualified to judge that the emotional feel of the harmonised guitar idea I had already started would work. However, the shift to Mostly Autumn changed the aim the piece and how I was making my creative decisions for how to develop the song:

a. Change of audience: Mostly Autumn has a loyal audience that has stylistic, topical and sonic expectations that needed to be considered. Halo Blind has a much smaller, less established, and less well-defined audience. The field then, would have a stricter set of criteria for accepting new work into the Mostly Autumn domain.
b. Change of line-up between the bands: this altered the complexity I could write into the musical parts so that they better suited Mostly Autumn personnel and their playing styles, a swift tracking process, and the potential live performance of the song. This can be heard in resulting arrangement of guitars, bass, drums, Hammond, electric piano and vocal harmonies to suit the line-up, which features 2 guitarists, 2 keyboard players, a rhythm section and 4 singers.
c. Change of form: Halo Blind favour shorter songs with no solos whereas Mostly Autumn develop ideas over long sections and include guitar solos as a key feature of the band and Bryan's persona. The song had to have room for Bryan's guitar

virtuosity to make its contribution, which is included in the final version as the dynamic climax of the song (6:05 – 7:27).

d. Change of Self: my Halo Blind 'Self' is motivated to sound innovative and progressive with musical forms and technology, whereas my Mostly Autumn 'Self' is more concerned with communicating honest and heavily emotional messages through songwriting. This affected lyrical as well as sonic decisions, as I felt I had to be more instantly accessible for the listener to be able to 'own' the lyrics within their experience of life and loss. This was difficult as I felt they were cliché in parts, and I had to fight my Halo Blind instinct to make the lyrics more veiled and complicated.
e. Change of production process: Halo Blind songs are developed and re-developed in the pursuit of innovation, crafted over many revisions until I'm happy with them. Conversely, Mostly Autumn fully write and produce albums in a much shorter time with an established process that is understood by everyone involved and we can say exists as doxa within the Production Habitus. It favours intuition and an unspoken understanding that the first idea is usually the best. I knew the studio would be Fairview, the engineer would be John Spence, and there will be pressure on the studio time. This affected how I approached the drum and keyboard parts. They would need to be tracked very quickly, in one or two takes, with little time to experiment with the drum or Hammond tones. Other keys, guitar, bass and vocal parts I could record myself at home and spend longer on. Therefore, the drum and Hammond parts were written to work with John's preferred tones, the band members' musical strengths, and a quick recording session, in mind. This can be heard in the track, with the straight repetitive drum pattern for the verses and chorus establishing between 1:30 – 2:46, and embellishing to become more dynamic 2:46 – 4:23. The Hammond is given a simple instrumental chorus to allow for a dynamic lift within a quick tracking process (2:50 – 3:12).

In considering the change of destination for the song, I naturally fell into composing vertically in sections. By vertically, I am describing the arrangement layout in the DAW, so each song section is composed with full instrumental arrangements before moving to the next section in a behaviour Bennett coins 'verticality' (2018, p.24). This method seemed to suit the development needed for the emotional journey through a more lengthy Mostly Autumn song. With an intro, verse and chorus section developed the musical arrangement activity rested while I entered an extended period of

lyrical and top line experimenting. At this point I was still uncertain as to whether or not the song will work and so the priority shifted to the vocal melody and the search for a song message.

Two opposing melody ideas keep returning; the first had a slow, melancholic and nostalgic feel that was hard to sing convincingly in the key I'd written in, but it was the first thing I sang when I had a go at improvising a vocal melody. The second had a darker, denser, alternating 2-note melody that was more vocally expressive of angst, hurt and yearning. I assessed them both and preferred the second, however a sense of the Mostly Autumn doxa of capturing that first idea prevented me from rejecting it. I also felt that the rawness in the emotional tone of this melody matched where I imagined Bryan's artistry was at the time. The solution I settled on was to open with the first idea in the early sections and develop into the second idea for an extended third verse. This could be treated as a new section by adding a chord to the sequence and writing a more solid rhythm section arrangement, a build that works for the Mostly Autumn style. A significant observation is that this solution only came about after I had completed that faster paced section, from 3:13 – 4:04. This needed to be there before I could accept the fragility of the slower earlier sections with the raw, first melody idea (0:40 – 2:34). Once I was confident in the concept the build was reversed engineered from the heavier section.

After several aborted attempts to perform a falsetto vocal of the difficult melody over the early choruses I changed the key from Bm to Cm. This facilitated an easier full voice vocal performance, but the Cm lost some of the heartache that I could feel in Bm. Consulting the version of Bryan's persona in my head that was helping with my decisions removed my vocalist ego and focused my attention on how well the technically weaker falsetto vocal delivery communicated the emotional lyric. After this I could accept that Bm worked best for the song. I would just have to find a way of delivering an acceptable vocal. At this stage I was convinced enough that the song would work for Mostly Autumn so the arrangement was further refined for the classic rock instrumentation of vocals, drums, bass, vintage keyboards and guitars, with lots of stacked vocal harmonies.

Simultaneously, the lyrics were being developed in reaction to each added arrangement element. A moment was identified where the arrangement hit its emotional height and so lyrics were constructed to build with the musical intensity of the arrangement, using repeated quantifiers to stack a sequence of reflective and nostalgic imagery (3:39 – 4:02):

"And all we choose to undertake
And all that's true and all that's fake
And all the days, the life we make
And all we stacked against our fate
And all that's left of life to live
And everything we ever did
The song we sang when we were kids - I'm still singing it."

Johnson (*The Undertow,*2018)

The repetition builds to the emotional punch *"the song we sang when we were kids…"* which could reach its peak with *"…I'm still singing it."* In writing the lyrics simultaneously with the arrangement it become obvious at this moment that the melody and chords also needed to reach a peak here to highlight the lyric, and so an A major chord was added at 4:01 (the only one in the song) and the melody adjusted accordingly to build into the Dsus4 of the now full voice big chorus. This section best illustrates the collaboration between my Mostly Autumn persona and my mental representation of the band leader's musical reference points, for example Pink Floyd's *Eclipse* (1973) here, the slow building of emotional delivery and how I have incorporated a projected view of how Bryan may have been feeling after the loss of his childhood friend into the lyrics.

After this moment my Mostly Autumn songwriter instinct felt the song couldn't finish with just a chorus. The nostalgic 'looking back' message had been established, but the song narrative needed to then explore the impact of grief on the song character as they move forward in life, and so another section was added (4:22 – 7:27). This section was composed as an acoustic guitar riff in 7/8 and a series of vocal harmonies that I developed simultaneously with the lyrics. The theme of time passing by relentlessly was stressed to extend the theme from the earlier sections, and to express more of my own self-reflections during times of grief. I was conscious in this section of doing something a little novel for the Mostly Autumn domain, and I was listening more to my persona than Bryan's here. I left the arrangement very sparse so that it could build to the obligatory guitar solo. Bryan records his guitar solo as part of the mixing stages of production, and Fairview Studio records onto a Radar system which, like tape, means if you re-record something you lose the previous version. This changes the way performances are assessed in the studio, adding a big element of risk if deciding to do another take. Knowing this guided me toward arranging the end sections to be evocative and inspiring for a guitar solo to be quickly added.

At this stage, with the song fully arranged and written with all the parts and even some performances present as they would be in the finished version (except the guitar solo), I sent the song to Bryan for approval (this original demo is included as Appendix 1). It felt important to work the song up to this level of production so that it would accurately portray the emotional journey and the dynamic form I intended. There is very little arrangement difference between this demo and the final mastered track[1]. The main difference is in the drum tones. The song couldn't have been written any other way, as the emerging arrangement and combined instrumental textures crafted from emotional intent and being immersed in the social and thematic spheres of the Production Habitus directed the lyrics, melody and performances just as much as the harmonic progression did. All of this content is embedded in the character the original demo (Appendix 1). The hypnotic yearning of the guitar interplay for the start; the vulnerable and grieving tone of the vocal melody (00:42 – 02:37) underlined by the melancholic descending mellotron (02:21 – 02:49); the powerful moment where the band kicks in properly (02:50) and the prog rock 7/8 final third built to express the anger and frustration of grief whilst energising the climax of the track for a live performance (04:26 – 07:17). In this way, the track was written as a Mostly Autumn record, rather than a song.

Bryan listens to ongoing work in his car on the 75-minute drive home from the studio, working out which tracks sit best next to each other and in turn how the eventual running order can suggest arrangement and production ideas. It enables him to maintain a strong overview of the project having spent the day focussed on much smaller details. This means he is in the thick of the album Production Habitus, steeped in its messages, tones and emotions, and the theme of this album was particularly raw. He assesses new material on how much it moves him emotionally, and how well its emotional resonance, rather than its sonic imprint, fits with the other tracks. I wasn't there when he heard the demo for *The Undertow* but he sent a message saying he'd had to stop the car because he was crying so much. He also commented that "I could fit my own story in there" which validated the lyrical approach. This constituted a big thumbs up from the project director and meant the song development could move into a more focussed production phase.

Studio Production

The change in focus from writing the parts and completing a full sounding demo, to capturing the actual performances and recorded tones is an important watershed in the evolution of the song's

[1] This chimes with Zak's defining of a third layer of track composition explored in chapter 4, and Sting's comment "I make the best demo I can, singing and playing guitar, bass, piano and drum machines. I get a good version so that people will see its potential" (in Zak 2001, p.27).

production. The experience working on the track shifted. No longer was I experimenting with parts, searching my artistic soul for creative ideas, measuring each against a multitude of internal judges and collaborators and working in a state of ‘flow’ as a musician and writer. All this has been approved and the production template is now set. The focus now became more technical and logistical. How best to capture or create the right ‘versions’ of the parts that are written within the limitations of the project? Is anything from the demo usable?

It is important at this stage to examine the influence of the album’s main recording engineer John Spence. I have worked with John before and so mentally refer to our previous collaborations when preparing the track that will ultimately be transferred from my DAW into his set up at Fairview Studio. There is a shift of control here, as the producer-songwriter relinquishes control to the studio engineer. In Fairview Studio and in the Mostly Autumn Production Habitus, John has a cultural capital that comes from recording and mixing most of the band’s output, as well working with Sisters of Mercy, The Beautiful South, Happy Mondays and Bill Nelson (Fairview, 2026). This had an effect as I was preparing the song for the studio. In considering his mix preferences and engineering approaches, without prompting I was able to provide him with what he needs to get to grips with the 8-minute track as quickly as possible using his own templates and approaches. For example, I included his usual options for the bass tone (DI, clean amp, and compressed clean amp); double tracks of each of the backing vocals; I used only a single mic on the acoustic guitars instead of my usual pair, and only 2 mics on each guitar amp (specifically an SM57 and a U87). John also has a very keen ear for tuning and timing errors and in some instances would correct a performance error that I would perhaps allow in a different project if it contributed positively to the message of the track, so my criteria for assessing performances was appropriately recalibrated. I was also aware of John's capital in the Production Habitus when it came to tracking the drums. John knows of my own engineering experience and our sessions usually begin with a chat about equipment or recent recording developments and this helps establish a good working relationship. However, it is clear that in the engineering domain John's capital outweighs mine. This made it a little awkward to request tonal changes to the drums. I was aware of the possibility of such requests being interpreted as a challenge to John's status in the Production Habitus and this could sour the creative environment. Therefore, my comments were phrased carefully and limited to a small number of sonic issues from a producer perspective, without suggesting how to address them technically, in deference to John’s substantial engineering expertise. This part of the collaboration felt like establishing a workable communication style that acknowledged and balanced John's cultural capital as the album’s engineer with my status as the producer-songwriter, contributing detailed knowledge

of the song, its intentions and its arrangement. Within this specific Production Habitus I was selectively foregrounding my Mostly Autumn songwriter 'Self' and deliberately subduing the engineering 'Self' that would be more prominent in other projects. The influence of John and Fairview studio within the collaboration is also audible in the differences of tone between the demo and final version. This can be demonstrated by comparing the Hammond break to third verse section, and how the studio activity brings out more rock characteristics in the production, generally adding power and definition throughout, and substantiating the second research question: *how can the social and logistical arrangements of a production be considered to deliberately shape the aesthetic of the final product?*

Tone	Original Demo (Appendix 1) 02:49 – 04:06	Final Version 02:47 – 04:04
Hammond	Thin VST . Has a bright pad role. Glossy but ill defined	Genuine Hammond with Leslie cab. Adds drive and power, that roars through the instrumental chorus.
Snare	Light, soft and 2 dimensional	Has more weight and power. Brings the production more into the rock genre.
Cymbals	Dull and soft, with more sustain than attack	Very bright with thin attack on the hi hats.
Kick	Poor definition, dull tone	Much more attack and better definition allows the drums to provide a rock foundation to the section.
Guitars	Acoustic is prominent, electrics lack solidity due to the amp sim	Electric guitars are wider and more prominent. Acoustic is very quiet.
Electric piano	VST is soft and padded.	VST has more velocity and a harder tone giving it more impact to interplay with the electric guitars

Figure 6.2 Comparing tones between the demo and final version of *The Undertow*

Bryan's approval of the demo was also considered throughout the more technical 'production' phase. Any re-tracked performances or tones couldn't stray too far from what was on the demo. This is a difficult and dangerous part of the process. If participants, including me as the songwriter, have grown used to the demo version it can be very difficult to present alternative tones to them, even when they are technically better recordings or performances. This can lead to recordists chasing their tail in attempting to recreate the exact tones from the demo, and can often result in the original demo part surviving into the final version along with any imperfections that editing was unable to resolve. An example of this is the dominant finger picked electric guitar part in the right hand side from the start of *The Undertow (00:00 – 00:39).* The usual Mostly Autumn sound features Fender

Stratocasters heavily, and it is uncommon for other electric guitar designs to be included. Therefore, I use a strat for Mostly Autumn projects. However, this song was intended for Halo Blind at the time the intro was written, and so I was using a telecaster going straight into a amp simulator in Logic (for speed when tracking ideas), bussed to a reverse delay that seemed to bring a compelling yearning to the intro and set a certain emotional tone for the track. This is the guitar tone that is heard on the right hand side at the start of the demo (Appendix 1, from 00:03 – 00:43). This sound was created before any lyrics were written and actually governed what the meaning of the song was going to be. The lyrics were in part written as a reaction to, or interpretation of how this guitar part and the acoustic guitar interweave to set up the song. Once it became a Mostly Autumn song I had assumed that part of the re-tracking would be to replace this part with a stratocaster going through a Vox AC30 amp which was my usual set up for the band. However, attempting this removed a great deal of the emotional imprint of the telecaster, even when including the same reverse delay. It fundamentally altered the character of the production and suddenly the rest of the arrangement was less effective. I found myself trying to compensate for the tonal change between the guitars by manipulating the tone dials on the guitar; the tone stack on the amp; and using different pick-ups, but the strat was simply incapable of projecting the same dark tones and melancholic yearning that the telecaster provided. The solution was simply to let go of the 'stratocaster for Mostly Autumn' assumption that some idea of production doxa had me wrestling with, and re-track the telecaster through the AC30, which is the tone on the final version (00:00 – 00:39). This maintained the emotional imprint but added the depth, definition and quality of tone achieved by miking a real amp. In evaluating this decision, I was weighing up the expectations of the audience and their understanding of the Mostly Autumn sound against the power of the production to communicate a complex emotional and conceptual theme. I concluded that I was perhaps crediting the audience with too much expert knowledge in being able to identify guitar designs by their tone, and that they are much more likely to identify the emotional message with Mostly Autumn than the guitar tone.

Bryan's guitar solos are a core part of his musical persona and therefore the identity of the band. The arrangement had left space for him to be able to express his musical response to the song in the guitar solo (Appendix 1, 06:08 – 06:53). There are a couple of things at play here. One is that Bryan's capital as the leader of the band meant that I felt he should have the freedom to play whatever guitar solo he wanted without his expression being affected by my interference in the control room. The other is that my comments as the producer-songwriter more intimately familiar with the lyrics and arrangement have their own value and should help guide the aesthetic. The process was that after listening to the whole song from the start and absorbing its emotive message, during the same

playback Bryan did a single take of the solo when it cues in the final section. He played beyond the end of the space I had planned for, soloing right over the vocalisations at end of the song (06:50 – 07:15). This provided a better dynamic shape to the conclusion of the song so we kept it at this length without discussion. I gave very positive feedback and pointed out a couple of things where melodic phrases locked well with other parts of the arrangement. Bryan fancied another go and we edited the final version from those two. This edit is what is heard on the final version (06:04 – 07:27). The only other edit was the very final note which we all agreed lacked finality and so a single low tonic note was dropped in as an overdub on the final beat (07:15).

Conclusion

The shared contexts between the collaborators proved to be the most important elements in producing *The Undertow*. The rich band history that we are part of created an unspoken understanding, production doxa and flows of capital that directed both creative decisions in songwriting and logistical arrangements in the studio. These factors created a Production Habitus for the album that was experienced as we were producing it and is translated into the final product. Most importantly of all was the shared motivation to give a fitting tribute to our lost comrade. The almost unconscious understanding of the texture of the sadness felt collectively gave a powerful enough sense of an aesthetic that my song contribution struck an appropriate tone with the rest of the album, even though the songwriters did not hear each other's works-in-progress. This contributes some understanding to how the social conditions surrounding a production affect the aesthetic of the produced work, and can be considered as we address the second research question: *how can the social and logistical arrangements of a production be considered to deliberately shape the aesthetic of the final product?*

The share social context and motivation is woven through the patterns of collaboration that occurred, from the direct expertise-based roles to the more internalised influences at play during the songwriting, and so helps investigation of the first research question: *how do different approaches to collaboration in music production affect the creative contributions of the participants and the final product?* If we consider the creation of the track through the DAW-based Track Writing Engine (Chapter 4) we can see how the social and micro cultural factors have an influence on the songwriter when working alone. Musical ideas are assessed within a sphere of stylistic influence and conceptual aesthetic generated by a social group and informed by intersecting cultural domains. The criteria with most influence on whether an idea is accepted or rejected will vary depending on the project definition and aims. The accepted idea then becomes a stimulus for the next musical part that's

needed, which is trialled and assessed with the same criteria and so on, and so on, through the spiral so the track builds up a specific aesthetic. For this project the most influential criteria were to do with how authentically the musical ideas portrayed the emotional messages I intended, and how well they fit with a constructed idea of the band leader's artistic persona modified by a recent significant life event.

PART TWO

Graveyard Star



Figure 6.3 The album cover of *Graveyard Star*
(Art and design by Suzanne Bielby, 2021)

Graveyard Star – Limited Edition (2021) – album by Mostly Autumn [AUT0354]
Contains the tracks “The Diamond” and “Side Effect”

- composed, arranged and produced by Chris Johnson
- performed by Chris with members of Mostly Autumn
- part engineered by Chris at Nautical Studio
- part engineered by John Spence at Fairview Studio
- Mixed by John Spence with Chris at Fairview Studio

The effects of social micro-cultures and a wider cultural context on how tracks are produced can be examined by looking at the production of the songs *The Diamond* and *Side Effect* (Johnson, 2021).

Album Context

The album *Graveyard Star* was produced during the coronavirus pandemic of 2020 and 2021. However, the original concept was defined by Bryan just before this, and involved contemplations

around a star winking out in the night sky and imagining the stories of distant lives on far-off worlds that were lost in the aftermath. When the pandemic hit in the early stages of writing the concept shifted much closer home, becoming an expression of living through the pandemic with its tragedies, and its effects on society, mental health and relationships. Whereas the original concept may have taken a certain amount of creativity and imagination to write songs about, it felt very authentic to write from a first-person perspective about living through those challenging pandemic years and it would be something that all listeners would be able to relate to. This set an emotional and aesthetic tone to the Production Habitus, even though throughout the lockdowns the band had no face-to-face contact and so many of the usual patterns of production could not be followed. Tracks were developed by the songwriters in a much more isolated manner, and when the studio sessions could finally be arranged they were under very challenging socially distanced conditions. In our pre-pandemic lives we would see each other regularly for our concerts, occasions in which the flows of capital in the group and our artistic personas would be practised and reinforced. Without this social interaction such parts of ourselves became unsupported and less distinct. Without the occasion to wear my gig clothes, or strap on a guitar, or sing to an audience down a microphone, I felt my musician Self diminishing and my dad Self and my day job Self coming more to the fore. This represented a very significant shift in both the artistic Self as it makes its creative decisions, and the social and cultural environment the decisions are being made within.

The pandemic had a significant effect on my day-to-day role as a university lecturer as we worked out different ways of teaching and assessing music production students in lockdown conditions. This took so much energy and time that I was further limited in what my withered creative Self could offer to Mostly Autumn in this period. However, I had written a song called *The Diamond* for a previous Mostly Autumn album years earlier[2] that had not been used, so it was selected for inclusion on *Graveyard Star* in lieu of me writing a new song. In this way we can see that although certain elements of the Production Habitus can be controlled and the conditions of production manipulated for aesthetic effect, the much wider societal context here had a huge impact on the way this album evolved.

[2] It was written for the album *Glass Shadows* (2008), however just before production I left Mostly Autumn for 5 years and so the song was not recorded. A version did appear on an album I produced called *The Fabric* (Parade, 2009).

Analysing the Production of *The Diamond*

I still had the multitrack demo of the original version of *The Diamond* (Appendix 2). The lyrics were reworked to fit with the concept of the album, and some guitar parts were re-recorded in better quality at my home studio. The drums, Bryan's guitar solo, and some vocal lines would need recording at Fairview studio when lockdown conditions allowed. Tracking the drums and solo guitar happened with similar considerations of doxa and capital as investigated above for *The Undertow*. However there were further effects of social dynamics in the Production Habitus that emerged whilst tracking the vocal.

I performed the lead vocal in my home studio which is my normal practice, however the chorus for this song involved a high register and very exposed melody that I intended for Livvy, the female lead singer of the band, to perform. Livvy is a brilliant, award-winning vocalist and well respected in the UK Prog scene and therefore carries a lot of cultural capital, however on this occasion the part I had come up with was a poor match for her vocal tone and it didn't really work. This was compounded by the logistical necessity of having to track a lot of lead vocals for the album on the same day, as the challenging conditions of the pandemic on family lives and work had severely restricted everybody's availabilities. It was the end of the day, her voice was tired, and she was recovering from a cold. A further unspoken element was that Livvy would have been aware of a previous version of this song in which Anne-Marie Helder, a former Mostly Autumn member and known lead vocalist in the same UK Prog scene, sang the same part and it worked really well. After a few takes trying different vocal approaches when nothing was working I began to feel uncomfortable for having misjudged the situation and unintentionally setting up a potential rivalry or conflict of capital within Livvy's mind as she was trying to perform. This was never mentioned and may never have occurred to anybody else but my consideration of it as a possibility was heavy on my mind.

Chapter 2 proposed a Consolidation Points Framework as an analytical tool to focus on moments in a production where multiple elements are assembled and combined into a whole. We can use the first part of it here to focus on what may have been contributing to the vocal situation.

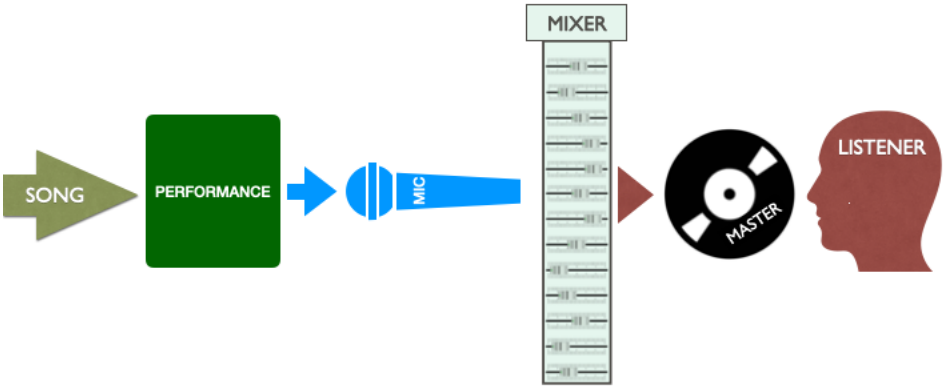


Figure 6.4 Consolidation Points Framework (CPF)

Going left to right, at the start of the chain the Song combines melody, harmony, lyrics and musical ideas from the demo into a single format that communicates meaning. For *The Diamond* we can also consider that a cloud of surrounding messages about the pandemic and the core album theme are also combined here especially within the lyrical content. My persona as a songwriter, and my background and values are also composite at this stage, as are the intersecting domains of songwriting, production and performance from a variety of genres and artists which form the specific brew of influences that affect my creative output.

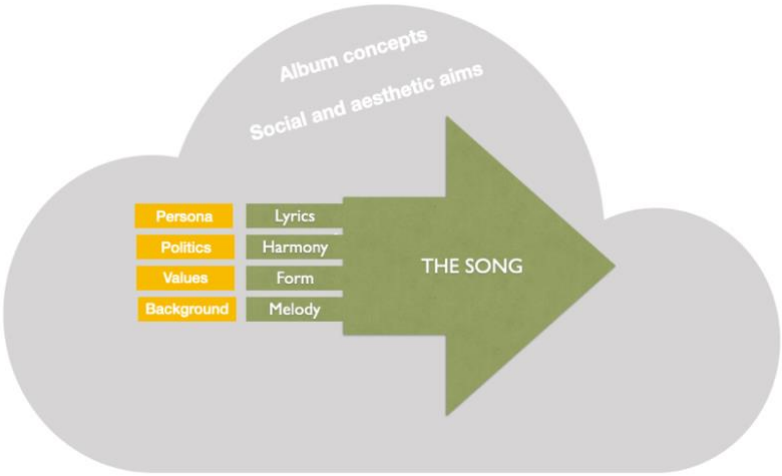


Figure 6.5 Zooming in on the elements that combine in the Song point of the CPF

The next point in the framework is of most significance for us here, that is what elements combine to produce the Performance. The artistic personality and skill of the performer are very important here but they combine with their health, mood, psychological and emotional states. The logistical and technical set up of the studio also play a big part in the performance. Factors such as whether the

performer is observed or not, how their monitoring is controlled, and how many bars run-in they get before each take all play a part in shaping the performance.

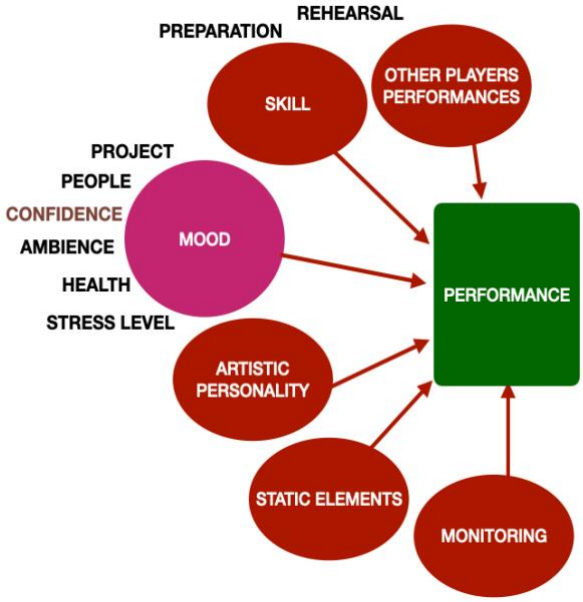


Figure 6.6 Zooming in at the Performance point in the CPF.

For the vocal performance in *The Diamond* it is clear that Livvy's health was compromised and her energy levels very low. There was no vocal preparation or rehearsal, as the lockdown conditions prevented us getting together before the studio session to test if the part worked or not. This alone could increase stress levels when expected to sing a demanding part straight to tape. The mental awareness of another performer's version of the song could have been diminishing Livvy's confidence with each unsuccessful take. It is also clear that my artistic personality when writing the part in a fragile vulnerable male falsetto created an inadequate and unsympathetic framework for Livvy's vocal tone to emulate. The number of people in the studio should also be considered. For most of the day three people were working on vocal parts for the rest of the album, that is Livvy (vocalist), Bryan (band leader) and John (engineer). Livvy would be in the live room separated by a pane of glass from the control room where Bryan and John would coach and capture the performances. Time had been put aside at the end of the day to record the few bits of vocals for *The Diamond.* I arrived around 5pm with the backing vocalist in the band, Angela Gordon. Our arrival then, disrupted the flow and collaborative model that had been established throughout the day, adding to the pressure and changing the social dynamic when energy levels were at their lowest.

We can see then that a number of social, psychological, and physiological factors that had not been adequately considered were adversely affecting the performance. This is combined with the wider

context of the pandemic restricting me from writing a new song more specifically tailored to Livvy's vocal, and preventing us working more collaboratively on the part before getting to the studio.
A solution came when we decided to give Livvy a rest and let the backing vocalist, Angela Gordon, attempt the line instead. Angela did not have a cold and was not exhausted from a hard day in the studio and was able to perform the line. Her vocal tone changed the feel of the line, imbuing it with a message of innocence that suited the song. I was again conscious of causing a slight capital imbalance here as a part designed for the lead vocalist was given to the backing vocalist. Livvy showed absolutely no sign whatsoever of being bothered by this and was completely happy for Angela to sing the line, however the session left me with a sense of guilt for having planned and handled the vocal production poorly.

Despite being very confident with the original version of the song in its own right and being very happy with the adapted lyrics for this new version, it was ultimately poor production to attempt to reimagine an old song and expect it to work in a new context, and this is evident in the quality of the album track. Not enough work was done to adapt the parts to suit the current lineup of the band, or the heavier tones now being used. During the mixing sessions I felt myself attempting to guide things closer towards the original version, especially with the drum tones, however the track needed to fit with the sound of the rest of the album. This dichotomy was never fully resolved, and the final track feels like a compromise as a result.

The table below highlights key differences where the song arrangement did not work as well in the new context, and demonstrates how the logistical and social conditions of working in lockdown had an audible impact. This contributes to how the practice addresses the research question, *how can the social and logistical arrangements of a production be considered to deliberately shape the aesthetic of the final product?*

Instrument		Original version (Appendix 2)		*Graveyard Star* version
Tapped harmonics on acoustic guitar	From 00:00	Single track. Acts as rhythmic and tonal foundation throughout the whole arrangement.	From 00:00	Double tracked. Lusher, wider sound but loses definition and cannot support the arrangement.
Ride	From 00:16	Soft, relaxed tone. Adds depth and ambience.	From 00:16	Bright and insistent in the mix. Poor blend with guitar.
Toms	From 1:07	Tone foregrounds the attack and reverb over low frequency content for the dramatic strikes. Adds to the ambience soundscape.	From 1:04	Tone is very heavy around 90Hz with little attack, so the aesthetic intention for the part is not achieved
Bass	From 4:10	Tight, dry, defined. Solid clean tones with the drums. Soul influenced bass line drives the section.	From 4:07	Less definition against heavy rock drums and snare reverb. The same bass line does not work in this context.

Figure 6.7 Comparison of key differences between the versions of *The Diamond*

Part of the Production Habitus model outlined in chapter 2 includes a focus on the motivations of the participants in a music production. We have noted Amabile's intrinsic motivation principle of creativity (1983, 1996, 2013) as well as examining the idea of acquiring cultural or social capital from Bourdieu (1977). It is interesting to note the motivations behind the song *Side Effect* which we will examine now.

The Diamond and its *Side Effect*

The problems outlined above in the production of the song *The Diamond* motivated me to do better. I wanted to prove to myself I could write a better song about the highly significant times we were living through. My cultural capital as a songwriter in Mostly Autumn may have taken a dip and I felt had let the side down in producing a lower quality song then my previous contributions. I also felt that I owed it to Livvy to write something that considered her vocals and artistic persona much more thoughtfully. We are close friends, there is a familial nature to the collaboration of Mostly Autumn, and these things really matter. I am respected as a songwriter in this social grouping and I hoped that Livvy would like having me write a song specifically for her to sing. This motivated me to put more time and effort into a new song. The track list for the main *Graveyard Star* album was in the final stages of mixing so it was too late to add a new song, however a special edition was planned that would include a CD of extra songs and there was still time to get one on there as long as the production was simple, quick to produce, and low impact on Fairview studio sessions.

These social, cultural and logistical conditions dictated the Production Habitus for the song *Side Effect.* It would explore some aspect of living through the pandemic and fit with the *Graveyard Star* definitions and aims; it would closely consider Livvy's artistic persona and vocal range; it would need to use software instruments only; and it needed to have the emotional potency and authentic messaging typical in the Mostly Autumn domain. An additional logistical part of the production habitus was the physical environments involved. I was between houses living in temporary accommodation without access to my usual studio, but I did have a laptop, a Native Instruments S88 controller keyboard and the Komplete suite of VSTs. I did not have an audio interface or a microphone. I also had very limited time as the album was in the final stages of production and I was aiming to get a new song produced before mastering, whilst continuing with a particularly intense day job. These fixed elements at the start of the songwriting dominate the aesthetic of the final track.

***Side Effect*: Composition**

The song was developed by playing piano ideas with headphones over a couple of evenings. As song sections emerged I would improvise vocal melodies over the top and record them using the built-in microphone on the laptop. I had analysed several of Livvy's previous lead vocals and established what I thought would be a good range for her to sing in. It also was above my register so I could not make a good job of the vocal demo. I considered this to be a positive part of the collaboration as there was no chance my vocal could be anything more than a rough guide, thereby leaving space for Livvy to adapt the melody and make more of a contribution to the song development. This can be heard in the original demo, included as Appendix 3.

My commute to work at the time involved a 40-minute bike ride which gave me the mental space to write the lyrics. These needed to be authentic but also work from Livvy's point of view so that she could get behind them and communicate them in her performance. I considered my own feelings and mental health through the pandemic as well as drawing ideas from conversations with friends, to create a set of emotive images and ideas that I thought Livvy would resonate with. The concept explored the side effects of lockdown that were being felt but not very discussed: watching your musician Self disintegrating; feeling demotivated to get dressed in the morning; painting a smile on to reassure the kids when inside you're really scared; and not having anything to say when your friends call because nobody's done anything interesting to talk about. I tried to portray these ideas in snatches of relatable images and sense memories. Ideas were subject to strict criteria and only accepted if I judged they would hold a strong emotional potency for Livvy.

With lockdown loosening a little I was able to arrange a session with Livvy in a university studio where we could trial the melody and she could adapt it to make it her own. It was technically and logistically possible to record high quality audio in this session and use it in the final mix, however this would neglect important social and psychological factors that contribute to the production. The doxa of Mostly Autumn production, and the capital of John Spence and Fairview studio, would likely produce a better performance with Livvy in her more familiar studio environment. Therefore, I made it clear that we were only recording demo ideas for her to get familiar with and that the performance for the 'real' version would be recorded by John at Fairview. We tried a few different keys and tempos, finding that Ebm worked best for her delivery, and Livvy made a few adjustments to the melody to craft it better to her style and interpretation of the lyrics. For example, the melody on the line "I'm torn from a dream where I'm flying" originally used conjunt auxilialry motion, moving between the minor third and the root and maintaining an anxious tension to the next phrase. (00:15 – 00:20 Appendix 3). Livvy adapted this by extending the range down to end on the dominant lower fifth scale degree which creates a more melancholc, sighing descent that adds a sense of heavy resignation and showcasing a warmer part of her range (00:15 – 00:20 in the final version).

With the experience of *The Diamond* fresh in my memory I was keen not to assume the arrangement would translate to the new key and tempo without some work. Therefore after Livvy had left I worked on adjusting the piano inversions and decorations to sit better in the new key, and I arranged some additional orchestral parts to underscore the emotional dynamics, such as the gentle pizzicato pattern in the final verse that support the juxtaposition between the lyric "I smile through another day holding a scream inside me," and Livvy's soft delivery (01:57 – 02:17).

***Side Effect*: Production**

This more considered pre-production activity allowed us to go into Fairview better prepared, and it allowed Livvy to relax into her performance in her comfort zone of a Fairview vocal session, confident in John's process of coaching and editing a good take. Their collaborative relationship has developed over years of successful projects and I was keen to preserve this as we tracked the vocal. I positioned myself in the control room out of Livvy's sightline so that she could focus on communicating with John and almost forget I was there. I have a reputation as a bit of a perfectionist within the band and I didn't want this to affect the performance. This allowed the more established working relationship between the two of them to take care of issues in timing and pitch, and I could contribute praise, encouragement, and occasional comment on the dynamic intention of specific lyrics, as a more distant voice in the headphones rather than as an observing, assessing presence.

Overall, these considerations in setting up the conditions for the vocal production resulted in a swift and fruitful session, with a positivity around the collaboration that facilitated creativity and an expressive performance.

Following the successful vocal production, I was motivated to spend some more time developing the orchestral elements in university studios. There is a point to make about motivation here. The original drive to create the song came from social and cultural places where it could be argued I was seeking to increase my capital. However, the development of the orchestral parts involved a lot of time learning new virtual instruments and blending articulation samples from different sources. This was a learning curve that took a lot of effort, but I was not actually conscious of any capital motivations at this point. The drive was mainly to craft something I was happy with. The result can be heard by comparing the final chorus with the same section in the demo (02:39 – 03:00). The demo version has the violin melody played in unison with no orchestration or consideration of the other string voices, whereas the final version is orchestrated between 4 string voices and adapted for the new key giving a fuller tone and more sophisticated character.

Conclusion

The effects of wide cultural contexts on the logistics and Production Habitus are embedded in the final versions of *The Diamond* and *Side Effect*. I have examined how the original project definition shifted as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and how subsequent lockdown conditions affected the album production. As well as the logistical restrictions, and the competition for creative energy from my university job, deep psychological notions of identity were being eroded by the lack of opportunity to engage in our usual musical performance practices. In examining performance, Schechner (2013) outlines Turner's ideas of ritual and liminality. By undergoing the structures and processes of a ritual participants can enter a liminal state, become free of their more mundane daily lives, and feel connected to their comrades in a state Turner calls 'communitas' (in Schechner 2013, p. 70). Spontaneous communitas, in which a social group feels so connected they achieve a kind of telepathy, can be reached through ritual practice. The social grouping of a touring band has its rituals that help to generate this; the setting up of the equipment; the warm-ups; the sound-check; the costume change; the countdown to stage time; and then the performance of structured music itself. Practiced regularly these liminoid rituals can reinforce group identity as well as an individual's perception of who they are, and when the lockdowns removed the occasions for this to happen the effect was felt in the song development and altered production processes.

The Consolidation Points Framework has been useful in analysing where things went wrong in the production of *The Diamond*, and revealed elements of Production Habitus that were flawed, particularly in affecting the psychological and physiological state of the performers. The insights from producing *The Diamond* and *Side Effect* are important in investigating the second research question, *how can the social and logistical arrangements of a production be considered to deliberately shape the aesthetic of the final product?*

We can also note the familial nature of the Mostly Autumn collaboration and how in turn social and cultural factors became a motivating factor in the creation of *Side Effect,* as well as how time, cost and personal logistics dictated the Production Habitus and therefore the aesthetic of the final track.

PART THREE

Studio 2



Figure 6.8 The album cover for *Studio 2*
(Art and design by Suzanne Bielby, 2023)

Studio 2 (2023) - album by Mostly Autumn [AUT0357]

- Recorded live at Abbey Road on 19th and 20th April, 2022
- Produced and mixed by Chris Johnson
- Mastered by Russ Hepworth-Sawyer

Project Initiation

In early 2022 the opportunity arose to produce a Mostly Autumn album at Abbey Road studios as part of York St John University's annual project. This presented significantly different circumstances to the usual production doxa of the band and so the creation of a Production Habitus needed to be considered from the ground up, rather than relying on the tried and tested processes and relationships involved in producing records at Fairview Studios. As Bennett has suggested, "…particular working methods create a different creative environment in which certain musical decisions – and therefore outcomes – become more likely (2011, p.10)." Although the chance to record at Abbey Road would be attractive, the band would need to commit significant funds to the

project in terms of session fees, manufacture, marketing and distribution, and so the first stage was to pitch the idea and persuade Bryan Josh and the band's management that it was worth the financial risk.

The Production Habitus model guided me to consider relevant factors to make a convincing pitch before approaching the band. The motivations would focus on associations with the studio which would be particularly important to the band who frequently cite Pink Floyd as a major influence, and the chance to record in the same space where *Dark Side of the Moon* was produced would be a very appealing intrinsic motivation for the band members. I also considered the cultural capital of Abbey Road in pitching an aesthetic for the project. Notions of sophistication, a rich heritage, seriousness, organic sounds and quality musicianship would be important. The project could give the band an opportunity to secure themselves as elders of the UK prog scene, which would be a positive evolution of the band persona, an amplification of cultural capital, and a therefore considerable motivating factor. Chapter 4 explored notions of persona in record production and how it can be formed and developed through cycles of musical outputs for an artist. We noted from Moore's studies of song meaning how an audience's perception of artistic persona is affected by the textures, spatial characteristics and complexity of the sound worlds that the vocal inhabits (2012, p. 187). He also distinguishes between the content of a song (melody, chords, lyrics) and the articulation of this content which carries a 'feel.' Moore refers to this as "the 'tactility' of sound in a recording" which is to do with timbre, space and texture (2012, p.29) and that we can consider contributes a large proportion of the aesthetic personality of the produced song itself. The way the timbal and sonic relationships in the accompaniment are formed around the vocal creates a unique audio character that has been deliberately shaped through the creative processes of production, and that Zak argues constitutes the third compositional layer in making records (2001, pp.24-25). A 'live at Abbey Road' record where the committed performances, timbres and soundscapes involve heritage Abbey Road instruments, the Studio 2 acoustic ambience, and a string quartet, presented the opportunity for this maturing of the band's persona as perceived by the audience.

Therefore the cultural and aesthetic aims of the project would guide how I organised a production process to achieve them. We would need to create new arrangements of existing material that would foreground organic tones and musicianship, removing any perception of artifice that can result from contemporary production techniques, and presenting authentic representations of the songs that would be fresh to the band's established fanbase. In order to highlight a 'high-brow' aesthetic I hoped to include a string quartet that would perform live with the band, playing arrangements

scored exclusively for the project, thereby giving the album a distinct identity of 'Mostly Autumn: live at Abbey Road with a string quartet.' Many of the band's songs use keyboard symphonic string patches to add grandeur and underscore emotional content, and so I envisaged a small live section would fit well, offering an intimacy and detailed texture in the solo lines of a quartet as a slightly grainier and more authentic alternative to the lush, chorus texture of orchestral string patches.

The dates of 19 – 20 April were fixed before the project was conceived, which had a significant effect on the motivation of the band, their individual performances, and the emotional texture of the production. *Heroes Never Die* from the band's first album *For All We Shared* (1999) was written about the loss of Bryan's father, Robbie Josh. It became the heart of the band and its most iconic song, becoming the last song or encore at pretty much every gig of the band's career, usually dedicated to 'anyone who has lost anybody.' The 20th April is the anniversary of Robbie Josh passing, and so it would be a highly significant moment for Mostly Autumn to play *Heroes Never Die*, in Abbey Road, on 20th April.

The pitch was well received and the themes for the album were collaboratively developed between myself and Bryan. There was a potential issue however, with how the project would be understood by the audience. Mostly Autumn have many concert albums and many studio albums but a 'live in the studio' album was a new entity which is risky for the band to invest in. We simply had no indication of whether the audience would be interested in buying alternative versions of songs they have bought before, without the context and excitement of the concert environment. My suggestion was to only release the album as collectors' edition vinyl and charge a premium for it, in keeping with the high quality, vintage aesthetic, and to release videos of some of the songs on YouTube to keep the exclusivity but still giving fans that don't buy the vinyl chance to experience the project.
The Production Habitus model draws attention to themes of ownership and how this is understood in a production. The ownership of the sound recording would be with Mostly Autumn records, and the songwriters would retain their appropriate rights, but more consideration was given to the musicians' sense of ownership of their performances and where they could have creative control. As the bandleader, Bryan could also exercise his creative control through the choice of songs for inclusion. More acoustic and piano-based songs were selected than I had anticipated, but this was a result of his interpretation of the 'heritage' aesthetic we had discussed. The new arrangements would be worked out in a 2-day pre-production rehearsal with band members able to take control of their own parts through this collaborative engagement. The keyboard players Iain Jennings, Angela Gordon and I would arrange the string section parts. This assignment played into our intrinsic

motivations as musicians, as it is uncommon for us to get the opportunity to score parts that will be performed by a live string section.

Pre-Production

The desired vintage aesthetic would be facilitated by the production model. We used a classic staged linear model of preproduction rehearsals, studio recording, and then postproduction. It is noteworthy that it was frequently commented during the process that we were "making a record the old-fashioned way." This was a significant shift from the established non-linear patterns of contemporary composition and production the band is used to.

In order to get all of the band members on the same page with the intentions of the project and communicate pertinent logistical details, an information sheet was circulated that highlighted the heritage aesthetic we were going for and pointed out the significance of the date in Mostly Autumn history. It was carefully worded to excite the band whilst communicating the tight logistics required to produce this ambitious project in just two studio days. If we consider it in the light of the Consolidation Points Framework (see figures 6.4 and 6.5 above) the information document had a key role in communicating the narrative of the project in a way that the band members could buy into, thereby positively affecting their understanding and therefore their performances. It also would define the end product, setting clear aims within the Production Habitus, and give it its persona in the Mostly Autumn catalogue.

This communication represented a change to the usually casual style of Mostly Autumn organisation and I was conscious of the social shift involved with my taking charge. However, the result was that everybody was well informed of the aesthetic and the arrangements, we avoided any logistical issues that can arise from a lack of communication, and the musicians were motivated for the project.

Pre-production rehearsals took place in a physical environment the band was unfamiliar with. I booked a large clean space at York St. John University that is used as a music recital room, usually for more classical ensembles. This was chosen as a deliberate departure from the smaller, warn and grungy rock band rehearsal rooms with stale smells and carpeted walls that the band members are used to. It is on the second floor, has a large window overlooking York Minster, a high ceiling, curved panelled walls with wooden diffusers, a polished wooden floor and a grand piano. This environment would communicate more of the aesthetic we were going for, seeping into the attitudes and behaviours of the band members and steering the arrangements we were working on in the right

direction. The presence of the grand piano in the rehearsals was significant in setting the tone of the project. It boosted confidence and inspiration in the sessions as it sounded so much better acoustically than the electric-piano-through-a-PA-system that we are used to working with in rehearsals. The acoustic, unamplified piano also required us to rehearse at a lower level than is usual with electric guitars and drums, forming an alternative, cleaner acoustic environment. This enabled the musicians to be more aware of each other as we played, and produced more focused and considered performances.

The sessions were booked for 2 full days, which afforded much more band rehearsal time than we are used to, allowing us time to find fresh approaches to songs we have played many times before. These pre-production arrangements, along with the narrative of Abbey Road and its Pink Floyd associations created a bubble of excitement and sophistication around the project within the understanding of the band members that would affect their motivations, performances, and ultimately the sonic character of the album.

The tone of the rehearsal environment and the progress we made on the arrangements had another effect on the quality of the record, in that until this point it was still just a possibility that the band's management would pay for the string quartet. With everything going well and the aesthetic taking hold in Bryan's mind at the end of the first day of rehearsals he was convinced enough to commit to this expenditure. This left only a week to score the parts, source the quartet and make the necessary arrangements. Four songs were chosen to feature the quartet:

- *Man Without a Name*
- *Silver Glass*
- *Tomorrow Dies*
- *Heart Body and Soul*

I contacted Jon Hargreaves, a composer that I had collaborated with on a previous project. Jon was working in Canada but was able to fix a quartet using his London contacts. Angela, Iain and I shared out the songs and scored the parts individually, and then met two days later to collaborate on the transcriptions in Sibelius, finessing each other's work and adding articulation and dynamics. We have limited experience transcribing for quartets and so I emailed the score to Jon who reviewed them and sent back some revisions. This was an important final stage. Jon has experience working with rock bands as well as classical musicians and so was able to interpret our intentions for the quartet

and adapt the scores so that the quartet would quickly see what we were going for. Much of this was adding hairpins for dynamics and phrasing, moving some first violin parts up an octave, and coaching us on the nuances of articulations that went beyond those available in the VST libraries we are used to. For example, whether we wanted a pizzicato to sound 'fleshy' or 'picky' or a sustained part to sound warm, thick, cool or pale. Although he was a distant voice phoning into the Production Habitus from Canada, Jon's professional sphere of contacts, his capital amongst London-based classical musicians, his expertise, and his generosity in helping us last minute would all significantly influence the aesthetic of the record, as demonstrated in the final mixes of the four songs with the quartet. For example *Man Without a Name* has an added elegiac grace, particularly in the violin and viola counterpoint at 03:03 – 03:15. *Tomorrow Dies* gets a thunderous tension through the rising tremolo in the break at 04:18 – 04:56. The warm supporting textures in *Heart Body and Soul* dynamically swell into operatic grandeur in the final chorus giving a tragic-romantic texture to the final chorus at 03:45 – 04:27.

During the rehearsals it felt like there was a conscious transfer of creative control. The established flows of influence and ways of doing things within the band has Bryan making most of the creative decisions. He is the named producer on every Mostly Autumn album which made it uncertain, given that I had conceived and was managing this project, where my 'producer' role started and ended. I wasn't sure before the rehearsals whether I'd be responsible for the new arrangements or it would default to Bryan. However, in the sessions, he consistently deferred to me on arrangement decisions, commenting "it's your thing." This was an unusual lending of capital within the social micro-culture of Mostly Autumn, and it came with a palpable sense of responsibility.

The changed social and physical environment, and the 2-day timeslot facilitated a freshness in the approach taken in the rehearsals that affected the arrangements as a result of experimentation and 'play.' Ideas were freely suggested and then refined, accepted or rejected depending on how well they fit with the aesthetic aims. For example, the opening synth melody for *Silver Glass* was moved onto flute for a more organic feel (00:26 – 00:54). All of the sustaining synth pad parts usually played on *House on the Hill* were exchanged for country influenced decorations on the piano for a more spacious and rootsy arrangement (for example 01:28 – 01:43). Denser guitar tones and keyboard layers were dropped from *Silver Glass* and *Heart Body and Soul* to make more space for the string quartet and additional vocal harmonies. The 'heritage' theme actually had us reinstate sections of songs that had been dropped from live versions for many years in a callback to the band's roots, such as the introduction to *Last Climb* which could make use of the Fender Rhodes in Abbey Road (00:00 –

01:02). As *Heroes Never Die* would be recorded on the anniversary of Robbie Josh passing, I referenced an old recording of Liam playing his original acoustic guitar part so I could recreate it in homage and deepen the layers of meaning and tribute (02:33 – 02:58). We knew the specific Schiedmayer Celeste that Pink Floyd used on *Time* (1973) would be in the studio, and so we worked out a few parts for celeste so we could link ourselves to our heroes somehow through this wonderful instrument (Abbey Road, 2022). This is heard at the end of *Silver Glass* (05:10 – 05:26) and in the choruses of *Man Without a Name* (01:55 – 02:24). Altered arrangements also included parts that would utilise the vintage Fender Rhodes and Hammond Organ in order to amplify the band's 1970's rock aesthetic. The effects of the pre-production were therefore very evident in the character of the final record, and show clearly how approaches to collaboration affect creative contributions, and how social and logistical arrangements can be considered to deliberately shape the aesthetic of the final product, which address the research questions.

Studio Production

The notion of Production Habitus conceptualises a virtual bubble around a project that the participants both generate and inhabit. For a band like Mostly Autumn, whose collaboration has a family style, this bubble is at its most defined when we are on tour and the band is travelling together, eating together, sharing accommodations, and moving through the world in a social vessel that carries its own set of codes, rituals and relationships. The sound of the band performing on tour depends on the complex network of interactions that exist in this sphere, and so it was important to nurture and maintain it when planning the logistics around the studio sessions. As per any other band engagement, we travelled from York to London in our splitter van with all the equipment. We spend a lot of time in that van driving across the UK and Europe. It represents a physical embodiment of our immediate social sphere, a place in which relationships and band personalities are formed and maintained. We all have our usual seats and roles, and the same topics of conversations tend to get replayed. Travelling in the Mostly Autumn tour bus has a psychological effect when moving from one Self to another that we can again link to Turner's ideas of ritual and 'communitas' (in Schechner 2013, p. 70). By climbing on the bus we are beginning a ritual that reinforces the band identity and each individual's sense of who they are within that community. It was important to consider this in making the travel plans. Similarly, a large apartment near to Abbey Road was secured that could accommodate the full band. This included an outside area with a fire pit and a well-equipped kitchen, so the band could socialise and eat together, and walk as a unit to and from the studio. The fire pit was a significant detail. Social events at band members' houses, and on our frequent communal camping trips, almost always take place outside sat around a fire pit and so it

was another familiar actor in reinforcing the social sphere and activating our Mostly Autumn personae.

An edited version of the project definition document had been sent to the Abbey Road engineers with a summary of the band, a tech spec, and a track list with details of who plays what on each song. I had also discussed the session with the engineers, detailing the required sight lines and likely preferred positions on the studio floor, as well as some aspects of the band dynamics that would be important. This ensured a very swift setup on the first day and after loading in we were quickly onto recording the first track.

The running order for the days had the easier and most familiar songs first in order to build confidence. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the Mostly Autumn production doxa is to record very few takes. This facilitated the rapid model that emerged. We would record one take for levels, then adjust our headphones accordingly, then record a second take and that was usually it. Most of the tracks on the album are the second take.

The most unknown and potentially risky element was performing live with the quartet, so the 4 songs with strings were timetabled for the second half of the second day with the quartet booked from 1pm until 5pm. I was apprehensive before they arrived due to my awareness of how the classical and rock music world have different doxa, different etiquettes and different approaches to studio sessions. I was also keenly aware of an internal personal insecurity born of a cultural attitude that classical music is somehow highbrow to rock music, and that these trained and brilliant people would find our scores laughably simple, naïve and childish. As a classically trained flautist with orchestral experience who moved into playing in a rock band, Angela felt she had a foot in both worlds and a strong understanding of the doxa of both. This is an important part of her identity as a musician and therefore a powerful intrinsic motivator, and so she enthusiastically volunteered to conduct the quartet. This made good sense as many of the parts the quartet would play were replacing the string parts Angela would normally perform on the keyboard.

In his discussion of the domain of commercial record production, Thompson notes that just as the composition of popular song demands learning the rules of the domain, "…the domain of record production also holds some of the symbolic rules, traditions and practices of the related domain of musical performance." (2019, p.71). It is noteworthy that such rules and practices are quite different between the domains of commercial record production and classical recording. Therefore, when

employing musicians embedded in the world classical performance to play on commercial records and thereby working in the intersection of classical and commercial production, the rules from both domains must be learned. One example that highlighted a difference between commercial and classical production practices came as we were welcoming the quartet into the studio and talking through the project. It is normal practice for a rock musician to double track a part in the studio to achieve a richer timbre, and in my ignorance of classical recording rules I casually mentioned wanting to try this with the quartet. There was a slight stiffening of atmosphere and the engineer quietly explained to me that I shouldn't ask this of them without prior agreement and offering additional Musicians Union rates for doubling. The quartet said they were happy to do it anyway, but I didn't want to put them or the Abbey Road engineers in an awkward position and so quickly dropped the notion, reading up about 'doubling' and overdubbing rates on the MU website so I wouldn't make the same mistake again (Musicians Union, 2023).

Against my expectations the songs with the quartet were recorded just as quickly as the others and we produced strong versions of all 4 songs with them in the 4 hours we had. Before we started Angela chatted to the string players using shared language and narratives from the classical music domain, establishing a relationship that would make her conducting role more comfortable. On reviewing takes and commenting on how to shape the quartet parts more to our intentions I drew heavily on Jon's coaching, which was largely effective. However there remained a need for a 'translator' to mediate between the language and practices of commercial record production and the domain of classical music. Angela and was able to help here so that communications were clear, the quartet were responsive, and the session was very productive.

The practical arrangements of keeping the band together socially, planning the sight lines, and programming the running order carefully, resulted in spirited performances with a tight rhythm section and a relaxed 'freedom' to the parts that would be lost in other circumstances that favoured more focused and introspective performances, such as on *Smoke Rainbows.* This can be heard in the character on the record. For example, during the extended guitar solo in *Heroes Never Die* when the stabs are tight but everybody fills and builds loosely to support the intense solo (07:34 – 08:12), and the whirlwind freedom in the Hammond, drums, bass and vocals in the mid section of *Simple Ways* (02:00 – 03:15).

Post Production

The post production process saw the Production Habitus shrink considerably. The persons involved was reduced to 3; myself doing most of the work alone with occasional comments from Bryan, and then the addition of Russ Hepworth-Sawyer as mastering engineer. The physical environments shrunk to my small home studio, and Russ's mastering room.

The editing and mixing work happened in my studio. I was making decisions based on my knowledge of classic rock records, the band's persona' the aesthetic we were going for, and the general domain of contemporary mixing. The first stage involved editing the preferred takes. As I was accountable for the project I felt I needed to make it sound as good as possible before sharing any 'premix' audio with Bryan. The rapid nature of the studio production allowed us to record the full album in just 2 days, however the model prevented us from reviewing takes in sufficient detail which moved most of this work to post. The result was that I found a few shaky moments that would have tainted the memory of the treasured Abbey Road session for some band members and therefore affected their connection to the project, so the issues needed addressing before anyone but me heard them. For example, there were some tuning issues in vocals and the quartet. As a live performance it was challenging to address in some areas due to the amount of bleed down each mic on the studio floor. Some tuning issues in the quartet were addressed by laying in sample parts and gently cross fading the levels to mask the out of tune moments. This changed the tone of the quartet, creating a lusher texture, but this actually helped sit the strings within the Mostly Autumn sound. It allowed the expressive nature of the performed strings to stand out where they needed to, being overtly identifiable as a quartet rather than samples, whilst creating an easier to blend tone for more sustained harmonic pad elements of the arrangements. Some correctional editing on vocal tuning was difficult due to the bleed with the piano, and several techniques were employed to address this.

In this way each track was tidied up in editing in before the rough mixes were shared with Bryan. In doing this I was aware of imposing myself as a quality control filter before allowing the band access to the material, and therefore setting up a hierarchy where my judgement was privileged over others. I was making decisions and altering other musicians' contributions based on my own taste and quality thresholds. However, this was necessary both to keep up momentum and motivation within the Production Habitus, to save people the awkward moments where under par performances are scrutinised, as well as avoiding tedious editing sessions with more than one person involved. The postproduction was largely a solo and quite protracted process in stark contrast to the production. I was working full time elsewhere and so could only dedicate a few hours a week to it, so

it took a few months. I would do a mix of the album and then invite Bryan to the studio at certain points so we could be sure the mixes were heading in an agreed direction. The keywords that kept coming up in those sessions were “analogue,” warmth,” “quality,” and “1972.” As a result these aesthetic terms, along with other comments from the sessions, would be internally highlighted in my awareness within the domains of classic rock and mixing practice that I was immersed in and measuring my decisions against. We could say that the reduced Production Habitus for mixing was dominated by of a cloud of aesthetic ideas, reference tracks and production understanding that was generated and inhabited by Bryan and I, and that this steered the mix timbre of the product.

At a mid-point in the mix process I began collaborating with the mastering engineer on the project, Russ Hepworth-Sawyer. Russ is also an academic and understood the research elements of the project, and so we agreed to trial methods of collaboration between mix and mastering engineers. Having been present during the set-up of the project, and at the recording sessions, Russ was well integrated in the Production Habitus and aware of its commercial and aesthetic goals. Rather than wait until the mixes were complete before sending them for mastering as would be normal practice, we integrated Russ’ mastering perspective into the mix process in the hope of developing both mix and master in parallel. I would send early mixes and he would respond with comments on adjustments that could be made to the mix that would avoid issues having to be dealt with in mastering. This would optimise the mixes for his workflow and allow him more opportunity for aesthetic shaping rather than solving problems. Additionally, he would send ‘demos’ of his evolving mastered versions to demonstrate how certain mix decisions were affecting the master. For example, high hats and cymbals that were well balanced in the mix might turn out overly bright in the master due to the vocal needing to be brightened by mastering processes. On hearing this I would adjust the levels and tones of the overheads and the vocal in the mix and hand it back. This model was very valuable in highlighting issues and guiding the postproduction timbral shaping processes in parallel. However, limitations in our availabilities made it an overly long process with slow momentum which had an effect on the freshness and excitement the project initially had. More research could be done here to investigate the possible closer collaboration between mix and mastering engineers in more detail and over a much shorter timeframe.

Conclusions

The finished audio product *Studio 2* addresses the research questions on collaboration and how the social and logistical arrangements can be considered to deliberately shape the aesthetic of the final product. Although no new songwriting was involved in producing *Studio 2*, it is observed that the

collaborative processes of constructing the Production Habitus, writing the new arrangements, scoring the string arrangements and performing the postproduction, closely reflect the collaborative songwriting processes put forward by Bennett. These are stages that ideas pass through in the collaboration that determine how or if they make it through the collaborative filter and onto the project: "…stimulus, approval, adaptation, negotiation, veto and consensus" (2011, p.9). At each stage of the project ideas were suggested either verbally or within the context of a performance, score or mix, that were then considered by others in the Production Habitus. They would respond accordingly from their position in the project, and the idea would be either be rejected, or it would survive in one form or another into the final product. Rather than apply this to songwriting as Bennett does, we can borrow the notion and consider it in the context of Zak's third compositional layer of a song - "the track" - which is the sound recording itself and comprises specific tones and performances and how they are balanced. In considering this layer Zak states:

> "Compositional decisions are based on or influenced by a similar set of factors, which include technical competence, aesthetic belief, the needs of personal expression, a sense of style and language, a feeling for form and dramatic narrative, familiarity with other works, and so on"
>
> (Zak 2001, p.38).

Bennett's compositional processes, viewed in the context of Zak's composition of "the track" can be observed through the production of *Studio 2.* By using the ideas of Production Habitus throughout the project I was able to consider, monitor and shape how this was happening and make decisions accordingly. Perhaps a difference to Bennett's songwriting processes when applying them to Zak's third layer of composition, is that in creating the sound recording there is invariably a person who is accountable and who ultimately makes the final decision: the producer.

Although I had instigated the project, driven the aesthetic, secured the funding, designed the preproduction, managed all of the logistics, organised the quartet and the scoring, been musical director, liaised with the engineers, mixed the album and managed the mastering, the question of who would get the producer credit was still raised by the band management before manufacturing the album. I had assumed it was obvious that I was producing. Earlier in the process it didn't feel important to negotiate for a formal 'producer' title as a discussion that highlighted the matter could potentially be distracting and even upset the creative eco system in which every Mostly Autumn album has Bryan as producer.

As the project progressed the understanding of the varied producer role and what I was doing became more and more apparent. In the end the credit came to me with no argument, but the fact that the question was raised at the end of the process highlights some interesting aspects of production and collaboration. The Mostly Autumn project can be largely recognised as exhibiting the values, roles and working methods of John-Steiner's 'family' pattern of collaboration (2000). This pattern, dependent on trust, foregrounds commitment to a shared vision and is characterised by a flexibility of roles, which loosely portrays the informal way the band has operated socially and professionally over its 30-year career. This means that it is usual practice to swap instruments or contribute logistical support, and it's all-hands-on-deck when a stage needs setting up or a van needs loading. The motivations for everybody here are intrinsic, and to do with being part of something we believe in and want to continue doing. However, there is a tension between this unspoken arrangement, and the doxa that has developed that *does* solidify capital and roles within the organisation. This doxa is so strong that even when it is beyond doubt that I have taken the producer role on a project, it breaks doxa and so is still questioned before the credits are published. In a less family-orientated collaboration, more formal structures of engagement could exist and the producer role would be determined at the outset when agreeing a fee or royalty split, and it would be interesting to explore what difference that clarity would have had on the project and the product.

The question over the producer credit also highlights a commonly held assumption in the era of the DAW, that the things a 'producer' does are mainly to do with songwriting, arrangement and programming. The encompassing considerations of Production Habitus in creating an aesthetic, and the more linear analytical tool of the Consolidation Points Framework may help elucidate the nuanced and complex role of the producer, especially when examining the influence of facilitative, collaborative, enablative and consultative producer types as identified by Burgess (2013).

There was also tension between the project definition and the commercial doxa of the band's management when it came to releasing the product. Although we had been discussing a vinyl release throughout the process and it had greatly influenced the aesthetic of production, when it came to actually funding the pressing the management reverted to their tried and tested CD manufacturer and distribution mechanisms. Having never released anything on vinyl before they lacked confidence in how to press, store and ship vinyl, and didn't know if the Mostly Autumn audience would buy it. As a result of being so firmly in this mindset, a CD version was produced instead and released worldwide via Nova, but with no promotional strategy. The physical product does not explain what

the album is, and the product-defining words “Abbey Road” and “string quartet” do not appear on the external packaging.

However, the sum result of all the considerations of the Production Habitus is an album that achieves the vintage rock aesthetic but with a high-quality contemporary tone, confident and spirited performances, fresh arrangements and a more developed maturity and sophistication in the product’s persona.

CHAPTER 7: Halo Blind – *The Unravelling*

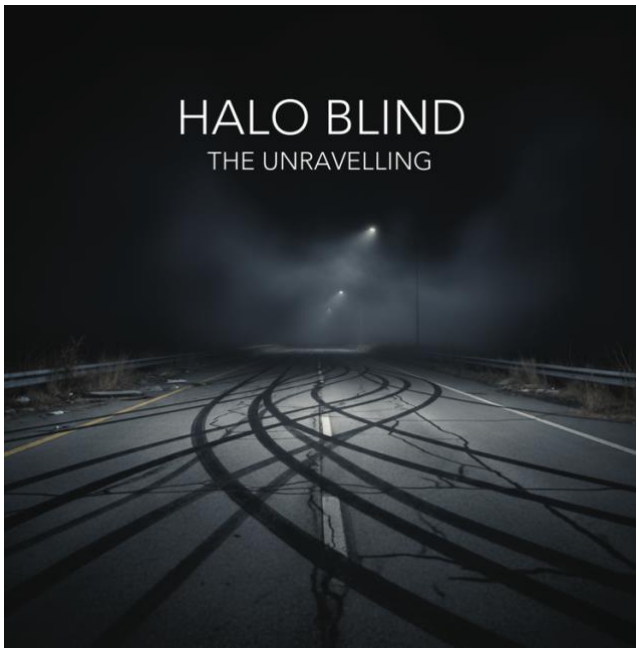


Figure 7.1 The album cover for *The Unravelling*

(Main image AI-generated by Loveart, 2025. Album design by Johnson, 2025)

Overview

Halo Blind is the band that was originally formed in 2009 as an outlet for my solo material, using a band persona in preference to my own name. I felt being untethered from my personal identity would facilitate a level of creative freedom and collaborative contributions that would be more difficult in a 'solo artist' branded project, and I thought a band name would be more interesting than my very common Christian Anglo-Norman personal name. The Halo Blind material reflects a different part of my songwriting and production than the Mostly Autumn material. It's far darker, more ambitious, and being detached from the Mostly Autumn domain it allows me to use more complexity in all levels of track composition: lyrics, harmonic structures, instrumentation, rhythms, and a much heavier use of technology in the search for fresh sounds to present emotional and cerebral concepts. The project is now more collaborative than its solo origins, and includes songwriting contributions from Andy Knights who has similar musical interests, styles and motivations.

There are 2 previous albums, *The Fabric*[3] (2009) and *Occupying Forces* (2014), which drew the attention of UK progressive rock audiences and commentators and generated a persona for the band

[3] *The Fabric* was originally released under the band name 'Parade'.

that included notions of sophistication, experimentation, high quality songwriting and musicianship, and a dark unsettling sound world. *Prog,* the dominant print magazine for the progressive rock genre, commented:

> "*Occupying Forces* is no mere progression, it's a daring revolution. Their debut was pure alt-rock beauty, but this is bleak, dystopian and unexpectedly spiritual…these are pieces of rare intelligence and maturity…the new line-up (shaped in part around ex-Seahorses personnel) has pushed mainstay Chris Johnson into darker and more complicated territory…The band members' stellar credentials led to the previous incarnation being dubbed a 'supergroup'. On the back of this can we call them a mega-group?"
>
> Prog (2014)

Other commentators noted:

> "The musicianship and songwriting are exceptional…*Occupying Forces* is a significant album, not just as a throwback to the halcyon days of British progressive rock, but as a guiding template for how this sort of thing should be done. Astonishingly good."
>
> Jones, A. (Get Ready To Rock, 2014)

And:

> "Halo Blind are essential listening and *Occupying Forces* highlights an exceptional potential which, if given the chance to flourish, could see the band becoming one of the major progressive forces in the UK in the coming years."
>
> Sonic Abuse (2014)

This chapter will explore the development and production of the band's third album, *The Unravelling,* which is part of the practical element of this PhD, using notions of an Artistic Self progressing through the cycle of production as outlined in Chapter 4, and considering structures of collaboration and their effects on creativity and Production Habitus discussed in Chapter 2.

The Halo Blind Artistic Persona

In Chapter 4 we considered Moore (2012) and Frith (1996) in examining how audiences construct an understanding of 'persona' from the produced record, and we used Zak's idea of 3 compositional layers involved in production to explore where persona might be created in songwriting, arrangement and sound recording (2001). The previous album *Occupying Forces* developed the idea of what the 'Halo Blind' persona is through the themes and messages of the songs, the sound worlds

it created, the performances, characters and attitudes implicit in the production, and the press and promotional materials created for the release. These product and PR elements, controlled by the producer and label, represent the 'intended production personality' of the Production Cycle of a Producer-Artist proposed in Chapter 4 (reproduced below as fig 7.1). This 'intended personality' was a development from the first album's characteristics of lyric-centric melodic songwriting fused with sonic experimentation, into a more focused exploration of spiritual questioning and political frustration in a more complex Radiohead-esque style. The album was also about grief and anger, and these emotions were poured into the lyrics, performances and tones with the expectation that rage and emotional weight would be imprinted in its character.

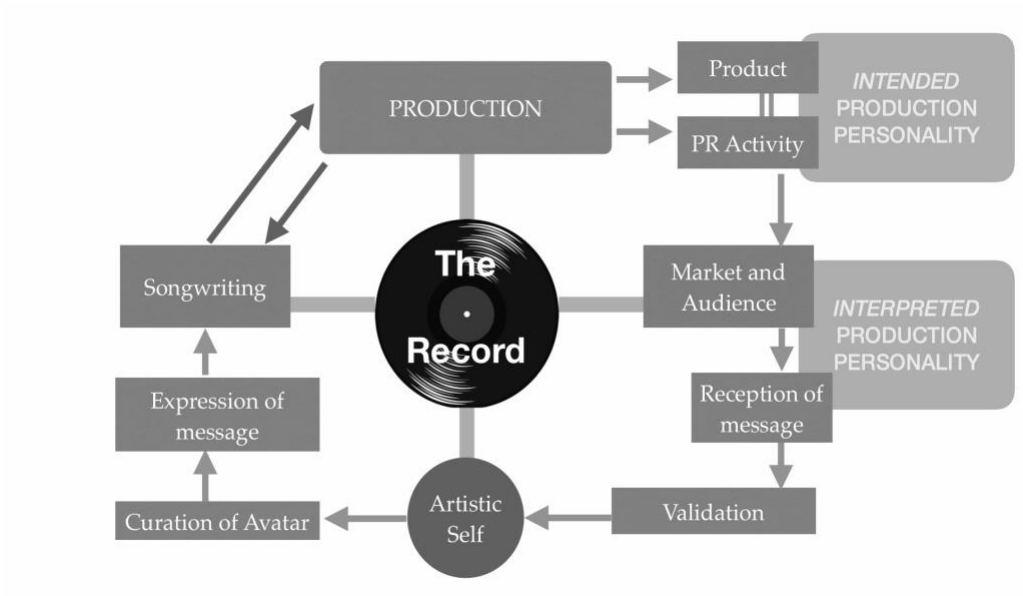


Figure 7.2 The Production Cycle of a Producer-Artist from chapter 4.

We have recognised through a range of explorations around authorship that the artist has limited agency in how their work is actually interpreted (Moore, 2012; Barthes, 1977; Goffman, 1990; Eisenstein, 1947; Foucalt, 1969), which could explain why I didn't see any audiences or press comments about how angry the album was. However, we have also discussed confluence approaches to creativity that view the artist as a more active component in a dynamic social system, drawing from and contributing to an evolving cultural sphere (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013; McIntyre, 2009, 2012). We can apply these ideas to the development of artistic persona, suggesting that the Halo Blind persona is collaboratively constructed between the artist and the audience, or the Scriptor and the Reader (Barthes, 1977). In considering the 'interpreted production personality' of *Occupying Forces* it is useful to consult the field of music journalism that commented at the time (see review quotes

above). These reflected some of the 'intended production personality' which seems to have been successfully communicated to the field, but their interpretation amplified or attenuated certain elements, amended or missed parts, and added others. Therefore, the Halo Blind persona was altered in the understanding of the audience who would likely have encountered *Occupying Forces* at the same time as its press reviews. Perhaps more significantly, the persona was altered in my understanding as the lead creative in the band. Following the reviews, comment and social chatter within the niche audience, my understanding of the band persona was now changed with much more affirmed ideas of complexity, bleakness, musical virtuosity, maturity, darkness, and potential significance than it had previously. In this way at the very start of development for album 3, my understanding of my own artistic Self (the Halo Blind one) was altered by the field's reception of the band's previous output and its inclusion in the cultural domain. The expectation would be different, the pressure felt a little increased, and the creative palette felt more defined and therefore more restricted. With *Occupying Forces* I felt creative freedom to be explorative in all music production areas, but at the start of album 3 it was difficult to escape the notion that we had to follow in the style and persona that was now already established. My attempts to rid myself of this creatively stifling notion and shake things up a bit had significant effects on the production design and composition process.

Models of Collaborative Writing

To give context to the production of *The Unravelling* we must examine the approaches of the first two albums and how the models of production and collaboration evolved. The production process for the debut album, *The Fabric,* involved me as the songwriter-producer writing all the musical parts and the lyrics, creating full demos of the songs in the DAW before drafting in band members to learn the parts and replace them, recording their performances into the same DAW session. As each demo part was replaced the produced track was progressively assembled. This solo-centric approach (see figure 7.3) allowed me to spend a lot of time crafting the arrangements before involving the cost of recording studios and time from the musicians. Rick Rubin favours this attention given to pre-production and is quoted as saying "the most important thing a producer can do is spending time getting songs into shape before recording…at home or in a rehearsal studio" (quoted in Zak, 2001, p 28.). It also allowed me meticulous creative control, having spent so much time crafting each musical part that I knew precisely what its role was in the arrangement. This meant I was able to coach the musicians quite specifically to get the performances needed.

However, this production model limits the potential of the collaboration, foregrounding the songwriter's cultural domain as the dominant aesthetic driver, minimising the contributions of the band members and closing off the creative possibilities of combining our skills and aesthetics and seeing what happens. Each part was either played by me, or I created tight parameters for the musician to follow, with their performances selected and edited by me according to my internal aesthetic. The resulting record was critically praised and well received by fans, and I was very pleased with it, however it was a bit of a lonely slog to produce, and I can hear an insular tone in it that was a result of that solo-centric process.

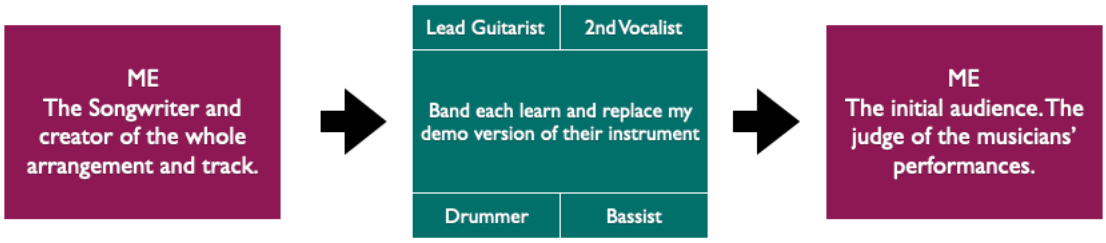


Figure 7.3 A Solo-Centric model of production.

In order to expand the creative palette for the next album, *Occupying Forces,* I recruited a second songwriter, Andy Knights, who has a shared skillset to my own as a multi-instrumentalist songwriter, able to contribute to writing any part of the arrangements. This allowed a great deal more creativity as developing tracks were passed between us as DAW sessions and we each contributed to songs started by the other, falling into a model identified as 'asynchronicity' by Bennett (2011) following his extensive research into collaborative songwriting. He outlines writers working separately with no defined roles, passing a DAW session backwards and forwards making iterative changes to any part of it. This can be seen as an expanded version of the DAW-based track writing engine from Chapter 4 (figure 4.1). This time, 2 writers are drawing from their skills and familiarity of multiple domains to generate the ideas, and 2 writers' judgements are in play in assessing each idea for inclusion in the track. This was frequently a quicker process than working solo as the other writer could step in for a fresh perspective when one was stuck, and decisions held more weight and permanence once they had been agreed upon by the pair. The stimulus for the next idea would frequently come from something the other writer did, which would create some excitement and give the process more momentum as we spiral closer toward a finished demo (see the 'WRITING' stage in figure 7.4).

We experienced a healthy sense of creative competition, which drove some risk-taking in our efforts to make a fresh-sounding album that pushed musical boundaries in sonically invigorating ways. Working intensely in this endeavour we can recognise John-Steiner's 'integrative' pattern of collaboration (2006), and the songwriting and arrangements were significantly affected by it.

Once the songwriting and DAW arrangement stage was complete, I wanted to create more space for the other musicians' contributions than they had on *The Fabric.* This involved circulating the completed demos for them to learn the arrangements and then holding several days of full band pre-production rehearsals for them to be able to try out the parts, interpreting and adapting them collaboratively before production (see the PRE-PRODUCTION stage in figure 7.4). This allowed much more room for the musicians to connect to the material and add their own personality to it before recording. Instead of a solo producer making all the judgements on parts and how they develop, the process is shared with the band, each being an expert in their instrumental field, and hence the creativity is more distributed through a network of musical and cultural domains.

In Chapter 2 we considered McIntyre's (2019) use of a holarchy to express an interconnected set of systems models, and the concept is useful again here. In this model of collaborative production there is more space for the internalised domains and fields of the musicians to connect and interact. Each is bringing their discipline-specific skills and aesthetics to intersect and react with the others within a well-defined overall project aesthetic established by the demos and maintained by the guidance of the writers and their own contributions on guitar, vocals and keyboards in the rehearsals. The written parts are interpreted and performed by the musicians with each influencing the other in a dynamic process of play, discussion and refinement as we circle ever closer to the performance attitudes, tones and musical arrangements that works best for the combined aesthetic of the group. The subsequent recording sessions were largely conducted with each musician working with me as the producer on our own, allowing us to focus on their specific performances and tones uninterrupted, apart from many of my own parts which I recorded alone.

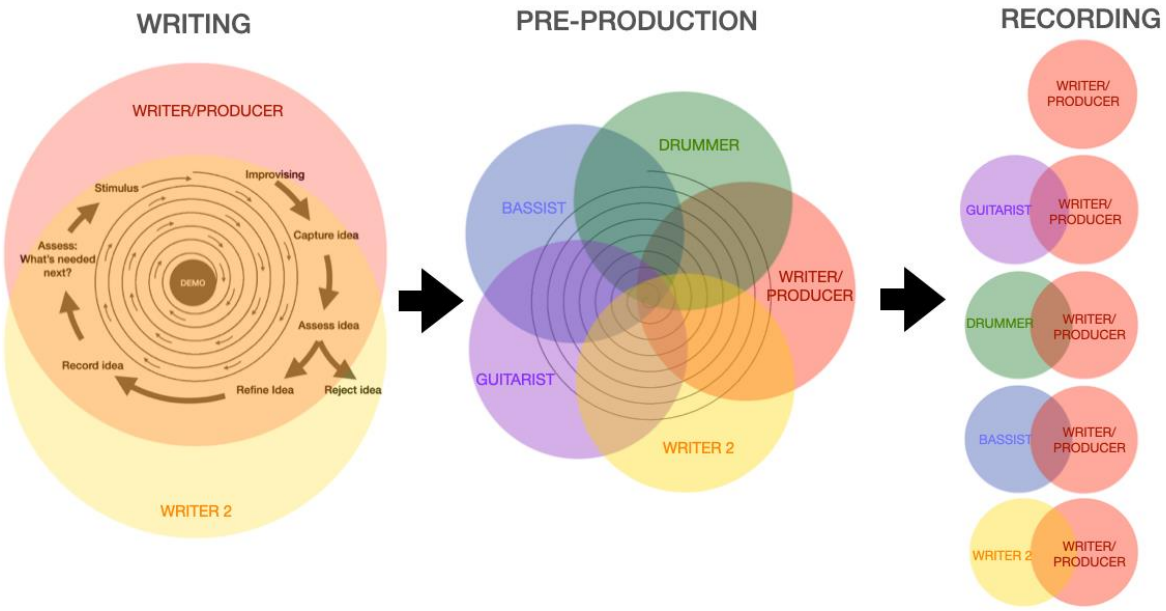


Figure 7.4 Expertise-based collaboration

This more expertise-driven process (figure 7.4) facilitated an intense and competitive writing stage with 2 experienced songwriters driving each other, followed by the dynamic integration of the band members' individual domains, skills and personalities in the pre-production rehearsals. The focussed recording sessions gave dedicated attention to every tone and performance. The result is a richer album that includes a much wider range of ideas and aesthetics drawn from multiple creative contributors' internal domains and musicianship. It arguably resulted in a better-defined unique band persona for the second album, *Occupying Forces* (2014).

The Unravelling: PHASE 1

Widening the Collaborative Writing: Trials

In Chapter 2 we explored the importance of intrinsic motivation on creative contributions and noted the multiple implications of ownership on motivation in the music industry. As an intrinsic motivator, giving a rock musician space to practice their art freely gives them a sense of ownership of the work that can be lessened when they are told exactly what to play. As an extrinsic motivator, being a registered part of the songwriting team has financial implications when the songs are sold, broadcast or performed, and it carries a level of cultural capital if the song has some success. When planning the Production Habitus for Halo Blind's third album, I considered these motivations from the perspective of the band, and reflected back on the positive effect the wider collaboration had had on *Occupying Forces*.

Discussions in the band had also revealed some frustration in not being able to contribute more to the earlier stages of song development, especially when the musician considers their craft to include experimenting with tone, creating soundscapes with specific equipment combinations, and writing parts in response to and in parallel with the tone creation.

In reflecting on this, it is important to consider the perspective of musicians that do not write full songs on their own, but have experience contributing to band arrangements. Being in a band involves group gatherings and repetitive practices that we can consider as ritual. The load-in and set up of equipment at gigs and rehearsals, the warm up, the sound check, getting into stage clothes, the set list structure and the amended Self that steps out onto the stage are all part of this, but perhaps the best-defined ritual structure is the group performance of a song. This involves each band member performing many concentrated organised and synchronised actions, the results of which declare the shared values and identity of the group. Turner (1974) suggests such acts can create a ritual camaraderie, or 'communitas' in which group identity is reinforced and a sense of connection is felt between group members. Moments of what Turner calls 'spontaneous communitas' can occur as a result of the performance ritual, where social status and personal differences evaporate, and the participants feel equal and at one with each other, as if inside each other's heads as the performance takes flight (Turner, 1974, in Schechner, 2013, p.70). It's likely that a large part of some members' motivation to be in a band is to achieve that spontaneous communitas and feel connected and equal with their band 'family,' as this is a highly positive experience for musicians. From this position, the writing of a song can be considered as the group agreeing the ritual it is to perform, where the

shared values and creative bonds are decided upon and structured. Being excluded from the writing of this 'ritual' could therefore cause feelings of a loss of status or belonging, and perhaps a diminished opportunity for communitas.

We can consider this in parallel with the understanding of habitus outlined in Chapter 2 (Bourdieu, 1977). The musicians have inhabited the social environments of bands for many years where the shared rules, rituals, creative bonds and world views that emerge form strong social structures that identify the group, and psychological structures that establish the belonging of people within it. If the practice in these previous bands included writing arrangements in a more democratised process, perhaps akin to figure 7.5, it will be a determining element of the habitus that has formed their core idea of what it is to perform music, and what it means to be in a band.

Reflections and discussions in these areas led to several trials to include the band members earlier in the writing process, with the intention of making some great music by developing the collective Halo Blind persona whilst democratising the creative process and increasing the motivations of the band.

The first trials involved writing full songs as chords, melody and lyrics, but holding back on writing instrumental parts beyond bare bones rhythm guides. I would then circulate the songs to the band and we would meet in rehearsal, playing songs through repeatedly for each musician to work out their own parts (see figure 7.5: Collaborative Part-Writing). It quickly became apparent that this would take too long, as limited availabilities meant we could rarely gather the whole band for more than a couple of hours every few weeks. This was not enough time to focus on each part, and with everybody improvising simultaneously it was not possible to assess in any detail what was working and what was not. No useable arrangements came from this process and it was abandoned.

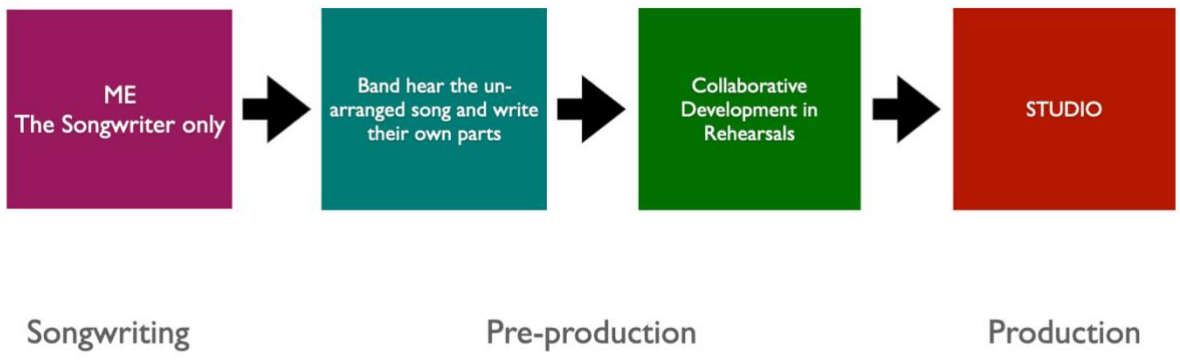


Figure 7.5 Collaborative Part-Writing

As an adapted approach, the 2 songwriters worked individually with each band member (including each other in instrumentalist roles) recording their ideas, discussing and refining them in an environment that allowed us to focus on each instrument. The idea was essentially to keep the 'DAW track writing engine' approach that had been successful for the writers, but to adapt it so that wherever possible we'd work with band members, recording their ideas directly into the DAW session. Having spent time with each musician collaboratively developing their parts, we then assembled the band for refinement rehearsals with everybody feeling ownership of their contributions. This approach was more fruitful, and parts for several songs on *The Unravelling* were developed in this way (see figure 7.6: Inclusive Part-Writing). For example, the insistent tapping in the drum pattern on *Twisted* (2:00 – 2:30) was an idea that the drummer played for a bar or so during a run through where he was trying lots of various approaches. He's hitting the shell of the bass drum instead of a hi hat. As we were recording all the ideas we could play them back and refine the idea collaboratively and place it in the song to increase tension in the build toward the climax.

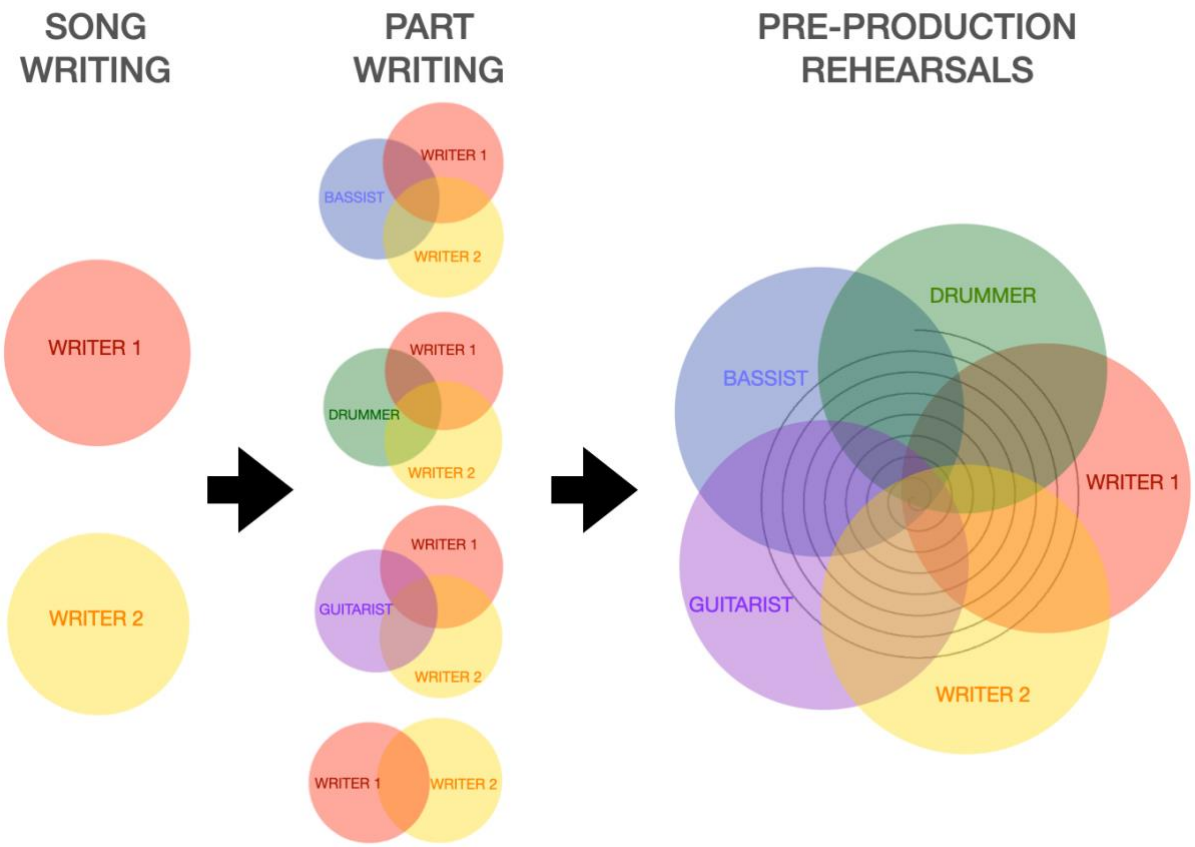


Figure 7.6 Inclusive Part-Writing

Used on the songs *Twisted, Banging Out a Warning* and *Unravel*

This approach was not always successful. Some sessions involving both writers working with one other musician ended fruitless, and I theorised a number of possible explanations to do with factors that make up the Production Habitus. The sessions were on weekday evenings after heavy days at work, so energy levels were low; they were in a studio that involved some loading in and out that reduced time and added to the hassle; and the social dynamic of having two writers judging each idea as it emerged from one musician was potentially adding pressure and reducing confidence. On reflection of the social micro-culture, it is understandable if people felt uncomfortable with the implied hierarchy that set the two writers above the musicians in assessing parts and shaping the creative direction, especially if they did not consider themselves in the 'musician' group in this arrangement. Vallerand et al (2003) identify the psychological importance of harmonious passions, when a person regularly pursues and enjoys an activity to the extent that it becomes a core part of their identity. If, for example, a keyboard player has "I am a songwriting keyboard player" as a part of their psychological identity, but our production process was only making space for the "keyboard player" part, it is understandable where frustrations could occur and stifle creative output.

A Groove-Based Collaborative Writing Model

The inclusive part-writing model had some success in developing rhythm section parts, however it was much more laborious than the expertise-based collaboration and required several sessions going between the drummer and bass player as each part was amended in response to the other. It seemed obvious to develop the drums and bass simultaneously, but we were put off by our unsuccessful earlier attempts of working on songs with the full band in rehearsal environments, where it was impossible to give enough focus to each part whilst playing our own instruments, and the sessions were short and infrequent due to availabilities. Considering this, and the major drivers of creativity identified in the Production Habitus (see figure 2.1), an alternative arrangement was devised that would put collaborative rhythm section writing at the start of the songwriting process. It was posited that if the writers had collaboratively developed grooves as the initial stimulus for songwriting, they would be invigorated to write fresh sounding tracks, the band would share more ownership of the material and the music would have an energised and more unique band persona. A 4-day residential production session was planned, where a location studio would be set up in a remote cottage to give us the space, time and facility to write and record drum and bass parts.

The agreed process for the residential sessions would be:

1. Before the sessions, the core writers would prepare several short musical ideas on keyboards or guitar. These would be no longer than a few bars each and provide starting points for improvisation.
2. In the residential studio, the relevant writer would play their idea repeatedly as the rhythm section improvised and developed drum and bass ideas.
3. The other writer would observe and offer ongoing feedback and refinement suggestions, whilst operating the recording equipment and capturing the performances.
4. Once core rhythm section parts were established, extra sections could be developed until a basic song form existed.
5. This would then be learned and recorded with more focus on performance accuracy and sound quality.
6. Following these sessions either writer could develop full song demos from the recorded rhythm section foundations, integrating contributions from the lead guitarist earlier in the process, and writing the top lines.
7. The band would relearn the song from the full demo before production (see figure 7.7: Democratised Songwriting).

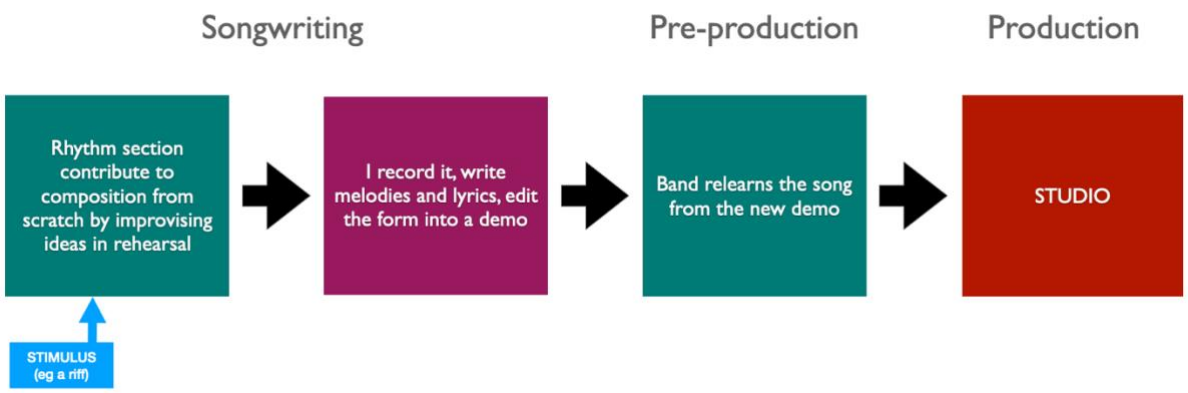


Figure 7.7 Democratised Songwriting

Used on *Silence*.

The sessions took place as planned in a remote cottage in the Scottish Borders. The location was selected to minimise distractions, foster a sense of creative focus and allow us to make noise comfortably without disturbing anybody. Evaluating the approach during and following the sessions revealed several key insights.

1. There was a removal of songwriter ego and creative hierarchy, with the originator of a musical idea no longer monarch in the collaboration. With the stimulus idea stripped of

capital, and the potential for either writer to develop the songs post session, I felt a breaking of attachment to my contributions. This was initially liberating and productive.

2. We made swift progress, with rhythm section parts and basic structures for 7 full length songs written in 3 days. However, my sense of excitement for each song was lower than I am used to, although it was understood that this was early in the process and I was unused to this model of composition.

3. There was still far less time dedicated to developing each part when compared to other models. With 4 people in the room, there are more limitations in terms of concentration and patience. Where a solo writer might enter a state of flow and spend hours trialling countless ideas and variations, this would test people's patience in a group of 4 who will need to come up with something far sooner. As such, the musicians would settle on the first or second idea that worked well enough, rather than reaching further for something fresh. The result was that although the songs came together quickly and were great fun to play in the moment, many of the recordings sound generic and mediocre in comparison to other models. Counter to our expectation, the tracks had less identifiable band persona, not more. This can be heard in the abandoned song *Sitting Duck* in Appendix 5. The track begins with the stimulus guitar riff idea, and the band kicks in at 00:13 with a spiky and well played groove. However, the result sounds like almost any indie rock band and the stabbed variations of the riff to develop the track at 01:30 do not add sufficient originality.

4. The process steered composition toward binary song forms, with emotional dynamics emerging simultaneously with the part-writing to create the structures. This is before any intended song meaning was established, and would drive the top-line writing later in the process.

5. The simplest stimulus ideas produced the quickest and fullest responses. Fuller and more developed chord sequences were more difficult to work on in this model, and resulted in the least interesting parts.

6. There was a significant change in feel as soon as the session moved from rehearsal to recording on day 4. It was important to record to a click so that song sections could be re-ordered on a DAW grid by the writers if needed, which meant recording with headphones

which altered the aural environment for the musicians and focussed their attention differently. The drummer also changed his focus to performing with consistent velocities and pressures to achieve a better tone for the recording. This altered how the songs had been coming across in the looser jam sessions, and they lost freshness.

7. The lack of other instrumental parts at this stage led to busier bass parts. Despite discussions around leaving room for other sounds, the bass player was reluctant to simplify the parts he had quickly grown attached to.

Following the cottage sessions, Andy and I shared out the 7 tracks for review, development and top-line writing. Working solo, the process began by loading a DAW session and doing rudimentary edits and mix work to get familiar with it and make it sound more inspiring for melody writing. Immersed in this activity I was conscious of waiting for the persona of the song to emerge, looking for inspiration, and a need to make the tracks sound great to excite the band when I share updated versions. After spending quite some time with each track, I was ultimately unable to come up with many arrangement or top-line ideas that I was truly happy with. They were OK, but not great. I met with Andy, and he was having the same issues, struggling to write 'good enough' melodies and lyrics. We were simply not sufficiently excited by the material, and our discussion generated these key insights.

1: The Cool

In each of the tracks we could not identify a core element that could stimulate creativity and motivate the exhausting set of subsequent actions needed to bring a song from its initial beginnings all the way through to a completed mix. We called this element the Cool. In our combined writing experience, there always needed to be something 'cool' in the track to drive the next step. It could be a chord sequence, a lyrical idea, a beat, an interesting timbre or effect chain; something fresh that is exciting enough to form the character of the track at an early stage and drive the development into full song and arrangement. I have already incorporated this insight into the DAW Track Writing Engine (figure 4.1). There were 'cool' elements in the tracks, but they were less potent than the Cool that emerged when writing solo. I suggest that the Cool involves a personal discovery made during the solo process of play and invention, an idea that that strikes the ideal balance between meeting the criteria of the domain and offering something new and exciting. In Sternberg's propulsion model of creative contributions this can be termed 'forward incrementation' in that the idea "…seems

to move the field forward from where it is and to the extent that the movement appears to be correct or desirable" (1999, p.33). This describes a core aim of the Halo Blind project, which is to push the limits of progressive pop rock so far, but remain acceptable to the field and therefore commercially viable. If an idea fulfilled these criteria and provoked an excited response from the writers, we would feel we had found the Cool and the rest of the track development process becomes an attempt to showcase this initial element to the world. For the cottage sessions, by limiting ourselves to rough stimuli ideas at the beginning of the process, we didn't pay them adequate attention and so created a mediocre starting point that lacked an essential Halo Blind element. We went in without the Cool.

By way of illustration, the abandoned track *Stag* started from a perfectly workable piano chord pattern, and the rhythm section and guitar melody parts are all fine (see Appendix 5, *Stag,* 01:20 – 02:20). However, the result is more accessible songwriter pop and does not have the more experimental and interesting aspects that define the Halo Blind project.

2: Disposability

The recordings from the cottage sessions represented expense and the contributions of our bandmates. This imbued them with a significance that restricted us from modifying them. For example, we couldn't change the key or rewrite a drum part to fit a top-line idea retrospectively. Of course we had the technology to change them, but they now held a capital that made such tinkering feel uncomfortable as we would be re-establishing a songwriting hierarchy we were trying to disrupt. This meant that our model had inadvertently relegated the lead melody to something secondary. When one writer is working alone in our other DAW-based writing models, all parts have an equal disposability, so can fluidly adapt and morph guilt free in service of the Cool, the melody and the vocalist. Fixing the contributions of the rhythm section disallowed this practice.

3: Quality Control and the Cycle of Self

We have seen that the starting point for the new Halo Blind project included a progressed understanding of the band's persona and my own creative Self that had been modified by the experience of previous productions and commentary from the audience and press. This included notions of high-level songwriting, complexity, innovation and sophistication. These are largely the result of the asynchronous writing model (Bennett, 2011) and a perfectionist level of quality control exhibited by the songwriters. In reflecting on our inability to come up

> with ‘Halo Blind’ toplines for the cottage session tracks, we noted that we had actually written lots of top-lines, but none of them felt like us. They sounded more generic, and may have worked for a different project, but they were not compelling enough for Halo Blind.

Only one song, *Silence,* that was created with the democratised songwriting model in the cottage sessions made it through onto the album. The other 6 tracks were ultimately abandoned.

The Unravelling: PHASE 2

I concluded from the experiments with writing models and our reflections on quality, motivations and the Halo Blind persona, that the earlier expertise-based model (figure 7.4) and the collaborative part-writing model (figure 7.6) produced the highest quality tracks and generated the most excitement and engagement within the band. Therefore 3 more tracks were written using a blend of these 2 models, *The Wild and The Beautiful Ones*, *Keep Down*, and *Only Forward.* All had something we could identify as the Cool, and all sounded like Halo Blind tracks with the persona intact, if a little closer to the previous album that I had hoped. An additional stage emerged around this time as lyrics were being developed, where the writers were searching for a concept that could link the songs together as a coherent album. I noticed some areas of synchronicity in our independently drafted lyrics where we both seemed to be writing about middle age. As similar aged writers with similar interests both absorbed in the same Production Habitus it is perhaps unsurprising that a common theme would spontaneously emerge, but as soon as it was identified every other production decision was affected by it. The writing now had a focus, and the musical and timbral choices had clearer guidance for what fits and what doesn't. The overall concept became 'Generation X reaching middle age' and the topics we were writing about were written through that lens. These included health anxiety, regret, an oversaturated news diet, building psychological walls and retreating behind them, privilege guilt, and a cynical view of the world spinning out of control, leaving us behind as it goes. Phase 1 had been a protracted process as we experimented with the writing models and lacked some artistic definition as a result. With a theme now emerging, the Production Habitus became more distinct, and we found some momentum again.

Pre-Production

In planning how to bring the tracks to full production, I went back to the project origins and re-considered how to include the band members more. As the Cool had not emerged in a democratised songwriting process, but it did emerge when the writers worked alone, perhaps there would be an opportunity for something great to happen if the band were included more in the collaborative track writing, Zak's third layer of composition (2001) that addresses not songwriting or arrangement but the specific tones and performances in a sound recording. This would require facility to record the core tracks with all 4 band members playing together, interacting, responding and accommodating each other's playing into their own as part of the performance. In his interview with Massey (2009), Daniel Lanois describes this as 'music as a network', highlighting that it is the interplay that makes it

sound good, which is not possible to achieve if one element, like the drums, is fixed, such as in a model based on overdubbing. This requires sensitive playing and economic arrangements, and a high level of musicianship and familiarity with the material, which became key factors in determining the pre-production process.

With momentum growing and 7 songs written, I secured University support to include the band in the Music Production department's annual Abbey Road project. We would have two days in Studio 2 to record the core tracks playing together as a band, with a few overdubs that made the most of the studio facility, such as using the Steinway grand piano, the celesta, the Fender Rhodes and the Leslie speaker. The tracking would then be completed with additional overdubs back in a home studio. The addition of the Abbey Road element had significant effects on pre-production:

- Having the date in the diary focussed track development and rehearsal activity, which became regular recorded rehearsals with opportunity to listen back and review.
- The capital of the Abbey Road name motivated the band to prepare enough to perform to their best musical ability. This included investing in some equipment maintenance and additional sundries, such as guitar amp servicing and higher quality drum heads.
- It forced arrangement decisions and commitment to ideas. How could we select and modify the core parts so that they could be performed well together in a single 'as live' performance? This involved combining and streamlining some parts with a focus on interplay and performance dynamics, and required some additional one to one sessions with the drummer and a DAW to refine beats.
- It prompted a revision of the Production Habitus, with a focus on keeping the band 'in the bubble' from rehearsals, through to the studio sessions. This would involve some logistical considerations on communications, travel and accommodation.

Production

Prior to the session dates the final versions of all the parts were exported from Logic to build ProTools sessions with tempo maps, markers and guide parts for the Abbey Road engineers. This DAW transfer process represented a shift from writing to production, a palpable commitment to the parts and tones we had collaborated on.

An apartment near to the studio was booked for the band, facilitating pre and post session discussion and socialising. Additional guitars, drum sticks and practice pad, and a small bass amp

were left in the apartment for warming up and last-minute rehearsal. These measures were intended to maintain the social micro-culture and maximise confidence going into the studio. The well-structured preparations made for an efficient session, and on the whole we were able to capture strong performances of the core tracks for each of the 7 songs as a live 4-piece band with minimal corrections. As the session was being recorded by Abbey Road engineers I was able to focus on my instrumental role in each song whilst keeping a general producer overview of dynamics and encouraging creative contributions where possible. This included integrating the expertise of the Abbey Road engineers with my aesthetic intentions as producer. Working on the project for only 2 days the studio engineer's understanding of the Production Habitus needed to be quite immediately formed, without inhabiting the deeper realms of the band's social dynamics, artist persona or writing models. This involved using reference artists and tracks as touch points we had in common and drawing on music and production terminology to communicate sonic and stylistic intention. This was a constant part of our conversation in the sessions, shaping many of the approaches for setting up the studio and establishing the tones for the capture. As an overt example, in the demo for *Twisted* I had used a VST piano through a heavy tremolo effect to create a watery tone. In exploring this concept with the engineer, we were able to experiment with the Steinway Grand piano in the studio, sending the signal from the mics directly through a rotary Leslie cabinet to create a unique tone that dynamically responded whilst Andy played the piano, which can be heard on the final track 00:56 – 01:15. Similarly, I wanted to create a shift in the size of the perceived sound stage (Moylan, 2014) for the heavy end section of *Keep Down,* so that the aesthetic went from tight to expansive, enclosed to cavernous, from introvert to extrovert. In communicating this change of environment, dynamic and meaning that I was going for, we settled on a plan to record the song in 2 passes, repositioning the room mics deeper into the space and using an alternative snare drum for the second section. The moment where this shift happens on the track is at 02:36.

The map of Production Habitus proposed in Chapter 2 (see figure 2.1) includes consideration of the Persons included in a collaborative project, and their psychological, physiological and emotional states. We did encounter issues during the recording sessions that were linked to the state of participants. One issue was a cold-like illness that was moving through the group, effecting energy levels and specifically restricting the vocal range of the singers. This used up some session time on repeated vocal attempts, as the capital effect of the studio was a motivating factor for recording the vocals there, however we conceded that due to ill health most vocals would need to be recorded elsewhere at a later date. Another issue was the emotional and mental state of the drummer, who was going through some personally challenging times and wasn't sleeping well. This had some effect

on his focus and mood, and his usually high energy levels seemed lower. Although he was responding very positively in the sessions, when I reviewed the recordings at a later date there were instances where the agreed part had altered, which I hadn't noticed at the time, creating issues with the bass part. Certain sections had been played with lower velocities than we had rehearsed, for example the opening toms of *Banging Out a Warning*, and a few takes were looser than his usual style. I was surprised that I had not picked up on more of these things in the session. Reflecting back, as we were limited on time and had an ambitious schedule we only listened back to each preferred take once, and in those playbacks I was focussed on assessing my own instrumental performance and so missed the drum issues. It would create some more work for me in post-production. The most significant effect on the finished product is actually very positive and improves the track *The Wild and The Beautiful Ones*. The rehearsed drum parts for the verses were performed a little differently in the session and no longer fit in the desired way, so they are now muted in the mix. This gives the verses a more lyrical, introspective focus, with the relentless machine-like 909 kick providing a dark electronic undercurrent (01:29 – 02:05).

The studio sessions took place in late January 2020, just as the first cases of COVID-19 were confirmed in the UK in York. Indeed, it's likely that unbeknownst to us, coronavirus was the illness passing through the group. We had already agreed to take a short break from the project following the intense activity leading up to the studio sessions, however the accelerating pandemic and eventual lockdowns that began on 23rd March 2020 extended this hiatus considerably. It prevented the band meeting, dismantled the social microculture, challenged our individual notions of Self as live musical performance disappeared, and it threw everybody's lives and jobs into massive disarray. The project fell way away in everyone's priorities and was effectively put on hold for a number of years as we all dealt with other things.

The Unravelling: PHASE 3

Editing and Additional Production

During the extended time away from band activities, the drummer moved to a different part of the country and Andy began a series of world travels that had him working in different countries for months at a time, rarely returning to the UK. Therefore, on initially revisiting the material, the Production Habitus had altered in many ways. I was now the sole participant driven by personal motivations to complete the project, referencing internalised domains to assess tones and ideas, and limited to working introspectively at home with project studio facilities. My aim in this period was to edit the recordings and pre-mix the songs to construct a solid and inspiring foundation to add vocals and additional layers to. As the momentum had completely left the project and I had no collaborators to enthuse with, it was very difficult to reignite the excitement that had existed when the material was fresh. I struggled to assess the value or quality of contributions that were made within the more populated, energised and carefully maintained Production Habitus of a few years previous. Some rough ideas that were sketched in the demos were now detached from whatever their eventual intention was, which I struggled to remember. It was also a challenge to summon my artistic Self after the extended hiatus of the pandemic, and an attempt to reconnect with that creative persona is explored in Chapter 5. With the loss of momentum and a deflated Production Habitus came a loss of perspective in reviewing the now stale recordings. In an interview with Graeme Thompson (2008), producer Nigel Godrich recounted the many years and different attempts it took Radiohead to produce the song *Nude* (2007):

> "Songs have a kind of window where they are really most alive – and you have to capture it. *Nude* missed its window, and it took a lot of reinvention to bring it back to the place where we could capture it again in a way that resonated for the people playing it. It was essentially the same song; nothing had really changed. What has changed are the people playing it."
>
> Godrich, quoted in Thompson (2008)

I felt we had missed the window on this material as it resonated less with me than before. There was no realistic possibility of assembling the band to reinvent it collaboratively and besides, the recordings represented a massive creative and financial investment that could not be dismissed. There was a significant change in motivation. This was now an obligation, and I was driven by a need to complete it in order to move on to new creative ground. The editing and pre-mixing process became a lengthy attempt to reinvigorate the songs in my perspective so that I could continue to add

creativity to their development. I was conscious of a loyalty to ideas collaboratively developed and agreed years previously which limited any structural changes I could make and so was trapped in a cycle of tinkering with tones and levels searching for the identity of the songs as I pre-mixed them ready for the overdubbing stage. Recording the previously written parts felt like a technical exercise, but I eventually found creative space in adding fresh guitar and keyboard parts, and experimenting with effects processing to augment what was already written. The track that was changed most in this process was *Banging Out A Warning* which I simply could no longer understand until I'd altered the bass and guitar parts, and added considerable electronic percussion and glitching effects, in line with Godrich's observation that "It was essentially the same song; nothing had really changed. What has changed are the people playing it" (quoted in Thompson, 2008). The greatest uplift in creativity came in rewriting some of the lyrics, which shifted the songs closer to my current creative Self so I felt more aligned with the messaging and better able to craft appropriate sound worlds.

In summer 2023, three and half years after the Abbey Road sessions, Andy returned to the UK for a while and we were able to organise some studio sessions to add his vocals and finish the tracking. The sessions began with a discussion around the effects of the extended production period and an evaluation of what we were doing it for in order to focus our intention and rebuild the pillars of the Production Habitus in our shared understanding. Commercially, it seemed unlikely that any product that emerged from the process would make any money given the length of time since the last album and therefore loss of audience interest, the dissolved line-up and the limited availability we had for marketing and promotion. The main motivations were our harmonious passion as artists to simply make something of merit, and our drive to finish the thing and rid ourselves of the psychological burden of unfinished work. The research outcomes for this study were also a factor for me.

This discussion highlighted a critical omission in the Production Habitus that had been absent from the very start of the project. Phase 1 had been an exercise in collaborative writing styles and production models to see what happened to participant motivations and subsequent creative outcomes. The project moved to Phase 2 as a result of the findings and at no point was a commercial Product Definition agreed upon. We hadn't set out to make a specific product. There was no release date, no physical format plans, and no concrete direction that we were making 'an album.' A conceptual aim had emerged through the process, and we had discussed the themes and narrative as part of lyric writing, but whether this was a vinyl album, a series of online singles, or just an exercise, had not been solidified. At the time of our Phase 3 discussion, we did not yet have the confidence that the material would be good enough to invest in physical manufacture and

promotional campaigns, and so, as before, the format decision was delayed and the explorative attitude that started the project prevailed: “Let’s see how good it is when we’re done.”

Although the Covid 19 pandemic was undoubtedly the massive cause of delay in production and the scattering of the band members, this hole in the core project definition exacerbated the delay with the absence of intention. With no clear commercial goals, the motivation and direction were not strong enough to drive the project forward when the momentum had stalled. This underlines the importance of the project definition within the Production Habitus, and its interconnectivity with participant motivations, the socio-micro-culture and the production model.

Following our discussion to refocus the project, the return of a collaborator with fresh ears into the Production Habitus had a positive effect on progress as ideas could be generated, discussed, validated and committed with more speed and confidence than when working in isolation with a lowered sense of perspective. It also facilitated some collaborative instrumental performances that would be impossible for one person to achieve. For example, Andy had a pedal guitar part idea for the end of *Unravel* with a rigid pattern in his head that could be demonstrated on piano. However, on guitar it required the repetitive drone of an open string that lifted a semitone for one bar at the same time notes higher up the neck were being played. It was impossible to achieve the effect with two hands so the solution was for one person to play up the neck whilst the second fretted the high E string on the first fret for that one bar, lifting the pitch of the drone at the right moment. Similarly, the distorted lead guitar at the end of *Twisted* required a progressive tonal softening that could be achieved smoothly with me playing the part whilst Andy slowly turned down the volume knob on the guitar itself to send less level to the amp’s high gain channel (03:19 – 03:28). Such problems and solutions have a more significant effect on the project than the tonal nuance they produce. A sense of creativity and achievement is generated which goes on to spark further ideas and progression.

These sessions completed all the main vocal recordings, and with some new lyrics and fresh performances confidence in the project was somewhat renewed. I continued to develop the tracks on my own, adding layers of extra guitars, vocal harmonies and percussion, and eventually mixing the tracks. At various stages the developing mixes were shared with the mastering engineer who offered a completely fresh perspective and increased confidence on the project. The mixes were amended in several rounds of feedback and pre-mastering before the final masters were agreed.

Conclusions

This chapter has explored the development of *The Unravelling* over a very long composition and production period that began with an intention to democratise the songwriting process and a series of collaborative writing experiments. This was following an analysis of the artistic persona of the band and how it has evolved through a cycle of production, product release and responses from the field.

For this band, it was found that the most collaborative models led to the least coherent band persona and the least engaging material. These more democratic songwriting processes (see figures 7.5 and 7.7) rarely produced music that evolved into full songs, creating conditions that failed to motivate or inspire the top-line writers, causing uncertainty around the character of the material, seemingly demoting the vocal melody and lyrics, and de-emphasising the project's core aesthetic search for fresh sounding ideas in the progressive and art rock field. This is evident in the 2 examples of abandoned songs written with the most democratised model (see Appendix 5) which feature generic pop rock elements and lack the complexity and invention that are core to the Halo Blind sound.

The most successful models for balancing a coherent band persona with creative progressive material, high levels of quality control and strong motivation and contributions from the participants were those models that facilitated the right level of collaboration at the right moment in the process (see figures 7.4 and 7.6). These models had the songwriters presenting full 'songs' to the other musicians first and only then focusing on enhancing them with interpreted instrumental parts, tones and musicianship. Zak's 3 layers of composition (2001) are useful again here, in that the more expertise-driven approaches allow the musicians creative space in the collaborative composition of the *arrangement* layer, and the *track* layer, whilst leaving the *song* layer to the songwriters.

Allowing the participants whose expertise lies in songwriting to write the songs first seems an obvious conclusion, however in an age where the songwriting technology blurs the distinction of what a 'song' is, this becomes murkier. For example, where does the songwriting end and the arrangement writing begin when the song started life as a specific drum and bass pattern programmed by the songwriter? This was the case for *Keep Down*, and the 7/8 rhythm section pattern became the Cool that drove the rest of the songwriting, long before the band heard it. The track writing models can be displayed in a spectrum from the perspective of the producer-songwriter (figure 7.8). On one end the collaboration is at its most closed and the producer-songwriter has the

greatest amount control and autonomy. This approach resulted in the insular sound of the first album, *The Fabric.* On the other end of the spectrum, the collaboration is the most open and the producer-songwriter has the least control over what emerges, with every band member contributing to the songwriting from scratch. This was trialled in the cottage sessions and produced only one track that was developed into a full production.

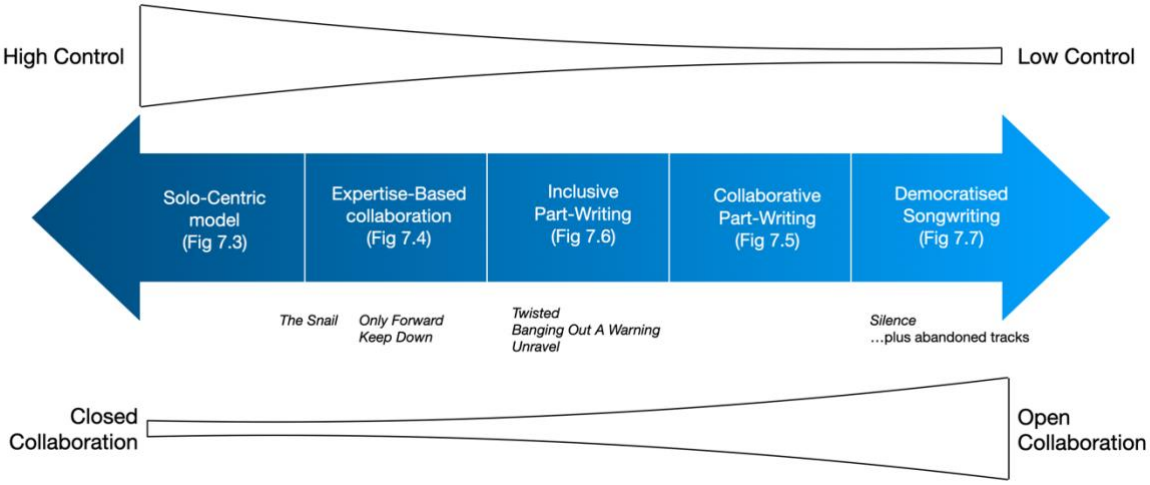


Figure 7.8 A spectrum of collaborative track writing models.

The most successful models allowed the songwriters exploration time to find that initial impetus, the Cool, and follow it through the track-writing engine to create a demo they could be confident in presenting to the band. This confidence, the Cool, and the essence of the band persona, is detectable in the demo and creates motivation for the band to then run with the idea and add creative responses within their own field of expertise. It is possible that bands in different situations who can spend more time together in rehearsal studios would have better success with the more open collaboration models. The models we had most success with were in themselves a solution to limited availabilities and allowed rehearsal time to be focused on finessing arrangements and performances, rather than songwriting and a search for the Cool. In reading this conclusion through Burgess' (2013) functional typology of producers, we can consider the solo-centric model (Fig 7.3) as mapping most closely to the Artist producer type for the production of the song demo, giving the songwriters access to all the contemporary tools of composition and space to be creative. However, the producer role shifts to Burgess' collaborative type once the expertise of the other band members is incorporated. The democratised songwriting model could be viewed as embodying Burgess

collaborative producer-type much earlier in the process, which was demonstrated here to produced less characterful material.

The Production Habitus conception was a useful tool in highlighting the important considerations throughout the extended development of this project, as it morphed, inflated and deflated through the stages of production. However, as the ideas of Production Habitus were emerging simultaneously with the pre-production stages of this project, the importance of a commercial definition had not been fully realised. Although the extensive delays to the project were squarely due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its after effects, the absence of a project definition made it very difficult to restart when momentum had stalled. Similarly, the effects of the songwriting hierarchy and the attempts to disrupt it had an effect on the social micro-culture of the group, with discussions and reflections revealing how an understanding of what it means to be in a band had not been adequately considered. This was subsequently incorporated into the Production Habitus model as aspects of the 'Persons' and 'Socio Micro-Culture' areas.

As such the final album embodies the outcomes of investigations into the three research questions, demonstrating the results of distinct approaches to collaboration; possessing an aesthetic that emerged from deliberate and enforced interventions in the social and logistical conditions of its production; and demonstrating interactions between creativity, Self and artistic persona through the production processes and cultural contexts.

The Unravelling is a 31-minute album that explores Generation X in mid-life, but the title can also refer to the fragmenting of the band as a unit throughout the album's extended production. It is complete but not yet released, so at the time of writing I am unsure of how its intended messages and artistic persona will be received by the field. However, it has certainly fulfilled the aims of exploring collaborative production models, and as the lead creative I feel it sounds like Halo Blind, it is progressive and fresh, and it successfully expresses the multi-layered, dark, complex and unsettling aesthetic that I intended.

CHAPTER 8: Conclusions

Overview

This PhD came about following reflections on my professional practice as a producer-songwriter. Over the years the predominant tools of my trade had developed from strumming a guitar and chewing a pencil into selecting and manipulating audio on a screen, and I was intrigued by the effects such conditions had on us as artists and on the music we produce. The DAW as the predominant track writing technology can increase the amount of production time spent working alone, and this is something I was feeling keenly. Music production has always been collaborative in one way or another, with our records representing the social and cultural environments involved in their creation, and so I was driven to investigate how different patterns of collaboration and different approaches to communicating ideas could affect our practice and our output. I had experiences working on different projects where there was a palpable 'feel' to being involved - a composite psychological rendering of the people involved, the way they behaved, the environments and technology, the aims and themes of the project - and I was convinced that the same 'feel' was present when listening back to the final production. My intention to explore this led to the original aims of the study:

- to explore various models of collaboration in music production
- to gain deeper understanding of creative processes in music production
- to examine the link between the 'personality' of the production process, and the 'personality' that can be read in the final product

My research around these aims revealed intersections between the musicology of production, theories of collaboration, the literature on songwriting, sociology, and the psychology of creativity. There was a wealth of existing literature in these separate areas, but also space for a specific practise-based study into how they can be drawn upon to synthesise new models to better understand creative practice in music production. Therefore, this PhD was designed to utilise my professional production activity for reflective study, developing models and frameworks to analyse practice and to plan subsequent projects, testing different arrangements and conditions of collaboration and production. The research questions that developed from the initial aims have been refined to these three:

1. How do different approaches to collaboration in music production affect the creative contributions of the participants and the final product?
2. How can the social and logistical arrangements of a production be considered to deliberately shape the aesthetic of the final product?
3. How do creativity, Self, and artistic persona interact through the processes and cultural domains of music production?

Tracking the Practice

Chapter 1 outlined a timeline of the practice in explaining how the methodology developed. It is useful to revisit this chronology in order to draw together the main conclusions from this research.

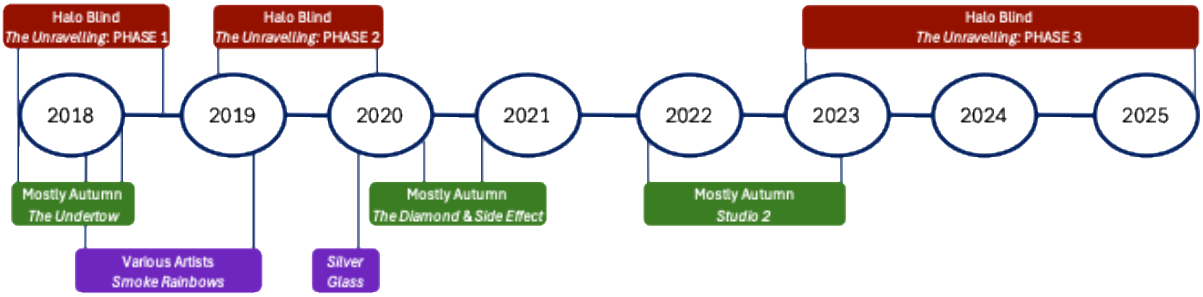


Figure 8.1 A Chronology of the Practice.

A timeline of when the projects were in production and the order they were done in.

In addressing the first research question, the Halo Blind: Phase 1 experiments into collaborative songwriting disrupted the band's production doxa by distributing creative capital and ownership at earlier points in the record making process. The results indicated that the most democratised songwriting modules led to the most generic sounding material, as illustrated by comparing the abandoned songs in Appendix 5 with, for example, *The Wild and the Beautiful Ones* or *Only Forward* from the final album, which feature much more compositional invention, complexity, and depth that are hallmarks of the band's sound. This conclusion can be considered through Burgess (2013) producer types by suggesting that the more characterful material was achieved by adopting the Artist producer type for the songwriting and moving to a Collaborative producer type once the song was written.

Reflections on the songwriting trials led to the examination of the band's persona from internal perspectives of what we wanted it to be, incorporating artistic intention, the expression of message

and notions of artistic Self, to external perspectives of how we were actually perceived by audiences and the field. The outcomes of this practice and reflection included the Production Cycle of a Producer-Artist (Chapter 4) as a model for conceptualising the evolution of the creative Self and how artistic persona evolves, which addresses the third research question of how creativity, Self, and artistic persona interact through the processes and cultural domains of music production.

The effects of collaborative songwriting on sonic identity were considered in a different context through the writing and production of *The Undertow* for Mostly Autumn, a band with a different persona, different social dynamics, and different writing and production habits. The reflections on the psychological creative processes during songwriting, examined through theories of creativity (Csikszentmihalyi 2013; Amabile 1983; Rhodes 1961), revealed that the shared cultural and social contexts of the band had the most significant influence on the track's identity, even when the bulk of the character was constructed when working solo. This was evidenced by comparing the demo version (Appendix 1) to the final master and noting that most of the emotional meaning, dynamics and artistic persona were established in the solo-produced demo, whilst the more overtly collaborative Fairview production process contributed to the sonic identity of specific tones so it could sit seamlessly with the other tracks on the album *White Rainbow.* The production can be deemed a success within the field of progressive rock, with the album being nominated for album of the year in the Progressive Music Awards 2019 (Prog Magazine, 2019) and receiving positive reviews from prog fans. It has a rating of 4.07/5 from 196 rating on ProgArchives with one reviewer highlighting *The Undertow,* describing it as "a masterpiece musically" (Prog Archives, 2023a). In 2019 the album reached number 11 in the UK Official Progressive Albums Chart and, more recently, *The Undertow* was featured on the compilation album *The Clock Ticks On* (2026) which reached number 3 in the Rock & Metal Albums Chart (Official Charts 2026).

The subtle influence of the Mostly Autumn social group during the solo writing stage was evident in the original demo, and so the DAW-Based Track Writing Engine (Chapter 4) was devised by analysing and how musical ideas are assessed and developed during the flow of songwriting, drawing attention to how creative decisions occur within a system of intersecting cultural domains and social contexts. Nuanced observations on the pattern of collaboration, the flows of capital in the group, and the effect of the shared motivations, were collected into the Production Habitus conception. This ecosystem maps the social, logistical and cultural conditions inhabited by and influencing participants in a music production, and so provided a framework for potentially shaping the aesthetic of subsequent productions, thereby investigating the second research question, *how can the social*

and logistical arrangements of a production be considered to deliberately shape the aesthetic of the final product?

The *Smoke Rainbows* project was devised to address this question, and so my producer role fit Burgess' Enablative producer type where "the art of music production lay in finding talent and material, and creating conditions in which a successful recording could take place" (2013, p.33). The approach was noted in a piece written about the project in the online music magazine, Gigslutz: "In acting like producers of the old school (much fretting, telephoning and paper shuffling), Sheehan and Johnson have helped stage something quite rare." (Holmes, 2019). The sonic identity of the record was shaped by the careful construction of a social micro-culture, defining clear aims for the project, leveraging social and cultural capital, considering the motivation of artists, designing the physical environments, and the management of communications. Utilising shared domain knowledge and fostering a culture of camaraderie were crucial in facilitating the behaviours, creativity and interactions that formed a coherent sonic identity for the record. As an outcome of the research the released record demonstrates a consistent aesthetic tone through the sensitive performances, organic arrangements and thematic song selection. The timbres are consistent as a result of the logistical and technical management of the studio sessions and the handling of the mix process. This addresses the second research question, and demonstrates in the audio product and in the evaluation in Chapter 3, how the social and logistical arrangements of a production can be considered to deliberately shape the aesthetic of the final product. The project was successful in its aims of promoting the Music Minds Matter charity to the music industry. This is evident in the well-known artists it attracted, including The Blow Monkeys, Mercury Music Prize nominees The Magic Numbers, Ivor Novello nominated The Leisure Society, and former Mother Earth, Oasis and Paul Weller guitarist Matt Deighton. It received good coverage in the music industry press, with the comments reflecting the aesthetic we were hoping for. For example, Record of the Day described it as:

> "an eclectic concept record that…is an ode to personal story-telling and the spirit of community that connects music with listeners… This sense of connectedness is carried through the stunning thermochromic artwork."
>
> Record of the Day (2019)

On reflecting on the *Smoke Rainbows* project the Production Habitus idea was developed further. Synthesising this with insights from the songwriting practice from the earlier projects, the Halo Blind:

Phase 2 production explored moving the collaborative focus from songwriting to track writing, Zak's 3rd layer of composition (2001).

Using the cultural capital of Abbey Road and the limited recording window available for focus, a Production Habitus was formed to facilitate efficient arrangements, tight performances and a technically high level of audio recording. The approach was highly successful in creating a common motivation and driving the band as a unit through pre-production development and rehearsals. The tight drum, bass, piano and rhythm guitar performances of complex songs, with the core tracks all recorded live, demonstrate that focus. For example, the interlocking picked guitars and helter-skelter drumming in the first half of *Only Forward,* or the evolving drum pattern, bass groove and Rhodes through *Keep Down,* and the erratic rhythm section and swift runs in *The Wild and the Beautiful Ones* (4:38). These took a lot of work to prepare so that the core parts could be recorded as a live unit in the studio. Conclusions that were drawn from this phase of the project noted the effects the physical and emotional states of collaborators can have on a project, and so developed the Persons node of the Production Habitus.

The project *Silver Glass: Reproduction* investigated how song arrangement, performance and production are a result of a collaboration, even when working physically alone and any collaborators are internalised. The project demonstrated the relationship between the artist, the cultural domain and the social field, using Czisentmihalyi's Systems Model of Creativity (2013) as a framework for reflection. Multiple nested and parallel systems were identified and articulated in a holonic structure following McIntyre's perspective of creativity happening in the interplay between many interconnected systems (2019, p.70). The final product demonstrated the influence and capital of the physically absent collaborators, as social groups or internalised individuals. It is audible in the intimate performance, piano arrangement, recorded tones, and authentic presentation. The theorising in Chapter 5 explores how these influences were operating, presenting richer psychological and cultural perspectives to address the first research question into how different approaches to collaboration affect creative contributions.

The wider societal conditions of the Covid-19 lockdown enforced tight restrictions on the logistics of the production, and the project concluded that Production Habitus remained a crucial and valuable concept in planning the project goals, motivations, physical and social environments, and technical conditions to deliberately shape the aesthetic in response to the second research question. The effects of lockdown, when normal musical activities could not be practiced, were explored with

Production Cycle of a Producer-Artist (figure 4.2) offering a perspective where the artistic Self sought to reconnect with an audience in order to reaffirm itself and re-establish creativity. The project was a single live performance video on YouTube, and success can be measured by how well it connected to its audience and achieved its aesthetic and social aims. It was viewed 477 times in the first 24 hours and has 2.4k views to date, with viewers leaving highly positive comments that draw attention to the beauty of the piece.

The enforced social distancing of Covid-19 also had audible effects on *The Diamond*, from the song selection to the lack of opportunity for performance and in-person collaboration, and the subsequent dulling of artistic persona. Lower levels of creative energy and poor planning induced problems in the song development and vocal production. The work needed to reimagine an old song for a new context was underestimated, and this is demonstrated by comparing integral characteristics of the original version (Appendix 2) with the final version on the album *Graveyard Star*, which is problematic in its arrangement, performances and mix. For example, the tapped acoustic guitar provided the tonal and rhythmic foundation the original version, but this is lost when reimagining the song for the wider and bulkier tone of Mostly Autumn, and no consideration was given to address this. The project demonstrated the usefulness of the Consolidation Points Framework (figure 2.2) in analysing faults in the production, which highlighted logistical, social and psychological factors that had been overlooked. A key conclusion was in how this perceived personal failure affected my motivation within the social group of the band, and how the relational flows of friendship and capital operate through a familial pattern of collaboration to motivate creativity. In this case, driving me to produce the extra song, *Side effect.*

Side Effect provides further evidence of social, cultural and logistical conditions affecting sonic identity. Culturally it was written about lockdown, from within lockdown. Logistically, only a laptop and controller keyboard was available for much of the production and studio sessions required social distancing. Socially it was motivated by my insecurity about the quality of *The Diamond* and a desire to retrieve lost social capital, and so extra sessions were arranged with the vocalist to allow more collaborative development. These elements can be heard in the composition, arrangement, lyrics and vocal melody and gave the track its melancholic, regretful, and orchestral sonic identity. The production of both of these songs for the album *Graveyard Star* expanded the understanding of how social and logistical arrangements affect sonic identity, by incorporating ‘ritual’ into the Production Habitus ecosystem. It was concluded that during the Covid-19 lockdowns the band had not been able to practice the structures and routines that normally define the social group and the artistic Self of

each member. Without performing the rituals of touring and performing together, the band could not enter the 'communitas' state that helps define the group give the individuals a strong idea of their band Self (Turner, in Schechner 2013, p.70). The effect of this absence was notable in the song development and studio production of *The Diamond.*

Graveyard Star was positively received by the field, reaching number 3 in the Official Album Breakers Chart (Official Charts 2026) and being praised as a highpoint in the Mostly Autumn catalogue, with Background Magazine claiming "One of their best albums ever" (Bannink, 2021), and Music Waves writing "Mostly Autumn delivers … one of its most accomplished albums to date" (2021).

The findings from the previous productions and the more developed Production Habitus model informed the approach for *Studio 2*, where the focus was on deliberatively shaping a 'mature and sophisticated vintage rock' aesthetic by designing the social, cultural and logistical arrangements for the production, thereby addressing the first and second research questions. In Burgess typology, the producer role began as Enablative in the initial administrative stages, and developed into a more Facilitative and Collaborative type once the musical activities of pre-production started (2013). The musical arrangements that developed during pre-production were observed to closely reflect the collaborative songwriting processes put forward by Bennett (2011), although in this case applied at Zak's third compositional layer (2001). Synthesizing these perspectives through Production Habitus facilitated the shaping and development of the album's sonic identity through the producer's agency in managing the social, micro cultural, and logistical conditions. Consideration of the third research question and the Production Cycle of the Producer-Artist effectively guided the initial pitch of the project so that it would make sense at that specific moment in the band's career, increasing their capital in the progressive rock domain and reinforcing notions of sophistication and maturity in how the band are perceived. Key production decisions that contributed to these characteristics were the association with Abbey Road, the use of heritage organic keyboard instruments, the new arrangements that foregrounded these elements, and the inclusion of a string quartet on 4 songs*: The Man Without a Name*, *Silver Glass*, *Tomorrow Dies,* and *Heart Body and Soul*. The management of logistics around the social environment produced confident, relaxed and spirited performances that achieved the aim of presenting the band as elders in their domain niche of UK prog. Ultimately this was successful and can be evidenced in the album's reception by commentators in the field, who highlighted the effect of the studio and the quartet. For example, Background Magazine wrote "a dream came true for them to spend two days in the recording cathedral of Abbey Road with a string quartet to deliver the ultimate emotive experience of classic Autumn material" (Strik 2024).

ProgArchives rates it 4.63 out of 5 (2023b). However, the project also demonstrated the importance of communicating and defining the project definition, as an album with no new songs that was not a concert recording was unfamiliar to the label, and so it was released without the buildup or promotion given to the other Mostly Autumn albums. The album's external packaging did not mention Abbey Road or the string quartet and is inadequately defined for the audience, so there are fewer reviews.

The sonic identities of the Mostly Autumn outputs are composite renderings of all the conditions and complex interactions mapped in the Production Habitus, and a key part of that is the studio: its size and layout, technical resources, workflow, instruments, monitoring, cultural capital and personnel. It is useful to summarize some of this by briefly comparing sonic identity of output from the band's usual studio, Fairview, with Abbey Road.

Fair View Studio	**Abbey Road Studio 2**
Song: *Side Effect*	Song: *Man Without a Name*
Grand Piano is a Native Instruments VST	Grand Piano is a Steinway with 2 x stereo pairs of mics, plus room mics
Piano tone is soft, lacking in solidity and dimension. Cloudy in the lower midrange and so masked by the strings in places (eg. 1:03-1:09).	Piano tone is 3-dimensional, with a more prominent attack, a brighter high to mid range, and better definition on each note. Clear separation with the strings.
Vocal tone preserves performance dynamics, for example, compare the quiet "…hour glass" to the louder "…and I'm reaching" (1:05 – 1:08).	Vocal level is more consistent and the tone is more dynamically even. Consonants are more prominent.
Strings are a blend of Logic X, Native Instruments and Spitfire VSTs	Strings are a blend of a live quartet and Native Instruments VST.
Strings have a slow attack and so take more of a pad role (eg. 2:18 – 2:33). Written with the VST limitations in mind, so less emphasis on individual voices.	Strings are dynamically expressive with distinct individual voices (eg. The first violin 3:04 – 3:10). Written to showcase the melody and player's expression.
Resulting sonic identity is soft, with a murky soundscape and wide dynamics in the vocals and orchestral percussion.	Resulting sonic identity is clean and defined, with a more consistent dynamic and a yearning grace from the live string quartet.

Completing the Halo Blind album in Phase 3 brought together the findings from the previous projects. *The Unravelling* has a sonic identity that resulted from the various approaches to creative collaboration, and the enforced social and logistical conditions involved in its production. It has the cerebral complexity of art rock but with fresh sounding accessible grooves and melodies. It expresses the psychological uncertainty of its core themes in anxious, dark and unsettling soundscapes, with tight performances and sonic invention, such as the stuttering, pitch shifting vocal delays in *Banging out a Warning* (1:36 – 2:04), the randomised rapid electro percussion elements through *Unravel* (eg.1:48-1:52), or Leslie cabinet on the piano in *Twisted* (0:57 – 1:15).

The reflections on the artistic Self and the band persona concluded that expertise-based patterns of collaboration were the most effective for producing a distinct band identity. The extended production period gave further insights into Production Habitus, underlining the importance of a shared project definition on participant motivation, linking the concept of ritual and what it means to be in a band with ownership and collaboration. It demonstrated the challenges to creative continuity when a Production Habitus is extended over a long period of time and introduced the effect of momentum on creativity as a previously under-considered factor.

Evaluating the Methodology

The reflective, practice-based nature of this study has produced rich qualitative results that provide a broad range of perspectives in addressing the questions raised at the outset. The methodology developed as new models emerged, and the theorising situates the study within existing literature drawing on multiple areas to create new frameworks of analysis to read the practice through. This has created new knowledge and new approaches to understanding creativity, Self, collaboration and music production cultures in addressing the research questions. In this way the creative process is the research process, and so the outputs from the creative process – the produced records – are also the research outputs. The accompanying chapters explain the knowledge gained, evaluating the practice from the intimate perspective of the music producer, elucidating details of the creative process and siting the work in academic contexts. The methodology allows access to deep psychological mechanisms of creativity and notions of Self, and my position as an academic provides the facility to evaluate them against the bodies of existing knowledge in the fields of creativity, the musicology of production, sociology, and psychology of Self. Observing the effects of different social, cultural, and logistical arrangements on my own creativity in a variety of settings has demonstrated some of the ways these factors interact, and has gone some way to suggesting how they can be considered when shaping a production process, and microculture, for a desired aesthetic result. I

acknowledge that this reflective practitioner study can only offer a narrow perspective, especially in its findings to do with artistic persona and the creative Self, however the findings do provide rich insights, and they may find more universal relevance through wider comparative studies.

Different approaches to collaboration in music production have been thoroughly explored at various stages of production processes: collaboration in songwriting; composing musical arrangements; performance; timbral shaping; thematic conception; designing performance environments; communications and logistical management; have been extensively trialled. A wide range of scales of collaboration have been examined closely, from large multi-stakeholder projects involving a hundred or so people all the way down to the small-scale workings of the solo practitioner being affected by internalised collaborators. The various patterns of collaboration have been evaluated in terms of how they produce different styles of social and cultural interaction in music production, and how these interactions go on to affect creativity and the sonic identity of the produced work.

The observations around the logistical conditions of a music production focused on the most immediate factors of environment, facilities, social proximity and workflow, however there is the potential for more research here, perhaps using an actor-network theory methodology (Latour, 2005, 2017). If we consider the volume of things that can affect a person whilst participating in a music production project we could quickly get into much greater detail. Factors such as interior design, temperature, time of year, clothing, and what was in the fruit bowl in the control room will arguably have an effect, but fell outside the reasonable scope of study here.

Contributions to the Field

Some of the research conducted for this PhD has been published as solely authored chapters in the book *Coproduction: Collaboration in Music Production* (Wilsmore and Johnson 2022), demonstrating a contribution to the fields of production musicology and collaboration theory. The practical elements of this research offer creative contributions to the various domains of popular music and progressive rock, such as the 3 *Mostly Autumn* albums which are disseminated through international distribution as commercial products in multiple physical and digital formats. The *Smoke Rainbows* project also has a cultural contribution in supporting grassroots artists and the UK music industry, as it helped launch *Music Minds Matter,* the flagship mental health support service for Help Musicians UK. The model developed for *Smoke Rainbows* using Production Habitus has a continued social and cultural impact, and has been used to produce two similar albums with BBC Introducing that support the *Children in Need* charity (Spina-Matthews 2025). That project is now extended to a long-running

partnership between York St John University and BBC Introducing that includes regular productions, broadcasts and community events, and is being cited as an example by the national BBC team to kick start similar partnerships between universities and their local BBC stations (BBC 2025). This demonstrates positive contributions in supporting emerging artists and early career producers, and fostering community engagement using BBC and higher education infrastructures.

The *Silver Glass* production with its exploration into the effects of internalised others could offer insights for artists in self-reflection, prompting them to consider how they are responding to cultural and personal influences as they work, and so to explore that notion creatively in their practice. It also offers a perspective for artistic reinvigoration in periods of sluggish creativity.

The Halo Blind project offers a spectrum of models of collaborative composition and evaluates them against the effects on the people involved, the production process, and the material produced. This could be useful for producers and bands to consider in their collaborative approaches, and it adds to Bennett's research on collaborative songwriting (2011, 2013). Some important lessons learned during the Halo Blind project, such as losing the Cool, the importance of ritual, setting the intention early, and the importance of momentum on creativity, will be useful pedagogically in developing new producers. The findings could also be of benefit to anyone researching the impact of COVID 19 lockdowns on creativity and music production.

The models developed through this practice-based research expand several areas of theory. The DAW-Based Track Writing Engine builds on Bennett's co-writing processes (2011), adapting the ideas and synthesising them with Zak's proposed third layer of composition (2001) and Csikszentmihalyi's systems model of creativity (2013) to help understand the creative processes of contemporary digital music composition when working alone. The integrated creative processes of inspiration, exploration, refinement and assessing ideas within the DAW environment offer a way of expressing artistic persona, and the model shows how this is happening in a way that could help the artist understand and explore their work. There is potential to develop this in a mental health direction as a technique for Creative Art Therapy (Chiang, Reid-Varley and Fan 2019; Dalley 1984). As DAW-based apps become more and more accessible to the none-expert and AI driven processes prompt the user to select between an array of options to construct something new and express themself, the model could be used as a mindfulness tool for exploring psychological aspects of the decision making, or with a therapist for guided psychoanalysis. There is also a pedagogical application in teaching

creativity and composition, contextualising influence, visualising progress and getting over creative blocks.

The concept of Production Habitus, and the map developed to demonstrate it, offers a detailed structure for analysing the social, cultural and logistical conditions of a production. This can be used to quantify a 'feel' to the production, or to deliberately shape it, in the pursuit of influencing the aesthetic of the produced work. Producers could apply it as a practical tool for planning their projects. It provides a preparatory process for developing the production culture, or doxa, illuminating the spaces where there is room to be creative, and highlighting factors that should be considered in how they bring a team together toward a defined aesthetic outcome. There are possible applications beyond music, in Film and TV, theatre, business management, education, sports, or any field that involves combining the creative contributions of multiple collaborators. Pedagogically it has use in teaching the intricacies of production and collaboration, and I actively use it in class to teach music production practice. As the model is developed largely around psychological, social and cultural conditions and has a focus on the 'feel' of being involved, it could be applied when planning projects where the desired outcome is not a product, but the positive effect on the participants taking part. For example, creative workshop experiences; mental health support projects; community building and social integration projects; and supporting disadvantaged groups.

The Consolidation Points Framework, developed as a tool for analysing a production process and its habitus, has value in teaching music production as it focuses attention on important aspects of production practice that may otherwise escape consideration. It guides the user in their analysis of the complex layers involved in Production Habitus in a more accessible and linear format. As demonstrated in Chapter 6 it is also a useful framework for evaluating a production process and identifying issues so they can be addressed.

The Production Cycle of a Producer Artist model draws on philosophical writing and an area of clinical psychology to suggest how an artist constructs a creative persona from a multiplicity of Selves, shaped by previous interactions with the cultural field of their audience. It helps to explore the relationships between audience and artist, suggesting how artists can evolve and develop through a series of commercial releases. As such it could have applications for labels or artists in considering their development, career path, and how to approach their next project.

Final Thoughts

The Production Cycle is also useful in my reflections as I approach the end of this PhD study and consider how I have developed through the multiple productions of the past few years. I find my artistic Self wearied by such intense self-evaluation over such a long period, but enriched with a greater awareness of the intersecting domains and collaborators that influence my music. In his book of musings on the creative process, Rick Rubin suggests:

> All art is a work in progress. It's helpful to see the piece we're working on as an experiment. One in which we can't predict the outcome. Whatever the result, we will receive useful information that will benefit the next experiment.
>
> Rubin (2023).

For my 'next experiment' I have gained a much more developed sense of the value of community on music making, and how to arrange production situations to make the most of this whilst elevating and maintaining standards of songwriting and performance. The extended Halo Blind project has me wanting to make my next projects much faster, and I've learned the hard way the importance of freshness and momentum on creativity. In the next project I will favour boldness of invention and the thrill of taking part over laboured perfection.

Finally, as an educator there are many implications on my teaching practice, and I have begun to consider the aspects of Production Habitus in how I plan and conduct modules of learning in any subject. The key elements of motivation, clear goal setting, workflow processes, managing a social-microculture, communications, ritual and environment can all be considered in pedagogy as the student takes ownership of their learning. Using Production Habitus in teaching, the 'product' becomes the student's education. The producer's goal as educator then, is to bring about the social, cultural and logistical conditions that create a positive and constructive 'feel' to the learning experience that will endure in the enriched skills, thinking, confidence and well-being that is developed in the student.

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