

Business of Contemporary Music Production

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Introductions

My self-determined major, The Business of Contemporary Music Production, has allowed me the academic freedom to combine three strong passions into a singular interdisciplinary path. My love of music is not confined to the study of a single instrument, but driven by a broader learning of the way music is written, recorded, and distributed within the evolving landscape of the music industry. As I near the end of my SDM, I look forward to putting into action what I have studied in a final Capstone project.

My Self Determined Major has focused on Music Technology, Marketing, Entertainment Law and Music Journalism. As I prepare to enter the world as a contemporary music producer, Skidmore established my foundation with the necessary studio skills to compose, record, mix and master my own music. It is more than these technical skills, however, that make a great music producer. For my capstone I will exercise both a technical and historical approach to music production by exploring sampling within Hip-Hop and Popular Music.

Sampling—re-purposing recordings from other genres and decades of music—has become a critical technique in Hip-Hop and Popular music. The roots of contemporary Hip-Hop sampling can be traced back to the birth of Hip-Hop in the late 1970s. DJs looped drum breaks from Soul and Funk records which became the musical beat for “emcees” to rap over. Now, the best Hip-Hop producers not only spend their lives finding unique recordings to sample, but also develop a unique approach to sampling records in an effort to create a musical style all their own. While “digging” for records, Hip-Hop producers pay detailed attention to particular factors that could lead to an inspirational gem. These factors may include, instrumentation, year of recording, record label and artists. By sampling records from different time periods with

different sonic characteristics, Hip-Hop producers are able to utilize unique sounds far from their own musical palette. Over the years, dedicated drum machines and keyboards have developed for record producers to sample other recordings. Today, sampling is most popularly utilized within Digital Audio Workstations: digital computer software.

While Sampling dropped in popularity during the 2000's due to copyright law enforcement, it has recently seen a major re-resurgence within the landscape of contemporary music production. Innovations in online sampling distribution are re-imagining how producers seek inspiration. These newly developed sample distributors allow music creators to pay a monthly cost for access to millions of samples and soundbites all for royalty free use. Now contemporary music creators turn to digital databases instead of vinyl records for instant inspiration.

The popularity of online sample distribution has given birth to a new entity in Hip-Hop production: The sample pack. The sample pack is simply a group of recordings composed and recorded with the sole intent for other music creators to sample or re-work it within their own hip-hop beats. As record stores close, and the music community looks for more convenient sources of inspiration, the online sample pack has allowed producers the same experience of searching for inspiration in a record bin, but in the digital realm.

No longer does the producer need an expensive turntable and a crate of rare vinyl records to sample. Anyone with a laptop, the internet and a digital audio workstation (pre-installed on most computers) has the power to create chart topping music within the confines of their bedrooms.

Project Overview

For my capstone project, I will explore sampling within Hip-Hop music by producing an original sample pack. My goal is to create a set of 3 to 5 compositions that are meant to sonically emulate analog recordings of the 60's 70's and 80's, the most sampled years in Hip-Hop music and its melodic backbone. In effect, I hope Hip-Hop producers find inspiration within my sample pack and sample or re-work these original recordings within their own music.

My sample pack will be guided by both historical and technological research. Each composition I produce will be inspired by a certain period of music history that directly influenced innovative styles within Hip-Hop production. Specifically, I will study the three largest stylistic influences on Hip-Hop: Soul, Jazz and British Rock Music from between the years of 1960 and 1980. I will use these three musical periods as a basis to inspire my original compositions. In effect, I will create 3 original samples emulating both the sonic and compositional characteristics of either Soul, Jazz or British Rock music.

In order to produce in these past decades of music, I first must understand them from a historical point of view. For each period, I will explore the following questions: What specific samples have influenced stylistic changes in hip-hop music? Where / when were these recorded? Who were the leading figures in this particular styles? How can I understand this sound through instrumentation and performance? What are the tonal/textural aesthetics of this particular style and what about this aesthetic appealed to the ear of the Hip-Hop producer? How did early Hip-Hop producers reimagine these records to create something unique? Through this research, I will understand an overlooked musical lineage that will create direct

connections between past, sometimes forgotten styles of music to recent influences in Pop and Hip-Hop music production.

In order to produce new compositions that sonically emulate these past decades, I must have a grounded understanding of how technologies were used to capture this historic, analog sound. Therefore, I can emulate older technology and recording techniques using the digital and analog tools at my disposal. For each music style, I will ask the following questions. From a technological point of view: What was involved in the studio process? What type of microphones, analog consoles and outboard processors did they utilize? How did multitrack tape play into the recording aesthetic of these records? Were there any cutting edge or distinctive technologies utilized? By uncovering the specific studio technologies applied between 1960 and 1980, I will understand how to re-create these environments and techniques in order to capture the recording and compositional aesthetics within my original samples as accurately as possible.

Final Product:

My final product will be my original Sample Pack, consisting of three recordings, accompanied by a combined history/artistic statement essay. As stated earlier, each composition will be inspired by a certain stylistic period that inspired Hip-Hop production. In my paper, I will write about 5 pages for each stylistic era, discussing both the historical and technological findings for that particular period. I will follow this with an artistic statement of 1-2 pages, that reveals my creative and artistic intentions for each composition. This section will also include my entire production process from composing, recording to mixing. Lastly, I will

include marketing and copyright materials for my sample pack. This will incorporate a self-designed album cover (utilizing the skills I have learned in Digital Foundations) and a blueprint for marketing my sample pack on digital platforms. Additionally, I will include a set of licensing rules tied to my Sample Pack informed by research in Copyright Law. My set of rules will layout the usage terms granted when purchasing or utilizing my samples.

Methodology

Creating samples requires a unique approach to composing music that will understand at a high-level of sound design, mix / recording engineering and Digital Audio Workstation navigation. For my project, I will exercise the skills I have learned in my music technology courses by utilizing the resources within the Grossman Recording Studio. In order to produce these samples, I will have to compose, record, and mix my recordings (create a sonic balance of the multitrack through leveling, equalization, compression and FX). While I plan on recording predominately analog to tape (using the Atari Tape Machine in the Grossman Studio), I will be mixing fully digital within Avid Pro Tools, a Digital Audio Workstation. By doing most of my postproduction work within Pro Tools, I will gain intensive practice in this industry standard program. This will also forge a hybrid approach in allowing me to exercise both the analog and digital techniques I have explored at Skidmore. I will do most of the composing and playing of instruments myself so I will not rely heavily on musicians. When possible, however, I also hope to involve talented Skidmore musicians during my recording process.

For my research, there are several types of sources I will have to study in order to understand music production from both a historical and technological angle. I will utilize both

primary and secondary sources. I will pull from scholarly sources to inform my historical and legal research. By examine past lawsuits involving sampling, I hope to have a grounded understanding of copyright law.

Another critical resource will be trade magazines in audio engineering such as, Sound On Sound and Mix. These magazines are directly geared toward professionals in the field of audio production and include articles, interviews and techniques focusing in different topics of music technology. These trade magazines often explore recording techniques from the 70's, 80's and 90's, critical information for my project. In order to inform my studio work, I also plan on reaching out to professional audio engineers (who I am already acquainted with) and gather research through personal interview. Through directed questioning I will be able to gather focused information necessary for my project.

Conclusion

As the world of sampling becomes a larger part of the way music creators work, I feel understanding it as thoroughly as possible through the project I've outlined here will allow me to approach music production from an essential, multi-faceted perspective. Not only will I understand how to sample, but I will be able to create unique compositions that will inspire other creatives to utilize my work.

Timeline / Due Dates

Jan 20 – Week 1 (History Research for Sample 1)

Jan 27– Week 2 (Technology Research for Sample 1)

Feb 3 – Week 3 (Compose)

Feb 10– Week 3 (Record/Mix)

Sample One Due / 5 Pages For Sample

Feb 17– Week 5 (History Research for Sample 2)

Feb 24– Week 6 (Technology Research for Sample 2)

Mar 2 – Week 7 (Compose)

Mar 9– Week 8 (Record / Mix)

Sample Two Due / 5 Pages For Sample

Mar 16– Week 9 (History Research for Sample 3)

Mar 23 – Week 10 (Technology Research for Sample 3)

Mar 30 – Week 11 (Compose)

Apr 6 – Week 12 (Record / Mix)

Sample 3 Due / 5 Pages For Sample

Apr 13 - ***FINAL Due (Sample Pack / Artistic Statement)***

Annotated Bibliography

Dandridge-Lemco, Ben. "How an Uncredited German Producer's Free Loops Are Powering

Platinum Rap Hits." *The FADER*, The FADER, 20 Sept. 2019,

www.thefader.com/2019/09/20/minor2go-looperman-interview-polo-g-lil-tjay-loops.

This article comes from a popular source, The Fader, a Magazine and online media company dedicated to news in hip-hop. The article outlines the work of a German Producer who has had uncredited success in the industry. He was composing samples and posting them to online sample distributors unknowing of the legal implications. His work got picked and was sampled by major Hip-Hop producers. Without his credit, his work became the main melodic elements in several chart-topping singles. To this day he is still unknown for his work and there is no legal argument on his end that could back him up for his work. This article is a key real world example of the way sampling continues to create unforeseen legal implications in music creation. It also stressed the power of the sample in today's climate of pop production and how heavy it weighs in the production process of contemporary music creation. This article will be included as an argument for why I am creating original samples.

Hu, Cherie. "Unbundling The Song: Inside The Next Wave Of Recorded Music's

Disruption." *Forbes*, 13 May 2018,

www.forbes.com/sites/cheriehu/2018/05/13/unbundling-the-song-inside-the-next-wave-of-recorded-musics-disruption/#2614a8269cae.

This article uncovers sampling from a business perspective as a rapidly growing market. It explains that by creating a market around stems (or samples) it will bring User generated content to the world of music making: allowing the average user to remix their favorite songs or create new songs from scratch. This article is a great source for generating real world numbers around the sample market. I will use this source heavily to back up my argument for studying Sampling as a way of the future for music creating and distribution.

Whalen, Eamon. "Frank Dukes Is Low-Key Producing Everyone Right Now." *The FADER*, The

FADER, 25 Apr. 2018, www.thefader.com/2016/02/04/frank-dukes-producer-interview.

This article profiles Music Producer, Frank Dukes, as one of the pioneers in modern sampling composition. He has created an aesthetic in his sample compositions that pull from earlier sounds in Soul music. From his original samples, he has created an online database of his samples which has become a successful business for him and lead to a few platinum records on his wall. He explains his online business: "as a digital collection of drum breaks, rare synths, keys, strings, brass riffs, and guitar and bass licks that he records with vintage amps and microphones, then sells for a fraction of the price of a standard sample clearance." Dukes work is a big inspiration for my capstone and hope I can create a sample aesthetic all of my own that can in turn become a successful business.

Otari. *MX-70 Professional Recorder: Operation Manual*. 1989.

I will be using this primary source, the manual to the Otari Tape Machine, to inform my work with the tape machine in the Grossman studio. By understanding the in and outs of the Otari Tape Machine, I will have the proper knowledge to Printing my compositions to Tape.

Schloss, Joseph Glenn. *Making Beats: the Art of Sample-Based Hip-Hop*. Wesleyan University Press, 2014.

This is a dedicated recourse on Sampling. I turn to this book for historical information on how sampling both came to be and changed over time. The book also includes discussions from hip-hop producers. I will learn from their words. What is it that they look for in a sample and how can I turn their needs into inspirational material? I look forward to reading an entire book on the Sampling. This book also includes a great section on the most pivotal Lawsuits surrounding lawsuits.

Carlisle, Stephen. "Sounds Great - But It Sounds Very Familiar, Where to Draw the Line on

Digital Sampling of Sound Recordings." *Landslide*, vol. 9, no. 5, May/June 2017, p. 14-17.

HeinOnline.

This article is a fairly recent look into the legal implications of Sampling Records. I will turn to this source for ways I can protect myself from being sampled without permission. I will study the laws surrounding derivative work from sampled recordings. This will help me write a legal waiver that explains the usage rules for my particular sample pack.

Vox. *How J Dilla Humanized His MPC3000*. YouTube, 6 Dec. 2017,

www.youtube.com/watch?v=SENzTt3ftiU.

This video touches upon the way producer J Dilla used his MPC a commonly used sampler. I will use this as a case example to describe the art of sampling and the technicalities involved. J Dilla was a pioneer of Sampling and used very specific quantization techniques to receive a certain drum swing and sound. The Smithsonian Museum placed his Sampling MPC on display in order to honor the producer and his achievements. Dilla is a case example of the way sampling can influence an entire genre of music and even the driving force a legacy.

McGraw, Molly. "Sound Sampling Protection an Infringement In Today's Music Industry." *High Technology Law Journal*, vol. Vol.4, 1989.

This is an additional article I can use to learn about the legal implications of Sampling. This article was particularly published in a legal journal. I will use this source to inform the legal aspects of my project: particularly how I will go about taking the pre-cautions with distributing my particular pack.

SoulCulture. "The Art Of Sampling". YouTube, 28 Apr. 2009, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=GKW-](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GKW-Kr4dl70&t=116s)

[Kr4dl70&t=116s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GKW-Kr4dl70&t=116s).

This interview is a conversation with Hip-Hop producer 9th Wonder. The conversation revolves around his use of sampling. Since 9th Wonder is heavily regarded as a great sampler, this will provide me with a perspective from a great sampler for which I will use as part of my research.

Marshall, Wayne. "Giving up Hip-Hop's Firstborn: A Quest for the Real after the Death of Sampling." *Callaloo*, Vol. 29, no. No. 3, Hip-Hop Music and Culture, 2006.

This article provides a unique perspective to the timeline of Sampling history. It touches on the Cons of sampling. It includes anecdotes of why many hip-hop producers choose to not sample certain recordings and would rather just write their own music. According to many producers, the act of clearing the recording rights to use the sample is a major process than can be extremely expensive. By learning to compose my own samples, I am catering to the needs of producers that don't want to have to clear expensive recordings but also want to have the sampled aesthetic in their music.

Buskin, Richard. "Miles Davis 'Round Midnight' | Classic Tracks." *Sound On Sound*, Apr. 2010.

This is an example of a trade magazine regarding studio techniques used during past recordings. This article specifically explores the studio technique used on Miles Davis' track 'Round Midnight'. By using these trade magazines, I will be able to understand the exact technologies and studio settings they used to capture this seminal record. As Jazz had incredible influence to Hip-Hop music I will be able to use this as inspiration for the recording / technology process for my Jazz sample.

