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PARASITE FUTURE

Creation of an audio record and critical reflection
on the production process with remarks on
applying time management methods on creative
work processes in music production

Written part of the master thesis that refers to the seven track audio record

PARASITE FUTURE

Abstract

The overall aim of this master project was to create an audio record consisting of seven tracks that are both cohesive and very individual at the same time. The pieces are thought to showcase the diversity of my creative identity as a composer and music producer and will represent my individual way of composing and producing music freed from all external influences in the best way possible. This written part of the thesis is a documentation and critical reflection as well as investigation of the creation process: from sorting out the original material, writing, producing and arranging over to mixing and mastering. The observations I make are the essential part of investigating my own creative identity as a music producer and composer. In addition to the audio record and its critical reflection, this thesis will also state remarks on three time management methods I apply onto my creation process in order to observe their effects on my working routine.

keywords: music production, songwriting, crossover, time management methods

Abstract (Swedish)

Det övergripande målet för detta examensarbete var att skapa en ljudinspelning bestående av sju låtar som är både sammanhängande och mycket individuella samtidigt. Låtarna ska presentera mångfalden av min kreativa identitet som kompositör och musikproducent och ska representera mitt individuella sätt att komponera och producera musik befriad från alla yttre influenser på bästa möjliga sätt. Denna masteruppsats är en dokumentation och kritisk reflektion samt en undersökning av skapandeprocessen: från att sortera ur originalmaterialet, skriva, producera och arrangera till mixning och mastering. Observationerna jag gör är den väsentliga delen av att undersöka min egen kreativa identitet som musikproducent och kompositör. Förutom ljudinspelningen och dess kritiska reflektion kommer denna masteruppsats också att ge kommentarer om tre metoder för time management som jag använder under min skapandeprocess för att observera effekterna på min arbetsrutin.

nyckelord: musikproduktion, låtskrivande, crossover, time management methods

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1. Introduction

When I was five years old, I sat down in front of a piano for the first time. It was my grandfather's old Bosendorfer upright piano in our living room and its amazing sound that fascinated me. A year later and after plucking off my fingers without having any idea of what exactly is going on, my mother thought it could be a good idea to find a piano teacher for me. Vera Spindel studied and taught at the St. Petersburg Conservatory before she left Russia to come to Germany. It was a lucky coincidence that she decided to settle close to my hometown. 15 years I ran through her classical Russian piano school that demanded a lot of discipline and was not always the biggest joy but is something I am deeply thankful for today. Throughout these years I played a bunch of concerts and various pieces, from Rachmaninov over Bach and Beethoven to Chopin. Besides from playing those pieces on the piano myself, I started listening to classical music in every context: solo piano, operas, symphonic orchestras with their overwhelming bodies of sounds. I can only guess - but it seems quite obvious - that this classical educational background and those many years lasting consumption of classical music are the reasons why the 'commercial' music I write and produce today are heavily influenced by these experiences. But at that early point of my musical development I hadn't found my way into 'pop music' yet.

The first time I heard 'Three Preludes' by George Gershwin it blew my mind. Is this still art music? And, if so, what the heck is going on? His symbiosis of established structures of serious music and something else I wasn't able to identify then, led my attention to his whole repertoire and to those of his fellows: I discovered Jazz. Week after week I binge-played one piece after another. I became a member of my high school's Big Band, founded my own combos and was simply overwhelmed by the eternal musical possibilities this genre had to offer. And that was the reason I came pretty soon to another important point in my musical development: to paraphrase the compositions of others wasn't enough for me anymore. I wanted to improvise, to play more freely, to find new song structures - I wanted to create my own repertoire. Followed by a time of experimentation, it developed naturally that I started to use my voice as well. In the early stages, it was only wordless nonsense to explain melodies

and rhythms to my combo colleagues. But with time I found great joy in singing. I was thirteen years old when I wrote my first song.

At around the same time, the Columbian pop star Shakira had her worldwide breakthrough hit 'Whenever, Wherever'. I remember a situation me sitting in a car and listening to this song on the radio for the first time. I was instantly and in a magical way attracted to her music. There were more instruments used than in a typical jazz formation and so many interesting new sounds I hadn't heard before and I wondered how those had been created. When I fell in love with Duncan James from the UK boy group 'Blue' just a little later, I finally spent most of my free time with listening to pop music and watching music videos on MTV. I was sixteen years old, when I bought my first midi keyboard and the newest version of Cubase and started to create my very first own amateur productions.

When I look back to these 15 years of musical (self-)education and discovery I can see very clearly now the step by step introduction into the different genres, musical instruments, sound worlds, song structures and types of recordings. Therefore it appears to be only logical that I make use of all of those different elements in my own compositions, arrangements and productions today. However, I never really investigated which role those different sound worlds actually play in my pieces, how I make use of them and for what reason. It is still also very unclear to me what their individual effects are on me personally.

1.1 Aim and method

The overall aim of this master project is to create an audio record consisting of seven tracks¹ that are both cohesive and very individual at the same time. The pieces will feature my personal way of composing and producing music and will use elements out of all the musical worlds I got to know in my past. The tracks are thought to showcase the different styles and genres I write and produce in today but it should stand out and make very much sense in the end that those have all been created and performed by the same artist. This written part of the thesis will focus on the description and critical reflection of the creation process of the record: from sorting out the original material,

¹ another expression for ‚song‘

writing, producing and arranging over to mixing and mastering, the following chapters will give a detailed insight into the experiences I underwent with a simultaneously ongoing reflection and critical discussion of the record development and my very individual working routines. The observations and the documentation of how I work as composer and producer are the essential part of investigating the different potentials of all the elements I use in every individual step of the creation process.

In addition to the body of art and its critical discussion I also want to actively investigate and influence the record creation process by applying different well established time management methods. In the past I often struggled with finding and sticking to a certain working routine in order to maintain a constant level of productivity. Working result oriented, setting marks and stay on track of a timeline has not been the easiest task for me personally and I often wondered if it's even possible in general to find a certain routine and establish it when it comes to creative work. I convinced myself way too often that working creatively needs a certain level of chaos in order to function well. The transfigured picture of the late night working tipsy artist was stuck in my head but is very much obsolete with a wider look at the modern music industry. Songwriters, producers, mixing engineers and everyone else actively involved in the commercial music industry have become a part of the meritocracy themselves. Working efficiently by maintaining a high level of quality at the same time is the key goal of every writing session, live recording or professional band rehearsal.

During the record creation process I want to force myself to apply three of the most well known and established time management methods: the Pomodoro technique, the Kanban technique and the 10-minute method.² I will investigate all of them individually by the criteria of productivity, adjustability to creative working processes and my personal satisfaction and joy while creating in order to possibly find and establish a new well working routine for my future work.

²Koz, B. (2020) 'The Ultimate List - 58 Time Management Techniques'. Available at: <<https://www.spica.com/blog/time-management-techniques>>, Spica International (2021)

2. Critical discussion of the creation process

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I want to give a detailed insight into the creation process of the seven tracks. From creating and/or choosing the material towards the arranging and producing process up until mixing and mastering the productions. Although I will provide detailed information about the single tracks here and there as well, this chapter is not an all around methodically analysis of every single work. It is more an overall description and documentation of my habits and will get backed up with examples from the single tracks sporadically. A detailed analysis is not thought to be part of this thesis as it would go beyond its scope.

2.2 Material and inspiration

I probably subconsciously collect inspiration for my own works at any time and any place: while listening to other music, in conversation with my fellow human beings, when hiking through the nature or strolling through the city, while watching films, reading books or having special encounters. And of course, and above all, as already described in detail in the introduction, through my previous and ongoing musical education and training. Up until today, I've never had to force myself to be creative. But so far I've never wanted to force myself to be creative either. At least not when it comes to create music for my own artist project. Whenever there is an impulse to write a song or to sing, I try to follow it instantly as long as the circumstances permit to do so. In the best possible case, I then have a piano on hand, a quiet environment and a lot of time. In the worst case, I have none of these three. I am forced to sing or hum my ideas as voice memos into my cell phone then, so that I can listen to them at another time. Even if a piano, silence and sufficient time are always the better conditions, both scenarios lead to the fact that I regularly create new ideas as audio snippets which I can either work on immediately or use as raw material at a later point of time to then start working with them. So far, and I consider myself very lucky, I have never faced the problem of not having any material to work with and so far there have not been any lengthy phases in which I struggled with a lack of inspiration.

When creating new material, I always have two maxims that I want to live up to in order to experience satisfaction in the creative process. My music should be authentic and I should like it. I try to avoid all external influences, both very concrete and subtle. Current trends, a 'scheme x', Spotify algorithms, money or the A&R manager³ from Sony - impulses that emerge from these categories which could possibly influence creative decisions have no place in my own music. It is of course anything but easy to completely free myself from those external influences and it would be a lie if I were to say that my music is completely free of them. Nevertheless, I can still say today that all the music that was published under the guise of one of my own artist pseudonyms was always authentic and I liked it. In fact, I always quickly notice - at the latest when I record my lead vocals - whether or not I stayed true to myself as the artist I want to be or if I created something that does justice to other demands but not my own. I am aware that this is not necessarily the best idea from a commercial point of view. But my need for authenticity, personal pacification and, to put it simply, happiness that comes with it, was and still is greater than the thirst for commercial success. Here, however, a very clear line can be drawn to the work and thought process that goes hand in hand with creating for other projects or artists. Then, I work on behalf of someone and can even consciously incorporate and apply the above mentioned external factors into my work. With a pitch⁴ for a pop song, a new circus music or a joint writing, I put my own personal demands on the back burner and try to achieve the best possible result my clients wish for.

For this master project I wanted to create seven new works that are both cohesive and at the same time very individual and different in genre. As mentioned before, I wanted them to present the breadth of my work, my musical development, the sound worlds I dive in to, the elements of all different kind of music styles I like to use and simply be an active exploration and investigation of how I work and function as composer and music producer.

³ Artist and Repertoire manager, a person mostly within a context of a music label company who takes care of artists and their creative material

⁴ actively offering a song to a label or artist

At the very beginning of the creation process, I searched through all of my hard drives and computers and listened to all possible voice memos and demo productions I collected in recent years. I was extremely surprised by the high number of ideas and also by how I developed over the years as creative being. Not only my demo productions from some years ago, but also my voice messages have changed greatly in the way they are recorded and in their creative content compared to the ones I create today. When I first listened to the individual ideas, I put every one that spoke to me straight away on a list that at the end of this process contained 43 ideas. With a little distance I listened to these 43 pieces again after a few days and sorted them out for a second time with the prior mentioned criteria in mind (cohesiveness, individuality, representation of the breath of my work, free from external influences). At the end of this second selection process, there were 12 ideas left to choose from. Since my personal experience is that in a creative process as well as with such an important selection process one tends to lose objectivity with passing time and repeated listening. So I decided to not only trust myself in the final selection of the seven pieces, but to also hand over the final 12 to fellow producer colleagues and friends in order to ask them for their personal assessments. Together we listened to and evaluated the remaining ideas and selected the seven final pieces. In the following I want to present all of them briefly.

2.2.1 Diamonds

Diamonds has been on top of my list from the very beginning. It was musically a one hundred percent what I saw and felt being the identity of the whole record. It had very interesting harmonies, an unusual alternative song build up and structure and yet a very strong hook-line⁵. Besides from that it felt like being excellent material to be arranged for strings or even bigger orchestra. It sat in a fable-like, saga-influenced alternative pop niche, where I originally come from but at the same time it could build bridges to recent material and new styles I experimented with in the last couple of months. At the beginning of the creation process I evaluated the writing status to be around 60%. There was a bridge⁶ missing and the ending was also quite unclear. The

⁵ a central melody part of a track's chorus / chorus: a central part of a track

⁶ a part of a track, in pop music mostly leads from a chorus to another chorus

production status though was just about 20%. There was already some good material in the demo but still a lot left to be done.

2.2.2 Parasite Future

Parasite Future rose from the same world as Diamonds yet it was very different in its musical expression. The track was much more dystopic while I considered Diamonds being hopeful and majestic. Parasite Future was a soundtrack-like, experimental, both electronic and organic track that ended with an interesting classical piano sequence.

The writing status as well as the production status were at around 30% when I started to work more intensively.

2.2.3 West End

When I was listening to West End again - and it was the first time in quite a long time - I was instantly drawn into it and its world. It was very simply structured, guitar and vocals mostly, but the lyrics spoke directly to me. It had a mesmerizing atmosphere through being so plain and wide at the same time. It was relaxing and floating yet driving and the vibe and the beat were easy going as well as melancholic. It was definitely the most organic song from the seven selected, almost touching the borderlines of country, folk and definitely typical singer-songwriter. The writing status was at 40%, the production status was at 30%.

2.2.4 All He Wants

The by far most commercial of all of the selected tracks and very much what I consider to be a 'pop song' was All He Wants. It also seemed to arise from a very different area musically since it was built on a very basic band set up and also played with elements I don't use in any of the other songs except from maybe partially West End. Anyhow, the hook-line was stuck in my head for days and the whole song is a great representation of a complete different genre I anyway feel kind of comfortable in. I couldn't imagine the final record without All He Wants. At the same time it was also developed the most in the beginning. The writing status was 65% and its production status was around 50%.

2.2.5 Wonder Why

The set up of Wonder Why was very close to the one of All He Wants but at the same time it featured great atmospheres and elements that could possibly build a bridge to pieces like Diamonds or Parasite Future. I had already several versions of it, one guitar acoustic version, a little more groovy one with a focus on drums and organ and one version with only synths. Therefore it was interesting to see in which direction this song would go. In the beginning its writing status was around 40%, the production status around 50%, but very much depending in which direction I would head to.

2.2.6 Unity

In 2017 I was asked to create a re-work of a popular single of a well-known electronic pop duo in Germany, named Hundreds. When I got the call, the deadline was only four weeks away so there was little time to write and produce something completely new. I had been working on a track for a possible own new record which I considered to match perfectly with their track. Due to the lack of time, I decided to simply take its sound world and a big part of the instrumentation and transferred it to the harmonies and melodies of Hundreds' original song. While looking for material for this master project, I stumbled upon my own original track again which served as base for the re-work. I almost forgot that it existed since I found it obvious to not use it in the future due to the resemblance to the re-work version for Hundreds' song. But after I listened to my original version several times I found the effect the different harmonies and melodies had, compared to the re-work version, to be so huge that I decided to continue working on it and let it become a part of my own record. Due to its simplicity in general (the instrumentation is limited to piano, synth, electronic drums and vocals), the demo production was already quite far evolved. However, lyrics, vocals and a huge part of the rest of the recorded and arranged instruments were far away from being final. So I considered both writing and production status to be at around 50% when I started to focus working on the track.

2.2.7 Human Touch

Human Touch is probably second in place when it comes to suit the demands of a certain commercial music song scheme and structure as well as harmonies and hook-line right after All He Wants (at least what I personally consider this to be, see chapter 2.3 for a more detailed description). It is yet combining elements from different sub-genres within the frame of 'pop music'. There's some dance, electro as well as influences from film music but this can only be said for the version as it appears on the final record now. When I first found Human Touch in a list of voice memos on my cell phone it was piano and vocals only and there wasn't more than a first verse and an idea of a chorus. The track was by far the most un-evolved from all the seven tracks of the record but it instantly draw my intention anyway because of the - in my opinion - extremely 'catchy' chorus. It seemed to be a great match to the rest of the chosen tracks because it rose out of a similar sound and writing world and yet represented an individual style that none of the other tracks featured. When I started to work intensively on the demo, the production and writing status were no more than 10%.

2.3 Writing

Almost all of the pieces I write begin their development at the piano. If, with a spontaneous idea in mind, I don't have a piano or keyboard available in the immediate vicinity, I sing melodies into my smartphone, save them and pick them up again while sitting at the piano at a later time. It is extremely rare that I don't start to write a song or start a production at the piano or keyboard. Of course, I am regularly inspired by sounds and songs that are not directly related to a piano. Nevertheless in 95% of all cases I sit down at the piano first and not directly in front of an empty DAW⁷ project.

For me, the harmonious base of a track is like the foundation walls of a house. I build them with great care and I have to make sure that they are set firmly in place before I start constructing everything else around them. The fact that I take the time to carefully select my harmonies and fine-tune them until they really seem to sit right in place is both a great advantage and disadvantage at the same time in the process of writing a new song. It is more the rule than the exception that I spend most of the time

⁷ Digital Audio Workstation, a software that is used to produce music

when creating a whole track with establishing a coherent, final harmony structure for a piece first. I am simply not able to do this in one session or in one day because I always need to sleep over a new composition at least once. I work on ideas, drop them, pick them up again at a later date, and then keep working on them consistently. This means that it takes a while for me before I can really start to arrange and produce because I need to finish the harmony structure first. At the same time this detailed work on, which I consider to be the very fundament of a song, gives me an important security and stability in the further creative process. Knowing that I spent a lot of time with defining harmonies until I am very sure that they are chosen 'correctly', protects me from suspecting problems or inconsistencies within a track in the department of the harmonies in the later production process. Instead of wildly changing harmonies later in the process because 'something doesn't fit yet', I can be very sure that it is not the chords, but rather a problem in the arrangement, the melody or in the mix. Of course this is not exempt from exceptions and there are pieces where it turns out in retrospect that there is still room for improvement in the harmony structure. Most of the time, however, once I have thoroughly laid the foundation for the harmonies, I no longer break with them.

Basically, I would say of my pieces that they have a tendency towards unusual harmony progressions, compared to pop repertoire from the areas of the mainstream or genres close to the mainstream. There are always chord changes and varieties that come more from the field of classical music, mixed with influences from jazz. The harmonically most interesting works of the record for this thesis are probably *Diamonds* and *Parasite Future*. Both of them have long endings that resemble a classic epilogue (*Diamonds* 02:00 - 03:12, respectively *Parasite Future* 02:30 - 04:38). What both pieces also have in common is the lack of a song structure that I consider to be usual for 'pop music'.

In the beginning I always found it difficult to live up to a classic pop song structure - if something like that even exists today. Assuming that we are still talking about intro-verse-chorus-verse-chorus-bridge-chorus, almost all of my songs do not do justice to this scheme. Only *All He Wants* and *Human Touch*, which I have already described above a little more in detail as probably the most commercial ones, live up to this

form. I can't exactly determine where this is coming from, but I know that I feel a kind of dissatisfaction when I force myself to try to use this typical pop scheme. In most cases - but again I have to limit this statement to writing material for my own project as I did in the introduction already - I try to avoid this form. This happens mostly subconsciously and arises out of a gut feeling or could be described a little more vague as 'what the song demands'. This can certainly be traced back to my individual musical development which has its roots in classical music. Either way, both the unusual song structure and the less common harmony changes are definitely two elements all of the seven songs have in common and are thus an extremely important part of the album's cohesiveness.

Since almost all of my pieces which I create for my own artist project (and what therefore also applies to the record of this master project), contain vocals, lyrics and vocal melodies are important parts of a track. In my case, writing harmonies almost always goes hand in hand with writing a vocal melody and, subconsciously, writing lyrics simultaneously. When I write a new piece on the piano, my fingers search for the right harmonies while I am humming or singing melodies at the same time. When I sing, it's usually a kind of gibberish that anyhow contains important information for the later lyrics. For me personally, the relationship between vowels and consonants in relation to the respective melody tones plays an extremely important role. During the writing process, when I sing a melody, I try different vowels on different tones until I find the best suitable one. A good example here is Diamonds. Entering the chorus (00:37 or 01:33) works well with an 'Oh', but very much not with an 'Ah'. With Wonder Why it's the 'oo' in 'moonlight' (00:55 or 02:17) that goes best with the melody. This 'oo' was part of my melody from the very beginning. But I didn't know from the start right away that it would become a part of the word 'moonlight' because I always write the matching lyrics to the demo melodies after I finished writing the melodies at the piano.

By completing the work on harmonies and melodies first, I have a harmonic foundation and a melodic framework of vowels and consonants. The atmosphere and mood of the piece and my very own personal feeling make it very easy for me to then find a topic that I want to write about in the respective song. Using the vowel-

consonant-melody framework, I then start to form lines of lyrics that are coherent and in most cases also do justice to a rhyme scheme. So far all of my lyrics have been in English. I don't feel comfortable writing texts in my mother tongue German and I am no more confident in any other language than English yet. Here, too, I regularly seek help from native speakers to make sure that my lyrics are grammatically correct. For this album I kept asking my sister and her Canadian husband for advice who then made adjustments. In general, I have to admit that the textual level is definitely the creatively weakest link in my pieces. Personally, I can't deny that I don't pay as much attention to lyrics when listening to music as I probably should. For me the whole piece in total is always in the foreground. This is certainly also the reason why I place less value on groundbreaking lines with my own lyrics but focus more on the musical framework. My background from theater and circus music certainly also plays a role here, as fantasy languages are often used there, which only provide melodic information and not linguistic content. The lyrics to the seven songs from the album are attached to this thesis.

The general writing process of the seven songs for this certain album went exactly as described in detail above. Based on the demo versions and voice recordings, I completed and polished the existing material. In conclusion, it can be said that for me writing is a very intimate and spiritual experience that I almost always do alone. Working in a team as a couple or with several other people is only possible for me when I'm working on other projects or on behalf of others in the means of a commission work. When I create music for my own project, it's almost always done alone. At certain points in the creative process, I search for feedback from colleagues and friends whose professional or emotional assessment I find helpful. Other than that, the entire writing process is limited to me and a piano in a quiet environment with plenty of time.

2.4 Arranging and Producing

Arranging and producing always goes hand in hand for me and it happens at the same time. I have rarely arranged in a classical sense, i.e. notated for larger band formations, ensembles or orchestras and then recorded the material directly in the

studio. Everything I do after the writing process happens in a DAW, in my case it's Logic Pro⁸. I started with Cubase⁹ as a 16-year-old but then found my way to Logic via GarageBand¹⁰ when I bought my first MacBook. Today, I'm a convinced and enthusiastic Logic user. In the course of my bachelor's degree I also came into contact with ProTools and Ableton, but I've never found the routines there as easily understandable and simply 'logic' as with Logic.

When I start a new production, I almost always proceed in a very similar way which means that I record the harmonies that I previously figured out on the piano as a MIDI¹¹ track. Every now and then I also do piano audio recordings if there's a piano available, but for the most part my first tracks in the project are MIDI pianos. I then continue to record demo lead vocals. Here it depends on whether or not the lyrics are already finished if there's already a sense behind the singing or if it's still just gibberish. In most cases, the latter applies, as I rarely finish the lyrics entirely before I start to produce. I usually finish the lyrics at the end of the production phase right before the actual final vocal recordings. That makes sense in the way that I don't have to do vocal recordings several times in the case that I change tempo, key¹² or melody in a late phase of the production process.

With the framework of piano and lead vocals, I now have a basic structure in my project which I can now build the whole arrangement around. From this moment on, there are no longer any work chains I use to follow - everything just runs in a relatively disorganized way. Sometimes I start building a beat, sometimes I get lost in finding second voices or in recording choirs, sometimes I also replace or double the piano with another supporting harmony instrument immediately after I recorded the first one. But in general in the very beginning of the production I work almost

⁸ a Digital Audio Workstation

⁹ a Digital Audio Workstation

¹⁰ a Digital Audio Workstation

¹¹ a form of digital signal procession within music production

¹² the harmonic base of a track

exclusively with virtual instruments¹³, less often with samples¹⁴ and almost never with audio recordings. If I develop - after being a while into the creative production process - a certain feeling or wish that a production requires actual additional audio recordings of real instruments (apart from vocals) - which is usually the case for drums, strings, woodwinds or brass - I try to organize recording sessions when a large part of the production is already finished.

Since the production process and the production elements used differ greatly between the seven pieces of this bespoke record and each of them showed different, interesting peculiarities and/or problems, I would like to briefly discuss each piece in below. Here, too, it must be stated in advance that no detailed analysis can be formulated but only an overview can be given to not go beyond the scope of this thesis.

2.4.1 Diamonds

The basic structure of Diamonds at production start consisted only out of the piano, which can be heard well in the final version, as well as the lead vocals. Both have been preserved from first recording to final mix. The piano is a combination of a MIDI piano and an audio recording. The audio recordings were made in Studio 2 of the Royal College of Music Stockholm in December 2020 using two KM184¹⁵. The MIDI piano is the Noir from the Native Instruments¹⁶ family. It's based on the piano sound world of Nils Frahm¹⁷. The strings that join in during the first chorus of the piece were recorded live, also in December 2020 at the Royal College of Music Stockholm. The synth bass that comes in during the 2nd verse is from the Serum¹⁸ family, the beat almost entirely from Battery 4¹⁹ with additional, more organic

¹³ sounds that are available to play with within the context of a software

¹⁴ pre-recorded parts of music

¹⁵ a type of microphones used in audio recording

¹⁶ a provider and seller of virtual instruments

¹⁷ a German composer and music producer

¹⁸ a virtual instrument

¹⁹ a virtual instrument series

elements from the Studio Drummer from Native Instruments (hereinafter abbreviated to NI). The production process of Diamonds was interesting in the way that I initially strongly assumed that this piece would remain a purely acoustic work - either just vocals and piano or with additional strings. This character still comes through strongly, but I felt the strong wish to brutally break the sound world with the onset of the second chorus. That's why I expanded the second chorus but also the second verse with electronic elements, which, in retrospect, gives the piece a completely different character compared to the organic and orchestral beginning.

2.4.2 Parasite Future

Parasite Future is by far the most diverse and experimental piece in terms of production. The number of individual tracks (183) and the number of different instruments used (98) is far above average for me - not only in comparison with the pieces on this album but also in comparison with my other productions. The previously mentioned instrument groups such as Battery 4, Studio Drummer and NI Pianos are joined by Moog²⁰ synths and numerous vocal effect tracks (vocoders, vocal synths)²¹. The piece also has the most unusual structure and combines many instruments and sounds from all different kind of sound worlds. I made great use of NI's Ethno World here (voices and instruments) which has been created by Marcel Barsotti²². It contains an amazing palette of world music instruments and sounds. This diversity, which in a certain way also stands for my diversity in general and the diversity of this record, has led to my decision of making Parasite Future the title of this record as well as the title of the entire thesis. My dystopic, melancholic, almost cinematic view of life is reflected extremely well here, not only in terms of sound. Furthermore, there couldn't be a better piece that expresses my own state of mind I had during the process of creating this record than Parasite Future. The title is both swan song and request at the same time - almost like my very personal motivation, which fluctuates daily, and the search for meaningfulness in creative work.

²⁰ a well-known synthesizer company

²¹ virtual effects instruments

²² a Swiss composer and music producer

2.4.3 West End

With West End I've had a contradicting experience when it comes to comparing and competing of virtual instruments and self-made audio recordings. West End is based on guitar riffs that I initially recorded myself with the very impressive new Electric Sunburst Deluxe from NI. This new version of the Sunburst imitates real guitars extremely well compared to its predecessor. Nevertheless, you still cannot achieve a result that a real well-trained guitar player delivers. The organic, human way of playing is missing here, which still - in my opinion - only a real musician can deliver. That's why I decided to record real guitars later in the production process. In addition to the guitar, the vocals and a simple programmed beat, West End plays very discreetly with different synth surfaces (NI's Arkhis, Straylight & Absynth) which are not very precisely individually identifiable or separable but have an important supporting effect that becomes apparent instantly when muting all of them in the production. West End is the strongest song for me lyrically. It tells a phonetically-melodically very coherent personal story and additionally, lyrics and the sound character of the track go very well together.

2.4.4 All He Wants

The exciting thing about All He Wants is probably that when first listening to it, it could be assumed that most of the instruments and elements were recorded live. In fact, All He Wants is the only track that does not feature any real instruments or recordings but consists a 100% of virtual instruments (with the exception of the lead and backing vocals and choirs). For All He Wants I also used a standard NI repertoire for most parts (Battery 4, Studio Drummer, Alicia's Keys). It is interesting that right before finishing the last details in the production of the song I decided to increase the tempo just slightly - but the final vocal recordings had already been made. That is why the entire track has moved up a quarter tone in pitch and is floating between two keys which adds for me an extra special element.

2.4.5 Wonder Why

In complete contrary to All He Wants, Wonder Why is one of the few tracks that bases on audio recordings mainly. They actually also initiated the whole production process in the very beginning. I already had several different demo versions of Wonder Why I all liked in a way, but none of them really impressed me. I unpacked the song at a recording session in Paris and jammed on it together with a bassist and drummer. Only after a few minutes, the continuous bass drum and the bouncing bass established themselves and locked in so well that it was clear in that moment that those two elements would probably define the sound world of Wonder Why. In addition to the lead and backing vocals, these live recorded material is accompanied by an organ, also recorded live, an additional electronic drum groove consisting exclusively of virtual elements (Battery 4 and NI 80s drummer) and occasionally field recordings of wind, sea and birds I made at the Baltic Sea in Germany. The production process of Wonder Why is therefore in general slightly different compared to my actual standard procedure, because the entire production builds on two self-recorded audio tracks, which clearly define the character of the whole piece.

2.4.6 Unity

Unity aligns itself very well with the sound worlds of Diamonds and Parasite Future. Overall, it shares their melancholic, dystopic and cinematic character but becomes at the same time very unique through elements that add a dreamy and in a way also hypnotic touch. The track has a very special atmosphere that combines organic and electronic pieces in a way that is very special on the record compared to the other tracks. The grand piano (NI Giant) floats above a thick underline of various synths (Moog Mini V5, Juno, NI Straylight). The minimalistic electronic drum beat (Battery 4) gets enriched by an interesting self-recorded plucked piano (01:08 - 01:31). Here and there appear occasionally some strings that enrich the organic feeling and help to build up to an almost majestic ending (02:43 - 03:00). Unity also has a slight but undeniable existent world music character, only through the very little presence of some smaller short motives that borrow melodic phrases out of a middle eastern related pool of music: the backing vocals at 00:15 - 00:18, 00:35 and 03:02-03:06. It is

interesting to experience how strong such a short and almost invisible element can influence the character of a whole track - at least in my opinion.

2.4.7 Human Touch

As mentioned a few times before, it is very rare that songs I write and produce for my own artistic project match a certain level of commercialism in order to be considered a 'real pop song' - or at least what I consider this to be. With Human Touch this is, in my opinion, very much the case. It's not only its song structure, the vocal melody and especially the lyrics but also the whole sound world and the way it is produced.

Similar to tracks like Unity or Parasite Future, Human Touch plays a lot with various underlying synth pads (Absynth, NI Straylight, Moog Mini V5), electronic minimalistic drum grooves (NI Battery 4, Spectrasonics Stylus RMX) and several, part-wise electronic modified backing vocals as well as choirs. The interesting thing about Human Touch is though that the focus on lyrics and main vocals is very strong. There's also a build up from first verse to last chorus in terms of added elements, increased velocity and simply more energy vocal-wise. If there was a song I personally could imagine being played on the radio besides from All He Wants, it's Human Touch.

2.5 Mixing and Mastering

Mixing is and was for me - again with the limitation to my own music - not an independent process as one might know it from a prior time in the history of recorded music and music production. For recorded music, which mainly or maybe only consists of live instruments and recorded audio tracks, the line between recording/producing and mixing may be a little bit easier to draw. However, since I work with a mix of both audio recordings and virtual instruments - with a large proportion and focus on digitally based sound worlds - the transitions between arranging, producing and mixing are very fluid for me. There are five elements that I always check and adjust immediately after adding a new element to my productions: leveling, panning, equalizing, compression and delay²³. I find these elements so important for the interplay of all the individual, different tracks that after importing a new motive,

²³ different tools and mechanisms used in modify a track's elements within music production

figure, etc., I immediately deal with integrating them harmoniously into the overall picture. If I wouldn't do that right away, the culminating imbalance would bother me through the rest of the production process and inhibit my creativity because I would dwell on it again and again.

For me, the central element and the most important part of my own productions is vocals. In my case, with my own artist project, that simply means my own voice. In the last few years I experimented my way to the for me perfect working combination of hard- and software that I apply for almost all of my productions: the MK4 condenser microphone from Sennheiser and a small chain of digital plug-ins (Valhalla Room, Logic internal compressors, FabFilter or Logic internal equalizers)²⁴. I am generally extremely comfortable and satisfied working with these both while recording but also later in mixing. For me, a good sound on the ears while recording vocals is essential in order to deliver the best possible performance. The sound of my voice in the later productions and mixes is just as important to me. Some of the above named plug-ins which I use for my lead vocals, I also use very often in general for a variety of instruments, both analog and digital ones. They have become the 'basic equipment' of my productions. These include the Echoboy, the PanMan and the Sie-Q from SoundToys, the Valhalla Room, all UAD compressors and their DeEsser, the Logic internal compressor and EQ, the FabFilter Pro as well as the free distortion plug-in Camel Crusher.²⁵

My biggest problem with mixing today, is still the far too often occurring overload of arrangement and the associated queasy and thick sound that results from stacking and overlapping frequencies in the low and middle mids²⁶. In the course of working on this record I paid extra special attention to this problem and repeatedly checked on the frequency mids of all of the individual elements and instruments. This problem is also related to my rather unusual way of producing when it comes to the use of buses²⁷: you rarely find these in my projects. Working too fast and being impatient very often

²⁴ different plug-ins / plug-ins: virtual tools to modify audio signals

²⁵ different plug-ins

²⁶ a part of the frequency spectrum within audio signals

²⁷ a strategy to combine and/or lead different audio signals in certain ways

leads to the fact that I keep placing many plug-ins separately on individual tracks instead of creating buses that make a later mixing process easier and clearer. The fact that I recognized this problem and that I am trying to improve is thanks to the work on this record.

In order to get an overall impression of my productions and mixes that is as objective as possible when it comes to finish the work on tracks, I use three different techniques: producer friends and colleagues give feedback, I compare my mixes with reference tracks and I listen to the productions a few days or weeks apart after I finished them. These three different feedback sources give me the opportunity to make final adjustments to the productions and the respective mixes before I can finally hand in the mixes to mastering or master myself. In general, mastering is something that I tend to hand over to external parties. I experienced that after producing and mixing a track one is so charged subjectively that mastering works best if someone else does it. One could of course do the same for all other processes and it will certainly vary from person to person as to which work steps one hands over. For me, it's the mastering and this one has been taking over by a virtual mastering tool that I think has a great future ahead. I am of course in no way sponsored at all when I name the software concretely, but the increasingly popular LANDR mastering software is just as equally good as any personal mastering I have done myself or someone else did for my productions. I would it even consider to be better. In 2015, I had an EP²⁸ mastered comparatively once by the software and once by a real mastering engineer. The results were similarly good in a surprising way (and this is six years ago already), which is why I assume that mastering via software will be of greater importance to the whole music production scene in the near future. The entire record of this thesis has been mastered by LANDR.

2.6 Reflection on special circumstances

The work on this record - sorting out the material, the writing process, production and mixing - lasted over a period of ten months in the autumn and spring term of the academic year 2020/2021. Those terms were heavily influenced by an ongoing global

²⁸ a form of an audio record, mostly consist of three to eight tracks

pandemic. It can't be denied that the circumstances coming with this situation had their influence on the creation process of this record and the whole thesis in general. For me personally, this influence was very much present and I experienced it both internal and external. Recording sessions needed to be canceled, co-working was almost impossible, studios were not always available to book. Being forced to stay at home, meeting a very reduced amount of people or no people at all and following the continuous flow of never ending dystopic news reports in every media had their impact on my motivation, my overall mood and mental health but most definitely on reflecting on my identity and role as an artist - both in my local community as well as in the world in general. Creating art in times like these can be welcome distraction as well as an impossible project. For me, both was the case and positive and negative sides came and went in waves. In the end, it can't be said how this record would sound and this thesis would be written if there was no pandemic. I personally am satisfied with the way it turned out in the end and learned a lot about not only my abilities as composer and music producer but mostly about myself as artist.

3. Time management methods

3.1 Introduction

As long as I have been working consciously creatively - that means more than 20 years with me being 31 years old at the time writing this thesis - I have been struggling with productivity, procrastination and finding the right balance between working regularly efficiently and feeling personally satisfied with both the ongoing creation process as well as the results of a work day. I don't know exactly why I haven't found my way to a certain working routine in the past but I always felt some kind of inner rejection when it came to structure creative work. I was convinced that being creative is something that can't be forced or scheduled in a calendar but needs to evolve out of an inspirational moment. Furthermore, I've had the hardest times to actually start working, then continue working productively and most of all feeling satisfied at the end of a work day. Most of the times throughout the last ten years, I always felt I hadn't done enough and that there's way much more left to be done than

I already had accomplished. This led to a vicious cycle of bad habits that started and ended with avoiding to work at all.

With this master project I saw the chance to face these personal issues by actively forcing myself to make use of well established time management methods. The intention is to evaluate their individual potentials for my personal use in order to maybe find new routines I could apply for my future work. These methods haven't been created initially for creative working processes only but became well-known for structuring productive work in nearly any area. I decided to focus on three of the most popular ones: the Pomodoro technique, the Kanban technique and the 10-minute rule.²⁹ In the following chapters I will briefly introduce those three methods and then discuss them individually in terms of my personal experiences while applying them. I decided to measure the methods by the following three criteria mainly: adjustability to creative working processes, level of productivity and personal satisfaction with daily results and while creating. Even though all different steps of the creation process of this record (writing, arranging, producing, mixing, mastering) could be investigated individually by focusing on the applying of the chosen time management methods, I decided to discuss them in an overall matter in order to not stretch the frame of this thesis too much. This chapter will find its end with a brief overall reflection.

3.2 The Pomodoro technique

The Italian Francesco Cirillo was the first one to define the relatively simple structured rules of the Pomodoro Technique in a more concrete way. He said that he 'discovered that you could learn how to improve your effectiveness and be better able to estimate how long a task will take to complete by recording how you utilize your time.'³⁰ The Technique is structured as follows:

- choose a certain task to work on
- set a timer for 25 minutes and start working

²⁹ Koz, B. (2020) 'The Ultimate List - 58 Time Management Techniques'. Available at: <<https://www.spica.com/blog/time-management-techniques>>, Spica International (2021)

³⁰ Collins, B. (2020) 'The Pomodoro Technique Explained'. Available at: <<https://www.forbes.com/sites/bryancollinseurope/2020/03/03/the-pomodoro-technique/?sh=598ddaf03985>>, Forbes Media LLC. (2021)

- take a 5 minute long break when the timer rings
- repeat a new 25 minute long cycle after the break
- after four 25 minute long cycles, take a 20 minute long break
- record each session with a tick on a notepad

The idea behind this technique is to separate a bigger task into smaller pieces in order to get a better overview on a project and to prevent getting tired and unfocused after a while. 25 minutes as timeframe is still long enough to get work done but at the same time it's not too overwhelming. By stacking small sessions on top of each other, bigger projects seem more and more manageable with every new Pomodoro.³¹

When I first applied the Pomodoro Technique I was very sceptic looking at the 25 minute timeframe (one Pomodoro). For me, it seemed impossible to actually get a significant part of work done in this short amount of time. But already after the first Pomodoro, I was very surprised about how much I actually worked. Proceeding with these 25 minute time slots, taking 5 minute long breaks and then doing this over again gave me the satisfying feeling of really progressing. Knowing I worked f. e. six times for 25 minutes at one day is a satisfying feeling because I measured my work and actually know that I accomplished something. To apply this method on creative work processes within music production such as writing or producing worked very well for me although it's sometimes hard to force myself to take a five minute long break when I'm in a creative flow. In the contrary, I never experienced a lack of flow before the 25 minutes were over. That showed me very impressively that it is absolutely no problem to work productively with this amount of time. With every new accomplished cycle I furthermore felt joy and happiness of working both creatively and productively. Up until to this very moment while writing this thesis, I'm making use of the Pomodoro technique. It was a real game changer for my work in every sense.

³¹ Koz, B. (2020) 'The Ultimate List - 58 Time Management Techniques'. Available at: <<https://www.spica.com/blog/time-management-techniques>>, Spica International (2021)

3.3 The Kanban technique

'Kanban' is the Japanese word for billboard. To have a visual board or signboard to track the progress of an ongoing project, task or goal is the main idea behind the Kanban technique.³² In the early 1940s it was Taiichi Ohno, an industrial engineer and businessman from Japan who developed the technique first. Ohno worked for Toyota and his technique was thought to help 'control and manage work and inventory at every stage of production optimally.' While it was Taiichi Ohno who introduced the Kanban technique in the manufacturing industry, David J. Anderson is known for applying the concept and its ideas to IT, software development and knowledge work in general.³³

The basic idea behind the Kanban technique is to draw several columns on the whiteboard in order to visualize the status of each specific task. Usually the columns are 'To Do', 'In Progress' and 'Done'. Every task that need to be done for completing a project is then written on sticky notes. Different colors can be used for different types of tasks. After having prepared the board and the notes with the individual tasks, the notes can be put in one of the columns, depending on the phase the task is in. The technique is thought to help organize and structure working progresses and to identify occurring problems as soon as possible in order to limit their negative effects to a minimum.³⁴

Making use of the Kanban technique for the creation process of my record production was not the easiest task for me. Since I'm less of a visual but more an audio and haptical driven working and learning type of person and due to the fact that I don't like to think through or prepare a lot of things before I actually start to work, I really had to force myself applying this method. Getting a white board and sticky notes and bring them with me into the studio sounds not to be the toughest thing in the world but for me being a very spontaneous, impatient character it was quite a lot. Anyway, I

³² Koz, B. (2020) 'The Ultimate List - 58 Time Management Techniques'. Available at: <<https://www.spica.com/blog/time-management-techniques>>, Spica International (2021)

³³ Digité editor team (2021) 'What Is Kanban?'. Available at: <<https://www.digite.com/kanban/what-is-kanban/>>, Digité Inc. (2021)

³⁴ Digité editor team (2021) 'What Is Kanban?'. Available at: <<https://www.digite.com/kanban/what-is-kanban/>>, Digité Inc. (2021)

gave it a try several times but I can already say upfront that the method doesn't fit me very well.

In order to function flawlessly and effectively, the frame of a project's work amount and the individual tasks need to be formulated very precisely upfront and that is not always manageable for parts of a creative working process within music production. For studio sessions for example, I can imagine it works very well when it comes to the recording session progress of different instruments for different tracks. For me though, who works most of the time alone in a studio in front of a DAW arranging and producing or mixing a track, it's difficult to identify all the individual tasks as single parts of the whole. During my creative work, there's so many small steps that also become more and more with time proceeding. It's hard to integrate new spontaneously arising tasks precisely without losing the overall picture. As described in the prior chapters, my working routine - when it comes to producing, arranging and mixing - is very chaotic. I could therefore state that it very much depends on the type of work during a music production process whether or not the Kanban method can be applied successfully. For me, it was simply quite annoying to take the time to write a new sticky note each time a new task came up. I tend to just write them directly into my project's 'notes' section. I came very quickly to a point where I felt this method is not helping me to work productively but is actually doing the opposite. I felt it prevented me from working freely and blocked in a certain way creativity.

3.4 The 10-minute rule

The 10-minute rule is probably the easiest one to explain out of the three chosen methods I applied on to my creative work. Procrastination - the more scientific term for postponing tasks that sooner or later need to be done - has been a problem of mine for a very long time already. This appeared to be true for not only tasks I don't necessarily like to do but also for the ones that are more enjoyable. To initiate the working process in the very beginning has always been the toughest part. The 10-minute rule is as easy as its name: tell yourself that you are going to work on a specific task for 10 minutes. After the 10 minutes went by you can decide whether or

not you want to keep working. Previous research has shown that in 9 out of 10 times people proceeded to work long past the 10 minutes.³⁵

The idea behind this method is to put people in motion. Having crossed the line of an initial working start, it is much easier to continue working. By shifting the attention away from the big goal or what one wants to achieve in the long term - such as 'I need to write a master thesis' - the focus lies on what one can do and control in the very moment: 'I'll write a few sentences now.' or 'I'll read a short text passage.' The overall task gets divided into a series of small actions.³⁶

In contrary to the Kanban technique, the 10-minute rule was the second game changer while establishing new working routines for my personal creation process. From the very first time I applied this rule it worked perfectly - and keeps doing so until today. Telling myself that there is the option of actually stopping to work after 10 minutes is for me the key to start working. It functions in a magical way and I've never stopped to work after the 10 minutes have passed. I experienced this method to work with every task in music production I applied it onto. It increased my productivity immensely in the same way as it gave me joy. Seeing results, even if it's only small ones after 10 minutes of work, pushes impressively the motivation to continue working and to accomplish even more results.

3.5 Reflection

Working with the three time management methods bespoken above not only gave me pleasure but also aroused my curiosity to experiment further with other methods that could possibly improve my personal work routine. To work productively and creatively in a fulfilling manner is neither tied to the transfigured image of having to be an artist who can only create meaningful art borne by a moment of inspiration, nor does it have to be tiring or frustrating. On the contrary, structured, well-planned work

³⁵ Morin, A. (2017) 'Want To Stop Procrastinating? Try The 10-Minute Rule'. Available at: <<https://www.inc.com/amy-morin/want-to-stop-procrastinating-try-the-10-minute-rule.html>>, INC./Mansueto Ventures LLC. (2021)

³⁶ Bryant, M. L. (2021) 'The 10-Minute Rule: It Seems Crazy, But it Will Revolutionize Your Productivity'. Available at: <<https://www.themuse.com/advice/the-10minute-rule-it-seems-crazy-but-it-will-revolutionize-your-productivity>>, Daily Muse Inc. (2021)

on projects even leads to broadening ones own creative horizons by using the time that is available most effectively and with the greatest possible euphoria.

Looking at it in detail, the Kanban method did not work so well for my personal inclination to work, but the combination of the 10-minute method and the Pomodoro technique is a newly discovered, almost unbeatable combination for me. To get started with having in mind I only have to work for 10 minutes if I want to and then making it kind of automatically to the first 25 minutes long slot, is the best solution for me to really get things done. During the smaller time slots of 25 minutes, the tasks I'm working on get my full focus and concentration. I know that there's regularly short as well as longer breaks coming to get some fresh air, drink a coffee or speak with colleagues. In retrospect I regret that I didn't address myself earlier to time management methods in order to establish well working routines for my creative projects in general. To structure creative projects and their individual tasks works greatly and I'm thankful I integrated this investigation of time management methods into my master thesis.

4. Overall conclusion

The overall aim of this master project was to create a seven track audio record as body of art and reflect on the creation process in order to investigate my personal way of composing and producing music as well as the individual musical worlds and their specific elements I make use of for my productions today. While I got introduced to these worlds during my musical education and exploration in the past, the record was thought to showcase the different styles and genres I write and produce as artist today. In addition to the critical reflection of the creation process, I applied different time management methods onto it in order to find out if and how they can be applied to my personal working processes in music production with the overall aim to increase productivity and personal satisfaction for both the ongoing process as well as the final results.

The resulting record Parasite Future features seven tracks which both represent my musical diversity and are at the same time cohesive enough to draw a clear picture of who I am as artist today. A variety of elements from my musical background from

classical music, jazz and world music appear in different ways throughout the whole record. The work on the record improved my skills as music producer. I explored a large number of new plug-ins, virtual instruments and ways of addressing specific problems in production and mix, such as dealing with difficult to handle frequency areas or successfully combining audio recordings with digital elements out of the same instrument pool. The detailed written reflection of all of the individual steps of the creation process - sorting out the material, writing, arranging and producing, mixing and mastering - as well as the critical reflection on my working habits, provided me with enormously helpful insights in order to identify both weak points and strong suits I have as the artist I am today.

Although the written reflection of the creation process' single steps seems to demonstrate that I have a well established well working and very clear image of how I work, I very much lacked an overall motivation of getting to work in the first place and I also wasn't able to structure the individual tasks of the bigger project well. Working on long lasting big projects like this record - which in the end lasted over a period of time of almost ten months - comes with constantly new arising challenges and changes and therefore needs a well structured plan in the very beginning. This plan also needs to be adapted regularly in order to maintain a good work flow and to ensure that there will be a substantial result in the end. That is why in addition to all the experiences I made and insights I got while working creatively on the record as well as the new knowledge I gained through working practically on the project in general, I experienced one certain fact to be of fundamental importance to me and my creative work and I wouldn't have explored that if I wouldn't have experimented with the above discussed time management methods: sticking to a working routine, making use of time management methods and having regular working days throughout the week is for me personally the key to a healthy and fulfilling level of productivity, progress, personal satisfaction and individually enhanced creativity. Never in my life before I managed to create so efficiently and at the same time creatively satisfying. Like possibly many other musicians or people working within a creative field I assumed that creativity comes and goes and that one can't force a process like writing music that deals with emotions and with being in a certain kind of mood in order to create meaningful art. But what I experienced is, that even if I might not be in the

most creative mood a certain day, it is still always the better idea to start working, to open projects and to at least give it a try instead of procrastinating just another day. At the end of the day there will always be at least some kind of results. To create a little bit every day is worth a lot because it always adds up to more than skipping a day and doing nothing. At the same time, the work on this project has been a time of fulfillment and joy due to the fact that I really got the feeling of accomplishing smaller steps within the bigger project context every day. Getting home knowing there lies a day of focused work behind me also helps to enjoy my spare time because I don't take unfinished business home. The work on my master project has probably been the most productive and satisfying one I've experienced in my life as professional working artist so far.

5. Resources

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6. Attachments

West End

There's a square on the west end,
called 'Marie Anne's High'.
It's the place where I met you
the very first time.
Wearing blue shoes, a white shirt
and an innocent smile.
Lasting for a while.

Didn't take us a minute
to unpack our lives.
You have a dead sister
and I'm dealing with frights.
After eight blocks and three bars,
some laughter and wine,
I kissed you and you didn't mind.

You said things like 'I like you'
and I said 'I do too'.
Spent the summer in bed,
at the lake, climbing roofs.
You're friends were quite awkward
and your taste was it too.
Still I started to miss you.

The days got shorter
and so did your calls.
Scrolling through pictures
you're posting abroad.
A lot in the office
and your mum is not fine.
'Sorry, I don't have much time.'

Wearing blue shoes, a white shirt
and a bittersweet smile,
we met at the west end street
'Pentonville Drive'.
You said things like 'I like you'
and 'Thanks for the time.'
It's the place where you said goodbye.

Wonder Why

Oh, I wonder why I walk with a smile,
had it if you need it for a while.
And I see you there,
head with a stare.
Lighting up the air is what they want.

And I'm all alone with an open heart.
Fighting for another one to start.
And I wonder why I walk with a smile.
Flying up upon.

I need the moonlight haze up above for dreaming.
So right, won't you stay out of my reaching.
You thought you would help me with time that could fly.
Never felt the reasons why I lied.
And you thought you would need me but I changed my mind.
I need the moonlight, oh I wonder why.

Oh I wonder why I walk with a smile.
Standing back inside of what I might.
So I need you there, hand with a swear.
Trying to catch up with the way I am.

And I need your own, with a lonely heart.
Some standing there, to be on the part.
And I wonder why I walk with a smile.
Head inside my dreams.

I need the moonlight haze up above for dreaming.
So right, won't you stay out of my reaching.
You thought you would help me with time that could fly.
Never felt the reasons why I lied.
And you thought you would need me but I changed my mind.
I need the moonlight, oh I wonder why.

All He Wants

I was taking it easy,
didn't want to be found.
You came in here like thunder,
see if I was the light you need in the morning.

And I heard myself begging,
keep me running around.
And now I'm flying so high, I just can't deny no,
words can't describe it now that I'm found.

All he wants he takes,
breaks it and he leaves the scenes with no regrets.
And if it's all he wants, he knows I fake it and we leave the scene
with no regrets 'cause he wants it.
Oh he needs it.

He says easy,
walk around.
Feel your sun kissed face in the morning
and this ride will keep going on.

And if you can't feel on you,
you see me walking away.
Cause I'm flying so high,
you just can't deny your words can not fight it.
Oh please, just come.

All he wants he takes,
breaks it and he leaves the scenes with no regrets.
And if it's all he wants, he knows I fake it and we leave the scene
with no regrets 'cause he wants it
Oh he needs it.

Parasite Future

I hear you calling
Calling again
Into the night
And with a warning
I didn't mean to see you sigh

Parasite Future,
Future, Future

I hear calling, calling
Into the night
with a warning
Inside my head it goes
I hear you calling,
Calling again

X-tra life small
Ready, set, crawl
Future

X-tra life small
Ready, set, crawl
Future

Forwards, crying,
Into our
Forwards, crying,
Into our
Forwards, crying,
Into our future

Diamonds

Only lovers around and no-one changes the ground
It's hard to
Had it on my own way
I wouldn't teach you
No, there's nothing I need to
Had it closer
Than I would
Hold you
On

Oh, the diamonds fall apart
Change your colors smart
And leave no on behind

Oh, the diamonds fall apart
Change your colors smart
And only be heart

No, there's nothing I need to
Change your heart and I feel to
Blame
Walk with the fly and hold
You had
It's inside your heart
It's never old

Oh, the diamonds fall apart
Change your colors smart
And leave no on behind

Oh, the diamonds fall apart
Change your colors smart

Unity

You see me walking through the open door
A shadow is following my unexpected leave
Too many times I've have crawling on the floor
So I swore myself that I would never spend a tear for you
My love
So hard to speak like that
About you, my love
So hard to speak like that

I called a thousand times
But I never ever got just only one reply, my dear
And you treat me like a crime
I would never ever pretend just only one more time unity

And I'm sorry that you walked with me
The only thing I did was following my dreams
My love
So hard to to speak like that
For you, my love
So hard to speak like that

I called a thousand times
But I never ever got just only one reply, my dear
And you treat me like a crime
I would never ever pretend just only one more time unity

Human Touch

I feel like I'm trapped in here
Staring at the same four walls for months now
Tell me where it all went wrong
Empty words but I can't see you
I'm not letting go before I see your face

Ah, I need a minute of your time,
I wanna look into your eyes
I need a human touch

Ah, can I get closer to your heart
Or are we running out of love, are we running out of love?
I need a human touch
I need a human touch

If honesty is the truth
Then everyone knows we're all still lonely
Won't close my eyes before we try to change

Ah, I need a minute of your time,
I wanna look into your eyes
I need a human touch

Ah, can I get closer to your heart
Or are we running out of love, are we running out of love?
I need a human touch
I need a human touch

Are we running out of faith
Or running out of ways to love?
Hiding in our spaces scared to breath
I need to feel you skin to skin
I wanna find the words that mean something
I won't close my eyes before we tried to change

Ah, I need a minute of your time,
I wanna look into your eyes
I need a human touch

Ah, can I get closer to your heart
Or are we running out of love, are we running out of love?
I need a human touch
I need a human touch