

CRMT120 STUDIOCRAFT (2022-23) PORTFOLIO (70%)
// CRITICAL DOCUMENTATION //

1. SUBMISSION REFERENCE DETAILS

Your name(s):

Michael Freeman (Holmes)

Name of track and artist:

Jazzy One by the band Sidetracked.

List all performers, instruments, amplifiers and other sounds sources (incl. samples) featured in the production:

Eloise Simpson (vocals), Lily Thompson (vocals), Peter Holmes (piano), Chard Faul (guitar), Tom Gillespie (engineering), Conner Huggins (engineering), Michael Freeman (engineering). Fender Champion 100 Guitar Amplifier with acoustic panels around it.

2. EVALUATION: Critical Evaluation of the Production

2.1 MICROPHONE CHOICE

List which microphones (incl. microphone settings) were used in the production, for what purpose and why the particular microphones were chosen for their given purpose. (250 words)

Guitar (unused in final recording which uses DI): The Shure SM57 Dynamic Microphone because it offers clean reproduction of amplified and acoustic instruments. Default settings. The Shure SM7B Dynamic Microphone which is really a vocal microphone was added to provide an alternative choice of recorded materials from the guitar. Default settings. Ultimately due to issues with the guitar amp these recordings were not used in preference to re-amping the DI input in Logic Pro.

Vocals: The AKG C414 B-TL II Condenser Microphone for its excellent vocal qualities. Default setting. The Shure SM7B Dynamic Microphone was also used which is a vocals microphone. Default settings. Both microphones had pop filters attached to prevent to block plosives; percussive P and B sounds.

Piano: Rode NT-5 Condenser Microphone Matched Pair which are designed to be overheads. They were placed facing the open side of the grand piano. Default settings.

2.2 AIMS, RATIONALE, and MUSICAL SENSITIVITY

State your intended recording and production aims, as informed by your analysis of the track and its key features. Provide a critical account of the steps made in the realisation of your aims, with a clear rationale for the artistic, technical and other production decisions taken. How does the submission demonstrate your creative approach to production praxis, in terms of musically aware application of recording techniques, technologies and production processes? (350 words)

The final recording was of good quality. There were some concerns with microphone leakage, but this did not cause problems as serious as I anticipated. In fact, recording everything in the same space without using isolation rooms led to a more intimate recording that I was happy with. I spent some time carefully listening to the recorded production on AMATA studio speakers before starting any mixing or processing. It took me a while to understand and get the feel of the song which expresses a difficult truth of having to go through uncomfortable times to bring forth a needed change. These quite delicate concepts led to an approach where I wanted to keep the original informal sound of the recording as much as possible without imposing too much of a "high concept" approach that could interfere with the subtle concepts in the piece, both emotional and musical. The first challenge was the guitar. In the recording session there were some problems with vibration noise coming from the guitar amp. But even with that solved I was never happy with the microphone recordings of Chard playing his guitar. I began to work with the DI recording of Chard in Logic Pro adding "Double Dragon" and Delay pedals and some stereo spread. Even then something was not right, and I finally realised that Chard's guitar had been slightly out of tune. This was remedied with a Pitch correction plugin in Logic. With that problem solved I moved on to add some Compression to the vocals and piano to tighten up the mix. For the piano I also added some EQ and gated some of the microphone leakage which was most prevalent on the overhead mike pair for the piano. While continually listening to the track I quite naturally came up with the idea of adding slight delay feedback on the pedal for the guitar; a little at the end of his solo and some more right at the end of the track. This emerged from feelings from the meaning of the vocals that inspired me to add to those themes for reasons that are more instinctive than rational.

2.3 RESEARCH INFORMED PRACTICE

What informed your production? Account for research undertaken in the development your recording project and state the relevant reference frames used for benchmarking your work against relevant industry standards (e.g. Track X by Artist Y used as a mix reference) and how you utilised them. (250 words)

After some communication with the band about what informed their approach, I listened to the tracks *Dog Days are Over* by Florence + The Machine (Florence 2008) and *Rolling in the Deep* by Adele (Adele 2010) which had a similar sparse yet emotional approach. This highlighted the bands intimate approach to their themes. This gave me the correct starting point before carrying out more technical mixing tasks.

"When approaching a new mix, we may ask ourselves: What is this song about? What emotions are involved? What message is the artist trying to convey? How can I support and enhance the song's vibe? How should the listener respond to this piece of music? As basic as this idea might seem, it is imperative to comprehend– it is emotions that gel the music and mix together, not technical excellence. A mix can, and should, enhance the music: its mood, the emotions it conveys, and the response it should incite."
(Izhaki 2012)

This approach also allowed me to focus on maintaining the meaning of the original recording as I wanted to stay faithful to what the band had produced as the piece is well sung and has thoughtful and meaningful concepts in it.

"A mix is as good as the song." (Izhaki 2012)

ADELE, *Rolling in the Deep*. 2010. *Rolling in the Deep*. [sound recording]. XL Recordings. Available at: <https://www.discogs.com/master/306054-Adele-Rolling-In-The-Deep> [accessed 12 Feb 2023].

FLORENCE, *Dog Days are Over*. 2008. *Dog Days are Over*. [sound recording]. Moshi Moshi Records. Available at: <https://www.discogs.com/label/7448-Moshi-Moshi-Records> [accessed 12 Feb 2023].

ROEY IZHAKI. 2012. *Mixing Audio : Concepts, Practices and Tools*. Oxford: Focal.

2.4 DETAILS OF COLLABORATION AND GROUP WORK

Declare and detail who did what in the production, and if the workload was not an even split amongst group members state the percentage-split of work carried out by each group member. (150 words)

We set up the microphones and stands as a group. Tom and Conner setup the headphones foldback patching. We worked together on mixing desk tasks. I attended to some problems with the microphones as well as chatting to the band to make them feel comfortable.

2.5 EVALUATION

Provide a critical account of your role and input to the tracking session (incl. planning) and final mix, evaluating both your final mix and the examples of unprocessed recordings. (250 words)

We met as a group to plan the recording and to decide on which microphones to use. I booked the equipment. The final mix was not a group mix but was a separate mix done by me alone. The example of the original guitar recording shows that it was out of tune. This was corrected in the mix. The vocal example shows how the vocals sounded before some compression was added.

2.6 REFLECTION: YOUR LEARNING FROM TRACKING, MIXING, PLANNING,...

What are your key takeaways in terms of learning and experiences associated with this assessment task. How can you use the knowledge and experience gained in your future studio practice? (150 words)

Although our group were effective in setting up equipment there were some needed corrections with our interaction with the band. The correct polite instructions and reassurance were not initially given leading to some uncomfortable moments for the musicians. However, once this was recognised some time was taken to put the band at ease and the recording continued in a much more relaxed manner. This continued with my group inviting the band into the recording studio to listen to their recordings making them much more a part of the process. This went a long way to cementing our relationship with the band. Although I felt I had stayed true to original intent of the bands piece I had some trouble finalising what I was looking for with the compressor processing due to inexperience in this area. This is an area I need to gain mor experience in. However, I felt I creatively rescued the issues with the guitar recording and added something to the bands recording with the delay effects.

2.7 ANY OTHER INFORMATION (Optional) (100 words max)

