Post-Rock Composition and Performance Practice: Authenticity, Liveness, Creativity & Technology

Laura Jane Lee

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1.0 Abstract

This thesis seeks to recontextualise journalist Simon Reynolds' 1995 definition of post rock from the perspective of a practitioner and guitarist, focusing on popular music production and recording practices. The research applies a practice-as-research (PAR) methodology combining practice, interviews (with contemporary practitioners in the field) and contextual theory (musicology of popular music, cultural theory, and technology studies).The rise of cheaper music technology and the influence of electronic dance music (EDM) aesthetics and cultures in the 1980s and 1990s in genres such as techno, house, and jungle, have influenced an increase in the integration of recording studio devices into live performance set-ups for stage. I argue that the amalgamation of studio and stage (DAWs, samplers, sequencers and loopers) redefines the 'rock band' model. This has created new collaborations, as the technology and production become a physical extension of the band members' instruments (Emmerson, 2011) and expands their creative processes. Guitarist Jonny Greenwood from Radiohead comments on a new way of composing, recording and performing: a '*third' way* between playing and programming (Greenwood, in Rose, 2019:201). The 'rock band' model is shifting between studio and stage, live and recorded, and experimental and accessible, challenging the themes of liveness (Auslander, 2002).

The thesis proposes that the 'I' of the band identity or the individual 'rock' performer has therefore dissolved or has been displaced by the more complex 'I' of the human and machine. Through producing *Series of Studio Experiments* (2019) and the album *Enid – Yes!* (2021) the research practice is concerned with the space between live performance and creative studio production— the *post-digital performance*. Post-rock thus presents a paradigm shift in authenticity, in which the origins and authors of sound are dislocated, and the creative acts of the manipulation of sound becomes the emerging virtuosic act, or act of *timbral virtuosity* (Solis, 2015).

1.1 Introduction

The era of "post" digitalisation complicates the relationship between humans and new technologies in the creative industries. As a creative practitioner, guitarist, musician, technologist and researcher, I find myself in a dichotomy between being a producer and a musician which is challenging the rock archetype. A post-rock musician can digitally arrange and design their aesthetics and sonic identity through the gained control of real-time studio practices which are integrated within the craft of their instrument. This research contextualises a post-digital era of contemporary music practice through theory, conducted interviews of post-rock musicians from bands such as Battles (Williams, 2019), Gallops (Huckbridge, 2019), TTNG (Colins, 2019) Three Trapped Tigers (Betts, 2019), and Warpaint (Mozgawa,2020) and practice in *Series of Studio Experiments* (2019) and *Enid – Yes!* (2021).

As a guitarist I find myself 'in loops' when creating, sampling and degenerating the guitar in pursuit of something new. I can design and program music technology to effect, sample, and record myself whilst at the same time achieving live and immediate interactions with the technology as I play my instrument, fusing recording devices and rock instrumentation. Certain tasks can be automated by the machine and this acts to my creative advantage. Playing with real-time recording practices, I can sample or loop myself, which at one point was limited to a space and time with multiple musicians but which can now all be captured from a single author. I experiment by layering, tweaking, modulating, and distorting the guitar, pushing it, and myself, a little further to develop my artistic voice. I find that my music sits somewhere between blissfully cinematic soundscapes and delay-driven chaotic noise. Much of my experimentation and artistic development has been actualised in my band Parachute for Gordo. As the only guitarist in this instrumental band (guitar, bass, and drums), I need to be inventive to fill out the sonic space.

In my practice, I question the traditions of the electric guitar and discard traditional rock riff-oriented styles of playing as highlighted in Reynolds' post-rock (2004) in favour of alternative tunings and their resulting chord voicing. As I delay, distort, loop, sample, and resample further sounds from my guitar, I find a more authentic expression of my-*self* through the integration of studio with multiple audio, MIDI and recordings devices. I call this my *hybrid studio-stage instrument*.

As I produce complex sonic eco-systems between my instrument, my technology and other musicians, I explore a post-digital aesthetic (Cascone, 2000) and theory (Cramer, 2015), which reject reductionist aspects of music making (Jaeger, 2003). I set up a chain of equipment, from the analogue amplifier to effects pedals, joined by the digital, MIDI keyboards and foot controls to operate the real-time studio Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) software Ableton Live: this becomes my 'studio'. Inspired by electronic artists from Warp Records such as Aphex Twin and Squarepusher, I strike my guitar strings, and the sound is instantly chopped and 'glitched up'. With this approach, I can be as expressive with the 'studio' as with my guitar. The technology acts as an extension of my hands and limbs into the machinery's sonic possibilities. This removes me from the self and the instrument, and creates a '*third thing'* (Greenwood, in Rose, 2019:201). Post-digital practices present the combining of the old and new technologies: emerging aesthetics and musical strategies are formed beyond the intended use or purpose. The method of adopting post-digital practices builds complexity of authorship and this informs the conceptualisation and design of this practice-as-research PhD.

Simon Emmerson (2011) conceptualises new forms of collaboration with technology (Chapter 4), which can be interpreted as two potential paradigms for the machine-musician relationship in performance. The first paradigm is that the machine is an extension of the 'self' of the musician. The second paradigm is that the machine can become an 'independent other' in collaboration. Building on Emmerson's two paradigms, a potential 'third' space, between the 'playing and programming' (Greenwood, in Rose, 2019:201) in music studio recording practice

is at the core of this research. Using this practice-as-research method, then, the new knowledge offered by this thesis is the proposal of a third space of collaboration, through a *post-digital performance space*.

The rise of cheaper technology in the 1980s and 1990s (Théberge, 2001) generated availability for producers in the creation of the electronic genres of house, techno, and jungle. The affordability and accessibility of technology increased again in the 2000s with the DAW software (Knight and Lagasse, 2012), particularly with Ableton Live in 2001. As the name suggests, Ableton Live enables studio techniques (such as digital effects, looping and multitracking) to be played 'live' on stage. In other words, the digital material is designed to be performed, manipulated, and automated in real-time.

Throughout my music career, I have found that there are gaps in the literature and theory that apply to my practice. In contextualising my own music composition, performance and recording practice, the existing research focused on musicology in popular music (Butler, 2014, Brøvig-Hanssen, R. and Danielsen, A, 2016, Osborn, 2017) and music journalism (Reynolds, 2004), from the listeners' viewpoint, not the viewpoint of the practitioners or musicians themselves. My research is therefore focused on contextualising the issues raised by my practice. As part of the re-contextualisation of post-rock, I seek to locate my practice between various creative scales: studio and stage, live and recorded, and experimental and accessible. The band format in which I usually present myself is accessible to audiences and this is reflected in the music and art venues that I perform in (for example *West End Centre, Aldershot; Centrala, Birmingham; New River Studios, London; Green Door Store, Brighton*). However, there is a tension for me. As a performer I am pulled between my impulse for creative expression, which I feel is my 'authentic self', and the expectations or conventions of 'rock' performance. As an instrumentalist and composer, I am also conflicted. On the one hand, I am drawn to harmonic and rhythmic complexity and virtuosic techniques. On the other hand, the removal of restrictions in experimental work and the use of an instrument as source-of-

sound allows me to de-construct and reinvent traditional approaches. This is an iterative process, and with each iteration I find myself further from idealised rock music. To investigate the research questions, I produced musical works for this practice-as-research project which are: *Series of Studio Experiments* (2019) and the conceptual album *Enid – Yes!* (2021). Through applied practice restrictions within this practice project, I illuminate an emerging 'third' space enabled by the shift within the recording paradigm in contemporary music practice.

New musical identities, sonic palettes and rhythmic complexities were created with the machine, further blurring the line between the studio and stage. This inspired new instrumental techniques, and a virtuosic engagement with the machine — a *timbral virtuosity* (Solis, 2015). This could be described as a paradigm shift as the musician merges into the role of the producer when the studio becomes a compositional and performance tool. Throughout this thesis, I use the genre term 'post-rock' to define the exploration of possibilities that electronic mediation can provide in real-time studio creative practice within the 'rock band' formation. This research offers insight into new models of creativity within electronically mediated contemporary music practice. The research presents a practice-based perspective expanding on Reynolds' definition of post-rock from the 1990s. The *Series of Studio Experiments* (2019) and the album project *Enid* (2021) expose a decentring of the 'I' of the rock-archetype through complicating the authorship, thus challenging authenticity in recording and liveness in performance in rock-derived genres. A further contribution to knowledge is methodological: by combining theory, practice, and critical reflection within the journey from concept to compositional process to performance, new knowledge is gained through the three methods in answering the research questions.

1.2 Research questions, structure and aims

1.2.1 Research questions

This thesis investigates the following research questions through a critical dialogue between three methods of research: contextual reading, interviews, and practice. Practice-as-research methodology is expanded in Chapter 2.1.

Research Question 1: Defining post-rock with Simon Reynolds and music journalism.

Reynolds' post-rock (2004), originally published in 1995 within an article in *The Village Voice,* observed the 'eroding' of rock-music norms, defined by the removal of vocals, the deconstruction of the guitar as a source of timbre and texture, and a band dynamic based on the integration of digital technologies.

> **RQ.1** In what ways is journalist Simon Reynolds' 1995 definition of post-rock still applicable and, how can it be applied to current practice? How can his definition be developed from a practice-based perspective?

Research Question 2: Post-rock and the shifts of binaries of popular music practice

The post-rock genre prompts a shift in popular music practice due the impact of EDM and DJ music and culture practice, with the resulting rise of digital production and stage technology of the 1990s. The binaries of the live (immediate) to the recorded (reflective), the studio (edited) and stage (performed), and "post" music practices between the popular and experimental in the post-rock shifts are interrogated through practice.

RQ.2 How does post-rock prompt shifts in the binaries between studio and stage, live and recorded, and experimental and accessible, in contemporary popular music practice?

Research Questions 3: Post-digital performance

I define post-digital performance practice as an act of the deconstruction of sound through the active engagement of both analogue and digital recording and stage technologies. The anti-reductionist approach to musicianship promotes individualism and self-designed sonic ecosystems. Post-digital performance builds complex interactions through the machine (mediated technology) and the human (individual or group).

RQ.3 How is post-digital performance disrupting traditional notions of creativity and liveness with technology in the context of rock-derived genres?

The research questions are designed to inform the boundaries of my practice, to enable practice to be research, as they expand on existing literature in popular music studio recording practice. To answer the research questions from the practitioner's perspective, I combine critical reflection on the experience of the process of recording practice with a musical analysis of completed works.

1.2.2 Research Aims

The aim of this research is to contribute knowledge in the following areas: musicology of popular music; practice-based music research; composition and performance studies; and music recording production studies. The research aims to contribute knowledge with the following:

Musicology of popular music

- To contribute to an updated definition of post-rock from a practitioner's perspective using a practice-based methodology.

- Adapting musicology of popular music and music journalism as a tool to recontextualise post-rock practice through primary research methods of artist interviews and music recordings.

- To gain historical and cultural insight to expand (Hodgkinson, 2004) post-rock genre discourse.

Music practice-based research

- To define 'the studio' as a compositional and performance tool within the post-rock context.

- Through the application of practice restrictions, to deconstruct my own practice norm, in the binaries of studio and stage, live and recorded, and experimental and accessible.

- For critical reflection as an effective tool of analysis of practice-as-research.

Composition and performance studies

- To deconstruct the binaries of the studio and stage and live and recorded within my practice to reflect on the themes of *liveness* (Auslander, 2002)

- To deconstruct the binaries of the live and recorded within my practice to reflect the role of the 'I' within post-rock composition, recording and performance which challenge the themes of authenticity and authorship.

- To apply forms of musical analysis, in particular applying analyses of timbre and cultural theory to popular music performance practice.

<u>Music recording production studies</u>

- To understand the music recording paradigm, shift of 'third space' in the post-rock context through practice, with applied critical reflection (Greenwood, in Rose, 2019:201, Emmerson, 2011).

- Through applied practice restriction, deconstruct traditional processes in music recording practices to construct a post-digital performance space and, through critical reflection, understand the disruptions in traditional notions of creativity with technology.

- To design hybrid studio-stage instruments (chapter 5.2) to question the roles of technology and creative expression through applied real-time studio techniques within the post-rock genre.

<u>1.2.3 Research structure</u>

To fulfil the research aims, the overall structure of the chapters is as follows:

1) **Research design** (chapter 2 methodology and literature review)
2) **Contextual theory** (chapter 3, musicology of popular music, chapter 4 cultural theory and chapter 5 technology studies)
3) **Practice - music composition, recording and performance** (chapter 6 – Practice Restriction, *Series of Studio Experiments* (2019) and conceptual album *Enid-Yes! (2021).*

1) <u>Research design</u>

To justify my research, in chapter 2, I apply three methods in a practice-as-research (PAR) methodology. As the post-rock genre is situated in a subculture, underrepresented in scholarly literature, my argument is built through the combination of musicologists of popular

music and music journalism, and with additional interviews from contemporary artists within the field of practice.

2) <u>Contextual theory</u>

To contextualise my practice, I engage with three areas of theory and research: 1) musicology of popular music, 2) cultural theory and 3) technology studies. The research areas investigated in chapter 3, *Reynolds, Post-Rock and Post-Genres,* are: musicology of popular music and technology; music journalism; and post-genres. In the contextualisation of post-rock, I investigate the genre and its definition through aspects of the music journalism of Christopher Porterfield (1967), Simon Reynolds (2004, original works in 1995), Jeanette Leech (2017), and Jack Chutter (2015). Musicologists of popular music such as Robin James (2017), Mimi Haddon (2020) and Brad Osborn (2017) are referenced due to their scholarly specialisms in historical, cultural, and analytical aspects of music genres. This chapter serves to answer RQ1: in what ways is Simon Reynolds' 1995 definition of post-rock is still applicable and how can it be applied to current practice? This chapter also acts, through music journalism and musicology of popular music, to address the shift in binaries in RQ2 in contemporary popular music practices.

In chapter 4, *Authenticity, Timbre, and Structure in Post-Rock Practice,* scholars within cultural theory and post-structuralism are discussed: specifically, Walter Benjamin (2008, original work published 1935), David Pye (1968), and Roland Barthes (1997, original work published 1967). I refer to these cultural theorists to conceptualise the 'authentic self' in the creative act, within the age of digital reproduction and the changing landscape of digital musical material. Themes of authenticity, timbre and structure are expanded with reference to the musicologists Allan Moore, Steve Waksman, Mark Butler, Cornelia Fales, and David Blake. This chapter acts to address how post-rock prompts discussion shifts in the binaries between studio and stage, live and recorded, and experimental and accessible in contemporary popular music practice.

Through post-rock's recording paradigm shift in authenticity, an emerging form of virtuosity is discussed, a *timbral virtuosity*.

In chapter 5, *Post-Digital Liveness and Machine in Post-Rock Practice*, the areas of post-digital cultures and aesthetics, human-machine interactions and collaboration, and liveness in music recording practices are discussed with reference to the scholars Philip Auslander (2002), Anne Danielsen (2010, 2016), Simon Emmerson (2011), Pedro Peixoto Ferreira (2008), Kim Cascone (2000), and David Berry (2015). Expanding from Cascone's (2000) and Cramer's (2015) post-digital aesthetics, cultural theory and practices, this chapter acts to gain insight into a 'third' space of popular music recording practice which I define as *post digital performance* (RQ3). The research concept of *hybrid studio-stage instruments* is contextualised in the discussion of the discography of band Radiohead and artist Björk.

3) <u>Practice - music composition, recording and performance.</u>

Chapter 6 is divided into 1) the concept of applying artistic practice restriction, 2) compositions - *Series of Studio Experiments* (2019) (SE) and recording and performance of the album *Enid – Yes!* (2021). Four compositions are analysed with conceptual diagrams which demonstrate the blurring of binaries between studio/stage and pop/experimental informing new musical languages**.** The *Enid-Yes!* (EY) (2021) album deconstructs music studio recording processes, leading to a single live performative take and presented as physical artefact, a vinyl record. In SE and EY, through the application of practice restrictions, I complicate the authorship between musician, producer and engineers and critically reflect upon the experience of the process of composition, recording and performance to answer RQ2 and RQ3.

<u>Chapter 2 Methodology and Literature Review</u>

<u>2.0 Methodology</u>

I started this project from a purely theoretical perspective but was dissatisfied by not having a space for my experience and perspective as a practitioner. I wanted to find a way to write about music that went beyond simply using theorical tools and frameworks to contextualise my practice. Practice-as-research (PAR) allowed a blend of these methods. My perspectives as a practicing musician and artist, a guitarist, composer, engineer, and performer have created the boundaries of this research project. This framing of the research enables the contextualisation of my practice through theories from art and music disciplines. The primary research centres around creative practice and artist interviews, and the secondary research is concerned with contextual and theoretical reading.
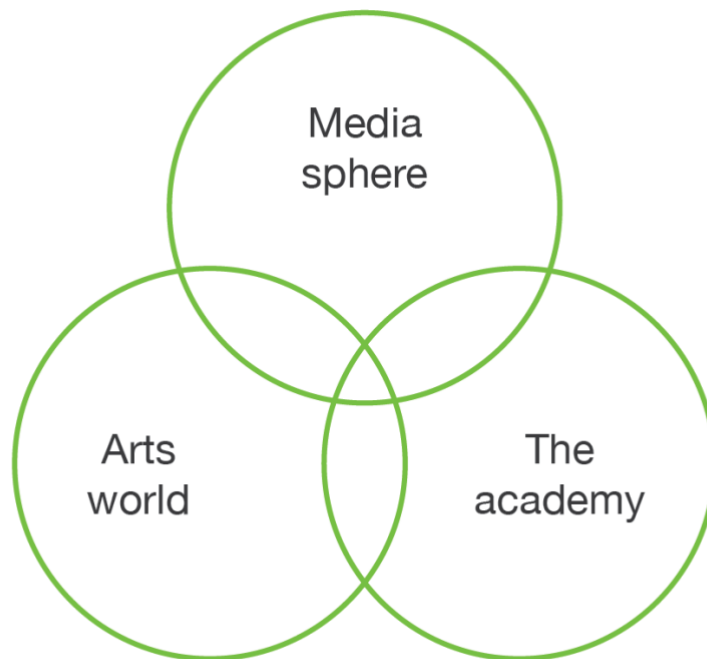
Fig.1 Interlocking spheres (Nelson, 2013)

As an established art and music practitioner, Robin Nelson, in his 2013 book, *Practice-as-research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistance* inspired the design of my

methodology. The Venn diagram (Fig.1) displays the interlocking professional fields for the experienced practitioner between academia, the arts world, and the media sphere, which reflects my blend of perspective and critical insight. I apply a PAR methodology to answer my research questions through the mixed method approach of contextual theory (the academy), contemporary context with semi-structure interviews with practitioners (media sphere) and practice-as-research (arts world). The intersection between the spheres is the space in which insight can be gained into the research project questions.

Contextual Theory (Reading)
Musicology of popular music, cultural theory and technology studies

Theory

Practice   Interviews

Practice (Playing)
Practice-based research

Interviews (Speaking)
Semi-structured artists interviews
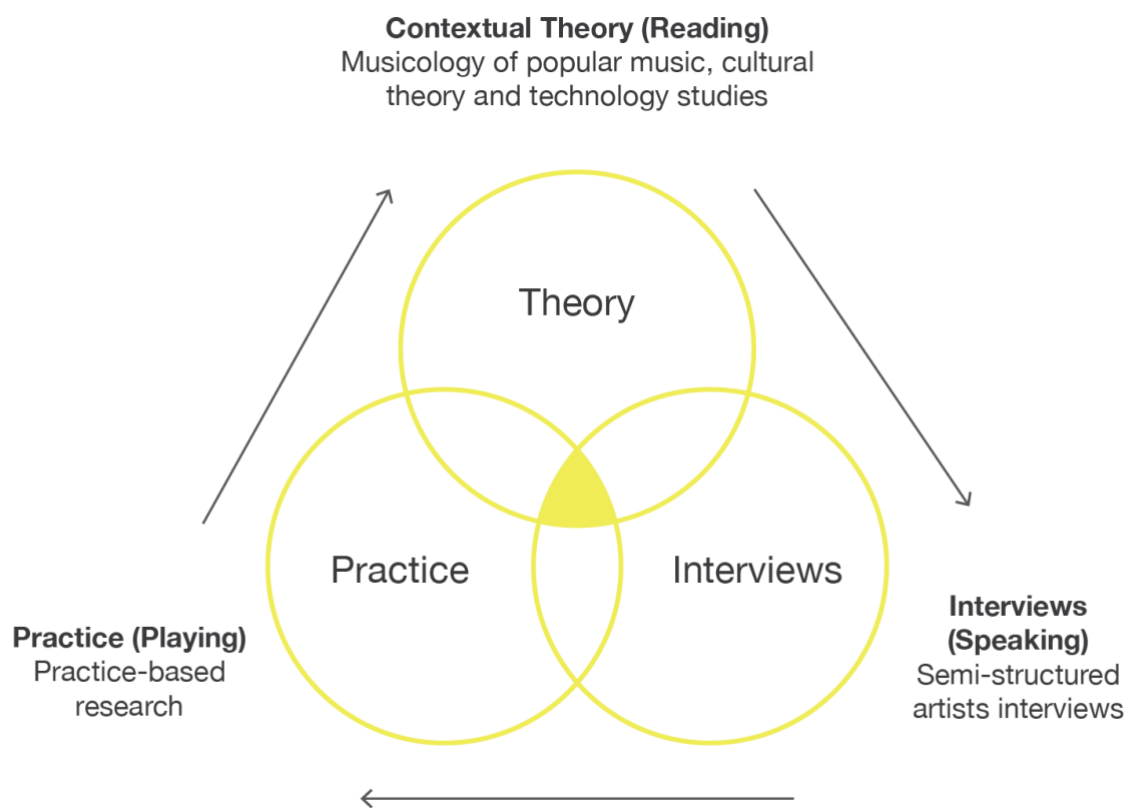
Fig.2 Project practice-as-research methodology (2022)

In (Fig.2), I adapted Nelson's (2013) diagram and considered the design of PAR researchers in popular musicology (Halstead, 2009, Bright 2020, Furniss, P, 2017) and record production (Egenes, J. R. 2016, Exarchos, M. 2019, Meynell, A, 2017). There is a feedback loop of all methods: each informs the other. A gap in knowledge has been identified; that is, we require an updated definition of post-rock informed by PAR. The practice investigates the concept of

a shifting of the popular music recording paradigm into a 'third space', which creates a new type of musician who is both performing and producing simultaneously. Each chapter within this thesis investigates the overarching critical themes of musicology of popular music, cultural theory, and technology studies, with a continuous conversation in text with the three methods.

The practice has two stages: *A Series of Studio Experiments* (4 compositions) and project *Enid* with the conceptual 'performed' studio album of *Yes!* The practice contribution is submitted with digital audio tracks with video documentation which is then discussed through critical reflection and musical analysis. In addition, the practice is physically submitted with the vinyl pressing of the conceptual album.

Elements	Activities	Outcomes
Practice	Create, exhibit, reflect	Music composition and performance
Interview	Conversation, contextualising	Archive of artist interviews
Theory	Read, think, write, develop critical thought	Contribution of knowledge of academic discussions of critical themes and practice
Evaluation	Analyse, reflect	Written thesis, in particular self-reflection of your work

Fig.3 Mixed methods in practice-as-research methodology (Nelson, 2013)

As reflected in Fig.3, this project employs a mixed method approach, with multiple research modes, with practice (creation, reflections), interviews (conversation, contextualising, theorising) and theory (contextual reading, critical thoughts, writings). The methodology design is to actualise a dynamic and integrated approach to practice-as-research in musicology of popular music. The interviews with contemporary practitioners give an oral music history from their viewpoints on new recording strategies and the themes of the research questions of the PhD. The role of secondary qualitative research is of equal value as the

interviews and practice. I have sourced both contextual readings and existing literature on post-rock, and wider theories of 'post' cultures (e.g., post-genres, post-digital, and post-humanism). By combining theory, practice, and critical reflection as part of the journey from concept to compositional process through to recording, new knowledge is gained through the three methods in evidence of my core arguments and research questions. As a result, this research offers insight into new models of creativity within popular music recording and electronically mediated contemporary music practice.

2.1 Explaining practice-as-research.

The justification of this methodology of practice-as-research is that it creates a different form of knowledge, a particular ontology, that is not possible without practice. The research questions are actualised through the perspective of the practitioner. Song writing (composing) in rock has often been about band dynamic. Post-rock shifts this towards technology, however, the underlying form of composition (as co-composition) remains the same; it is also still fundamentally about performance and practice. My practice as an electric guitarist is a tool for the investigation of the paradigm shift in rock music in which the guitarist is decentred through a deconstructive technically mediated space. This PAR methodology enables an holistic insight into popular music studies and recording practices. From this perspective, the 'data' or knowledge which is obtained from practice is not only for analytical purposes but also to enable critical reflection in the revealing of the artistic process through documentation.

The implementation of combining methods creates a continuous interaction between the theory and practice: a dialogue, a spiral effect, from small exchanges to large ones. This research is a PAR project, not practice-led, as all three methods are equal in contribution in answering the research questions. The mixed-method approach, with the flexibility of PAR methodology, enables the interaction of concepts between the methods. This, in turn, enables a deconstruction of formal analysis, which is important to my viewpoint as a practitioner in this field.

2.1.1 Qualitative research not quantitative

Traditionally, scientific research methods are quantitative and objective, whereas artistic research is more qualitative and therefore more subjective. Qualitative vs quantitative style of art research and 'data' is compared in Barrett and Bolt's *Practice-as-research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry* (2014):

In science this might involve measurement, tables, graphs and so on. In artistic research data collection might involve the keeping of visual and other journals, sketches, photographs, filmed documentation, recordings, interviews, and other inventive methodologies. The approach used will reveal "data" to be discovered and discussed. (Barrett and Bolt, 2014:192)

As mentioned, there are different expectations of primary research depending upon the subject matter. In my practice, I employed filmed documentation, recordings, and interviews to allow the 'data' to reveal emerging themes and understanding. In relation to Barrett and Bolt, Vis (2021) notes that in arts research, methods can be subjective and complex. '*Art or design research can be a complex combination of many different research methods ranging from the scientific to the highly experimental and even the commercial*' (Vis, 2021:67).

In producing music 'data' in the form of a finalised score, a composition, a recording, or a performance, forms of musical analysis can be applied such as harmony, form, and structure. However, in linking art-based research strategies, I design a variety of practice restrictions as a form of enquiry into the deconstructing of binaries in my own practice. Therefore, my research is written from the perspective of the artist, setting restrictions to consider how this role can act to interrogate the research questions. As Zagorski-Thomas remarks, practice-as-research gives a different insight into research, but criteria are needed to order to judge whether the research and art are effective in answering the research enquires.

This is a vital insight in the art world, but it also requires the researcher to establish a set of criteria under which they can assess whether they have expressed themselves effectively or not. (Zagorski-Thomas, 2015: 30)

This is the rationale for the practice restrictions (expanded in chapter 6.0). They were applied to explore the artistic binaries between the studio and stage, live and recorded and the

experimental and the accessible in contemporary music practice (RQ2) (RQ3). Zagorski-Thomas (2022), in his presentation to the Art and Humanities Research Council UK in 2021, was asked to outline the defining characteristics of types of practice as research for a range of art disciplines, which methodologically affirms this thesis. Artistic research allows individual perspectives on a subjective phenomenon, and, in this research, a series of music recordings are produced, as research artefacts in which the process is documented.

2.1.2 Practice-as-research methodology in popular music practices

In the formulation of my PAR, I gain different perspectives from the scholars (Barrett, E. and Bolt, B; 2014, Bell, 2019; Nelson, 2013; Smith 2009) with interdisciplinary approaches in art, media and music. Till (2017) discusses Tagg's (2011) concerns with the lack of PAR within popular music studies:

> *Tagg's conclusion was that there is a lack of music within popular music studies (Tagg 2011). He also proposed that alternative formats for popular music research would benefit the field, suggesting that he prefers video presentations to written text. Popular music practice faces difficulties in acceptance, both within popular music studies as well as in the wider context of music research.* (Till, 2017:3)

I wish to add to music practice and record production, equal to other scholarly forms. As Barrett and Bolt (2014) comment above, documentation is needed to contextualise PAR and in popular music studies (Till, 2017) audio-visual documentation is important, or even preferred over written analysis. I argue, to succeed in effective PAR research, there needs to be continuous interactions between theory and practice, as editors Michael Biggs and Henrik Karlsson discuss in their book *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts*:

>*Art-based research uses much more flexible interactions between practice and theory as it places the making at the centre, not as an object for theoretical processing or verification, but as an investigative, creative and compositional practice that may be put at interplay with several theoretical frameworks, specific concepts and experimenting activity.* (Biggs and Karlsson, 2010:227)

The design of art-based research enables a response to emerging activities, themes, and concepts in the process, and this is the research dynamic and flexibility appropriate for this project and the justification of the choice of this methodology. Art-based documentation and critical reflection of practice sits outside the empirical and deals with ephemeral materials and processes. PAR in music, with a focus on process, enables investigation into the changing of musicians' roles and their relationships with each other and with technology. This emphasis on the changing relationship of the musician with music technology is explored in the PAR research PhD by Halstead (2009) *After Techno and Rave: Status and Validity in Post Dance Music*, in which Halstead applies theories on embodiment, politics, and authorship within Techno through a series of compositions. It is also explored by Egenes, J (2016), in his comparison of three recording projects in which he interrogates his own role as producer. A further example of PAR in music is the work of Exarchos, M. (2019), in an exploration of the technological impact of the Akai MPC on Hiphop and analysis through original works as musical output.

2.1.3 Defining practice with critical reflection

The method of practice is presented as recorded audio tracks with the physical vinyl artefact of the album *Enid – Yes!* (2021) with a filmed performance. In using critical reflection as a form of knowledge, I build a dialogue with the artistic process through the interrogation of the research question by applying practice restrictions. I adopt a *reflection-in-the-moment* style of critical reflection; as discussed by Candy (2019), related to the music recording studio practice.

> *These moments make space for reflection on the detail of a work in progress and involve working with the 'material' of the situation whether it is paint, musical notes or computer code*. (Candy, 2019:55)

I critically reflect through the use of my studio journals from a series of smaller experiments culminating in a large-scale recording project. Chapter 6 is a distillation of those journals. By applying a continuous critical reflection process, the initial stages of free, experimental, and abstract studio experiments transform into more formalised works. These concrete and fixed works are then exhibited, performed, and publicised. This is in dialogue with reflection, documented with artist interviews, with artists who are involved in the practice and within the post-rock discourse.

<u>2.2 Artist Interviews</u>

I selected a focus group of professional practitioners, artists, musicians, performers, and engineers within the post-rock field (also practising in related genres of jazz, drum and bass, EDM, math-rock, and noise-rock) for in-depth semi-structured interviews either in person or online. The semi-structured interviews (duration of 1 to 2 hours) were conducted with practitioners to gain a contemporary and cultural context of the post-rock genre and for insight into their composition, recording and performance practices. The interviews act to capture an oral history of post-rock and for knowledge to be gained of the genre and their practice which sits outside music journalism. The conducting of these interviews enabled voices of practitioners who normally sit outside academia to come to the fore, as they are industry-led musicians.

<u>2.2.1 Criteria for selection of artists</u>

Eleven post-rock artists and instrumentalists (guitarists, a bassist, drummers, and studio producers and engineers) were interviewed with respect to the core themes of authenticity, their relationship with the music technology and their recording practice. In the selection criteria, I approached key practising artists in the post-rock genre. I chose to interview artists with whom I had performed or whose performances subjectively resonated with my own. The selection process expanded beyond guitarists, as through the complexity of authorship in the composition, recording and performance within the post-rock genre, and the challenging of authenticity through engagement with studio practices, it was important to gain the perspective of the drummers and engineers, in addition to my own practice as a guitarist.

I was seeking to interrogate these contemporary performers about their relationship with technology, the studio and live performance. Betts (2019) Huckbridge (2019) Mozgawa (2020) and Williams (2019) are post-rock instrumentalists (drummers, guitarists) who have a hybrid

approach to their instruments, incorporate Ableton Live within their live set-up, and employ real-time studio techniques such as live looping and sampling.

2.2.2 Selected artists: guitarists

Each guitarist interviewed explored their instruments with extended techniques, alternative turnings, pedal effects and, importantly, the studio. Ian Williams is the guitarist in the band Battles (Warp Records) and previously in Don Caballero and Strom and Stress. Williams (2019) adopts a distinctive style of guitar playing in which he uses extended techniques with his left hand whilst playing MIDI controllers, keyboards and an Ableton Push controller with his right-hand to enable this studio collaboration with his instrument. Mark Huckbridge (2019) from the band Gallops (Blood and Biscuit) has a similar hybrid approach to the guitar, and as a music technology lecturer, has extensive research and practice in the field, as do Williams and Huckbridge, Matthew Collings (2020), who is influenced by My Bloody Valentine and Sonic Youth, and contemporary classical composers Steve Reich and David Lang, incorporate Ableton Live and collaborate in multiple disciplines including dance and filmmakers. Collings' work is especially interesting in that he explores the amplifier as an instrument and the guitar as a control device for digital processing. Tim Collis (2019) is a key guitarist within the math-rock and post-rock scene in the band TTNG. Collis's electric guitar style combines right hand fingerstyle playing, with virtuosic left-hand techniques with alternative tunings. Tom Mason (2019) is a leading session bassist and DJ (Son of Mothra) and is known for his role in The Heritage Orchestra, and Pete Tong's, Ibiza Prom (2015) at the Albert Hall. Mason is heavily influenced by London-based dub, reggae and jungle, and his approaches as a bass player have been adapted from his jazz training at the Royal Academy of Music.

2.2.3 Selected artists: drummers

Adam Betts (2019), Mark Glaister (2021), Mark Roberts (2019), Stella Mozgawa (2020), and James Wright (2021) are all drummers and engineers. Betts (2019) is a drummer with the bands Three Trapped Tigers, Emperor Yes and Colossal Squid. He also is a session drummer for Jarvis Cocker, Melt Yourself Down, The Heritage Orchestra, Goldie, Pete Tong, and Squarepusher. His specialisms are breaks and an electronic style of drumming. Betts has a hybrid approach to his instrument, in which his acoustic drum kit is integrated with Ableton Live and the Roland SPD-X sample pad. Stella Mozgawa (2020), who is in the indie pop band Warpaint (Rough Trade) and is a session player for Courtney Barrett, Cate Le Bon and The XX, employs a similar hybrid drumming style to Betts. Additionally, the drummer Mark Glaister (2021) who plays in the band Parachute for Gordo. was interviewed, with whom I have a long-term professional relationship. In our working together in both aspects of practice of this research, his insight was integral.

2.2.4 Selected artists: engineers and producers

The perspectives of the producer, engineer and DJ are gained from interviews with Roberts (2019), Oakenfold (2021) and Wright (2021). Mark Roberts (2019) is a producer, engineer and drummer and has worked with the bands Broker, Toska, Black Peaks, The Physics House Bands, Delta Sleep, Parachute for Gordo, Fes, Polymath, and The St Pierre Snake Invasion, and works with labels Sargent House, Big Scary Monster, Small Ponds, and Virgin. He works in the UK at the studios Brighton Electric, Small Ponds, and Middle Farm. Paul Oakenfold (2021) is a key figure in the commercialisation of club music with the nightclub Creamfields and in EDM. He has worked with Happy Mondays, Madonna, U2, Massive Attack, Rhianna, Moby, The Cure, New Order, The Rolling Stones, and The Stone Roses. James Wright (2021) works as a sound editor/designer for short films, produces music under the alias Bananafish, and plays drums/electronics for the improvisation group Sea of Cables. He was a key

contributor and creative producer in the development of the recording process in the articulation of the *Enid – Yes!* (2021) in his role as engineer.

2.2.5 Justification of semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are a contemporary style of data collection, which is participatory and unpredictable for both interviewer and artist. Like a photograph, these interviews represent a moment in time, both from the participants' and researcher's viewpoints, when the artist may choose to withhold or reveal information. As Given (2008) states: their interpretation of '*meanings may shift over time and within various historical and social contexts for both participant and researcher*.' (Given, 2008:62). Qualitative research is exploratory and can be inconclusive, as opposed to the results achieved from a scientific hypothesis. However, I propose that a semi-structured interview-style of data-gathering and analysing is an integral form of research. Within this thesis, the semi-structured interview is particularly effective in capturing musicians' and artists' sound and music production, which is highlighted in Bennett, S. and Bates, E (2018) *Critical Approaches to the Production of Music and Sound,* as the creative act in this field goes beyond 'page' and 'notation' in music practices. Semi-structured interviews, for example, are employed in Bramwell, R (2015) *UK Hip-hop, Grime and the City: The Aesthetics and Ethics of London's Rap Scenes* to develop an understanding of artists' music production and creativity.

At the beginning of the interview process, the artists were approached with an initial enquiry and pre-interview conversation on the research itself. The interview process was approved through the UCA ethics committee. As most of these artists are not from an academic background, I approached the research and interview in an accessible style to encourage them to share their passions, knowledge, and perspective on their practice. The overarching method I used in the interviews to initiate conversation was to discuss their musical career. I adapted the interview questions depending upon the artist's specialism, their instruments, and

projects they've worked on (either as part of a band or as a solo artist). I asked open and non-leading questions, to encourage authentic responses from my subjects. Interviewee responses were varied, particularly in relation to their instruments and specialism, demonstrating the success of this method.

By using a semi-structured interview technique with artists to collate information within my music specialist field, I gained in-depth qualitative research, but it can be a difficult balance, between oneself as a practitioner and a researcher. Semi-structed interviews tend to be more abstract, but more subjective, than quantitative styles of interviews, and as Amsbary and Powell comment, they are *'extended conversation rather than true interview'.* (Amsbary and Powell, 2018: 124). In the book *Performing Music Research: Methods in Music Education, Psychology and Performance Science* (Williamon *et al.*, 2021), the advantages and limitations of qualitative approaches are discussed in music research. The benefits of the data are that it is gained holistically, exposing unknown phenomena and representing lived in experiences, but, they argue, it is limited due to bias, and is messy and convoluted in manner. In preparation for this style of interviewing, with each artist's questions, probes, or follow-up questions, I had to be aware of my own assumptions and bias in influencing the tone of the interview (Given, 2008). The interviews were transcribed, initially with the software Otter and then edited to be analysed and formatted into primary research. Coding is a subjective qualitative form of analysis, and, as Campbell (2013) suggests, '*the point is that there are no clear guidelines in the literature as to what the appropriate unit of analysis should be for coding interview transcripts (Campbell, 2013:10).* Coding enables a tool of identifying meaning, activities, or phenomena, and in this research, related, opposing themes can be discussed (Given, 2008: 86). Through the reading and analysis of transcripts, correlating themes were annotated, and I employed a coding method with Campbell's (2013) '*units of meaning'*. These artist interviews are quoted through the next four chapters and build a dialogue between theory and practice (full transcriptions can be found in appendix 6).

2.3 Literature review

Having established my methodological position, it is important now to position this research in relationship to other work that explores similar themes. This review is organised around the key theories of authenticity, timbre, and the machine in production and performance. These thematic areas are then expanded in chapters 3,4, and 5, where I provide a more in-depth analysis related to my practice.

At the beginning of my research in this field, the most relevant and inspiring book that I encountered was by Mark Butler (2014) *Playing with something that runs: technology, improvisation, and composition in DJ and laptop performance*. This book is important as it acknowledges new forms of performance practice informed by electronic dance music (EDM) within the genres of house and techno and is underpinned by cultural theory. Butler's research was taken from extensive fieldwork and interviews with internationally recognised DJs and EDM laptop musicians based in Berlin. As an example of what can be done in a parallel field, this thesis imports a comparable approach to address the knowledge gap in analyses of post-rock and the emerging recording and performance practices impacted by technology from a practitioner's point of view.

2.3.1 Digital signatures, auras and authenticity

Like Butler, Anne Danielsen is a musicologist of popular music, whose research specialism is music production and technology as an analysis tool (within rhythm, groove, aesthetic) in popular music recording, composition, and performance practices. She researches within the genres of pop, funk, hip-hop, trip-hop, and electro-pop, with a focus on post-war black American popular music, with artists such as D'Angelo, James Brown, and Prince. In her book, *Digital Signatures: The Impact of Digitization on Popular Music Sound* (2016), she discusses the challenges of authenticity within digitalisation of music expression. Danielsen's concept relates to Katz's (2010) 'sonic auras' (chapter 3) in that the creator or 'producer', expresses

themselves digitally with music production tools and techniques to develop their individual aura. The concept of 'digital signatures' is explored with artists' unique production signatures which include Squarepusher's inspired glitches, Portishead's digital silence and Kate Bush's digital reverbs and delays. Expanding on Danielsen's term, I refer to 'digital signatures' as the exposure of the tools and techniques of the digital studio as a form of expression. Other 'digital signatures' discussed are micro rhythmic manipulation and vocal auto-tuning. In relation to Danielsen's concept, I argue that the creative use of music technology, with its 'digital signatures', not only informs new ways to analyse music, but also creates new musical meanings and performance practices. The concept of combining 'digital signatures' from multiple musicians is further explored in chapters 5 and 6 (the combination of 'analogue' and 'digital' signatures in recording and performance).

Since the 1980s, the archetypical 'rock' canon has been challenged with the ambition of studio production and with the integration of synthesisers and drums machines in which the authenticity of guitar roles in rock music is decentred. Danielsen and Butler critically interrogate music technology's impact on the concept of rock authenticity recordings with the challenging of multiple authors of the sounds, and the proximity of the origins of source of the sound. Butler discusses rock music recordings, in which he refers to Gracyk (1996): '*Rock recordings, he [Gracyk] argues "represent" rather than transmit performance (1996:43); they create "virtual" spaces and time of performance*' (Butler, 2014:39). The studio acts as an artistic tool for collaging and sound design (Eno, 2004) for "virtual" spaces as much as recording musicians' performances. In Butler's paper, *Taking it seriously: intertextuality and authenticity* he compares two versions of the track: *Where the Streets Have No Name* by Pet Shop Boys (1991) and U2 (1987). In the comparison of these recordings, Butler discusses the way U2 presents 'authenticity' as rock musicians that are being true to themselves, and for their personal expressions with their guitars to be taken seriously. The seriousness is displayed in the 'chorale-like' introduction of their track and the expressive delivery of vocals, whereas the Pet Shop Boys' synth pop recording of *Where the Streets Have No Name* (1991)

uses synthesizers and drum machines. The Pet Shop Boys' track is an example of the challenging of 'authenticity' in the discourses of the role of technology in personal expression. In relationship to Butler's research and EDM recordings, the collaboration with the studio is transparent; it is a core aesthetic component and representative of the genre, but this relationship with personal expression is the linking challenge in the authenticity discourse. In popular music, the 'sound' design, through its interaction with the studio, is as important as musical analysis in harmony, form and structure. Danielsen comments on two forms of analysis which are lacking within the field of popular musicology:

> *In post war popular music, this iterative character, which Walter Benjamin claimed resulted in the loss of 'aura' of the artwork […] seems to have manifested itself through an artistic obsession with sonic design, or 'sound' as well as the innovation use of mediating technologies. [..] Sound is perhaps the foremost constitutive aspect of post war popular music. Against such a backdrop, popular musicologists' relative disinterest in analysing both the sound and rhythm/groove are surprising.* (Danielsen, 2010:8)

Using sound as a form of analysis (Danielsen, 2019; Bell, 2018; Fink, R. W., Latour, M. and Wallmark, Z, 2018), with the use of mediating technologies, for example of samplers, drum machines and DAWs, expands discussions into the challenging of authenticity within the creative act in popular music studies. The production of a popular music track is perhaps seen as produced, programmed, designed, and not composed, arranged, written, or played. The producer is the designer or conceptualiser of a track, recording, performance (chapter 4) which is actualised through music recording practices, and it could be argued that this creator has sonic 'aura', which challenges Walter Benjamin's (2008) use of the term, in the context of the era of digital (music) reproduction. Danielsen argues that the creative interaction with digital music production tools with electronically mediated aesthetics, alters the groove and micro temporal variations in composition and performance. Danielsen's analysis of micro-temporal changes within tracks is demonstrated with spectrogram visualisations. Most of their research

is focused on post-production or non 'real-time' creative processes in which artists embrace non-performative imperfection. The complexity of human interactions with machine-generated grooves exposes human imperfections in composition and performance (Ostertag, 2002, and Rodgers, 2010) and in this thesis, through conceptual diagrams and critical reflection, is analysed in practice (chapter 6) with audio-visual documentation.

2.3.2 Analysing timbre in terms of source deformation

Osborn is a music theorist, focusing on millennial and post-rock music, with artists such as Sigur Rós, Mogwai, and Godspeed You! Black Emperor, but most extensively with the band Radiohead. He focuses on form, rhythm and meter, timbre and harmony to analyse their works. My initial introduction to Osborn's work was his paper *Kid Algebra: Radiohead's Euclidean and Maximally Even Rhythms* (2014) in which he discusses the binaries of the popular and experimental, described by him as the '*Spears and Stockhausen Continuum'* (Osborn, 2014:81). He claims that, although The Beatles balanced commercial success and critical appeal in the 60's and 70's, between 1997 and 2011 Radiohead inhabited the equilibrium between these two extremes.

Osborn's work builds a new narrative around the rock-music canon and offers an intertextual form of musical analysis between musical perception and semiotics. Osborn achieves this through his analysis of timbre, which is evident in his publications, in his co-writing with David Blake, with *Timbre as Differentiation in Indie Music* (2012) and his chapter in *Everything in its Right Place: Analysing Radiohead (2017)*. He analyses Radiohead's discography, linking the themes of timbre with authenticity with Denis Smalley's concept of source bonding (2007):

> *Radiohead's most salient timbres, which maximize arousal and prompt a listener's search for meaning, are usually not those whose sources are immediately recognizable but instead those whose sources are either (1) deformed through signal processes or (2) those for whom the only "source" is synthetic*. (Osborn, 2017:94)

Osborn builds on Smalley's (2007) source bonding concept in the act of the dislocation of the source of sounds and the manipulation of sound, which he describes as *Source Deforming*. The concept of source bonding informs new ways of working together and impacts the musical conversation formed within the group and band dynamic (Smalley, 2007:35) in music recording practices. There is a paradigm shift, with the separate and delineated roles collapsing with technology, as Paul Théberge states: '*a blurring of the roles of 'singer-songwriter-producer-engineer-musician-sound designer'* (Théberge: 1997, 221–222). The merging of roles is accelerated through the new capacities of technology. In the book *Sounds Icelandic: essays on Icelandic music in the 20th and 21st centuries*, his chapter *Triangulating Timbre in Sigur Rós's Iceland* discusses this timbral group and band interaction*:*

> *Triangulation attempts to connect the three 'actors' (Zagorski-Thomas) central to the production and perception of timbre: sound producers (voices, instruments, environmental sounds, etc.); mediating technologies (e.g. microphones, mixing boards); and human perception. Specific timbres result from a feedback loop between these entities.* (Blake and Osborn, 2019:210)

Osborn's concept 'triangulation' and interaction between sound producers, mediating technologies and human perception is explored in practice within the project Enid, in the production of the album *Yes!* (Chapter 6). This 'triangulation' is building new concepts of virtuosity due to changing technology through human and machine interactions within performance and relates to Simon Emmerson's paradigms (2011), discussed in chapter 5.

2.3.3 Human machine interaction in music production and performance

Danielsen's research on human and machine interaction (HMI) (Holland *et al.*, 2013; Leman, 2016; Maestri, 2017) differs from that of a computer scientist's point of view, as she analyses HMI in music production from a musicologist's perspective. She acknowledges that HMI has

impacted timbre and groove, and the importance of this concept in the study of the musicology of popular music. This is a key tool in deconstructing my own practice. In her book, *Musical Rhythm in the Age of Digital Reproduction* (2010) she discusses the interplay between human and machine as a catalyst of imitation, exchange, and interaction in the creative act. Following a research project from the University of Oslo called *Rhythm in the Age of Digital Reproduction (RADR)* her book was developed through the scholarly enquiry into how sounds and rhythms of black American-derived popular music styles were impacted sonically and within groove, with programmed machines in music production.

Butler examines the themes of technology, interface design, mediation, recording, repetition, and improvisation. He examines the relationships between technology and improvisation, with the transformation of the 'fixed' pre-recorded, deconstructing and constructing new sounds. Butler (2014) discusses transparency in Electronic Dance Music (EDM) in DJ and laptop performance in which records, loops, or digital files are used as an artistic and musical material, a recorded object, as Butler discusses here:

> *On the one hand, performances of electronic dance music are consistently built on objects recorded prior to the event itself, such as vinyl records, digital files, loops and samples. On the other hand – and in response – the work of the performer is to radically transform these objects through the disassembly and reconfiguring of music structure.*
> (Butler, 2014:25)

Electronic dance music displays acts of virtuosity through the act of reconstruction. The creative act of reconstructing in music performance, is, for example, the mixing of two records, in the craft of turntablist, in the selection, cueing, beatmatching and effecting of sound to an audience. These musical fixed materials (analogue or digital), or as Butler (2014) describes them, 'pre-existing elements' (PE's), are reconstructed in the performance spaces, or, I argue,

post-digital performance (chapter 5). The act of reconstruction in EDM is highlighted by Kjus and Danielsen:

> *Through this process of deconstruction, and the ensuing reconstruction, artists not only identify the most important sound elements from the studio-based recording but also those parts that are suitable for processing and editing on stage.* (Kjus and Danielsen, 2016: 328)

Danielsen's research paper with Kjus, '*Live mediation: performing concerts using studio technology'* (2016) builds on parallel themes of practice within this thesis and they comment '*Technology's appropriation has likewise contributed to a much-publicised blurring of roles such as musician, record producer, mixer and engineer'* (Kjus and Danielsen, 2016:345). As Kjus and Danielsen comment, digital music technology is understood as playing with the context of time and space, with listeners only experiencing the perceived final works, or track, but not exposed to the process of works.

The binaries between the rehearsal, recording or performance space (Kjus and Danielsen, 2016:325), are blurred, as discussed by Kjus and Danielsen, and are interrogated as a form of enquiry in the practice project of *Enid – Yes!* (Chapter 6). To create a space to act as both a recording space and performance space was challenging in relation to the instrument design and in the interrelationships of musicians and engineers. The collapsing of the popular music recording processes and creative hierarchy and authorship between the engineers and the musicians occurred in the making of the album *Yes!* This was achieved in rehearsals, recordings and stage performance happening all within a single time and space, and the engineer becoming an equal member of the band. A method employed to interrogate paradigm shift in recording practice within Danielsen's article (2016) is by conducting in-depth interviews with ten artists who integrate studio-related technologies in their works and performances.

In-depth interview-based studies of artists could arguably represent a substantial source of insight into the use of new musical tools, in terms of concrete practice as well as the creative and expressive experience. (Kjus and Danielsen, 2016:326)

Indeed, within this research, interviews with artists enable valuable and unique insights which theory alone cannot provide. Danielsen highlights gaps in popular musicology and applies contemporary forms of analysis to popular music studies, coupled with the combination of in-depth interviews. This literature review explores the perspectives of Danielsen, Osborn and Butler who state that there is more research needed in the exploration of timbre in popular musicology, particularly from the viewpoints of the musicians themselves. 21st century popular music practice authenticity is gained through 'digital signatures' (Danielsen, 2016), in particular from EDM and Laptop performance (Butler, 2014), which enable the deconstruction of rock authenticity. Due to the blurring role in the production of digital signatures, rock musicians are not only traditionally hitting effecting whilst playing, but digitally effecting and dislocating sources of their sounds to produce their 'digital signatures' live. This is disrupting the authenticity of the rock musician (Butler, 2003) and embracing notions of liveness through the creative use of technology. To gain the practitioner's perspective, I conducted semi-structured interviews with post-rock guitarists, drummers and engineers (2019 – 2021) in which they reflected upon their practices. In combination with this qualitative research method, I audio-visually recorded the process of my own practice which led to a production of the album *Enid – Yes!* (2021). The conducting and reflecting on the interviews shaped the interpretation of my own practice in this research.

Chapter 3 Reynolds, Post-Rock and Post-Genres

Simon Reynolds is a music journalist who, in his writing, blends cultural criticism with music journalism. His books and articles have focused on music genres including hip-hop, rock, rave, post-punk and, most importantly in relation to this research, post-rock. Reynolds initially popularised the term 'post-rock' in his *Mojo* magazine review of the band Bark Psychosis's album Hex (1994). His '*Post Rock'* article, originally in *Village Voice* (1995), published later as a chapter in *Audio Culture* (Cox 2004) is key in framing and defining the post-rock genre within this chapter for the way in which Reynolds' definition functions as a springboard into a wider academic discourse. I build the parameters of new understandings of the prefix of 'post' rock through a wider discussion on 'post' genres, referencing the scholars Mimi Haddon, Simon Halstead, Robin James, and Brad Osborn. Reynolds' definition captures an important perspective on rock history within the 1990s, and the article *Post Rock* (2004) resonates with me as a practitioner. An updated perspective of the post-rock genre is gained in this research through interviews with artists in the field of post-rock and music practice (as discussed in the methodology chapter earlier).

By expanding from post-rock into post-genre, I offer an alternative to Reynolds' narrative, not from the perspective of an historian of popular music, but through blending ideas from music journalism, cultural theory, and the lens of my own practice. Two main concepts are formed through this chapter. Firstly, the concept of the *authenticity loop*, and secondly an emergence of a virtuosity in post-rock performance, which I refer to as a *timbral virtuosity* (expanded upon in chapter 4). This chapter asks in what ways Reynolds' definition is still relevant, and how it can be applied to the understanding of current practices. To contextualise the contemporary practice of post-rock, it was essential to reference music journalism within this thesis for historical and cultural context.

3.0 Defining 'post-rock' through music journalism

Reynolds suggests that post-rock disrupts the rock-soloist archetype, the single author, the storyteller, the vocalist, and steers us instead into a sonic landscape that is about 'fascination' and 'sensation', rather than 'meaning' and 'sensibility' (Reynolds, 2004:358). Reynolds' (2004) definition of post-rock highlights the 'eroding' of rock-music norms and of the notion of the 'front-man', replacing the band with non-rock instrumentation, building a new band dynamic based on the integration of digital technologies.

His article argues that electronic dance music (EDM) and DJ cultures of the 1980s and 1990s are two of the defining factors that impacted post-rock and contributed to its new sonic aesthetic. Through practices such as DJ mixing, sampling, and live looping, EDM and DJ cultures influenced post-rock practitioners and their approaches to music creation. EDM's impact on composition and performance practices aligns with other genres such as prog-rock, post-punk, punk, krautrock, electronic, jazz and dub. The music studio in rock music traditions represents the ideal stage. Yet, post-rock musicians are in search of an emerging creative practice by adopting real-time studio techniques in their own playing and sonic signature. This presents a space between the immediacy of the craftsperson and the reflectivity of the designer. From the 2000s, EDM and DJ composition and performance techniques have continuously evolved as they present real-time recording instruments and devices (Ableton Live, Loop pedals) and, I argue, this has further blurred the boundaries between the studio and stage in post-rock.

3.0.1 Music journalism and post-rock sounds

Historically, Reynolds refers to post-rock stretching as far back as Velvet Underground, from krautrock's Can and Neu!, minimalist composers Brian Eno, Steve Reich and Robert Fripp, to bands of 1990s Talk Talk, Bark Psychosis and Disco Inferno. Complementing this canon, the music journalist Jack Chutter (2015), in his book '*Storm, Static, Sleep: A pathway through*

post-rock', cites bands from 1990 to 2015 such as Don Caballero, Tortoise, Mogwai, Godspeed You! Black Emperor, Sigur Rós, 65 Days of Static, and Explosions in the Sky. Chutter (2015) remarks on the lack of clarity in the understanding of post-rock, as there is a 'codified' association that was formed in the 1990s and 2000s. The distinctive sonic characteristics commonly associated with post-rock is that it is cinematic in tone, instrumental and long formed with large shifts in dynamics. For example, the bands Sigur Rós and Explosions in the Sky, build large dynamic shifts, from quiet and subtle melodic delayed reverberant guitar sounds switching into heavily distorted 'drops' in chorus sections. In *Fearless: The Making of Post-Rock* (2017) the music journalist Jeanette Leech discusses post-rock from 1987 to 2001, raising issue with a fixed definition of the genre, arguing that '*virtually all modern experimental guitar music: […] is used for a needle-eye definition relating only to a certain type of instrumental volume-based dynamic music'* (Leech, 2017:7). In contradiction to Leech's '*all modern experimental guitar music'*, Reynolds acknowledges Paul Morley's (1982) reference to post-rock in his article *Altered Images: The Altered State of Pop Art* in the *New Musical Express*, in which he refers to an abstract equilibrium between pop and rock music. This is discussed in his book *Bring the Noise: 20 Years of Writing on Hip Rock and Hip Hop* (2007):

> *I genuinely thought I was coining a new term with 'post-rock' but as the years went by, I kept coming across earlier occurrences. Paul Morley used it in the early eighties to describe something more abstract, the emergence of a new sensibility in which New Pop groups like Haircut 100 and Altered Images would be as valued as Led Zeppelin or Joy Division; being 'post-rock' meant jettisoning rockist assumptions about 'depth', 'edge', 'meaning'.* (Reynolds: 2007:193).

There is a recurring theme of tension between the popular/accessible and the experimental/avant-garde in post-rock. Morley's (1982) more abstract viewpoint of post-rock (cited by Reynolds) being applied to new pop music and having equal depth as rock music,

relates to Christopher Porterfield's (1967) review of the album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band (SGT)* by The Beatles. Chutter (2015) discusses Reynolds' post-rock as being subconsciously influenced by the article: *Pop-Music: The Messenger* (1967) in *Time Magazine.* Porterfield's album review describes a new era of rock music, which is to be considered as an art form, experimenting with pop music conventions, and is deemed 'serious' music, thus creating post-rock sounds. Porterfield acknowledges the role of the producer, George Martin, on *SGT* producing 'sound pictures', in which he shifts from realism to abstraction in music recording practices:

> *Sound Pictures. Such recording practices are early steps in a brand-new field. George Martin, the producer whose technical midwifery is helping to make the steps possible, likens them to the shift from representational painting to abstractionism. "Until recently," he says, "the aim has been to reproduce sounds as realistically as possible. Now we are working with pure sound. We are building sound pictures."* (Porterfield, 1967:67)

These 'sound pictures' created go beyond the band members and instruments. There is a representational shift in the role of the studio. Chutter comments on Porterfield's review of *SGT* stating '*They use the studio as a compositional tool to meddle with the real-time interaction of rock instruments and their players'* (Chutter, 2015:72). Paul McCartney is quoted (1967) in discussing the role of their studio engineer in the process of making *SGT*:

> *"We haven't pushed George Martin out of the engineers' booth,"* says McCartney, *"but we've become equals. The music has more to do with electronics now than ever before. To do those things a few years ago was a bit immoral. But electronics is no longer immoral."* (Porterfield, 1967:68)

McCartney acknowledges the equal importance of the engineer and the musician, and with the acceptance of 'electronic' sounds. Martin's 'immoral' abstraction with sound through recording music practice challenges the authenticity of the rock musicians and their instruments, as EDM producer Paul Oakenfold acknowledges:

I think that what George did with the Beatles […] in my opinion as a producer, […] he just put it all together in a great way. In some respects, he was known as the fifth Beatle. (Oakenfold, 2021)

It is interesting to ponder if the Beatles were to have had a real-time studio tool for performance, how would an album like *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967) have been translated into a live show, and how would this have affected the musicians themselves? Are we at a point in music performance where the language and knowledge to articulate from the studio to the stage is seamless or habitual, or is it too complex to actualise, depending on your style of music? For example, for large scale pop tours, due to large resources, their actualisation of the recording to performance can be very close to even their performances being mimed. I argue that this shift from the representational to the abstract, in rock-music with the studio (the machine), is the defining feature of post-rock. The music studio becomes an inherent tool and collaborator in the creative act. The studio and music technology inform new creativity and are catalysts in disrupting the band norm. This disruption in real-time interactions of the musicians and engineers is a central point of inquiry in this project (RQ3) and is explored in practice (chapter 6) through audio and video documentation.

3.1 The impact of the studio as an instrument in post-rock

The 'studio as an instrument' (Bell, 2018, Eno, 2004) is building new musical crafts of the composer, instrumentalist, performer, and engineer. Reynolds refers to Brian Eno's essay on the interpretation of *The Studio as a Compositional Tool* (Eno, 2004 :127). Implementing the studio as an instrument within its own right in post-rock offers a '*fictional psycho-acoustic space*' (Reynolds, 2004: 360) as it displaces sounds and sources of the real-time physical space. The integration of technology as part of compositional and performance practice is common to post-rock, krautrock and prog-rock. Leech comments: '*common to both post and prog-rock is certainly a sense of ambition and an interest in new technologies*' (*Leech, 2017:16*). The integration of recording devices, drum machines, samplers and MIDI triggers within post-rock generates a third thing, a space for musicians to collaborate with the 'machine', forming an extension of their 'traditional' instrument of rock and their creative practice (expanded in chapter 5).

The ambitions of the musicians, producers and engineers in the studio, which once would not have been possible to play live, can now be translated through real-time recording equipment and devices. Adopting a hybrid approach to the instruments enables studio aesthetics and techniques to be presented, played, and articulated in a *post-digital performance* space. Within this thesis, I define the studio as a fundamental mechanical interlocutor and an instrument for *post-digital performance* (Chapter 5). This is where I currently situate my practice.

Real-time music technology, since the 2000s (Ableton Live, looper pedals), correlates with a widespread shift from the large-scale fixed analogue studio to the small-scale digital and portable bedroom studio. I argue that the studio as an instrument (DAWs and recording devices) is fusing with rock instrumentation and, as Théberge comments: '*Because of its ever-increasing electronic mediation, the creation of popular music has moved towards an increasing "fusion of instrument and recording device."*' (Théberge, 1997:194). Radiohead's

Jonny Greenwood is quoted discussing this 'fused' approach (Rose, 2019) on the band's making of the album *The King of Limbs* (2011).

> *We didn't want to pick up guitars and write chord sequences. We didn't want to sit in front of a computer either. We wanted a third thing, which involved playing and programming.* (Greenwood, cited in Rose, 2019:201)

In relation to this research, I argue that post-rock musicians are seeking a 'third way' of creativity in music, as a form of exchange with technology within the composition and performance process.

In my own performance practice, I have built a workflow in which I apply the music studio practices of sequencing, programming or triggering, simultaneously responding and interacting whilst playing my guitar (chapter 6). Radiohead's Ed O'Brien refers to the album *The King of Limbs* (2011) as '*studio conceived"* (O'Brien, cited in Rose, 2019:201) and the band's creative process would not have been achieved without this collaboration with the music technology (samplers, turntables, loopers). The fusion and/or exchange of the studio as an instrument with 'playable' recording devices can cause issues for post-rock musicians. For musicians there are different modes of creativity: for some there is more creativity within a live, immediate performance; for others there is more of a feeling of control within a reflective recording studio space. Stella Mozgawa (2020), from LA based Warpaint, discusses the lack of flexibility within this fused (Théberge, 1997) approach to their instrument:

> *So say […] I want more […] echo on my snare drum or something like that, and then actually being able to perform through that stuff is just so impossible when you're playing live [..] that's a visceral, immediate experience and being in a studio, it's very languid, if you're lucky, if it's a good experience, and it's very reflective and it is a lot more creative and a lot more interesting.* (Mozgawa, 2020)

Mozgawa raises the issues of the integration of studio processes within live performance. The studio recording environment and the '*naturalistic decision making*' (Lefford and Thompson, 2018) of music production allow for creative experimentation and reflection. I define the concept of integrating instruments and recording devices as a *hybrid studio-stage instrument* (expanded in chapter 5). I reflect on this impact of *hybrid studio-stage instrument* on the musicians and in collaboration with others (RQ3) in popular recording practices in chapter 6.

3.1.1 Authenticity Loop

As stated at the outset of this thesis, as a musician engaging with the studio, I find myself in an 'authenticity loop'. As I capture, overdub, and make recordings of myself, I play with the proximity of the origins of the sound source. I push the boundaries of the recording paradigm which relates to challenging the paradigm shifts in authenticity in rock music in 1) the author of the sound (chapter 4) and 2) proximity of the origins of the sound source (chapter 5). Through the act of capturing, I increasingly imitate and respond to the recorded and dislocated version of myself. In practice, through the electronic mediated act of mixing, manipulating and curating of the sounds source an emerging authenticity loop is created. By creatively reacting and responding to music technology the authenticity loop is accentuated, and without this interplay between the technology and self, my practice would not exist. An example of this is the practice of beatboxing, in which the 'machine' and music production is imitated through the limitation of the voice.

> *It mimics the sound of computer-generated music: it parodies the computer in live performance relying on human voice only.* (Thompson, 2011: 175)

The discipline of beatboxing could not be conceived without the redefining technological instruments: drum machine and sampler. The beatboxer expands their voice beyond spoken,

rapped, or sung parts, and imitates technology (Beswick and Murray, 2022), for example, using their voice to replicate the sounds of a drum machine or imitating an auto-tune effect. The drum machine and the turntable (machine) influence the beatboxer (human); the beatboxer vocalises and imitates the machine sounds (drum machine, scratched records, samplers) which are then recorded and looped in real-time. A vocal technique through the imitation of the drum machine is 'inward K snare' in which the vocalist takes an inward breath to create an imitation of the electronic snare. Some live beatboxing performers use looping techniques in which they build multiple parts of a track. This produces new performance strategies and blurs boundaries between the single performer in the studio and on the stage.

Once a cultural authenticity loop (Thompson, 2011) is accepted, these techniques are employed in different genres. The beatboxing artist *Shlomo* collaborated on Björk's album *Medulla* (2004) which was constructed completely from human voices. He expands his vocal techniques through the imitation of post-digital aesthetics (more in chapter 5). His articulations could not exist without the exchange with the 'machine'. Through this authenticity loop, a new virtuosic act in the performance is formed within the manipulation of sound sources. The vocalist or beatboxer becomes their own 'sampler', a human music production machine.

Post-rock prompts shifts in the binaries of the studio and stage, and the creative exchange between the musician and technologies post-rock musician is defined in the space in-between. Experimental textual guitarists pushed the studio stage binaries such as Robert Fripp and John Martyn on the 1970s, or The Smiths and My Bloody Valentine who expanded their sounds guitar pedals, such as digital delay, and as a result increased the distance from the guitarists themselves through source deforming. From the 1980s EDM and DJ culture were not bounded by historical narrative as rock music or its relationship with technology. Post-rock was influenced through this freeing of rock authenticity and took this concept and integrated EDM and DJ cultures live performance software and DAW, Ableton Live. From my perceptive

as a guitarist, the *authenticity loop* is explored in practice in *Series of Studio* Experiments (2019) and *Enid – Yes!* (2021) (chapter 6) through the application of studio techniques, inspired by the beatboxing technique, in which all sounds originate from my guitar playing but in exchange with the 'machine'. I sample my guitar, to create 'machine' timbre and rhythms, to which I react as I loop and overdub through electronic-mediated studio practices.

3.2 The impact of DJ culture and electronic music in post-rock

In 1995, Reynolds described post-rock as *'infected rock'* and that the *'altering'* of *'its defining features'* had fused with electronic music subcultures of the time: house, techno and jungle. The composition and performance techniques in these subcultures heavily impacted aesthetics, form, duration, band dynamics and the rock music virtuosity canon. A new virtuosity materialised, a *timbral virtuosity* (expanded upon in chapter 4) in the manipulation of sound through the applied techniques of DJ and electronic music culture, rather than traditional rock virtuosity with extended guitar techniques, progressive and complex time signatures, harmony and manual dexterity.

3.2.1 Defining EDM and DJ culture techniques

Studio techniques such as looping and sampling, inspired by EDM and DJ culture (Butler, 2014; Halstead, 2009; Gilbert and Pearson, 1999), have been incorporated into composition and performance post-rock practice. The immersive and embodied qualities of the club sound system have impacted the 'live' experience which has influenced rock music production beyond the stereo mix. In Zagorski-Thomas' (2010) paper *The stadium in your bedroom: functional staging, authenticity and the audience-led aesthetic in record production,* he discusses the different record production values in both rock music and dance music. Traditionally, long-playing music albums (L.P.'s) were formatted (Eargle, 2013:259) for individuals to play through their living room speakers. The aesthetic function of post-rock sounds, as discussed by Porterfield (1967) in relation to The Beatles' *SGT*, is for the recording to invoke contemplation, intellection, and active listening. The transition from EDM to post-rock was not predictable, given the musical differences in the recorded format and modes of listening to rock music *versus* dance music.

The role of the record changed in club culture from the mid- 1970s (Byrne, 2012) when the DJ would spin (or loop) their 12" singles records, with wider grooves, through the club sound

system, which could be louder than previous rock albums with a more prominent kick and bass. EDM music productions, values and outputs were focused on clubs and dance floors, to stimulate movement and create immersion in sound (Ferreira, 2008). Producing for the dance floor enabled a different perspective for record production, even though the DJ's skills could be criticised, as Paul Oakenfold comments:

In the early days, people were like, well "You don't make music, all you do is play other people's records." That's not true. You're the ignorant one here because you don't know what a modern DJ is. I'm not a radio DJ, I'm a club DJ who produces his own music, produces other bands, and performs live. (Oakenfold, 2020)

In the 1990s, Oakenfold produced bands such as Massive Attack, U2 and the Happy Mondays. He applied his compositional and performance DJ techniques into his EDM productions, and this enabled him to work with bands to create 'post-rock' sounds (Portfield, 1967). Equally, EDM and rock were impacted by the changes in production equipment and technology of the 21st century (Strachan, 2017).

3.2.2 Post-rock loops and samples

The ambitions of recording and overdubbing, which once relied on the fixed music studio of technicians with expensive specialist recording equipment, can now be articulated, arguably better, with a single unit, the loop pedal. The loop pedal enables recording, playback and overdubbing of an audio source, thus creating a 'third' space of real-time music studio practice. The loop pedal was first mass-produced in the 2000s and was intended for use by guitarist and soloist singer/songwriters (Bjørn and Harper, 2019) (2001 *DigiTech Jam Man* and *Roland Boss RC1* with guitar and XLR inputs) as they click and control with their feet. In related genres, such as shoegaze, guitarists look down at their feet to focus and manipulate their

effects pedals. The guitar pedal for post-rock musicians is a performative and improvisational tool within their sound design for their guitar. Collis from TTNG comments:

I think it's a continually interesting step for guitarists now to be creating noises and sounds that aren't so much on being technical but more about soundscapes from pedals through Ableton or whatever they use – it's a lot more limitless. (Collis, 2019)

The guitarist can now build and construct their own unique blend of sounds on their boards by selecting and combining different effects pedals, for example reverbs, delays, tremolo, chorus, distortions, and fuzz. This has been further impacted with the boom of limited designed and handcrafted boutique pedals (Fenn, 2010). As Fenn comments: '*Improvisation feeds into the creation of musical technology (which may very well then feed into improvisational performance*)' (Fenn, 2010:69). A band who explores this is Battles, who present themselves as a traditional rock trio format, with the integration of electronics. Guitarists Williams and Konopka experiment with the guitar's timbral variations and depart from electric guitar traditions. *'Slippery and post-humanised – math rock obfuscated by the disguise of studio tampering, using effects and rearrangements to put legs where arms should be, and vice versa'* (Chutter, 2015: 250). Battles' Ian Williams uses the rack effect unit Gibson Echoplex (2001) which enables syncing and looping between multiple players:

We all had Echoplex that we could sync up and it helped us keep in time […] the idea for me *audio cuts* multi-layer stuff from what I was [….] it was sort of 4 or 5 layers of guitar, but it eventually sounded like a big wall of guitar jumping around in patterns. I think me feeling like it sounded small so the idea in the earlier Battles stuff was to take those riffs that were on one pedal and to spread them out *imitates sounds* so we would trade them in circles and John would play drums under it – the original Battles formula was just that unpacking. (Williams, 2019)

Here, Chutter comments on Battles' ability to extend beyond their instruments, a technologically extended approach with real-time studio 'tampering'. Fixed loops create some semblance of structure as they manipulate and sculpt the 'machine's' potential sounds. Battles explores music technologies' potential of the 'third' space, through their ambition to record, loop, and expand multiple versions of their own playing, thus creating 'post-rock' sounds. Williams comments on when his 'tampering' goes beyond the performative aspect of pedal work:

> *I think, people could understand maybe the looper being in a pedal format, but once it went to sort of completely, you know, laptop based, people questioned the true analogue tone, you know. (Williams, 2019)*

As Williams remarks, the authenticity of performance is challenged once a laptop is present (Jaeger, 2003), and this generates an anti-laptop response from guitarists. Even if techniques such as looping and sampling are accepted within the use of devices and pedals, using a laptop is questioned on the stage and in performance. Leech comments on sampling culture in post-rock and deconstruction of the genre:

> *A lot of this deconstruction was made possible through the advent of the sampler, ushering in a new genre-bending mindset. Most of the post-rock bands used samplers in some form, but even the ones who didn't were influenced by sampling's possibilities for simultaneous structure and chaos*. (Leech, 2017:8)

Post-rock is known for sampling the spoken word in place of vocals in their tracks, for example in Public Service Broadcasting's *Go!* (2015), Godspeed You! Black Emperor's *Sleep* (2000) and Mogwai's *Punk Rock* (1999). Reynolds remarks on sampling in post-rock:

Sampling and a related technique called "hard disk editing" (where sounds are chopped up and rearranged inside the computer's virtual space) dramatically increase the possibilities for disorientation and displacement. (Reynolds, 2004:360)

Since Reynolds' writings, the disorientation and displacement of post-rock sounds through the act of sampling has been expanded into performance through the DAW Ableton Live. A distinction of all artists interviewed in this research is the use of this technology. This digital software can perform the task of a recorder, or sampler, with real-time live studio manipulation making it an instrument in its own right. Ableton Live uses 'clips' as loops and sources of information, either MIDI or audio, and they can easily be rearranged and manipulated. These techniques of sampling and looping are explicitly explored in practice (RQ3) in both *Series of Studio Experiments* (2019) and *Enid – Yes!* (2021) and this is expanded on in chapter 6.

<div align="center">3.3 Post genres</div>

The prefix of 'post' within genres can be interpreted in several ways from different perspectives; blurring norms, intellection, more experimental, less humanised, and culturally dislocated. I analyse post-genres from a practitioner's perspective. I refer to the 'post' in post-rock as a prefix in which creative compositional and performance tools and techniques are applied, specifically with studio technology, to challenge and muddy the waters of what we have inherently thought of as 'rock'.

3.3.1 James' (2017) Post genres

There are multiple meanings attached to the 'post' aspect of all post-genres, which tend to incorporate a deconstruction of the norm and play with the complexity of interpretation inspired by both popular culture and high art practice. This concept is examined in Robin James' (2017) article *'Is the post- in post-identity the post- in post-genre?'*. She discusses a course offered at Mannes School of Music in New York in *Post Genre Music: Performance and Creation*:

> *Post-genre musicianship includes the ability to 'perform in multiple mixed ensemble settings, spanning a range of styles, sizes, and instrumentation', and 'awareness of the history and context of multiple genres.' […] 'Post-genre' means competence in both art music genres and (some) popular genres.* (James, 2017:24)

As James comments, a post-genre artist performs with multiple interpretive and technical musical skills. This mixing of genres not only allows experimentation with aesthetics but also an understanding of the displacement of the historical context of those genres. Post-genre blurs cultural identity and is closely linked to the challenging of authenticity (chapter 3). The concept of post-genre musicianship is interpreted differently within genres. For example, in post-classical or neo-classical (Huizenga, 2013 *Max Richter in Concert: Reimagining Vivaldi*) music the site-specific locations of the performances and recordings inform new

interpretations of classical works and traditional works in new settings. I propose that the post-genre musician is further challenging the displacement of time and space due to studio manipulation, relating to the *authenticity loop* discussed earlier (3.1).

3.3.2 Post-intellectual and experimental genre form

The term 'post' is also associated with the intellectualisation (Alkwakeel, 2009, Halstead, 2009) of the genre and a deconstruction of core aesthetics, identity and cultural references. The 'post' element in post-rock could be a simple indicator that it was the genre movement after the cultural phenomena of the initial genre, for example rave or dance to post-dance (Halstead, 2009). The term 'post' can also decentre the genre, intellectualise it, and defuse it, recycling and deconstructing the cycle of fashion and skills within it, for example, EDM to IDM (intelligent dance music), with artists such as Aphex Twin, Squarepusher and Björk linked to the latter. Adam Betts (2019), session drummer for Squarepusher, comments on the relationship of 'post' from post-punk to post-rock:

> *So, the first wave of post punk can totally be done with guitar, bass, drums, you know just the very experimentation of it is fuck the chorus, you know, fuck the song form. But then once you've got away from that, then I think there are definitely instances where maybe essential isn't quite the words, but you know, it's like the sound, taking influence from someone like Jon Hopkins - the sound design is the song […]. The sound design is the emotive connective transportive thing and I think in a weird way, we're almost kind of doing that with rock now. We're taking from tech/house producers and trying to do the same thing with rock.* (Betts, 2019)

As Betts discusses, the 'post' in post-rock is an emphasis on sound-design acting as a vehicle for emotive communication, or, as Reynolds suggests, a 'programming of sensations' (Reynolds, 2004:359). For example, an experimental post-rock guitarist rejects rock music's

popularised blues riffs and power chords in favour of adopting a more avant-garde sonic palette and execution.

Describing experimental genres and identifying their characteristics is subjective. Therefore, how do we analyse the degree of experimentation within post-rock? Osborn's research focuses on post-millennial rock, and in his paper (2014) *Kid Algebra: Radiohead's Euclidean and Maximally Even Rhythms*, he uses the term *Spears-Stockhausen Continuum* when describing Radiohead as a band that is inspired by both the experimental and accessible. As previously mentioned within this thesis, Porterfield (1967) refers to the tension of the experimental and pop continuum within the work of the Beatles with their track *Strawberry Fields*:

> *Moreover, Strawberry Fields, with its four separate meters, freewheeling modulations and titillating tonal trappings, showed that the Beatles had flowered as musicians. They learned to bend and stretch the pop-song mold, enriched their harmonic palette with modal colors, mixed in cross-rhythms, and pinched the classical devices of composers from Bach to Stockhausen.* (Porterfield, 1967:62)

Porterfield's reference to Bach in relation to Stockhausen compared both virtuosity and harmonic complexity (techniques of classical music) to the audio processing techniques of minimalist composers. It is interesting to compare the binaries: from Porterfield's (1967) classical composer Bach to Osborn's (2014) pop artist Britney Spears. Yet both Porterfield and Osborn refer to Stockhausen as an example of an experimental composer. Osborn's article in *Music Theory Online* (2011) *Understanding Through-Composition in Post-Rock, Math-Metal, and other Post-Millennial Rock Genre*s comments on the reference to experimental approaches being associated with minimalist composition:

Many pieces from the so-called minimalist period (ca. 1965-1972) take a different approach to through-composition by developing a central idea through some audible process (for example, Steve Reich's Come Out and Alvin Lucier's I am sitting in a room. (Osborn, 2011:2)

This correlates with the post-rock definition earlier in this chapter in terms of studio experimentation. The music studio as a creative tool informing experimentation not only challenges rock aesthetics in post-rock but is informed by post-genres, mixing locality and identities into new sonic spaces.

3.3.3 Post-other

The 'post' prefix can be related to the concept of a music genre that is heightened by the process of the electronic mediated interactions (expanded in chapter 5). Reynolds acknowledges this emphasis on the diffusing of the author, the ego and the 'rebel' in post-rock:

Above all, post-rock abandons the notion of rebellion as we know and love it, in favour of less spectacular strategies of subversion – ones closer to psychic landscapes of exile and utopia constructed in dub, reggae, HipHop, and rave. At the heart of rock 'n' roll stands the body of the white teenage boy, middle finger erect and a sneer playing across his lips. At the centre of post-rock floats a phantasmatic un-body, androgynous and radically indeterminate: half ghost, half machine. (Reynolds, 2004:359)

I argue that the 'post' in post-rock presents a disruption to the rock canon and the archetype of the rock rebel single soloist into a diffusion of the 'author'. This brings into question the authorship in post-rock which is inherently impacted by the changing roles of the musician, engineer and producer within the band dynamic. This is expanded further in Chapter 4 with

the relation to the theories of post-structuralism and post modernism in the cultural shift of the

rock 'rebel' and the 'I' in rock music.

Chapter 4 Authenticity and Timbre in Post-Rock Practice

The studio as a compositional and performance tool has resulted in a new form of virtuosity, a *timbral virtuosity*. Performing in this way poses a dilemma in terms of craft, authorship, and authenticity in post-rock performance practice. I argue that the use of studio techniques such as music sampling has led to a disorientation and displacement of ego or the 'I' in the recorded and performed self. In using the term 'ego', I am referring to the popular definition, the conscious mind of the individual, rather than Sigmund Freud's (2018) psychoanalytic interpretation.

This chapter explores the themes of authenticity and timbre within post-rock, from the perspective of the makers: the guitarist and the drummer. The repositing of the 'I' in performance is contextualised through the work of Roland Barthes, Walter Benjamin, and Mark Butler, with interviews from post-rock musicians to gain further perspective within this philosophical conversation.

4.0 Challenging authorship and creating new forms of authenticity.

In my practice as a guitarist, through the act of looping or sampling my work, I use the studio as an instrument in a performance. I use studio techniques and effects as forms of expression which are as expressive as holding a note with my guitar. I produce audio and music material which is transient and digitally reproduced and blends with the analogue sound of my amplified guitar. I create an authorship of the material I produce, regardless of whether it is pre-recorded or captured in different moments; the authorship is gained through the act of all material played or recorded in a single space and time.

In pop and rock discourse, the live versus the recorded, challenges perceptions of time and space through its applied music production, yet is accepted, as discussed in Frith's (1998) book *Performing rites: evaluating popular music,* where he states:

I listen to records in the full knowledge that what I hear is something that never existed, that never could exist, as a "performance", something happening in a single time and space; nevertheless, it is now happening, in a single time and space: it is thus a performance and I hear it as one. (Frith, 1998:211)

As Frith states, when one listens back to a single recording, even if it is reconstructed in the studio, the experience of the listener is that it is a live performance. The traditional norms of popular music practice are centred around the ego and the author of works is the storyteller, the vocalist, the songwriter, who is the central expression of humanistic self. Popular music practice is transparent in presenting a fictional space which is not located in time and space, explicitly embracing studio techniques such as close miking, in which space ambience is not captured. However, the methods of capturing this functional sonic space achieved by musicians, producers, and engineers are concealed from the listener with the locality of sound sources dislocated. Popular record production, as Brian Eno discusses (2004), presents the studio as an instrument, which is not limited to capturing a performance in a space. This

practice of dislocation of the space placement of the recording also displaces the author, the individual, and their situation in which authenticity is challenged. Musicologist Allan Moore, in his article *Authenticity as authentication* (2002), defines the artist and their relationship with authenticity in popular music practice:

> *…artists speak the truth of their own situation; […] they speak the truth of the situation of (absent) others; and […] they speak the truth of their own culture, thereby representing (present) others.* (Moore, 2002: 209)

As Moore remarks, the authenticity of self is perceived through the author of works, an autobiographical standpoint, a perception of the individual situation, time, and culture which is ascribed rather inscribed. Further challenging of the authenticity with the displacement of the author is explored in real-time performance practice. Through music technology it is common practice to deconstruct, recontextualise and collage sounds in the genres of hip-hop, house and techno. The ascribed authenticity through digital reproduction in these genres is challenged as Scott comments:

> *Music technology, especially sampling, […] allows existing sounds to be recorded and re-used or manipulated. […] The producers and DJs in Hip-Hop, House, Techno and Underground Dance, who select parts of records, add sounds, blend features, combine tracks, restructure or remix, eat away at notions of authorship.* (Scott, 2012:190)

In the chapter *Postmodernism and Music* (2012), Scott discusses that the producer can reconstruct sounds which challenge the notion of authorship, due to the creative tool of the music studio, in which they implement techniques such as sampling. Popular music performance through new technologies alters the agency of the practitioner, thus impacting concepts of authorship. For example, a DJ playing digital files from a USB instead of vinyl, is still a performance through the act of digital reproduction, however, it challenges authenticity.

The emphasis is on the sculpting and reinvention of the sampled material within the real-time music studio performance.

Popular music practice offers a unique perspective on this relationship, with an altered agency with technology within the creative act in composition, recording and performance, thus causing what I refer to as *an authenticity loop* (chapter 3). Through real-time studio performance, the musicians can design, program and sculpture their sound, adopting the role of the producer. Due to the delegation of certain activities to automating technologies, the musician embodies editorial and reflective practice as a display of performance which is not limited to the display of instant "craft" of themselves, or their instruments.

The acceleration of the use of technology is challenging authenticity for artists within their disciplines as it straddles the inevitable question of human agency and craft within the creative act. Benjamin (2008, originally cited in 1935) argues that mechanical reproduction techniques employed in art practices produce an artefact which he states lacks aura, thus authenticity. David Pye's discussion in his book '*The nature and art of workmanship*' (1968), acknowledges the shift in the value of the craftsman in which the focus of the craft is the designer (composer, producer) of works, as opposed to the maker (instrumentalist) and their material (sound). In new media and digital arts there is the expectation that the tool of the artist's craft is inherently the technology. The meditation of the technology is intrinsic to the discipline and the craft is evident through how the machine is programmed, coded, hacked or automated to produce the creative output. Artificial intelligence (AI) art (Paul, 2016), it could be argued, is going a step further in challenging authenticity through the delegation of the creative act generated through the machine, an instant art. If creative acts for example, in poetry, screen writing and digital photography can be created through Chat GPT (Michaux, 2023), who is considered the author at work? Equally this creates a focus on the designer's concept as the creative expression of the "instant craft".

4.0.1 Roland Barthes and new emerging 'I' in performance

The traditional definition of authenticity in rock music is connected to seeing and hearing the composer or performer: the visibility of the author. Both visual artists and musicians in 'post' genres have explored this concept of authorship and the authentic. Roland Barthes, a post-structuralist philosopher of the 20th century, was hugely influential in the art and music world in shifting the notion of the author of works. Barthes emphasises the role of the reader, which decentres the author in the creation of meaning in a text. He argued that meaning is made by interpretation, meaning is not inherent in the object or text, but constructed through the subjectivity of the reader (viewer, audience) *'The birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author'* (Barthes, 1977:148). Barthes emphasises the subjective dialogue of the reader (listener), and the individual interpretation of text depending on their own cultural background and personal relationship to it.

The displacement of self and sound sources (the author), using studio and electronic music practice, is a musical language that can exist without a human, the musician and creator at the centre of their works. In this way, the machine is a programmable electronic collaborator, which functions without the human agency and can perform without one's 'self', as Barthes states: *'To reach that point where only language acts, 'performs', and not 'me'.'* (Barthes, 1977:143). Barthes influences the group of artists called *Pictures Generation*, which included the photographer, Cindy Sherman.

Fig. 4 *Cindy Sherman Untitled Film Still #53* (1980)

Sherman's works offer an insight into the shift in meaning which is interpreted by the reader of works, within the medium of photography and film, and, with a parallel to tape and digital recording in music, offer a post-author role of works. In the act of taking a photograph, the usual assumption is of an authentic representation of self. But Sherman challenges this assumption in her self-portraits (Fig,4), in which she develops fictional characters. Sherman's photographs frame her as the object and author of the photograph but leave ambiguity for the viewer's interpretation, which challenges authorship. In the era of post-digitalisation, visual artists are capable of creating visual possibilities, such as with special effects that are beyond a single place and time. Visual ambition can be achieved solely though digital techniques, or in combination with analogue methods, informing an ever-evolving post-digital visual language. Film maker, Michael Gondry regained his visual authenticity in capturing a single time and space through his "in-camera" special effects. These are demonstrated in the film *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* in (2004) in which Chen (2011) comments: '*Gondry's expertise (is) in combining "imaginative fiction and emotional reality," including his signature of "in-camera" special effects and the dramatic use of long takes*' (Chen, 2011: 34). The visual method of regained authenticity through "in-camera" techniques relates to practice restriction 3 applied to both *Series of Studio Experiments* (2019) and *Enid – Yes!* (2021) (expanded in chapter 6) in which digital music production is captured with "in-microphone" techniques within a single take of recording. This parameter forefronts a shared authorship, subjective to the reader in production stage with musicians and engineers limited to the single act, capturing imperfection and human flaws, decentring the single author. The individual interpretation of the reader, and shift of ownership from the author to the reader, are the fundamental concepts within Barthes essay, *The Death of the Author (1977).*

Decentering the self, through collaboration with the music recording studio practice, gives rise to a new form of musical language, foregrounding the 'other', and electronic mediated techniques beyond *self*. This philosophical approach is reflected in the music studio-practice

of producer and artist Brian Eno. He discusses this in his essay *The Studio as a Compositional Tool*:

> *You're working directly with sound, and there's no transmission loss between you and the sound – you handle it. It puts the composer in the identical position of the painter – he's working directly with a material, working directly onto a substance, and he always retains options to chop and change, to paint a bit out, add a piece, etc...* (Eno, 2004:129)

Here, Eno also echoes Barthes' point, relating to studio practice. As a producer/engineer working in the studio, the artistic material is the recorded audio which gives a perspective which is one step removed from the self, removed from the recorded performance, thus non-real-time composition. The producer/engineer has authorship and direct control in this way of working, and Eno compares this to how painters work with their material. One can approach this material like a painter, it is equally process-led. Like colours for a painter, the engineer chooses their audio 'colours', from multiple sources, from the musician, from vocalist to speech, to samples, colours from different times and spaces. Within the discipline of music, whether a recording or a performance, the works are constructed through the individual 'reader's' or listener's interpretation; multiple readers construct a culturally specific meaning for themselves. J. Cseres, in the paper *Musica practica according to Roland Barthes* (2017) expands on this divide between the 'ego' in the role of performance between being listened to and being seen:

> *The new way of making music will re-establish our broken and deformed relationships to the world and others and it will give them new meaning, deprived of old codes and alienation between the author, performer and the listener. This kind of music should transform a listener into an "operator" – just like Roland Barthes imagined.* (Cseres, 2017:150)

Cseres' term *operator* is useful in describing an emerging 'I' in contemporary music practices. The deconstruction of the author of works is freeing a new creator of meaning, an artistic *operator* of creation and meaning, a producer of music creation. Danielsen and Brøvig-Hanssen (2016) discuss that the 'I' in music production is produced in the post-production stage; non-performative imperfection is produced as opposed to capturing visceral and immediate performance. Through reflective-based design in music production, "imperfection" can be gained from multiple sources, as through this act, an operator of meaning is exposed.

4.0.2 The changing roles and 'I' in post-rock performance

Scott remarks that applying postmodernist and poststructuralist theories to the seeing and hearing of the studio as a performance tool challenges this authenticity:

We must also recognize that postmodernist theory, poststructuralism and deconstruction have strongly challenged notions of organic unity and the composer's expressive presence *within his or her music. The use of sampling technology shifts the focus from new creation to new use of material.* (Scott, 2012:191)

Scott suggests a paradigm shift of focus in music of the reconstruction of 'sampled' or used material, which can be created through the individual. If we think about the role of electronic musicians, compared to bands, these musicians are usually soloists. Mark Butler (2014) comments on this, in his book *Playing with something that runs: technology, improvisation, and composition in DJ and laptop performance:*

Within this tradition, most recordings are made by one person: in contrast to the majority of contemporary rock and pop, a single individual generally assumes the role of engineer, producer and performer. Bandmates are rare. Performances are usually solo as well. Laptop sets, which are generally the province of producer-performers, maintain the single authorship. (Butler, 2014:62)

As Butler comments, in rock and pop recording, the dividing of roles within the productions are seen, those being the performer, producer and/or engineer. However, in terms of electronic music production, which is usually produced by a single author, they gain authorship with multiple material and sound sources and hence a blurring of our understanding of authenticity. With music samples being provided by companies such as Splice, producers are now the consumers of other people's samples, building more complexity on their authorship.

The definitions of authenticity are linked with the proximity to original sources of sound and a single author. In post-rock genre, I argue that the communication is through the reader (listener) with '*the programming of sensations'* (Reynolds, 2004) rather than through the author (the performer). This presence shifts the band identity and ego in rock music towards a more dislocated, mechanical, and egoless genre. Post-rock's paradigm shift of the band identity and ego affects the definition of authenticity, as the single author is de-centred and the origins of sound source are blurred between human and the 'machine'. For the individual performer, sampling technology presents a perceived further dissolving of agency, as they can practice reflective modes of creative acts, performative editing, as opposed to instant playing of their instrument. The impact of EDM genre aesthetics and practices presents the change of authorship of self where the 'I' of the band identity or the individual 'rock' performer has dissolved or been displaced by a more complex 'I' of studio (human and machine) within post-rock practices.

<u>4.1 Timbral virtuosity</u>

The creative act of the manipulation of sound is a virtuosic act. This creative act, that I call *timbral virtuosity* in music and sound, is afforded by recording studios and these methods are then translated to the stage*. Timbral virtuosity* meets a different kind of aesthetic satisfaction depending on what kind of creator is engaging in the process.

Stockhausen's use of microphones, filters, sine wave generators, and ring modulators in '*Solo for Melody'* (1966), and King's Tubby's real-time live production with his mixer (Williams, 2012), with filters and effects as real-time instruments in *Flag Dub* (1983), are acts of *timbral virtuosity* in composition, recording and, I argue, in performance.

A variety of new performance strategies have emerged with electronic musicians bringing studio techniques into a live setting. Electronic music performers' virtuosic acts can be achieved in the perfectly beat-matched mix; in the curation of the launching loops and clips; or from highly manipulated audio samples from unusual sources. It could be argued that timbral virtuosity is an anti-virtuosity which, through shared authorship and technological collaboration, dissolves individual display of the 'I'. This concept of a post-virtuosic playing and art making is discussed in Ostertag's paper *Human Bodies, Computer Music:*

> *Virtuosity has been out of fashion for years now, ever since the advent of punk rock, conceptual art and other movements that emphasize the idea rather than its execution. Nevertheless, virtuosity of some sort is a necessary element of almost any performance*. (Ostertag, 2002:12)

Ostertag comments that virtuosity is a necessary aspect, even in its rejection. Within this argument, a timbral and machine virtuosity, even if this is on-stage and not visible, is nonetheless tangible. Timbral virtuosity is not achieved by the musician and their instrument

alone, but by a hybrid approach in which the musician adopts the role of a producer or engineer of sound and music. The virtuosic act is the achievement of the self-crafted sound palette and the creative tools of manipulation they used to articulate these sounds. Studio techniques such as sampling, looping, filtering, sequencing, mixing, and cueing are common practices for electronic music acts and are not only changing how we see performance, but also how we hear it.

4.1.1 Hearing Virtuosity in Timbre

Cornelia Fales' (2018) chapter, *Hearing Timbre,* relates to a new timbral analysis of popular music in the genres of house and techno. Fales discusses hearing timbre using the two terms, unity and variety. She describes how listeners respond to a balance of *unity* (fixed, regularity) and *variety* (improvisation, different pitches, melodies, harmonies). Examples of the use of Fales' terms would be free jazz potentially having 'too much' *variety* and house and techno too much *unity*. New forms of listening techniques and sensibility to timbre were developed within house and techno genres, as Fales writes:

> *But they were sensitive to the "elements of variety", non-pitch and non-lyric-oriented features that had indeed escaped the attention of listeners for centuries in Western music history. They were sensitive to timbre*. (Fales, 2018: 23)

This emerging sensitivity to timbre suggested by Fales, I argue, relates to the tension between variety and unity in music production, with human-like timbral qualities having *variety* and machine-like timbral qualities having *unity*.

4.1.2 Timbral Virtuosity and analysis

David Blake's (2012) article, *Timbre as Differentiation in Indie Music,* discusses two notable themes in terms of timbral analysis. Firstly, the lack of scholarly attention to the divide between

the independent and the mainstream in popular music discourse, which has received more attention in cultural studies and sociology. Secondly, timbre as a form of analysis in popular music theory and musicology. Blake summarises the argument from Timothy Warner's chapter on *Approaches to Analysing Recordings of Popular Music* (2009) saying '*Traditional analyses of popular music focused on notable parameters ignore the impact of the recording process in shaping sound'* (Blake, 2012:3). Blake expands these ideas with a timbral analysis of the guitarist Kevin Shields, from the shoegaze band My Bloody Valentine. The studio-intense album *Loveless* (1991), taking two years to produce, using 18 different studios and on a budget of £250,000, was ambitious in studio production and Blake analyses the opening track *Only Shallow* (1991). McGonigal discusses the studio influences and experiments leading to the timbral approach to Shields' guitar:

> *Shields created this effect by performing the riff multiple times, layering each take on top of each other with additional feedback. Shields recalled that "I had two amps facing each other, with two different tremolos on them. And I sampled [the riff] and put it an octave higher on the sampler".* (McGonigal, 2007:55 cited in Blake, 2012:6)

This experimentation of layering, sampling and feedback by Shields, who was also the producer and mixing engineer on the album, is an example of a guitarist's desire to have a timbral approach that collaborates with the music studio. The creation of multitracking layers of guitar and oneself is to create an impactful *Wall of Sound*. The term *Wall of Sound*, originally coined by Phil Spector, also referred to as the *Spector Sound,* is a music production 'formula', a music production technique involving recording large ensembles, with audio saturation, distortion and use of echo to create a large, impactful, reverb-heavy production. Spector's production style and studio techniques are evident in track such as *You've Lost That Loving Feeling* (1965) by The Righteous Brothers. Spector's emphasis on his reverberant *Wall of Sound* production characterises this timbral approach to record production. In more recent years, this term has been characterised using large impactful layers of guitars on the stage

with bands such as The Jesus and Mary Chain and Sonic Youth and then later through post-rock bands of the 2000s such as Sigur Rós, Godspeed You! Black Emperor and Mogwai.

This disrupts the perception of the virtuosic act of rock musicians: it is now the *process* and not the execution that is the new form of authenticity in composition, recording and performance. Long extended solo sections, with fast, complex runs, and use of extended techniques are no longer the focus. This new complexity is in the manipulation of the machine. Post-rock is almost anti-soloist, with musical processes and manipulation of the sound as the performative act—the sound is further distanced from the original source of the instrument. Timbral virtuosity as performative act is explored in practice in *Enid – Yes!* (2021) (chapter 6) through the design of the album, in which the authorship of the recording of the album is shared between the engineer and the musicians. The creative sound processing and display of virtuosic acts within the recording of the album is shared in between each member, in timbral virtuosic 'solo' and through virtuosic timbral interplay with each other.

4.2 The post-guitarist; authenticity, timbre and ego

The rock canon is famed for the display of virtuosity with the solo guitarist, the central ego, in parallel with the 'front-person', traditionally the 'front man' storyteller and singer. Rock's most conventional instruments, as discussed by Osborn (2017), are the distorted electric guitar and vocals but he acknowledges that both '*are capable of a remarkably wide breadth of timbral variation'* (Osborn, 2017:102). Timbral virtuosity enables new perspectives to be gained through seeing beyond what we usually think of as 'rock' virtuosity and how that challenges authenticity of the 'I' in performance. The post-rock guitarist's acts of timbral virtuosity (RQ2) are blurring of the binaries of studio and stage, live and recorded and the experimental and accessible.

Reynolds highlights these new performance strategies in his chapter in *Audio Cultures*: *'Post-rock uses effects and processes to sever the link between the sound you hear and the physical act (striking a guitar chord, pounding a drumskin) that produced it.'* (Reynolds, 2004:360) He points out that his link between what you hear and what you see in post-rock is interrupted by using the effects and processes influenced by electronic music culture. The post-rock creators respond to the creative manipulation of sound, the act of deforming, curating, editing, and affecting the sound from its source. The heightened accessibility of music technology with electronic music aesthetic has repositioned the guitar sonically and has thus changed the role of the guitarist. The guitarist his shifted in their relationship to authenticity of their instruments, as guitarist Jonny Greenwood comments:

> *A voice into a microphone onto a tape, onto a CD and through your speakers is all as illusory and as fake as any synthesizer…. But one is perceived as 'real', the other somehow 'unreal'. It's the same with guitars versus samplers. It was just freeing to discard the notion of acoustic sounds being truer.* (Greenwood, in Letts 2010:51)

Discarding the authenticity of the guitar not only leads to emerging experimentation and aesthetics for the guitar player, but also forms new 'collaborations' between acoustic and digital. The desire to produce a more 'machine-like' tone with the guitar was evident in the invention of the Guitar Synthesizer in the 1970s, as Steve Waksman's chapter on *Guitars, Synthesizers, and Shifting Sound Field of Fusion* questions:

> *Maybe the use of digital synthesis could help a guitarist sound like a trombone or even a drum, but would it allow the player to still sound like a guitar and perhaps more to the point, still play like a guitarist without abandoning already developed distinctive techniques of tone production?* (Waksman, 2018:253)

Issues arise for the guitarist, as Waksman highlights, because the expressive microtonal variations produced, for example in a bend or a vibrator on a guitar string, can't be digitally reproduced. The creation of these new varieties within the guitar as a timbral instrument is evident within post-rock. An example of this is the work of band Godspeed You! Black Emperor with the track from *Undoing A Luciferian Towers* (2017) with the ambient, reverberant (02:04) feedback and sustained guitar work, with minimal note changes. The listener is invited to engage with elements of variety in the timbre, non-pitch and non-lyric, as Fales mentions above. The listener, or the 'reader' is invited to interpret the variety in timbre, and create their own subjective meaning, hence a decentring of the author. This sensitivity to timbre in guitar discussed with Osborn (2017) with the analysis of Radiohead guitarist Ed O'Brien's use of sustain in the track *The Gloaming* (2011). I describe these varieties in timbre that guitarists achieve in post-rock as a form of 'timbral virtuosity'.

4.3 The post hybrid-drummer; EDM, aesthetic and form

The rock drummer has been impacted by EDM and DJ practices though creating 'beats'. Osborn discusses the layering techniques used in popular-music genres, but also in rock subgenres, in *Understanding Through-Composition in Post-Rock, Math-Metal, and other Post-Millennial Rock Genres (2011) 'though live performances of EDM pieces often include improvisatory arrangements of these layers that may differ from the studio mix.'* (Osborn, 2011:6). In some sense the rock arrangement was formalised in the recording (Frith and Goodwin, 1990). EDM real-time manipulation of looped based beats disrupts the role of the rock drummer as the art in layering or looping of beats is in opposition to rock traditions of human velocity and extended drum rolls as vehicles of momentum in the song form. The drums become a 'programming of sensation' into longer and looped-based sounds, thus a changing of form. In the interview with DJ and EDM producer, Paul Oakenfold, he spoke about his producing role in the Happy Mondays' album *Pills 'n' Thrills and Bellyaches* (1990).

> *What we did with the Happy Mondays was that we brought more than just producing the record in a stronger direction, which we think was important, but with my name at that time, coming from electronic music, it brought a different sound. If you listen to their album before me and then one with me, you'll see that the sounds, the arrangements, are very much a lot different.* (Oakenfold, 2021)

In this example by Oakenfold he brought not only new sounds, aesthetics and timbres into rock production, but also his production impacted form and arrangement. EDM production heavily influenced the changing role of the rock drummer, in which authorship was gained by the producer within their production and arrangement, as they could become the creator of 'beats'. Harding and Sloan (2019) in their book *Switched on Pop* discuss EDM impact on the pop track *We Found Love* (2011) by Rihanna and producer Calvin Harris. The impact of the EDM 'drop' is evident in this track (01:07). Harding and Sloan describe it as a post-chorus: '*the post- chorus sustains or increases the energy level of the chorus. It super charges verse-*

chorus form, prolonging its energetic high- point.' (Sloan & Harding, 2019: 51). The standard rock structure of verse, bridge and chorus was disrupted with EDM music structure between the 'the drop' and 'post-chorus'. This relates to Osborn's (2013) analysis of music form in millennial rock, with the new form 'outro' called the terminal climax. '*Terminal climaxes display chorus-like characteristics, though they are thematically independent sections.'* (Osborn, 2013:23). So, the *terminally climactic ending*, becomes the focal point, or pay-off for a long form outro, different to the rest of the song. Battles' (2015) track *Yabba,* for example, explores the terminally climactic ending (05:00).

The DJ, the single author, in their act of mixing all elements of the tracks, in the cross-fade, the mashed up, and syncing and programming of beats, has changed the role of the post-rock drummer, to a post hybrid-western drumming style. There is a tension in the articulation of this timbral virtuosity within a rock-band setting, due to the complexity of linking and syncing the 'single authors' of electronic music and making it work within a band dynamic. William Bruford, drummer of the band Yes, discusses a new style of collaboration with the machine in the thesis *Making It Work: Creative Music Performance and the Western Kit Drummer*.

> *In light of the digital age redefinitions which see the computer as a musical instrument and the inputting of data as performance (Burnard 2012), both musico-humanist and musico-technological creators may be said to function as composers, performers, and producers in collaborative acts of grooving.* (Bruford, 2017 :59)

As Bruford remarks, the 'machine' or computer is exchanging with the drummer in generating creativity, relating to the earlier concept of the authenticity loop, an example of which could be in a recording setting playing with programmed loops, which can be randomised, and the drum can response in real-time. To articulate this live, a hybrid approach to the drums is adopted and Stella Mozgawa, (drummer of the band Warpaint), discusses this new exploration of a hybrid between rock and electronic music acts:

> *I don't think people have completely explored the limits of […] hybrid performance, yet. […] And then there are these new school, primarily electronic acts. But the grey area or the kind of the centre of that Venn diagram, I don't think that's been explored to its logical conclusion, just yet. I think there's a clumsy kind of pioneering spirit that now, or has, revolved around that small kind of niche market in music for the last maybe 10 or 15 years and I think that's only going to develop in a really interesting way over the next few decades.* (Mozgawa, 2020)

This 'grey area' discussed by Mozgawa, is reminiscent of Betts' comment on electronic artists using sound design as a tool of changing musical form within hybrid performance. As Betts and Mozgawa comment, this is informing a new timbral virtuosity, creating a new hybrid musical language and virtuosity between harmony, structure, form and timbre.

Chapter 5 Post-Digital, Liveness and the Machine in Post-Rock Practice

Chapter 5 is organised into the theme of post-digital as a material, process and how this is translated (through themes of Liveness) and articulated in composition, recordings and performance in the post-rock context. The creative act of sound reproduction is under critical scrutiny due to the interruption of a 'proper' sound source, a post-digital practice, as Sterne comments:

Sound reproduction is doomed to denigration as inauthentic, disorienting, and possibly even dangerous by virtue of its "decontextualizing" sound from its "proper" interpersonal context. (Sterne, 2003:21)

Sterne is highlighting the assumption in musicology and in popular understanding that the 'proper' mode of music performance is live, in person, a body physically using instruments to generate sounds. 'Proper' is read to mean authentic, and authenticity is perceived to be in the body of the musician, their physical relationship with the instrument, and with the audience in the room. Post digital practice, with the blending of analogue and digital music (Cramer, 2015), workflow with syncing computer systems and devices, and the use of advanced digital sound production with its limitless timbre possibilities are explored through my practice with *Enid – Yes!* (2021) and *Series of Studio Experiments* (2019) (Chapter 6). If post-rock interrupts the 'proper' sound source of the individual musician, as Sterne states, then where or what is 'live-ness' in post-rock music recording and performance? This chapter explores the themes from Sterne's 'decontextualizing' of sound and Osborn's (2017) 'source deformation' to argue that sound reproduction in a live context is disrupting traditional perceptions of creativity in post-digital performance, in the context of rock-derived genres (RQ3).

5.0 Post-digital

Post-digital aesthetics and materials are informed through the creative engagement of technology, with both the wanted (and unwanted) sound and music created, which is encapsulated in Katz's (2010*)* concepts of 'sonic auras' and 'performative quotations' from *Capturing Sound: How Technology has Changed Music.* Hughes (1991) discusses in *The Shock of the New*, that initial responses to new creative tools or technology can be literal, or logical, but then emergences happen, with creative acts beyond the intended use of the technology. These initial stages of using new creative music tools can cause issues of integration of creative practices for the individual, and following this, integration of the tools in collaboration with others. Consequently, a new language for post-digital aesthetics and performance practice is developed.

5.0.1 Cascone's and Cramer's post-digital

Cascone's (2000) defining post-digital article *The Aesthetics of Failure: "Post-Digital" Tendencies,* discusses the post-digital aesthetic informed from the 'machine failures' and the development of DIY cultures from this, with open-source audio programming software such as Pure Data. In this article, he writes about a community of music creators, rather than academics and professionals, who are using their surrounding sounds and immersive environment with technology as their musical materials, which might be perceived as unwanted material, mass data. The world we live in now, is surrounded by and immersed in technology, with glitches, errors and clipping, with the exposure of machine failures as a post-digital aesthetic.

> *But more specifically, it is from the "failure" of digital technology that this new work has emerged. […] even the noise floor of the computer sound cards are the raw material composers seek to incorporate into their music*. (Cascone, 2000:13)

Cascone's interpretation implies that the 'failure' gives a sense of authenticity as it is a direct

response to a lived experience within digital technology and relates to Katz's (2010) *Sonic Auras*. Katz (2010) returns to the concept of Walter Benjamin's 'aura' (2008 originally published in 1935) in which he argues that through technology the artist's 'aura' is lost, but Katz proposes the capturing of mechanical errors and mistakes is authentic in our lived-in experiences. The impact of the 'failure' in sound, as Cascone (2000) describes, impacted a music genre: 'glitch'. He discusses this genre through the works of 1990s techno artists Panasonic and Oval, to subgenres of drum and bass and trip-hop with Aphex Twin, Wagon Christ and Goldie. The bassist Tom Mason, in his interview, comments on Cascone's article:

> *I was reading a paper about glitch, […] Cascone's one about glitch music and how to declare digital artefacts and celebrate them within music. Jungle is weird because it utilises the technology more than any other genre but is still trying to digitally create something that sounds very natural.* (Mason, 2019)

Mason notes that a genre like jungle is inspired by this post-digital aesthetics but is inherently inspired to use the DAW and specifically the sampler, to enable human expressions within production. In response to Cascone's post-digital and aesthetics of glitch, I argue that post-digital practice is the contemporary form of composition and performance we find ourselves in, with all our current digital tools of music creation we have (DAWs, samplers, sequencers and loopers). Post-digital practices are creating a different form of authenticity and 'aura' through the creative engagement with the technology.

Cramer's chapter (2015) *What is 'Post-Digital'?* orientates a discussion on post-digital culture, the 'messy state' of the aftermath of the digitisation of artistic disciplines and technologies. Cramer (Cramer, 2015:20) expands on the concept that a digital view is a reductionist view, constituting parts, simplifying, a techno-positivist viewpoint. Cramer discusses the cultural rejection of techno-positivism, and those post-digital-only functions when repurposing in relation to digital media – vinyl as 'anti-CD' or cassette tapes as 'anti-mp3'. In rejection of the

digital viewpoint, a post-digital view is anti-reductionist as it presents an ecosystem of components, a mess, a collage, a deconstruction of parts, a blurring of the acoustic and electronic.

Post-digital aesthetics and ethos aren't as clear or binary as acoustic versus electronic and this is evident in multi-track recording (Watson, 2020:11). Watson discusses the narrative of the fear of analogue technology being replaced by digital versions, with the DAW greatly improving editing and affordability as a tool. The post-digital era enables collages of sounds, an approach to both acoustic and digital sources, with less emphasis on the choice of materials and tools but more on the conceptual goal of the music:

> *It doesn't matter whether it's soft synth or analog synth or a guitar through 500 pedals. What are you trying to achieve? It's less of a conscious electronic versus acoustic or traditional versus unconventional decision. It's very much about satisfying the role in that moment or achieving the goal musically, compositionally.* (Mozgawa, 2020)

Mixing processes of the old and new technology are subjective to the musical goal, compositionally or in performance. Within the post-rock context, the post-digital aesthetic can be applied to the guitar (chapter 5.3) and the band which challenges the craft of the instrument and is difficult to articulate in live settings.

5.0.2 Sonic aura and performative quotations

The sense of space and ambience of a room-recording, of a time, space, and location, applies a *sonic aura*, with the wanted and unwanted sounds captured. For example, our perception of the unwanted sounds in a recording could be glitches, errors, or distortion clipping. In any recording music practice, defined as post-digital, all elements of the recordings can be seen to have sonic aura, as Katz (2010) states here:

…. the sonic aura surrounding the sound can also be captured. By "aura" I mean two things: the reverberation that imparts a sense of space, and the slight but constant ambient noise—a patina, perhaps—that is a by-product of imperfect recording fidelity.

(Katz, 2010:149)

This reflection on the *sonic aura* builds upon Walter Benjamin's (2008) concept of *aura* in his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. A broad summary of Benjamin's argument is that when music is recorded, and it is removed from its original settings, this reduces its temporal identity. Benjamin defined the aura in terms of an art piece being in one place and time with a single author. In music, this would mean that to capture this 'aura', the imperfections are recorded in addition to the perfections, creating a sonic aura embracing both human and machine faults: a post-digital aesthetic. In a post-digital era, machines, and the technological tools we use to create music are becoming intrinsic for musicians and practitioners. If this post-digital material is presented in this space, and performed and recorded in real time, a cohesive 'sonic aura' can be present. A full discussion on Benjamin's aura is outside the scope of this thesis, but the concept of the aura is a helpful tool in this research to interrogate the definition of liveness and authenticity in post-rock.

Katz (2010:149) also remarks on digital sampling and the concept of *performative quotation.* Digital sampling, with tools like Ableton Live, can be launched with a single click in real-time in performance space, therefore recontextualising cultural meaning and temporality. In this post-digital performance situation, displacement of the source enables a decoding of meaning of timbre and timing and a sonic relationship to a unique sound event. The concept of *performative quotations* relates to Kannenberg's cultural *Soundmarks* in *Soundmarks as Objects of Curatorial Care* in (Kannenberg, 2019) and refers to site-specific sound recordings which have become objects of cultural value.

The complex forms of digital information and materials that surround us, created by multiple creative tools and DAW's in music production, disrupt the sense of creativity and flow of

recording practices and performance. From the perspective of my own practice, the complexity of an integrated approach to technology, not only with oneself but in collaboration with other, causes a disruption in flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). The balance between analogue and digital is at a fundamental 'messy' state, as Cramer states (Cramer, 2015:24). Luigi Russolo comments, in the Futurists' manifesto *The Art of Noises* in 1913, that all varieties of sounds or 'noise' need to be explored, and he argues '*We must break out of this limited circle of sounds and conquer the infinite variety of noise-sounds*' (Russolo, 2004:11). Now, over one hundred years later, with seemingly limitless technology and production techniques with which to play with sound, how do we work in the post-digital space? This continuous act of deconstruction and reconstruction through music-studio real-time practice is central to popular music production and performance, with new constructed aesthetics. The play with post-digital materials and aesthetics invites us to consider what emerges from the interaction between musicians, artists, and technology.

<u>5.1 Creative music technology – processes of imitation and collaboration</u>

Within human-machine interactions, there is a discussion (Holland *et al.*, 2013; Leman, 2016; Maestri, 2017) about the role of technology, whether the technology is a continuous aid or an extension of human expression and behaviour or, as some theorists suggest, a posthuman conditioning. If we are playing post-digital material in the context of composition, recording and performance, how are we as musicians processing it? How do we collaborate and interact with this 'other'? Are we as musicians imitating the machine, and how are our playing and interactions being shaped or disrupted by these collaborations with the machine in *post-digital performance*?

<u>5.1.1 Human-machine interactions (HMI) in music production and performance</u>

In her chapter *Glitched and Warped -Transformations of Rhythm in the Age of the Digital Audio,* Danielsen presents her viewpoint on the impact on technology and DAWs with music production and music expression:

> *According to the latter position, so-called posthuman expressions are not after or outside of the human repertoire at all. Instead, they should be considered simply the most recent expansion of that repertoire […]. This would mean, in turn, that the microrhythmic manipulation made possible by the digital audio workstation represents, in principle, nothing new, because there is nothing new in the fact that new technology produces new forms of knowledge, expression, and behaviour or that it expands the scope of the human imagination*. (Danielsen, 2019:610)

As Danielsen highlights, as music technology evolves, human expression incorporates this technology: new methods of collaboration with the machine engender new playing behaviours. This has occurred throughout the history of instrument and audio technology.

Technology in contemporary society is complex in the same way as the relationship between human creative expression and the impact of technology is complicated. A post-humanist discourse examines whether one's subjective understanding of real experiences beyond the boundaries of embodied existence are extended, and Danielsen acknowledges this post-humanist expression with the use of DAWs. A contemporary example of post-human collaboration in composition and performance is the artist. Holly Herndon. In her most recent work *Holly +* (2022) she creates an AI music twin. Users can interact with this twin, by uploading audio, and through vocal modelling and machine learning, can generate vocals with the twin. Another example can be found in her album *PROTO* (2019) in which she collaborates with her self-created AI. The AI named Spawn, which Herndon creates with Mathew Dryhurt, is taught to sing with them, with the intention of making technology less dehumanised. Herndon's work relates to Donna Haraway's essay *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1991) with the combination of machines and organism. The human-machine relationships and interactions which Herndon explores could be argued as active interaction through AI, beyond her own artistic expression. In terms of this research project, I position my creative relationship with technology within popular music practices as complex, and the technology extends my human expressions as I continuously interact with it and with other musicians. The technology I interact with informs a paradigm shift in recording practice, in which I capture my creative 'digital signatures' (Danielsen, 2016) (chapter 2) and this is explored in practice within the *Enid – Yes!* project (Chapter 6).

5.1.2 Simon Emmerson's paradigms

Simon Emmerson (2011) theorises on electroacoustic music in his chapter *Combining the Acoustic and the Digital* and he asks, *'How does the instrumentalist respond literally and musically to this disembodied other?'* (Emmerson, 2011:168). Emmerson conceptualized two paradigms to discuss this evolving relationship between the human and machine. He states

that electronic mediation has disrupted the body-object-sound relationship in contemporary music practices. These paradigms (in Fig.5 and Fig.6 below) are applied to mixed electroacoustic music (instrument and tape) or 'real-time' studio practice (with instruments and recording devices). The roles in the human-machine relationship range from the passive extension of the sound of the instrument, for example amplification of voice through a microphone, to the active algorithmic and generative collaboration with machines, for example in live audio coding.
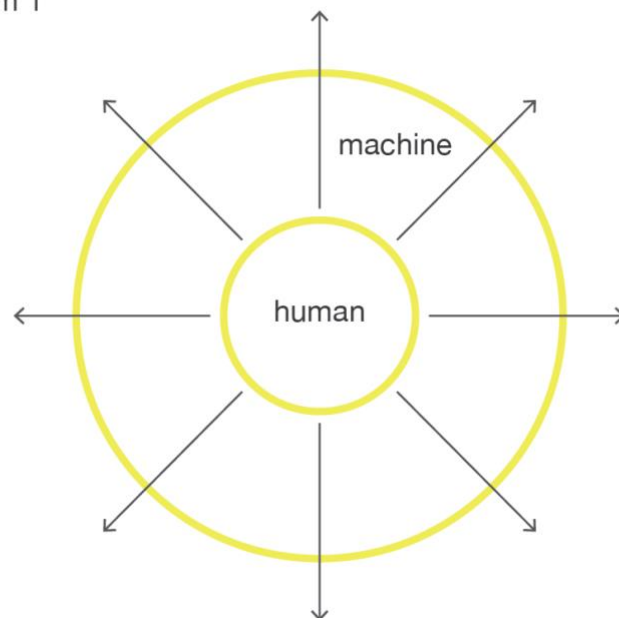
Fig.5 First paradigm of human/computer relationship (Emmerson, 2011)

The first paradigm (Fig.5) describes the machine as an extension of the human body, extending the instrument beyond physical and mental limitations of human performance, actions and perception.
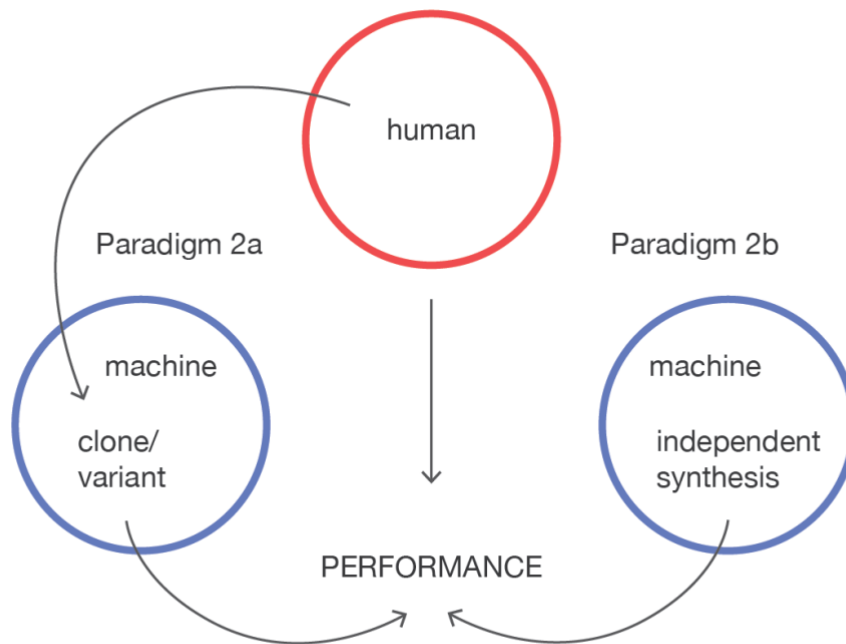
Fig.6 Second paradigm of human/computer relationship (two possibilities) (Emmerson, 2011)

The second paradigm (fig.6) is divided into what Emmerson refers to as 2a and 2b. 2a sees the role of the machine as generating another performer, being a clone, variant, or mirror of the decision-making and creativity of the musician. Paradigm 2b exposes the machine as a performer, having separate and independent contributions which enable new creative interactions. Emmerson's paradigm models, taken from *The Oxford Handbook of Computer Music* (2011) is a constructive tool to analyse the 'I' in the exploration of live studio performance practice and is applied and expanded in this research. In *Enid-Yes!* (2021) in chapter 6, musicians and engineers mix and blend acoustic sound with electronics, they in turn become instrument-builders and designers and the interrelationship between the 'I' and others becomes complex.

5.1.3 The instrumentalist perspective of HMI and changing roles.

The complexity of authorship through HMI within the roles of composer, performer and instrument builder leads to an environment that enables the challenging of liveness in performance and can enhance or disrupt spontaneity. Like Emmerson's paradigms, Osborn's and Blake's *Timbral Triangulation* (2019) concept is that in studio recordings there is a triangulation of the instrument, the technology and producer, and this informs a dialogue in the creative process of the recording. In performance, Osborn's concept of timbral triangulation could be applied to *Clasp Together (beta)* from composer Harry Whalley (2015) in which he expands the role of the performer to interact through an EEG control device to an artificial neural network, thus raising questions of agency.

'Human expression' and 'velocity' through music technology are traditionally controlled with MIDI CC data and issues arise with MIDI syncing on all devices (drum machines, sequences, or pre-existing loop) and can lead to disruption of creative flow. Mozgawa discusses her use of Sunhouse MIDI triggers and the potential of a hybrid approach using the studio as a collaborator:

> *And I think that technology like that, for example, bridges that gap in a way that I've never necessarily seen before. And it is very exciting because it includes that human flaw and that human expression into a primarily electronic world. […] But it's very possible that kind of bionic technology starts to influence the creative process of musicians.* (Mozgawa, 2020)

Mozgawa comments that bionic technology is beginning to influence the creative process, especially in terms of the technology for a drummer. The MIDI triggers enable her to put the 'human' in the collaboration with the machine for a continuously natural physical velocity, through the integrated approach with the acoustic drum kits. To enable the machine as a

collaborator in the rock-derived setting, an almost bionic technology is needed to enable technology to be both a performance tool and studio tool, thus closing the gap between the studio and the stage. This is explored in practice in *Enid – Yes!* (2021) in chapter 6.

5.2 Liveness

The concept of the live singular event has been interrupted through the process of editing and digital reconstruction. The singular event is electronic mediated and translated into artistic mediums that are viewed/listened through our televisions, screens, and speakers, blurring the live and recorded (RQ2). In the early transition from live theatre to television, it was thought that television would simply replicate the theatre, but instead a new '*mediatized'* discourse evolved (Auslander, 2002:23). The perception of what we see on television is manipulated through a collage of realities which have been edited. In television we accept the construction and deconstruction of sounds, but with music this acceptance of manipulated sound is still in its early stages, and Auslander expands on this:

> *If television once could be seen as ranking among a number of vehicles for conveying expression or information from which we could choose, we no longer have that choice: the televisual has become an intrinsic and determining element of our cultural formation.* (Auslander, 2002:2)

If television informed a new discourse, which became a fundamental element of the cultural formation, what elements of electronic mediated performance in popular music have become intrinsic to our cultural norms? The discourse of *Liveness* within musicology of popular music is inherently linked with a definition of authenticity which predates television. In the first radio broadcasts, it was considered dishonest if a record was played. Auslander comments that, within the 1920s and 1930s, '*listeners therefore had good reason to assume that the music and other programming they heard on the air were being performed live*.' (Auslander, 2012:4). The listeners' assumption was that if there was a featuring live band, this representation was a true experience and the singular live event. Within the early transition in recording practices in popular music, the assumption was that the recording would simply replicate the live performance. The translation from the live performance to the recording, for the listener,

seemed as if what they were hearing was live (recorded in a single time and space). It may in fact have been heavily edited, thus music recording production therefore became its own 'mediatized' discipline. As Cox (2004) discusses, from the 1960s and 1970s the technological development of the music studio challenged the translation of the live performance for the listeners, and he comments '*This had particularly unsettling effects on both classical and popular music, both of which place a premium on presence, the realness of the singular live event' (Cox, 2004 :113*). Tom Mason (2019) acknowledges the superiority of the single live event of classical music over digital performance practice:

> *Even for me when I go to a classical music concert, I'm still blown away – I can take my performer hat off and just enjoy the sound, that acoustic sound is something that people in the digital age are not used to experiencing and I think that trumps everything else.* (Mason, 2019)

Mason describes the impact of the live experience, but comments that to compete with the acoustic presence of the singular classical music event *'people have been working more creatively to be more performative with electronic music' (*Mason, 2019:43). In the electronic music genre, there was initially an illusion that the translation from the record to the performance could not be reproduced 'live', as audiences' expectations were difficult to fulfil, but again, a new discourse evolved. An example of a band fitting within this discourse of performance is Kraftwerk, and Grönholm (2011) comments on their reinvention of live performance with electronics:

> *Soon they discovered that technology was not only a way of distancing themselves from the conventional notion of performed authenticity in rock music but it also helped them to adapt themselves to live performances*. (Grönholm 2011: 76)

Kraftwerk's famous performative style was a robotic and static aesthetic which was their authentic group representation of performing with the machine. The use of technology in

performance acted as tool for dislocating from the rock music canon. In relation to Auslander's electronic '*mediatization*' of performance, Kraftwerk's performance is evidence of a paradigm shift of recording and performance collaboration with the machine, in cultural understanding and music contemporary practices. A post-digital musician merges and deconstructs the notion of liveness through the exposure of multiple roles in the creation of works within the performance. Whalley's (2021) *Towards Authophony: authenticity, texture and intention*, conceptualises a diagram to illustrate the casual chain of intention within music.

improviser → audience or singer → audience.

composer → arranger → score →conductor → musician(s) → recording → radio → listener

Fig.7 Casual chain of intention (Whalley, 2021)

As Whalley (Fig.7) displays, the chain of roles and exchanges in composition, recording and performance, can be evident or hidden between the highly constructed and processed. In EDM performances the chain of intent can be less visible through the effects of liveness and tension between the composer and the listener, as Butler comments:

> *The increasing technological mediation of performance has led to complex tension between the expectations audience members bring to events, the technologies performers choose to use and how they perform.* (Butler, 2014:6)

The choice of EDM instruments, if there would be a turntable, a mixer, or a laptop, can change the audience's expectations and the audience themselves are part of the performance through dancing. There is an exchange between musician and dancer. As Butler notes *'Without the audience cooperation and participation, this crucial quality will not emerge'.* (Butler, 2014:112). This critical quality is shared by Ferreira (2008) who illustrates (Fig.8) an interrelation between the DJ, human movement, dance floor and machine sound.

```
                              DJ
                    _____
                   /                   \
                  /                     \
        human    /     PERFORMANCE       \   machine
        movement|                        |   sound
                 \                       /
                  \                     /
                   _____/
                          dancefloor
```

Fig.8 Performance in electronic dance music corresponds to the actualization in the DJ-dance floor relation of the

shared reality of human movement and machine sounds (Ferreira, 2008)

Electronic-mediated performances, such as DJing and VJing have become normalised, and Ableton live sets and live looping are now expected forms of performance, but is this expected in post-rock performance? A contributary factor which challenges the notion of liveness in popular music practices is the recording paradigm shift in which multiple authors and sound sources are presented. Therefore, the translation from studio to stage is interpreted and articulated differently, and this concept of authentic performance differs from the perspective of art, performance art, and the popular culture practice of the musician. I argue, with reference to Ferreira (2008), that the interrelationship between the DJ, human movement and the dance floor, that triangulation between the engineer, the musician and stage is interrogated in practice (*Enid – Yes!* chapter 6) to gain insight into the disruption of traditional notions of creativity and liveness with technology in the context of rock-derived genres (RQ3). The blurring of this 'realness' is linked to the examples of artists Radiohead and Björk in their electronic culture influences and their developments of hybrid studio instruments, that blend the acoustic and electronic worlds, and create a new 'live'.

5.3 Hybrid studio-stage instrument

To translate the recorded to the live, I define a space of post-digital performance which is explored. Within post-digital performance, an evolving adaptation of rock instrumentation is happening, and for this to be articulated, a *hybrid studio-stage instrument* is created. For this to be formalised, there must be an acceptance or exchange with the machine. Danielsen states:

> *In the age of digital reproduction, then, the "machine" is not what it used to be. Its music can be deep and groovy or high-paced and frenetic; it can expose its mediating technology or conceal it; it can even evoke the human touch of the pre-digital era.* (Danielsen, 2010:3)

As Danielsen acknowledges, in the age of digital reproduction the machine acts as stimulation for insightful play and imitation of the human. If the machine, or the studio, is a compositional and performance tool and collaborator, then, for the individual, a hybrid studio-stage instrument is created, to enable an integration of others and the studio. In *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* (1985) Jacques Attali, in the chapter *Composing,* discusses the concept of the post-repeating era, in the age of digital reproduction, with techniques such as sampling informing the invention of new instruments.

> *If representation is tied to printing (by which the score is produced), and repetition to recording (by which the record is produced), composition is tied to the instrument (by which music is produced). We may take this as a herald of considerable future progress, in the production and in the invention of new instruments*. (Attali, 1985:156)

Attali acknowledges the age of digital reproduction and, with the components of *representation*, *repetition* and *composition,* applies a dialogue, a feedback loop between the three. In relation to Attali's (1985) themes, a definitive instrument of the post-digital era is the

DAW. Sound artist and composer Matthew Collings comments on this regarding the DAW and Ableton Live:

> *I can't remember what the exact figure is but it's around 10,000 hours that you need to master an instrument – if you think about people with computers that time is probably double that in order to manipulate digital software and harness texture or find your own voice using Ableton.* (Collings, 2020)

There is a perception that music-making that is crafted through computers takes less time to master. The issue within authorship of work, is the shift from craftsperson to designer (Pye, 1968) within music production. Collings emphasises that to produce an expression of self through a DAW is a craft. The issue is the lack of transparency of the mastery of the instrument with the works reduced to the use of a single laptop, so there is little exposure to the process. Composers may even not want their sounds associated with an instrument, Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Etude, Studies I* (1952) is described as the first tape composition (Maconie, 2016:31) in which he did not want to be associated with pre-existing instruments, electronic organs, and synthesizers, thus subverting audience expectations. The DAW as an instrument is theorised within EDM (Bell 2018, Butler 2014, Danielsen 2019, Zagorski-Thomas, S. 2019) and in Bell's (2015) paper *DAW democracy? The dearth of diversity in 'Playing the Studio,* he comments '*The idea that the recording studio is a neutral space where music is simply captured to a medium is misguided; recording is not just a product, it is a process too.'* (Bell, 2015:131) The processes in the creation of the music within the DAW can be hidden, and the integration of a DAW as an instrument is also hidden in performance. My practice takes this as a new instrument for the stage. I argue that a post-digital performance is anti-reductionist, offers an electronic mediated performance space which is not solely reliant on a computer or laptop but can build a complex integration of systems.

5.3.1 Between music cultures: Björk and Radiohead

Björk and Radiohead are artists who play 'the studio' and developed instrumentation to articulate the live, *hybrid studio-stage instrument*. I analyse their discographies and their engagement with rock and electronic music cultures which have impacted their innovations of the hybrid studio-stage instrument. The hybrid studio-stage instrument presents timbral virtuosic expression with their instruments and different spaces for collaboration: a space between musician, engineer and producer in collaboration with other players and the machine.
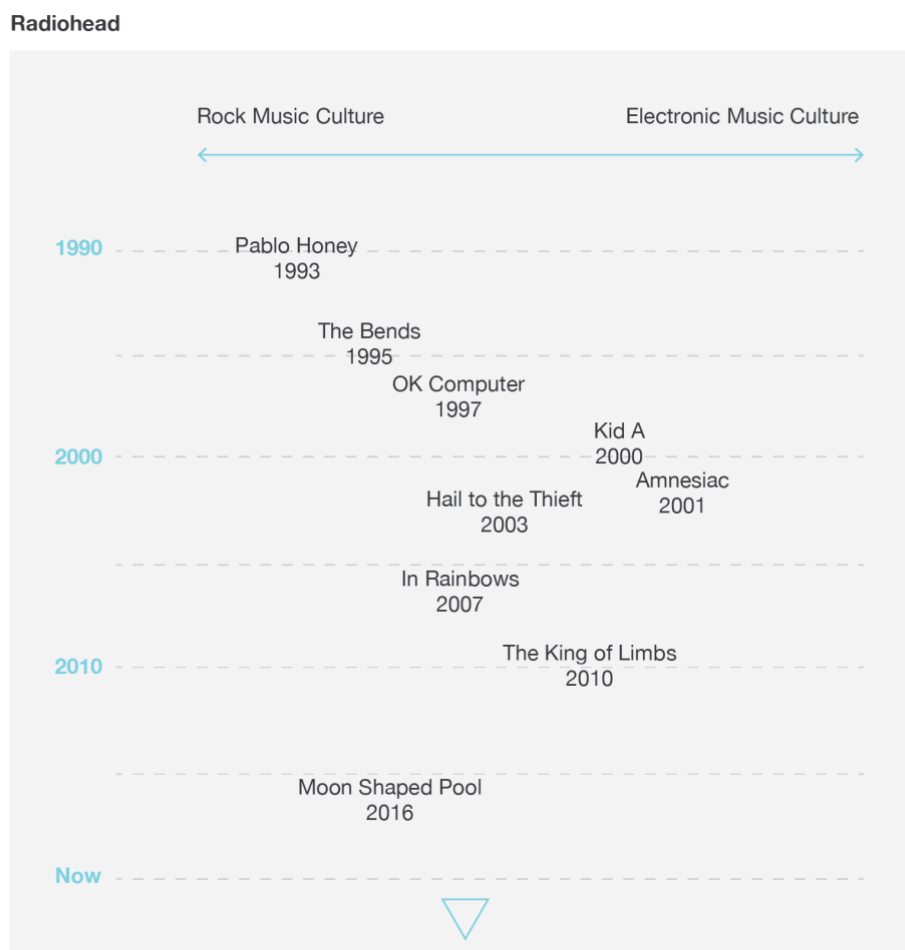

Radiohead

Rock Music Culture   Electronic Music Culture

1990 — Pablo Honey
1993

The Bends
1995

OK Computer
1997

Kid A
2000   2000

Amnesiac
2001

Hail to the Thief
2003

In Rainbows
2007

2010 — The King of Limbs
2010

Moon Shaped Pool
2016

Now —

Fig. 9 Radiohead's discography rock to electronic culture paradigm (2022)

A post-rock band which has explored this space, and has been academically theorised, (Letts, 2010 Osborn, 2017, Rose, 2019) is Radiohead. The fundamental shift (Fig.9) in the aesthetic

and production between their debut album *Pablo Honey* (1993) to *Kid A* in (2000) questioned the guitar as the rock signifier and invented new sonic possibilities and interactions with new technologies. Radiohead's work puts into question the status of the electric guitar as the primary signifier in rock, as progressively their electronic music influence has deformed and decentred that instrument's importance. Producer Mark Roberts discusses Radiohead's play with authenticity and their discography:

> *I think that's where Radiohead kind of personified it if you look at their progression. It ends up as something quite like glitchy electronic and then you listen to Pablo Honey and it's almost a grunge/rock record and I like that authenticity of it.* (Roberts, 2019)

In the track *Go to Sleep* on *Hail to the Thief* (2003) is evidence of the aesthetics works of 'glitch' and the post-digital with the values of a rock production. To perform this live, guitarist Jonny Greenwood (Fig.10) developed a hybrid-studio stage instrument in which he produces a digital stutter effect through the integrated audio programming software MaxMSP.
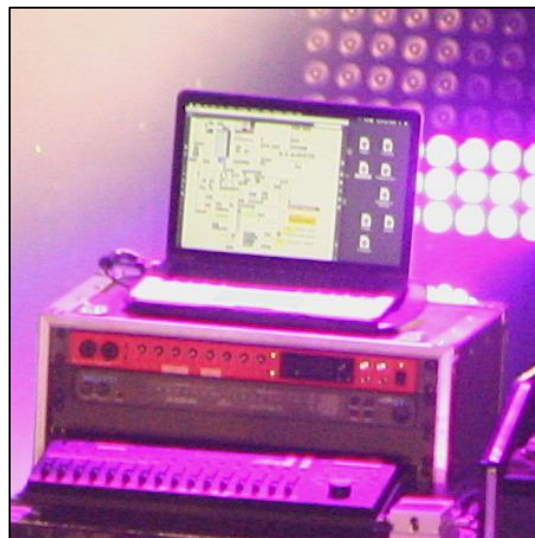

Fig.10. *Jonny Greenwood- MaxMSP "Stutter" patch on track 'Go to sleep' on album Hail to the Thief (*2003)

The digital stutter effect in *Go to Sleep* is evident in the guitar solo at 02:44. This post-digital execution of the guitar, the machine-made effects of stuttering or glitching, disorientates the listeners with the generative splicing of the audio and playing back in a variety of speeds, and this machine collaboration is brought to the stage. The stutter effect is evident in the studio

recording of Talking Heads' album *Remain in the Light* (1980) produced by Brian Eno. The track *Born Under Punches (The Heat Goes On)* at 02:43 also has a stutter, and yet a highly expressive guitar solo, an almost anti guitar solo in both examples. Talking Heads' guitar manipulation in the 1980s created this ambition in the studio, an ambition at the time which was limited to the fixed studio. Another example Osborn (2017) analyses is from Radiohead's guitarist, Ed O'Brien, in the track *The Gloaming,* also from *Hail to the Thief* (2003). At 00:56 in the track, O'Brien uses the sustain pick-up on his guitar to create reverb guitar swelling effects, not obviously sourced from a guitar, which Osborn describes as '*Source Deformation'* (2017:105). From the perspective of the audience, however, there are effects of disorientation to the source of the audio, the author of works, and the display of the crafting of sound. Composition and production conceal the process, but in performance it is important to reveal the process to expose the 'authenticity' of the sounds.

Fig. 11 below, illustrates Björk's full discography which includes the last album, *Life's Too Good* (1988) with post-punk band The Sugarcubes. Since her work with The Sugarcubes*,* there has been a rapid engagement with electronic music culture, illustrated by the album *Debut* (1993) with her collaboration with UK producer Nelle Hooper. Björk has historically been collaborative with technologists, programmers, musicians, sound artists and studio engineers.
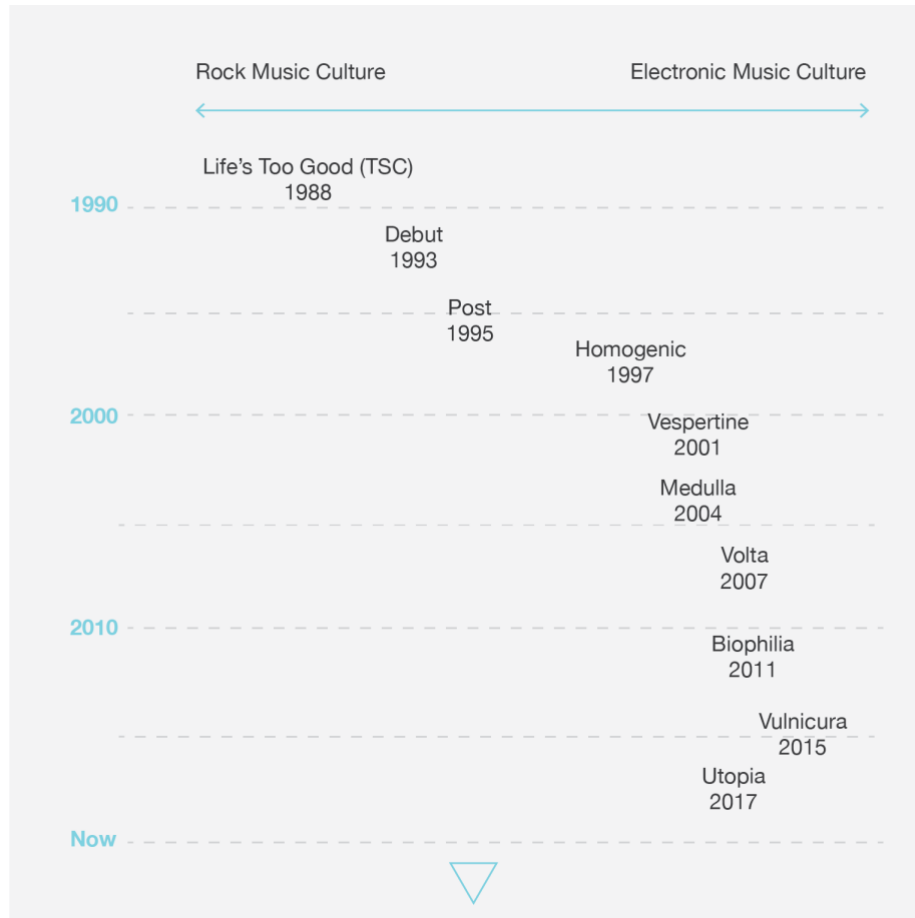
Björk

Fig. 11 Björk discography rock to electronic culture paradigm (2022)

Fig. 12 The *reacTable instrument* (2007)

Biophilla (2011) was released as an app, and *Vulnicura* (2015) was released as a VR album.

In terms of hybrid-studio stage instruments, in her album *Volta* (2007) she collaborated with

Günter Geiger, Marcos Alonso, Sergi Jordà and Martin Kaltenbrunner with the instrument The reacTable *(Fig.12),* a visual modular synth, programmed within Pure Data which enables control of VCOs, LFOs and sequences. Björk's development of the hybrid-studio stage instrument brought technology to intrigued popular music audiences, as Roberts comments '*how people started playing like machines, that cross pollination from different scenes'.* (Roberts, 2019). This '*cross pollination'* of post-genre practices (chapter 3) further suggests the challenging of authenticity within the music recording paradigm, in which not only could multiple genres be sampled (removed from the original source), but then they could also be articulated and played from the studio to the stage (RQ2). In response, through the chronically reflected discographies of Radiohead and Björk, in which their binaries of practice are explored from the perspective of impact of rock to electronic music cultures and production values, I applied this into practice (chapter 6). I respond to examples of artists and groups who explore post-digital performance through hybrid studio-stage instruments, and I create and reflect on my own practice, to interrogate the disruption of traditional notions of creativity and liveness with technology in the context of rock-derived genres.

<u>Chapter 6 Compositional, Recording and Performance Processes, Insights and Outcomes</u>

Desmond Bell (2019:324) argues that artists who challenge their own practice (media, music or arts disciplines) can build a distinctive voice in research. Through the experience of making and doing, their "inner voice" can be captured with the combination of critical thinking and their studio and professional practice. Through the application of artistic practice restrictions (PR's), I investigated the "inner voice" of my practice processes within composition, recording and performance practice to investigate my research questions. This chapter is divided into the following sections:

- **Concept** - *Artistic practice restrictions*

  Within my practice-as-research methodology, artistic practice restrictions were a tool to interrogate my music studio composition, recording and performance practices for analysis and critical reflection. The design and application of artistic restrictions was to investigate my research questions.

- **Compositions *-** *Series of Studio Experiments* (SE) (2019) Practice restrictions were applied at the compositional level. The four compositions were analysed with conceptual diagrams to enable the visualisation of the music process and output. These demonstrate the blurring of binaries between studio/stage and pop/experimental, informing my research questions**.**

- ***Recording and Performance - Enid-Yes!*** (EY) (2021) practice restrictions were applied at project (album) level. The conceptual album was designed to deconstruct music studio recording processes, leading to a single live performative take. The musicians and engineer formed a single unit as live performance was simultaneously effected, recorded and mixed. *Yes!* was performed in front of an audience with no post-production and was committed to tape. Hybrid studio-stage instruments were designed

for collaboration between the engineer and musicians to capture the post-digital performance. The album was supported by timecoded audio-visual documentation. The research artefact comprises of a vinyl record.

All recordings were captured in either the University for the Creative Arts, Film and Media Centre music studio's live room or the theatre space from the control room (technical specification in appendix 3). All audio and video listed timecodes can be found in the appendix (appendix 4). The overview timelines of SE (2019) and EY (2021) practice projects with their durations and track titles can be found in appendix 3 and upcoming figures (Fig.13 and Fig.14).

6.0 Artistic practice restrictions

At the beginning of this research, I was concerned with the question of how I could translate my music practice into practice-as-research. I have previously engaged as a guitarist in building eco-systems of sonic expression. I felt comfortable when integrating post-digital technology (amplification, effects, samplers, audio samples) into my practice. The practice restrictions I created were to de-construct this comfort zone I had as a musician, to try to understand and break down my relationship with technology and equipment. I applied a variety of extended playing techniques to explore the guitar as a source of timbre and texture, including gestural techniques such as strumming, harmonically slapping, tapping and hitting the body, and studio techniques with real-time digital manipulation through audio effects, sampling, warping and looping. I questioned this engagement, and this questioning has enabled practice to become research. Is studio engagement beyond the acoustic instrument the norm in my practice, and does it shield the vulnerability of the self in composition, recording and performance? Does removing my 'self' from the source build a new sense of creativity and exploration, distancing from the ego and the need for traditional notions of virtuosity and musical skill?

To develop practice into research, I needed to disrupt my natural practices in the studio or on stage and then apply restrictions to challenge my habitual playing. This research enabled a creative laboratory to explore the emergence of the hybrid studio-stage instrument, with themes of imitation, virtuosity, spontaneity, restriction and flow. The PRs were designed to push myself out of my comfort zone within the process of creation. Through the tool of critical reflection, I built a dialogue between theory and practice, through the application of PRs to practice in SE (2019) and EY (2021) to discuss harmony, timbre, structure, and recording techniques within the rock derived genre. Conceptual diagrams of the visualisation of the outcomes, with the applied PRs to my recording of my studio compositional experiments are shown in chapter 6.1.

This practice contributes knowledge to the field of popular music recording, composition, and performance studies and music practice-based research and as such, explores the 'third' space of post-digital performance. These PRs enabled interrogation of my relationship to the material (authorship and authenticity); the process of adapting in electronically mediated practices (human-machine interactions); and the emerging compositional and performance strategies (new paradigms of music collaboration).

6.0.1 Applying artistic practice restrictions to the research questions.

In relation to this research, practitioners worked within various boundaries: budget, resources and taste all played a part. However, in PAR, the restrictions were explicit and related directly to answering the research questions through practice itself. The restrictions created the boundaries that enabled this. The PRs were theorised and then applied in practice, initially within compositions and then to project level (an album). I provided visual maps and lists of the practice restrictions which included instrumentation and timecodes. The research questions and practice restrictions are listed below:

Research Questions

RQ.1 In what ways is journalist Simon Reynolds' 1995 definition of post-rock still applicable and how can it be applied to current practice? How can his definition be developed from a practice-based perspective?

RQ.2 How does post-rock prompt shifts in the binaries between studio and stage, live and recorded, and experimental and accessible, in contemporary popular music practice?

RQ.3 How is post-digital performance disrupting traditional notions of creativity and liveness with technology in the context of rock-derived genres?

Practice Restrictions

PR1. The guitar to be used as an exploration of timbre and texture.

PR2. Acoustic, electric or hybrid instruments to be recorded at source, played, sequenced, or triggered by the musicians present in the room.

PR3. All compositions to be recorded as single performance takes.

PR4. Performances to be collaborative and improvisational between musicians, engineers, and technology.

PR5. A recording that is committed directly to stereo analogue tape and restricted to the length of a vinyl record.
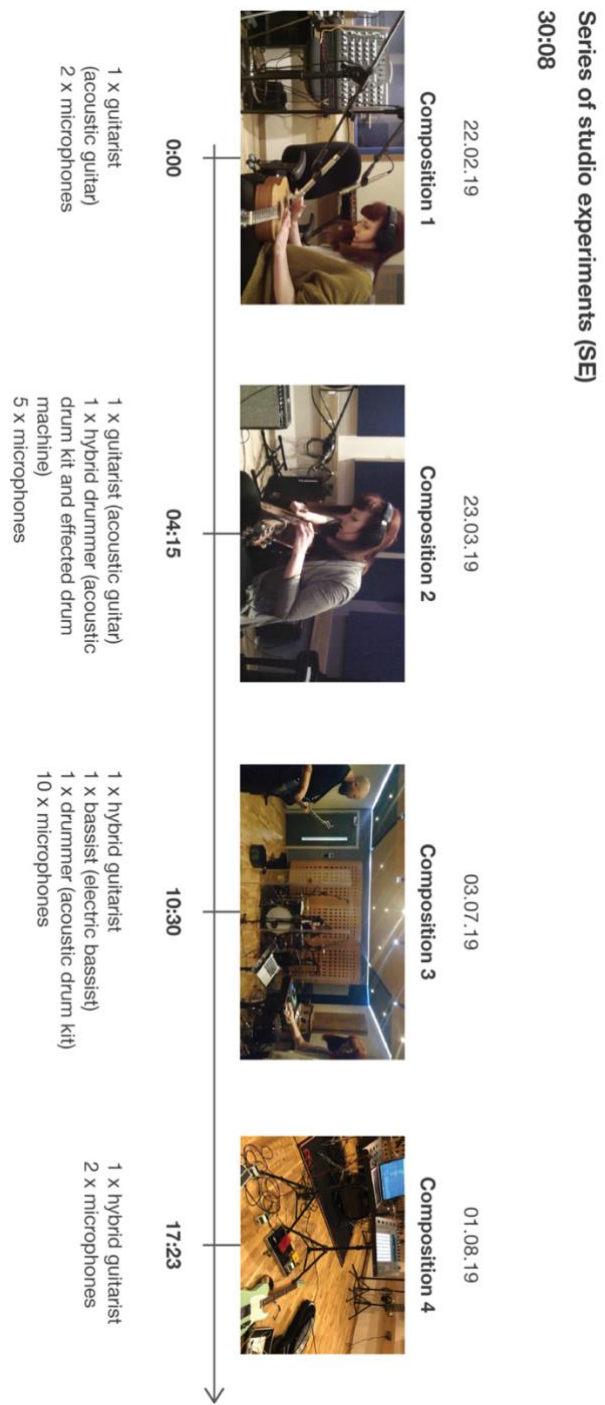
Fig.13 *Series of Studio Experiments* timeline (2019) -

Includes dates, time stamps, recording descriptions of the PR's and images of myself and the live room. Images

of myself and equipment reflect my ongoing preoccupation with the 'I' and authorship.
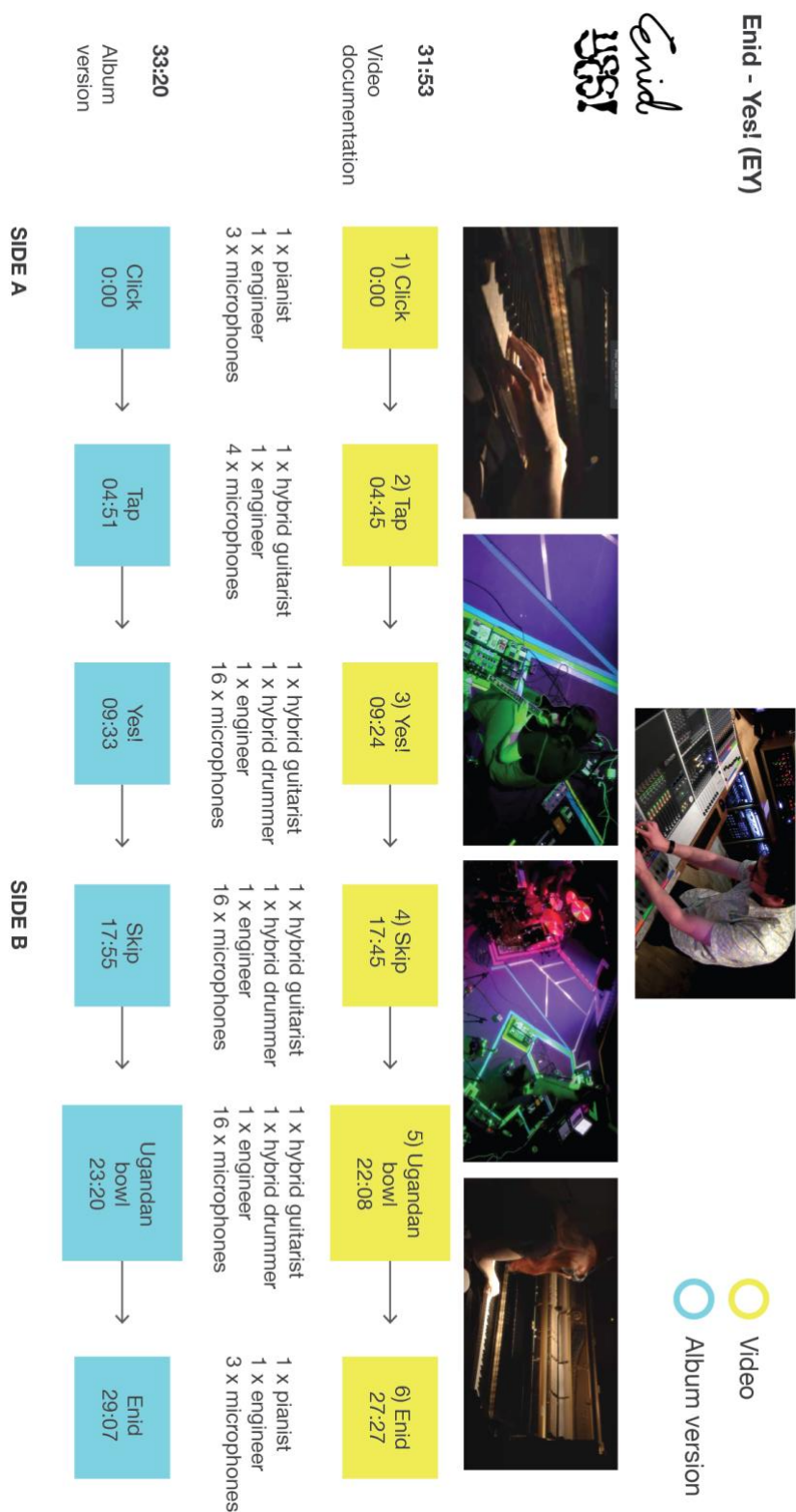
Fig.14 *Enid - Yes!* timeline (2021)

6.0.2 Justification of applied artistic practice restrictions.

For practice to be articulated into artistic research, and to investigate my three research questions, I applied five artistic practice restrictions. My justification is listed below.

PR1. The guitar to be used as an exploration of timbre and texture

To interrogate whether Reynolds' 1995 post-rock definition (chapter 3) is still applicable in current post-rock practices (RQ1) and applied from the practice-based perspective I deconstructed the guitar as a source of timbre and textures through audio processing and studio techniques (sampling, looping). Through critical reflection, insight was gained on the changing role of the guitarist, as I analysed the extended and studio techniques I applied to my instrument throughout this restriction. Through a staged process I expanded into a hybrid-studio stage guitar instrument to achieve this PR. Through critical reflection, the production and perception of timbre and texture between myself, mediating technologies (Smalley, 2007) and human perception (*Blake and Osborn, 2019)* is revealed from the practitioners point of view. I achieve textual guitar playing through source deformation...sonically exploring a loop-based ambience which is a highly adopted characteristic of post-rock guitarists. As a post-rock guitarist, I adopted the role of producer to shape the sound and timbre and this was embedded in the processes of expression in the composition, recording and performance. This hybrid guitar is conceptually visualised within diagrams (chapter 6.1) to plot its position in the binaries between the studio and stage, from pop to experimental and through its interactions with other instrumentation. I reflected on the contrasting interrelationship between the guitar with the bass, drums, drum machines and the 'studio'. The experiments conducted in *SE* informed the conceptualisation of *Enid- Yes!* (2021) with the design of the hybrid studio-stage guitar instrument (chapter 5.3), to understand how it disrupts creativity and liveness post-digital performance and this interacts with the drummer and engineer in a 'performed' recorded studio post-rock album.

PR2. Acoustic, electric or hybrid instruments to be recorded at source, played, sequenced, or triggered by the musicians present in the room.

The tradition in rock music narrative is that authorship is gained through the band writing and performing their own material, which is captured in the recording studio and reflects an authentic reality of their sound. In post-rock practice, the musician adopts the hybrid role of musician and producer by embedding music production techniques with their own instrumentation, thus their authentic sound. This restriction of capturing all sound, if this is played, sequenced or launched is designed to capture the sonic aura of post-digital performance in which digital and analogue sources of sound are presented all in a single space. Both *SE* and *EY* present the acoustic and digital sound world in the design and implementation of hybrid studio-stage instruments to allow musicians to employ studio production techniques (RQ2) in real-time with each other in their composition, recording and performance. In his exploration of post-rock, Reynolds discusses a shift in the recording paradigm. (RQ1) With the employment of studio techniques of sampling and looping, the application of PR2 enables insight from a practice-based perspective and the impact it has on the musicians themselves. In *SE* and *EY*, recordings both audibly and visually challenge the concept of authenticity and liveness, through the perception of the source-bounded (Smalley, 2007) to source-deformed (Osborn, 2017) via music studio recording practices. By employing critical reflection, insight into the artistic process and the disruptions this causes to musicians in a post-digital performance space is presented (RQ3).

PR3. All compositions to be recorded single performance takes

In both *SE* and *EY*, there is a deconstruction of the popular music recording process (RQ2), with no post-production applied. The commitment of 'authentic' single takes (Benjamin, 2008) enabled the capturing of the 'sonic aura' (Katz, 2010) and challenged themes of liveness (Auslander, 2002). The pre-production stage was expanded with the hybrid-studio stage instruments enabling electronic music production to be played and captured in a single time and place. PR3 was designed to gain an understanding of post-rock's exploration of Liveness (RQ3) (Auslander, 2008) that challenged the authentic experience of a what is 'live' due to electronic meditation in music performance practice. In the genre's engagement of liveness, a third space in the recording paradigm was explored by means of the mediating technologies. PR3 enforced instinctual performance through a shared authorship between producer, engineer and musician. To achieve PR3 for *EY* a hybrid approach to the mixing desk configuration was adopted to simultaneously record and perform live with input from room micing, close micing and DI.

PR4. Performances to be collaborative and improvisational between musicians, engineers, and the technology.

The collaboration between the musicians, engineers, and the technology (RQ3) of the practitioners (chapter 5) was discussed with their experience of the capturing of the post-digital performance with the blurring of boundaries between live and recorded, experimental to pop, and studio to stage (RQ2). In *SE* and *EY,* insight was gained through critical reflection into whether there was an increased flow and more creativity because of the restrictions imposed. In *EY*, PR4 wa applied. This led to a complication in the authorship of the recording process as a result of the engineer being presented with the studio as their instrument and disrupting notions of agency of the musicians. Through critical reflection, the dynamics between the guitarist/pianist, drummer and engineer were revealed (RQ3). Timecodes are provided for

cohesive moments of collaboration with the capturing of post-digital performance. PR4 exposed the design/craft dichotomy between the instant agency of the musicians and engineers and their creative use of technology. PR4 encouraged human flaws and imperfections with technology, post-digital engagement in which traditionally the 'unwanted' or 'mistakes' of sound in post-production can be edited within the reflective process.

PR5. A recording that is committed directly to stereo analogue tape and restricted to the length of a vinyl record

In relationship to RQ3, post-digital cultures, as Cramer (2015) discusses, are a hybrid of 'old' and 'new' media technologies in which '*digital information technology no longer focuses on technical innovation or improvement, but instead rejects the kind of techno-positive innovation narrative'* (Cramer, 2015:21). PR5 applied post-digital ideologies and aligned with post-rock practices. Despite the possibility of endless channels and edits within the digital world, the restriction of all channels, setting and automation into single stereo mix in the production stage engendered shared authorship. PR5 enforced a commitment to the conversion from multichannel digital recording to analogue stereo recording. *EY*, through applied PR5, challenged concepts of authenticity (chapter 3 and 4) and liveness (chapter 5) within the deconstruction popular music recording practices in which it captured the post-digital performance and reflected collaboration through the electronic mediation of the studio (RQ3). The awareness of the musicians of the 'experience of process' was heightened with the collapsing of the traditional stages of recording (RQ2), with the removal of post-production and mixing. The subsequent restriction on control in post-production was designed to gain authorship for the musicians and engineer. The immediate 'red light' syndrome (Askerøi and Viervoll, 2016), at the time of the recording, further committed the musicians to all creative decisions during the performance.

6.1 *Series of Studio Experiments* (2019) composition

The *Series of Studio Experiments* (*SE*) comprises of four selected compositions from 2019. To investigate the research questions (RQ 1,2,3), each track implemented different levels of restrictions which impacted on the number of instruments, the number of collaborators (musicians and machine) and the level of studio practices integration (number of microphones, effects, DAWs and applied recording techniques).
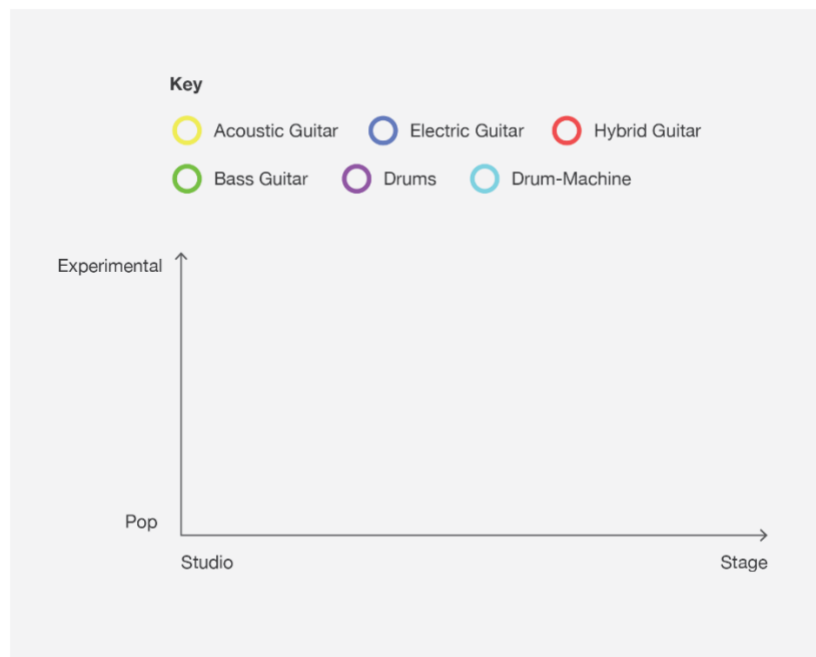
Fig. 15 Conceptual x/y diagram with instrumentation key (2019)

The interrelationship between these factors can be visualised using the conceptual diagram Fig.15**.** Through the application of the practice restrictions, the following factors were discussed:

- Composition techniques.

- Recording techniques.

- Practice analysis with conceptual diagrams.

- Critical reflection of the recording processes, collaborations, and output through practice restrictions.

6.1.1 *Series of Studio Experiments*: alignment with research questions

The *SEs* were designed to investigate the research questions and the compositional outcomes which I conceptually visualised as the X and Y axes of a graph (Fig.15). These axes represent RQ2's binaries. The X axis represents the exploration of binaries between the studio and stage**.** The Y axis represents pop to experimental, in reference to Osborn's *Spears-Stockhausen continuum* (Osborn, 2014). The conceptual diagrams display the instrumentation in each composition (Fig.15) and represent a visualisation of the interrelation between the role of a musician and their instrument, and how this is impacted by their use of recording technology.

6.1.2 *Series of Studio Experiments*: Composition_1 (00:00)

Fig. 16 *Acoustic compostion_1 studio experiment* (2019)

Composition_1 is limited to a solo acoustic guitar (Fig.16) captured by a pair of SM81 condenser microphones positioned at 12th fret for a realistic representation of the recording of the acoustic guitar in the live room. I tuned to guitar open tuning (D A C# E A D), which, when openly strummed, is harmonically represented as Asus4/D chord. I changed my playing style to a lap position with the employment of extended guitar techniques (body hits, harmonic taps and slaps), I explored producing timbral and rhythmic imitations of EDM music production

aesthetics. For example, using the guitar's body to imitate a reverberant kick, simulating sequenced drum machine kick pattern, or by tapping strings to create natural harmonics, I imitated electronic synth pad sounds. Through PR1, with the guitar in the lap position, it removed the desire to adopt my habitual playing style. In this position, habits of fretting the instrument to play melodic motifs and riffs are limited. Additional reverb was committed to the recording with the Vermona DSR-3 and this was monitored back within my headphones. This trick to overcome 'red light' syndrome within artist monitoring is to enable musicians to feel more relaxed, and, through this compromise, additional reverb can then translate into the recording itself, which applies to Emmerson's (2011) paradigm 1 (Fig.5).

Fig 17 Acoustic studio composition_1 experiment diagram (2019)
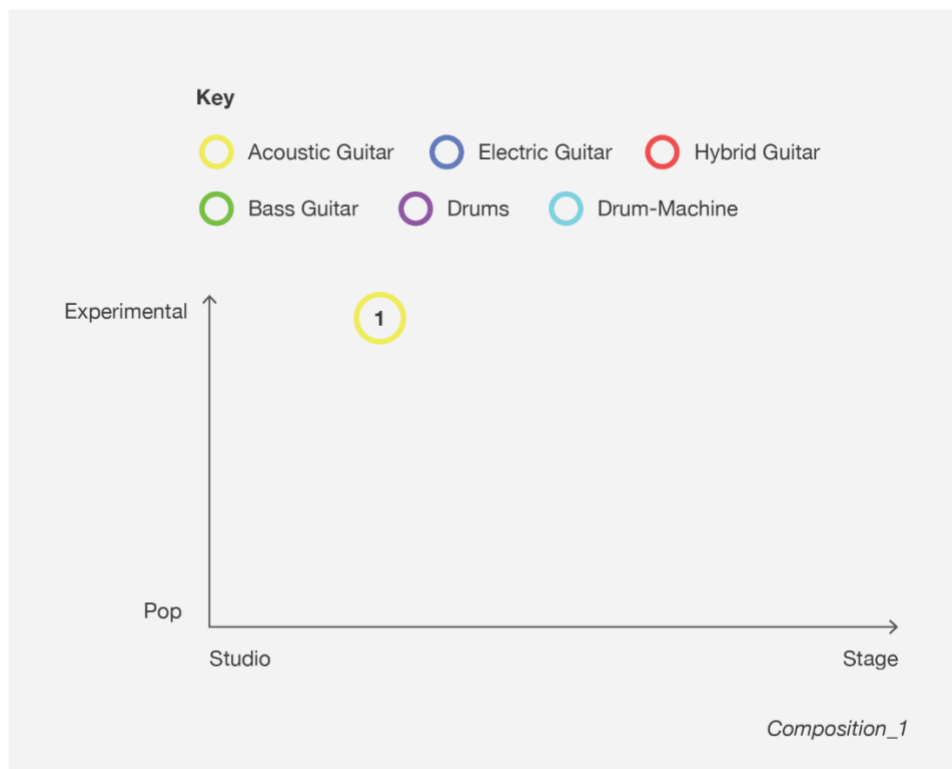
As represented in Fig.17 the composition explored experimental extended techniques which emerged through the application of PR1. Upon reflection, I feel that there was a vulnerability in the restriction of PR1, being limited to one acoustic instrument in the recording process. Through the discomfort of this composition, I feel recording technologies are inherent in my

practice (RQ2) and can't be separated. Indeed, as Betts (2019) comments, he feels 'naked' without the form of expression through electronics. Within music traditions, the acoustic instrument signifies craft (Pye, 1968), musicianship, and authenticity in virtuosic expression. However, I feel that, in contrast the applied PR's, the composition_1, with the highly processed guitar, exposed the 'sonic' aura (Katz, 2010) beyond the instrument and 'I'. Composition_1 relates to Reynolds' (RQ1) definition in practice, in which post-rock's *'dismantling of trad rock's dramatic mechanism such as "identification" and "catharsis"' (Reynolds, 2004:358*) is highlighted. The introverted and reflective performance style that was captured with adopted extended techniques informed a new form of virtuosity in rock, with the guitar as the source of timbre and textures.

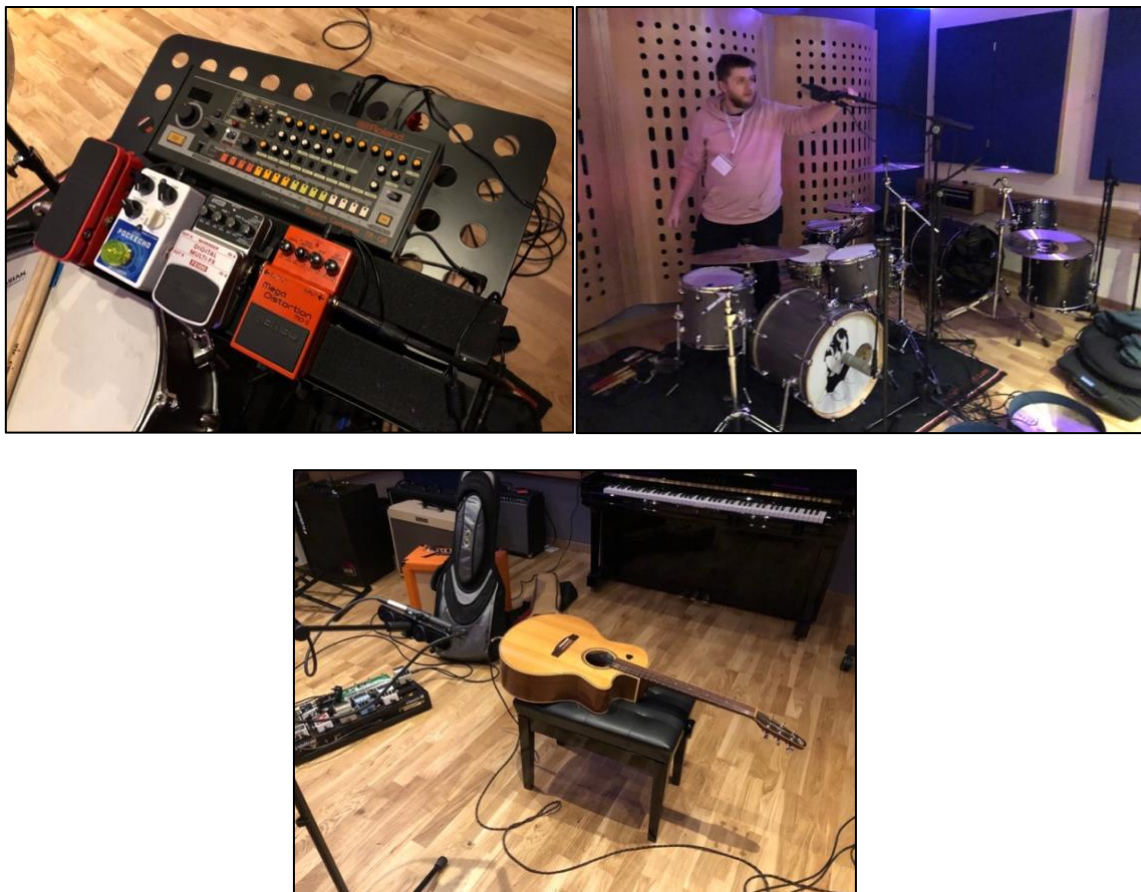6.1.3 Series *of Studio Experiments*: Composition_ 2 (04:15)

Fig. 18 Acoustic guitar, drums, drum machine composition_2 studio experiment (2019)

Composition_2 explored the collaboration between an acoustic guitarist and a drummer. The drummer simultaneously played both an acoustic drum kit and a Roland TR-08 drum machine, with the latter being processed in real-time by guitar effects pedals (delay and distortion). This composition explored spontaneity and flow inspired by the *authenticity loop* (chapter 3.1) and music techniques adopted through the imitation of the machine. Through the player's improvisation, a natural A/B structure formed with call-and-response from players cueing and initiating solo sections from each other. I used extended techniques, experimenting with the use of a brass rod over the frets to create a tremolo and oscillating effect. The acoustic guitar was used in an exchange with electronic aesthetics to enable an increase collaboration within the improvisation. This is evident at (07:10) where the guitar motif was formed. Still restricted to my acoustic guitar, I collaborated with drummer Mark Glaister and with the Roland TR-08 drum-machine in composition_2 (Fig.18) and, I argue, this form of collaborating with technology is a core element of post-rock. In free improvision (Corbett, 2016) technology can be used as a catalyst to generate randomised and/or rhythmical motifs. In pop and rock, a click track is used for cohesion for performance with studio tracks. Post-rock's relationship with technology differs from other genres in that post-rock uses technology to create a third space of collaboration, between playing and programming with the integration of digital technology.

I was apprehensive before this session, as I was restricted once more to the acoustic guitar. I questioned how the acoustic guitar could imitate and interact with both drum sources (Fig.19), the metronomic and synthetic drum-machine and with the dynamic power of the drums. In the recording session I felt limited and restricted in terms of how this instrument could contribute aesthetically and creatively in terms of responses to drummer and drum-machine. The acoustic guitar responses in this improvisation became more percussive within the interaction of the drum-machine and developing melodic lead lines. I mixed the transition, which is evident from compositions 2 to 3 (10:15). In the process in the collaboration, as Glaister distorted the

TR-08 with Boss MD-2, he intensified his drumming. The drumming became more improvisational as this intensity developed, his playing became more virtuosic and was competing with the drum-machine. At this point (09:24) the drummer took a solo and then reduced dynamically for the re-introduction of the guitar.

Limiting myself to 'normative practice' with an acoustic guitar in juxtaposition to post-digital practice adopted by the drummer, led to a discomfort. My role as a post-rock guitarist was linked to a 'third space' between playing and programming, in which there was a dialogue between the sonic eco-system of my hybrid studio-stage instrument and my guitar, which both provided restrictions and possibilities of creativity through the extension of the music technology.
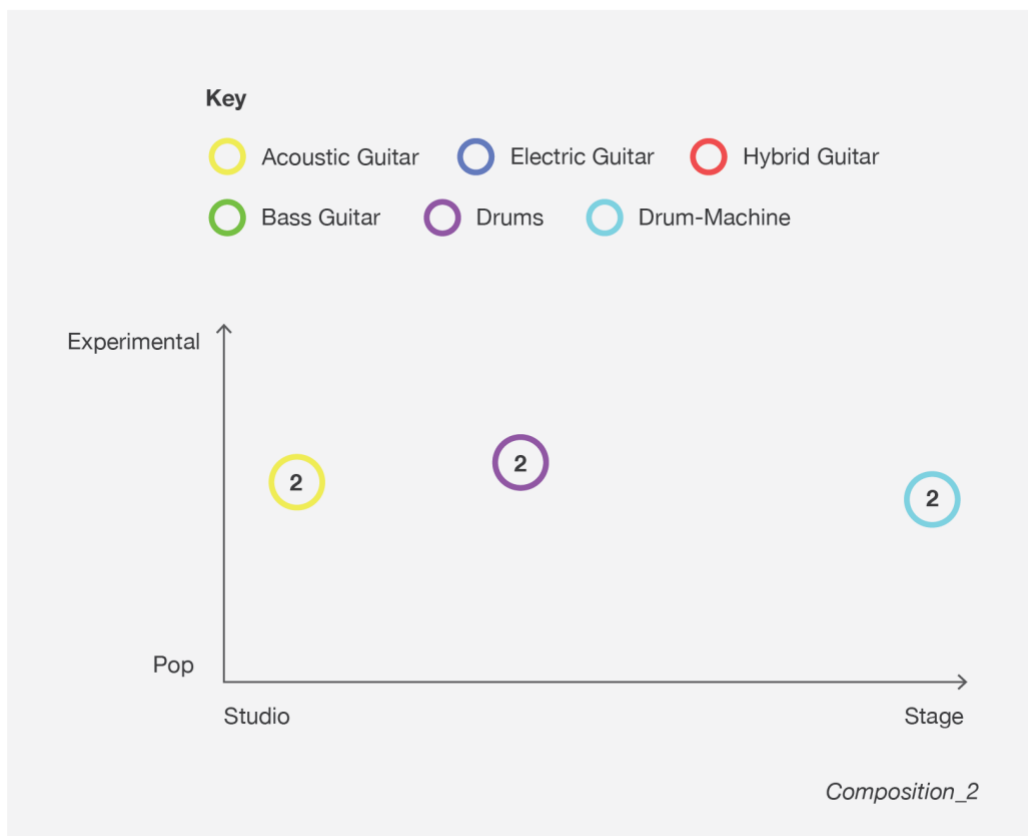

Fig 19 *Acoustic guitar, drums, drum machine composition_2 studio experiment diagram* (2019)

Both visual and melodic cues were taken from each player to initiate changes of section in the improvisation (PR4). I created a melodic motif using the extended technique of placing a metal rod and creating natural harmonics and this emerged through improvisation and collaboration. I was able to break habitual playing, in response to this new collaborative environment. The drum machine enabled a collaborative bridge, which reduced feelings of frustration and tension in the group dynamic. The metronomic nature of this, locking into the machine, put both Glaister and me at ease as we are used to playing with each other by ear. This enabled a grid for us to interplay with the machine, allowing us to play with groove within the group dynamic (RQ3). As I took my solo, I wanted an almost anti (PR1), or destructive solo, something I usually achieve through use of effect.

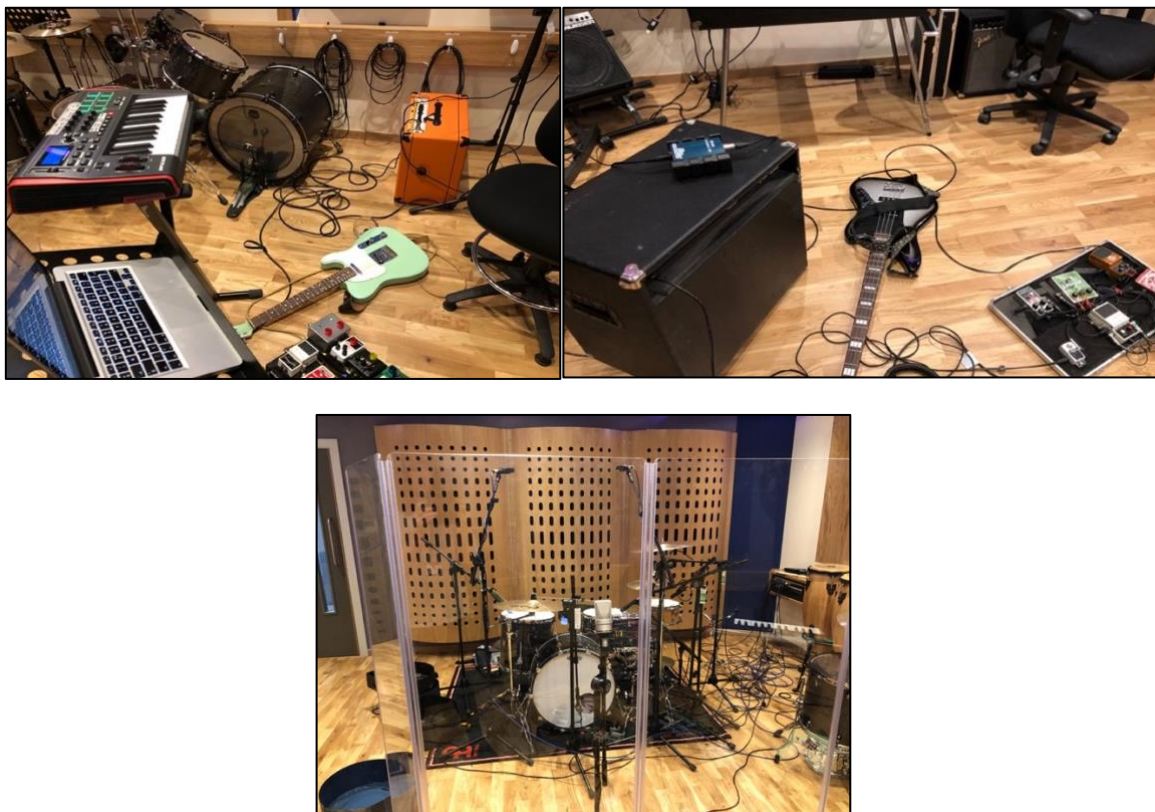6.1.4 *Series of Studio Experiments*: Composition_ 3 (10.30)

Fig. 20 *Sampled guitar, bass, drums composition_3 studio experiment* (2019)

Composition_3 was a collaboration between a hybrid guitarist (Fig.20), a bassist, and a drummer. The hybrid studio-stage instrument (Fig.21), in which I created a sonic-eco system

for the hybrid guitar, is based around Ableton Live incorporating the devices *Simpler*, for playing sampled guitars, and *Drum Rack* for triggering 808 drum machine samples. This was controlled by the Novation Impulse 25 and sent through guitar pedal effects which was then re-amped to a pair of amplifiers.
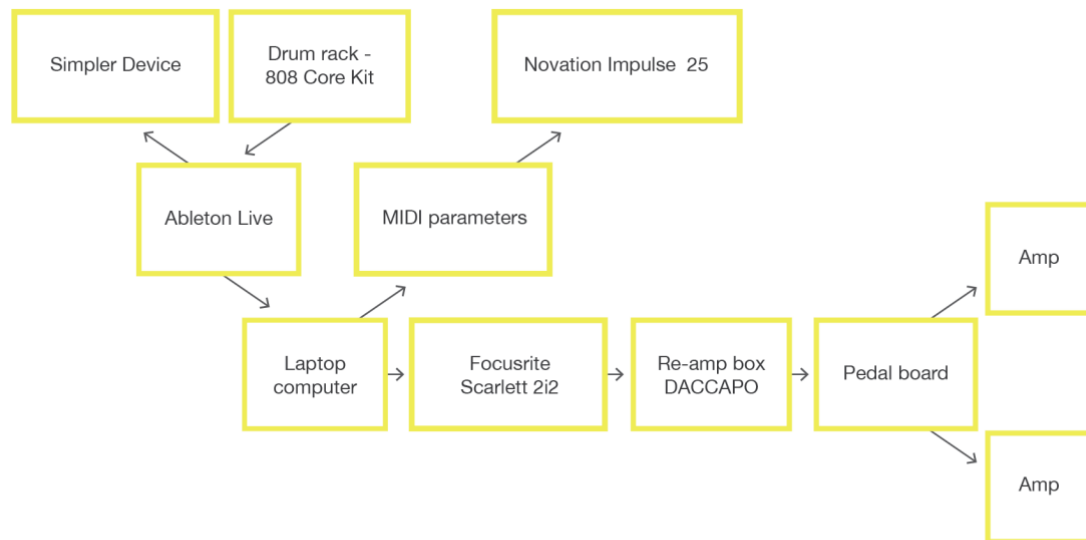
Composition_3

Fig 21 *Sampled guitar setup up composition_3 studio experiment diagram* (2019)

In composition_3, the devices that I controlled within Live (appendix 3) included filters, echo, ring-modulation, pitch bends, and arpeggiators. In addition, I used effect pedals including delays, octave shifts, distortions, and choruses. Accompanied by a bassist and drummer, I wanted to gain an insight into group dynamics and collaboration whilst challenging the role of the guitarist due to the hybrid approach. Between the players we agreed to build to three peaks, in the key of E, and at an average of 120BPM. With the 4/4 kick pattern, 16th hi-hats, 'robotic' tom rolls and the placement of a cymbal on top of a second snare drum (13:48), the drums acted as a human drum-machine and were stylistically influenced by disco, krautrock, house and electro. The hybrid guitar used the Simpler to deform the sample into an electro organ-sounding instrument. This was re-amped into the live room giving the flexibility of a synthesizer and drum-machine in one. There was evidence of collaboration through the

technology and the players, for example when there was a climatic cluster of unified hits at 12:01 and the tension is released in the outro at 16:47.
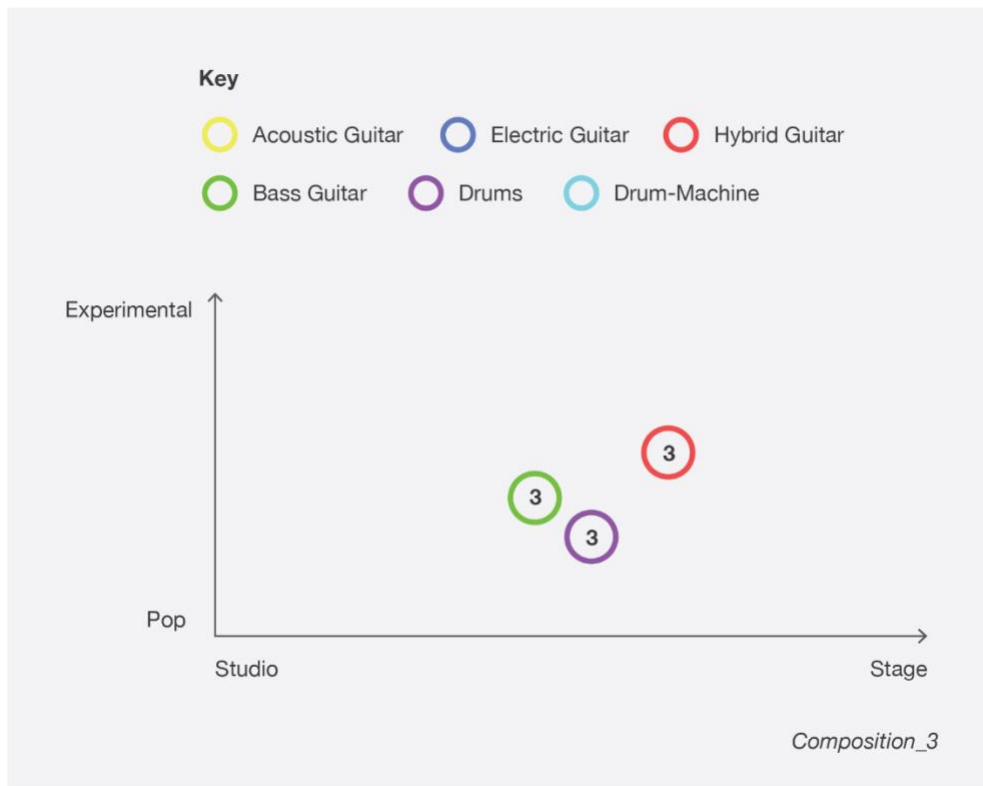
Fig. 22 *Sampled guitar, bass, drums composition_3 studio experiment diagram* (2019)

Approaching my guitar as a sampled sound source allowed me to feel more within my creative comfort zone. The use of live studio controls, faders, switches and effects enabled me to feel I was producing an expressive play of the 'studio'. I used an arpeggiator to automate drum hits, metronomic and machine-like expression, to which I added layers of distortion. The feeling of the hybrid studio-stage instrument, playing the melody, triggering snare samples, hitting effects enabled an extended self of expression, and allowed me to think more in terms of timbre creation. The spontaneity was enhanced (Fig.22) due to the hybrid guitar instrument interplay between the bass and drums, which is plotted centrally between popular and experimental music practice. I created textures through the hybrid studio-stage instrument, which was built to replace rock's traditions of power chords and vocal delivery. As the guitarist,

I switched between the established part of electric guitar performance in using effects pedal in music rock styles, and the integration of samplers with triggering and arpeggiator (RQ3) enabled a hybrid 'third space' in post-rock performance.

6.1.5 *Series of Studio Experiments*: Composition _ 4 (17.23)

Fig. *23 Resampled guitar composition_4 studio experiment* (2019)

Composition_4 was the real-time improvisation recording, using the hybrid studio-stage instrument and a drum machine. It was a two-stage process. For stage one, (Fig.24) I spent a day in the studio doing multiple live takes with my electric guitar, working with effect pedals, the Boss DD3 Delay, Boss DD7 Delay as a looper and Boss RV6 Reverb with FV-500H expression pedal for an expressive reverb. Through PR1, stage one was to digitally reproduce my own guitar playing which was then built as an instrument within a sampler in Ableton for stage two: changing the notion of liveness. In stage two, this sampled guitar was processed through the hybrid studio stage instrument in which I can effect and loop with my guitar playing, enabling a 'performed recording' (RQ3). This post-rock approach to my guitar highlights the 'third way', a space between playing and programming which, in reflection, enhanced my creativity rather than disrupting it, (RQ3) through the collaboration between myself and the technology (PR4).
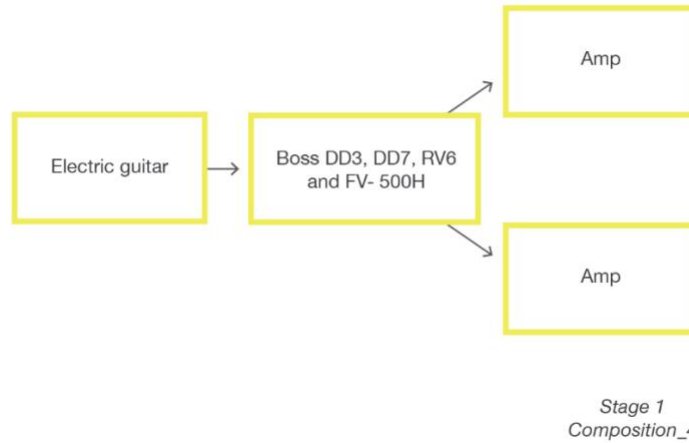
Fig. 24 *Stage 1 resampled guitar setup up composition_4 studio experiment diagram (2021)*

During stage two (Fig.25) of the process, I used all of the material from stage one as a source of sound, which I then sampled and manipulated with Ableton's Push II, thereby making digital reproductions of the sound I created that could be sampled with real-time studio practice.
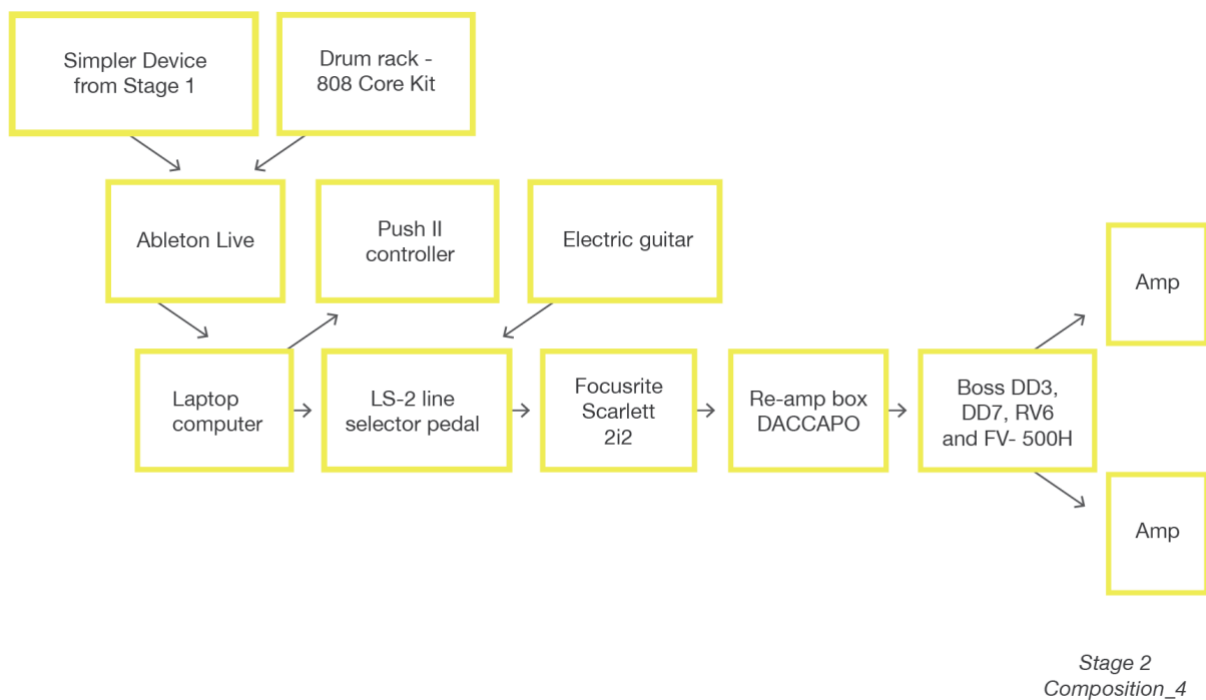
Fig. 25 *Stage 2 resampled guitar setup up composition_4 studio experiment diagram (2021)*

The composition applied sampled loops from stage one and fundamentally had a 4/4 feel, with loops overlapping and phasing into each other. There are moments of spontaneity and flow in the holding of samples with the DD3 (22:28) to create a stutter effect, and in the layering of samples (23:04), which I slowly mixed in the TR-08 drum machine in (23:28). Composition_4 presents a shift in the recording paradigm in which I sampled and looped a processed pre-recording of myself through effects, which aligns with Reynolds' (RQ1) definition of post-rock in the impact of DJing and EDM cultures. In comparison to more 'traditional' performance practices in post-rock since Reynolds' definition, this composition exposes an embedded creative practice of myself in the role of producer within the compositional process.
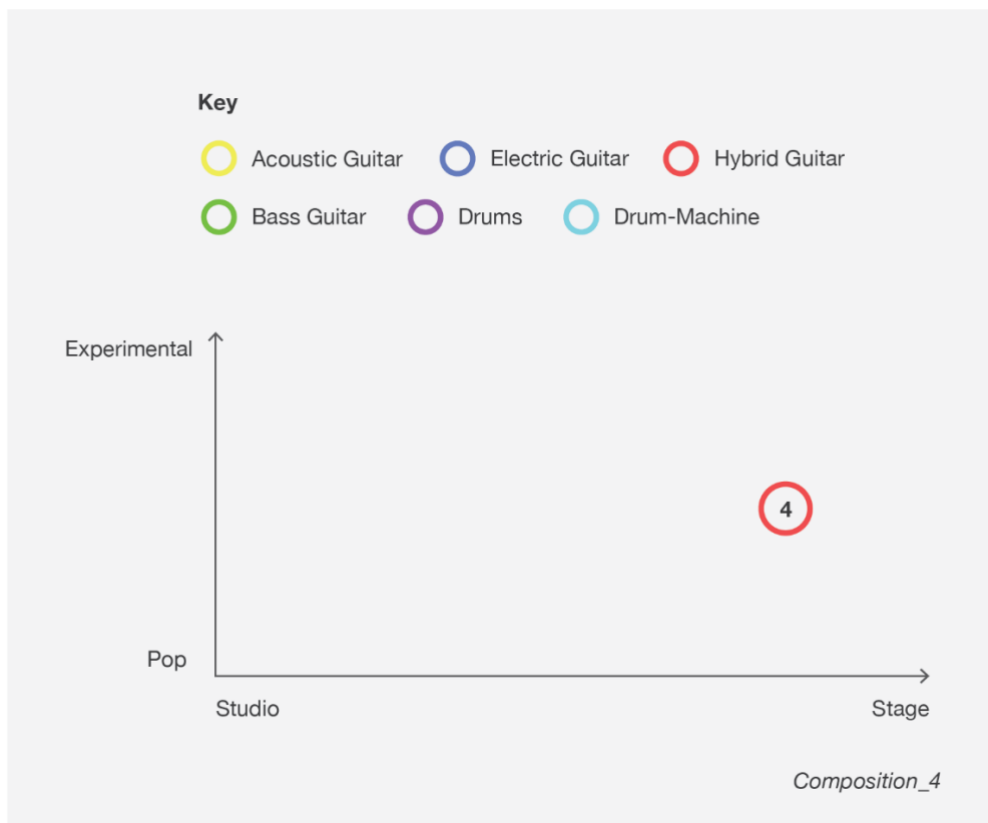
Fig. 26 *Resampled guitar composition_4 studio experiment diagram* (2019)

In this work I felt the most improvisational and comfortable (Fig.26), due to having increased control and authorship (RQ3). But there was a frustration when performing with laptops, as they were not designed to be a musical instrument. The 'machine' seemed to dictate a

predetermined composition approach, such as assuming, when applying looping techniques, that I will want to quantise to the grid. I gained authorship of my sound through construction of the instrument itself, through the network of musical components and studio processing with the Ableton Live and guitar effects I linked. Through the material which I generated through my instinctual guitar playing, I could process, resample, reconstruct and most importantly play as my own self studio-stage designed instrument. Through the development of the hybrid studio stage instrument, my control and ownership was increased and enhanced in composition_4 when compared to composition_1 with acoustic guitar playing alone (RQ3). A staged process (RQ2) of playing, capturing, triggering, and programming created a third space of creative practice, in which I was able to craft my sonic signature through the integrated practice impacted by DJ and EDM cultures (RQ1). In exploration of timbre and texture there was a compromise of agency as I played my guitar through the application of PR1. (PR4), performing in collaboration with the machine, highlighted a non-disruptive shift in the recording paradigm in post-rock performance.

6.1.6 *Series of Studio Experiments* – Conclusion
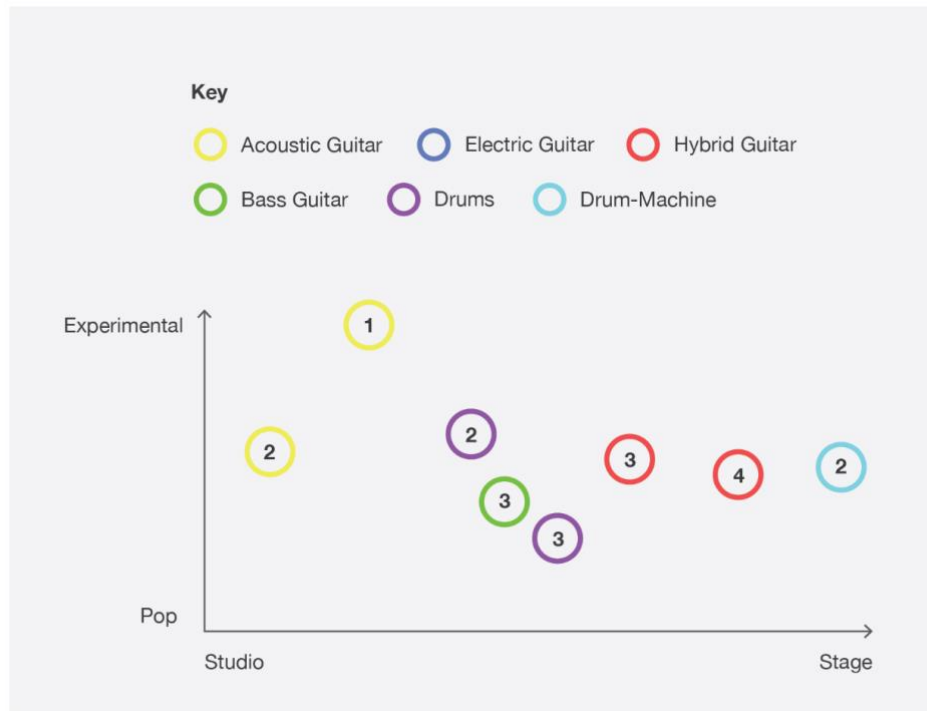
Fig. 27 All compositions of *Series of Studio Experiments* diagram (2019)

As Corbett discusses, real-time improvisational capturing of recordings and performances are experienced differently by the author (musician) and the reader (listener), but both experience the feeling of duration as time becomes 'elastic', and the process of the material is exposed in real-time.

> *The reason the phrase "real-time" is funny though, is that duration is not so simple. Listening to music in the moment is often profoundly elastic, and a concert can condense into something that zips by in a flash or stretches out into near infinity.*
> (Corbett, 2016:33)

In these studio experiments I reflected on the experience of process within the music studio environment and how this fundamentally impacts my approach to the guitar. (Fig. 27). For this experimental stage of the composition, I wanted to challenge my own practice, questioning the status of the current individual performer and their role in studio practice (chapter 5). In

applying PR3, no production was applied, for a real-time reflection of what was produced in the single space and time. Framing this research in the genre of post-rock, I have highlighted the defining features, different to other genres. Firstly, there was an emphasis on timbre or as discussed earlier, a 'timbral virtuosity'. This defining feature in post-rock is used differently than within EDM, in that the virtuosity is dissolved in the existing sound-world of rock. For example, a DJ might filter the main stereo output to emphasise transitions and 'drops' in the music, but in post-rock the technology regains authorship through the possibilities of the electronic-mediated extension of expression. The traditional act of virtuosity is embedded with the band ensemble and, from the perspective of the practitioner, dissolves the 'post' in rock performance (RQ2). From the individual perspective as a guitarist, through deconstructing my playing through practice restrictions, I achieved this act of timbral virtuosity (chapter 4) due to the blurring of the binaries of traditional acts of 'rock' virtuosity (RQ2).

Secondly, the impact of DJ culture with electronic music composition and performance practice (chapter 3) which has evolved into real-time studio practice was explored. Throughout the four series of experiments, I increased the integration of technology and collaborators (PR4) in which I applied Reynolds' (2004) (RQ1) to my practice. For example, through the composition 4, the embedded compositional practice was evidenced through a display of 'producer' style techniques in a sonically rock world. I am aware that my perspective as a practitioner is biased in shaping this research, but, with this methodology, a feedback loop from theory to practice is made, which enabled me to re-evaluate and challenge my work in a wider discussion and academic discourse.

6.2 *Enid – Yes!* (2021) composition, recording and performance.

Fig. 28 *Live performance (08.09.21) of the recording of Enid – Yes!* (2021)

Enid is a collective of artists, musicians and sound engineers. The album *Yes!* (Fig.28) is a collaboration between guitarist/pianist (Laura Lee), drummer (Mark Glaister), and engineer (James Wright). The concept of the album *Yes!* was to build a common language between the musicians and the engineer: to design the three-hybrid studio-stage instruments (drums, guitar, piano) and to provide a list of practice restrictions (PR2 to PR5) for all collaborators to answer my research questions (RQ1, RQ2, RQ3). Recording in the studio was an active part of the process and acted as a mediator of collaboration. The musicians and engineer were given parameters within which they could improvise, to provide agency and democratisation through technology. *Yes!* was recorded (RQ2) and committed to tape (PR5) whilst being performed on the stage in front of an audience and was also audio-visually documented. The album presents the engineer mixing in real-time, responding to the musicians whilst they are

playing their hybrid studio-stage instruments within the live performance space. The engineer's real-time response was simultaneously monitored by the musicians and played back to the audience. The production was 'played' by the collaborators in front of an audience and then committed to tape with no postproduction.
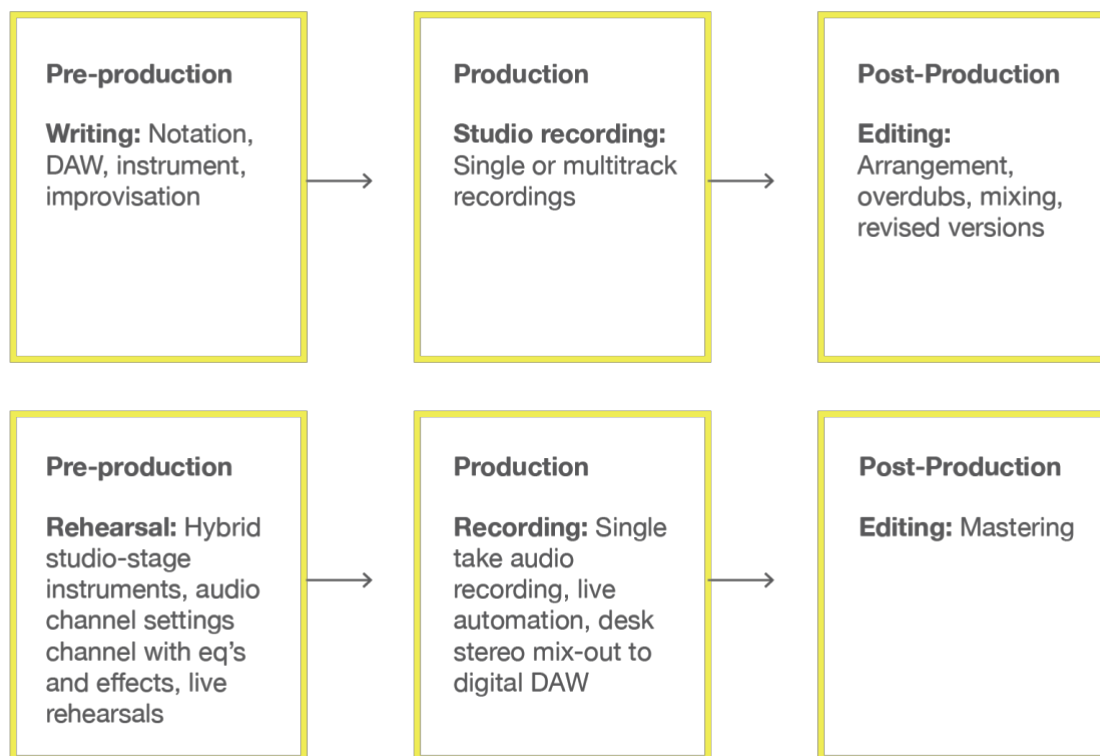
Fig. 29 Recording and production workflow Enid – Yes! (2021)

Yes! was designed to enable a critical lens for the collaborators in the process of music recording processes (Fig.29) and through applied practice restrictions (PR 2,3,4,5), to see how the studio disrupted and/or affected their playing and responses to each other in post-digital performance. Through the collapsing of recording process (pre-production, production, post-production), the rock 'stage' was challenged with themes of liveness for the musicians and engineer in which they experienced themselves recording a live rock performance, but recording themselves doing live production and this was directly committed to fixed album recording. This recording exists as a physical artefact (pressed vinyl), and through its fixed medium, reflects on acts of timbral virtuosity.

Enid was designed to complicate authorship through new forms of collaboration in recording studio practice, and to explore the 'third thing' (Greenwood, in Rose, 2019:201) between playing and programming. *Yes!* exposed and concealed the studio as an instrument (Eno, 2004) as highlighted by Reynolds' (RQ1) with the post-rock adoption of Eno's concepts (2004: 360) with the recording paradigm binaries being blurred due to the album being simultaneously recorded and performed (RQ2). In creation of 'post-rock' sounds (chapter 3), I echoed a similar recording collaboration style as George Martin's role in *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967) that Porterfield discusses. *Enid*, as a collective, interrogates the disruption (RQ3) of the musicians' and engineers' traditional notions of creativity and liveness (Auslander, 2002) with music technology within a post-digital performance.

Yes! challenged the traditional process of popular music recording and through critical reflection, created a continuous dialogue between theory (chapter 3,4,5) and practice. This subchapter is divided into the following:

1) Design of hybrid studio-stage instruments

Enid - Yes! disrupted recording processes and collaboration with the design of the hybrid studio-stage instruments (guitar, drums, piano). The technical design of the hybrid studio-stage instruments and their real-time studio effects and techniques employed within the recording processes are discussed.

2) *Enid - Yes! recording* – music performance analysis and critical reflection

The music recording of the album *Enid Yes!* with accompanying video documentation was analysed with recording process critically reflected on through the applied practice restriction. *Enid - Yes!* is a 6-track album (Fig.14) recorded on 08.09.21 and 09.09.12 and committed to

tape (Fig.30). Tracks 2, 3, 4, and 5, were recorded on 08.09.21, and were performed in front of an audience. Tracks 1 and 6 were recorded on 09.09.21, and because of the logistical issues were not performed in front of an audience.
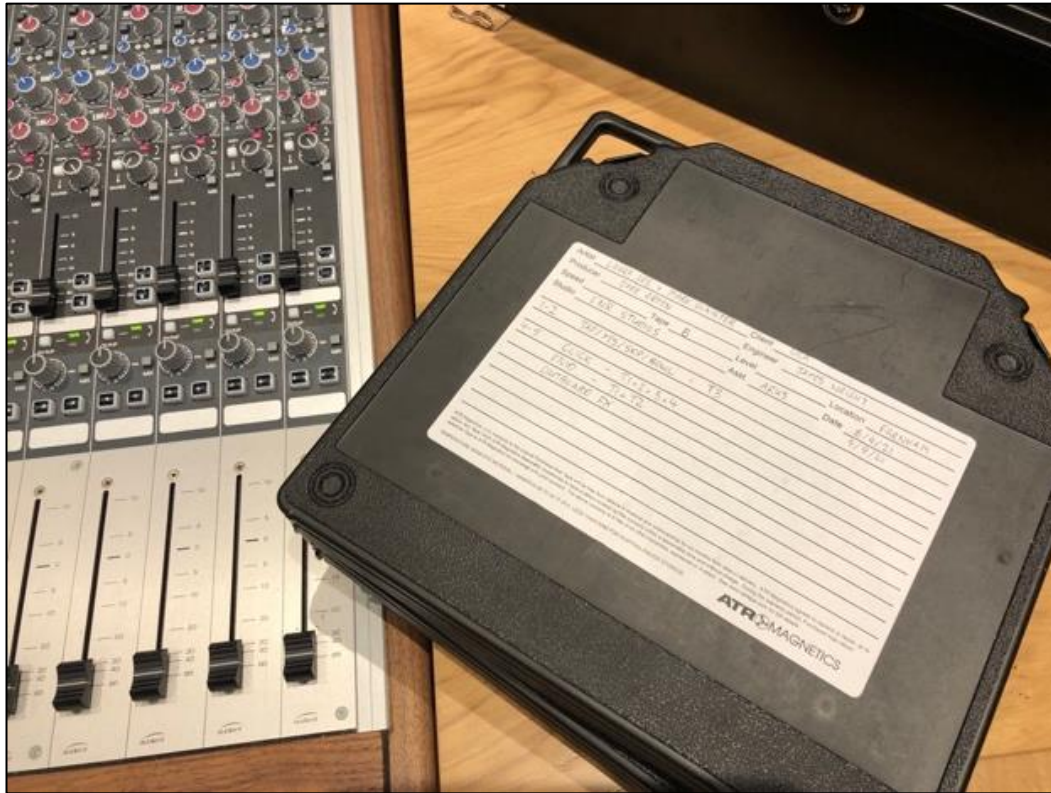
Fig. 30 *RF07- Tape recording of the Enid - Yes!* (2021)

3) *Enid Yes!* - Exhibitions, performances, and vinyl

There has been wider impact gained as a result of *Enid – Yes!,* with an industry presentation for Music Hackspace London (17.05.2022) and three multimedia exhibitions at *Worlds within Worlds* conference and *Practice as Research- Work in Progress* exhibition at University for Creative Arts (2021), *Recording, Performance, Vinyl and Colour* exhibition at West End Centre (2022) (Fig.31), and *Enid-Yes*! exhibition South Hill Park (2023). Through this process further insight into the research questions was gained after the recording. I reflected on the different methods of impact on this PhD practice-based research.

Fig.31 Live performance (14.09.21) at exhibition of *Enid – Yes!* West End Centre, Aldershot (202

6.2.1 Designing of the collaborative recording process in the 'third' way – between playing and programming.

In the recording process of *Yes!* to interrogate all the RQ's, I designed the recording process to challenge authenticity and liveness in post-rock practice through collaboration between the musicians and the engineer (Fig.32), and the technology through the applied PRs. Through PR's, all collaborators are exposed to a 'third' way of the recording paradigm. I used the strategies to investigate: the practice-based perspective of post-rock (RQ1) and how the genre is blurring the binaries of studio recording practices (RQ2); and whether this disrupts rock traditions through post-digital performance practices (RQ3).

1) Approaches to composition and arrangement with applied studio techniques.

Fig. 32 *Mapping out with engineer for parameters for live mixing and effects* (2021)

The composition was initially articulated through the visualisation of the arrangement of the album (Fig.32), as this was sketched into sections, with instrumentation, harmony and dynamics. In addition to this compositional arrangement, I graphically represented timbral approaches to the instruments with the possibility of applying real-time studio techniques. I divided each instrument into two categories and graphically represented them as dry/acoustic and wet/electronic, thus blending the binaries between the studio and stage (RQ2) within the writing process. Through this process of visually mapping my composition in modular sections, I presented these to both the drummer and engineer (Fig.33). These sections were discussed, and this allowed us to improvise together with different arrangements, which could be altered or heavily effected, as we responded to each other's interactions. Our hybrid studio-stage instrument (expanded in 6.2.2) enabled us to play with each other through the designed parameters as we rehearsed on the 'stage' (live room).

In this pre-production stage, I felt an equal balance between authorship and collaboration due to each member's applied PR's, which enabled shared limitations with their creative practices. For both engineer and drummer, the pre-production discussions involved the design of the hybrid studio-stage instruments, their sonic goals, musical prompts or indicators for transitions and the level of control and automation they would have in the production. The pre-production stage was the most negotiated and important part in gaining trust with each other, and aligning with the RQs with the design of the instruments themselves and with the recording of *Yes!* being an improvised production. The emphasis on no post-production built anxiety due to production values usually being crafted in post-production. The design of the hybrid studio-stage instruments extended all members' creative practices. In our roles as co-producers, we could collectively respond instantly to each other.

Fig. 33 *Visual mapping and modular approach to constructing Enid – Yes!* (2021)

2) Linking hybrid-studio stage instruments and quantisation

The musicians and engineer were given parameters of automation on their instruments which they could improvise with through technology and expose their creative expression. To unify ourselves with a 'third' space, between playing and programming, a new design of the recording process needed to be applied. The emphasis in designing post-digital performance practice was to increase creativity with technology and analyse its potential disruptions (RQ3). Normative practices in linking band ensembles were experimented with; that is, the rock and pop technique of syncing between musicians with a click, or the launching of pre-set audio clips enabling audio for musicians to follow, or live quantised looping of each instrument which was synced through the Ableton Live function link.

Fig. 34 *RF08 - Experimenting with Ableton Live 'Follow Action' function to follow drum channel with live automation* (2021)

Fig. 35 *RF08 - Experimenting (2) with Ableton Live 'Follow Action' function to follow drum channel with live automation* (2021)

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The linking of the hybrid studio-stage instruments was experimented with using Ableton Live's new feature called *Follow Action* (Fig.34 and 35) which gives the option of tracking the BPM through selected audio channels, for example the kick drum audio channel. The *Follow Action* was developed by researcher Andrew Robertson (who expanded the device called

BeatSeeker), who discusses it in his collaborative paper *Synchronizing Sequencing Software to a Live Drummer* (2013). Both methods were experimented with, but neither were suitable, due to the syncing methods causing disruption of post-digital performance practices (RQ3). In traditional settings a drummer can be limited to playing along to a click, but a responsive and free style of interaction was wanted from all musicians and engineers. This is in contrast to composition_3 (chapter 6.1) where the click improved flow, but in the context of *Yes!* due to the engineer's increased authorship, no linking of DAW sessions or click was used. Traditional genre norms of syncing technology for multiple musicians did not serve to allow each member the role of the co-producer in which their creative practice with the technology could be simultaneously, collaborative (RQ3).

1) <u>Recording the 'stage'</u>

Fig. 36 RG03 - Theatre live room with drum setup - Enid - Yes! (2021)

Fig. 37 RF07- Live control Room - Enid - Yes! (2021)

For *Yes!,* the theatre space became the live room for recording and performance (RQ2) to enable the capturing of the post-digital performance (RQ3). This was decided for the following three reasons:

Firstly, the acoustics, size and design of the space for instruments and musicians:

The size and height of the theatre space created acoustics desirable for a band setting, for example the large natural reverberant sound of the drums. The design of the building in which the theatre space (Fig.36) and control room (Fig.37) were located, allowed easy routing of

audio between the spaces through a patch bay (Fig.38). The artists were sent a master stereo mix for monitoring to enable them to hear each other and interact with the engineer, who was in the control room.
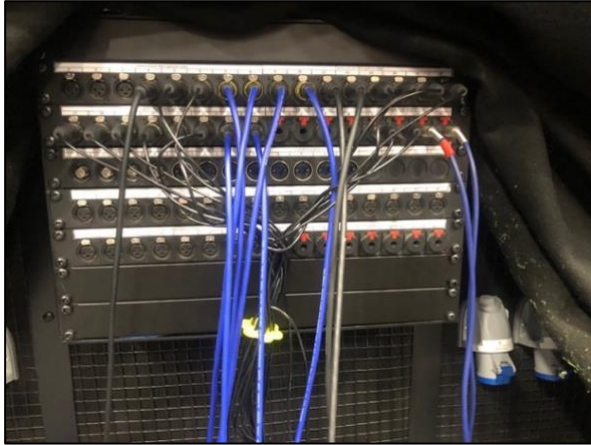
Fig. 38 *RG03 - Theatre patch bay - Enid – Yes!* (2021)   Fig. 39 *RG03 Audience monitoring - Enid – Yes!* (2021)
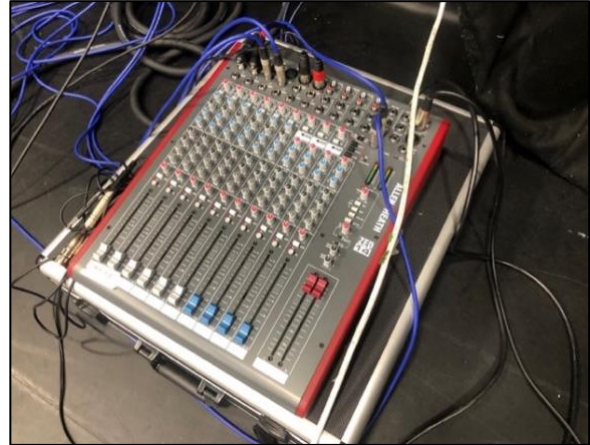
Secondly, its suitability for an audience:

To make the recording session suitable as a performance for an audience, two options were discussed. One option was for each audience member to have a pair of headphones to listen to the control room studio mix. The other option was for a PA system to be set up for playback. It was decided that second option would give the audience a more authentic 'live' experience. The following channels were sent to the PA via the mixer (Fig.39): studio effected drums (14 – 18) and engineer effect returns from (21- 24). All other sources of sound were audible in the acoustic room, so required different amplification. The audience was invited to listen to the finalised tape recording in the control room straight after the recording session. The design of the recording in front of the audience was to interrogate RQ2 and if the exposure to this impacted the recording experience for the musicians with their recording practice and collaboration with technology.

Finally, the decision to record in the theatre space was to film and document the process.

Fig. 40 *RG03 - Director of photography setting up - Enid – Yes!* (2021)

Fig. 41 *RG03 - Laura Lee and Mark Glaister from live audience take (08.09.21) - Enid – Yes!* (2021)

For the purposes of analysis of RQ3, I worked with Philip Osborne (Fig.40), director of photography, to visualise the hybrid studio-stage instruments for both the attending audience and the viewers of the documentation. The coloured tape was used as a visual representation for the network sounds from source to destination (Fig.41). The anti-reductionist networks were represented with green (hybrid studio-stage instrument guitar), and pink (hybrid studio-stage instrument drums) which were linked to their forms of playback in the room (amplifiers and PAs). This emphasised and visualised the third space of studio performance, through the

design hybrid studio-stage between the engineer and the musicians. The methods of syncing musician and technology were designed for their equal contribution to the project which aligned with the RQs and PR1.

6.2.2 Hybrid studio-stage instruments – design, composition, and performance

In *Enid- Yes!* the pre-production design was a critical part of the process, with the design of the hybrid-studio stage instruments for musicians (guitar, piano and drums integrated with Ableton Live) and engineer (configured of mixing desk and patching of outboard equipment).

Fig. 42 *RF07- Channels 1 to 12 on Audient ASP8024 for recording session for Enid – Yes!* (2021)

Fig. 43 *RF07- Channel 13 to 24 on Audient ASP8024 for recording session for Enid – Yes!* (2021)

The Audient ASP8024HE was reconfigured (Fig. 42 & 43) to enable the engineer to play the studio as an instrument (Eno 2004, Reynolds, 2004), through deeper control of channel parameters and the patching of the outboard through the desk. One of the technical obstacles in the design of *Yes!* was using the mixing desk to perform multiple roles at once (RQ2). The mixing desk primarily needed to be utilised much like a mixing desk in a live sound environment; the stereo mix would be recorded directly to a reel-to-reel tape machine (Tascam

TRS-8). The desk would then simultaneously record individual multitrack outputs to a DAW. This was achieved through the desk's in-line architecture. Each channel strip had two separate audio paths, one being the input from a microphone or line signal, and the other being an input from tape or DAW. By default, the mic/line inputs were routed through the short faders and the tape/DAW returns were routed through the long faders. The aux sends and equalizers (EQ) on each channel could be assigned to either the short faders (SF) or long faders (LF). The solution was utilising the LF/ SF flip function to switch the short faders to the long faders and switching the mic input to the DAW input so the long faders (LF) could be used to do 'live automation'. Additionally, the mixing desk for performing tracking and automation, *Yes!* was designed to encourage authorship from the engineer and the creative manipulation through the desk. The EQ was creatively used for shaping sound, for example using resonant peaks on the LMF/HMF EQ bands to create a phase effect on the guitar or creating a 'fade' effect by lowering the HF to blend into the next sound. Other timbral decisions were made within the design (Fig.44). For example, on channels 19 and 20, the Coles C4038 overhead microphones were patched into the Neve preamps to add additional colour through saturation. Channels 21 to 24 were used for two outboard stereo effect units: the Eventide Reverb SP2016 and Lexicon MX400 delay (Fig.43). *Yes!* was designed for music recording practice to be research, and this designing of the 'studio' related to the interrogation of RQ3, with the engineer's creative role impacting on the creative use of the technology and liveness within the recording.
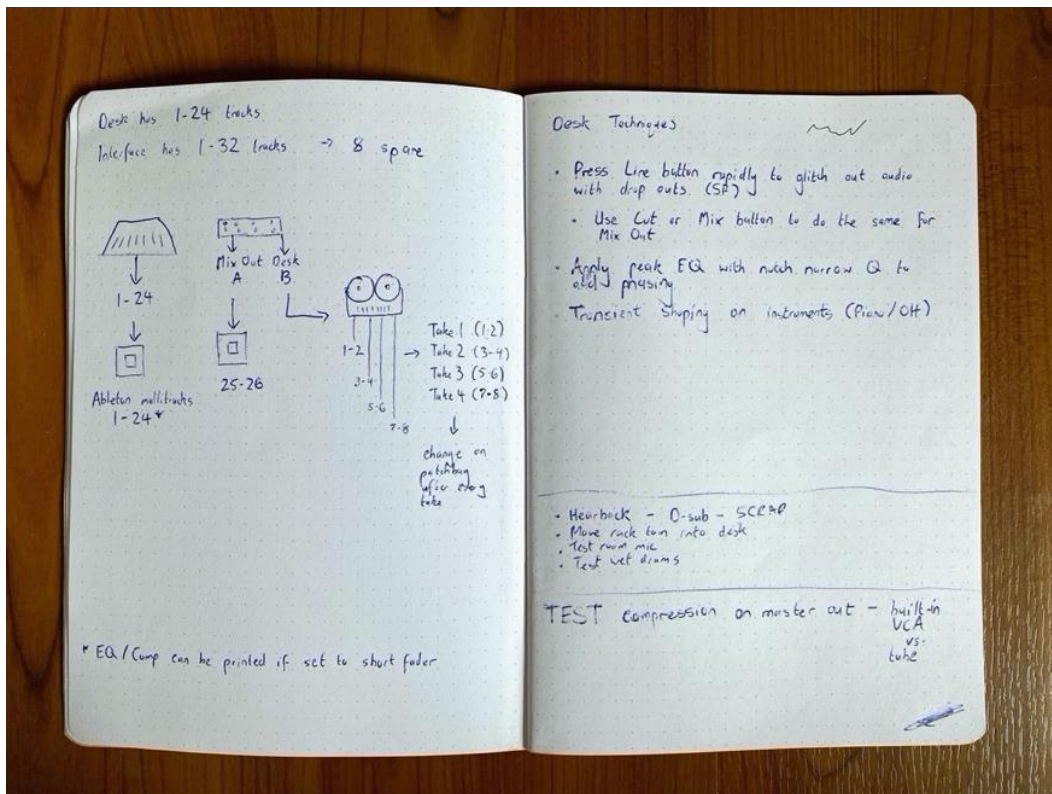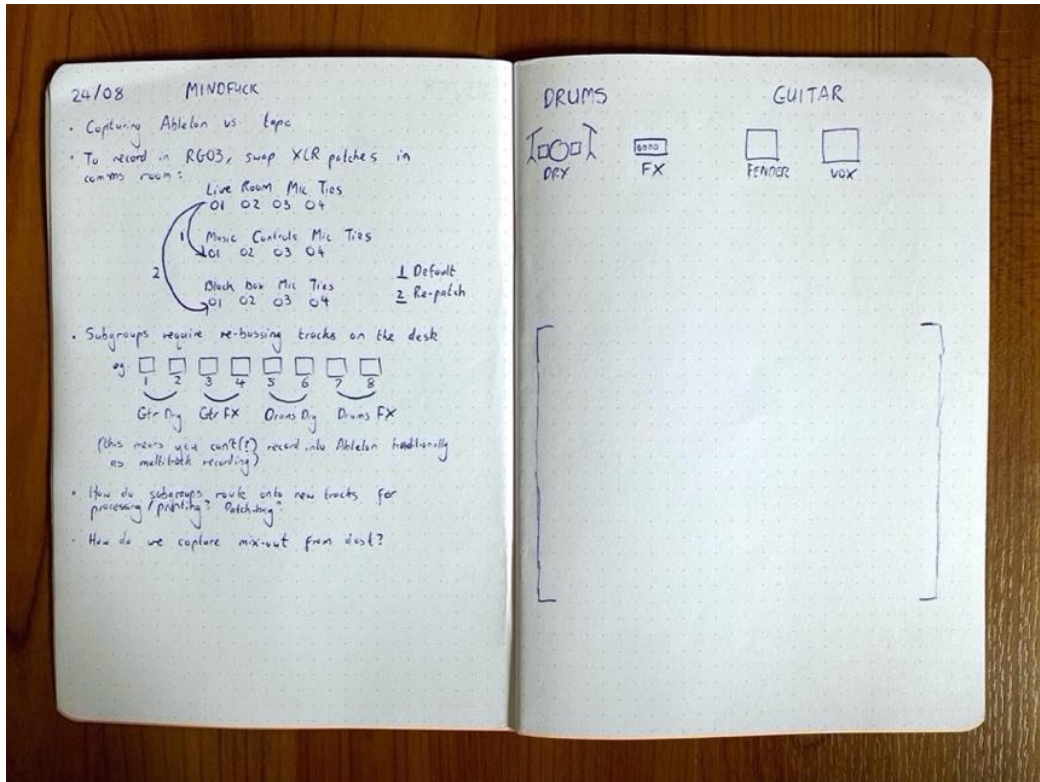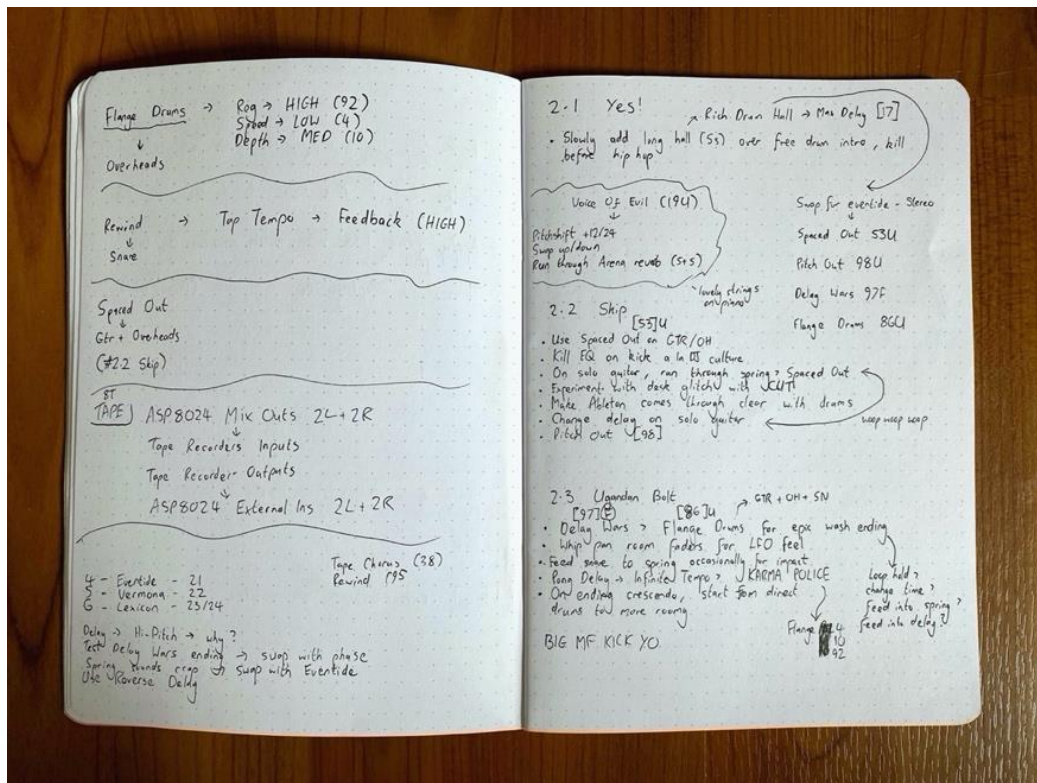
Fig. 44 Engineer artistic notes on the recording process for *Enid – Yes!* (2021)

6.2.3 Hybrid studio-stage instrument – drums

As an electric guitarist, it is standard practice to feed a single guitar signal directly into effects pedals, which are then controlled by the feet. In contrast, if I want to apply this timbral approach for the drums, control of audio effects from the source of the acoustic instrument is problematic to achieve. 'Plugging' a drum kit into effects pedals requires microphones on each element of the kit and for the equipment to match level and impedance between microphone and effects pedal. Although this was complex, in *Yes!* I wanted to achieve a stable setup that the drummer could be 'plugged into' effects with the same timbral and textural approach I have as a guitarist (PR1) and apply their creativity with the technology in a post-digital performance (RQ3). To address this problem, I initially tested two different microphone setups. For the first, I experimented with two sets of microphones, one to capture the acoustic kit, and a second set to capture effected microphones through Ableton Live. This resulted in phasing issues in both the recordings and whilst monitoring, as a result of there being latency on the effected signals and no latency on the directly miked signals. The recording techniques applied in order to

capture the analogue and digital sonic 'auras' (Katz, 2010) simultaneously caused a disruption

within the creativity with the technology in post-digital performance.

Fig. 45 *RG03- Drum setup and floor design - Enid – Yes!* (2021)

Fig. 46 *RG03- Hybrid studio-stage drum instrument with microphones- Enid – Yes!* (2021)

The second microphone set-up (Fig.45) involved capturing only 'effected' microphone on the

kick, snare, and toms, with the hi-hats miked with a pair of overheads for the room and higher

frequency of cymbal work. The phrasing was resolved by not doubling up on microphones on

each element of the kit. There were 4 effects channels: the kick, snare, floor tom and rack tom

(Fig.46).

Fig. 47 *RG03- DI boxes for Hybrid studio-stage drum instrument- Enid – Yes!* (2021)

The effected channels within Ableton Live were sent to the Audient ASP8024HE for the engineer to balance, EQ and blend with the other instruments. These were sent to the soundcard, the Audient IDi4 MKII, and Focusrite Octave-Pre, which were routed through active DI boxes (Fig.47) into the theatre patch bay, with a pair of overheads to capture the acoustic sound of the kit.

Fig 48 RG03- Ableton Live session for hybrid studio-stage drum instrument- Enid – Yes! (2021)

I initially started with subtle variations between mixes for the effected microphones of the kit, but to work dynamically within the live recording setting (RG3), the effects needed to be heavily

contrasted and wet to be obvious in the mix. I was experimenting with effecting hi-hats and cymbals, but the effected microphones worked best on the kick, snare and toms. The more heavily effected the drum kit became, the more the drummer's focus was on acts of timbral virtuosity instead of complexity in rhythmical virtuosity.

An Ableton Live session was created to manipulate the audio from the drum kit and for the drummer to have ease of control to change audio effects. As seen in Fig. 49, a matrix was built for triggering changes of audio effects on 4 audio channels. So, to achieve this hybrid studio-stage drum instrument, I developed a technique in Ableton Live with audio effect racks, mapping macros and empty clips or 'dummy clips' to enable the triggering of effects for multiple channels simultaneously.

Fig. 49 *Ableton Live in session view for hybrid studio stage drum instrument (cycling of scene, dummy clips and max for live multimap) for Enid - Yes!* (2021)

On the 'Control Clips' channels, dummy clips ('blank' audio clips with no sound) were created with automation to control the 'input' parameter on Max for Live's (M4L) MultiMap device. This device was then mapped to the Audio Effect Rack chain selector of each corresponding 'Drums Input' channel. The clips on each 'Scene' (a full row of clips) contained different values

of automation, causing each clip to position the chain selector at a different point, resulting in a change of effects to process the corresponding channel. (Additional screenshots for this Ableton Live session can be found in Appendix 3). Using Ableton's scenes functionality, the drummer could cycle through effects by triggering the assigned scenes to launch multiple 'dummy' clips with the MIDI *KT-10* kick and with the *Roland SPD-30 Octapad*. I initially experimented with Roland RT-30HR drum triggers to change scenes. However, they were highly sensitive, and so I found that the *KT-10* kick trigger worked best for accuracy in changing scenes. It was important to give authorship to the drummer with the 'studio', and for the acts of timbral virtuosity to be recorded by the triggering to the acoustic kit instead of using a MIDI trigger pad. From a performance perspective, it was also important for the laptop to be out of sight, so that the manipulation of the sound was not immediately obvious to the drummer and the audience. To apply RQ2, in contemporary music practice between the studio and stage, the effected sounding kit had to be loud through monitors to match the volume of the acoustic kits to be heard by the audience on the recording day, thus exploring the 'third' space in post-digital performance.

6.2.4 Hybrid studio-stage drum instrument – artist interview and insights

In the research method of interviewing a wider community of post-rock musicians, the highlighted technological strategies were discussed by the drummers Betts (2019) and Mozgawa (2020), as they both explored the 'third' space between playing and programming. The Roland SPD-X sample pad (Fig.52) was integrated in both their live-setups to play samples and control MIDI parameters with Ableton Live.
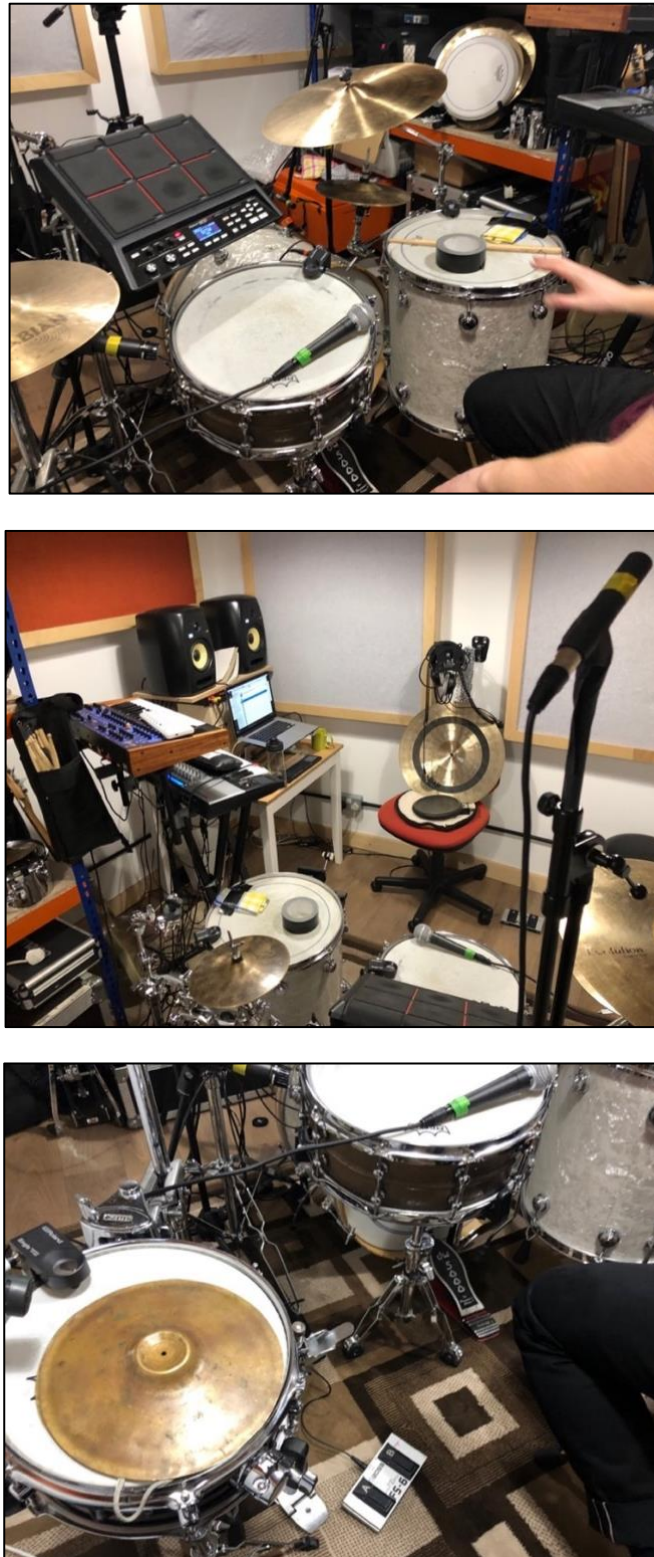
Fig. 50 *Adam Betts' hybrid drum kit at Play Studios Peckham, London* (2019)

At Play Studios, London, in which the interview took place (Fig.50), Betts discusses his hybrid

studio-stage drum instrument, in which he combines prepared drum techniques with real-time

studio techniques through the control of MIDI but acknowledges the limitations of composing and performing in this way on an acoustic drum kit:

> *I think all kinds of electronic guys now demand such a degree of automation with every sound, so that's what I'm kind of chasing on it now. How can the envelopes of the synth be affected by the drum kit etc…*? (Betts, 2019)

Playing in MIDI with devices that enable human expression is 'traditionally' done with faders, knobs and keys. As Betts remarks, there is an issue with a drummer's ability to manipulate timbre and textures whilst playing, different to a guitarist (PR1) and to a synth player. His ambition as a drummer would be to effect live something such as a pitch or volume envelope whilst playing and programming, to explore post-digital performance space (RQ3). In *Yes!* the hybrid studio-stage drum challenged the 'norm' of human expression within their instrument by the programming of effects which were triggered and cycled through multiple effects and channels simultaneously. Mozgawa discusses new drum triggers by the company Sunhouse which expands the acoustic drums with MIDI integration that increase the potential for a more standardised hybrid approach to drumming:

> *The thing that you kind of miss as a traditional instrumentalist is the expression and the velocity of certain parts of your playing, and that unquantized, or slightly out of tune, or inconsistent expression. When you're performing or playing an acoustic instrument [..] there's still a human element to it and I think that technology like that, for example, bridges that gap in a way that I've never necessarily seen before*. (Mozgawa, 2020)

Mozgawa highlights the importance of integrating a humanistic element to hybrid drum setups, and for this technological enhancement to enable to input the inconsistency of human expression i.e. tempo, velocity, pitch. Through the application of the practice restrictions (PR2,

PR3, PR4, and PR5) in *Yes!* both the human (unquantized, inconsistent) imperfect expression as well as the machine (errors, distortion and glitches) imperfections are captured through the design of the hybrid studio-stage instruments in post-digital performance.

<u>6.2.5 Hybrid studio-stage instrument – guitar</u>

Fig. 51 *Hybrid studio-stage guitar instrument development in Berlin studio for Enid – Yes! (2021)*

Fig. 52 *Hybrid studio-stage guitar instrument live development in Berlin studio for Enid – Yes! (2021)*

Fig. 53 RG03 - *Hybrid studio-stage guitar instrument full set up Enid – Yes!* (2021)

Fig 54. *RG03 - Hybrid studio-stage guitar instrument – microphone positioning - Enid – Yes!* (2021)

Developing my practice from *SE* (2019) in *Yes!,* I experimented with expanding my guitar set-up (Fig.51). I integrated my guitar with samplers and loopers within Ableton Live, MIDI controllers (keyboards, Ableton Push, Roland SPX, footswitches) and hardware guitar effects and loop pedals. I experimented using a MIDI footswitch with Ableton Live's *Looper* device to

capture quantised clips which involved cueing in loops in Session view (PR3), which was then synced with the drummer using the function *Link* (Fig. 52). Unlike a guitarist style loop pedal, which is instantly looped, Ableton Live's looping function involved monitoring and cueing of upcoming loops. This method felt unnatural and disruptive (PR3), so I decided to capture my loops with hardware pedals instead (Fig. 56). As a guitarist, the sonic character of an amplifier is a fundamental part for one's instrument to sound authentic or have a sonic 'aura' (expanded in chapter 3) and is therefore usually used for monitoring. In the rehearsal stage of *Yes!* within the theatre space (Fig. 53) a close miking technique for the amplifiers (Fig.54) was used to reduce the bleed of sounds from the drum kit (RQ2).

Fig. 55 *RG03 - Hybrid studio-stage guitar instrument – sampled guitar - Enid – Yes! (2021)*

Fig. 56 *RG03 - Hybrid studio-stage guitar instrument – pedal board with loopers - Enid – Yes! (2021)*
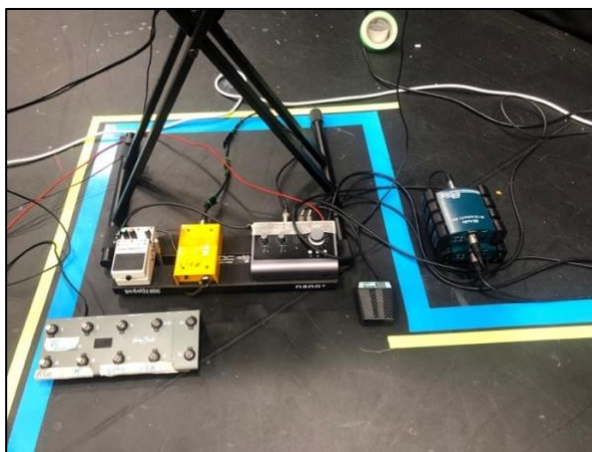
Fig. 57 *RG03 - Hybrid studio-stage guitar instrument – reamping and MIDI triggering – Yes*! (2021)

Fig. 58 *RG03 - Hybrid studio-stage guitar instrument – sampled guitar through bass amp – Yes! (2021)*

The instrument was expanded with Ableton Live's Simpler (a basic sampler) device using MIDI controller (Fig.55) and effects pedals (Fig.56). Therefore, three amps were used (Fig.53) to explore post-digital performance (RQ3). I used the Simpler device to create textures, pads and melodic sample instruments which I created from my own guitar playing, deforming the sounds and decentring the self with post-digital performance (RQ3).

The master output from the Ableton Live, through the Audient MKII soundcard (Fig.57) was sent to both straight patch bays using active DI boxes, and a third output to bass amp. (Fig.58). The hybrid guitar studio-stage instrument was developed to through the applied restriction (PR2, PR3, PR4, PR5) to create a 'third' space between the playing and programming (PR3) for a guitarist in a post-digital performance (RQ3) In the design of the studio-stage instruments, there was an inherent blurring of rock and EDM practices in the 'hitting' of pedal guitar effects with hybrid producer performance techniques informed by EDM and DJ culture which positioned it within post-rock practice.

6.2.6 Enid -Yes! recording – Critical reflection of experience of the recording process

From a practitioner's perspective, I critically reflected on the experience of the recording process and production of *Yes!* which timeline is represented in Fig.14, both through musical analysis of the album's six tracks and through video documentation. Through this critical reflection, insight was gained into the research questions (RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3) as I highlighted significant moments between the musicians' and the engineer's timecodes impacted through the PR's (Appendix 4)

The track listing of the albums is as follows: 1) *Click* 2) *Tap* 3) *Yes!* 4) *Skip* 5) *Ugandan Bowl* and 6) *Enid*. *Yes!* has two solo piano tracks (1) *Click* and (6) *Enid* and are arranged as the intro and outro for the video documentation and album. (2) *Tap* is a solo acoustic guitar

composition and the tracks (3) *Yes!* (4) *Skip, and* (5) *Ugandan Bowl* are arranged for electric guitar and drums.

1. *Click - Yes!*

Fig. 59 *RF08 - Live room piano recording (09.09.21) Enid Yes!* (2021)

Fig. 60 *RF07 – Control room piano recording (09.09.21) Enid Yes!* (2021)

I composed *Click* and *Enid* to be the intro and outro the album to explicitly expose the paradigm shift in authenticity in post-digital performance (RQ3). *Click* comprised of one hybrid-studio stage pianist (Fig.59) and an engineer (Fig.60) who was an extended part of the hybrid studio-stage instrument. *Click* produced a delicate and deteriorating feeling, to show the fragile and transient 'single moment' nature of the recording process, disrupting the traditional archetype of a solo pianist. *Click* captured the humanistic imperfection of temporal tempo changes, improvisation, and spontaneity and the machine imperfection (glitches and distortions). The cyclical and repetitive single motif (Fig.61) was recorded freely without a metronome or to a grid. The modular approach to the motif melody built in dynamics through acts of timbral virtuosity, slowly revealing the studio.

Fig. 61 *Motif of solo track Click - Enid Yes!* (2021)

This composition adopted an ideology which Reynolds (2004) discusses (RQ1), in which post-rock uses effects and processes to dislocate the sound from the physical act. The digital glitch effect was created by a guitar pedal, a rock style implementation of 'instant' clicking of effects. The glitch effect pedal was clicked in real-time to an upright piano and was exposed in room recording (RQ2), a process which is normally applied in post-production, through micro-editing practices. Post-rock is influenced by neoclassical and experimental artists and pianists such as Nils Frahmn Ólafur Arnald, for example, in Radiohead's *Videotape* (2007), in which Thom Yorke's reverberant sounding piano experiments with meter. As Osborn (2017) comments: *'Navigating changes of meter such as these, which involve beats of different speeds, involves hearing, feeling or visualizing a faster pulse which is actually preserved through the meter change' (*Osborn 2017:63*).* In *Videotape* (2007) Yorke's virtuosity act is within this process of changing of meters, which is more informed by experimental composers. The piano aesthetic of Yorke, or *Click*, is not 'rock' piano, in contrast to rock traditions, such as Elton John's (1972) *Rocket Man (And I Think It's going to be a Long, Long time)* which is bright and compressed-sounding. I was influenced by composers Kathryn Joseph, and Emahoy Tsegué-Maryam Guèbrou and the minimalist composer Michael Gordon. The score (Fig.62) for his piece *Industry* (1992) for cello, explores large dynamics, harmonic overtones, distortion and feedback.

Fig. 62 *Michael Gordon: Industry Score* (1992)

In Gordon's *Industry,* the solo cellist builds tension with a single motif which deteriorates in clarity with the increasing distortion and deforming of the single author. Inspired by compositional technique, *Click* used the DD3 effect pedal (Fig.64), continuously distorting and glitching the piano. Like *Industry*, through applied performance production, *Click* enabled a third space in which both pianist and engineer had equal authorship and creative control in the recording process. As a result of the recording being committed to tape (PR5) both musician and engineer (PR4) were fully present and there was absolute engagement in the recording process Through *Yes!* in applying PR4, I wanted to compare collaborative and improvisational approaches between piano and engineer compared to other chosen rock instrumentation (guitar, drums). In applying PR2, I had similar issues in designing the hybrid-studio stage instrument for drums, in applying real-time recording techniques and effects to the acoustic piano causing issues such as feedback.

To interrogate my definition of authenticity, the track blended between the non-effected and effected microphone channels to slowly merge and distort the musician and the listener from the sound source of the instrument (PR2). The pianist used the loop/hold function on the Boss DD3 pedal to create a glitched stutter effect which oscillated and phased out of time. The

recording set up for the track was with a pair of stereo overheads (Neuman KM194 x 2) with an additional effect microphone (Sennheiser E914) (Fig.63). The effected microphone was processed through a Boss delay DD3 guitar pedal (Fig.64) using the hold function, which ranges the delay time from 800ms down to 200ms, and which was controlled by myself in the live room. Additional compression was used to further emphasise the imperfections with the microphone clipping, distorting and glitching. The use of an effect pedal on a live microphone as a recording technique led to anxiety for the engineer due to the lack of control in post-production (PR4). This anxiety produced disruption in creativity in post-digital performance.

Fig. 63 *RF08 – Hybrid studio-stage piano set up (09.09.21) Enid Yes! (2021)*

Fig. 64 *RF08 – Hybrid studio-stage piano – DD3 hold function for effected channel (09.09.21) Enid Yes! (2021)*

The '*element of variety*' (Fales, 2018) was evident in *Click* with the non-pitch and non-lyric-oriented manipulation of sound through both the engineer's and musicians' ability for equal authorship within the recording process. I had the control of the hold/freeze function on the delay effects pedal, which I engaged at 01:59 and then at 02:33 in which I repeated the motif (Fig.61). The engineer's interaction with his effects channel, in which he used the Eventide SP2016, was expressed at 03:19 when the delay time was increased (RQ3), and at 03:32, when the reverb and delay channels were increased, causing a modulating effect. As the track developed, the more expressive and faster the playing became, and the more responsive the engineer was, with more effects channel work, and a heightened sensitivity to timbre. This is evident at 04:01 with the increase of the effected microphone and the effects channel, in which the automation is committed with the play of faders on the mixer. There is experimentation at

04:37 with the creation of a self-oscillating chaotic barrage of feedback for an outro of the track, achieved by increasing the volume of the effected microphone with the effects channel increased, causing feedback. It is evident from the video documentation that the visual cues between the pianist in the live room and the engineer in the control room greatly informed the development of the composition (PR4). The performative aspect of this recording enabled more risk-taking and spontaneity in the process (RQ3). The electronic mediation acted as a catalyst in experimentation both for the musician and the engineer in this post-digital performance space.

2.*Tap - Yes!*

Tap is an electro-acoustic guitar composition (opening tuning DADAAD) exploring extended techniques (harmonics slaps and body taps), stereo delay, looping and feedback to enable insight into acts of timbral virtuosity within the solo guitar performance (RQ3). No microphones were used to capture the acoustic guitar. The signal was taken from the guitar's internal piezo pickup pre-amp into the pedalboard into two amplifiers, Fender Reverb 65 Reissues and Vox AC30, through a stereo output (Fig.65).

Fig. 65 *RG03 - Laura Lee solo performance of track tap on (08.09.21)- Enid – Yes!* (2021)

Applying extended techniques to an electro-acoustic guitar's reverberant body created timbres, when amplified, that an electric guitar cannot produce in the same way. Electro-acoustic guitars are prone to feedback due to the sensitivity of piezo pickups combined with

the resonant body of the acoustic instrument. This, usually undesired, feedback is caused by the amplified signal of the guitar traveling through the air and physically re-resonating the guitar's body, to then be amplified again. I pushed the electro-acoustic through the applied extended technique in *Tap,* for example at 04:48 (PR2). Reynolds (2004) (RQ1) highlights the fact that post-rock challenges rock norms, and compares similar genre disruption from folk to rock in which Bob Dylan and Jimi Hendrix would present themselves with electric guitar rather than acoustic. Reynolds positions his argument that for post-rock to go to the mainstream (RQ2) it would require Bob Dylan '*shocking his folkie audience by appearing onstage with a sampler, as Dylan did when he went electric*' (Reynolds, 2004:361). An experimental and rock application of the guitar in the use of feedback as a composition and performance tool is a space which guitarist Jimi Hendrix defines. Ostertag (2002) comments on Hendrix as a pioneer of electronic music practice with his instrument:

> *At his most experimental, Hendrix made the most successful electronic music to date. It is music that would be impossible to make, impossible even to imagine, without electronics. It is also hard to imagine a musician on any instrument in any genre integrating his/her body into the performance as totally as Hendrix did.*
> (Ostertag, 2002: 13)

Hendrix's virtuosity was in his manipulation of the electric guitar through amplification, and his embodied performance style was part of this electronic instrument. I argue that this is an example of timbral virtuosity. As previously mentioned, the amplifying of acoustic instruments can cause issues within the live environment, but also disrupts and comprises the embodied experience and tone of the instrument for the musicians, as Mason comments about the double bass:

> *I'm playing on my double bass, I want to feel it resonate at a low frequency you know, making mountains vibrate. I visualised the sound like that but there's a trade off*

because when you amplify acoustic instruments to that level you start to lose the integrity of the tone. (Mason, 2019)

In using the electro-acoustic guitar within the recording *Yes!* there was a 'tone' trade-off for the ability to 'plug' in effects and play in a post-digital performance space. *Tap* as an 'electronic' composition was articulated with effects pedals and interplay with the engineer (RQ3). *Tap* was composed with two pedals, the Boss DD7 and Line 6 DL4, which both contained the functionality to delay and/or loop to set off stereo outputs. The DL4 had four footswitches which, whilst in loop mode, function as loop, overdub, tap tempo and enabled loops to be put into half speed or reversed. The looping and mixing functionality on the pedal was part of the composition process, a live production tool, a 'third' space of performance (RQ3). Using the technique of the mix level down on the DL4 looper pedal, I built loops which I finally brought up in the mix (07:22), exposing all overdubbed loops, a timbral virtuosity, with an additional overdub of a harmonic slap (08:04). An emergence of flow with interaction between musician and engineer (RQ3) is evident at 08:15 when the engineer created a phasing effect, with the EQ of the Audient desk. This was achieved by one pair of microphones left unaffected, to maintain the stereo field of the amplifiers, and the other pair being phased with the mid EQ's settings.

3.Yes! - Yes!

The *Yes!* track introduced the album to the hybrid studio-stage drum instrument, as the acoustic and electronic sourced sounds from the instrument switch from bounded (Smalley, 2007) to deformed (Osborn, 2017), thus representing a post-rock authenticity (chapter 3). The *Yes!* composition played with contrasting timbres and shifts between two sections (ABA structure) (Fig.66), from natural sounding, reverberant, free, fluid, and improvisational (Section A) to highly effected, artificial, robotic, and metronomic (Section B) in explicitly addressing RQ2.
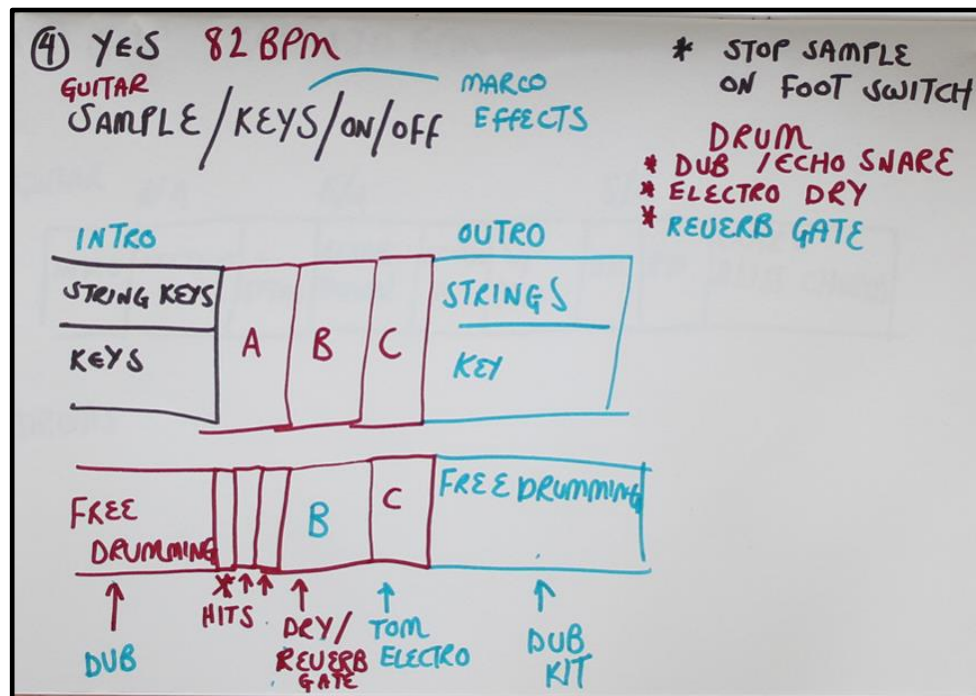
Fig. 66 *Laura Lee Yes! Composition Note Pad (08.09.21) Enid – Yes!* (2021)

In section A, the transition from the *Tap* to *Yes!* (08:53) was slowly mixed onto the record by both the engineer and the guitarist in real-time (RQ3) through their joined authorship of the recording. The drummer was introduced at 09:11 with mallet cymbal washes and he developed his playing at 10:04 with detailed and subtle ghost notes and side stick hits on the toms and snare (wires off). His improvisational jazz-inspired drumming style built anticipation for the first dub style sub kick (11:14) which expanded in practice from Reynolds' post-rock (RQ1) in which he references Lee Perry and King Tubby (chapter 4). The drums then formulated into a free and virtuosic solo at 12:26. In contrast, in section A, the hybrid guitarist experimented with the live and recording (RQ2), with the deforming of sound sources (Osborn, 2017) with his own sampled guitar playing which I affected by an auto filter (11:41 and 13:04). The timbral play acted as a sonic motif prompting interactions between musicians and engineer (RQ3). This auto filtered sonic motif was then responded to by the engineer with a phasing effect, created with the sampled guitar channels on the mixing desk (13:23) (PR4). As the drumming built, so did the interaction between the musicians, with the guitarists and engineer's responses growing in intensity and velocity (13:13) (RQ3). The capturing of the

post-digital performance was in flow with the sampled guitar work, encouraging an off-grid and free improvisational drum style, which built to a drum hook at 13:30, signalling a transition into section B. At this point the engineer reduced the drum effected channels giving a drier, more natural sounding kit (13:43). A clean electric guitar tone was introduced for the next section (14:25), which is a non-effected and source-bounded guitar through a reverberant amp, juxtaposed with the heavily effected drums. This kit encouraged an electronic gridded playing style pitch shifter and vocoder on the toms (14:53) and gated reverb on the snare (14:47). The most prominent guitar effect used in section B is the Boss TE-2 Tera Echo pedal, which has a self-oscillating modulated echo effect. The engineer responded to both musicians (RQ3) as he applied a phasing technique (16:04) to both guitar amplifiers. The dynamics were dramatically dropped with the return of section A (16:30). The drummer mirrored the improvisational style previously played, with the addition of a pitch bending technique created by pressing his hand on the drumhead (16:53).

I would argue that, of all the tracks, *Yes!* is the most effective in questioning authorship with rock-derived instrumentation within the album and embracing post-digital performance as a tool of disrupting rock norms (RQ3). It disrupts the notion of creativity and liveness with technology, as it displays the most interactions between musicians and engages with acts of timbral virtuosity in a post-digital performance space. This is achieved through the dramatic shift between the source bonded and source deformed (RQ2) control from the musicians and engineer in the recording process and as their instruments blur between the studio and stage, which is informed by the practice restrictions.

4. *Skip - Yes!*

Skip has a time signature of 3/4 and plays with meter as it implements triplets, or 'skips' within a 120BPM, which is the default BPM setting in most DAWs. Inspired by Cascone's (2000) post-digital aesthetics with the creation of sound through machine error such as glitches and skips in audio. *Skip* adopts this post-digital aesthetic by using the Sample and Hold (S/H)

function on the Electro Harmonix Canyon digital delay & looper pedal. The S/H function senses or 'samples' guitar plucks and then repeats or 'holds' them indefinitely until another pluck is sensed. This creates a humanistic and expressive guitar 'glitch', generated by the machine, and physically impossible, challenging authenticity, and the guitarist's ability and craft (Pye, 1968).

In *Skip*, I created guitar loops which I sent to a stereo output with the additional pad and gated synth sound, previously sampled from my own guitar playing and triggered with Ableton Live's Simpler. In relation to PR2, the previously sampled guitar was sourced from myself and then played through real-time music production tools in which I adopted techniques from EDM and DJ cultures, in that I launched and triggered pre-existing materials (Butler, 2014) of my own playing. This is then processed with the Audio Effects Racks in Ableton Live and sent through a bass amp. This hybrid studio-stage instrument enabled me to manipulate my playing and apply recording techniques at once, with the playing of guitar melodies and arpeggiated chords, with a looper pedal for capturing phrases and chord sequences, and Ableton Live to manipulate 'guitar sampled' synth parts. This enabled the guitarist to play beyond single authorship, through the applied techniques of looping and sampling and, as a result, explore the post-digital performance (RQ3). In my interview with post-rock guitarist Ian Williams (2019), he comments on his embodied creative practice as a producer in a live setting within his band Battles:

> *It was a simple thing `of taking our guitar loops and unpacking it to put it into different sounds and each of those voices came through a different amp to spread them out and make them bigger in that different sort of way.* (Williams, 2019)

As Williams remarks, expanding his 'stacked' guitar loops out of one amplifier enables an exploration of the stereo field and tonality through multiple and different amplifiers. His technique enables real-time multiple tracking of the guitar, with all guitar loops, from multiple

sounds sources to be expressed into a single space and time. Williams' approaches further distanced him from his guitar playing and sounds from their source, complicating single authorship, and the post-rock authenticity is challenged through this.

'Happy mistakes' can be created through the art of guitar looping. With *Skip*, the micro variations of playing and timing captured in each loop led to a variation of interactions between both the engineer and drummer (RQ3). At 18:43 the first loop was captured, with the phrasing mostly being in 6/8, but the final repeat is in 5/8, enabled a timing glitch or 'skip' to which the drummer responded intuitively. The engineer responded to the drums at 18:52 with the EDM and DJing techniques of cutting the kick out of the mix which relates to Reynolds' post-rock definition (RQ1). Drummer Glaister remarks on this: '*You know how you asked if I was responding at all to James; the one thing that was quite impactful for me was when he muted the kick drum.*' (Glaister:2021) In EDM, this is a mixing technique which cues the audience and builds anticipation before the 'drop' or the next bigger section. *Skip* built intensity throughout with a release of tension within the outro at 20:37 as all musicians responded to the engineer's high manipulation of the Eventide Delay (20:44) (RQ3). The guitar loop captured at 21:14 enabled the drummer and engineer to respond to each other whilst the guitar was being alternatively tuned for the next track *Ugandan Bowl. Skip* (RQ2) prompted the discussion in the binaries between studio and stage and live and recorded. The non-audience version was selected for the album version of *Enid - Yes!*. When recording *Skip*, the musicians and engineer experienced more empathy with the audience, although they were less explorative and risk-taking as they were more aware of making mistakes.

This impacted their experience, in that they played with a more immediate and cathartic rock aesthetic, with 'happy mistakes', rather than a more reflective and experimental style captured without an audience.

5. *Ugandan Bowl - Yes!*

Ugandan Bowl was inspired by dub style mixing and production (Williams, 2012) and was composed with the guitar in alternative tuning (CFCFCF). Fig.67 shows *Ugandan bowl* sections and timecodes with the transition from the track 5, *Skip*.

Track	Video documentation timecodes	Sections
Skip	20:38	Section C
Skip	21:15	Outro loop
Ugandan Bowl	22:08	Section A
Ugandan Bowl	22:59	Section B
Ugandan Bowl	23:30	Section C
Ugandan Bowl	23:59	Section A
Ugandan Bowl	22:12	Outro
Ugandan Bowl	27:21	End

Fig. 67 *Ugandan Bowl timecodes of sections – Enid Yes!* (2021)

Reynolds (RQ1) defines post-rock as something which "*firstly erodes, then obliterates the song and the voice*" (Reynolds,2004:358). The shared authorship between musicians and technology in post-rock musicianship allows the expansion of music form and structure through acts of timbral virtuosity. The section that exposed the most shared authorship and interactions between the musicians and engineers is the outro, and longest in form. The hybrid studio-stage drum instrument was designed with three variations of natural and reverberant sounding kits but with the expectation of the kick which was 'boomy' in an EDM style. This was first evident at 22:41 and increased in intensity as the track progressed. Section A was repeated at 23:59 which built to a climatic outro, inspired by Osborn's (2013) term *'the terminal climax'* in which he argues is a compositional rock technique from the 1990s. Here, he discusses music form within experimental rock music:

In conventional rock song forms there are, generally speaking, two ways to end a song: by recapitulating the verse or chorus, or by appending an outro or coda to the end of either section. By contrast, experimental rock artists regularly end songs with completely new material designed to be more memorable than anything previously presented—the terminal climax. (Osborn, 2013:23)

The repetition of section A, which was then expanded in an outro, is similar in compositional communication vehicle but not the same as Osborn's 'terminal climax'. This improvisational section allowed the musicians to climax through their expressive and performative manipulation of sounds, as they were encouraged through the engagement of post-digital performance (RQ3). An example of this would be in the technical revealing of the looping technique with the Line 6 DL4 pedal. I created loops which were continuously overdubbed (PR2) and then I used the half speed and reverse function of the pedal, in which a rhythm was tapped (25:40) to which the drummer and engineer responded. This expanded in practice to Reynolds' post-rock in which he references Brian Eno and Robert Fripp's 'guitar-loop mosaics' (Reynolds, 20004:359). The engineer responded with an increase of the effects channels at the final climax at 26:38. *Ugandan Bowl* disrupted traditional notions of creativity and liveness through the complexity of authorship (RQ3) between the musicians and engineer, which was evident in the example of changing of music form (section A which built into an outro). More space for improvisation and shared authorship (PR4) in the recording process was enabled by each of the musicians and the engineer adopting producer-style creative practices within their instrument.

6. *Enid- Yes!*

Fig. 68 *Motif of solo track Enid - Enid Yes!* (2021)

Enid was composed for piano and engineer, with three motifs which I freely improvised. Firstly, an E major section, which slowly formed in an A minor section (Fig.68) and in a final section in F of internals of major 4th and 5th. The improvisational approach enabled clusters (Corbett, 2016) of intensity which in turn enabled a collapsing of pulse.

In comparison to *Click*, all creative control of the recording was given to the engineer (PR4) to encourage a disruption of the notion of liveness (RQ3). The engineer's selected effects on his channels were a blend of the pitch-shifter and hall reverb effects with the Lexicon MX400. As the piano playing developed from free style playing into a locked fixed phrase, the more effects the engineer applied. The more abstract or experimental the playing became (RQ2), a 'third' space ws created for engineer, between the playing and programme, and which he expressed with Lexicon MX400 pitch shifting/hall reverb effect. The engineer rode the effects using the faders which he slowly increased (PR4) and then faded back and forth (29:25). Then (30:33) the engineer built the climax, using a pitch shifter which he switched to two octaves higher. The engineer's expressions with the effected channel became more virtuosic in his hands, an act not possible without the act of recording. The recording of *Enid* challenged authorship between musician and engineer, through the paradigm shift of recording practice and rock authenticity, in which the virtuosic act was neither in the hands of the engineer (designer) nor the musician (craft), but equally through interaction with each other by means of the creative use of technology.

6.2.7 Album Version – *Enid – Yes!*

The album version of *Yes!* is different from what is heard in the video documentation. This version, released on vinyl and digitally, was constructed from two different takes recorded on 08.09.21 but with no multitrack editing. Instead of recording individual tracks (2) *Tap, 3) Yes! 4) Skip* and 5) *Ugandan Bowl*) were captured in their entirety, one with, and one without an audience. The piano tracks *Click* and *Enid* were recorded on 09.09.21. To fit (PR5) on a 12-inch vinyl record at a speed of 33 1/3 rpm (PR5), the album was divided into sides A and B (22 minutes maximum a side).

The act of the 'edit' of the album version challenged authenticity within this research. In the purest sense, I wanted to capture an 'instant' album with all production played and recorded in a single take (PR3). In the construction of an album, I did two edits from the non-audience version of *Yes!* as this recording was a less pressured and controlled take of the album. Firstly, I replaced the recording of *Skip* (17:55) and secondly extended the intro and outro sections of *Ugandan Bowl* (27:45). There was a guitar loop which was created from the non-audience take (22:15) as a transition in *Ugandan Bowl*. The (27:45) extended outro was created using the Lexicon MX400, with the preset '*Delay Wars'* which was generated through the return channels and allowed jumping between a 1 millisecond delay and infinite delay with additional feedback.
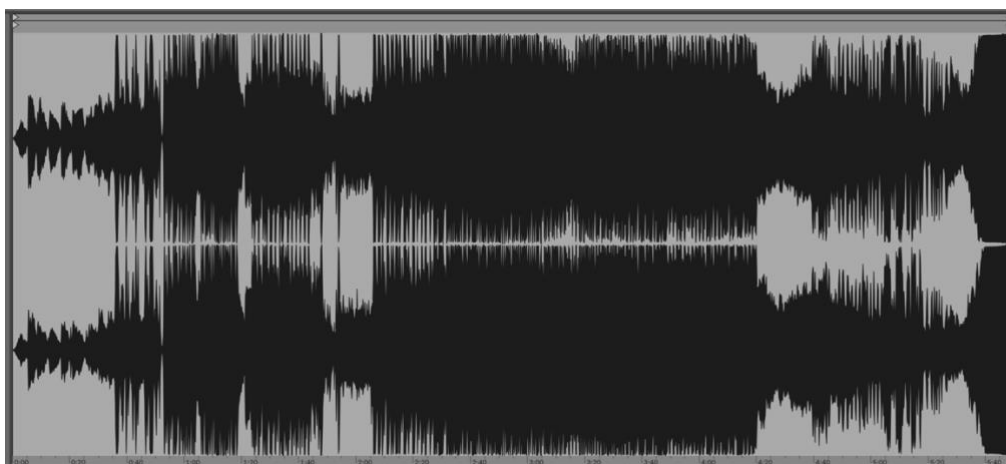
Fig. 69 *Ugandan Bowl Waveform - Enid – Yes!* (2021)

Ugandan Bowl's musical form is visualised in the waveform in Fig. 69 with the longest section being the outro. The track climaxed with intense dynamics but then dramatically transitioned to expose the engineer's voice, thus breaking the fourth wall on the album version. The authentic transparency of the recording process was exposed as the engineer's voice was heard saying "*Tape, speed, this is Enid, take 1, give us a clap Laura*" (29:08). The recording of the talk back microphone was achieved by using the slate button on the mixing desk, printing it straight to the master.

During the recording of the album, anxiety and pressures were felt by the musician and engineer (RQ3) in being committed for the recording to tape and fitting onto the length of a vinyl record (PR5). The engineer felt safer and more in control in his approach with the presence of an audience, with fewer studio techniques applied (PR4). The musicians themselves were more performative with the presence of an audience. Wright discusses his role as the engineer using the mixing desk in real-time, as an instrument, in collaboration with the musicians:

> *I also love collaboration and, as a musician myself, it felt interesting to do what traditionally is an afterthought in the process, to sculpt it in real time. Also listening to each other and collaborating in real time and responding to each other i.e. when I throw a really heavy effect on something, both yourself and Mark respond to that intensity which kind of results in a kind of call-and-response between us. Using this as an instrument is quite an interesting process [...] It was thinking of different tricks you could do to break the traditional way of thinking*. (Wright, 2021)

In the process of creating this album, the emphasis was on the performance of 'the studio' (RQ2) to enable real-time spontaneity and flow, with the additional ability to create call-and-response between one another (PR4). The engineer creatively used 'cut' buttons (Fig.74)

within the track *Skip* (19:08) which he lightly pushed on and off within the stereo channels which gives a cut up and glitch effect. The engineer used the desk to prepare effects in the background, cueing them to bring up into the return channel. He was responding to the intensity of the musicians' playing within *Skip* at (20:40) when he turned up the guitar and overhead channels whilst the return channel fader was turned down, but then the return fader was jumped up for dramatic effect. Through the increased authorship of engineer, the studio was an instrument (Eno, 2004) which was played with the musicians.

On reflection, through listening to the album, viewing the video and through the interviews with Wright and Glaister, the recording paradigm (RQ3) was challenged. In the act of listening or viewing, authenticity is challenged (RQ2) through the dislocation of source and the originator of the sound (musician or engineer), and this exposed acts of timbral virtuosity within a post-digital performance space.

6.2.8 Exhibitions, performances, and vinyl

This project was designed to be practice-as-research which would make an impact within academia, industry and the wider community in a series of events, in which *Enid – Yes!* is performed, exhibited, and discussed. *Enid – Yes!* is a research project that challenges the binaries of the studio and stage, the live and recorded and experimental and accessible (RQ2). The recording of the album became a performance, and then afterwards the recording of this performance became an art object. The vinyl became an object artefact, the screening documentation became digital art into process and artwork was created in response to the live performance of the recording. The meta-approach to challenging recording practice and performance on themes of liveness and what is the 'stage' or 'studio' can be decentred from rock norms. The recording of *Enid – Yes!* (Fig. 70) was a research event part of *Worlds within Worlds - PhD Student Research Event (2021).*

Fig. 70 Screenshot of *Worlds within Worlds - PhD Student Research Event*

*(*https://worldswithinworlds21.com/laura-lee/*) at University for Creative Arts, Farnham (2021)*

An audience was invited as part of the *Worlds within Worlds* research event to a recording of *Enid – Yes!* The audience was introduced to the research project by supervisor Dr Harry Whalley, before the live performance (with PA speakers playback) in the theatre space. After this, the audience were invited to the control room to hear back the first tape play of the finalised album recording. The audience responded positively to the experience of being part of the live recording process of the 'instant' album and discussed the difference between the 'live' experience and album listening experience.

Fig. 71 *Screening of practice-as-research exhibition at University for Creative Arts Farnham of Enid-Yes!* (2021)

Also in 2021, the video documentation of the recording of *Enid-Yes!* was screened at the Practice-as-Research / Work-in-Progress exhibition (2021) which had multiple artist disciplines (Fig.71). This included video art, textiles, craft and photography (Fig.72). *Yes!* was screened and mounted using 9 LED screens with headphones for audio playback.

Fig. 72 Poster *of practice-as-research exhibition at University for Creative Arts Farnham of Enid-Yes!* (2021)

A strength of the exhibition was that all artists and researchers involved applied forms of critical reflection within their medium to question and expose their artist processes. The *Enid-Yes!* video documentation, I argue, acts as its own medium, between documentary, film, digital and video art exposing the normally hidden part of music production and recording practices.
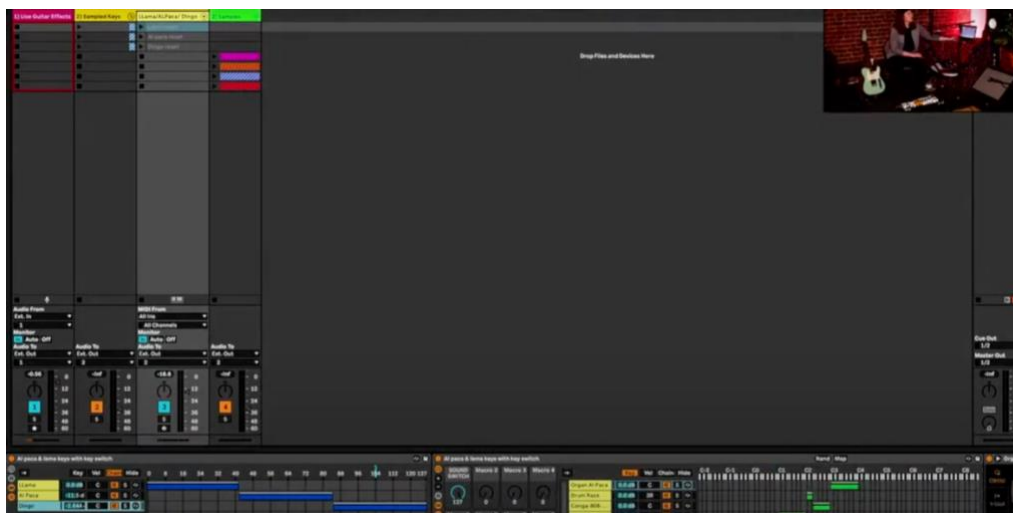
Fig. 73 Industry Lecture - *We Move Session 11: Laura Lee - Hybrid Guitar Production & Performance* – Music Hackspace https://youtu.be/B8OnHZYw2T8
(2022)

The research expanded into talks and practical demonstrations in *We Move* (2022) for leading Women and Non-binary specialists in the field of music and technology at Music Hackspace, London. I was invited to do a lecture (Fig. 73) on my hybrid guitar practice and on *Enid-Yes!* This event was sponsored by Arts Council England, and the music technology companies Focusrite, Isotope and Ableton. In addition, I have set up mentoring schemes and masterclasses for both the University for the Creative Arts and SHR Berlin School of Popular Arts with Ableton for Women and Non-Binary composers. *Enid – Yes! Recording, performance, vinyl and colour* (Fig. 74) was co-exhibited with synaesthetic artist Karina Fraser with the main gallery at West End Centre in Aldershot (2022) and then South Hill Park (2023). These exhibitions included performances, video screening, album release and oil paintings.

Fig. 74 *Recording, performance, vinyl and colour promo shot for Exhibition of Enid-Yes!* (2022

6.2.9 *Enid – Yes!* Conclusion

Fig. 75 *Recording, performance, vinyl and colour vinyl for Not Clean* (2022)

The *Enid – Yes!* research output is captured on vinyl format, an object, a fixed artefact (Fig.75

Yes! disrupted usual recording processes and what is currently understood to be the physical

parameters of the music studio space. The album *Yes!* pushed the boundaries of the popular

music recording paradigm, through its relationship to the paradigm shift in authenticity

(Chapter 3). By the application of practice restrictions, *Enid – Yes!* complicated authorship

through the electronic mediated collaboration between the musicians and engineer (PR4).

Also, through the design of hybrid-studio-stage instruments, *Enid – Yes!* interrogated

authenticity within the recording process, challenging the proximity of the origins of the sound source (PR2), and defining new forms of liveness.

Through this practice-as-research project, the studio is defined as an instrument (PR2) and as a performance tool, enabling the real-time interaction and collaboration of the musicians and engineers (PR4) in the recording process. The engineer was challenged (RQ3) as no post-production (PR5) could be applied to the album, and with this, had to become an equal collaborator. James Wright reflects on the practice restriction applied, and the pressure and risk involved in the making of the album *Yes!*:

> *Postproduction gives you a lot more flexibility but with this you have to be much more decisive. All the automation is done entirely in real time and after several rehearsals I think I was at the point where I knew what sounded best for it. So yeah EQ, volume and effects are all baked into the final track and in tandem to that to add a little bit of pressure they're all going into the tape machine [...] so the fact that we're going through it and you can immediately hear the album as if it's the end of the studio process straight away is pretty crazy. So that was the aim - to have an instant product*. (Wright, 2021)

Wright gained equal authorship in the recording process (RQ2) between his roles of producer, studio engineer, live mixing engineer and musician. Wright reflects on the removal of control after the recording itself, in that once the 'instant product' is heard back, which is simultaneously recorded to tape (PR5), that is the album, the fixed medium. To ensure that there was no post-production capability, with a live mixing of 'production', it required a vast amount of experimentation with different types of mixers to enable the routing of hybrid studio-stage instrument to the engineers mixing desk, to then be exported to tape machine (PR5). Wright discusses the concept of the perfect take, or recording through post-digital performance (RQ3):

The aim for this was to capture the perfect take. So, although we're capturing the instruments as best we can, we're also using things that you would further use to embellish the sound i.e. reverb, delays, different filters and effects. They are all done in real-time along with the performance, with the aim to combine that into one big hybrid sound. (Wright, 2021)

This ambition of achieving the perfect 'hybrid sound' from the perspective of the engineer and for the musicians, led to a tendency towards 'red light syndrome'. The practice restrictions applied in *Yes!* (PR2, PR3, PR4, PR5) were designed to gain insight regarding whether post-digital performance (RQ3) disrupts the traditional notions of creativity with technology, and one consequence in *Yes!* was stress and anxiety for both the musicians and engineers. I argue that the role of the studio, even when the effects of 'red light syndrome' acted as the mediator of post-digital performance practice, enabled a decentered self through shared authorship in the recording process, a space in which I and others could act, respond, and interact with both human and machine. The musicians and engineer equally display acts of timbral virtuosity.

As Wright reflects, *Yes!* aimed to create an environment in which the production values could be played at the source of the instrument (PR2), with the engineer's role as an additional player, and a mutual language and dynamic to be formed (PR4), leading to negotiations about who is leading, or who is responding to whom etc… Drummer, Mark Glaister, remarks on the changing role of the drummer within this project:

It's really interesting to have the electronic part because it means that you're taking up not more sonic space or performance space but you're taking up more interest i.e. if you just had a rock drum kit with a kick drum, snare and toms; people know what it sounds like in a rock scenario they will immediately put that into the background […]

So yeah, it gives you more of an interesting palette to play with and it does allow you to not have to do so much with your playing. (Glaister, 2021)

Unlike in traditional popular music settings, where the drummer has a supportive role in the band, to the vocals, or the guitars, in *Yes!,* through the experimentation of microphone positioning, audio effects, and studio techniques, the hybrid drum studio-stage instrument was created. The productions values and sounds within the instrument could then be brought to the foreground, as Glaister comments, and the drummer could be equally virtuosic in timbre. The ability to change multiple audio parameters and settings whilst playing was developed in stages. Here, Glaister discusses the development and issues:

I've never had an opportunity to have drum kits set up all the time with mics on to experiment with – so through that coexistence alongside the development of this project, what we realised is that you can have the same drum kits with very similar mics that you can make sound really different. That is what led to the idea of doing this with pure audio instead of using triggers. (Glaister, 2021)

The application of practice restrictions (PR2) led to the inventiveness and creativity in the design of the hybrid studio-stage drum instrument, through challenging the distance of origins of the sound source, source deforming (Osborn, 2017) of audio only, without using MIDI pads or triggers.

As seen within the documentation, the engineer's deskwork was a performance within itself, but to use this desk, a compromise was made. The ambition of the music technology and technical specification of project was large, leading to reduced rehearsal times. An example of this is that the video documentation had to be synced with the audient desk digital master version of audio, as there were syncing issues using analogue tape recording. This illustrates the themes of liveness between the analogue and the digital, between the live and recorded

(RQ2). The output of the research is the album, which is now the vinyl artefact, but the project has also expanded into exhibitions, screenings, performances and presentations.

Enid Yes! has been successful in challenging the understanding of post-rock from a practice-based perspective from 2021 with the studio continuously evolving. The ambition of the production we hear from the studio to be recorded and performed on 'stage' can bring large technical issues. Through this practice research with applied practice restrictions, and through shared authorship between the musicians and the engineer, a 'third' way of composing and performing is articulated in a post-digital performance, a space between playing and programming.

6.3 Conclusion

Prior to this study, it was difficult to contextualise my practice within an academic discourse. Through the practice-as-research methodology, with the methods of contextual reading, artist interviews and practice, I was able to integrate my perspective as a practitioner and present a new perspective on the definition of post rock. This research has pushed the boundaries between the studio and stage, live and recorded and pop and experimental (RQ2) through composition, recording and performance. Through the critical lens of practice, this research has contributed an insight into the themes of authenticity, liveness, creativity and technology. The practice has created knowledge that scholarly reading and listening methods alone could not achieve. This contributes to the paradigm shift in which post-rock dislocates the 'I' in the rock archetype. This shift redefines authenticity. In a conventional rock paradigm, authenticity rested on the musicians' proximity to the sound source and their singular authorship of the sound. In my practice, authenticity is instead linked to transparency of multiple authorships and music production technologies. This is the paradigm shift of post rock.

The theme of *liveness* (Auslander, 2002) was interrogated in practice (RQ3), as the authorship was complicated. I sought to create a third space, as Jonny Greenwood describes; a 'third thing' between playing and programming (Greenwood, in Rose, 2019:2010). To do this, I started the practice-as-research on a conceptual level through experiments with applied practice restrictions, in *Series of Studio Experiments* (2019). From this I developed *Enid – Yes!* (2021). The album project was a third space that included hybrid-studio stage instruments in post-digital performances in which acts of timbral virtuosity were displayed by musicians and the engineers through a shared authorship of the music. Through interviews with other practitioners, I was able to situate my practice in the broader context of timbral virtuosity and hybrid studio-stage instruments. This thesis offers a model for other musicians or practitioners to follow and those interested in the practice dimensions of post-rock music and performance.

6.3.1 Simon Reynolds' 1995 definition of post-rock in current practice and from the practitioner's perspective

While I felt that Reynolds, as a music journalist, does not give the perspective of the musician, his definition of 'post-rock' nevertheless acted as a springboard for wider academic discussion used in this research. Reynolds' 1995 definition is still applicable in post-rock, as Reynolds' writings acknowledge the shift in the authenticity paradigm in rock music (chapter 3) through the influence of EDM music production practices. For example, real-time studio practices looping and sampling and as a result, post-rock finds itself in an *authenticity loop*.

The concept of the 'guitar hero' or the 'virtuosic guitarist' has been diffused to enable a different focus on the virtuosic in a performance that is being challenged through technology. The archetype of the lone, single voice, genius performer within rock genres has been questioned and a new virtuosity has formed within post-rock, a *timbral virtuosity*. The 'post' guitarist is given the permission to be more timbral and textual with their instrument, with the inclusion of the studio in the stage techniques. Through the displacement of authenticity, post-rock's aesthetics, form and timbre have been complicated with the impact of EDM and challenged through popular music recording practice, which has redefined the studio as an instrument. The act of displacement of sounds through the studio (Pye, 1967) forefronts the designer of the recording. The studio is integral and a performance tool, leading to post-digital performance practices (RQ3).

I applied Reynolds' definition to current practice through artist interviews and then I developed this definition from a practice-based perspective with *Series of Studio Experiments* (2019) and *Enid- Yes!* (2021). Through the tool of critical reflection, the practice interrogated the notion of the decentred author within post-rock practice and can now be more understood from the points of view of the musician and engineer. The current perspective of the practitioner was gained through primary qualitative methods. These combined artist interviews and practice to

gain knowledge within the contemporary popular music practice of the post-rock genre, which contextual reading within musicology of popular music and music journalism could not solely provide, and thus provided a more robust and dynamic practice-as-research creative output.

6.3.2 Post-rock shifts in the binaries in contemporary popular music practice.

Chris Porterfield (1967) described The Beatles producer and engineer George as an equal collaborator and as an additional member of the band. This predates Reynolds' definition of post-rock and shows that some of the changes that Reynolds described existed in earlier pop music experiments. I have built on these historical examples and explored how a musician can interrogate the binaries between studio and stage, live and recorded, and experimental and accessible. Through RQ2, with applied practice restrictions (PR1, PR2, PR3, PR4, and PR5), *Series of Studio Experiments* (2019) and *Enid – Yes!* (2021), I have explored my practice 'post-rock sounds'.   Post-rock is embracing the blurring of roles between instrumentalist, engineer and producer which combines the instant rock authenticity with 'post' reflective and editorial performance technique adopted through the influence of EDM and DJ cultures.

In *Series of Studio Experiments* (2019) the compositions were conceptually plotted binaries in the recording experience and processes between studio and stage and experimental and accessible. In *Enid*, as a 'senior' collaborator I designed the recording of the album, employing practice restrictions to challenge the process. Both the musician and engineer in the recording and performance are craftspeople, but as I was the producer, I designed the album to challenge the 'I'.

6.3.3 Technology's disruptions to creativity and liveness in post-digital recording and performances practices.

I contend that there is now a complex 'I' in popular music performance, the simultaneous role of musician, composer, producer, engineer, and performer. Through the combination of theory and practice I have explored the post-digital third space of post rock performance. The possibilities with MIDI and audio manipulation and capturing, which were initially designed for the fixed space of the studio and within controlled live rooms, can now be translated from digital music production into a live post-digital (chapter 5) space. This post-digital performance practice exposes the relationship between creativity and interaction, with oneself, technology, and others.

This research has demonstrated that the role of the technology, with the use of the hybrid-studio instrument, had the ability to dislocate our sound sources from their origins, thus challenging authenticity. The concept of post-digital performance was to fuse both electronics and band instrumentation. The blending of the studio and stage put multiple pressures on the recording process, with the shared risk and shared control, and was evident in *Series of Studio Experiments* (2019) and the recording of the album *Enid – Yes!* (2021).

The research contends that there is a paradigm shift within rock music authenticity (chapter 3) which has decentred the 'I' (chapter 4) through electronic mediation of music studio practice (chapter 5) which in turn informs new forms of collaborations and interactions in rock derived genres. Through the complication of authorship and authenticity in music recording practice, a new stage is defined, in which the post-rock musicians expose their craft and design of the recording process and in which the music becomes an object (vinyl) which is then exhibited, screened, or spun, continuously recontextualised. I contend that through my practice there is the possibility for a third space of composition, recording and performance which shifts the rock music recording paradigm. The post-digital era provokes questions in all the arts and

music disciplines and the tension in the craft/designer dichotomy and the role of the human in the creative act with technology, and if that act is authentic. Through the interrogation of my own practice as a guitarist by applying cultural theory, popular musicology and technological studies, this thesis has contributed knowledge in this field and locates a specific time and place in popular music, from a practice-based perspective.

6.4 Bibliography

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Lee, Lee (2019) 'Composition_2 Recording Session' [Film and Media Centre, University for the Creative Arts, Farnham, UK] 28.02.2019
Lee (2019) 'Composition_3 Recording Session' [Film and Media Centre, University for the Creative Arts, Farnham, UK] 04.07.2019
Lee (2019) 'Composition_4 Recording Session' [Film and Media Centre, University for the Creative Arts, Farnham, UK] 01.09.2019
Lee (2021) 'Composition_4 Recording Session' [Film and Media Centre, University for the Creative Arts, Farnham, UK] 01.09.2019
Lee (2021) 'Enid – Yes! [Film and Media Centre, University for the Creative Arts, Farnham, UK] 08.09.2019 and 08.09.2021

Exhibitions
Lee (2023) *Enid - Yes!* [Audio, Audio-Visual Documentation] South Hill Park Bracknell, UK 01/01/2023 – 09/04/2023
Lee (2022) We Move: Hybrid Guitar Production and Performance [Lecture and Performance] Music Hackspace, London, UK – 17.05.2023.
Lee (2022) Enid - Yes! - West End Centre [Performance, Audio, Audio-Visual Documentation] Aldershot, UK – 06.09.2023 – 23.09.22
Lee (2021) Enid - Yes! - Practice in Research, Work in Progress [Exhibition Audio, Audio-Visual Documentation] James Hockney Gallery, UCA Farnham, UK. 01.10.2021 – 15.11.2021
Lee (2021) Enid - Yes! - World within Worlds Research Event [Performance] James Hockney Gallery, UCA Farnham, UK - 08.09.21

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Appendix 2 - Technical and critical glossary of terms

Technical glossary of terms

DAW – Digital Audio Workstation

Sampler - A sampler is an electronic or digital music instrument in which 'samples' audio recordings which can be arranged, launched, played, or triggered.

Looper – A looper is a real-time studio technique in performance in which either a DAW device or hardware pedal can loop audio signals that be recorded and overdubbed.

Ableton Live – Ableton Live is a DAW designed to be an instrument for live performances as well as a tool for composing, recording, arranging, mixing, and mastering.

- **Session View** – Different to traditional arrangement views in DAWs, session views are laid out vertically from left to right with MIDI and Audio clips and scenes.

- **Scenes** – A row of clips can be launched with scenes in the session view

- **Device** – Audio effect, MIDI effects and instruments devices can be selected in live into a channel for processing signals.

- **Clips** – Clips represent recorded signals. A track can only play one clip at a time.

- **Dummy clips** – A 'blank' audio clip with no sound

Critical glossary of terms

Timbral virtuosity – I define this term as the creative act of the manipulation of sound as a virtuosic act. *Timbral virtuosity* is afforded by the recording studio paradigm and these methods are then translated to the stage. *Timbral virtuosity* meets a different kind of aesthetic satisfaction depending on what kind of creator is engaging in the process.

Authenticity loop – A human-machine creative exchange/imitation in which, through reacting and responding with music technology, an authenticity loop is accentuated. An example of this would be the practice of beatboxing, in which the 'machine' and music production is imitated through the limitation of the human voice.

Third 'thing' – A philosophical electronic-mediated space for music creativity, inform by guitarist Jonny Greenwood from Radiohead who comments on new way of composing, recording and

performing: a '*third' way* between playing and programming (Greenwood, in Rose, 2019:201) and from Simon Emmerson (2010) paradigms in *Combining the Acoustic and the Digital: Music for Instruments and Computers or Pre-recorded Sound*.

Post-digital performance – Post-digital performance enables the deconstruction of sound, the collage of post-digital material that is processed in real-time and translated through technology onto the stage and articulated through the musician. Relating to Cascone's (2000) and Cramer's (2015) post-digital aesthetics, cultural theory and practices, post-digital performance integrates analogue and digital technology (for example analogue amplification, digital and analogue effects, and digital samplers) into an anti-reductionist, complex, networked form of individual or group interactions with post-digital technologies in performance.

Hybrid studio-stage instrument - If the machine, or the studio, is a compositional and performance tool and collaborator, then, for the individual, a hybrid studio-stage instrument is created, to enable an integration of others and the studio with their instrument. In my own practice, I describe my hybrid studio-stage instrument (the guitar), as an eco-system of sonic expression.

Practice restrictions – Practice restrictions are a tool for the deconstruction of one's own practice to encourage critical reflection within a practice-as-research methodology. Through the application of the PRs in this project, critical reflection enables insight into the recording processes, interaction and collaborations and composition techniques and recording techniques applied.

Practice-as-research (PAR) A practice-as-research methodology takes the nature of practice as its central focus and is carried out by practitioners, such as artists, designers, curators, writers and musicians (Candy, 2006). My PAR methodology combines practice, interviews (with contemporary practitioners in the field) and contextual theory (musicology of popular music, cultural theory, and technology studies).

Appendix 3 - Technical specification of recordings

All recordings from Film and Media Centre Building, University for Creative Arts, Farnham, UK

Series of Experiments (2019)

Engineers – Laura Lee (Composition_1, 2, 4) & Mark Glaister (Composition_3)
Performers – Laura Lee, Mark Glaister, John Harvey
Recording Spaces RF08 – Live Room
Control Room – RF07 - Audient ASP8024 Heritage edition recording console mixing desk

Composition_1

Performer	Instrument(s)	Instrument specification	Effects	Microphones
LL	Acoustic Guitar	Taylor BT1		2 x Shure SM81

Composition_2

Performer	Instrument(s)	Instrument specification	Effects	Microphones
LL	Acoustic Guitar	Seagull Maritime Mini Jumbo		2 x Neumann KM184 and DI
MG	Drum Kit	Mapex Mars (20",12",14") • Bosphorus • Syncopation Traditional Series Ride 22" • Traditional Series Hi-Hats 15" • Dream Vintage Bliss Ride/Crash 18"		(Kick) Electro-Voice RE20 (Snare) Sennheiser MD421 (OH) 2 x AKG C414 XLS
MG	Drum Machine	Roland TR-08 Rhythm Composer	• Boss MD-2 • Behringer FX600 • Ammoon PockEcho • Hotone Soul Press	DI

Composition_3

Performer	Instrument(s)	Instrument specification	Effects	Microphones
LL	• Electric Guitar • Studio DAW • Effects	• Fender USA Telecaster • Apple Macbook Pro Laptop Focusrite Scarlett 2i2 Ableton Push • Novation Impulse 25 • Fender 65 Deluxe reissue • Orange Crush 60	• Electro-Harmonix POG • Nano Big Muff Pi • Pro Co Rat • Boss GE7,TE-2, CH1, DD7, Line 6 DL4	2x Shure SM57's
JH	Electric Bass Guitar	• Fender Jaguar Bass • Fender Rumble 100 Combo	• Electro-Harmonix SoulFood • Bass Big Muff	Shure SM57 and DI
MG	Drum Kit	• Custom Pork Pie Percussion Drum Kit • (22", 16", 13") Bosphorus • Syncopation Traditional Series Ride 22"		• Shure Beta 91A (Kick) • 2x Shure SM57 (Snare) • Shure SM81 (Hi-Hats) • Electro-Voice RE20 (Floor om) • Sennheiser MD421(Rack Tom)

				• 2x AKG C414 XLS (OH)
		• Traditional Series Hi-Hats 15" • Dream Vintage Bliss Ride/Crash 18"		• Neumann TLM 103 (Room)

Composition_4

Performer	Instrument(s)	Instrument specification	Effects	Microphones
LL	• Electric Guitar • Studio DAW • Effects	• Fender USA Telecaster • Apple Macbook Pro Laptop Focusrite Scarlett 2i2 Ableton Push • Fender 65 Deluxe reissue • Orange Crush 60	Boss LS-2 DD3, DD7, RV6, FV-500H	2x Shure SM57's

Enid – Yes! (2021)

The full channel specification for desk - Audient ASP8024 for both recording sessions;

Performers – Laura Lee, Mark Glaister
Producers – Laura Lee, Mark Glaister and James Wright
Engineers – Mark Glaister, James Wright
Assistant Engineer – Jade Green
Performers – Laura Lee, Mark Glaister
Recording Spaces - RG03 – Theatre Space & RF08 - Live Room

Tracks 2. *Tap*, 3. *Yes!* 4. *Skip* 5. *Ugandan Bowl*

Engineer – Mark Glaister & James Wright
Recording Spaces RG03 – Live Theatre Space
Control Room – RF07 - Audient ASP8024 Heritage edition recording console Mixing Desk

Performer	Instrument(s)	Instrument specification	Effects	Microphones
LL	• Acoustic and electric guitar • Studio DAW • Effects	• Apple Macbook Pro Laptop • Ableton Push • Audient ID4 • Fender USA Telecaster • Tanglewood TWBB Electro Acoustic • Vox AC30 • Fender Deluxe Reverb 65 reissue • TC Electronic BG250	• Line 6 DL4 • Electro-Harmonix POG and Nano Big Muff Pi • Pro Co Rat • Boss GE7, TE-2, CH1, DD7	• 2 x AKG C414 XLS • 2 x Shure SM57 • Electro-Voice RE20
MG	• Drum Kit • Drum Pad • Studio DAW	• Pearl World Series drum kit (22", 16", 12") • Mapex Black Panther snare (14" x 6.5") • Bosphorus Syncopation Series 22" Ride • Bosphorus Traditional Series 15" Hi-Hats • Dream Vintage Bliss 19" Ride/Crash • Apple Macbook Pro Laptop • Audient ID4 • Ableton Live • Roland SPD-20 Pro Octapad • Roland KT-10 Kick Trigger Pedal		• 2x Coles C4038 (OHs) • Shure Beta 91A (Kick) • Shure SM57 (Snare) Shure SM81 (Hi-hats) • Sennheiser MD421 (Rack tom) • Electro-Voice RE20 (Floor tom)

Tracks 1 *Click***, 6.** *Enid*

Engineer – James Wright
Recording Spaces - RF08 – Live Room
Control Room – RF07 - Audient ASP8024 Heritage edition recording console Mixing Desk

Performer	Instrument(s)	Instrument specification	Effects	Microphones
LL	Stage Upright Acoustic Piano	Yamaha U3	Boss DD3	2 x Neuman KM194, Sennheiser E914

Enid – Yes! Ableton Live Drum Session (2021)
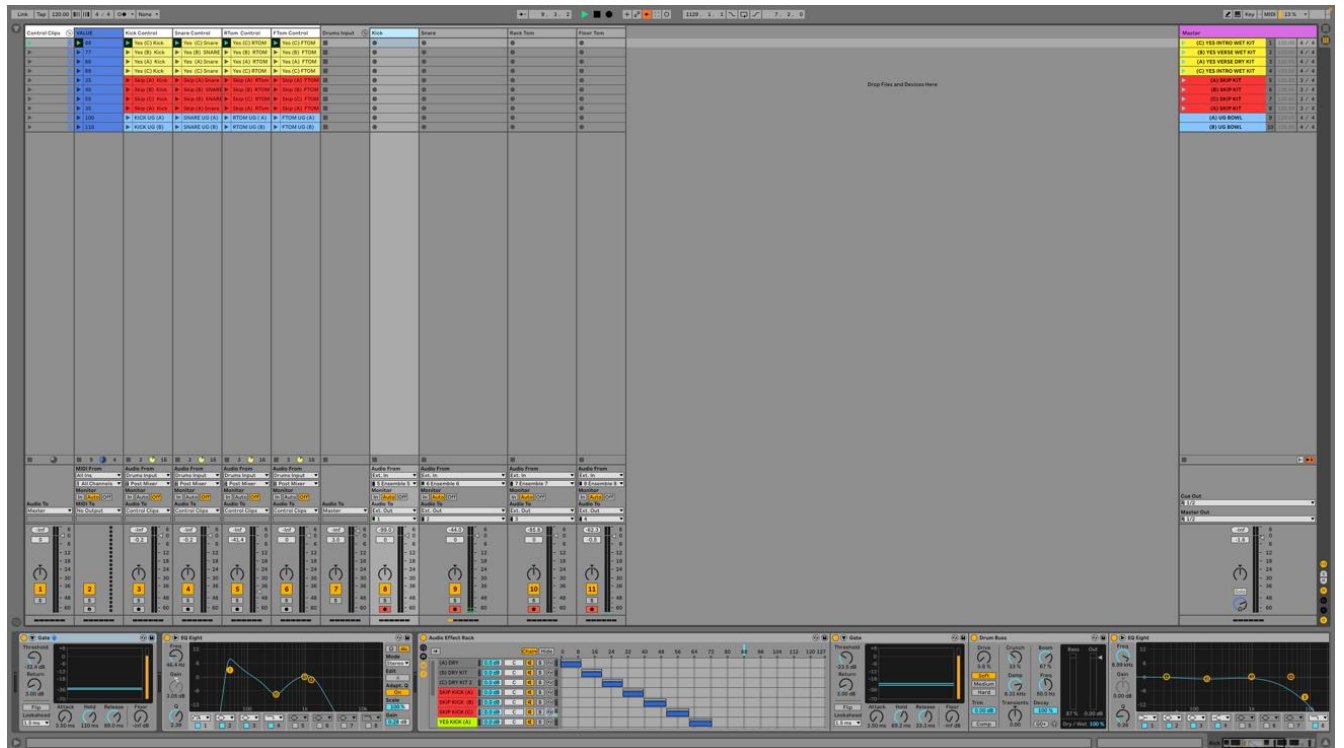
Enid-Yes! - Ableton Live Drum Session 1
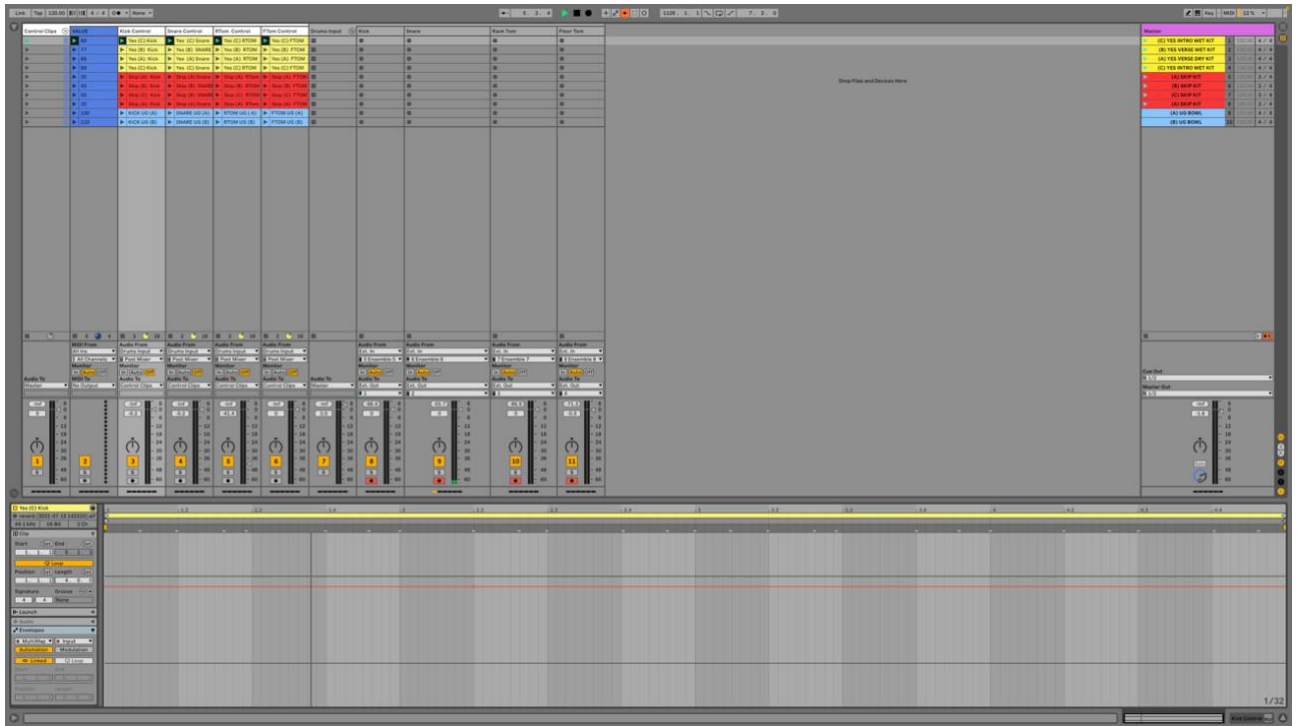
Enid-Yes! - Ableton Live Drum Session 2
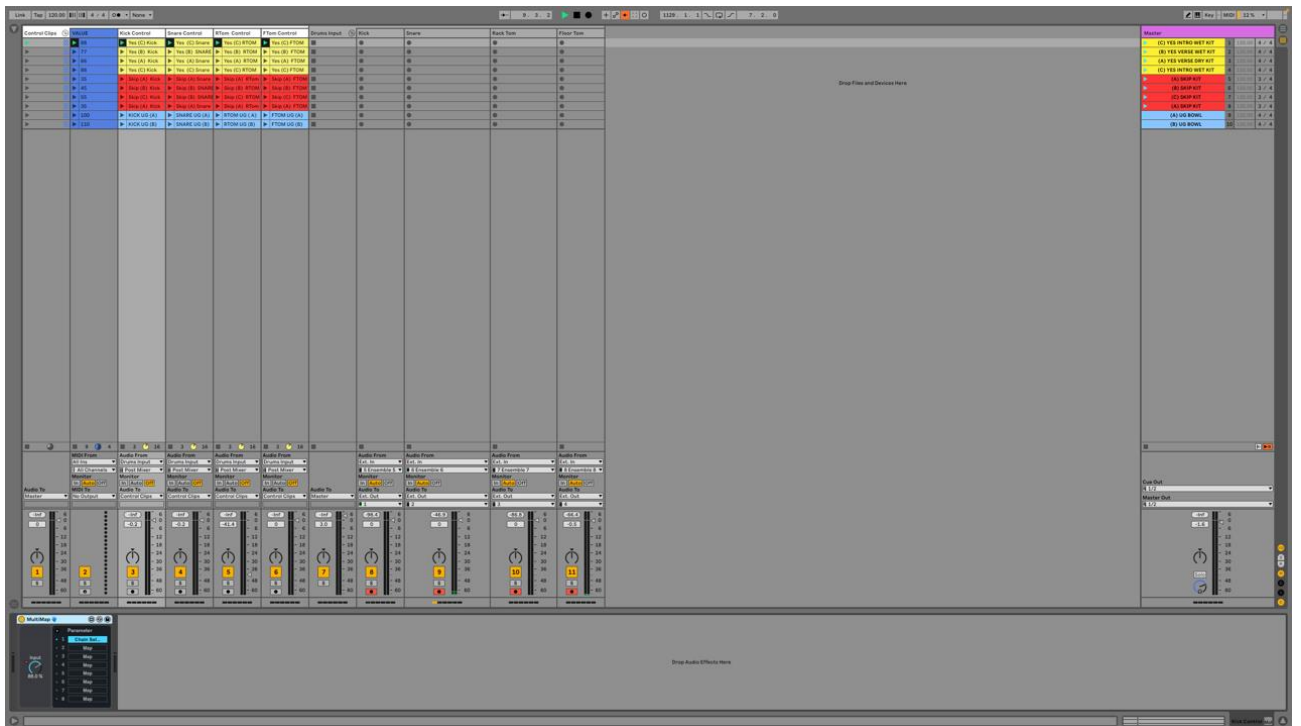
Enid-Yes!- Ableton Live Drum Session 3

Audient ASP8024 Heritage edition recording console mixing desk for Enid – Yes!

Channel	Instrument	Microphone	Room
1 & 2	Piano	Neumann KM194 x 2	RF08 Live Room
3	Piano effects	Sennheiser E914	RF08 Live Room
4	ID14 Bass Amp (Ableton)	Electro-Voice RE20	RG03 Theatre Room
5 & 6	ID14 (Ableton)	Active DI	RG03 Theatre Room
7	Fender 65 Deluxe Reissue Amp	AKG C414 XLS	RG03 Theatre Room
8	Fender 65 Deluxe Reissue Amp	Shure SM57	RG03 Theatre Room
9	Vox AC30 Amp	AKG C414 XLS	RG03 Theatre Room
10	Vox AC30 Amp	Shure SM57	RG03 Theatre Room
11 & 12	Room	Rode NT4	RG03 Theatre Room
13	Artist Talk back	Shure SM57	RF08 Control Room
14	Drums – Kick (Ableton)	Shure Beta 91A	RG03 Theatre Room
15	Drums – Snare (Ableton)	Shure SM57	RG03 Theatre Room
16	Drums – Hi-hat	Shure SM81	RG03 Theatre Room
17	Drums – Rack Tom (Ableton)	Sennheiser MD421	RG03 Theatre Room
18	Drums – Floor Tom (Ableton)	Electro-Voice RE20	RG03 Theatre Room
19 & 20	Drums - Overheads	Coles C4038 x 2	RG03 Theatre Room
21 & 22	Engineer effects	Eventide Reverb 2016	RF07 Control Room
23 & 24	Engineer effects	Lexicon MX400	RF07 Control Room

Channels 1 to 12 on Audient ASP8024

Channel 13 to 24 on Audient ASP8024

Appendix 4 - Practice timecodes

1) Series of Studio Experiments 2019

TC 1 (07:10) Composition_2 – Guitar motif with extended technique - Series of Studio Experiments
TC 2 (09:24) Composition_2 – Drum Solo - Series of Studio Experiments
TC 3 (10:15) *Composition_3 and 4 – Mixing transition - Series of Studio Experiments*
TC 4 (12:01) *Composition_3 – Loud dynamic cluster - Series of Studio Experiments*
TC 5 (13:48) *Composition_3 – Stereo delayed handclaps - Series of Studio Experiments*
TC 6 (16:47) *Composition_3 – Pitch bending - Series of Studio Experiments*
TC 7 (22:34) *Composition_4 – Holding sample on Boss DD3 - Series of Studio Experiments*
TC 8 (23:04) *Composition_4 –Mixing in Ableton sampler - Series of Studio Experiments*
TC 9 (23:28) *Composition_4 – Mixing in the Roland 808 drum machine - Series of Studio Experiments*

Enid – Yes! 2021

2) Video Documentation

TC 10 (01:59) *Click – Pianist - DD7 first click with freeze/hold effect - Enid Yes!*
TC 11 (02:33) *Click – Pianist - DD7 second click with freeze/hold effect - Enid Yes!*
TC 12 (03:19) *Click – Engineer – Eventide delay time & modulation - Enid Yes!*
TC 13 (03:32) *Click – Engineer – Eventide delay time & modulation- channel up Enid Yes!*
TC 14 (04:01) *Click – Engineer – Eventide delay time & modulation- Faders - Enid Yes!*
TC 15 (04:37) *Click – Engineer – Feedback and mixing outro - Enid Yes!*
TC 16 (04:48) *Tap – Guitarist– Feedback - Enid Yes!*
TC 17 (07:22) *Tap – Guitarist- Mix up of overdubbed loops - Enid Yes!*
TC 18 (08:04) *Tap – Guitarist - Harmonic Slap - Enid Yes!*
TC 19 (08:15) T*ap – Engineer – Phasing Guitars - Enid Yes!*
TC 20 (08:53) *Yes! – Guitarist – Mixing between DL4 and Ableton - Enid Yes!*
TC 21 (09:11) *Yes! – Drums – Introduction - Enid Yes!*
TC 22 (10:04) *Yes! – Drums – Extended techniques on the snare - Enid Yes!*
TC 23 (11:14) *Yes! – Drums – Effected Kick - Enid Yes!*
TC 24 (11:41& 13:04*) Yes! –Guitar – Opening the filter - Enid Yes!*
TC 25 (12:26) *Yes! – Drums – Drum Solo - Enid Yes!*
TC 26 (13:13) *Yes! – Guitar, Drums and Engineer – Intensity in dynamics/flow - Enid Yes!*
TC 27 (13:23) *Yes! – Engineer – Phasing Ableton Desk Channels - Enid Yes!*
TC 28 (13:30) Yes! Signalling drumming motif - *- Enid Yes!*
TC 29 (13:43) *Yes! – Drums and Engineer – Reducing of effect channels - Enid Yes!*
TC 30 (14:47) *Yes! – Guitar – Intro to new section - Enid Yes!*
TC 31 (14:47) *Yes! – Drums– Toms – Pitch/Vocoder - Enid Yes!*
TC 32 (14:53) *Yes! – Drums – Snare – Gated Reverb - Enid Yes!*
TC 33 (16:11) *Yes! – Engineer – Phasing Guitars - Enid Yes!*
TC 34 (16:53) *Yes! – Drums – Extended techniques - Enid Yes!*
TC 35 (18:43) *Skip – Guitar – Triplet loop capture - Enid Yes!*
TC 36 (18:52) *Skip – Engineer – Cutting the kick - Enid Yes!*
TC 37 (20:37) *Skip – Drum and Guitar – Release - Enid Yes!*
TC 38 (20:44) *Skip – Engineer –Space Echo delay - Enid Yes!*
TC 39 (21:14) *Skip – Guitar- Outro loop - Enid Yes!*
TC 40 (22:41) *Ugandan Bowl – Drums – Kick frequency - Enid Yes!*
TC 41 (25:40) *Ugandan Bowl – Guitar and Drums – Tapped rhythm - Enid Yes!*
TC 42 (26:38) *Ugandan Bowl – Engineer – Infinite delay - Enid Yes!*
TC 43 (29:25) *Enid – Piano and Engineer– Pitch shifting Lexicon - Enid Yes!*
TC 44 (30:33) *Enid – Piano and Engineer– Pitch shifting jump Lexicon - Enid Yes!*

3) Enid – Yes! Album Version

TC 45(19:08) *Skip – Engineer – Desk Line Button/Glitch Album Edit - Enid Yes!*
TC 46 (20:40) *Skip – Engineer – Increasing the effect channels - Enid Yes!*
TC 47 (22:15) *Skip – Engineer – Interlude loop edit - Enid Yes!*
TC 48 (27:45) *Ugandan Bowl – Engineer- Extended outro - Enid Yes!*
TC 49 (29:08) Enid – This is Enid – Enid Yes!

Appendix 5 – Ethical paperwork

Interview Consent Form

I,   (print name)

                                                                                                agree to a
recorded interview for this research project.

- I have had the purposes of the research project explained to me.
- I have been informed that I may refuse to participate at any point by simply saying no.
- I have been assured that my confidentiality will be protected, and my name will not be published unless I have specified below that I wish it to be published.
- I agree that the information that I provide can be used for educational and research purposes, including publication.
- I understand that if I have any concerns or difficulties I can contact the Research Office, University for the Creative Arts, Falkner Road, Farnham, GU9 7DS, United Kingdom.
- If I wish to complain about any aspect of my participation in this project, I can contact Laura Lee or Research office both at the address above.

I, | would like to be identified by name | do not wish to be identified by name |

(*please delete one*) in any publication of this research.

Signature   Date

Research Participant Information Sheet

About the Research

The research being conducted is a study of post-rock composition and performance practice and the relationship between authenticity, liveness, creativity and technology. The fieldwork is taking place between 01/2019 and 09/2021 and will form the basis of a PhD thesis and related publications.

The researcher is Laura Lee, a practice-based PhD student in musicology of popular music and art theory at the University for the Creative Arts, UK.

The methods for the research involve discussions and interviews with people involved in this and related scenes; observation of rehearsals and performances; and gathering of questionnaire data. The semi-structured interview will involve being audio or video recording for an hour or two.

Participants in formal interviews will be asked to provide written consent to participate in the project and are free to contact the researcher (Laura Lee) or his research supervisor, (Dr Harry Whalley) by using the contact details below to discuss the project, how the data provided will be used and any other queries they may have. All personal data will be held in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations (2018) and may be kept as such for use in future research projects until it stops being relevant to planned research. For further information, please contact:

Laura Lee
PhD Researcher
Department of Film, Media
and Performing Arts
Falkner Road, Farnham
GU9 7DS
laura.lee@uca.ac.uk

Harry Whalley
Course Leader of Music Composition and
Technology
Department of Film, Media
and Performing Arts
Falkner Road, Farnham
GU9 7DS
hwhalley@uca.ac.uk

In line with the General Data Protection Regulations (2018), participants have the right to request to see all data held which relates to them and also have the right to demand that any or all of these data be amended or erased.

About the Researcher

Laura Lee is a creative practitioner, composer & technologist and has a collaborative ethos and drive within creative and cultural industries & academia.

Laura is a lecturer at University for the Creative Arts, Farnham, UK and SRH University of Popular Arts, Berlin, Germany on Music Composition and Technology (BA), Audio Design (BA), and Computing and the Arts (MA).

She is also undertaking a practice-based PhD entitled *Post-Rock Composition and Performance, Authenticity, Liveness, Creativity and Technology*. Laura combines popular musicology and arts practice-based research, exposing new approaches to music technology, blurring the lines of the studio and stage.

Recent works include performance collaboration with Tom Northey, live improvised piece exploring the relationship between sonic inquiry and interaction with s_andra_v2.5 (a generative digital artwork that examines the interplay between autoschediasm and parametric design) at the Experimental and Expanded Animation Conference (2018) and presentation at International Guitar Research Centre Conference (2016) at the University of Surrey with Dominik Strutzenburger, Head of Pop Division at the Vienna Conservatory and the University of Wuerzburg entitled Human vs. Machine in Post-Rock Guitar Collaborative Performance.

Laura's integration of Ableton Live and guitars in composition and performance is explored in band Parachute for Gordo, with releases Best Understood by Children and Animals (2020) Possibility of Not (2017), Ten Meters Per Second Per Second (2014) and Eight Minutes of Weightlessness (2012). The band remote recording techniques were featured in Music Tech Magazine (June Issue, 2017). The band have toured internationally and played with bands such as The 1975, Jamie Lenman, Gallops, Physics House Band and Adam Betts.

Appendix 6 - Interviews Transcripts

Betts, A (2019) *'Artist Interview: Adam Betts'* Interview by Laura Lee [In Person, Play Studios, London UK] 17.04.2019

Collings, M (2020) 'Artist Interview*: Matthew Collings'* Interview by Laura Lee. [Online] 24.04.2020

Collis, T (2019) *'Artist Interview*: *Tim Collis* Interview' by Laura Lee [Online] 08.08.2019

Glaister, M (2021) '*Artist Interview: Mark Glaister'* Interview by Laura Lee [In Person, Berlin, Germany] 19.11.2021

Huckridge, M (2019) *'Artist Interview: Mark Huckridge'* Interview by Laura Lee [Online] 10.07.2019

Mason, T. (2019) *'Artist Interview: Tom Mason' I*nterview by Laura Lee [In Person, Peckham, London UK] 17.04.2019

Mozgawa, S. (2020) *'Artist Interview: Stella Mozgawa'* Interview by Laura Lee [Online] 10.09.2020

Oakenfold, T (2021) *'Artist Interview: Paul Oakenfold'* Interview by Laura Lee [Online] 02.02.2021

Robert, M. (2019) *'Artist Interview: Mark Robert'* Interview by Laura Lee [Online] 10.09.2019

Williams, I (2019) *'Artist Interview: Ian Williams' Interview* by Laura Lee [Online] 20.02.2019

Wright, J (2021) '*Artist Interview: James Wright'* Interview by Laura Lee [In Person, University for the Creative Arts, Farnham, UK] 09.09.2021

Appendix

Artist Interviews – 2019 - 2021

Betts, A (2019)

Betts, A
Artist Interview: Adam Betts
Interview by Laura Lee
[In Person] Play Studios, Peckham, London, UK
17.04.2019

LL - 00:00
I'm obviously quite interested in how we're adapting our acoustic instruments and how we are developing them a bit further. Maybe we can start discussing your progression in your drumming. So, from your traditions within jazz learning and development, to working with people within drum and bass, and then maybe further into the Three Trapped Tigers and now to this sort of set up.

AB - 00:36
Yeah, so when I was really young, I think at like 13, it was metal that I was listening to, but like Nine Inch Nails were a pretty strong thing there.

LL - 00:54
And I think quite a lot of people were quite interested in the production values of Nine Inch Nails. So, it allowed an accessibility through that heaviness and rock formation but there was something other.

AB - 01:03
Absolutely, they used the electronics to kind of… it almost had a slightly like Tetsuo horror to their electronics. You know, it was all that kind of whirring machines and that definitely used to make it dark. So, straightaway there was kind of "this is darker" because there's electronics in it like it's more emotionally awesome because of the electronics. Before then my sister would bring home rave tapes when I was like 10 and those were always amazing, and hearing that 1989, 1990s through to 1993 kind of rave music was just a sound that didn't exist before. It was like "what?" you know, really kind of amazing. Obviously as a 10-year-old, it's a sound that you've never heard before. But that was what was really exciting. You knew that when she came in with the tapes, you had 3 hours of something that you've never really heard, and that was really cool. But then at 13 I went on a trip of "nah man, house and electronics are rubbish," but always kind of liked Nine Inch Nails. And I don't know, I felt like White Zombie betrayed everyone when they did a house remix, Fear Factory with Remanufactured was rubbish. But that was because the remixes were just shit. And then at 16, Aphex and Squarepusher exploded into my head and totally went down the IDM, Warp [Records] road really hard. You know, Boards of Canada and Autechre was too weird for me at that age, I knew it was amazing but I couldn't follow it, I didn't know what was going on.

LL - 03:00
So how are you having access to the Warp record stuff? So, the rave tape.

AB - 03:12
Yeah, so the Warp records, I mean, I think it was MTV, very early days and a mate saying, "Have you seen this" and showed me the Come To Daddy video, which obviously was a bit of a game changer for everyone when they saw it. And that made me go and buy the CD at

HMV and then you know, from then it was that thing you kind of realised that there was a record label on the back and you could find you know, oh wow, let's see what else has gone on. I don't even really know how I heard about Squarepusher from Aphex Twin […] but there was just this weird thing that it was like, these guys are on the same label doing a similar thing. Check that out too.

LL - 3:51
Yeah, I think it's probably that boom of MTV too. And working with Chris Cunningham and all those sort of music directors then, [it gave audiences an] "in", into that complex [music] maybe?

AB - 4:03
Completely yeah, and through that you got an idea that you had a back catalogue because my friend that had that video of Come to Daddy, had got like a box set of all his videos and you just saw that like, oh his stuff from […] 96 is a lot of stuff from five years ago, sounds totally different to this, Donkey Rhubarb and all that lot. And oh wow, this guy's done a real progression, he hasn't just started like this. And then obviously Boards of Canada were the more accessible ones, that would probably be on at most parties. [..] Towards the end of the night, there'd always be a moment where Boards of Canada would come on. So yeah, just that stuff, but obviously it's so drum focused. And also, I think like Drum n Bass when I was young, you know when I was like 13, the raves were always a little scary, like the parties where they would be played. So, you wouldn't go to them because you were […] a kid. And everyone was quite crusty. But Warp records didn't really have that much of a connotation. It was kind of just on its own.

LL - 5:13
I think it was sort of a bit more like, at the time, you still immerse yourself in those scenes but I feel that with the visual work those artists had as well as the production values allowed a new aesthetic to music making that we hadn't heard before and yes, transcended beyond localised music scenes. It was more of a transcendent scene.

AB - 5:51
Totally. And Chris Cunningham, he was totally instrumental. I think so many people got into it, because it basically told you what it was you were listening to, like it set the scene. You were like "This is weird music," and then you see it and it's got its slightly piss take-y, horror connotation there. And you're like, you've put it into a thing of like, that's what I'm listening to. Okay, cool.

LL 06:23
So how was that translated on drums at that point, though? How did you go to jazz school but still be listening to that?

AB - 06:31
To be honest, I never really tried it. I just loved it. And I was like, "You know what? This is too weird. This is inhuman kind of madness". I didn't really try and learn it, which is probably, it's a bit of a daff one I just carried on playing what I played, which was metal, and punk and funk and jazz as a kid.

LL - 06:55
I guess there wasn't like even a reference point at that time for drummers to be imitating or trying to play those parts.

AB - 07:06
There were guys doing it in places like New York, but I'd never heard of them. There was no access to them. I didn't hear of Zach Danziger till I got to London. In Bournemouth in the 90s, I didn't know you could go to London and study music. I had no idea what I was going to do, I was 16 playing in the Dorset Youth Jazz Orchestra, [and] playing in a load of punk bands. We had a bit of technology in our bands at that time. So we had a bit of synth and we used a Mini Disk for a bit of backing track, just to play the synth intro instead of having the synth there. And, then it would stop and then we would play the song. And that was kind of it. But then I met a few guys who were going to London to study music and then I was like fuck, alright, let's see what happens [with] that. So yeah, I went to college, auditioned for college, got in there, and then I was exposed to people who knew about music from all around the world. So, guys like Zach Danziger popped on this Bedrock Record, Uri Caine Bedrock, and that was the first time I had a drummer like having it and playing with rhythms that sound like Aphex. Fuck, this guy is really unbelievable, and even changed what I thought was possible on the drums. It wasn't even like he was using a new voice, it was like, I don't know if a drummer could be that good, which was pretty awesome. I didn't know drums could be so good and be doing something that I am really interested in. The jazz drummers I knew were amazing. I heard of Tony Williams, I heard of Roy Haynes, I've heard of all these amazing guys, but jazz music didn't really translate to me like metal or electronica did. I just knew they were totally amazing and it was a way to go and study drums, like it was a way to play drums for 4 years.

LL - 09:05
Yeah. I guess that was almost pre-ACM, which I think started around that time?

AB - 09:10
Yeah, I knew they did one-year courses [but] you couldn't do a degree at any of them yet. Even if they did, I knew a few drummers who had gone, and I was never like, "That's the kind of drummer I want to be." I didn't know what I wanted to be but I knew I didn't really want to be that. So, you know, it was like, fuck it, I enjoy jazz, let's go, and [I] got in. I was way out of my depth, the players in my year were unbelievable and really knew jazz and I didn't know jazz, I just enjoyed the drums and enjoyed playing it.

LL - 09:43
Did you feel like you quite had the, because obviously you were saying Metal, stuff like Squarepusher, because that was culturally relevant stuff that was happening at the time. But, you know, people always comment on jazz drumming don't they, how we try and conserve this past, something we still want to, are we just imitating the past or is it actually a progressive way to get into drums? To study the jazz classics, same in guitar, you study the real book, and you do this and then, but do you feel that was an important part of your development?

AB - 10:20

To be honest, it was an important part because I hadn't done it. You know, it was like "Woah, there's a real glaring hole in there," which I think is quite funny. When Mark Guiliana came to watch the Squarepusher gig, which is quite terrifying, chatting to him about it afterwards, he, and actually chatting to him and Zach Danziger about it, Mark was like, "I thought it was amazing because I didn't hear a drummer channelling it, I just heard Squarepusher, it wasn't like Tony Williams' take on Squarepusher, it was almost like you didn't have any drummers in the way, you just played Squarepusher."

LL - 11:03

Yeah, because this is what I find, like, this is part of the PhD, it's almost like, so in jazz, it can be a group mind or it can be you introduce each player, as them as a person, and everyone takes their turn, and it's quite centred in the ego. Everyone has their turn and everyone gets to know the band, but like you said then, you weren't even you, just vision, that production?

AB - 11:29

Yeah, which I don't think it was intentional, but it did happen. I think just growing up with Tom's music which was straight away, was like fuck, it goes somewhere central to my playing. But yeah, I mean, […] I think like the jazziers as themselves, especially now would say it's way more conversational and soloist, but definitely, if someone takes a lead scene in a play, you're only as good as the line that's supplied around you, especially in an improv thing. So, getting to London, I discovered Norwegian label, Rune Gramophone through some of the guys that I was at Uni, Matt Calvert in Tigers, and his mates at Guildhall they had a really good circle of guys, like Tom Challanger, George Fogel, Matt, like all really amazing musicians and were hanging out and sharing music with each other on a really regular basis, which I didn't really have at London. I did have the academy [but] I felt like I didn't really click with my year group. As guys, really nice but musically we didn't click and the only thing we clicked on was Weather Report because it was quite rocking, and quite weird enough [in the] composition and had a good line up.

LL - 13:01

Do you think you weren't connecting to how it was taught?

AB - 13:04

Just musically we weren't on the same page, like I didn't like most of the jazz we were playing, although I liked playing with a band that good that often. You know, listening, and control of dynamics, and stuff like that, it was totally rinsed but it was such an amazing learning curve. We started with Lennie Tristano and I was such a jazz newbie, this is bollocks, but as my hearing matured, and it is just coordination, it's how well you hear music, it's how good you are at jazz - as that matured, it was like that shit is amazing, but it was so far beyond anything I've done. I've literally come from county big band, like, not done, I've done small band thing, but only funk gigs not jazz things. Rune Grammofon [Norwegian record label] and guys like Thomas Stronen and Iain Ballamy from Food. That was really instrumental. He was the guy with two mics on his kits, with a SP404, which one I've got over here and a bit crusher. And I like, "Fuck," listening to that. That sounds like Squarepusher, there is a drummer in front of me sounds like Squarepusher and cowbells on the floor tom, upturn splashes on the thing, like bit, playing with chop sticks, and I was like FUCK, that's almost like, to a tee, that's where I jumped and loved it, and literally nicked

what he did. He is an astonishing drummer, like, he's an astonishing drummer and album with gongs. But, yeah, that was massive. They came into the college and rehearsed in the college as part of a workshop and I watched that. And it was also the first a jazz group playing it actually connected to me like Warp Records did.

LL - 15:10
What did they do differently? Why was their vision different?

AB - 15:14
Harmonically more sparse [..] and harmonically more in tune with what I wanted, like a bit more diatonic, bit more glorious rather than, like - I find jazz harmony pleasing, the kind of cycle of two by five, […] I find those tunes fun and cool and I think it's wicked and I enjoy it probably more now than I did, but it comes from more of like real songbook stuff. Whereas actually, the harmony that really speaks to me is more folky kind of slower movement and not as rich. I like diatonic harmony and [..] I could listen to kind of 5 6 4 go round for 100 years, that shit still absolutely speaks to me. And that's totally where they were coming from that kind of more Scandinavian sound so that worked for me and it was still improvised and really creative and also everyone in it was definably a motherfucker. It was amazing. Ave Henrickson is on trumpet there. Yeah, it's like these guys are all great. All the jazz is here, acknowledge they're great, but this also sounds like something I can get with. And I was like, "Cool. Game is changed." It was really, […] I guess at the time as well going to see like, Acoustic Ladyland. Again, all great jazz as everyone at college would be like, they're really good, but they're playing a punk gig and you're like, I'm allowed to kind of […] yeah. Like the first couple years at Uni were a dismantling of my ego. It was fucking hard. I realised I sucked and I had this weird time where like, the music that I'd grown up with was suddenly not valid. Yeah, like, no one listened to Pantera, they maybe did but they didn't really. They were like, I quite like Pantera, and then you're like cool, "Have you heard anything b-side from that single thing?" And they're like I've heard Walk and that's it. And you're like, right, okay. You don't like Pantera, what you do is you've heard of Pantera and you think it's funny? [..] And the only kind of pop that they listened to was Stevie Wonder. And because it was harmonically complicated enough, or Steely Dan, […] and I was like Stevie Wonder is great but so is Nirvana. So is all this shit and it was just really […] fucking jazz. And then kind of three years in you realise that actually, that's actually just an effect of the course That's what happens like people talk about the mainstream jazz stuff that they're talking about. They talk about you know, […] Keith Jarret and those guys more because that's what they're there to study. They actually do like other stuff and they are broader than that. But when you've got a room of 20 people and the one thing they have in common is a love for Keith Jarrett they're only going to really talk about Keith Jarrett. So as a kid if you don't really get Keith Jarrett and you don't really like it, then you're like, oh all right. And then slowly you know, I found the guys that were like that and actually then I kind of rebounded really strongly into myself and was like, "No, fuck you guys. I like Lightning Bolt." Yeah, I guess the other big bit will be like meeting the guys at Westminster uni that I formed Optimist Club who got me into like, Lightning Bolt, Ex Models, Oxes and that shit. The kind of art, rock, weirdness stuff […] I was a pretty cheesy metal fan, I liked Fear Factory. I realised that there was never anything too heavy. I was always like, cool, this is great. I can get that. So like Lightning Bolt was so visceral and awesome. It's like, yeah, that guy's changed the game. He plays Squarepusher […] but like a punk playing it. It's chaotic, it speeds up and it's not quite nailed. But it's so human but it's so of that language. And I was like that's fucking great.

Then Hella was around at the same time, and […] he took me longer because I just found Hella a little bit noodley but the drumming was kind of almost too much for me at first whereas Lightning Bolt was more like [makes kick sound]. And I was like how much coke have these guys taken, but then after a while, it's like, okay, this is amazing.

LL - 19:42
I think with Lightning Bolt you felt that you could play it in the centre of a room and it not be pretentious but still be quite virtuosic, at the same time, and still be quite visceral, but then on an equal playing field. And the ethos behind those bands was never to like make it in a sort of popular sense, I guess it was just more of an underbelly of the art school of players who probably weren't traditionally taught but just approached it from multiple resources.

AB - 20:23
Absolutely, yeah. […] Brian Chippendale's drumming is just a reflection on his painting. You know, the two are the same. It's just like [drumming sounds] and I think that's right. It's not pretentious, it's virtuosic, but it's not pretentious. It's a rock band but filtered through a couple of nutters.

LL - 20:52
Which is probably pretty refreshing now, after the boom […]. I guess you had like hits from Nine Inch Nails to Fear Factory, these sort of like high production value stuff, and then people who thought oh screw that, I'm going to totally rip it back down again.

AB - 21:07
Absolutely, you know, like yeah, it took me a while because I was totally sucked in. I used to love the production. This is how kind of cheesy I was when I first got to London I felt like Soilwork was a really amazing sounding album. And now when I'm teaching my students I have to really rein myself in and say like, yeah, remember that you used to think this shit was properly legit too. It's so kind of camp in its high production value. It's really comedic and like "Bloody hell guys, really?"

LL - 21:42
But I think that's the success, you know that you nearly said you were in Bournemouth, the suburbs […] that's what you had access to, that was the heaviest thing you could get hold of probably at the time, wasn't it? It was like yes sort of MTV2 and some local bands […].

AB - 21:56
Yeah and I think there's something really funny about that. […] There's something London or like, Metropolitan about the irony against that high production value. You know, you're quite like, "Oh, yeah, cool, good for you", you know […]. Like if you're still in Bournemouth, you still think that shit is legit even like, I mean, okay […] I will only say this because hopefully it will never get to anyone; you promise no one is reading it. You know, I've still got mates my age that think that you know, the Soilworks, is fucking great. […] But like, I had to be laughed at for it. I was playing it to mates and they were like, "don't you think this is a bit fucking mincing", and I said "no it's heavier than anything". But like, I think some people got it right. Like I think early Strapping Young Lad 'City' still holds up. I think that still sounds great. But it's following the logical […] progression and like oh, well how about if the chords are a little

more heartbreaking and a little bigger and it sounds a little further […] – then just like "Yeah, no, it's rubbish". And it's so funny, just a tipping point of that taste.

LL - 23:07
I think probably maybe even more at the time, it was so much more important to have those reference points of those bands. I don't think it's quite as defined and definitive now. It would be like, "Oh, you're not rock or heavy enough" at the time. That was your key cultural reference in […] making friends at that time, […] and it was so much more divided at that time, I think.

AB - 23:32
Absolutely. Well Brin, the guy that got me into all the art bands said the only way he found out about these bands, because I was like "Brin you always got amazing bands to show me" and you know, the internet barely existed. I was like, "How do you know?" And he said, "Man, I would walk up to people that I thought looked cool and say what do you listen to? And that was it." […] And I was just like "fuck, you just need to be mad". I mean, that's an awful thing to do to someone, walk up to them like "that's a cool t-shirt, what do you listen to?". And then you would go and check it all out, and then I would get the good bits.

LL - 24:07
Yeah and that would be good. Don't you think it's weird how Warp Records bled out of Sheffield? […] I wonder just how that scene emerged and how that allowed it to be so globally transcendent? […] That's really cool.

AB - 24:25
I mean, I don't think we quite got to the end, how this shit evolved. So, I've just seen Food and just seen a drummer with a live effects unit.

LL - 24:37
[At the start of your career] You're studying what was the closest we could get to a full-time music degree. Through an accessibility of jazz. Then you're talking to everyone else in London and then you're getting exposed to these other scenes. And then your drumming went from being trained within your local, big band and all that stuff at school. And then you were excited by these art school and art rock bands. And other things at the time and this sort of Scandinavian thing, which is what was booming at that time as well. […] Then like the forefront of Bjork. But then there was a lot of like crossover stuff happening at the time.

AB - 25:49
Yeah, I think like, Rune Grammofon was amazing. Also Hum Crush […] Then there was the band Super Silent, you know, like stuff like that which was really kicking off. And that was really important. […] As a slight side bit I was doing quite a bit of acoustic projects and to do like an acoustic duo where rather than getting a bassist you just have like a sampler to play the synth while you were just playing a shaker and a cymbal or something. That was really like you know […] I just need a 404 to play the synth on and then we just play and that that was kind of quite fun. And then from the combination of those Three Trapped Tigers kicked off, and that was a band where we argued, we didn't really agree on music at all. Roj doesn't like funk, doesn't get it, doesn't dance, doesn't enjoy it and thinks James Brown needs to write some fucking songs. And me and Matt don't always agree on kind of the heavier stuff

or the lighter stuff or anything really, you know, we all have disagreements about music, but the one that we all really agreed on was the Warp record stuff. And so we kind of put together the bands to play and that's when we actually tried to sound like those guys started.

LL - 27:21
And what year was that then?

AB - 27:23
So that'd be 2008/2009. I mean, that kind of drumming had kicked off a bit from *De-Loused in the Comatorium* […] That was really something, like hearing John Theodore with I think, like some people claim it's Blake Fleming wrote the drum parts and John Theodore played them. But yeah, that kind of drumming was suddenly like, Ah, this is double time slightly Drum & Basey kind of *makes beat/drum sounds* […]. you know, that kind of extra fast syncopation was suddenly there on the kit in a rock context and it was like this is prog. But again, I think not pretentious, it was prog but without the capes. It's without the smoke machines. It's actually a punk band but playing for 10 minutes. And way more influenced by […] who's the hilarious Latin American guitarist - Santana. […] Rather than yes, you know it's way less British, way less kind of real ale and so suddenly it was cool and yeah that's what influenced Optimist Club but then in Tigers it was probably like let's have a bit that's just a loop but the drums go mental or something like that. So I was like "shit". So I really had to bring it […] and kind of my playing got way better as Matt would just not really accept the flannel that I was playing. […] I'd start playing and I'd never really constructed drums so the build beyond kind of real basic thing and Matt was really intense on phrasing and drum, you know, so he'd say play something that's memorable, play things that sound like melodies because that's what Aphex and Squarepusher their programming is so strong.

LL - 29:04
And I guess that's a freedom for drums where it becomes a forefront in the melodic part.

AB - 29:09
Absolutely. […] I mean you hear *Journey to Reedham,* the drums or the melody for the first half of the tune. And […] well, we've got so many of them, you know, the drums are the melody in those tunes. […] And we did have tunes that exactly where that, the melody is quite simple, but the drums need to fucking carry the energy. And so yeah, that totally happened there. And then the progression to the solo stuff is probably just a more extreme version of all of that, […] I've got electronics connected to the kit. I've done gigs where I'm playing a sampler while playing a thing. What happens if all that comes together can it even be a song. And the answer is maybe.

LL - 30:00
[…] So when you started off Three Trapped Tigers […] you say like, we're going to present ourselves in this like rock formation but we're going to expand and what were you expanding with to start with?

AB - 30:16
So I took the kind of stuff that I had nicked off of […]
phone call interrupts

LL - 35:57
Yeah so that's what I'm quite interested in is like this expansion, I feel like for myself personally as well you have this constant expansion of your integration of technology and then you take it back down again and then you expand out. When you started Three Trapped Tigers, you probably thought okay we want to present ourselves as a trio. And so it's sort of like gig-able and transcends those influences from rock traditions, but I'm going to add X. So what did you start adding?

AB - 36:27
Yeah, so the first bit I had, I had an old SPD SX for a few samples, claps and bits. And I had a couple of mics going into an SP 404. So it's really quite basic stuff. It's like just a bit of effects on it. And actually, there was shit on there that was really fun and I haven't been able to replicate since; like Ableton is not as jammable as a 404. So we'd have crazy bits where I just like have distortion full up on the 404 going through the mics. […] Just have turned it down a bit, so it's just like a texture, and then it's like always […] muted it the second it happened. They were like, no. But it's like, no, that's part of the sound of the drums feedback. And the delay was kind of so messy. It was over everything when you used it, you know, like, because you can't gate the mics or anything. So it's just like […] fucking hell. And when you've just got piano and guitar, and the pianos playing a bit of bass in but he wasn't playing it all the time. There was actually kind of space for that shit to be that mental. And it's one of those funny bits, as the band's gone for 10 years in a way we've kind of got more slick, but less, you know, we all miss that early period.

LL - 37:51
What just because of the technology that you're using at the time? Maybe there was more of […] at that time. And we weren't at time we are now with Ableton, […] and maybe there was like a danger […] with the use of the music/technology back then.

AB - 38:09
Yeah, totally. You never knew. I mean, it regularly didn't work. It regularly did work, but didn't do what you wanted it to. And also, it was fucking hard like, except for the kind of glitchy *makes sounds* there was one dial to turn that effect on, then one dial to turn the speed down, and then you had to turn the other dial to turn it off again. So when you're playing drums, and you're going *makes sounds* and then carry on playing and it's completely un-tactile but just fun. And like you'd fall off the drum stool, you'd knock it off the milk crate that it was on that you've used as your kind of gig setup. Yeah and it was like that being part of Tigers as well. What can we bring to it that Aphex can't? Well, I'm sure his shit goes wrong all the time. But our shit can really go wrong and we can rush and drag and […] sweat and gear can fall apart and that's fun. And then we added a chaos pad which was similar like really tactile and actually way more awesome. And that was really fun just having like a finger surface that I could play and just reach over and hit mad effects on which was fun. But, you know, they all got broken in touring, they all got trashed. […] And then slowly after a while Matt was using a bit of Ableton for a few synths and then we realised Roj was carrying around four synths with him; he was carrying around a Juno, an MS 2000, a Base Station and then like a controller piano, and after a while, we just realised that you could do it with two controller keyboards and an Ableton set up and that was it. That change we realised we could achieve much more but also you know lose a bit of freedom on it like Roj can't jam now, even though he's got like a decent road Rhodes sound somewhere in it it's only for like

two octaves […] like if he opened up his Tiger set he can't jam. And in a way he needs to build that in it's like you know, you've got to have something that you can jam with. But he just doesn't have it. He's not very good technologically anyway. So yeah, it's quite a funny […] like we used to be very jammy on stage, used to just muck about.

LL - 40:30
Like almost as the timeline goes across in Ableton […] or is he more in arrangement or […]

AB - 40:36
Oh, he's in clip view, where every clip has all the settings for the synths on, you know, dummy clips, loads of dummy clips with the automation for his synth sounds on but they're all like one octave of rhodes because that's where he plays everything. Down here will be the bass synth but every black note will have the next chord that happens every so often on it. So we'll play like *makes sounds* so if you jammed with it, it would just be mental. You know, they're so built around the songs because there was you know, so many layers on the newer tunes because […]

LL - 41:13
It's almost like a rock tradition right where you would get these highly like produced albums in, before we have Ableton, you would have this vision in the studio, and then you would try and replicate that on stage. And then maybe do like a long drawn out solo towards the end to sort of replicate that this was alive. But people you know, 60s / 70s would want to know how can you create that great sound that you've created on stage? And then I guess you produce a lot of that work in the shoot in things like Ableton, and then you're like I want to create that on stage but maybe let's say at the start, it was more of a jam oriented thing with hardware. Then it became more […] your use of space and more practical, or, we could just have sections but like you say it allows less freedom.

AB - 42:05
Yeah. I mean like, if you hear the very original version of four, which was like, oh five even […]

AB - 42:56
This was probably one of the bits that kind of began that slippery slope. So the first demo, the first EP […]. *plays music*.

AB - 43:29
So this was just us in the studio and this is me with like, chopsticks just jamming away. But we never kind of got this sound live, it was always the more piano based one live. And it was like, wouldn't it be cool if it sounded like this live?

LL - 43:47
Why could it not sound like this live? Just because of the limitations or your set up?

AB - 43:52
Yeah, exactly like […] having a whirly for the chords and then piano for the melody and then see the bass and then the drums sounding a bit more controlled. It was always a funny one,

like whenever we wanted it to sound as much like […] whereas the actual one that kind of came out was way more what it actually sounded like live […] like a bit more frantic.

AB - 44:20
It's a subtle difference. But I think that kind of thing shows that like, in the studio, we sounded like that and live, we sounded more like that second version. And there was a general progression to sound more like the studio.

LL - 44:36
But yeah, I guess every artist goes through that. […] There's to and fro of like pre-production values, but they wanted to sound like you do live

AB - 44:46
[…] immediacy of the gig.

LL - 44:48
Yeah, that sort of thing. […] and like representation of yourself. But yeah I guess we're at a point now where we've got this hybrid enabler […], so we can be Studio orientated on stage. So we're in a good place - going to go back to my questions […] So we spoke about all these influences that you had, But do you still feel like you've got your own distinctive voice through those influences? And is that important to you?

AB - 45:23
Yes. I like to think I have, you know, it's one of those being British you kind of can't claim that you have, because it's too arrogant. But yeah, […] it's almost more for like someone else to say, but I feel like I have like, I think you know, you would hear something I've done and say, "Oh, that's clearly Adam Betts". I guess the Squarepusher band where we were all in masks was quite a nice show for that where people were like, "Oh that was Betts". And even though we were all anonymous, and it's like so […] I guess you can sum it up as kind of Lightning Bolt meets Squarepusher is a kind of blueprint for what it was I was doing and musically I think that kind of comes through as well I hope you know it's like there are definitely huge influences that I wear very strongly on my sleeve like some bits I always feel sound a bit too much like Rusty or Hudson Mohawk or someone like that, but it's like, actually then you play it to someone and they're like, "No, I didn't spot that", you know, it's a really personal thing […] but actually, you know, it doesn't come through because you're presenting it in such a different format.

LL - 46:38
Do you think that distinctiveness has come through this? Like almost like you've bought the kit we see stays a hybrid kit from sort of almost like to some rock elements of jazz elements and you say that tech element Do you feel like this experimentation through these genres is allowed like a more of a distinctive kit, which allows your creativity and expression

AB - 46:59
Definitely, like I almost never have a rack tom anymore. If I do go somewhere and so my kind of choice of fills are, you know, like, my voice on the kit has changed because of the technology. I'm almost […] that second snare is almost just like, Oh, yeah, that's always there. You know, now that kind of thing, and I find that my, the way I play on the kit kind of

does this. So I'm rarely like that, it's always, you know, you, it just informs the kind of voicing around it,

LL - 47:31
Because I thought that maybe we could go through a bit of that because basically, I want to, like throw up an argument saying like, could this creativity be[..] Could you still sound like Adam Betts without all this engagement of technology and through MIDI control?

AB - 47:45
I would, yeah, I would struggle like I am. So we're one of the ones […]

LL - 47:49
Have you gotten to a point now that you feel like my creativity cannot be really fully articulated without the use of some form of technology? Well, production value or electronic aesthetics?

AB - 47:59
Yeah exactly, it's a really good shout. I know that whenever I do an improvised gig, I feel naked without the electronics and it was freaking me out so much that I had to take a step back. I felt like I could improvise better in electronics than I could with the drums or at least I could improvise on prepared drums and electronics better than I could on just the drums.

LL - 48:29
Is that just because it gives you that slant away from snapping you out of habitual straight-forward drums?

AB - 48:37
Yeah, I think there's some quite Freudian fear of jazz improvised drums with me, where I felt so un jazz when I was at jazz college. That kind of improvising on the drums I instantly felt like a bit of a chancer. So you know, the second someone says, cool, right? Let's have a jam. And I go *plays snare* I sound like, instantly in my head. I'm like, piss take free jazz drummer and the same with like that you know that kind of […] because free jazz I really struggled with

LL - 49:07
Yeah, I think then that's their use module they would use within jazz school like "don't worry we're going to break away from performance you know song writing and the real book we're going to do some free jazz"

AB - 49:17
Yeah, and it sounds more constrained in most cases than non-free jazz you know it's like this is so like good like every kind of free jazz cliche is a fucking strong cliche for a good reason you know like you know the fire in the pet shop […] the spoons falling out of love like all those things are really fucking true. Yeah, you know […] and annoying like you know, and because it kind of carried with it this self-important status of you know, kind of Afro Rhodes and just dicking about with a soprano and it's like, well then from the same people that would look down on Lightning Bolt and Pantera and fuck you, you're way more predictable than this.

LL - 50:08
Yeah, they say nothing is predetermined before those performances […]

AB - 50:16
The very fact that you're not going to play in time is totally predetermined, the very fact you're just going to fuck about squawking on your Sax, you know, you're going to fucking do that.

LL - 50:24
So when someone breaks into something harmonious, then that's predetermined.

AB - 50:29
Yeah, completely and it's not as bourgeois as they make it sound and they're like "Oh, it's so boring or whatever" and it's like, Nah, you know, it's like, yeah, which is again, one of the reasons why the Norwegian shit was so cool was free music, but it didn't sound like bullshit. If there was kind of noise stuff, it was electronic noise stuff, which for me sounded […] I've got better at it. I've come to terms with it and now I can enjoy the pool motions drumming. Yeah but I'd like you know, I think like Laurence Hunt's EP, or albums are a fucking amazing blend of pool motion and, and drone electronics. It's like, fuck, that's so cool. So it's really, you know […] I've made my peace with it but only because I'm not in that jazz college world anymore - I was a twat while I was in college, don't get me wrong. I was angry, I was very insecure, so I rebelled against everything around me.

LL - 51:30
So that's obviously what made you the player.

AB - 51:32
I think so yeah but it's also mad - college, quite a tough experience. You just feel like an absolute nutter through all of it.

LL - 51:41
We spoke about this, what I felt like a bit because I didn't go to a traditional music school. So I sort of had the guy from Throbbing Gristle running it so it was more of the art school approach. But I had to search quite hard for that sort of thing and then it went into who's streaming to performance art, which can get a bit like, bad, but sometimes good it's all this sort of like pushing the boundaries and then deciding within your own artistic limitation. So if you'd like you said that free drummer style thing you're like, no that sounds bad and it's just trying to build these parameters around you of what sounds good and what doesn't. So I thought it would be interesting for you to talk through aspects of your gear but also I think what's interesting about your style is, that some of the styles you play in would not have been formed if we didn't have people like Squarepusher with that production value so it's only something that emerged through the studio so this did exist without acoustic instruments, it was brought through this technology – so you're probably a hybrid of both imitating the drums, only post Warp records, so yeah I think it's like a weird hybrid for you.

AB - 53:13
Completely, I think Joe may have said this very well when he said that the last groove that a drummer invented was the 'Blast Beat' - producers write the drum beats now not drummers and I think that is pretty true. It will go back and forth and I think one of the things I'm trying to do is put the drums at the focus even though it was studio music and you're trying to chase an impossible thing. I don't know Zach Hill at all but I would argue that his sound came from that as well, I don't think you learn to play drums like that – there is a free jazz element again that you hear Interstellar Space or something like and there's that busyness and madness within but

LL - 54:26
Even those that we perceived as a more organic way of drumming i.e. straight up rock drumming but it was so informed though studio productions that they had a reverb snare – So that's not a true representation of an acoustic instrument but I always think it's funny that some of those rock albums of our time are meant to just be those four guys in the rooms producing the albums but in actual fact there's so much of the producers vision that's represented and sometimes the producers aren't even spoken about in some of those fundamental rock albums because it's meant to be so honest and true tone of musicians with nothing technologically driven.

AB - 55:06
Yeah, I think what Blood Sugar Sex Magic did is so interesting. The drums are so roomy but it's a high production element, whereas something that is quite lo-fi often struggles to sound like 4 men in a room. It took me ages to really get into Fugazi because to me it just sounded so flat but slowly I've grown to love the sound of its kind of "don't give a fuck way" but it doesn't sound like four people in a room, it sounds like recorded without doing much or to it afterward – it's okay, fairly alright but in that way its own cool thing. The production that goes into making shit sound really natural, especially playing in a high ceiling room is a lot of compression, good mic placement […]

LL - 56:15
Should we go through a bit of kit stuff and then I'll ask some more extreme questions.

AB - 56:20
Yeah, cool.

LL - 57:27
So I'm touching upon three strands which is almost like how you were saying without an adapter kit and use of electronic you don't quite get your creative voice so that's just become a part of you and talking about the imitation of studio and some of the sort glitch, very inhuman forms as well as the hybrid kit with imitative drum machines – so we almost hail to those classic drum machines with that aesthetic. However, when they first came out it was very synthetic and no one thought they'd ever use it because it was rubbish and now that very thing has become our pallet.

AB - 58:14
Yeah, yeah it was rubbish.

AB - 58:21
Yeah definitely. One of the things. That's been quite good for me recently has been the development that all techno guys are looking for texture in their sounds so the pure drum machines[…] because this shit can't do it if you want drum machine stuff - I always have it where I'm in the studio with guys that want a bit of drum machine stuff but to be honest you don't need to hire me to get drum machine stuff you probably just have to quantize it to get that inhuman thing. If you want sequenced *makes drum beat noise* 8/8 stuff just put it on – you don't need to get me in to do it, just add in the sample and it will be way better but if you want something that evolves and has a load of texture then yeah sign me up.

LL - 59:17
So what do you think your mission is sort of a blend of the two or […]?

AB - 59:23
Yeah, I think so. Because I think anyone that pretends to be the human drum machine [is] being a bit of a twat really and there are some people who definitely claim it but it's like, that's not really useful 'cause drum machines are really cheap and everyone's got 808 samples so what can you really bring to the table that you couldn't do in 15 minutes typing it on a MIDI clip on Ableton. That's been quite a challenge with […] writing stuff since there's getting that level of texture with writing - the drums will bring it instantly but I think all kinds of electronic guys now demand such a degree of automation with every sound so that's what I'm kind of chasing on it now. How can the envelopes of the synth be affected by the drum kit etc.

AB - 1:00:43
Yeah, cool. All right so let's talk through it

AB - 1:00:49
So what probably is quite a nice example at the beginning would be this one so it's actually from the previous album [..]

AB - 1:01:02
Fuck it now let's talk about this one first [..]

LL - 1:01:12
Okay, so you got like, nice nicely colour coded in scenes. Yeah. do you cycle through those?

AB - 1:01:19
Absolutely so I've got around 120 channels going across of different kits for each song or different collections for each song.

LL - 1:01:33
So, on average you've got 4 channels?

AB - 1:01:37
Yeah Detroit is quite a dense one so it's got; 1,2,3,4,5,6,7. 7 things some of which will be really and some of which will be off for half the track. So when I start up Detroit here, what have I got running,

AB - 1:02:06
So I have to have the right kit set up on the SPD SX because the MIDI sends different notes or different bits.

AB - 1:02:22
So what we've got here, just like some random synths, that one's not plugged in right now.

LL - 1:03:03
You said you had 3 MIDI triggers but you've started to use parameters within audio sessions as well.

AB - 1:03:10
Yes. So theses MIDI triggers in action, this one's probably the best. So what you'll see like there was a synth player.

AB 1:03:29
So you'll be able to see that like this part of the synth is running around a random loop of things and that's kind of how this tune […] that with reverb is obviously quite a fun bit of the sound

LL - 1:03:47
I guess adding that sort of texture you were talking about – which is what traditions within house of techno, they almost become like a sound artist on top using this stuff

AB - 1:04:00
Yeah, that's it. Definitely, especially on record when you record this stuff without that layer it does sound completely empty without the really fake *synth sound* some of them haven't been completely re-amped these yet and there is a layer of re-amped stuff in there and this sounds quite full now and is a cool one to see how the filter is opening and closing from the snare. So that was just to give it some movement – that's the kind of MIDI stuff, more about songs than drum textures.

LL - 1:05:00
That was like a way to expand when you decided to become solo.

AB - 1:05:07
Yeah, exactly. Like I was saying in that acoustic project, I would play chord sequences behind the guy and have it on a little pedal there.

LL - 1:05:19
There are some people who would argue why not have click in headphones or play along to a track, what's the gratification by clicking through and cycling through these yourself?

AB - 1:05:30
Okay, yeah. It's probably the Lightning Bolt thing of […] I've got better at playing with click but I didn't really enjoy it at first – it felt really restricted. The thing is[…] when people first told me music needs to ebb and flow, I just thought it was an excuse for having shit timing but now I totally believe it. The outro of this tune, once it gets roaring, needs to be able to pick up a bit and when I'm playing it to a click it does one thing and when I'm not it goes where I want it to – so if I'm playing with another person our timing is connected to each other and it will not necessarily be connected to the metronome or the timing is always rushed or dragged which is a part of the visceral experience.

LL - 1:06:41
I only questioned it because you said when you put your YouTube videos up people always asked "why don't you play to a backing track?" so I'm asking from the artist vision why do we go to the extent of this exchange?

AB - 1:07:03
There's something about if you really know a song, the chords are already part of[…] you still know when the drums are going *makes drum noises* it's not going to be a surprise – you know, it's all part of you when you play and I know that the chords go *imitates chords*

LL - 1:07:38
Yeah so you can almost see the channels or layers.

AB - 1:07:40

Yeah, and you're just like "Cool. That's just what happens." And then it's just knowing that that's your left leg doing that. It's not that hectic really, it's not as weird as it kind of maybe […] But you have to, that's just then turning your brain to do that. Yeah, so then I guess another one that was like I got really obsessed with delays on drums. And this one is quite fun for that – so this is it. I'll just have to reassign the mics […] because live I just had the two mics but maybe I'll use six.

LL - 1:08:58
So yeah, this sort of stuff becomes procedure in itself, almost like tuning up?

AB - 1:09:19
So now I don't know why this isn't working other than […] oh now I do – I'll just have to make sure I don't save this when I close it cause it will change […] now that MIDI trigger is opening that gate but it's supposed to be that MIDI trigger […] So this one is a weird hybrid of "oh it's a synth sound" but you can get so much more texture because this sound reacts the same as a drum does because it's just distorting the texture. As a drummer I enjoy the difference between *makes drum sound* all these different textures are part of it - so now I know If I hit it in the middle it will be *drum sound*. There's obviously some sort of effect, some LFO stuff that is driving that as well.

AB - 01:10:55
You can hear the texture of the drum coming through it while it also feels really alien and dated.

LL - 01:11:00
I think guitarists have had this sort of freedom for a while and for drummers it feels completely brand new […] but yeah that's the whole point as a guitarists we always want to expand our sounds much far beyond ourselves by a load of delay to looping so it becomes far away from your touch and otherworldly.

AB - 1:11:35
No, it's totally true though. I mean, yeah, the first time I heard ring mod was probably on like Incubus, you're like "what is this sound" and then suddenly you're like putting it on your drums. That's really […] it's fun. So I guess one of the bits that […], similar like, along the way, is these pitched snare bits that have become […] like we're in that really early on in the set but actually become really fun bits that I enjoy kind of mucking about with in an influenced way the beginning of the set. *plays drum sounds* Reverb and the pitching which in a way is a bit naff but then you control the amount of reverb on it.

LL - 1:13:45
Are you making individual drum racks per song?

AB - 1:13:49
Yeah, just because the MIDI notes go out so much […] like change so much on every tune, just make sure I have space. It's kind of a product of the order of how I make the tune so if you suddenly go "lets add some effects to the snare at the end of it" then you'll find that […]

LL - 1:14:09
This gives you a freedom again but also away from […] allowing freedom of complete custom kits. You know how some v drum kits have pre-sets and you could change them slightly but never to this extent.

AB - 1:14:28
Completely. V drum kits were ironically always made by drummers *makes drum sounds* So like this kind of reacting to the envelope was kind of the first things I added, depending on how hard you hit the sound would go up really high.

LL - 01:15:14
So what is the expression you've got here?

AB - 01:15:15
So the expression I've got is the amount of reverb which is super short which is kind of hard to hear.

LL - 01:15:23
But how do you do that in a context allowing the reverb to be heard?

AB - 1:15:28
So it kind of just became like an improv at the beginning of a set. *plays drums* It all sounds quite weird and electronic as I said it's really early doors use of it.

LL - 01:16:26
Yeah it's weird 'cause, I'm trying to think from my own perspective as a guitarist who uses Ableton in their rig and uses effects quite a lot. It feels like a natural desire but it's quite alien to some drum use and when they do use these MIDI triggers it's quite a linear fashion where they just match their snare drum.

AB - 1:16:49
Yeah, so we went along to the Roland evening a few weeks ago and it was just a really terrible demonstration of technology because it was designed by drummers for purchase by drummers that don't know anything about electronics […] the first thing that they got wrong on it, they spent thousands sampling the kits for the sample packs but they only have one sample for each hit. And you're like "look if you want anything to sound even completely natural, 5,10,15 samples that are very similar will add to a kit way better than just one - so the second you hear that one sample being repeated, anyone with ears will be like "well that's not real" […] I mean hey it's for a different use but I just don't think it's a particularly good one but that's because it comes from drummers rather than producers. They haven't spoken to any producers about it to ask what would be useful and if they had a drummer in their band, what would they want them to do. It's pretty hilarious

LL - 1:17:59
I think that's the freedom with Ableton it gets it started with more people like that because initially it was what producers used and I think they never conceived that people like yourself would be using it in this format at all – so it's a bit of a, more of a neutral ground as some of this stuff can be predetermined of how you'll use your instrument.

AB - 1:18:23
The first thing anyone ever does with it that does anything good is delete all the sounds – weirdly I don't need a piano playing in one tune you know. It's such a terrible thing and there's nothing good about the use of that […] I had a friend come round and listen to one of my tracks when I was working on it – he's such a drummer, he said "oh, it sounds like that JoJo Mayer stuff" and I was like "NO. JoJo Mayer is trying to sound like the stuff I'm doing. I'm not listening to stuff other drummers do and thinking that's such a good idea for electronic music" it's such a backwards way of thinking about it and that comes from drum culture- it's very toxic you know. The world of drumming that's not to do with listening to music.

LL - 1:19:16
I think especially in that rock world […] I think the instrument and the dream of it is such a warped sense of reality and you're buying into it because of the image or whatever.

AB - 1:19:33
Yeah, completely. The second drums sound like drums then I think your ears just stop working. If a snare drum just sounds like a snare drum […] there's so much difference in your instrument even though we've got hundreds of years of culture setting up what these

instruments mean to us as a society – you still have loads of angles within that to fuck with it. We're still trying to make people move at the end of the day but it's like the second something sounds like Bon Jovi, it's not going to work in a punk album and that will that turn off a whole school of listeners the second they hear a drum kit just that sounds like Red Hot Chilli Peppers – it won't work in another context i.e. a britpop context and people who loved oasis wouldn't like that it sounds like that even if they don't know why they might be like "oh it just sounds a bit flash in L.A.".

LL - 1:20:31
I just think […] that's the point of me doing this PhD. I think we've moved forward, if I go from the 2000's onward we've got to a stage where[…] through this early influence of electronic music it allows it to not be such an egocentric performance thing and it allows a lot of musicians to [….] that's what I want to talk about because you're still very visceral and energetic almost proving the worth of this use of electronics whereas some people who perform electronic music are very still and in themselves. So the point of what I'm trying to say is, I feel you've got a blend of the two whereas some people are quite introspective in their performance styles to the point of not needing to be onstage. So the way we treat our instruments is a bit more inside ourselves and there's a point of music that can be a lot more intellectual and immersive. But then you still choose to be quite visceral at the same time but that's what you need to do for your creativity, there's this energy that comes across […] I think you're quite in the middle but if you took away these MIDI hits and audio hits, if you could have pads that felt like kits would that be enough or does it still have to be acoustic?

AB - 1:22:13
I think it does. Yeah, it does have to be the acoustic kit because it's so like, you could play the whole set on the SPD SX but it would […]

LL - 1:22:26
But I think it gives people a reference point and yeah, accessibility in.

AB - 1:22:31
I think so and loads there's something about the sound of the drums that I think that is incredibly […] there are loads of times where I wish it was more like an 808 and you can make a sound on the kit that I know how it works and I spent so long making it that it's my musical voice – I would love to do more house tracks in the set but it doesn't work with this kit.

LL - 01:23:03
And why is that?

AB - 01:23:03
Because the second you play […] when I'm playing with Pete Tong it feels amazing because I have a 909 kick and snare – I could do a 909 snare on the side of this and not hear the live kit snare and that would be okay but the bass drum you basically need another pedal there and I'm very lazy so I'm not prepared to do that. You literally can't hear that bass drum and it feels like house and it needs to be big enough – so there is complete limitation especially with the live kit with it being more LCD Soundsystem which comes from something else.

LL - 1:23:46

Yeah you know […] on the way here I was listening to Gang of Four and Talking Heads and stuff like that and I thought it was interesting because they were excited by production of disco and it was imitated on their instruments and we were excited by Warp records and things like that which we imitated on our instruments. It was such a weird extra jolt in that generation where it was still groove orientated from disco to post punk and LCD Sound Systems but this pushed more to post or glitch, more of a left turn to try and imitate.

AB - 1:24:19

Totally. It's totally inhuman, the disco one had elements of where it was going in Detroit when bands started copying that, even that was still inhuman, but it's still works really quick for you in a band if you've got a cool band whereas the glitch thing you're deliberately chasing something you'll never get.

LL - 1:24:40

That's what I was going to ask is actually now maybe you could play maybe a minute of something […] like you were saying you might want to engage with this is to push future sounds and there's an element of future in all of this why we engage in technology. Maybe a little clip and then we just talk about it, how you think you're pushing, and then I'll finish with more my PhD style questions.

LL - 1:25:22

Because I feel like if we cracked it, we'd stop this music stuff and we'd be like, "right I'm done, I've pushed music as far as I can".

AB - 1:25:30

Yeah, I've finished music. Which is kind of funnily like what […] if you have a chat with Squarepusher you have a feeling he'd kind of finished music when he was quite young and he's quite frustrated by it.

LL - 01:25:50

And why is that?

AB - 01:25:53

Because, well I mean I think he kind of did – his music was so powerful and almost finished. He more or less invented a genre when he was 19 inadvertently but yeah. *drum sounds* Yeah, annoyingly my external hard drive is at Charlies' right now so all the things I've really been doing aren't on here but I can show you how I go about it. *drum sounds*

AB - 1:26:46

So basically, the thing the thing that I've been chasing more now and this is this is kind of […] what I was talking about a bit like, so I think my last stuff was obsessed with "Can you make a song work through the MIDI being triggered from the key What does that do?"

LL - 1:27:03

But that was like a cognitive experiment with yourself, right? Yeah, like you were saying before, so do the percussive layers but also melodic layers and how your hits would be […] to push yourself up habitual playing because you would have to add melodies.

LL - 1:27:18

Yeah, absolutely. Some of those were really fun i.e. when you play *Agita* or *Detroit,* and you've got a melodic synth connected to the kick and snare, and you're improvising with that - you can kind of dictate roughly […] so on *Agita* it starts as just a fifth that's either going to be *imitates sounds*.

AB - 1:27:45

Then I can turn on an extra effect to just add more notes to that possibility - then when you're playing *drum sounds* you can really find melodies in that I would never write otherwise and I thought that was interesting. But then the bit I've kind of come around to now, is that I want to be, I really want to be doing stuff that is […] and like you say going back to the SPD SX, stuff that I just couldn't do on just the SPD SX. So it's like, well then the sound of the drum kit is essential and so I'm […] I'll just show vaguely what's going on with this.

AB - 1:30:00

So kind of in chasing back the more […] alive sounding stuff *drum sounds*.

AB - 1:30:43

I've been trying to chase some things that essentially need the […] if it didn't have the drum in the middle of it wouldn't sound like that at all which actually leads to drum effects more than MIDI because you can get great stuff straight away.

AB - 1:31:37

That this is the annoying bit about so much Ableton stuff like you straightaway […] without setting something up you're not making any music.

LL - 1:31:51

No and I think yeah for someone starting out you have to really persevere.

AB - 1:31:58

Definitely. *drum sounds*

AB - 1:32:14

And then try to work out ways to effect these kind of things with some parameters that you can easily control while […]

LL - 1:32:22

So how are you going to do those parameters, Yeah, because you're actually not doing much sort of like […]

AB - 1:32:26
Not much knob twiddling. It's much more like trying to use so you know […] which is fairly limited in terms of what it is. It's basically like, how loud are you hitting the drum and where are you hitting the drum *drum sounds* which kind of gives you your envelope kind of filter but really then trying to find the most exciting use of one parameter or two.

LL - 1:32:59
So you set those limitations, you're sort of like "So I'm going to put this on and try and get as creative as I can"

AB - 1:33:04
Yeah, exactly. Also kind of mucking about with maybe those parameters being drawn into a clip.

LL - 1:33:12
Because this is what they like this guy I spoke up earlier Mark Butler he was saying […] where musicians in the past pre-determined stuff would be the sheet of music they had. Now we're at a point where your pre-determined things, your parameters within an Ableton set up - where all the stuff that happens in between is all up for grabs and loads of improvisation can happen with that. The same goes for a DJ with records - you have those 10 records every time but those mixes that performance could change every time. You've just given yourself these restrictions, but there's a lot of freeway between.

AB - 1:33:47
Exactly. I mean here's a couple of tracks that are like almost on their way. This one is a kind of developed enveloped song just on the kit so it all just plays and it's like a skeleton of a tune. *drumbeats play* There's actually a slightly earlier version, let me see if I can find that *drum sounds*.

LL - 01:35:48
So you've almost now got […] a producer/mixer simplified technique over melodic playing.

AB - 01:36:07
And this is probably that […] that Egyptian influence was quite early on in drum and bass rhythms that don't sound like drum and bass but still have that same kind of energy. Those synth melodies are quite simple ones that you can just hit when you need to – so it's actually just 3 snares and a bass drum with just the hi-hat going really fast. The bit for me that's like "cool where's the focus here?". You always need to keep the intros to keep people hooked in and so much of that comes from sound design with electronic stuff that you can't do in real time but you can create in Ableton and then go to perform with that – it's almost quite back and forth, it's not an improv but it's not completely constructed version either. So yeah you kind of have to start with an idea that sounds fun and then turn it into a bit of music and make it a bit more, I guess shaky.

LL - 01:38:20
Yeah I guess before you wanted to push yourself to play different parts cause all your hands have been used for the drums and normally a DJ or a sound artist would have basic

knowledge to deal with this but you don't have that hand, but trying to see how you could connect that […]

AB - 1:38:27
And having a drawn on an Ableton click can feel a little bit, like a bit restricted, but actually, it's pretty […]

AB - 1:38:51
Yeah, I mean, I have tried it with like a 12 step or something where you can try and use the velocity on it to control it but it's just too much to think about. It takes away from the performance and I'm sure there's a way around it if you practise it – it's definitely quite hectic. […] when you see a live electronic gig they're never doing everything on stage so for me when I come to play I know that the envelopes are doing this but within it the notes are completely up to me. I'm never going to feel like a sell out who is playing along to a backing track. I just have some known factors and I normally know where it's going to kick into

LL - 1:39:50
I think that is a weird pre-conceptual thing we've put on ourselves, that it's got to all be done tangibly from touch but like you said all performances have an element of that from the engineer behind the desk […] so there's always that engagement.

AB - 1:39:17
Even when you see Squarepusher doing it live, he's just about as in there with the electronics while being obsessed with it being him performing as anyone I know. He still is like "it all comes from that sequencer and it comes from the MIDI envelopes that I've drawn" so he's still got some control but it's never over the entire track.

LL - 1:40:25
Otherwise you just end up with it not being a performance and that's not what people want.

AB - 1:40:35
At the end of the day a performance needs to take you from one place and move you to another. I think SOPHIE is quite an interesting one, first time I saw them it was just her with a sampler having it and I was really fucking hooked – I thought it was the best gig I had seen and I assume most of what I heard was coming from that and when she went *imitates noise* the whole music lifted up and I thought she could just be an amazing mimer because it looked really tactile and expressive.

LL - 1:41:12
But it could just be with those kinds of performances even if it isn't the traditional way of doing a performance you can still get people hooked in by being that performative and making the crowd more engaged than with your standard band set up.

AB - 1:41:25
Yeah, totally. Then the second time I saw them was after they transitioned, it was way more saying these related it was way more of a kind of cabaret show. It was like dances on stage, she was just standing there and kind of singing a bit, but a lot of orchestrated dancing. There were a couple of tunes where […] I was so less engaged. Now I totally know that that's from

my perspective as a muso. "Oh, you're not doing anything, you're not moving around the stage".

LL - 1:42:05
Because I think people love seeing studio equipment being used as an instrument itself. So that was probably super engaging but yes, you get more […] there's parameters of music theatre performance art that I get a bit[…] But then it loses like you say, the focus of the craftsmanship, even if that craftsmanship within that electronics and even with studio practice, some people can get disengaged if it loses that connection with the music making.

AB - 1:42:39
Absolutely. I think if at that first gig I'd seen they were genuinely trying to make everything at the same time, if they pretended that they were doing the vocals on Lemonade, you'd be like, you don't need to do that - everyone knows that that's a wicked sample. It's just in and you just go and so you know, that was great, but it definitely has enough of an element of life to take me with it but you definitely acknowledge that it's not all live. So I think kind of, you know, with the newer stuff I'm trying, it's definitely got a more stripped back feeling because I am trying to be more […] these key ingredients, it just happens that the synths and the drums are you know, it's not just playing along to synths if you will […] but it's an angle for sure.

LL - 1:43:27
Yeah. It's just giving you yet a new creative freedom and maybe even five years ago dealing with audio in this way would have been quite hectic. Trying to bring that live.

AB - 1:43:38
Yeah, basically impossible. I think having that much control […] I mean, one of the constraints is that I am kind of limited to effects with almost zero latency. So there's like a couple of GRM plugins that I think if I can great and then the Ableton ones are just so reliable and comfy and so corpus shows up loads, you can always get wicked effects with it but it is quite limited still *drum sounds*.

AB - 01:44:17
Within the parameters it reflects quite nicely – it definitely adds so much of its own character. *drum sounds* Enough of it sounds like a drum for me to be happy.

LL - 1:44:39
Yeah, they call it source deformation - if you take it so much away from the source it can feel […] it feels like you have a parameter that when it goes too far away from the source then […]

AB - 1:44:53
I didn't know the phrase for it. Yes, wicked. Yeah, exactly that if I hit that and just white noise happens then I'm like, you know that may as well be a sample and often then I'll just replace it with a sample because why […] just let it be a sample. Yeah it's exactly that, trying to get the right level of source before the deformation happens.

LL - 1:45:16

Yeah exactly and some people don't care at all […] they have the set samples and don't care where it comes from or how it's been manipulated. However, with some people it's quite important, the source is still obvious. How I came up with that term is another guy called Brad Osbourne, an academic, and he talks about when Johnny Greenwood started using Max MSP and how it sort of deformed it, but you can still sometimes see strikes of guitar but if you just heard that glitch work, or use of Max MSP you might not have not understood the reference.

AB - 1:45:59

Yeah, completely and it would connect with you less. It's such a mad one and that's why I haven't done any of the Sunhouse triggers because everything I've seen from it, the drums are really secondary to it. It's like it may as well be a push. I've seen amazing gigs and I really like it but everyone's drum kits are just; muted snare drums, muted bass drums and muted floor toms played by amazing drummers i.e. Ian Chang is an unbelievably amazing drummer and I love him but all the inflection just looks like it should be in Ableton Push – it's really awesome what he does but the drums aren't an integral part of the sound. I think it's quite regressive on my part […]

LL - 1:46:53

Well, I think what we've decided is your own creative parameters […] you've got to a point now where you can just be completely acoustic and you've got to a point now where you wouldn't want to just disregard the acoustics. You want this hybrid - so not only do you want a hybrid of acoustic and electronic, you also want a hybrid in your practice that is studio led as much as performance or stage led.

AB - 1:47:15

Yeah and that's it. Like, you can come up with something that sounds fun. Then you go and do a gig that is boring. You know, it still needs to go somewhere and you need to do something. [..] that is something you only find out by getting on stage and playing it live and then you realise, oh, God, this needs way more character to it than it was before it's definitely a tricky one.

LL - 1:47:50

I think we covered quite a lot of those questions that I was going to write. Have you had any change in the drum synths since you started making it more or less impossible because obviously things have changed […] Do you think Ableton allows further creativeness for purchase beyond the use of rock formations? We've said pretty much. Do you expand yourself with the use of MIDI controllers, MIDI triggers and Ableton kind of […] adaptive acoustic kits do we even need that? But we've said.

AB - 1:48:24

yeah, I mean I'd probably say that yes it can be but not multiple different you know, you need multiple kits for each gig. Like you know, you need so much like, "Oh, this tune I need this bass drum on this tune I need this bass drum" you know, that's a different thing.

LL - 1:48:41
I think we spoke about interactions in terms of audience and liveness and we used that term before, liveness. Which is this idea of recording equipment and services, visuals and all this sort of question in performance, and we spoke about […] I said to you "Why would you play without a backing track?" and why do we have this interaction, which I think you've explained?
I think I spoke about this question about how important gesture is to performance? What is this relationship with studio, stage and your work in practice and experience? I've talked about predetermined parameters which you spoke about. This last one of this question was like, do you think with this sort of engagement of, sort of, electronic music, aesthetics? So you tried to make snare sounds or 808's whatever it is, do you think that allows us to engage electronic music, allowed us to move away from sort of first chorus scenarios. So how much experimentation. Do you think of all your influences? How do you think that's only been achieved through this engagement of electronic music is aesthetics and timbres and structure?

AB - 1:50:12
I would say like the first wave of moving away from that shit can totally be done without it - so the first wave of post punk can totally be done with guitar, bass, drum, you know just the very experimentation of it is fuck the chorus, you know, fuck the song form. But then once you've got away from that, then I think there are definitely instances where maybe essential isn't quite the word, but you know, it's like the sound, taking influence from someone like John Hopkins - the sound design is the song, or like Chris Clark, the material is often incidental. The sound design is the emotive connective transportive thing and I think in a weird way, we're almost kind of doing that with rock now. We're taking form tech/house producers and trying to do the same thing with rock.

LL - 1:51:21
Exactly. That sound design is integral for it to work.

AB - 1:51:26
Yeah, I would say that it probably is because we've been led by producers who have done that […] we're always at that second degree, aren't we? Because the guys that lead the music are the guys that don't give a fuck about how it's performed - they just write the sound design.

LL - 1:51:44
Yeah and then there's a limit to that.

AB - 1:51:47
Yeah and in a way we're being informed by those guys. But I don't mean in a negative way - we're not just buying the hand me downs, It's not sloppy seconds. Performances are an integral part to our composition process so it will sound different. In some ways it will probably sound a little cheaper because I'm not Chris Clark's drum sounds. I wish I was – they're the best drums out there but that's a difference. We're not chasing that kind of perfection that they strive for. We're chasing something slightly different but we're still massively informed by people to do shit like that, I guess with tech or whatever. I think Clark's a really interesting one because he's just so amazing at sound design.

LL - 1:52:34
So I spoke about this before. I sort of like another thing. So when I've been teaching the module, I did this sort of Spears/Stockhausen content [..]

Audio Cuts

AB - 1:52:47
On a solo record New York guy, amazing drummer, and really cool. I love what they do with the Sunhouse percussion, sensory percussion thing. It's really textural and amazing but it never kicks in. I love shit that kicks in as much as I try to be an arty kind of experimental thing and my agent was like "you want people to be able to put it on in the gym, don't you?". Sadly, I think that's kind of part of it, like not because I want people to put it on the gym because that's just where I hear music and I like things going for it and I can't apologise for that anymore. I've apologised for it too much […] you're 37 I think you just need to fucking own it and just enjoy it like stop being embarrassed about it and so I'm probably more of the Spears end.

LL - 1:53:40
Maybe that's what you say, like some of that long form music where it doesn't hit an obvious climax […] it's almost as well audience expectations that they want to be challenged and unease but you probably want to put people fundamentally in some ways at ease. Or yeah, what's the right word? […]

AB - 1:54:04
It's a collective experience and I think a song is still probably the best art form of music. As much as we love to deconstruct it, a song is still the best bit of music. I love sound. I love experimental shit, but a perfect song is a fucking perfect song. We can only do our shit because of the absence of song. It's like an atheist […] you still think about God all the time - you just deny his existence […] you know where that song would go if we go completely nuts and it's like, wow, they're really not playing a song here, everyone knows it's missing. So I think song is still something that's essential to me, that's a really good thing - highlighted by the use of singers in my shit like the second I add it I'm like yeah, this is a better version of myself. I prefer this version.

LL - 1:55:06
What do you think? Is that a level of communication? Do you think you could be as immersive without the use of vocals? We just thought oh.

AB - 1:55:12
Yeah definitely but […] I know that the second that a human voice enters anywhere in music, people's ears just connect even if you use it in a fucked up way you know even if like one of the synth sounds comes from a human voice people are like […] you know, it's billions of years of like, it got us to this point.

LL - 1:55:35

It's interesting though in the case of Three Trapped Tigers and things like that. It was very, that push within post rock rooted things, which is usually disregarded vocals or vocals used textually but now you say you might have come full circle.

AB - 1:55:52

Yeah, I think we're far enough down the road […] If I was first generation I'd be like "fuck vocals man" but we're like that's all charming and we're in the luxurious position to pick and choose from what people have done. I love a load of instrumental music but there's something ineffable and amazing about what the human voice says – it's the most nuanced thing ever, out of all instruments I think. With the power to ruin and enhance all music, the second it's the wrong singer i.e. most metal I think can be really cool musically but totally destroyed by a terrible singer. I think all music can be destroyed by a terrible singer. With Tigers we had so many gigs where people said "you should have a singer" and it's like "yeah, no because what singer works over this beyond us going" *imitates sound* because we know as soon as we do it the whole audience is with you and totally connects way more viscerally. Having Alex singing for gigs it would feel like it was only 10 minutes long whereas just having myself sing it would feel over an hour long even though it was only 45 mins. The energy just changed and the audience were like "yeah I don't need to fucking concentrate on this one" and then when its back to me it feels fresh again with no vocals but that change was really nice and I enjoyed it. The London one having totally different singers made it even more interesting and surprising and it was definitely a joyous experience - it just didn't feel as long. You feel like you really have to fight for attention when it's just you.

LL - 1:57:58

That's really interesting. Within like post rock traditions all that stuff would be much more long form lack of vocals, much more sort of immersive but maybe yeah but you're saying like you don't have to be as popular as Britney Spears as a vocal star right at the end but whether you can like still add vocalists and still have that popular tradition which is […] vocals as a form of communication tell them the story. I feel like people got the movement and said like, I don't want to be telling the story. Disregard it so the focus can be on losing yourself, immersion – So you're chasing for that sweet spot in between.

AB - 1:58:40

Yeah. Which could be Godspeeds vocal samples, an old bum on Rhode Island just talking. […] but it's the wrong sample. It's actually some Kentish bloke in the queue at Curry's trying to return his TV then the entire saga is ruined. It just needs to again, it's the Chris Cunningham thing. "Oh I know where I am". This is a story of gloom of fading memory […] And where is it? You know, whereas if it was like a Brexit speech at the beginning of it, you'd be like "No, don't do that."

LL - 1:59:21

That's what they said, it's almost like the honesty of pop music would be that person singing in front of you but what something post rock did is you could have a story taken from a sample of something 50 years ago and still have that and displace where that recording sits and people were okay with that, had that understanding of production and things like that.

AB - 1:59:45

Yeah. Which I think is really new still. It's about, I mean, like forty years or whatever, but like it's, you know, that's still to subvert that is still really fun but I think we're kind of, we're post everything so […]

LL - 1:59:57

Which leads me nicely to my next question.. So this other academic - I've got quite a few Anne Danielson, She's like a Norwegian academic. She's got this term called exaggerated virtuosity of the machine, which you would fit into right. So we sort of like slightly pushed an influence by this virtuosic of the machine. So you heard these things, you know, it's beyond human - inhuman parts. Do you like that term?

AB - 2:00:34

I love it. Yeah, absolutely. I mean, that was Squarepusher. It wasn't you know, more than Aphex I think Squarepusher really had a kind of soft spot for it should sound like what a drummer can't play but that should sound like a drummer.

LL - 2:00:48

It seems like you aspire to that. You're not trying to be the machine but more be influenced but then bring it back.

AB - 2:00:58

I've been burnt […]. To really chase that perfection of a machine you need to lose an element of humanity. There are a lot of metal drummers that can play stuff beyond what I would have considered human 10 years ago and actually they're doing it in a wicked way – There's that kind of process where it goes *imitates drums* and they come off the gig smelling better than they went on. So, I'm still chasing a human transaction through the virtuosity of the machine and that will lead to mistakes and fluffs phrasing.

LL - 2.01:27

So maybe you have that exchange, but then you quite like the mishaps that happen out of that?

AB - 2:01:55

Yeah. So all you at least need to acknowledge them because otherwise it's a bit photoshopped. It's like, "oh, yeah, you know? Yeah, that's great. That looks excellent but I know it's not real". So yeah, you kind of need to acknowledge those bits because that's life, and that's a good thing, It's not like it's not like a negative thing - so, the characters in most sci fi are always worse than the characters in most dramas, and the kind of… When I was a kid, I was a total sci fi nut and then, when I was kind of 17,18, I started getting into slightly more like human books and discovered that actually, the richness of the humanity was way more mental than, than […] 100 worlds fighting a war at the same time because it was less rich, you know, it's bigger and it's like, "fucking hell" and in a way that that parallels metal so much. - metal was massive and everything was so big, but actually the nuance of hearing the creek *drum sounds* oh that's way more nuanced than *drum sounds* where every symbol sounds the same and every snare. So that kind of texture is really key. Without it being negative, it's still actually a really positive thing and what I'm trying to chase is that kind of acceptance, that thinking of the gig in Aldershot, no one else has ever seen a version of

that gig where I have to stop and restart my laptop halfway through because […] that was a cool moment in time and you know along with the sets going well, when you have those issues - that's actually part of the human experience and I think it's really, really important.

LL - 2:03:55
Okay, I'll finish with this […] so we'll just quickly discuss, I gave you that Reynolds discussion of post rock. So obviously, you sat in that genre a bit - we've spoken about that before but you've bled out into many other genres but what do you think? What did you think of that article anyway? And do you think it's a good depiction of it? Or do you think?

AB - 2:04:20
Hang on, I might need to have a bit of a refresher on it. When did I read it Monday night? […]

LL - 2:04:26
I didn't see, because it was written in 94. So, he is really good at seeing trends happen.

AB - 2:04:32
So he was talking about it kind of deconstructing the song, wasn't he and moving away from stories about people's lives, played through riff and vocals and drums, wasn't he? Also a kind of reduction of the ego. […] he said, like rock was white. The image of rock is the skinny white boy with long hair, pointing the middle finger and actually, the image of post rock was the kind of figure at the centre of post rock is some kind of not asexual being but is you know, kind of confusing and I think that's wicked […] I'm probably talking slightly down on post rock, almost because for me it's so established […] well, it's there. It's a thing that exists. But then when I go to college and see a kid in a Judas Priest t-shirt, and you're like […] they regularly play rock like Radiohead hadn't happened. You know, they kind of think that Radiohead just aren't as good as Bon Jovi. And you're like, "no, they're way more fucking clever than Bon Jovi". You know they're working on it and even having to defend Radiohead in 2019 feels hilarious.

LL - 2:05:52
Yeah, I always think it's weird. I would think that generation would want to learn […] we're at this point where they're doing adaptive kits and learning.

AB - 2:06:00
I'm talking about kids with Les Paul's.

AB - 2:06:07
You will have some that have a Strat, Tele and some weird pedals and you're like," I think we're going to get on" but then you have others that turn up with a Les Paul and you're like, well, we still have to have this debate that the Aerosmith version of Baby Please Don't Go is somehow better than the original and I'm like, no "Can you hear they lost all that nuance rather than gained it?"- So where I sound a bit down on post rock, it's probably from a position of privilege that I'm like, yeah, post-rock is awesome it's there. It's like, you know, it's fucking changed the game. Thank Christ it did. And now we're kind of drifting out into somewhere new from it.

LL - 2:06:51

I think yeah, it was definitely somewhere new from it but it's interesting that you entered that time when it was sort of accessible or acceptable to play in this sort of format and it's grown ever since then. Where before […] I think it's such a weird term, which I think got mainly used quite a lot with Sigur Rós and all that got coined and we spoke about that before. Then we've ended up talking about an experimental use of rock. Now we're in this genre less time, maybe we're all making basically EDM. What happened in that module when I did it is that all the students ended up making stuff in the middle and I said to push either end but through this engagement of electronics we end up just sitting in the middle. It's not a bad thing.

AB - 2:07:54

It's certainly not a bad thing, it's probably the place where there's room because you've got so much room to run left or right. So the middle is clearly way more, you know […] you've got that bell curve. There's way more music here than there is here or here. Maybe the pop, the Britney Spears and probably a shitload of music and the Stockhausen end, doesn't have so much […] you've got so many more possibilities of madness in the middle that still, but I think […]

LL - 2:08:29

I think at the time, we had to have a term for that sort of experimental rock that was moving away from those ideals but there is a point where rock music is not at the forefront of the cultural phenomenon - we have a different point of view. So this is what at the end of the PhD also feels like a state of mind of why people still engage with these types of instrumentation but we're in another realm of it. And if we see, and we spoke about this, but if we see it in normal terms now or it's nostalgic or it feels strange. So post rock gave an element of futurism to it and it felt this is where the new time where this sort of rock music will go and this is this speaks to me but then there's going be a new thing and that's why I'm talking to today because hopefully you can help me give insight into that new […]

AB - 2:09:20

Yeah, well we all come at it from a perspective of what we've listened to as kids as well so I guess drum kits and guitars are going to be a way in - it's going to be a real starting point I mean Christ like don't most techno guys start as metals. Randomer is a metal guitarist, Chris Clark […] I know a lot of them started as metal guys and then kind of grew out of it into something else but like so I think your appreciation for music is informed by that shit, that's where it starts. But beyond that, I think they're the ingredients of what music is - It's either rhythm to make people dance or storytelling and while the drums probably aren't as involved in the storytelling element, they're so involved in the, you know, the aspect that makes you dance that it's always going to be there. Even if that dance was in the post rock way where people just don't dance, you know, they just kind of enjoy. They're still moving to it […] I think that would be why I think it happens. I don't know, that's a tough one.

LL - 2:10:39

It Is a difficult one, isn't it? but I do feel like, a bit like with Bill Bruce's PhD trying to find creativity in drumming. I think the traditions of the rock drums in all popular music in the traditional sense, has been such a forefront of how we can see music today but now we're getting to a point where we get in these sort of more hybrid kits and genres - Electronic music now has been appreciated a bit like when you played, like Albert Hall those Ibiza

tracks. Yeah. Why do they go to the extent of getting a full orchestra when that track could speak volumes just by itself? But people are asking for that now.

AB - 2:11:19
Yeah […] The Pete Tong thing people want to experience and seeing 60 people on stage, even if only four of you are playing anything. it's still like, "I'm really part of something and that's cool" and I think the bit we're using, in the way that like rock became something that other music could use to sound a bit cool called jazz rock, you know, in the 70s. They were like, "Oh, you know what these distorted guitars are? Alright, Yeah. Let's have a bit of that "and it became this new sound. I think we're at that point with electronics, We're like "Oh, can I have a bit of electronics in my rock? piano or whatever". It's just another ingredient to add to it that I think was happening in the late 90s like cyber metal […] things I kind of heard that weren't just house and weren't just things like that

LL - 2:12:16
I think we get to a point of what used to be very precious like I said earlier about cultural referencing - you had to be in that scene to value yourself to play in that style or do that. But now we're at a point where they say those scenes don't exist, they're not localised anymore. Some people's parameters feel like culturally appropriating from loads of other cultures, some people might find it a bit strange if you're ripping off like different cultures, but now we're at a point where it's […]

AB - 2:12:49
Well, it's what you use it for as well. So like, I've got a friend who raps in a Jamaican accent to lend authenticity to songs of protests that aren't about protest because he doesn't have anything to protest about, he lives in Dorset. He hasn't had any rights oppressed but he writes songs that sound like he has and people respond to them in a good way. So he puts on a Jamaican accent - I find that shit offensive.

LL - 2:13:13
Yeah, that's what I mean. So that's why I'm saying that sort of line.

AB - 2:13:15
But also there's the funny bit as well we're like that, but what's that band that come out that just sound like LED Zeppelin and if they sounded a bit, if they added an element of whatever, that was modern, it would ruin the spell, you know? I think Back to Black by Amy Winehouse if they added any modern aspects of that, the spell of the vintage, the authenticity that lent that vintage will be destroyed. If there was suddenly an 808 in it, you'd be like, "Oh, God, it's all gone wrong." So they kind of broke it. I have a drum lesson at two o'clock. And she's just turned up.

LL - 2:13:55
Oh, sorry. We can finish this now anyways.

Collings, M (2020)

Collings, M (2020)
Artist Interview: Matthew Collings
Interview by Laura Lee.
[Online] 20.07.2020

LL – 00:00
I'm going to start a bit broader and then go more specific down the line. So, I gave you that information about what my research is about and obviously we spoke a bit before this interview […] So maybe you could start with a bit of the history of your artistic practice and how it developed into what you do now.

MC – 0:43
Yeah, so […] I guess the start of my music making was in choir as a kid and I think that had a big influence on my perception of sound, I really liked a lot of choral music as a kid i.e. the idea of doing things in really open spaces, performing really intense music was really cool to me especially the services on Good Friday which is quite intense as it's about the death of Christ if you're Christian. The silence around them is quite solemn so I was really into that. I started to record at university and doing solo stuff because waiting around for other people in bands was really tedious – I didn't like having to rely on people, I just wanted to make sounds so I found a way to make music on my own which was very self-taught. I was always really interested in getting into electronic music through bands like Radiohead, exploring the IDM stuff at i.e. everything on Warp, Aphex, Autechre etc. and also at university I discovered My Bloody Valentine and Sonic Youth, Godspeed, Sigur Rós and people like that – so those are two sides of things I was interested in. I don't think making music really took off until I went to Iceland in 2004 after doing a bachelor's degree – I basically just wanted to flee the country and I wasn't personally very happy at the time so I wanted a fresh start. I had a lot more time to focus on my music there, I had a very basic setup of an ancient laptop and some free software – this was before any exposure to Ableton I was using a free DAW called Crystal Audio Engine and a few other granular synthesis tools, so it was really basic. Most of the time I didn't really know what I was doing so I had to find out my own way to do everything which resulted in developing lots of idiosyncratic ways of working and in retrospect it probably took me 10 times longer than it should have done because I had no idea what I was doing i.e. EQ'ing and compressing would take me days when it should only take about half an hour. There was a real excitement behind the discovery of doing things your own way so towards the end of university in the band that I had, we were starting to do a lot of experiments with no input mixing boards – when I was in Iceland I had an acoustic guitar and a crappy digital 8 track recorder but I did a lot stuff with creating distortion effects and other additional effects by using that no input mixing style processing by recording the acoustic guitar and then feeding the output through the input and then feeding it back etc.. all this stuff I was doing. I found really interesting approaches to music that other people found interesting too – It was all quite lo-fi ambient music for the first 3 or 4 years as well as playing gigs. It was a great environment to be around, there were lots of creative people doing lots of interesting things across genres so it was very fertile. I think this was the first time in my life where most people I was around were interested in what I was doing instead of being really condescending or negative which I found really inspiring – I was still doing solo practice, I didn't collaborate with many people and when I did it was only in passing. It was through

found sound and acoustic guitar mainly or whatever I could make through basic sample manipulations.

So, I was really interested in people like Fennesz, Sigur Rós, everything of that kind of ilk really. I released a few EP's in that direction under the name Sketches for Albinos, they seemed to do okay but I think it was before that wave of people doing ambient music – after a while I got a bit bored of doing ambient music and I was much more interested in the nightlife, going out and partying, which I think was a great, amazing scene with some high energy bands which is how I realised I wanted to stop making ambient music and make something more energetic. Finding a way to do that was difficult, so I was in a creative rut until I came across the bedroom community label and particularly the work of Ben Frost who I got to know personally – he was doing interesting stuff with guitars and computers. Fennesz was an influence but was more on the ambient side whereas Ben's stuff was quite physical and loud and very confrontational with a spacious element to it. To me that was the route in which I could evolve sound, so I started doing gigs that were inspired by some of Bens' work i.e. a piece called Music for 6 guitars which was 6 guitarists playing one chord repetitively a bunch of times in Reykjavik. As a performer you kind of give up your sense of agency to the director as that time who is just manipulating the sounds of the guitars in a laptop and then sending them back out through the amps – that was the structure of the piece, it was driven by this physicality and theatricality of having 6 people on stage and not really knowing what they were doing. Something I really loved about this piece is with the dynamics you could sometimes hear the dry strumming of the guitar which I found interesting as it was a percussive thing that you don't normally hear in recorded music but there were lots of things about that piece that I found really exciting which inspired a couple of multiple guitar pieces I did. I did those particularly on tours of England and Scotland over a couple of years.

After that I got the opportunity to work with Ben a bit more closely and some other people on that label more closely – I was taken under the wing of these people that worked with Bjork and other people which was extremely flattering to me as I was just a guy that was making music in his room with no idea what he was doing. So that really drove me forward and was quite challenging when you had these listening sessions with guys who have been in the music scene for ages who could critique what you were doing – it was great but confrontational, almost like getting slapped in the face simultaneously from multiple people you respected but that was great. Through that process I started doing lots of other stuff, one technique I did was preparing speakers to use them a lot more aggressively i.e. using amplification and the speaker cone inherently as part of the structure and texture of the sound. Just expanding the sound so it was just focused on guitar, there was room for more instruments like live drums. After doing that for a while, I couldn't really finish anything so I decided to take music more seriously having got more faith from the support of people I respected which is when I moved to Scotland and did a course in digital composition and performance. A lot of that involved using MaxMSP and programming which I hadn't done before and had no intention of doing it before as I found it quite intimidating, but I was kind of forced to do it and eventually found an enthusiasm for it. That tied into how I was always using Ableton as an instrument and it has always been a bit part of my work and practice. I became much more interested in building my own thing and exploring the instrumental part. After that I did a lot of performances to hone the live sound of my performances which had been really erratic up to date, I've only just really got that down through using a combination

of; live guitar, pre-recorded stuff and then prepared speakers like having practice amps with your gear on the table. Often one, two or four of these speakers would be laid out on the desk and I would manipulate the speaker current and whatever was being fed through whether it was guitar, bass or drums etc. I also used my cameras on them to project the image of the procedure behind me which people found really interesting and the way I would perform was very physical so a lot of the Mac stuff I programmed was reliant on […] amplitude tracking and I would set up stuff which I would have to play really hard to be physically engaged and I would have to hit things to trigger- it wasn't about someone statically noodling behind the guitar, I wanted it to be engaging, I was really trying to drive that theatricality of rock music by moving around which is something I had always been really interested in. I think we're all caught up now!

LL – 12:52
I thought that was really good, there were some things I was thinking as you were archiving through that history that I might circle back to and move forward through with a series of questions. You said you were interested in the choir singing and the reflection of the intense aspect, [..] In choral singing there's a different dynamic and cohesion you feel with others which is very interesting in that way. I was going to ask about Warp Records and Sonic Youth […] a lot of artists I'm talking to integrate Ableton and are interested in bringing these world-of-rock ideal aesthetics like gesture and performativity – Sonic Youth were playing a lot of dissonance noise and then you turned to Warp Records which is quite rhythmically complex but also there was that deflation after rave movement there was a different intellectual realisation. Like you said, bands like Radiohead brought this together in a way but I'm really interested as to why when you have a guitar in your hand, why you don't just drop the guitar. Is that the future or is Sonic Youth the future, how did you feel in that time when you were influenced by both those genres?

MC – 14:49
Yeah I think there's a lot of similarities and there's another inspiration I haven't omitted which was Steve Reich and York minimalism, so I would probably say the 3 pillars of my work are; avant-garde guitar music, minimalism and Warp IDM. For me there are points of comparison in all 3, a lot of it is just overwhelming intensity i.e. repetition of minimalism becomes really intense, the same with rock music with Sonic youth and MBV based on volume and intensity, it's not light music. The same with the IDM stuff, it's quite full on which I find inspiring and something I love is; if you listen to Autechre's stuff from the last 10 years, they have dissolved the borders of what electronic music is and it becomes this amorphous thing or that's the way I perceive it. With Sonic Youth and My Bloody Valentine, the solid form melts and it becomes amorphous and you get these periods that expand into something and then they contract – that kind of motion I find fascinating it's more of a sculptural form which is the form I like to talk about music in as opposed to the keys and timing, it's about shape and texture. I think a lot of the Warp stuff is like that too, more about shape and texture.

LL – 16:17
I guess it's driving the narrative in timbral as opposed to harmony – we know harmonically there are tricks to play emotions i.e. through minor keys but perhaps this music was played through something else that created that intensity.

MC – 17:06
Yeah, I think harmonically I always end up doing the same things – pretty much everything I write is in the same key, I'm always drawn to music that involves certain chords no matter what genre it is. I will be like "oh, I like that" but yeah it's just the same chords in the same key and everything ends up there because it's where I feel comfortable.

LL – 17:31
What key is that?

MC – 17:33
I can't even remember […] A minor? It's a minor key for sure. Also, I don't even care, I don't know and I don't want to know but I always play similar things no matter what the instrument. So in terms of harmony I'm not interested in a range of stuff I'm more interested in one or two chords or one note – I'm interested in progression but in a very limited fashion, I think it should be there as an element but progression being how you try and ring out emotion to the listeners is not really what I'm interested in however it could happen coincidentally.

LL – 18:23
So, when you were making that was this as you were listening to Warp and you were getting into these bands, were you trying to execute that in your practice? Also at the time what did you define yourself as, was it an engineer, a guitarist? And how did you bring those worlds together if you did at all?

MC- 18:44
Yeah, so […] then and now I don't really regard myself as any one of those things, I regard myself as a weird meta person between all of them where; for better or worse I don't really do any of them in an outstanding way, I have my own idiosyncratic way of doing them all i.e. if I engineer or mix other people's music, I'll know what I'm doing but not totally, I can't play a guitar in standard tuning anymore because I haven't used standard tuning in about 15 years. If someone picks up one of my guitars they can't play it either and I quite like that […] that's the thing about Ableton becoming the core of it all, it allows me to do all these rolls simultaneously in one place and I don't have to excel at any one of them but I can work on them all in an equal playing field and I can kind of explore that space.

LL – 19: 45
Do you think if someone asked you, would you feel comfortable being described as a guitarist or do you think there are connotations or semiotics?

MC – 19:58
Yeah I think, composer is probably the best way to describe myself – I think composer needs to be reclaimed from the classical environment i.e. Aphex Twin is an amazing composer or Flying Lotus is an amazing composer, Steve Reich, Kevin Shields or Sonic Youth as an entity. It's all the same. Ableton as a piece of software […] it would be the same as if someone was writing sheet music, I can't write it as that's not my canvas.

LL – 20:40
Do you think a lot of these people you mentioned are engaging i.e. Sonic Youth in New York, Kim Gordon was working in art galleries and they got to Noise Fest. Steve Reich is also in

those seams, it kind of seems there is this arts engagement– do you think that allows us to move away from popular music ideals, what does it mean? […]

MC – 21:14
Yeah there is now. Even when I was getting into Warp they were doing this series of re-imagine stuff with the London Symphony so I think there is that element of it but they would never play something like Loveless (My Bloody Valentine) or Autechre which but I think they should because that would be amazing. I think all that stuff I'm interested in is cause of people wanting to subvert a set of norms, the same with Autechre; they come from hip-hop and stuff like that where they've tried to stretch the boundaries and ended up out there on their own really and MBV are the same it's trying to subvert stuff by bringing in a diverse set of influences and trying to melt them into your practices – which kind of how I see what I do, I don't know if I've been successful in doing that but that's what I've been trying to do.

LL – 22:28
I feel like the trying should be seen as a success especially from that DIY culture, success through the respect of artists because you did the thing right? And it doesn't always have to be between the punk scene i.e. bands like the Slits or some of the post-punk ideals where you are making music not to show musical prowess […] it seems like when you were talking, it seemed that was an ideal you had as well. It seems within fine art there is that deconstruction that we see as high quality or expertise, we see that has been challenged but when it comes to music; when do something on post-rock, it's that sort of morphing or sculpturing that you were talking about – that genre norm, that ideal that you were touching on.

MC – 23: 51
Yeah absolutely. A few things I hate in music is virtuosity. I despise the concept of it - which is what I like about punk and post-punk. They kind of broke that down and made it irrelevant. Post-rock is a good example of this; no one who plays post-rock is a virtuoso in their instrument but they are virtuosic and incredibly adept at working with dynamics, texture and ways of manipulating time – that's not a virtuosic thing, you don't become a virtuoso from that and if you tried to claim you were that's quite a moronic thing to do. It's kind of rejection of a bunch of things that are elevated as musical high points and finding your own language and tools to communicate that language.

LL – 24:50
Yeah, I think what we're trying to get to is; not only the norms of deconstruction and the influences you are driven from being digital and acoustic but also there's an emphasis that you *wanted* to play – which adds a technical feat which you'd have to overcome like you said with digital composition. You'd have to learn how to uses Macs and this was before YouTube, you just had to sit there and make the thing work – so there was probably not so much a virtuosic thing but an in-depth knowledge i.e. instead of sitting there playing scales all the time, you would be playing around a figuring out what you needed to achieve the technicalities of what you were doing.

MC – 25:59
I'm not adverse to knowledge but it's more the elevation of; unless you can play loads of chords and scales then you're not a musician – I find that ridiculous.

LL – 26:13
I've obviously felt like that even though it isn't like that […] in the arts it gets slightly more celebrated with the deconstruction but that means there's still that sort of hang up […

MC 26:24
Yeah for sure. People talk about it in music education, I can't remember what the exact figure is but it's around 100,000 hours that you need to master an instrument – if you think about people with computers that time is probably double that in order to manipulate digital software and harness texture or find your own voice using Ableton. I think Ben made this comment when I was doing some work for him on a remix he said; you managed to make my music with my equipment sound like you, I don't know how you did that – stuff like that, that's my instrument.

LL - 27:17
That's what I'm really interested in […] we spoke about this before about Brian Eno; the studio as a composition tool. I'm interested in the times where they saw the studio as a tool but they couldn't rectify it live and now thinking back on the time where you were engaging in those kinds of artist do you think that you could ramshackle all this with tape machines and other stuff that is accessible to you i.e. drum machines or cheaper recording equipment – whereas before it would have been too expensive.[…] As you were saying you could spend 10,000 hours on an instrument or on a new piece of technology to find your own voice and people think you can't find your own voice behind the technology which you can, it's just like another instrument.

MC – 28:22
I mean you absolutely can in the same way that King Tubby had a voice on a mixing desk that was treated as a generic piece of technology. If you think about the fact that people hire certain people to mix a record, it's because they have certain expertise but also the fact that you're wanting to have their voice i.e. in the 90's people hiring Steve Albini for his voice in mixing and recording but probably not so much now because I think he's averse to the idea. So the idea that you couldn't have a voice in the recording studio is absolutely ludicrous, so that totally extends to the digital studio having to spend £500,000 thirty years ago when now you can spend £500 and have the exact same power at your fingertips – that's the wonderful thing about how music technology has progressed as a great opening of that to people from different backgrounds or regions.

LL - 29:36
[…] Another thing I've been reading about in the role of the producer and Motown, let's say; you've got Steve Albini of the 90's gaining sense of authenticity in his role as engineer, […] there might have been rejections in the 80's to this highly digital and the not so generically sounding band feel of the time. So in Motown, the producer or engineer would be highly regarded, you might be seen with those producers i.e. Quincy Jones but in rock music there was quite a bit of a myth of it just being in the band members in the studio with no outside manipulation – I do think rock music was quite highly manipulated but they never really gave ownership to the engineers in the way that other genres saw the value of the craft of producing that sound. What do you think about that?

MC – 30:49

I think with advent of electronic music, you have that grey zone where; the producer is the composer and the band at the same time i.e. music by an electronic producer whoever they may be, you're talking about their art of composition but also their technical abilities as a producer unless it sounds terrible that is a conscious choice.

LL – 31:28

Maybe someone like David Bowie working with Brian Eno, do you think that connection was made or was it just through the artistry of David Bowie?

MC – 31:37

Yeah […] From people I know that have worked with Brian Eno – he seems like he is a great ideas man and a great person to have around as he has a great perspective on things which is as valuable as anything else. Having someone in the studio that's going to come at things from a different angle is really valuable and if you look at David Bowie's records it was a team effort. The same goes for Bjork, the records are team efforts.

LL – 32:08

So, […] particularly interesting with that idea of the roles getting blurred and the ownership [..] I just wanted to know what your thoughts are, perhaps on authenticity […] Steve Albini is very much within that scene of creating authentic sound and he had those recording techniques which he doesn't touch or manipulate things too much – that's his vision. Maybe we talk about the production values or experimentation in Iceland and how that might differ. I feel like a lot of Icelandic music can be highly mediated through electronics but there's still that sense of place identity and locality, but it's done slightly differently.

MC 33:18

It depends. I think that if you look at famous bands from Iceland there are some aesthetic similarities but from my recollection of the scene is that really was not the case – everyone was consciously making an effort not to sound like the other bands i.e. Bjork. The thing that tied them all together was a regard for experimentation and across the board even if you were an indie band you would experiment – the idea of doing something really straight was boring to people, there's a number of reasons for that; historically and culturally it was a very outsiders place that was founded by a bunch of renegade criminals who wanted to flee their country and there's a great cultural value attached to musical education – everyone is extremely well educated in music from a young age and they are really interested in music and art in general. That's kind of ingrained in people, it's not seen as a weird outsider thing you do, it's part of culture and not seen as strange if you want to indulge in it.
I think that is quite unique. For me, music in Iceland is not about sound it's about approach and the basic approach is; you can do whatever the hell you want and for better or worse may you be successful but you can absolutely do it – there was no sense of "that sounds weird and I think you should do that" it was quite the opposite which is why it breeds really good musicians.

LL – 35:14
Do you think you'll come from that standpoint as a British artist, there's that stigma of experimentation but a connection of engineering or artistry that internationally people respond to […] I read today about Iceland's situation of being between Europe and the US so they could build their own identity as they didn't have those attachments to those ideals that could pull them apart.

MC – 35:53
Yeah. I think that is true within Britain too as we are in between America and Europe and that forces it to find its own identity – we are still an island, we are not part of continental Europe; now more than ever it's clear we don't consider ourselves as part of continental Europe. It's the same with Iceland but it's more extreme as they don't think they belong to anything so they can do whatever they want and they don't care, so good on them – there's that aspect of it. In some ways it's not so different to British culture and even British artistic culture is still quite conservative.

LL – 36: 36
I think it's interesting when you start taking identity and locality out, you start thinking what you can concentrate on which I think is a good liberation where we get into some ways with arts. Earlier you were talking about virtuosity and I think that is very much attached with the ego and showing great feats of the self however, I think the things you're connected to are egoless driven through you being the centre in these feats so that's a different type of thing you're connecting to.

MC – 37:22
Yeah, I mean yes or no I think.

LL – 37: 24
Do you think ego is still there in a way of you wanting to be seen?

MC – 37:31
I think that's more of a personal question. Less now but definitely when I was working professionally in this area – I'm not now because it's not my sole source of income and what I spend my time on but definitely in the past in the way that; electronic music is still played and performed in an egocentric way, people on a stage even if you are behind a laptop not looking at the crowd, it still egocentric because you are automatically elevating yourself above people as you're on stage – it's still something that this music has not found a way to answer this question. I think for me because I love rock music and the theatricality of rock music I just play to it and I enjoy that part of it and because you're on stage you should play to it – there's no point hiding, if you want to hide then go into the crowd. Play up to it or you put yourself in this awkward position of people expecting you to perform and you're not visually or physically performing – which is why a lot of this music can feel flat being played live, especially when they're not into it. something that seemed to work for a lot of my music and transcend people who weren't even into electronic music could get into it because there was that element of performance and theatricality to it.

LL – 39:06

Is that a strategy you've used to overcome using electronics; you've become more performative to show or even earlier when you were talking about using prepared amps and having visuals for what you were doing, is that all part of breaking through to make a more performative show?

MC – 39:37

Yeah, I want it to be engaging – if I went to a gig, I would want it to be engaging. i.e. If you go see someone like Autechre or Tim Hecker they kind of acknowledge it in a way as they play in the dark there's not even a spotlight on them but its big and loud with lots of lights – so they kind of negate that they are on stage which is appropriate for their form of music. Otherwise I want to see something engaging, I want to see someone perform, maybe that's just a sense of taste which I mirror in my performance, but it does engage people and it's not just self-indulgence on my part.

LL – 40:23

I bet people feel that sound language comes down to; if you don't see the person using the traditional instrument or where that source of sound is coming from i.e. people might understand now how mixers can be filtered. Do you do much source removal when you're playing around with the amps – I guess that gives more source material as you show what you're doing instead of it being a gig with you just on your laptop. Is sourcing material an important value to you?

MC – 41:08

Yeah I'm more interested in a causality i.e. I'm going to hit something on the guitar or hit a stomp box and that's going to do something and you'll hear it – so its obvious there is a physical gesture connected to it. That makes a lot experimental music disengaging for audience members is; seeing something i.e. Fennesz playing guitar and it gets taken into this cloud of noise and that is a really interesting sound but as an observer you have no idea how the two connect and this is could be a separate conversation about the aesthetics between the two but for me it's really important in helping you engage with the audience which is what I want to do- I don't want to alienate them, that's not what it is about for me. That may be the case for some people and some people like that but I want to engage causality and theatricality and that seems to work for me - I think it's very important that people think about how they perform in terms of the aesthetics or how I'm going to make it work as a performance as opposed to just playing in a studio – in a performance your processes are almost seamless, so there's things you'd have to change from the studio. If I'm going to do a performance of something, even if I'm using the same tools and set up as the studio, I still will do it fundamentally different to how I would in the studio – it's a different ballgame and there are rules to it even though the mechanisms are the same.

LL – 43:02

Do you think someone would listen to your music fixed, and could anticipate what you do live or do you think the transcendence from each is different or when it's actually brought into it contextually would they get it?

MC – 43:19

Yeah, I guess. There are also some things I haven't played live and I will never play live as they are not interesting to do live or perceive live and vice versa; there are some things I have only played live and never released them on a record because they only seem to work live and I like that, it makes the practice more interesting that this song will only work under live circumstances.

LL – 43:45

Do you get challenged in your performance if you are live and you're using anything else but traditional people i.e. people might wonder if it was pre-recorded or did you manipulate that all from scratch – do people question or challenge you in that way?

MC – 44:05

Yeah absolutely. Some people find that really interesting and some find it's leaning too much on pre-recorded material. In a lot of ways, I think it does however I think I've found a way to transcend that in a lot of the stuff I am doing even if it is just a lot of loops – I'll loop them over each other one at a time and then shape how they evolve each time, so it's pre-recorded but how that evolves is different every time and it's more improvisational. Live improvisation is important to me but it's not free improvisation, it's structured.

LL – 44:46

I think there is always a space between even if people rehearse a specific set or have a box of records that are pre-recorded/fixed mediums but putting them into a live context takes it to a new form doesn't it. So people might think you are just playing some set records but actually it's the mix and what you're driving from the audience in that context i.e. if it was rock then you would have just rehearsed it to death and there was no sense of play for the live but there might be sections where they drop off and then go to free improv which is taken from people in the room and the clusters that might come out of that. I just wondered if you would position yourself in that, do they all have their place?

MC – 45:28

I think they all have a place. For me I'm much more interested in structured improvisation. I don't like completely free improvisation, even when I play it as part free improvised groups – I love the rehearsals, they're great but the gigs they're never really as good as the rehearsals for me. I prefer to have some structure to lean back on so I wouldn't like to do completely free improvisation, usually when I do a gig it will be 3 pieces that last about 10 mins each in bailage and it's an exploration of source into that space, I'll find a way to segue them into each other – sometimes seamlessly and sometimes not.

LL – 46:20

I think maybe what we're talking about with these attitudes within these scenes or localities – does this play between improvised and fixed structures etc. which is cool. I think that is mostly what I was getting upon. I was going to finish with one thing; when I said to you about post-rock, were there set bands you were thinking about – for me it can touch upon rock instrumentation but put into another space but obviously there are Sigur Rós movements after but not quite like what Simon Reynolds was talking about. What was your interpretation of it?

MC – 47:20
Of post-rock? I mean it's pretty broad. I see My Bloody Valentine as a post-rock group in the same ways that Sonic Youth are a post-rock group. I think that's where it starts and then you've got the classics i.e. Mogwai, Sigur Rós, Godspeed, Explosions of the Sky, Do Make Say Think – it's a really broad church really. None of them really get where I want to go which is probably why I make music in the first place because there's a gap in-between all these pieces of music where I want to exist. I don't know, I've lost my point now.

LL – 48:16
I think you made a really good point though. I talk about My Bloody Valentine but yeah I think it's mainly some form of experimentation towards the guitar which some bands have rectified and it gets spoken about in this kind of conversation but perhaps there's a lot experimental guitarist that like you said don't feel comfortable in free improv or in virtuosic Steve ?? style, rock hero status – there's this other realm.

MC 48:55
It's just like making […] I guess the common elements of post-rock is the guitar and the less straight structures. Actually, you can have straight structures, take Flying Saucer Attack for example; it's straight folk music but the way it is performed and recorded is something else – it's more about the production and the choice of sounds produced from the guitar which for me is as interesting as anything else. In fact, I'm really interested in the sounds of guitars and guitar music and the structure that it puts in, that's one thing I really disliked about rock music is that the guitars aren't loud enough. I can identify with music that isn't mixed right and the thing that I want to identity with is the guitar sound, which should be a lot louder and occupy more space – I think that's what this kind of music allows itself to do when it explores those spaces that are about sound and structure but not superficially about one or the other – you can be a post rock group and not be particularly interested in sound.

LL – 50:14
It's quite interesting when you're talking about space in the mix, that's another thing I think about sometimes – I'm at this point where I'm interested in how people heard Warp Records and had a guitar in their hand but didn't know how to respond to it. Are we getting to the point in popular music where a lot of the mids are taken out which is usually the guitar driven part so the guitar might have had to push to the higher end or the lower end but you're still lacking the mids or is there even a place in the mix for guitar?

MC – 50:58
I don't think that's a mix question, that's more of a musicology question. I think since the period of when Simon Reynolds started writing about the term 'post-rock' it's kind of been a slow fizzing out of interesting guitar music, really around the end of the 90's early 2000's where all those post-rock bands that we know emerged – there hasn't really been that many interesting things to do with the guitar well at least to my knowledge. You feel like that was a golden age of this stuff and were waiting for something else to emerge.

LL - 51:42
I thought that when I was talking to Ian from Battles, he is on Warp records now and it's quite interesting when Warp started to sign bands. He's doing interesting things now that he's

trying to feed through Ableton so I guess it does go into a different realm – I do think it is interesting where the future of this lies and whether people will still connect with it.

MC – 52:13
I mean if you think about what people do with the violin […] I kind of think that people have done everything they can do with a violin, I don't think there's much more you can do other than attaching it to electronics. Maybe it's the same with the electric guitar and that hasn't even been around for 100 years and has it reached a level of maturity where nothing else can be done with it? I think that's a bit pessimistic, but a lot of people are reaching for it as a way to augment their instrument and expand it and when you do that you end up in a hybrid electronic space where both you and I kind of operate as well as a lot of others. From that it becomes quite interesting because you're not a guitarist or a violinist, your technically an electronic musician – which is technically the most interesting and explorative music zone that there has ever been and I think people who are interested in classical music would have to realise that if their favourite composers were around now they would be using things like Ableton. They wouldn't be writing sheet music, this is the music of our age now. It's a broad church that you can have so many broad influences within your workflow and approach and it allows you to do lots of things – it's like a magnet that sucks you in with all this stuff.

LL – 54:00
[…] That was an amazing soundbite at the end there, what you said is very true – it's basically what I'm trying to get to.

MC – 54:20
I think when people, even in the arts and music and other areas of music, they kind of scratch their heads wondering why no one is interested and that because they are making music that was created hundreds of years ago that has no impact on the modern day and you forget that innovation of that music would be done in this realm today – it's not that people aren't interested in music, there's more innovation in Beyonce's records than in contemporary and classical music even experimental music. The innovation is happening in a different sphere and people are into that. There's a weird hybrid zone now that are not specific musical genres like there would have been 20 to 30 years ago. There's a lot of cross collaboration now within this zone where interesting music occurs.

LL - 55:26
I am interested in this hybrid period but I think were not at a point where it is seamless, it can be quite clunky when you're trying to introduce tech and the flow isn't there with others and the tech involved i.e. in a band context so, I don't there's fully integrated flow.

MC – 55:53
Absolutely. There's a quote from Jeff Mills, the techno DJ and he said " it will take 50 years for the electronic Jimi Hendrix to appear" which is probably true and he said this in the 90's. In that time electric guitar hadn't even been around for 20 years, Jimi Hendrix was a virtuoso and one of the things that was good about him is that he played the speaker as much as he played the guitar.

LL - 56:23
I was going to say that anyway when you were talking about that; we spoke about this before when he turned up to Woodstock with an electric guitar and sort of challenged the folk music with amplification – It was less about him playing it how he did and more about the level of amplification and what he did with the amps and I think that was what shocked people.

MC – 56:46
Yeah. Despite my dislike of virtuosity, I love a lot of Jimi Hendrix as he was amazing at exploring sound – it wasn't just about playing licks and so much of what he did was about opening doors to feedback, distortion and amplification and that was an amazing thing that he contributed to the history of electric guitar more so than playing licks and setting his guitar on fire.

LL – 57:15
This is the point where I situate myself, I agree with some of these spaces that you are talking about and where you want to go in this hybrid space but I don't think were at the point where music tech has completely caught up with the artist for integrated expression – it's getting there though. There's a resistance which helps the creativity, and if you put people in front of a DAW with these limitless possibilities it can be overwhelming as opposed to one drum machine or something like that.

MC – 58:15
I think the sheet music analogy is more apt i.e. if you have a piece of blank sheet music, you could write literally anything and it's the same when you sit in front of a modern DAW, you could do anything with that too. That is the modern sheet music I would say.
In the same way you could be like "oh well I'm going to write a sonata requiem" and then you go away and do it or you make a hip-hop track or experimental guitar piece – it is intimidating but no more or less intimidating than previous historical references.

LL – 59:05
Yeah and I think just that connection of how you execute is getting easier; beforehand it would be specialist people who could rectify that mix or use that machine or execute it live – so now it's easier but we're still not being necessarily taught it in education.

MC – 59:30
They don't teach you how to use a drum machine or how to program in Ableton, at least not yet.

LL – 59:36
It will probably be a lot more useful in the long term anyway but yeah, I don't think we're quite there yet. Today has been very interesting and I've been seeing a lot of themes that we've been talking about – so maybe I could keep you updated when I'm writing it and performing it. With these crazy times I'm supposed to be performing it but who knows if that will happen but then also, I feel like I'll be totally meta with this whole thing – I can't perform live so I'll do it through this streamed way.

MC – 01:00:26

But then that adds a whole other level of complexity to it and that's also a thought of what are the new rules of performing over Zoom – it's a whole new ballgame as there are so many questions form that unknown aspect of things, that could even be a subject of a PhD itself.

LL – 01:00:44

Which is what I have fallen into as I have started performing like that anyway i.e. you know when I mentioned about the acoustic guitar challenge I did for myself, now I'm going to have this hybrid performance approach that won't even be put back in a room, it's just put into something else. However, it is watched in real time so it is put back into a space as opposed to being pre-recorded. All this stuff I am quite interested in, how you summed up everything was really beautiful and I will transcribe it.

Collis, T. (2019)

Collis, T (2019)
Artist Interview: Tim Collis
Interview by Laura Lee
[Online] 08.08.2019

Interview starts at 6:32

LL – 6:32
So, this interview is only going to be used academically – we'll have this chat and I'll transcribe it and then I can send it and it will also be put in my thesis which will then be put into the British Library and your vision or experience of what you do will live on.

TC – 7:03
Let's hope I can articulate it. Yeah, that sounds good.

LL – 7:09
Yeah so it's cool you wanted to speak to me, I've already spoken to Adam Betts, Ian Williams, Mark from Gallops so far and a guy called Tom Mason who is an upright double bassist but he plays a lot with Adam as well and is interested in this sort of stuff - the lines between acoustic and electronic, virtuosity and imitation of the machine and how that could confuse or accentuate spontaneity when you play. I would like to open it with a short history of your guitar journey, if that's okay?

TC – 8:04
Sure. I started playing guitar young like most people, around the age of 10. I played the typical stuff that people would play i.e., Foo Fighters and Smashing Pumpkins - the typical rock stuff when you're finding your feet or hands with an instrument – the basic chords etc. I eventually got into some of the Kinsella projects so, Tim Kinsella, Mike Kinsella and Nate Kinsella. I think that was the turning point for me. Some of the guitarists in their bands used alternative tunings, which opened that side of things to me as it was a bit more unpredictable than open tuning – I have very limited theory knowledge anyway, but I found this interesting, I think finding guitarists doing different things with tunings really pushed me forward and not having to feel limited by not having that classical training. Players like Victor Villareal of Cap'n Jazz and Owls and Sam Zurich who played in those bands also – yeah that was a big turning point that got me into the style of what I do now, which is kind of fingerpicking, open-tuning, and a nice mix of pretty melodies with some dissonant weird-sounding stuff.

LL – 10:03
So you mentioned Foo Fighters etc and you were exposed to that through MTV or the radio?

TC – 10:14
Yeah, I think so – the usual channels, and other friends learning instruments and giving you the CD's.

LL – 10: 21
So […] what years are we talking about here?

TC – 10:26
I think that was around the age of 10 to 16.

LL – 10:33
I guess at the time it might not have been easy to find out about Owls and these other American quite niche scenes, so how were you exposed to or found the influence of these things?

TC – 10:48
Yeah, that probably came a bit later to be honest. I think from 10 to 16 I was playing all the typical stuff on MTV and from the rock charts that were fairly easily accessible and then I think my brother was laying in bands at school and just through word of mouth he would be finding weird bands and up-and-coming bands - I think it was quite a bit later, maybe around the time I was going to Uni in 2001. I didn't really play guitar for a few years and only found a band in the last year of Uni so I was probably listening to the same stuff. Then I finally met a couple of people who were doing interesting stuff. I met Stu in this band - between him and my brother, they introduced me to a lot of new bands which differently struck a chord with me and opened up that whole different realm.

LL – 12:30
And what were you studying at university?

TC – 12:34
I was actually doing environmental biology – it was pretty unrelated to music and yeah I guess I had my guitar that I picked up every now and then to experiment with, but it was only 'til the last year of Uni when I met Stu and we started playing more seriously. We still did rock stuff that was heavy with chords, somewhat Biffy Clyro-esque, and after listening to these bands that did fingerpicking which was so different to what I was used to, it really had an influence on my playing. I think it's hard to know what key things to change in your playing and I think that was a key moment, not just because of the bands I was listening to, but there was a lot of new stuff in all angles happening while I was at university so that all just blended together. I think I was really creative at that time, with a lot of output, and I was trying to write a lot more then.

LL – 13:49
I've been doing quite a lot of research around this […] this fundamental journal came out by a guy called Simon Reynolds in 2004 and he was talking about the changing of rock music around 1994. He coined the term post-rock, basically, and I think it's interesting how a lot of people have this trajectory around the early to mid 2000's when you had Kid A, Squarepusher, Go Plastic, Bjork, all that stuff, so I just wondered if that had any effect at the time?

TC – 14:35
I think yeah. Bjork for example was a huge inspiration but it doesn't obviously come through in guitar playing – she's a huge inspiration. However, I think I got into Bjork pretty late, I guess I had heard a lot of her early stuff when she was really prominent on the music channels, but I didn't really delve into albums like Vespertine till late. She had done that crazy pop thing that was more carefully crafted, and that record had a real nice blend of

instruments with the choirs- it was a naturally beautiful sound and then moving on to the electronic stuff which was very inspiring and got me excited about music.

LL – 15:44
It's interesting that sometimes you learn these classic rock tunes over that period of time and not just classic rock but that nu-metal, a rival in American rock music – people then might decide to get into alternate tunings and maybe a more artistic approach to the guitar. Why would you make that switch to express yourself?

TC – 16:23
I feel like listening to all that more typical rock stuff when you're learning your craft has an element of copying or imitating to find your feet and then coming up to more technical and complicated bands which is more in the realm of how to progress your playing and keep it interesting – I think I was getting bored of bar chords and learning these typical rock songs, so this was different.

LL – 17:18
Yeah, cause it's interesting that people used to relate complexity through extreme guitar solos, but I almost feel like people wanted this new virtuosity or complexity that wasn't so ego driven. I don't know how that fits with your playing - did you want to push yourself technically?

TC – 17:46
Yeah. I liked playing more technically and I liked how crazy it looked but not in the sense of "this will look cool for someone else" – at that point we weren't really a band as such, I was just a bedroom guitar player who was enjoying the exploration of this new world. I felt like I really enjoyed the challenge of learning something really hard even if I was 50 hours or so away from being able to actually play it. That level of dedication and trying to write something much harder than I could play to master my ability added a new challenge to it.

LL – 18:36
Those bands we spoke about that were sort of punk had that attitude of 'anyone can pick up a guitar' with that ethos to music-making, but when you switch to alternative tuning which is almost a folk tradition, where do you put yourself in that?

TC – 19:00
Yeah, again it's just the unknown – it kept everything interesting for me. Listening to those guitar players was a big inspiration to me of wanting to play like them which isn't necessarily a good thing, but it was a stepping-stone on the journey of bringing my own style along through this copying of my inspirations. I think you have to go through that phase of learning covers to get to that point, but these bands I was listening to, I didn't try to cover their songs as they were too complicated, but I did look at their styles or the tuning and learn from them that way.

LL – 20:12
Expand if you want?

TC – 20:14
I don't know if I can really – it was just hours of sitting and exploring […] the vast majority of trying these different tunings and it is going nowhere, a lot of dead ends, which can be frustrating, but I enjoyed moving onto different tunes or styles. I felt like I progressed loads through that trial and error, more so than just learning covers. I did learn a Hendrix song at one point which wasn't really my style, but I just learnt it, and it did improve elements of my playing, but it didn't sit perfectly with me. It wasn't until those alternate tuning bands that it really resonated with me – I think I heard Ghosts & Vodka play a song and delved into what they were doing and what tunings they used etc.. which was a lot more fun.

LL – 21:47
I think within post-punk and post-rock there's a slight rejection of blues-oriented music because it feels unauthentic, not genuine, limited, derived around the 12-bar blues. What do you think?

TC – 22:13
Yeah. It kind of irritates me in the world of guitar, even though I am more distant from it than I was before, but it does irritate me that it is still sort of based around the classic rock/ blues scale and I don't like looking at pedal videos that are demonstrated by a slick blues riff or something like that – there's so many other ways you can use this pedal and it would be nice to see that in a broader spectrum. I understand why they can't market these to every audience though.

LL – 21:46
I looked on TTNG's Wikipedia page and there was a diagram that said you were in the band from 2004 and you're the only constant.

TC – 23:23
Oh yeah, someone showed me that.

LL – 23:29
So maybe we could talk a bit about that. You just spoke about forming the band with Stuart and then what happened to your guitar playing from then?

TC – 23:40
Yeah, so that was around 2002/2003 that I joined and I think I was just writing extra parts over songs that Stu had already written with the rest of the band – they were quite rock-esque i.e. Muse or Biffy Clyro for example. I was trying to add in some more melody and lead lines. However, I wasn't really a lead guitar player in the classic sense. I never got into scales or modes or anything like that because it didn't interest me, so I think I was doing a 50/50 mix of rhythm and lead guitar – it was quite primitive but it was the start of me finding more things to add to guitar in songs […] I think it was around 2005 that I got more into the open tuning bands and then my brother joined the band, he's a very technical drummer which worked well for where we were going with time signatures, and the phrasing became a bit more angular and we delved into time signatures more over this time purely for interest to see if we could make it sound good. I guess we were just finding our sound as a band and it's kind of hard to articulate how that happened, but I think from 2005 to 2006 when Chris joined, we had a great skill set and were heading in this direction of listening to bands that

changed us. Then by 2007/2008 we had written some songs we were proud (of) and wanted to record instead of archiving them – we ended up putting them out on VSM with Kev and that was cool. I thought we were a real band at that point even though we had no idea what we were doing, had no money, and no plan to try and make it, but I think that's how most bands feel in the early days anyway. Sorry if you think I'm waffling on, I'm nearly through my coffee so it may get more interesting or I might pass out!

LL – 28: 13
When you were talking about getting into different time signatures and that phase, were you exchanging ideas through demo-ing in different DAW's or was it all done in the room?

TC – 28:33
Yeah, I should have mentioned that – I think it was really key that in that time we were almost all living in the same place together, which made it easy to practise together and get everyone together. The following year Chris moved to Oxford and we were all together with this shed in our garden that we went in every day – I think that helped in terms of writing as we were doing it literally every day for a couple of hours, there was probably stuff that didn't work but there was no pressure on it. I think a lot of the problems that bands find now, especially if they don't live together, is there's pressure on the time you do spend together to use that for writing. In the last few years we've found that we only have a few weeks to spend together so we have to do everything in that time and it's very pressured and not easy to be creative when it's like that. Back then it was really nice to have that freedom and I think that helped us improve as musicians and without writing material – having that massive output and seeing it go well with everyone enjoying it. We had a record called *Animals* that I think was only written in a few weeks from being in the shed every day just playing all the time – there's so many factors that can affect how you progress as a musician or a band.

LL – 30:54
So that was this sort of ecosystem you created for yourself at the time in 2008. Did you feel this momentum within the rock genre? […]

TC – 31:15
I'm not really sure, I think mass rock was really different to what people think it will be like today – it's not bands like Oxes and Dunkirk, that quite raw, angular, distorted crunchy stuff. I just thought we were writing kind of indie pop songs that had forced complexity because that is just how we liked to play our instruments – it wasn't to be showy, as I know that's how more technical pieces can come across, we just enjoyed trying to play stuff for us. Compared to the math-rock that is out now, our stuff doesn't seem so complex any more as those younger bands are crazy. I think the fact that we were doing some slightly crazier things than other bands in Oxford at the time helped us get seen as it was something quite different, it was cool because Stu was quite good at managing us and booking opportunities for us – we got to play outside of our town i.e. London and being up North. It was literally straight after work sometimes you'd go up in the van which was horrible but you did it. There was a lot of grafting but I think the harder you work at that stage, the more gigs you get, as we did get rebooking's from places which leads to touring – it built up slowly as we didn't have help or get randomly noticed but all the success we had was relative to us working hard.

LL – 34:23

Yeah, because you had the Oxford and U.K. scene of bands but there was also a bit of influence from the U.S. which, like you say, your definition can vary with bands like Shellac or Explosions of the Sky – you also have the Icelandic growth and, like you said, it was the U.S. indie, angular, emo stuff and that gained you success from going out there with that sound. So how did that happen?

TC – 35:15

Yeah, we pretty much imitated that sound and it's not like the U.K. hadn't heard it all but it was less common, so that sound for us was pretty established by the time we wrote our album Animals in 2008 and that came out on VSM. Kathy from Sargent House, which is a record label in Los Angeles, she picked it up in 2009 and put it out over there which you could say was luck, as we didn't influence that although we had an aspiration knowing our sound was quite U.S.- orientated. I think we would have got over there at some point anyway, as we had some small connections etc... It was good that Kathy did it, as it was a step up and a bit more professional, no disrespect to VSM – at the time it was a bigger label for us and a territory we hadn't been to yet. Through another band on the label, they were doing a small tour and said we could join them just to get our foot in the door – that was around 2010. We had stuff going on in-between, but we got to go back to the states on tour with Tera Melos and they were a bit more established with someone to book their gigs. I think between us we had really healthy numbers of people turning up to our shows- roughly about 200 – 300 people - I think between those years it stepped up really quickly as we had a lot of output and new material being created.

LL - 37: 39

So you had that timeline and you talk about these influences you have in your guitar playing of who you were trying to imitate along with the experimental tuning, but do you feel like you have a distinctive voice as a guitarist? Also do you feel that voice is fundamental to that sound?

TC -38:20

Yeah, I think in some ways there is a distinctive voice and I think everyone in our band has a distinctive voice, personally, but I think that's because I've been playing with them for so long. In answer to your question I think, yeah, I have a distinctive voice that is key to this band, but I think I've driven/ forced the way we write in this band, which is kind of detrimental to this band to Chris and Henry – I'll write a riff at home and then polish it up before getting into a band practice which is already difficult because Henry is a guitar player, vocalist and bass player, so he has quite a clear idea of how to integrate those things. On the other hand, I'm coming at it from a guitarist point of view where I'm just filling all the space and I think that must be frustrating to some degree for him, at least because I think possible space Is taken up by melody – it's a restrictive way to write.

LL – 39:55

Yeah, if you have these quite technical, still calling it riffs, but modular sections […] so then when you write it all together do you think that complexity leads to a lot of spontaneity when you play it?

TC – 40:17
It tends to be quite fixed because of this – we have had songs and jams where it's quite free but personally it's not a way of writing I enjoy.

LL – 40:30
And why do you think that is?

TC – 40:34
It's probably a control thing, but I don't like having time to feel like this was a draft and that I have perfected it – the speed that it moves with a jam is good fun but I always like the sections of the songs that we've done the least because everyone was happy with how it sounded. I do understand that's a compromise in a band, and it is difficult to know when something is finished, and it feels easier to know when something is "finished" when I've had lots of time to myself to polish it. It's a very selfish way of writing but we have experimented with other ways of writing and it can be very fun but I do like to spend a lot of time on things.

LL – 42:16
That feeds into two questions there […] So you said that jam sessions can be frustrating and feel like you're aimlessly noodling around and not getting anywhere, but you want sometimes that music-making to emerge unexpectedly. Do you feel your element of control sometimes sacrifices the chance of that?

TC – 43:14
It's cool because I feel like with the last record, even though it's hard to know how well your records do and I feel like with most bands their best work is behind them – not all the time and in our case maybe we aren't playing interesting stuff as much. I think for me it is harder to do those jams as there is that aspect of not knowing where it is going from the spontaneous aspect but I think it's hard to go into a rehearsal room as I feel I'm not a good enough musician to feel confident in that kind of scenario – I'm confident in my abilities of how I play guitar but I'm also limited in the way that I couldn't just rock up and play with other musicians easily. The way that I learnt guitar was very self-taught through finding my own way, and it's not always adaptable to other people. The way we wrote before Henry was in the band is pretty much the same, as I've tried to keep the thread of writing the same, but that could change as we haven't written anything in a while.

LL – 45:31
Yeah, I think it's really interesting […] you play in a very clean style with some Ableton effects as you said, but I find sometimes that when people use electronics or synths in a more artistic expression of sound as opposed to melodic phrasing, then sometimes they can find it easier to improvise with others, as you don't have to worry about theory and you can just sculpt the sound. Adam said to me he almost felt at ease with electronic, prepared drum kits rather than the actual acoustic drum kit – he felt he could jam more ideas with electronics rather than just himself. I don't know if you've started doing that with your guitar when adding effects, as it seems easier to improvise other things […]

TC – 46:39
Yeah, definitely. The only experience I've got is this weird loop glitchy things – I have got some pedals too that I haven't quite gotten to grips with yet, but from when I have used it; it

was just to add a loop or to fill a space that can make you feel differently about how you're going to fill it with a main melody.

LL – 47:19
I relate to that style of playing that you do, as I play in a 3-piece, so you've got to fill out that sound, which results in playing melodic stuff. But like you said there's that element of control and allowing there to be a replica of yourself if you duplicate it or manipulate it further then it leaves more space - do you feel comfortable with that?

TC – 47:39
The few times we've delved into Ableton and samples, it's nice to be able to sit back and not be playing as much – it gives a whole new shape to the vocals and allows it more room to go. It is something I would like to start doing but I don't know if we will or what will come from it – it is like having a fourth person or an extra colour/flavour that you can add without having to rely on your instrument.

LL – 48: 51
You say you work by these set players but there might be some sort of glitch or accidental timing that might trigger a potentially good idea that could be useful. I have this quote from Simon Reynolds. He said "In post-rock, soul is not as much abolished as radically decentred and dispersed across the field of sound as in club music like house, techno and jungle where tracks are less about communication and more about the engine of programming the sensations" what that talks about […]

TC – 49:49
I was going to say I need a few minutes for that, that was quite a quote.

LL – 49:52
So a few things that I think post-rock is; taking out the blues element and picking up the soul so you're doing technical playing that loses variety of the string and takes out expression […] it's different for you guys as you have a vocalist but with a lot of post-rock they take out the vocalist and have more expansion for the sound and a programming of your senses as opposed to communicating through lyrical content.

TC – 50:25
Yeah, definitely. I think from the more traditional mass stuff, mostly through repetition – there's a few bands you could apply this to but one in particular is My Disco, an Australian band. They started with slightly more technical stuff that was really interesting and worth checking out but their newer stuff is insanely repetitive in the way of wondering where it is going but at the same time you can lose yourself in it. They have quite long repetitive sections almost like a mantra, a bit like what Tool do in some ways – they're not afraid to write long songs like some other post-rock bands. It's moved away from the classic melody, riff, solo and it's quite similar to dance music where you don't have to listen too hard or intently and can lose yourself in the song.

LL – 52:02
Something that interests me is the switch from the Velvet Underground into post-punk of Joy Division into these post-rock bands we've been talking about that are moving away from

blues-orientated music to more art expansive sounds and dropping riff-orientated guitar playing. At the same time you had jungle house and techno with 808's coming out in the 80's, the underground scenes exploding outside of the rock scene – I just find it interesting what was happening to guitarists around this time. You had Nirvana in '94 and had underground rave scenes of sounds that had never been heard before. I wonder if that was the forefront and we were trying to still play 1930's blues riffs but it's like you said, very interesting to see how guitarists responded to this change to repetitive dance music which I think had an impact beyond the communication style rock music was doing at the time. What do you think of that?

TC – 53:35
I guess it had to change, the 80's had a lot going on with the guitar with power metal and classic rock etc. and that was really interesting and fun – there was also really prevalent punk stuff such as Green Day but then it's hard to know because there were so many underground bands that might not have made it to the mainstream side and people never heard of them or weren't quite popular.

LL – 54:24
So, you had Kid A come out in 2000 and that was a thing of not liking that they were in a rock band producing something like that.

TC – 54:35
Yeah, the Radio fans hated it as it was not what they expected.

LL – 54:37
Yeah. You also had bands before them like Tortoise bringing on rock instrumentation which slightly change our perceptions […] even when you guys play Arctangent with someone like Battles or Gallops there's a fascination of what virtuosity can get beyond the hand – when I spoke to Mark he said he's not a great player as 'I'm self-taught', he does like it but is more fascinated in pressing buttons to make arpeggios […] sometimes you find that people are more concerned about how you create the sound rather than what you were playing, I think people get more fascinated by the creation of sound.

TC – 55:45
Yeah. I think I mentioned this but Nick from Tera Melos is a very interesting guitarist, but he does more than guitar; he's a phenomenal player but also the stuff he does with effects is really great too – he's added MIDI drums on his guitar too. I find it really interesting what you can do with pedals and that's a whole world I never really got into that much. I think it's a continually interesting step for guitarists now to be creating noises and sounds that aren't so much on being technical but more about soundscapes from pedals through Ableton or whatever they use – it's a lot more limitless.

LL – 57:02
I think it's interesting what's been happening. For example Kraftwerk presented themselves with keyboards on stage and had that influence of techno/house music, so they were home producers releasing vinyl's and they didn't really care about presenting themselves, and now you have those techno artists that want to prove themselves on stage by being more jazz-improv but on the other hand with rock music we don't want to be as free or controlled and

technical so we present ourselves in an unhuman way […] I don't know if you feel that at Arctangent that it's very controlled?

TC – 58:14
I guess it depends who you are watching – I think there are bands that are like that and a large part of criticism I have about math-rock is to do with them being too focused on technique and the songwriting gets lost. I'm not terribly excited by bands in the genre we are placed in, I think I listen to more stuff outside of our genre i.e. Fugazi.

LL – 59:12
So, what would be an example of that?

TC – 59:14
I think some Bjork stuff and I guess Y – their new album just came out too, they can write in all sorts of ways that can be rigid or free, so they're quite an exciting band to listen to. Tool album is coming out, it's been 13 years I think, and my brother has introduced me to a modular synth guy called Detachi who is pretty cool.

LL – 01:00:07
That's good. I wonder why you're looking at those bands for influence and excitement, because I think there is a fascination or modular synth revival at the moment i.e. Thom Yorke's new EP and I was massively into Erasure and you can always tell that Kid A was Thom Yorke's vision and then it fell into his solo work which was massively influenced by those genres we're talking about […] Do you miss the guitar forefront of it cause you'll have a lead but […]?

TC – 1:00:59
It's difficult because, as a listener, I feel I'm a bit bored of heavily guitar stuff even though that's more or less what I am doing and I don't know where I am at in my guitar playing – I could be in a transition phase that's influenced by the music that I'm listening to, but I don't quite know that yet. I still enjoy playing guitar in the way I do, as it feels natural, but I think part of it is to do with getting bored as a listener – my brother was saying the other day he doesn't like listening to super technical math-rock that much anymore.

LL – 01:02:09
But maybe, like you said at the time, it was something you hadn't heard of.

TC – 01:02:17
I feel like now it's all been done, in a way, and all these sounds that math-rock came out of, the sub genres and the intricacies so it's time to move on. I think it's quite common that bands listen to stuff that's totally different to what they play and I'm sure they can enjoy bands that are similar to them but they are in that process of writing so they are looking for different things.

LL – 01:03:03
Yeah, cause I'm quite interested in how guitarists respond to all this change of power i.e. when the Akai Sampler came out and was accessible to home use. You are self- taught but

there's also self-taught producers who have been creating this stuff that's much more futuristic than guitar music. Guitar has a history of over 4000 years or something, so we could still be hung up on the approach of it embedded into us – so from that stance maybe math-rock sounds quite nostalgic as it's not as current, you know with the 70's revival music festivals in that kind of way. So that could be why you feel like […]

TC – 01:04:13
It's interesting still trying to figure out where it's going to go and I think now I am less interested in playing the guitar as I would've been when I was 20 – I don't play so much anymore, I've moved out of music quite a bit. Although I do still listen to music, it has been a while since I've heard something that surprised me.

LL – 01:04:56
Could that not just be an age thing, Tim?

TC – 01:04:57
Yeah, I think it is – having done something for so long, you're not going to feel the same way you had if you had just started. Personally, I'm not as excited by new music.

LL – 01:05:20
It sounds like you're excited by innovation. So interesting, innovative takes on the guitar instead of just one particular way.

TC – 01:05:38
Yeah it's really difficult to know what might inspire me further as a guitarist – I don't know what I'd have to see for it to inspire me, I feel like as an instrument everything has been done on it from the last few thousand years etc... I can't really imagine where else it could go other than putting it down and using a keyboard, samplers etc.

LL – 01:06:51
I feel like it's the same with the film industry - that potentially there aren't any more ideas out there. I like that, with females, they are getting more female and inclusive writing for storylines and maybe that would need to happen with music – allowing more people to have that voice. In rock music it's very male-orientated and derives from one voice. I watched this documentary on M.I.A and she was a refugee from Sri Lanka. When she moved to London, she picked up a drum machine and was quite big around the time you guys were too – that's the kind of thing that I think will help. Some of the films that have come out in the last 10 years […] I watched that film Lost in Translation. Have you seen that?

TC – 01:07:53
Oh yeah, I haven't seen it for a while though.

LL – 01:07: 55
That director Sofia […] I think because it was made by her it was a slightly different spin on the story and that's just an example of a small story being made by a different person.

TC – 01:08:11
I think you're right, your typical bands they're all coming from the same place at the moment – so there is a similar message or feel, so it would be nice to have more diversity of people's backgrounds and situations and to have that come through in the music.

LL – 01:08:56
You used to have distinctiveness through locality, but now I guess through globalisation there's not going to be a unique sound in different scenes – that originality will come from the individual […]

TC – 01:09:22
Pre-globalisation of music and pre-internet, you would have those distinct pockets of sound and they were probably really amazing to see from travelling, that there was a whole sound you hadn't heard of with some similar bands all in that sound. I imagine it would have been really interesting to travel and have all these sounds and have a colour pallet of these different sounds. I think Apple music is great, but I'm less interested as there are so many bands, and they are so easy to access – it's sad, in a way, that it's not interesting. Even when I was at uni there was still a few interesting bands that I found who I had never heard before. I think I'm not looking in the right places now to be honest.

LL - 01:11:18
I think there's that fascination around if what was created in the studio is authentic magic that just came in the room and sometimes that doesn't translate alone when you're listening so maybe when people do hybrid creations that could be when you fundamentally get excited about it. It's so transient listening to things on the go or online and it's the only way we can really get music, so the only way we could get impacted by music is through genuine experience.

TC – 01:11:56
It's rare, but hearing a new band on record is cool, but I think I've preferred seeing them live as it's more interesting. I think I haven't been excited by music for a while now, other stuff has taken over.

LL – 01:12:41
Priorities have changed, I guess. I just find it really interesting about all the influences that were happening around the time of this switch, and if you saw Kraftwerk you would be trying to figure out how they made these sounds – it was so far beyond us. Maybe that bridge is getting closer from higher production values […] I think when you're trying to analyse the point of music it's quite hard. I'm super-fascinated by the explosion of scenes in the mid 90's and how it changed rock music from being the popular end of the spectrum. Since the Beatles onwards we've had that defined popular music […] I have this thing I teach called the Spears/Stockhausen theory. Have I mentioned this before to you?

TC – 01:14:12
Maybe.

LL – 01:14:19

You've got Britney Spears on one, and then Stockhausen on the other end; I think what is happening at the moment is that we are borrowing music from both ends that now sits in the middle of the two. You might feel like that with your band when you were trying to be pop but sit somewhere in the middle of alternate tuning.

TC – 01:14:47

It's difficult to articulate this stuff but it's hard to know when you're in a band what you're doing or if it's going well because it kind of just happens – I have no idea what we're going to end up doing, I don't know if there will be any drastic style changes.

LL – 01:15 :24

Maybe that creativity will be down to yourself and not any sort of technology to push you forward.

TC – 01:15:40

Yeah, it's difficult because there are times when you are more creatively inspired in life and I think when you are living a more real life, it's harder for you to open yourself up to that. When you're younger things are exciting and there's lots happening to inspire you, but I think when you get older you find less things inspiring.

LL – 01:16:27

A lot of the people I have interviewed gain excitement from their instruments through modulated or hybrid playing, and I think it takes a while – you end up having to jam with yourself to figure out what works and then slowly you start to edge out of your comfort zone to something that interests you again. I'll round this off now but one thing I am interested in which I had to produce work for the PhD is could I make something great just on acoustic guitar? – so I've been in the studio working completely acoustic and slowly adding on electronic stuff. Your most recent album was acoustic, do you feel like your effect pedals or other things give you more ease for great arrangements?

TC – 01:17:49

There is a nice element to it being simple, as it is going back to basics, really, which is plain and the songs have been around for a while. It was very enjoyable to record that because we had the safety of it being trialled and tested with our fans, so they should like this too as it isn't much different. It was quite safe.

LL – 01:18:37

I thought you'd be quite interested in the actual arrangements.

TC – 01:18:42

Yeah, we try not to have just acoustic guitar and vocals for the whole album – the most exciting part of the whole album is the drums, which we are basically taking out. We did put in a few other layers which was quite nice to add in, and hopefully kept it interesting enough.

LL – 01:19:25

That's what I mean, you might go through this whole journey with your guitar, playing how you started, then adding these extra effects but figuring out fundamentally where everything fits.

TC – 01:19:58

It might be that less is more and it sits well with other things, but who knows – the guitar will do a lot less and we'll have more equipment or people. In my example, I learn to play less but the songs are more interesting. It's hard to know.

LL – 01:20:29

It sounds like your comfort zone is a piece of complex melodic lines, but maybe you could add another instrument or add other layers that could make you more spontaneous and add more excitement for you or the players with you.

TC - 01:21:01

There's that danger, though, if you play very technically or are very proficient in an instrument, you almost want to be playing that top proficiency level all the time because you can, which can detract from the song as a whole – which is what I was saying for current math-rock bands, where less is more. It is really difficult to know and to write in the way we do.

LL – 01:22:04

There's a 3-piece Texan band called Khruangbin, they're a very pitchfork kind of band. A friend of mine manages Soul Wax and I saw them play this festival. The bass player has the same name as me, but the drummer is a very melodic groove-oriented drummer, which is amazing. I think there's a good analogy using John Coltrane as an example; you had Giant Steps come out, which was a jazz piece. That was a lot of jazz chord changes and then modulation happened in jazz music, which took out the chord changes, and focused more on melody lines with modulation – I feel like that is what is happening now through metal to math-rock, house to drum and bass at 180bpm and then from the mid 2000's it started to slow down again. We haven't gone to 300bpm yet so maybe that will happen and then it will calm down again. So virtuosity isn't the way to push sound forward, I guess […]

TC – 1:23:42

Yeah, it might be a more careful crafting of working with others to get that cohesion. That's the thing with being in a band with other players. You can be the best players, but trying to get it to work together and have a balance is a difficult thing […] I think we try to be picky with our songs i.e. is it just happening because I've written it already or is there something we change and spend time on to make a better song? I think that's a constant issue of how long you spend on something to know it's ready, you could go on forever changing stuff.

LL – 01:25:44

Yeah, I definitely think there's an element of artistic control within it – you have to fundamentally let it go to the other players and realise the limitless studio and how you can tweak everything, but also putting restrictions on that too.

TC – 01:26:06

We're definitely in that kind of school, I think; if we're recording we want very little done to it, but that could change depending on what other instruments we end up using – it could go more towards the production side of things.

LL – 01:26:35

So maybe I will finish with the final question: your time as a band and your trade as musicians was probably fed into that framework of genres we spoke about i.e. math-rock, post-rock, emo, U.S. & U.K. indie history. So now, as a guitarist, what do you think the future of this instrument and genre you're exploring will be?

TC – 01:27:20

I think it will just be a bunch of covers, bands covering us […] it's really difficult to know if a genre has gone as far as it can before going stale. It's hard to explain.

LL – 01:27:46

Well, it seems you are rooted in the rock ideals and slightly the DIY scene – a guitar was cheap, you didn't have to have lessons, which made it accessible, cool and relevant and a spoken language of contemporary music as we know it. This formed that explosion of people going to art school because of it, so it was an exciting time of crossovers. Do you think it will be like i.e. when people learn the flute and think that's cool as it sits well in classical music but you can't play it and wonder if people will want to go see gigs in a blacked-out room in the future? Maybe the presence of rock music won't sit at all?

TC – 01:28:45

Yeah, maybe. As we said, the guitar might become extinct to some extent, and the space that all the guitar bands fill might be more irrelevant as people get into electronic stuff more through computers and software. These may become like any genre, nostalgia bands with an echo of early 2000's mid-west emo – we're still writing that stuff and it's nearly 2020. But, yeah, I think it's hard to tell because it is such an accessible instrument, even if it does become a dated instrument to learn, I think people will still play in those rock music bands even if it is just cover bands.

Depending on how long we're talking, nothing might change – there's always people discovering new genres of music that have been around for ages but it's new to them i.e. if you had just heard jazz music and it really inspired you then you could probably find a few people that could play in a jazz band with you.

LL – 01:30:54

Yeah, it might become like that.

TC – 01:30:57

It will stay the same, but there is a lot of scope for new things to emerge through effects and software, but I think there will be a point where the guitar is redundant if it gets pushed to (the) electronic side too much – there will be a much easier way to deliver those sounds.

LL – 01:31:34

I am quite curious […] People spend so much time on their instrument that they don't want to lose their craft and I think that's what will happen. However, I think some people are quite happy to go with the flow of music now, whereas before it would seem like time wasted on your craft.

TC – 01:32:12

I think my brother is a good example; he spent 20 or 30 years playing the drums and if you asked him today, he would quite happily never sit behind one again and have drum machines or modular synth – still writing drums but in an electronic way which would be more exciting. I think it depends on who you speak to - and you have to enjoy it. I think I sound very pessimistic about guitar playing, but I had a few years' break from writing, so I am interested in writing again and I have only just started picking up the guitar again.

LL – 01:33:29

For me; I just couldn't play for 2 months and then I went back to it still having the tangible knowledge and flow – I think that's what I struggle with, I have the tangible touch and flow but I am always obsessed with the exchange and discovery of something. It's a push and pull of comfort zone and flow and discovering new things in experimentation.

TC – 01:34:13

I think I read a brief interview with Thom Yorke, where he said he finds it really important to have a completely new instrument for a record he makes – something that is challenge for him, so he is constantly putting himself out of his comfort zone and it would be kind of weird for him to pick up a guitar or something, especially being a singer-songwriter - he has a completely new landscape to go and experience. That might be something that could happen with guitar players – a new software could come out and make this new MIDI guitar era that opens up a whole new world.

LL – 01:35:16

I don't think MIDI guitar has really taken off yet, it's still in the gimmicky zone. I have a few good Radiohead quotes, when you were talking it reminded me of what Johnny Greenwood said, "We didn't want to pick guitars and just write chord sequences. We didn't want to sit in front of the computer either. We wanted to do things that involved playing and programming." They wanted to have a mix and I feel like that stage is where people will go.

TC – 01:36: 00

Maybe that hybridisation of guitar and everything you can plug into the guitar makes it less important to be able to play crisply and cleanly but taking you to this electronic kind of world and seeing where it goes. If you were getting heavily into that, you probably wouldn't need the guitar at all.

LL – 01:36:47

Yeah. Definitely that involvement of the instrument. I've got another one that you might like: "A voice into a microphone, a tape, a CD, or through your speakers is all illusionary, fake and synthesiser, but one is perceived real, and one is somehow unreal. It's the same with guitars, it was just this freeing notion of acoustic guitar being truer." I think there will still be a point where you can use these hybrids […]

TC – 01:37:53

You can't imagine anytime soon that someone who is really inspired by guitar and synthesis effects will just put down the guitar – there's still that part in between that you would expect people would want to still play guitar but experiment with it too. There will be weirder and wackier ways, pedals coming out and stuff like that.

LL – 01:38:27

I think it's quite interesting i.e. how Adam plays; he got rave tapes in the 90's and had never heard it but decided to go to jazz school so he could play music, then he heard Squarepusher and couldn't figure out how to play that, so he imitated it, which then goes back to the human for us to program something else to then learn it again - so it's a constant exchange.

TC – 01:39:01

It's funny you say that, because I've only recently got back into playing guitar again and I whacked on one of the Logic drummers which was pretty bad, but it was some percussion to at least have. You can set it to really complex […]

LL – 01:39:22

The virtual drummer?

TC – 01:39:27

Yeah, and you can set it to more spontaneous stuff. I showed my brother 10 seconds of something and he was surprised to see how different the drum track was and he said he could learn it and use it as a really insane way to play the drum line.

LL – 01:39:57

This is what I was talking about in the beginning, programming stuff and then trying to play it yourself by cutting up drum loops and then learning them yourselves - you're pushing yourself to sound unhuman but making it human by playing it.

TC – 01:40:17

Yeah, it's an interesting place.

LL – 01:40:20

I hope you found this useful.

TC – 01:40:23

Yeah - super interesting […]

LL – 01:40:37

I thought that was really cool, and I try to leave it open but I think we discussed most of it. I saw little nuggets of you saying some good stuff in the bit you just finished up on.

TC – 01:41:02

Oh yeah, moving between using software […]

LL – 01:41:11

We were contemplating whether there is or isn't a future in it with this exchange […] I think we have mostly covered everything – the only thing I think we did is; why a lot of people like the bands is because it was less ego-centric i.e. foot on the monitor, swishing your hair around. Electronics artists don't tend to use their names, they have titles and got rid of all this ego stuff so you could just play and not have to worry about the other stuff.

TC – 01:42:11

I think that was all part of the aesthetic which people are a bit fed up of now. So, yeah, that kind of arrogant nature of performance is changing.

LL – 01:42:25

Also, by calling your album *Animals* it removes the obvious emotions.

TC – 01:42:28

Yeah, it was totally abstract.

LL – 01:42:20

That's almost quite art school - disregarding, not minding that it is connected to you.

TC – 01:42:52

You can do that for the right reasons, but people might still think you're being pretentious, but as long as you do it for the right reasons yourself and hopefully people can see that.

Glaister, M (2021)

Glaister, M (2021)
Artist Interview: Mark Glaister
Interview by Laura Lee
[In Person] 19.11.21

Interview starts at 02:16

LL – 02:16
I'll start off with some introductory questions, such as who you are and what your role is in this project.

MG – 2:30
I was a collaborator in the development of the material of what would have been Side B […] I also played drums and did a bit of the engineering side of things. I guess we all had a creative input on the staging and how the performance was set up. That's what's interesting about this; it started off as just an idea of just you, then brought me and James in and it started to become this not huge group of people but the final group of people that were all brainstorming to create the final product.

LL – 03:41
It's interesting that you said that because I talk a lot about collaboration hierarchy which I'll talk about later […] Sort of why I brought you into this is obviously because we work together anyway but the creative input you brought in not only as an artist but as an engineer/producer – I thought you could maybe talk about your influences in that i.e. if there's certain engineers producers or artists.

MG – 04:30
Specific artists/names would be difficult off the top of my head, however I do spend a lot of my time watching and reading about techniques. I'm quite passionate about it and kind of geek out about it, so it was nice to use all those things in this project.

LL – 04:55
I know you said sometimes you watch Steve Albini or Sylvia Massy.

MG – 05:00
They would be two names I would put on that list […]

LL – 05:11
Well, there are potentially some engineers. Who was the person that worked with Adele?

MG – 05:17
Oh. Rick Rubin, I only know about him from what I've read. There was something about him working with Slipknot, I don't know how true that is.

LL – 05:29
It's quite interesting though, we've talked about your influences in the past which were this sort of metal production albums, so some people like that but you do a lot more production now […]

MG – 05:44
I love pop world stuff, it's a guilty pleasure. This didn't really push any of those buttons, at no point was I just sitting at a computer doing that kind of work [...] Even when it came to the electronic drum implementation, it was very much in the raw rock aesthetic and that isn't the metal that is more towards the slipknot kind of stuff which is quite high production, but I like the rawness of sounds in the rock world. When you talk about metal influences, I never really liked drum-wise like all the super close mic-ing, gating or the double bass pedals in a tacky way, I've never liked any of that […]

LL – 06:53
Yeah, it's almost quite theatrical.

MG – 06:55
Yeah. Going back to the Steve Albini and Sylvia Massy thing, it's just experimentation and capturing a performance.

LL – 07:01
Yes, I think last time I spoke to you I mentioned something about Dizzee Rascal on a podcast, it's almost like he was interested in the raw recordings of rock albums but cut them up to give that raw energy but still with production values to it […] I know you listen to a lot of grime, do you connect more with the production value or more the raw execution of it because I guess a lot of the stuff we're talking about is quite band orientated and I know you're a fan of in the box or more sort of programmed stuff […]

MG – 07:51
Yeah I mean when it comes to pop stuff I love very well produced, clean pop music - A lot of that is the production but also the song writing […] its very minimal in its core ideas but they're just really good core ideas so a good groove from the drums, some good chords/bass stuff and then sound wise it's quite simple not too complicated with a very good top-line with a vocalist doing the top-line. I know this isn't anything to do with your project but all of what you do, then add to that is all these minute details […]

LL – 08:50
Yeah, which couldn't really be formalised in a project like this […]

MG – 09:01
No, not at all. It's also not the type of music where you would do that necessarily.

LL – 09:12
Exactly, we spoke about this. It was about trying to have more production values.

MG – 09:14
Well, when we started doing this we started experimenting with more sort of jazzy stuff, and you said you didn't want to be too Gogo Penguin so aside from your piano stuff about 2/3 of what we did ended up being post rock which is obviously what we're used to doing together so that's probably why that happened. If we had kept at the sort of jazz thing then it probably would've been those details not so much in a pop sense i.e., the drumming that you liked, I would've been able to do more of that, whereas what I ended having to do was just blocks of drum beat sections each with their own electronic sound.

LL – 10:21
This leads me nicely to the next question which is about how we actually designed the kit and how we designed it changed your playing. You were talking about when we first started your drums weren't affected and you were responding to my playing, and it was jazzier. Then I said let's start affecting your drums a bit more and I feel the more affected it is the less you want to interfere with rolls and things like that.

MG – 10:46
I guess so in the sort of traditional way of rock songs with vocals, you'll have your drums and your rhythm section which are fundamental but probably not what people are listening to […] if you asked everyone that knew 'Like a Prayer' would they be able to sing the bassline to you? No but they'd probably know the vocals. Within that music, the drums are important as they're playing the groove but they're not as big of a part as the vocals.

So, when we were doing the jazz stuff, in traditional jazz and I'm talking about instrumental here […] whether it's a jazz band, a large band or a quartet anything in between; the drums in that scenario would have a solo, they would have a moment where the drums are the lead instrument. So, when we were doing the earlier version where you were playing piano and I was playing drums, I think that very comfortably sits on the same level. But I think it is difficult when you start going into rock territory […] you know that band in Newport that we played with, they obviously have quite a post rock sound, but the drums are a supporting instrument, they don't feel like they're their own part. So I feel like although were aware of rock music it can still be on that same level it's still a supporting part but as soon as you go into that world it's really interesting to have the electronic part because it means that you're taking up not more sonic space or performance space but you're taking up more interest i.e. if you just had a rock drum kit with a kick drum, snare and toms; people know what it sounds like in a rock scenario they will immediately put that into the background and listen to whatever else is going on whether its guitar, keyboard or vocals. So yeah, it gives you more of an interesting pallet to play with and it does allow you to not have to do so much with your playing.

LL- 14:25
When you were talking about rock drummers there I was trying to think about Dave Grohl because he wasn't fore fronted, he was quite hooky i.e., in Smells Like Teen Spirit it's got a super hook, the sound wasn't dominating the track and that's something I like about this project; you're playing got quite loop based and the hi-hat opening wasn't a symbol of changing section it was about changing loops sometimes.

MG – 14:58
Yeah totally. Obviously, I'm used to playing a little bit more in that way […] who does the drums in Foo fighters?

LL – 15:14
I was thinking this while you're talking about Chad from the Red-Hot Chilli Peppers, but that guy is called Justin Hawking, I think.

MG – 15:23
I thought Justin Hawking was the guy from the Darkness. […] anyway, I'm pretty sure it was him or maybe it was Dave Grohl but there's a video where they do play a rock beat where you can play something simple but it sound really interesting – You've got the hooky-ness but then as soon as you have vocals or something more interesting i.e. Smells Like Teen Spirit that guitar riff is so easily recognizable and then the drums really go into that groove so you've got that kind of rhythmic thing […] I was watching this thing about Joey Jordison from Slipknot, his drumming is really hooky, really goes with the guitars but it's still about creating a solid rhythm section because all these extra things that you add in are just filling up spaces sonically but not exactly sonically and by using people interpretations you can push more buttons of the people that are listening […]

LL - 17:29
You like pop and electronic production where you could take the guitars out and they don't hold the hook or vocals and it could be about the drum programme […]

MG – 17:44
That reminds me of this track I was listening to on the way here, there is no bassline but every 32 bars or so there's like a synth, really carefully crafted layered kick and then you just have progressively changing hi-hats in slightly varying patterns and that does it – so it's alright me listening to that on the way over but maybe it's more suited to like a club or somewhere where it would physically move people.

LL - 18:27
I've got 4 headings here: Design, Pre-production, production and post. So maybe we could talk about how we designed it, so we started off with using clicks, and then maybe some of the stuff once we actually got into the room and started trying to match stuff to the affected drum kit.

MG – 18:00
Yeah, well when we were in the room, we actually needed a sound system, a lot of your references were Burial and all of these people which is really bass heavy music so even if you're mic-ing up the drum kit and having that in a room it will still give you a really cool rock drum kit sound but it wouldn't give you the same Burial vibes – you basically need a big sound system

LL – 19:40
Well yeah maybe you could talk through how we designed it; you didn't want to have pads or a sequencer […] I didn't want us to use MIDI or sit with clicks, that sort of thing and then that's when we started to play around with triggers.

MG – 20:30

Well the easiest way is if you had given me the brief of, I don't want burial drums, as in not even mentioning acoustic drum kits; you'd obviously have drum pads and a big sound system but then when you say you want that incorporated into an acoustic drum kit, then you'll have to use pads separate from the drum kit but you also want it to seem more natural which is where the triggers come into it which is just triggering samples […]

It's basically if you're not being purist about it then you might as well have a pad and hit which is how we then fell on the mix, through all the jazz stuff we first started off with and me getting used to having a space with drums that I could work things out in. you were talking about my history of engineering but I've never had an opportunity to have drum kit set up at the same all the time with mics on to experiment with – so through that coexistence alongside the development of this project, what we realised is that you can have that same drum kits with very similar mics that you can make sound really different. That is what led to the idea of doing this with pure audio instead of using triggers.

LL - 22:46

People do that with guitars now, you can either individually change your effects like with the tapworks I do, or you could just have preset snapshots or scenes that you could just launch when you need them. Because this was in a performance based setting you had to make the drums really effected for them to pop through, whereas in a mix in a room with monitors it makes sense to be subtle [...]

MG - 23:22

Yeah but that was for a number of reasons. Through the issues we had with tech stuff and the rooms - all of this meant we didn't have as much time to rehearse everything. The tracks existed but in a way where [...] we went into the final part of the project where I had played all these different drum parts which you had chopped up but we hadn't sat down and played these tracks together, let alone had we actually finalised what the sounds of each instrument would be. You had the stems of these songs and started experimenting with them; but on headphones on a laptop it will sound a lot more dramatic than it would in a room or studio - so it was very last minute developing the final version of what the songs would be. But you have to remember that the final sound was just me on the computer thinking that we needed to make this sound dramatic for the record. Which I didn't completely agree with but I also didn't agree with the fact that it was going to be a record.

LL 25:18

That's one of my questions actually, so through these restrictions we had [...] in concept things sound good but in reality it doesn't always work and the fact that we had to fit it into half an hour.

MG - 25:37

All of this was quite free from which then became a bit more structured that we had to learn but then you also told us that we would just do it as an improvised freefrom thing which we only have 22 minutes in total for. There was a point where we talked about having James tell us from upstairs that we only had 5 minutes left. You wouldn't have a freeform jazz session at Ronnie Scotts and have someone tell you in an in-ear that you've only got 5 minutes left so you need to finish up with this track.

LL - 26:18

Traditionally if you were to start a rock band and instantly hear what you sound like in a room, you know that is what would get captured when you record it. However, this project is more complex than that; like you said when you've done electronic performances, that you don't feel super satisfied, or it can get boring sometimes [...]

MG - 26:59

This is what it ended up being but also, this is also what confused me as it felt like a final thing, but you were also telling me that it was part of an ongoing research project, so I wasn't sure if this performance was the final part. To me it didn't feel like a finished product as I'm used to in a normal band setting where you practice till you're almost done and then go to record it and it gets better after it is recorded - it felt like it was just sections, I was selecting scenes with my foot [...] when you watch it and listen to it, it looks fluid but it didn't feel fluid when playing it, if that makes sense.

LL - 28:14

That's a good point there. It didn't feel fluid when we were playing it, but we executed it well. I imagine this is what it feels like playing with a click in your ear - internally it sounds weird but externally it sounds good [...]

MG - 28:54

No, yeah. It's grim. We were talking about this with Ruth, 'The Living Room' might be done with a click; well not a click but I have the synth part in my ear.

LL - 29:14

So, you can't really respond to everyone else because you've got to be tuned into this one part. I was going to say; when I watched it there were sections where I wondered if you were responding to things that James was doing upstairs?

MG - 29:33

I'll be honest, I wasn't responding to what James was doing and neither for what effects were happening with me. This is what I was saying, I was just playing the sections, I was playing a series of drumbeats in order and then also in turn hitting a pedal which then changed the effect.

LL - 30:05

Did you ever at school take part in a big band? When we were taught to play instruments then it was all quite modular bars and about learning your parts. The premise of this project was trying to be improvisational but also do timed technical things which we might not have completely got.

MG - 30:05

Well, I imagine not the average person is going to watch or listen to it; but for me when I watch/listen to it, the most exciting part is that part when something goes wrong with your pedal and then I improvise - that's a happy mistake. I think that was channelling the older version where we were improvising and doing more of the 'jazz' stuff. I think if we were to do

this again or continue this, I think it would go back to the earlier version because for various reasons it became slightly different.

LL - 31:30
I was talking about the traditional ways that were taught to do things i.e., the easiest way to learn things in a group is to learn your parts and then bring them together but also when you're recording; people find it easier to do single takes and then construct it like that - I've never done that though.

MG - 31:51
I don't think it would have worked for this. It's almost like we were doing it like that in a live scenario - we were playing a live Ableton arrangement in a simplified way.

LL - 32:09
When you write some of this music, ideally you would have a lot of hardware or programs that were offscreen because most of this music tends to start on a screen, so you visualise how it's going to go. This is kind of the point of what I'm talking about, yeah that mistake happened in SKIP! And there were a few more parts involved but because things kept going wrong, I had to just cycle that one section into a single loop.

MG - 32:41
This isn't the first time someone is thinking of that. You look at Ableton and see that it goes left to right and up and down but it's basically an orchestral score and that's why in whatever period of time people thought to flip it and not think about just the graphic scores.

LL - 33:06
I think the core aspiration of why I had the big bits of paper out was to be a bit more visual led in that graphic score way [...]

MG - 33:13
Yeah that's why I was saying I think it will probably go back to that but having to do it as a live performance, recording in real time and recording a record of it - this all meant that we went from all this development that was really interesting and cool with these improvised bits on it i.e. me wanting to put a weird snare on a section to us basically not having enough time to get to that so we just needed to rewind and take elements of it but put it into blocks. That doesn't make it interesting.

LL - 34: 00
It leans back into what is safe.

MG - 34:09
It was a very safe way of doing it. That doesn't make it bad, uninteresting music - especially nowadays, 80% of music is made like that.

LL - 34:27
Yeah, traditionally music is like art; you make works in progress, and you show them to an art critic. In music performance or tech, we tend to only show things when they are done as a point of it in theory not showing the vulnerability [...]

MG - 34:55

That's what I'm saying. If we had gone into this room[...] basically if we had all of that stuff just being recorded into a live mixing desk, being recorded onto a Zune and maybe a couple of DSLR's; then yeah I would have known that it was being captured.[...] you were in situation where you had all these facilities and this equipment so why wouldn't you have 3 done cameras and 4 cinema quality cameras along with recording into the desk and on tape. For me that was like a final record thing and I'm very happy with the final results however part of me would like some of that material to be like our earlier versions.

LL - 36:24

Do you feel like a lot of bands do that though? They have this raw material, they then work with a producer, and it gets morphed into something else, something more radio friendly for example.

MG - 36:34

That's maybe what it is, that is what I became because of these criteria [...]

LL - 36:34

Maybe because we're so conditioned to record something the way we're expecting to hear it [...]

MG - 36:48

You always joke about being this art school person; you did a performance in this theatre space with cool lights and tape etc. but fundamentally the project was actually something very different to being experimental and arty - which isn't a bad thing, it means that it is more [...]

LL - 37:23

All these great engineers such as Sylvia Massy, do all these experimental things but they have to do the weird things like, recording in a corridor or using different microphones and then that becomes normal. I do this sample hold thing on my guitar which would have been impossible to do in real time, but I can just use my pedals to make it easier now. After we played, we had the audience come upstairs to see everything, it was a different world to what they heard live as to when they heard the playback "it sounds like a record" they were saying. I think that is what has pushed it into that world of trying to simulate what we hear day to day.

MG - 38:17

I'm just going to pause that because I've thought of this other thing I wanted to say. You know how you asked if I was responding at all to James; the one thing that was quite impactful for me was when he muted the kick drum. In the electronic music world that is a trick that happens and for me, I did feel those drops[...]

LL - 39:01

They are indications of choruses that drop [...]

MG - 39:09
Yeah, it's also used in dance music.

LL 39:16
You know when I talk about 'We Found Love' by Rihanna [...] typical structure of a song in the 70's and 80's would have been verse, chorus, verse, chorus but now it's all about that 'drop' - it's a newer indication that things are changing.

MG - 39:42
I listened to it now and I didn't notice it as much as I did when I heard it in my headphones - I think the fact that I had drums coming in from the room and leaking into my headphones a bit [...] the one thing I noticed externally was that bass dropping out. In terms of low frequencies, it was mainly just the kick, I know you were doing some bass stuff too.

LL - 40:25
Maybe what would be better if we had a live engineer in the room, like in dubstep culture.

MG - 40:39
That's what I mean. If you've got an audient desk there to use to go into a tape machine and all these preamps then yeah, use it. This goes back to what we were talking about before I came to this point - it would've made more sense for me if we brought the tape machine down and had James down with us, you've got a bit better of a sound system and a more cohesive goal. That's why when people went upstairs and said "oh, this sounds like a record" why didn't it sound like that to them downstairs, but also why didn't we just do it as a studio session. We could've used that space as a studio, we did it as a live gig with an audience there which happened to be being recorded at the same time.

LL - 42:11
I was just going to finish with future projects. The point of trying to do all of this is not feeling satisfied just sitting in front of a screen all the time but then also if you don't have enough money for all these sequencers and equipment etc. I wanted to find a good middle ground to write simultaneously with production.

MG - 44:06
I can just say something as a point to that - both of us had a laptop with a screen with Ableton running alongside us. So, if we were in a studio with a laptop on a desk, is that not the same [...]

LL - 44:30
Laptop lead performance?
I remember I saw Fourtet with Miles Davis' drummer. It wasn't the traditional drumming you'd have in electronic music; this drummer was quite free with his playing and that was around 15 years ago I saw that. I was also seeing the looping pedal for the first time as the loop pedal only came out around 2000/ 2001, so that amazed me that you could capture things in your performance like that. Then things do come out i.e. sunhouse but do you think that we are inherently there with this style of playing where you don't have to rely on the screen in front of you [...] I know you've been listening to some techno music and you were saying that nothing is really exciting you anymore, what would you have to see in the writing or in the

performance to get you excited again? Obviously, we had a lot of issues such as latency, not wanting to play to a click etc.

MG - 45:55
There is stuff that I still get excited about but there's just so much music; it's not a bad thing as it means that a lot more people can make music than they could before and are able to get that onto platforms where it can be consumed but I don't necessarily think that [...]

LL - 46:36
Well, what do you think then, because Ableton was designed through [...] someone who was influenced by techno/dub, and they wanted to do it through screens - that was around 20 years ago so what would be next [...]?

MG - 47:03
Well, I think in terms of what we've been talking about, with clicks etc. (sorry Ableton). If we're talking about modular sequences and your source was a drummer, I don't believe that we are there. However we are there in terms of a system that is running off a computer but it just takes a lot of time and problem solving which we didn't have for this project although that was the aim - we came into that two week section where James had those triggers but we hadn't used them before so we kind of had to default to blocks of sounds, there was no individual changing which would have happened through the development. Big beats is an example; if you put in the time and the extra-curricular to do all of the maps stuff, you can do anything. A bit like with the following thing - it doesn't really work because it is AI, it would work with maps converting or being able to assign it [...]

LL - 49:24
I was thinking along the lines of the virtual drummer in Logic.

MG - 49:29
That's just sample loops [...]

LL - 49:30
But you can still use that in a way of someone following the kick, so it's almost imitating, I don't know if that is the level of AI intelligence but [...]

MG - 49:41
I imagine it would follow in the same way. I remember when I was doing this remix of a song (apologies to both Ruth and SoundCloud) which was an amazing remix of this Rita Ora song which they took down because it wasn't allowed. Anyway, you had to scour the internet to find an acapella version of the song but now you don't have to try that hard because the AI can take away the instruments - it is phenomenal how they do it. The only way this follow thing will happen is if they can get a computer to think in a way i.e. if you were in a room with me and were both sat on drum kits, if I progressively go from 110bpm to 120bpm and then do something loose then move onto something else, you'd be able to follow that but a computer wouldn't - it would need to analyse that behaviour as soon as it happens so you could have a live drummer doing what they want with a modular set up running, then the AI matching it. With all this stuff, even the trigger stuff that wasn't working for us, with effort and time, it is possible to work those things out.

LL - 51:42

I was speaking to Andrew when he did that whole 'Beat Seeker' thing; he was a nerd academic and it almost feels like academia as a concept doesn't work in real time, it takes years for musicians to actually implement these things and then it takes a further number of years for technology to catch up with it.

Maybe something to finish on, I know you're into computer science and coding and mathematics[...]

MG - 52:13

I mean loosely.

LL - 52:14

If someone told you a bit about a project like this, what you've mentioned needs to happen for something like this to work then? Something AI intelligently follows [...]

MG - 52:33

No, no but that is dependent on [...] you ended up not doing loops, I was never going to be using loops [...]

LL - 52:47

The use of the scene capture thing for my loops because guitarists do instant loops with their feet, they don't tend to cue things up but in electronic music there is a lot more cue-ing involved. For my loops to work in Ableton I would have to cue them [...] if I do work with Mog a lot of their stuff is more hardware based that doesn't deal with latency [...]

MG - 53:20

I can't do a loop pedal accurately but when we watched Bicurious he did it perfectly, so with practice it is possible and in a perfect scenario. A drummer either has to follow a click from Ableton or they are following guitar loops which we kind of did in a way - the beat that I did came from what was being done on your loops.

LL - 54:06

You almost want a computer to generate random ideas for you, sort of like what you did for your Masters - randomised groove settings to generate new ideas for you so you play in different ways like when you keep hitting a tennis ball.

MG - 54:31

That's kind of what happened when we were doing this; Ableton put out that video [...]

LL - 54:39

About imitating the production of them.

MG - 54:40

It was like doing audio effects but putting time-based modulation or some sort of delay or phaser [...] What I'm saying for example if a guitarist is using loop pedals and can do loops and a drummer can hear that to be able to play along to it then that's fine[...]

LL - 54:43
You get locked into a time but there's multiple channels so you can change it up[...]

MG - 55:55
Even with a looper you don't even need to keep to a tempo, you can just press record and play but what Ableton does is it creates the tempo for that, and everything follows [...]

LL - 56:22
The whole globalisation that we had [...]

MG - 56:24
This is another example; the resources are there and could work for the project. The way the music turned out there wasn't really a dramatic tempo change, but it still could have worked in a way.

LL - 56: 48
I think that was the final thing I wanted to end on.

MG - 56:58
I didn't finish answering your question that you asked me [...]

LL - 57:00
What would you design [...]?

MG - 57: 05
For the next project?

LL - 57: 07
It's been 20 years of loop pedals, when I spoke to Stella; she was telling me about festival bookings and how they end up being the only band there because the rest of the people are just people on Ableton as that is kind of derivative of pop music now.

MG - 57:30
For a very long time now, even with proper pop artists that have a band with them, the drummer will have triggers on their drum kit [...] we aren't talking about that, we are talking about your project and it moving forward, aren't we?

LL - 57:57
I think in general; my project was just to highlight it. I am trained to just sit in front of an instrument and write guitar parts. I was trying to create a space in between where there was a bit of pre-sets and programming [...]

MG - 58:27
But are you talking about it as a writing tool or a performance tool? Because we didn't use it as a writing tool. As a performance tool you can just create it for the songs that you've got.

LL - 58:42
Do you think perhaps we are there but maybe not with this intelligence following [...]?

MG-58:54
But what is the point that you're asking?

LL - 59:00
Currently we are at the point of when any new technology comes in i.e., the guitar pedals I think were developed for more blues technology, but people started using them inventively[...]

MG - 59:20
Yeah, that's what the Digitech stuff I was talking about is just full of drum stuff.

LL - 59:33
Yeah, exactly. It just gets used for other stuff. I remember when KT Tunstall first played on the Jools Holland show when she was a busker - people were more excited about her using the loop pedal to layer her vocals, I just find it interesting and I wanted to know what it would take for you to get excited about performances again [...] I was talking with someone about the artist SOPHIE and they were saying forget pretending to play instruments, I'm going to use my body.

MG - 01:00:34
Some DJ's have taken it to the next level with their performances by doing mashups but you have these CDJ's that are way more advanced now than when I first started using them [...] Normally DJ's like I'll be doing this weekend, you're not really doing anything - there is a learned muscle memory of where you're getting the tracks from and mixing the frequencies etc but the skill part of it is the track selection. That's why I was getting annoyed at Max the other day.

LL - 01:01:04
You and Max have similar records in your boxes, but the idea is that in real time, in front of an audience you might do different sequence orders and mixes.

MG - 01:02:04
Well yeah, individually it's fine but if me and Max were playing a show together and had a record box with pretty much the same records [...]

LL - 01:02:13
It would sound different.

MG - 01:02:14
Well, no. We will just be playing the same records.

LL - 01:02:19
Yeah, but people will be interested in the tracks that are played and also like you were talking about with James earlier, the mixing or the kick being dropped [...]

MG - 01:02:33
Yeah, fine.

LL - 01:02:36
Isn't that what makes the performance more interesting, the looped sections or the hot cues. Isn't that the interesting part more than the source?

MG - 01:02:50
No. people like the songs, they don't care about how it's looped. That's why I have respect for those people really pushing it and doing the live mash-ups - especially if you're playing long from techno stuff. I made a joke with Max yesterday, he was playing this tune, even for a long form techno track it was quite minimal and I looked at the CDJ and he literally looped a 4-beat bar which is kind of boring. What I mean though, isn't it better if myself and someone else turn up to a show and I've got my record box which I've gone out and sifted through. You can't take credit in the songs because you didn't write them, but you know people take pride in their playlist creation. I've gone to those record shops and found those records I've put together, you might have a few that cross over but fundamentally you have different ideas. Individually you'll have different things and then if you play together, it will be a nice amalgamation of these two personalities - the other person maybe looking at some of the tracks you've got and then buying them for their self to use next time

LL - 01:04:39
Don't you think that is what musicians do too. A guitarist does a really nice lick that you like [...]

MG - 01:04:42
Yeah, yeah but not in a scenario where you are playing out together. You know you'll probably be playing the same stuff.

LL - 01:04:55
I had this short conversation with Paul Oakenfold, we were talking about DJing and how when you used to DJ it would be really long form but now it's more of an impactful hour and that's the whole set. You could go a bit more into play with things when it is more longform, but when it's more pop and shorter there's not much room for that.

MG - 01:05:25
I think we're no longer at a point where [...] You know a lot of Jeff's vinyl's have pen on them because he didn't want people going and seeing what he was playing - that mentality was more at a point where there wasn't as much music to play, to find out what that record was and then to play it at your house party or whatever you were playing it at was super special. Whereas now, I've gone and got 120 new tracks for this weekend which actually isn't a lot - there was a point where there might have only been 120 tracks being played at parties in London, you would go to nights out [...]

LL - 01:06:25
A bit like those positivo records you've got - there are three records that are pretty much the same.

MG - 01:06:30
But you would go to hear those records.

LL - 01:06:37

It's just an interesting time and this project may highlight it a bit, but I think something else will happen to make more of a change.

MG - 01:06:52

That's what I'm saying I think there will be a new punk attitude coming out of somewhere [...] I think there needs to be small pockets of it coming out of somewhere.

LL - 01:07:22

I think that's why I'm so obsessed with performance because it's the only physical element that's really left, otherwise it's just a lot lower impact going into a room and making sounds and not as much present-ness.

I think that's it. We've spoken about ENID! Project and how you felt about it, obviously all projects if you spend enough time on it and both of us are quite experienced musicians and production people - it is an interesting time, wondering about if all this performance stuff will become seamless in the way that you were talking about how pretty much anyone can use a CDJ because it does an automatic sync whereas before it was a craft that took ages. Still with guitars and other instruments it's a bit harder to blag it [...] anything that is automated that a machine could take over and you can manipulate things on top [...]

MG - 01:09:01

The production of dance music in a mixing sense, if there is extra stuff to do then that would take a bit more skill but more often than not; you could just go onto a sample website and use a collection of samples that are techno like and within half an hour's time I would have a track that I could play out in a club that would be kind of convincing - I'm approaching that with the knowledge of how to put that stuff together though.

LL - 01:09:42

It has a resemblance to paint by numbers. There's the sound world and grid settings as well as the production values [...]

MG - 01:09:55

I'm talking about the very generic sounding stuff, it's the same with generic pop music, you can put the sounds together. You know those chord progressions that are in so many pop songs [...]

LL - 01:10:20

This is the point I'm making, music production is almost very, art school in a way because you are essentially collaging all these aspects which may result in you making the same techno track i.e. you said you worked with that guy who had the breaks samples and he had kept the names of the sound packs and hadn't even chopped them up - if you're inventive you can be given the same material but it's about what you make of it.

MG - 01:10:49

I came across that remix and I listened to his original vs my remix and thought my remix didn't stand up to his version production wise but then I remembered it because 90% of the sounds were taken from samples - there would have been minimal EQ-ing and compression in that project whereas I was actually using the stems in an original way.

Huckridge, M (2019)

Huckridge, M (2019)
Artist Interview: Mark Huckridge
Interview by Laura Lee
[Online] 10.07.2019

LL – 0:00
How's all the music been going?

MH – 0:03
Yeah so […] I've been doing bits and bobs but this week I've really started to sort of focus on it because I've been able to, from being off work. That's what I've been doing this morning, so - yeah.

LL – 0:18
So maybe you'll have a beautiful input from the music-making this morning?

MH – 0:22
Yeah, very possibly.

LL – 0:27
I've interviewed two other artists. I've interviewed Adam. He has a studio in Peckham, which is cool, and I've interviewed a guy called Tom, who's a double bassist – he's played for Goldie but also does a lot of electronics. He just came to a lecture I was doing, and I thought you might be quite interested in this, he's more from that angle but I'll explain a bit about why I've got into that sort of genre as well. So, yeah, that's another guy I interviewed […]

LL- 2:00
Okay are you ready?

MH – 2:03
Ready as I'll ever be.

LL – 2:06
Like I said before, this is only for academic use, and I just need you to sign and say it's fine that I use this.

MH – 2.24
Yeah, okay.

LL – 2.27
So, we've probably been over this before, but let's just do an introduction of the instruments you play. So: guitar, and maybe you feel like you're a music technologist as well? Or whatever you wanted to assign yourself as, and about how you started coming up into Gallops and other music projects.

MH – 2:54
Okay, so, right from the beginning type of thing yeah? All right, so […] I started playing guitar when I was really young - I think around 10, I'm not sure - as a result of my dad having a guitar and me sort of stealing it off him because he didn't really play it that much. He got a bit frustrated because I was getting a lot better than him, quicker than he was learning, so he was, like, "Yep, you can do that, I'm not doing it anymore."

LL – 3:35
What were you learning at the time you picked it up?

MH – 3:39
Your sort of typical; Nirvana, Oasis, Green Day. You know - all that sort of stuff.
Then stuff like Metallica and all the classic guitar stuff [..] Yeah so I played guitar for years and then got really quite heavily into DJing. That became sort of my main thing I guess for probably 5 or 6 years.

LL – 4:14
What years was that around?

MH – 4:17
That was around 2004/2005 till around […] I mean I still DJ now, but I wasn't doing any band stuff at that point in my life, it was really just DJing. I always kept playing guitar on the downlow - not the downlow it wasn't really a secret – it was more behind the scenes. Then I started sort of experimenting a bit with making music, like fruity loops (FL Studio) and early versions of songs with a friend of mine called Paul. That became Gallops. Like it started off just me and him doing that just initially arsing around really, trying to make a hybrid of electronic and guitar music, I guess. We then got picked up by BBC Radio 1 Introducing Wales for one of our tracks. It was at that point, when it got picked up on the radio, that we thought "let's try and do something with this."
So yeah, we then got some more people in the band. Made it into an actual band not just a bedroom thing, and from that point, I guess, from 2007 till now, I've slowly been getting more and more into the electronic side of things. I've always been into electronics, even before Nirvana, I grew up on rave sort of tape cassette packs like hardcore and jungle things like that. A lot of my mates at school were into it too, so we'd all listen to tape packs and stuff.

It's quite interesting though, for years I'd never mentioned that to anyone that asked me what I listened to. It was sort of an embarrassing secret. Although I've started listening back to that stuff recently under a new concept and some of it is actually quite good, some is pretty cheesy, but, yeah.

So yeah, I've always been into that kind of thing and then slowly bridged off into rock for a bit and I guess now it's all of that together. I think over the last 12 years I've been heading further and further down the rabbit hole of equipment and becoming more of a nerd, shall we say. So that's where I am.

LL – 7:23
Maybe I'll try and pick apart those two dimensions. It's quite interesting you said about the rave tapes, Adam said the same thing. His older sister had rave tapes and while he was

learning jazz drums, he thought it sounded amazing, but it doesn't translate to my instrument. It was only when he saw other drummers evolving out of that sort of imitation rave sound drumming, or electronic glitch sort of drumming, he didn't think he could study any of it, but he thought "it sounds amazing but doesn't translate to my instrument". I don't know if you had that kind of feeling too? You were hearing this stuff and you think "that sounds amazing, but I don't think I can play it, or I need access to something else to do so".

MH – 8:10
You know what that's probably both sides of the coin for me. I suppose in some ways I was […] getting into experimental stuff while playing guitar but also, I was still into electronic stuff. So, when I started listening to bands like Tortoise, I'm like, okay I get it now, this is a mixture of all these things together; this is soundtrack stuff, early on electronic stuff all mixed with an instrument that I could play, which is guitar.

LL – 8:52
So, when you saw all those sorts of bands was it a thought of "oh, ok, I can see there's a sort of avenue where I can bring these worlds together"?

MH – 8:58
Definitely. I suppose up until that point I got into Tortoise. It was probably around 2004, something like that, so quite late on for Tortoise. But, yeah, it was bands like that, and obviously Mogwai, but at that point we were just starting to do more electronic stuff, but it was still basically just triad rock set-up. So, yeah, bands like that made sense to me. It was okay to be into these sorts of things, I didn't have to pin the tail on the rock donkey - I can take all these things I'm into and that's where Gallops came from. 'Cause me and Paul were into rock music, but also things like Luke Vibert and Aphex Twin. I remember I bought a Roland MC 303, which is a Groove Box, and we made some tracks with that. Initially they were terrible, but I was just dead excited to have a drum machine. So, I guess that was my first foray into electronic hardware, at least. I don't remember if the first track we did was on fruity loops or Ableton, but we were using both at the time.

LL – 10:30
So, it sounds like you got influences from rock genres that you heard as a young kid, maybe you found some of it at that time a bit nostalgic, playing some of those rock tunes?

MH – 10:46
Yeah, I suppose it was.

LL – 10:52
Did it feel like a very current way of expressing yourself and was there a conflict with it?

MH – 11:00
No, I don't think it was conflicting, but if there was, I guess that was the kind of exciting thing about it – just sort of mess about with this and add a bit of that. Over the years it has moved further and further away from the rock thing, as I have as well, to be perfectly honest.
There's still a lot of rock bands I love, a lot of stuff I listened to when I was young, that I still do, as that has had a massive influence on the way I play guitar. I find you can get yourself kind of stuck in boxes playing guitar from stuff that you've learnt over the years and I try to

avoid that. I'm trying to avoid power chords. Recently, if I find myself playing a power chord, I'm like "no let's move away from that". I don't really like the sound of them these days but I'm almost stuck in that mode, you know?

LL – 12:08
Yeah, I try and leave out the power chords because I guess what some of post-rock has tried to do is move away from blues riff-orientated playing, and then you feel a bit trapped within those sorts of signifiers of your playing if you're sort of stuck in power chords.

MH – 12:25
Definitely.

LL – 12:26
But also I think what's interesting is that; if you think about, let's say, you've got prog-rock which is very virtuosic - power chords and varied styles of playing - and then punk came along and said we don't want any of that complicated, showy, ego driven music. We're just going to strip it right down i.e. like Joy Division, but then I feel like bands like yourself are almost sort of imitating machine and bringing back the virtuosity into it, which derived from those sort of high production rock values.

MH – 13:04
Yeah, definitely. I guess, to be honest, I'm not a fan of things like complicated music i.e. bands like Yes and these sorts of overblown prog-rock bands, it's not really my cup of tea. But in these sorts of electronic elements of music there's definitely a lot of complex things going on and I'm certainly not a virtuoso guitarist. I'm quite limited really; I'm self-taught and […] I guess that's really my only opportunity to be a virtuoso […] when I use this equipment, I suppose. Like, now I can do super-fast arpeggios just by holding a button. This is going to sound bad, but I'm not really interested in sort of skill with musicians, like I don't really care. Obviously, I respect it and anyone who puts that much effort into learning an instrument, it's mind-blowing to me. I guess that's because I don't really understand it or have the patience myself or want to do it rather. I'm much more interested in the punk side of things. To bring it back to what you said, I'm much more interested in that sort of DIY sort of thing.
I think the equipment I have right now enables me to be sort of complex and come up with crazy ideas but in sort of an intuitive way.

LL – 14:59
Could you give me an example of that? You said you feel self-taught and limited in your guitar playing, so how do you extend that through your use of creative technology? Give me an example of, like, 'I played this on guitar first and then I'm going to exchange that with keys at the same time', or maybe an example in a song?

MH – 15:21
Oh, okay. A technique I use quite often is that I'll write a riff in like a clip, whether it is mid-tempo or not, and I use a combination of things really to make it sort of complex. You know how you can multiply the timing by 2 or divide it and it either slows it down or speeds it up – so I use that all the time.

So, I play something slow and then turn it into this super crazy fast thing and I do that with a MIDI quite often as well. That's mainly to get away with doing fast things without having to play fast, it just throws something you've done into a different context. It completely changes the track that you're writing, and I love that idea, that a really simple idea that I can then multiply or move the play head about to somewhere in the middle instead of the start so that's the 1 or the 3 now. I use that all the time, in fact whenever I record anything into Ableton, whether it be a guitar piece, I tend to sort of move-play around with it, it opens up a new world for me and then I can make things a lot more complex than I would if I were stuck in the boxes on guitar that I am.

I also like to play the keys. Again, I'm worse on the keys than I am guitar in fact, but that helps me to come up with ideas that my limited musical knowledge […] I mean, I know bits of theory and I know enough to get by, but certainly not enough. I'm not one of those guys that can go "oh this song is in C minor; I know I can use this chord here" I have to work that out. I have charts and books that I use if I'm really stuck.

LL- 17:32
I guess the point is, (you) can have that theory knowledge but when you have that flow of an idea you want to excel that and not let it limit you and sort of accelerate that flow. When you build those MIDI clips are you starting from a guitar in a melodic sense, or are you starting from there and you might imitate eighths or sixteenths back on guitar?

MH – 18:04
In our first couple of records, everything was written with the guitar in mind but more recently the guitar is something that is used to add to what is already there. I can't remember the last time we wrote a track that started from a guitar riff. I don't think that has happened for many years now.

And that's actually become quite a bit of a problem, I can't remember if I talked to you about this last time. But on the new record we're doing, I'm having to add some updates to the guitar because the position we've found ourselves in is that: I'd write all this on Ableton with synths and stuff, then be like, okay, I've got a guitar so now I've got to do something on guitar on this track - but am I doing it because it's a good musical choice or am I doing that because I feel like I should play guitar because I'm a guitarist? So, then I say I'll leave the guitar playing to Brad and not have it super busy with guitar all the time, and then I can be a bit more creative with my instrument, which these days is the Push (Ableton), actually. It just means that a lot more of our set can be off-the-cuff and improv and taken in the direction we want it to be, really.

But, yeah, as the guitar goes it's not often the start of things, it mimics something that was already there or provides textures – just colour really rather than riffs.

LL- 19:58
I did this recent presentation, and I was thinking about artists such as 'Yellow Magic Orchestra' and 'Kraftwerk'. You know how they present themselves as bands of technology with their synths, and then you fast-forward to: house, techno and jungle who are really influenced by Kraftwerk, and it's amazing how they make these sounds and a lot of this was produced and played in their bedrooms and wasn't played out unless they were DJing it out

and I think that's when bands started to form around this sort of studio-stage hybrid instrument. So, like you said, have your guitar, keys and studio use all the time but maybe this is going into another level, like you said, putting the guitar down completely, so maybe that's another fold. What do you think of that?

Maybe there's always this sort of push-and-pull between presenting yourself live as a band-orientated thing. So, Kraftwerk present themselves as a band, even though they are quite heavily influenced by the studio.

MH – 21:11
Yeah. Yeah.

LL- 21:12
But then, when house and techno came out, they didn't really need to prove their live stage persona because the music speaks for itself and can be played by DJ's and not through the instruments or a band. Also, bands like yourself have thought, "but I want to play my studio as an instrument" i.e. you're holding your guitar, playing the keys at the same time whilst doing pedal work. So maybe there's a new disregard with things like Ableton being so powerful now, I'm interested in if we might just put down the guitars completely – it's a mixture of it not being an aesthetic we need, and now you've got more creative flow with the set-up you have beyond that instrument.

MH – 22:00
It felt like the guitar doesn't necessarily suit everything we're doing at the moment as our sound has evolved quite a bit, and it was almost feeling like guitar is being put in there because that's the instrument we play – this is what we do onstage. I play guitar, he plays guitar so we've got to do a riff here because there's a gap and it took years to realise this, that's not a good way to make music, because you shouldn't be shoehorning things in just because they're there. It's not like I hate guitar now or anything like that.

LL – 22:49
Oh, I know, I'm not saying it in a way of defending it. I just think it's really interesting and I feel the same - I don't really mind putting down my guitar a lot, whereas a lot of guitarists really value their ego within their instrument – they spent years on this thing so they wouldn't want to put it down. So, if you put it down do you still feel you can have a distinctive, original voice without it?

MH – 23:20
Right, okay, that's interesting. I think I will do eventually, I guess because I'm learning Push now – I'm learning the best way for that to work for me. So I'd hope eventually I would, but it's a difficult one, because is there a chance you can have a trademark way of playing the Push? I don't think you can […] I think it's not really in the instrument, but more my choice of sounds that I use I guess. There's only so many things you can do on guitar, and I feel with certain guitarists you hear it and just know its them, whereas with the Push you'd be quite hard-pressed to go "that's whoever playing the Push", you couldn't could you, so that would really come from the source material I use. It's quite often we've been told and I'm quite proud of this, with Galaxy there's been numerous cases where people say "I can tell it's a Gallops song as soon as it comes on" and I love that – I feel like I've succeeded in some

way because all my favourite artists are like that, like The Fall, or whoever it is, you can just tell straight away. So yeah to have a unique voice with electronic stuff as in the actual instrument you're playing, I think that's difficult.

LL – 25:07
Maybe it was like you, it's one of those things that comes across in the full production. So, it's not really down to the individual, it's a group state of mind that will fundamentally sound more unique than individually.

MH – 25:21
Yeah, well, I mean, our writing process tends to be that I'll write a sort of skeleton of a track that's probably 60-70% finished. From that, we'll take it to the rehearsal room, and obviously the other guys have some ideas that I hadn't even thought of, so they'll be like, oh this song should totally go here now, and I'm like, oh brilliant idea – so we never really write together but everything wouldn't be completed unless we all got together. I'm terrible for finishing stuff, like, I've got a proper short attention span, I'll get to a point in the track and then move onto something else, and the number of unfinished tracks I've got on my hard drive is silly. So, I think definitely it is a combination of minds that contribute to our unique sound and hopefully that will become more unique as we learn these instruments a bit more – I know Liam is starting to get into using the SPD SX Drum pad.

LL- 26:40
In combination with his kit?

MH – 26:44
Yeah, totally. So, like a similar thing to Adam, I guess it's like a hybrid kit where you're using triggers and stuff, so we've got to figure out how that's going to […]

LL – 26:56
Sorry, yeah, what he said was quite interesting. He said he feels like now with his instrument, he can't just play the acoustic kit – so he does prepared cymbal works and also the hybrid of audio MIDI triggering. But now he's got a point where he just feels like he could not express himself without that hybrid kit, but he also wouldn't want to have a completely electronic either – so the mixture of his actual acoustic kit with snare, which also some of that prepared work comes from minimalist composition, experiment composition and aesthetics are driven from Autechre - you know, just multiple things. So, yeah, that's interesting that your drummer is starting to do that stuff.

MH – 27:41
Yeah, definitely. I love the idea of that hybrid thing as well. I guess that's what we're all about as well – you know that kind of mixture of both worlds. We're in the middle of deciding whether his setup is going to be linked to my one on Ableton, or if it will be stand-alone. So we're working that out.

LL- 28:11
So, who's going to be the slave to it or the master behind it?

MH – 28:14

Yeah, that's the difficult thing. I think Liam will end up having to be the slave. There's actually a big thing in the industry about the use of that word which I think is quite spot on to be honest. But, yeah, I think he would have to be, because things have to be in tempo, synced and sequenced - you know the stuff that I do. But there's loads of different ways of doing it, we need to get around to trying out. I know there's that James Holden 'Max for Live' thing that we maybe spoke about last time. James Holden used this Max for Live thing that basically follows the tempo of the drummer and syncs everything in the project to that. So that would be interesting for us to use, but it sounds scary to use live. I don't know, I think it probably suits his set-up because his stuff is very sort of long form and improv whereas ours isn't at the moment. I'd like to go down that road a bit more, or certainly have parts of the set that are more long form and less sort of rigid.

LL- 29:34

Maybe you could talk a bit about that? I read about this guy that talks about the use of pre-existing elements – so for traditional guitars it would be a chord progression to a rehearsal room, but now it might be a sample or a box of records, and then within that space you improvise something from that, but you have these components which you bring to the table.

MH – 29:58

Yeah.

LL – 30:01

There's always time for improvisation within that, but maybe you feel like how much of that is fixed and how much is not fixed when you're about to play out.

MH – 30:16

At the moment […] it's probably about 80% fixed and in all honestly that 20% that isn't fixed. I don't think we take advantage of it enough because we're sort of scared of it. There are parts where we feel like this is a part where we can expand, but then we don't want to expand too much because it might go wrong. But that's something that we're working on, because I'd like what we do to be a bit more fluid, as I think the very nature of using technology and certainly sequences are that you do tend to be quite rigid. So, I think to sort of open up that space, we need to have parts of the set where that isn't the case and different things could happen. Also, to be honest it gets quite boring as a musician playing the same thing every night.

LL – 31:27

That's interesting. So you say it's pretty much fixed. Why do we then allow this sort of collaboration with something like DAW's when you could just have a backing track, so why do we go to this extent of fundamentally doing it live? Any thoughts?

MH – 31:51

Yeah, definitely that's a good point and I often think this: if we are going to do this song in such a fixed way as in arrangement-wise, then what's the point of all this equipment I've got to trigger things? Because if I'm going to trigger the next thing at the same point every time, then I might as well just leave it playing, and that's part of the reason we are changing our live set.

We're actually not doing any shows for the rest of the year because we're writing and changing our live set to just give the audience more. I'm thinking of it from my own perspective as a gig-goer as I much prefer shows where I feel like anything can happen in this show or it could fall apart at any time etc.

We're just so stuck in this set that we're doing because it's safe, but I think too safe, and that kind of takes the excitement out of it a little bit, because I know after 16 bars I'm going onto this next thing, which will sound cool because it did last time, so it will this time. Yeah, so we want to get to a point where Ableton is really another member of this band rather than we're all sort of slaves to it – we want to have that push-and-pull and it's just kind of working that out really. There are ways of doing it, and this is certainly something I have never done before […] So, previously I hadn't thought about how it was going to be performed when it was written. So, a track got finished, it's written and everyone's happy with it and then it's like "shit - how are we going to perform this bit? how are we going to do this?". But this time round, I'm writing in a way that is sort of like "this is exactly how this will be performed", so kind of limiting ourselves to a certain amount of layers for every moment in a track. So everything is going to be totally live and sort of malleable, I guess. So, that's quite a new thing for me, but I think that the limitations are quite liberating as well, because I don't have option paralysis or whatever. I don't think, "well that's as many people as there are in the band, we can't play any more instruments here so I'll move onto the next section". Because you could go on forever if you've got an unlimited number of layers. Maybe on the actual record when it comes to recording, that will be where we polish things up a bit, make things more textural and add more stuff, but for live we'll keep it a bit more raw.

LL – 35:20
Yeah, you know there's that tradition with rock albums that seem authentically raw, they would be heavily produced in the studio, and then the audience would expect someone like Guns n Roses to sound like the recordings with the long outros. But people feel that the limitations are exclusive to electronic music, but even with rock music people wanted to see the live studio given to them.

MH – 35:53
Totally. Loads of people want that experience of the CD. You can tell my age with that but […] that isn't interesting to me. If I wanted to listen to the album, I'd just listen to it. And I'd like to think that live performance is more than that, and I feel like our band have sort of been selling ourselves short a little bit in that respect. I've definitely fallen victim to that because I thought we need to do it like the record because that's what people like, but we've got so much equipment it's almost like we're not utilising it to its full extent. So now it's, like, ok, let's just go wild with it and make the live experience a completely separate beast to the recorded experience of the band.

LL- 37:00
I guess it's also almost trying to move away from the arrangement, going along with the DAW's, 'cause then you would have been able to play it out again. But also, I thought with the decline of people buying physical and digital copies, the most emphasis would be put on performing live, as that is where the most money, if there is money to be made, comes from. Maybe there needs to be this push up with the performance, would you say?

MH – 37:36

Yeah, I think so. I think there needs to be something, because it's getting difficult. So you need to give a bit more now [...] This is why we've started including visuals as well, I guess, because we've always kind of been aesthetically-minded with Brad being a graphic designer and Paul, who used to be in the band, is also a graphic designer – so that seemed like a natural progression. We've been quite hot on our artwork and the image - not the image of the band, you know what I mean - so that's been the case of bringing that to the stage and giving more. I think that's quite common with a lot of electronic artists, all of the big electronic artists have an AV show now.

LL – 38:43

I think that even people like Velvet Underground would do visuals, so I find interesting that in a lot of post rock bands like Godspeed it's the same sort of thing – so maybe people feel like they have to create this immersive experience live to narrow the narrative, because maybe what you show is too abstract.

MH- 39:22

Yeah, definitely. I think particularly with instrumental music, I think it just makes sense to have it – I think a lot of people will miss having a singer in a band so I think it can make a bit more sense doing that. With that being said, it's not like any of our music has a narrative to it or a meaning or anything interesting like that. We just write music really and the titles don't mean anything to us but, yeah, it's not like this song is about climate change or anything. So that was our initial strategy because we didn't think anyone would attach meaning to anything because there is no meaning to it, you know?

LL – 40:31

I guess that's like in some in some music history kind of way where you haven't even given a name to the track because its almost unsentimental, no large attachment towards it or a communicative meaning – so, yeah, if you were to take out the vocalist, you can communicate in different ways which derive from like a blues storytelling sense. Which is one way to communicate music, but I guess that freedom within this genre and people around the fringes of it is that you can communicate in different ways.

MH – 41:09

Yeah, definitely, especially with electronic music I think there's such a large scope of things you can do, and I'm really interested in that - not that you can't be interesting with a traditional set-up - but it fits my way of working a little bit better. I just feel more passionate about this than the traditional band set-up.

LL – 41:45

So you were listening to rave tapes, but you didn't know how to play those, and now you can play that aesthetic […] but have we got to a point now where, let's say, the next generation learning to play an instrument won't be able to express themselves because that's too much of their cultural history whether it be; rave, jungle, trap etc. they can't communicate or play their instrument without the electronic interpretation?

MH- 42:41
Yeah, that's quite interesting. I teach music composition in college and trap is the main thing that everyone wants to do - the rolled high hats and stuff like that. Yeah, I wonder how that's going to pan out in the future, I'd never really thought about it.

LL – 42:50
You might be driving a new generation with this hybrid approach, you know?

MH- 42:55
Yeah, I hope so.

LL – 42:59
Do you feel like you've got to that point? If someone said "Here's an acoustic guitar, see what you can do with it"? This is what I'm doing a bit in the studio. As part of the research I've tried to limit myself to an acoustic guitar, and I'm playing with drum machines and drummers and seeing if I can actually express myself. I'm so used to expanding the sound very easily or just supercharging into automation. I found it really frustrating at first but then you end up playing it really differently with taps etc. then you try the drum machines.. and I'm really first-year into that, but I'm basically doing really dry production in the studio and slowly I'll form it into a stage-hybrid instrument thing. So, I've stripped it back to acoustic and then I'm slowly going to build some effects to a quite heavily effected – there might be no limit or connection but that will be some of the point of some of the PhD, to see if we've got to a point of not being able to express yourself without integration.

MH – 44:10
Yeah, I think I feel like that. But I can see why you'd do that, because I think that would be an interesting project, like I could write crazy music in Ableton that's quite modular but could I write anything interesting on just a piano, or, like you said, on acoustic guitar? I don't know. I'd like to think I could, but maybe I wouldn't be as excited about it, so I wouldn't have that momentum to keep going. I know that Matt Calvert from Three Trapped Tigers, have you heard his solo records?

LL – 45:00
Yeah.

MH – 45:01
I read an interview with him about where he thought similar things. He's doing a record with traditional instruments. Because everything I've been doing has been so studio and electronically charged – the results of that are pretty stunning. He's a lot better of a musician than me.

LL – 45:25
Sorry, I'm just updating you on all the things I've been doing the last year, but there was this article about post-rock that came out in 1994 and so I did Radiohead and Bjork and I mapped out from Pablo Honey (1993) until their most recent album. So I basically gave an example from that album through to today and looked at how much of an influence the genres of house and technology had and how the production changes […] Thinking about Bjork when she came to the U.K. and she went from Sugarcubes to debut albums in 1993,

which were more house, and what I find interesting with her is that she saw that studio aesthetic and almost straight away dropped the guitar sooner than Radiohead. Even by Homogenic she was pretty out there with Glitch.

MH – 46:35
Yeah, actually that's quite interesting, 'cause when Radiohead did Kid A, it was certainly treated in the press like something ground-breaking that had never been done before, but obviously that isn't the case. I'm a big fan of Bjork, there aren't many artists around like that these days you know: quite prolific, and uncompromising and super-talented and, yeah, that was happening a lot, early on.

LL – 47:19
I just thought it was quite interesting what with everything happening in Britain at the time with rock music and electronic music. Especially coming from Iceland, there's a sort of innocence – you can just quickly take all that influence and go straight with it. There were no hang-ups of you having to be into Brit-pop, or at the time you couldn't just drop this disregard for your true British authentic tone. Also, maybe being a woman, she might have thought she didn't need to prove herself, and that there was a freedom without the attachments to that rock side of history, I guess.

MH – 48:12
And, as well, I guess around that time it was the Britpop era, which was a very male dominated era, which is why she decided to go her own way.

LL – 48:37
That's the sort of nice thing about electronic music. Like you said, you don't really have to walk on stage and strut your stuff, you can just be these collective beings […]

The other thing I was going to ask you is - what are your main influences, I think. We touched on that last time and it was quite interesting, it wasn't what I expected. You had; John the Carpenter, Robert Fripp Pan Records, Factory Records. So, maybe we'll just finish off talking a bit about those influences?

MH – 49:49
Okay. With factory records, I'm a huge fan of Joy Division, so that came from that but it's a really northern thing as well, so I think I like the idea of that – the kind of working class aesthetic, but make it experimental music that draws on influences from a lot of stuff that I've had influence of myself. I miss that generation, so obviously bands like Joy Division, The Durutti Column - Ben Riley is my favourite guitarist - and obviously New Order. I think the thing with factory records is the whole aesthetic, it's quite a minimalistic thing, and stuff like that.

Pan records - that's probably my favourite label these days. I don't know if you know much about Pan, but it's got artists like; Lee Gamble, Yves Tumor. It's a label run by a guy called Bill Kouligas, who is based in Berlin, and it's really sort of abstract electronica. Some stuff they put out will be pure drone by someone like H.E.L.M. One of my favourite records would be going back to jungle tapes and stuff where Lee Gamble made an album called 'Diversions 94-96' which is basically him taking the ambience from all his jungle tapes in the

breakdowns of song and almost made this sort of collage record of these bits and juxtaposed them and turned them into ambient pieces with a new meaning, I guess. So, from then it's been Pan records that is my favourite, they seem to pull out the most interesting electronic records for me. They're like the Warp records of now, not that Warp aren't good anymore, but you kind of find new things I guess.

LL- 52:39
Yeah, I spoke with Adam a bit about Warp Records, and talking about it being the beginning of the sort of mergence. Because you watched something so complicated but it had great visual work and they somehow packaged it in a way that was electronically-driven but also with their instruments. It was played on MTV, but it was also accessible at the same time, so there was a bit of a push, so maybe like you're saying with something like Pan Records, they're doing that now, which is interesting. I guess with post-rock you kind of get put on Arctangent, where you weren't really giving me much post-rock band clear elements, which is cool because I think it's not as clear cut as that. I think that post-rock bands aren't necessarily being influenced solely by that sector and I think that the original dream for that vision of variety was not what got adopted by Sigur Rós. That was one version of it, but I think there was something else. So, maybe we finish on; what is post- rock, is it important to you, if it's a term you would associate with your music?

MH – 54:08
Yeah, okay. I guess going back to before I mentioned Tortoise. So, they were considered post- rock in the beginning, and I guess they are kind of the epitome of what it should be, which is: a band that takes in lots of different influences from all sorts of music. But, yeah, I think you're right, post-rock has become something that isn't really a sound […] but more a way of doing and thinking about music - bands like Godspeed, who we mentioned before, and Explosions in the Sky, and things like that. I think they're great, and then they reached a point where it didn't really do much for me and almost became this just tremolo picking a guitar, with lots of delay, and these big crescendos into this grandiose type of thing. Which was great at the time and had a place which I was definitely influenced by, but I think sort of all became quite vanilla and less interesting as it went on. I'm really happy that anyone likes our music and it's great to playthings like Arctangent and stuff, but quite often when we thought about playing, it was interesting that we go down well here, because wandering around the festivals, other bands would be playing stuff that was pretty different to what we do. So, it's definitely not a label that we'd put on ourselves. But that being said, I guess we are, by definition – especially if we're going by the definition of other bands […] I guess it depends on what it means i.e. is rock music gone? Or it can sound a bit snooty is what I'm trying to get at, if this is the new way of doing things, and it doesn't have to be like that. If you think of post-rock in a term of bands that don't fit into just one genre and takes loads of things in to make it their own, then, yeah, I'd like to think we are that. I don't see any similarities between us and Godspeed or even bands like Mogwai, I also think post-rock has become sort of a lazy term for anything instrumental. It's a weird one – I don't often think about what genre we are. If someone asks me, then I'll say experimental, electronica and keep it as vague as possible, because there's a lot going on in our music, so it's hard to pin it down. As you could see from those influences I said, I can't remember what, but I can imagine a few of the ones I would've said.

LL – 58:09
You said David Cronenberg, Daniel Lopatin?

MH – 58:21
Danny Lopatin, Yeah, he's part of Oneohtrix Point Never.

LL – 58:30
But yeah that's what I was saying it was a really cool, refreshing list of things we were going through.

MH – 58:37
Yeah, well, David Cronenberg being on there had super-influenced from film as much as music. Not just soundtracks from film, but the worlds that people like David Cronenberg and such create, it just really fits with what we're trying to do and get that across in a musical way – as pretentious as that sounds, it's true. So, I like to draw influences from everywhere and not just music, I think you can find influence everywhere, it doesn't just have to be music. That's how I personally feel.

LL- 59:20
Do you think microfilm and things like that, by pinning it in electronic music like that, does that make it more accessible? Because you said you didn't want to be too fancy – so if you presented some sound-work in a gallery, that's one thing, but if you borrow those and put it in a gig setting, that changes?

MH – 59:40
Yeah. So, it doesn't belong in this kind of gallery world, as it can be off-putting to some types of people, particularly that kind of academic side of things. I don't think we're ever trying to be accessible.

LL – 1:00:04
I think that's sometimes why people have hybrid, because sometimes when you see someone playing guitar or the drums, they're just like "Oh, ok, it's a rock band". I think it's getting easier for laptop performances and DJ-type elements, as people aren't as scared to use a band formation as a sort of reference point. So then you can be as experimental as you want within that framework.

MH- 1:00:46
Yeah, that's true. I guess it's kind of like the medium of two worlds. That's part of it, but I think the main reason we do hybrid is because it's more of a physical element of a show is really important to me i.e. before when we were talking about the hybrid drum-thing before […] on this new record I'm writing, there might be song. Where on the record, there might be no real drums on it, but live there will be, because there's something to be said about a drum kit being played in a room and having something physically moving air in a room to make a totally different experience than listening to a drum machine over a PA - which is fine in certain situations but I think you can give it that real-world sort of force to take it to the next level.

Did I mention Factory Floor in my influences? They're a band that do electronica records, but with a drummer, and it just comes back to what you said before - that's why they're more successful as a live act – people get it because there's someone playing drums so it really helps in that live sense. That's the main reason for the hybrid thing, I don't think we'll ever go down the road of Kraftwerk and go full DI, Drum Machines and synths. I don't think that would be a true representation of what we want to do.

LL-1:02:36
I think that was pretty good, and it's quite interesting to be speaking to you a year later and it might be nice to even talk to you next year when you've done the record. I could reference what we've spoken about and see if it actually happens.

Mason, T. (2019)

Mason, T (2019)
Artist Interview: Tom Mason
Interview by Laura Lee
[In Person] 17.04.19

<div align="center">*Interview starts at 0:49*</div>

LL – 0:49
So, I'll just start with a very open question like I did with Adam because his journey was quite progressive from his initial start on drums with jazz training. Did you meet him at that school?

TM – 1:05
Adam is younger than me so I would have graduated a long time before he was there.

LL – 1:13
You both went to Royal Academy?

TM – 1:15
Yeah, I went there and I forget who else went there too.

LL – 1:18
He went there.

TM – 1:21
We both went there at different times so we would have met at a gig or through friends once or twice.

LL – 1:31
So just explain your journey as a bassist .. how you started playing, up to where you are now.

TM – 1:41
I didn't start as a bass player, I started as a violinist when I was young, I was in a Youth Orchestra, and I played a bit of piano too. In parallel to my classical training, I was already interested in electronic music and just a variety of music in general i.e. early 90's rave music, early 80's and 90's hip-hop. My first records were Public Enemy and Run DMC tapes, then I got really into 808 State from Manchester so that was more of a pop/techno with a bit of post-rock at the time – I didn't know what it was but I heard sounds that excited me, those electronic sounds really piqued my interest as an adult. At the same time, I was still very into learning classical music; when I was at the youth orchestra, there were other musicians that were getting into jazz. Acid jazz was the sort of sound in the mid to late 90's i.e. Jamiroquai and Brand New Heavies were quite big – so that sounded like fun music. I was playing around with the bass guitar and playing stuff like Nirvana. I started to get into the acid jazz thing and jamming with friends and sort of going a little bit off […] at that time I was heavily into jungle as a 14/15-year-old, and I bought as many records as I could afford. I wasn't old enough to go to raves, so I didn't really experience that side of it and living out in Hampshire […]

LL – 3:54
Where in Hampshire did you live?

TM - 3:56
I'm from Petersfield.

LL – 3:57
Oh okay. So that's your connection with why you saw that […] because you've got family there.

TM – 3:58
Yeah. Well my sister actually works at UCLA.

LL – 4:05
I knew that but I didn't realise she lived in Petersfield.

TM – 4:08
Yeah, she lives there so she's, my connection. I went to Alton college as well. I wasn't too adventurous; I found the idea of raves intimidating but I loved the music with a passion, and I still do but I started going off it a little bit when I was 16/17 in favour of jazz, which I had heard and thought I could do. I went to Alton college, as I said, and there was a double bass there that was just sitting in the corridor that no one was using so I thought I'll have a go at it – it seemed more my size than the violin which I loved playing, I was still working hard with the violin but I saw an opportunity with the bass to exercise my creativity a bit more when playing. I didn't really know what it was about the violin that wasn't working for me, but I realised a bit later on why I was dissatisfied with my life in the classical world – not that I didn't love the music - but in terms of the creative outlet, I felt it was lacking. The bass and jazz I felt were better opportunities to be creative – I wanted to be a composer, I was writing stuff and wanted to do new things.

LL – 05:52
So, what kind of composition were you doing?

TM – 5: 24
I was writing contemporary classical stuff that was rooted in groove-based music. They had a professional chamber group that came in to play compositions at my college and they were fantastic – I do remember being disappointed that they couldn't get the feel right or the groove, the subdivisions how I wanted them. This was partly from me creating it on Sibelius and using the MIDI timing which was really accurate and more or less how I wanted it to sound.

LL – 6:32
Yeah because I guess bass does allow the crossover of melodic ideas with an interest in pulse […] like you said you knew the restriction with playing in Sibelius and how strict to the grid you'd be.

TM – 6:55
By that stage I had not really worked with any great jazz or session musicians so I didn't understand that you can play completely metronomically in time but still play with feel – that whole world of rhythm was yet to open up, I was trying to operate in a classical framework with electronical rigidity and jazz harmonies, there were all these things that were coming at the same time. I was studying a lot of 20th century classical music and minimalist music. My teacher at A-Level, Martin Reid, who is sadly no longer with us, he was big on cage, glass, Reich and Harrison – he took us to concerts whenever they were on. That was a big chunk of the education at A-Level, along with the jazz, which was fascinating. It was when I was at Alton college when some tutors came from the Royal Academy to do a workshop, they were jazz tutors – I decided to play double bass that day from the many instruments I was having a go at, and I gave myself a massive blister from not having that level of endurance then. They liked my spirit and they recommended I audition, which was to my surprise because I was really just messing around on the instrument. But even when I auditioned, they knew I wasn't a bass player but they said I could become one and gave me the place.

LL – 9:04
So how did you get to that level before starting the Royal Academy? Did you just catch up?

TM – 9:10
The first six months at the Royal academy were very tough and I was on the verge of giving up – I had never felt so out of my depth but I think […] from a mix of maturity and playing bravado, I stuck at it, realised I was improving, and with hard work I got there.

LL – 9:40
Were there any other places you were thinking of going?

TM – 9:45
I was just going to do a straight music degree at maybe Bristol or York – they were the two Uni's I was leaning towards. At that stage I wasn't really thinking about becoming a performer because at that point to me it meant becoming a solo violinist and I saw that world and knew that it was very competitive, which is not what I wanted – I just wanted to play music and have fun. Going to Uni to do just a straight music degree would have given me a bit more scope […] ethnomusicology was really big for Uni's i.e. Gamelan and electro – acoustic stuff. Stuff that, even at this point in about 1998, started to sound a bit old-fashioned compared to what was going on in music at the time but for academic institutions; they build a room for something and then that's one of their features.

LL – 11:04
Yeah, I feel like they offer the free jazz or electro-acoustic as they are those on the fringe styles - I think it's interesting as it doesn't really suit all musicians. I was reading something the other day that said Music Tech only came out in 1998.

TM – 11:30
As a subject?

LL – 11:33
Yeah, so it feels like it has always been with us but it hasn't.

TM – 11:45
Yeah, because I was like "Electro-acoustic? Does that mean writing music on computers?" but I suppose that was relatively new because when I was doing my A-levels we were making music on Notator, a Roland sound module. We would just be using the regular MIDI instruments but trying to find hacks to get a good bass sound i.e. through the ocarina or the recorder, and just putting it down four octaves to make a sub bass. This was our work-around because these computers didn't have the opportunity for us to use sampling and at that stage, they didn't have the capability for software sampling – we had to use general MIDI sounds and hacks to achieve the sound we wanted. I can't even remember what it was we ended up doing. However, I do remember ocarinas and recorders make great sub basses.

LL – 12:58
Well, there you go. So, you thought of a way around it, you heard these production sounds and realised that you couldn't achieve it from your acoustic instruments but managed to find other strategies of even just finding that frequency.

TM – 13:10
I had already made some bad tracks on my Atari ST and a free program called ProTracker which was a vertical scrolling hexadecimal sequencer with four channels of audio. I also had a sound card that slotted into the side of the computer. It was quite chunky and only had 1 RCA in and 1 RCA out and it had a maximum sample rate of 22kHz. Also, due to some sort of grounding issue, I think everything I sampled had a high-pitched whine to it i.e. I plugged in my mum's stereo to sample some CD's, and everything had a horrible whistle or some sort of high pitched noise over the top – the way I combatted this i.e. when using a 45rpm record, I would sample it at 33rpm so then when I sped it up in the computer, that layer of noise would be higher but less annoying. I also made jungle tunes at hip-hop tempo and then when I had finished then, I would record them out into a Fostex four track tape recorder which had pitch control so then when I played it on a regular tape player it had sped up by 30% […] I figured out there was a tempo on my sequencer which allowed you to have set tempos so I figured out a way around that to get the tempos I wanted. As a 14-year-old I have no idea how I figured out this work around.

LL – 15:50
Well, obviously, that was your only way of making music so you'd sit there and find ways to work it out and now there are multiple ways to achieve what you want, but beforehand there wasn't.

TM – 16:02
Yeah, it was bizarre. I had never heard of an Akai sampler.

LL – 16:06
Yeah, so your A-level time was influential, then you went to the Royal Academy where you struggled a bit, but persevered, and then what happened to your playing?

TM – 16:18
I just really concentrated hard on being a jazz bass player as I knew I couldn't blag it, so up until I was about 18 it was very much 'big fish in a small pond' syndrome and I thought I was great, everyone else thought I was great, life was great. And then suddenly at the Royal Academy in a year group with people, some of them dropped out of A-levels to focus on their instruments and work on their art – I was then very much behind. One way I dealt with it was immersing myself in books to learn the academic side and learning the history because that was part of the course. It wasn't a big part of the course but I felt like an academic at the time as I did English Lit and German so I was very much into my reading for the first year while I worked on my playing – I was a very naïve player when I first started out.

LL – 17:35
How so?

TM – 17:38
It was just with everything. How naïve I was can be summed up in the audition process when they told me that I'm going to have to listen to jazz so I thought listening to some jazz records would do the trick – I didn't realise how big of a thing it was, I thought there was maybe only 100 jazz records. Obviously, after scratching the surface you realise how huge it is. It's the universe, essentially, and at that point I was already committed to it and I didn't realise what I had signed up for.

LL – 18:34
So, did you feel any resistance at that point? You wanted to become a jazz bassist but there's a lot of traditions that had rooted from this and at the same time you were trying out these things on notation. Did you feel a conflict of not resonating with one side of things?

TM – 19:00
One thing I found that was sad was; all these ideas I had of how I wanted my music and compositions to sound when I started there, and then at the same time I realised it was imperative to get good at the bass, absorb the traditions and just become a good jazz musician. By the time I felt secure enough as a player to go back and work on composition I had forgotten what it was that used to excite me. In the effort to learn jazz, I lost a little bit of raw inspiration I had, but in retrospect I think it's nothing to worry about as I think I didn't even have the tools at the stage necessary to realise those ideas. Also, I wasn't listening to too much electronic music at that point in time, maybe here and there I'd listen, but not regularly.

LL – 20:12
So, you had that first kind of influence from the rave scene and then went to jazz afterwards?

TM – 20:22
Yeah, I had to. It was willing as well – every day I would discover something new and amazing, it was a joy. I just had my head in that for pretty much 10 years and it was around […] I was always listening to bits and bobs of electronic music, there were certain albums that made a big impact on me. Most of Squarepushers' work, especially Go plastic, that kept me going and then it was when grime and dubstep came about that I got back into the electronic music scene.

LL – 21:11
So that early 2000's? So when you had people like Squarepusher and Aphex Twin about?

TM – 21:18
Bjork and Radiohead as well. That kept my connection to that electronic aesthetic.

LL – 21:23
I see. You said you were still in jazz while you got more into grime and dub?

TM – 21:31
This was 2007/ 2008 where I started trying to produce a bit again. I felt like I had done my time with jazz in terms of really focusing on it. However it was my profession, so I could never completely stop focusing on it. In fact, a few years ago when I went fully into drum and bass, I realised I needed to go back to jazz for a bit – I think my playing was suffering a bit.

LL – 22:18
I see. What do you think - was it the complexities of the virtuosic nature of some of the jazz pieces you were playing or was it your habitual playing that was rooted in those things so maybe you felt more at ease with those chops?

TM – 22:36
Yeah, I don't know. I think you just have to have a sound in your ear; in the background of your mind. I feel like musicians have a latent soundtrack going on all the time and it's only one style of music, so when you go to play another style of music it doesn't come naturally. Part of the way I learnt how to play jazz was from practising away from the instrument; tapping away, solo singing in my head, not really moving my fingers but those pathways are being exercised as you do it.

LL – 23:40
Yeah, so visualising it, before you even get onto the instrument. Maybe not visualising – verbalising might be a better word.

TM – 23:51
They've proven that even people who watch videos of people working out get stronger than people who don't.

LL – 24:02
When I'm teaching guitar quite a lot, when you do quite difficult patterns you have mentally visualise yourself playing them before you do or even think of the melodies.

TM – 24:20
Or several hours later when you think you won't remember it, you have to go over it again. If you're not doing that ever and only trying to make the music from cold and just go straight to the gig on the instrument, it starts to suffer - you kind of have to embody what you're doing away from when you're doing it.

LL – 24:48
So this was happening and then you started to DJ and play out as well?

TM – 24:53
So that was when I was 30. I had graduated in 2002 so I had only been a professional bass player for 8 years. I was going out with a girl who started DJing house/techno.

LL – 25:22
Did that scene have an influence on you too?

TM – 25:25
Yeah, maybe the post-dubstep phase – so when dubstep went to a deeper dubstep that was almost techno-like i.e. the Hessle Audio and Ramadanman who then became Pearson Sound, Kode9 - that kind of scene. Still very downtempo and dark but more toward the techno side, also some elements of jungle coming through which is what got me interested again. I discovered discogs and realised I could buy all the records that I wanted when I was 14 but didn't have enough pocket money for - that was the beginning of the end.

LL – 26:34
So, then you thought, I'm going to turn into a mixer?

TM – 26: 36
Yeah. So, I borrowed my then girlfriend's older brother's decks, set them up, bought some records and got back into DJing. I discovered the squat party scene – it's quite funny because this all happened when I was 30, I had spent my 20's learning jazz […] as an adolescent I feel like I never found my tribe, there were older people in school who tolerated me, but I was pretty annoying.

LL – 27: 26
How so? Were you very loud?

TM – 27:31
No, no. Just geeky.

LL – 27:36
Oh, I see. So, you wanted to go straight into those kinds of talks about what you could make.

TM – 27:41
I wanted to go to raves but I wasn't really cool enough and I was a bit annoying.

LL – 27:45
You were talking about the culture of that rave scene, but you weren't really immersed in it.

TM – 27:50
I think it was a case of when you're 14, 16-year-olds are so much older than you and those 16-year-olds don't necessarily want 14 year olds hanging out with them – I may be projecting but it never quite happened for me. I didn't realise I was mourning that until I went to a squat rave at the age of 30 and I heard Bizzy B, who I had bought records by when I was 13, and

there were young people dancing to jungle when I thought it was extinct – it was at this point I realised I had arrived and could enjoy the music. There was a hiatus of 15/16 years where I thought that kind of music was over, but actually it's always been there, I was just doing other things. This time I got back into in a big way; someone at a festival put me onto this Facebook group called 'lovely beautifully crafted jungle' and that became my source of information and also because at that time there were only 500 people and most a lot younger than me, I had knowledge that some of them didn't have.

LL – 29:39
Retrospectively.

TM – 29:41
Yeah, I had an older head, which they quite liked. So I started talking to some of the admins and they told me to go meet them at a rave they were going to - and that was it.

LL – 30:00
And how was that, breaking away from the jazz oriented stuff? You were distracting yourself from your craft and immersing yourself into something else.

TM – 30:10
Well for a start it was a social life which I never had. My social life had always been my work – as a musician you go out and play, it's a sociable environment.

LL – 30:24
Yeah, and I think it's part of that conservatoire-style training where you're just very focused on your instrument. Like you said earlier; you wanted to broaden out your music again and I did an undergraduate course that was almost like sound art but it was really more the other extreme of art school where you're trying out a lot of things – so there's no right or wrong - but like you said, you spent those 10 years really focused on your instrument but then culturally not allowing these extra infiltrations to happen around you.

TM – 31:01
I think it was out of necessity but also the fact that I didn't know it was there. This was still the fairly early days for Facebook.

LL – 31:27
Yeah, because I know YouTube was 2006 and then Facebook was a year or two prior to that.

TM – 31:30
Yeah, no. I think Facebook came after YouTube.

LL – 31:37
Oh maybe.

TM – 31:38
These are quite momentous dates that we should have heard of. The idea of being able to connect with a group of people digitally that are as excited about the same thing as you was

quite new – when I discovered these people that were as nerdy/ excited as I was, I could barely contain my excitement, and I remember feeling frustrated that these people were only available via that blue screen and people in my immediate vicinity were not. My girlfriend loved raving but she wasn't crazy about this sub-genre like I was and I had to meet these people - talking online wasn't enough, and after I did they became my best friends, which led to us forming a crew […] We started putting on events and doing radio shows, networking really, becoming part of the scene and helping nurture the scene we loved.

LL – 33:05
Was there a particular area where this all happened?

TM – 33:07
Well, they were all based in West and Southwest London but the event that we all centred around was a rave called 'Rupture' that happens in Elephant and Castle in Corsica Studios.

LL – 33:23
Oh okay. It's still there now, I've been there a few times in the last couple of years.

TM – 33:27
It's a wonderful venue because it's there purely for people to hear the music loud.

LL – 33:38
Yeah, I've seen Theo Parrish there which is like slightly techno and then I've seen they had gigs with a band I played with called chip […] the drummer Henry is a jungle style with hints of electronic type of drummer but they have band-orientated stuff.

TM – 34:07
Yeah, it fits that kind of ethos. It's the most unpretentious club venue – it's just black, they've got a great sound system, lights, a bar and two sofas - that's it. It's perfect, so that's where we all started going and it's run by two DJ's who are called Double O & Mantra and they've also got a label called 'Rupture London'. In the club they had room 1 which would be new drum and bass that was born from the jungle spirit with deep atmospheres and abstract aesthetics, room 2 was old skool for DJ's to play anything from 1991 – 1998 to draw that comparison and link between the music of then and what people do now- it was always quite inspirational and all the great DJ's and producers would play there, it was a real scene community.

LL – 35:35
So, when that was happening, were you translating that influence in your technique driven through mixing, knobs and faders? Did that affect how you were playing your instrument or anything?

TM – 35:55
I think it probably did in a very subtle, unconscious way. I think that music had already influenced the way I played bass or the way I heard music and experienced rhythms, but it had been dormant for a very long time. Now at this stage when I got back into it in a big way, it felt like there were two separate worlds and I wasn't really sure how to reconcile them – at that time it wasn't so much a secret but […] I decided that I needed to acknowledge the two

sides of music and be at peace with them because this was actually a strength much more than any kind of hindrance. From then I started to tell people from the jazz scene […] well, actually, I think I lost a few gigs because I said I wanted to go to a rave instead of playing the gig – I wanted people to know how important this music was to me because as an adolescent it felt like a lesser thing and I felt embarrassed when people would make fun of my music taste. I realised in the renaissance stage that some of it is amazing music and it's the music of my youth, and no matter what it is; the music that you identify as you're going through that stage in life will always get you fired up and have that activating power and I just had to accept that. No matter what music I play i.e. how jazzy I go, or however much classical music I play, jungle, drum and bass is where I get my energy from. So, I have to now make peace with that and my other musical personas to try and bring them together into one thing that may not be a cohesive identity at first but it will be unique, which will be a strength. That is starting to pay off now as people in the drum and bass scene know me as a musician, a bass player but one that understands that music in a way that pretty much no one else in the jazz scene could – I came from that then via jazz and then full circle back to it. I'm still exploring it, but it's working out.

LL – 39: 15
Did you ever try and adapt your bass i.e. using extended techniques from contemporary classical stuff, or audio manipulation, audio effects or anything like that?

TM – 39:37
Yeah, while I was playing in this group called the Bongo Brothers, a couple of Italian guys, we had a Saturday night residency at a venue called the Spits which is no longer there – it was on the edge of Spitalfields Market. I was running my bass through a little Korg processor called Pandora which was really inconvenient because it wasn't a pedal, it was intended to be a practice aid – it had jack in, jack out and some great effects but it was just a little box that you put in your pocket. You couldn't use your feet, you'd have to take a hand off the bass and tap a tiny button to change the pre-set – I was using distortion, envelope filters and some pitch shifting stuff and it worked in that setting because we weren't working at high volumes but the thing that has put me off using double bass in live drum-and-bass settings is; to experience drum and bass properly, it has to be quite loud and the low frequencies have to be heavy.

LL – 40: 51
So, you feel like there are limitations to using the double bass for that?

TM – 40:54
Yeah because it feedbacks so easily due to it being a hollow box.

LL – 41:03
It's interesting with that limitation, when I sat with Adam today […] I basically said to him, "Do you, as a drummer, feel that you can't play without this?" He has some elements of an adaptive kit with MIDI and audio triggers but he feels he can't really express himself creatively without these additional elements, but it still needs to be routed from the source instrument. I mentioned source defamation to him and how Johnny Greenwood was talking about using Max MSP on guitar […] So did you ever feel like that, and with Heritage orchestra, they sort of have that cross over too?

TM – 41:56
When I played with Heritage orchestra It was a role of an orchestral bass player, so I was coming at it from a conventional perspective. It was weird because I wanted to be doing what John was doing in the rhythm section which was playing the sub bass and the synth bass – that's what I feel, when I'm playing on my double bass, I want to feel it resonate at a low frequency you know, making mountains vibrate. I visualised the sound like that but there's a trade off because when you amplify acoustic instruments to that level you start to lose the integrity of the tone. I still plan to get hold of an Ampeg baby bass which is what the salsa and ska bands use, the Skatalites being one example – it's like a totally electric double bass, and sounds closer to a double bass in tone than modern electric uprights, so I think that would be a good compromise. But in terms of double bass, I feel like it's more useful for low/mid-range tones […] The first thing I learnt on a bass was Brown Paper Bag by Roni Size.

LL – 43: 42
Classic. That's cool. So, was that when you picked up that bass at Alton? So, that's interesting, as it wasn't a jazz classic, this was a contemporary piece you had heard but knew there was that bass line in it so it did crossover in a way there.

TM – 44: 00
It worked so well for that as it was kind of an abstract, atonal line. It didn't sound like It was coming from jazz in retrospect, but it wasn't doing the sub or performing that role.

LL – 44:20
Yeah. A friend of mine said they saw James Blake when he first came out and then that was sort of the sub frequencies of that new dub sound […] the rumble, that presence of the sub and I wonder if an acoustic instrument could ever really achieve that.

TM – 44:42
An organ can. I don't think anything else really can. People will always ask me to play my double bass in the drum and bass stuff but I'm still trying to learn the subtle art of synthesis because that's the sound I respond to.

LL – 45:05
So, if you hadn't been able to make a hybrid instrument yet in the way that you like […]?

TM – 45:13
No, because I wrote a tune that used only apart from the beats, it used samples that I recorded myself using my bass, violin, accordion and then I manipulated them. I had some success creating what's called a 'Reese Bass' I don't know if you know that term – the Reese bass was sampled by […] I've gone blank I can't remember but it was one of the techno greats. Kevin Saunderson, I think.

LL – 45:58
That was one of my first techno gigs, Kevin Saunderson.

TM – 46:00

There's a bass sound, whoever it is from I need to look it up. But it's at least two filtered, detuned square waves and it has this undulating rising effect which has been used a lot in drum and bass *imitates sound* - that sort of thing, you can distort it, to make it more aggro. There is a song called 'The Terrorist' by Ray Keith (Renegade) which is the famous use of it and because I understood how that was made by watching some YouTube videos I thought; maybe I could do the same for my double bass. So I recorded an arco note and put it in the sampler, looped it and detuned it a little bit so it had that same rising effect on it - I used that in the track alongside some regular double bass phrases but I still led it with an 808 kick as, no matter how much I boosted the low end, it wasn't giving me the sub that I thought It needed for the music I was making to follow the rules of this genre. It's a constant struggle as that's the sound I want to make when I play the instrument, but I just can't replicate those synthetic tones.

LL – 47: 40

Yeah. That's the point of some of my PhD, is the studio/ stage hybrid – now we have those cultural references that speak to us and we want to replicate them in live settings but only in recent years have things like Ableton live given us the point of being able to achieve that in a live setting. It plays to your own ethical and artistic human limitations but also morals or heritage i.e. out of the respect of the double bass and the limitations, this would be tampering with the general tone and I don't need to push it to that […] but there could be a midpoint where you could do both.

TM – 48:36

Yeah, I'm sure there could be. It's probably as much to do with my own perceptions of my shortcomings as a serious bass player so […] I'm trying to make it as pure as possible on one hand as I have this fine acoustic instrument and I'm aware that I can go so much further with the acoustic nature of this instrument and if I start to pursue that area of my study in favour of using all the tools available to me as an electronic musician, it will pull me further away from my goal. So I do feel like I'm being pulled in different directions at once, but I think I know a lot more about how to make sounds than I allow myself to, I definitely impose some restrictions.

LL -49:46

What would be an example of that?

TM – 49:53

Well, I was thinking about this earlier […] I was reading a paper about the glitch, not your one but a Cascone one about glitch music and how to declare digital artefacts and celebrate them within music. Jungle is weird because it utilises the technology more than any other genre but is still trying to digitally create something that sounds very natural.

LL – 50:36

Yeah, by raising those jazz breaks into that key of 117bpm thing. So that's okay, it's still humanly possible and maybe with that use of bass that can sometimes sound natural, and I think the sound design is slightly different to house or techno […] if you think about that layer of production values, in house/ techno there's the premise of the grid and the use of

something like an 808 gives that framework which allows the use of framework and timbre. So maybe jungle is a bit different. You've still got that way in by the break but […]

TM – 51:37
It's like people didn't realise how many rules there were until they all had been so entrenched and established. Also, it's a lot to do with the technology that was available when the music came to prominence and the sound of that so there's certain Mackie mixing desks and the Akai sampler - there wasn't a lot of compression, it was just all the natural desk compression.

LL – 52:13
And you might hear things as physical spin-back or something like that. Like you said with those samplers it would only allow a certain production value.

TM – 52:36
Yeah, and even if people didn't know what it was that created that sound, they were still kind of moving towards it. "We want this on our record, and we want it to have that quality that stuff from the 90's had." So there's sort of contrived retrospectives, even though you're trying to make music that is futuristic and moving forward […]

LL – 53:11
But yeah, so maybe that takes me a bit to […] I've basically asked this question; since you've been using your main instrument of the bass, obviously scenes that have allowed more creativity have come up since you started than not, because of all this exposure to other subcultures, i.e. with the post-rock scene there's a quote talking about the infiltration of house/techno allowed rock musicians to see that the form of communication didn't need to be just in vocals or the riff orientation of guitar – the guitar could be put back in the mix and we could build a subversive i.e. Radiohead from Kid A onwards.
How important is it to develop your own distinctive voice and work with or resist the influence of others? Because some of your influences are very stylistically rooted, so is it important to you to have those values?

TM – 54:40
Yeah. I think for me, I kind of come at it from the other side – I feel like I spent a bit too much time trying to emulate my inspirations and influences and I think a lot of people do. You have to give yourself the time and respect to actually acknowledge your own style at some point i.e. if we look at myself as a bass player, there are some players I admire and listen to more than others and if you knew their work you could tell I was influenced by them but I don't think […] if you are really interested in a musician you don't really have to worry about sounding like someone else. I think the essence will always come through in what you do as long as you are making a genuine effort to play music how you want it to sound.

LL – 56:06
The reason why I bring this up is; the point of some of the stuff I'm talking about is how you would like to imitate your key influences i.e. jungle but the imitation of this production in the studio brings a new voice to our playing within this boom of the last 30 years in more of a genuine underground movement scene – as soon as recording equipment got cheaper and people started incorporating that equipment more in recording as well as on stage […] now

we're allowing new distinctive voices of imitation whereas before it would imitate jazz players who are human and now it's imitating machines or production sounds. I feel people turn to production sounds as they are a more futuristic way of interpretation […]

TM – 57:20
Well, I have always been interested in that machine imitating. I think it's a circular feed as well. We've sampled stuff and sped them up – people learned to play faster and then we sample it again to slow it down, it's always going back around. I've heard teachers saying that they have kids coming in singing and they sound autotuned because that's what they are listening to – they instinctively flatten the harmonics in their natural voice to sound like a robot version. There will be a reaction to that and I'm seeing it now with young people who are more interested in music from the 60's - because there's always a search for the other thing when things get too saturated with one. In terms of trends or retro culture, there's enough richness in music history that there will always be something that people can go back to and rediscover.

LL – 59: 00
If you go to a fine art show, hopefully you would have individual paintings or sculptures but with music, especially when there's a house style of preserving the jazz greats, when you go back to those retro styles whatever you were interested in, you'll find this slap stylistic things is that truly giving distinctive voices.

TM – 59:37
I think both sides are necessary. You need to have this preservationist faction in any style of music – it's like the custodian of sounds, people can take from it and then bastardise it and do what they want with it but I think both sides are equally important. It's really funny when people get upset about someone destroying the true art form of whatever it is i.e. In Argentina they told Astor Piazzola that he was destroying the tango and now he is seen as the greatest tango musician, from putting electric guitars in it and adding Bach to it, but it was important for there to be those voices complaining that he was destroying it in order to have that antagonist push or pull against the tradition. In turn that bastardisation will help to preserve the traditions, as those who are concerned about the pure form will work harder to preserve it – it's a natural mechanism and I encourage it. I love jungle from the 90's, but I love people who seek to tear apart the art form and reassemble it in a new way i.e. what Juke House was doing with footwork in Chicago. It was the same tempo as jungle and some people liked it but others thought it wasn't authentic, but it appealed to the younger audience and now we have absolutely incredible music being made with the production values you couldn't have dreamt of in 1994. In terms of jazz, it's always imperative to find your own voice […]

LL – 01:02:23
I think there's a tradition within jazz for soloists or for the band to be introduced by their individual artist names but I feel like with the engagement of electronic music, some people aren't using their real names, so the persona […] it's almost like the ownership of that music-making gets passed to the audience. I feel like there's that disregard, a bit like in the post-rock scene, about not caring where the source is from as long as they are the one who has put it together in this way to get it out there. That to-and-fro, like you said, after spending

10 years on jazz and didn't mind turning to a new form of music that you weren't completely homed in on.

TM – 01:03:29
Yeah, that's interesting what you say about the identity of the musician in those different genres and how for the jazz players it's more about the individual player, their own style and how they use their own name, and you'll have someone like Thundercat who is very much rooted in persona and fantasy and that really struck a chord with the electronic music scene.

LL – 01:04:16
I saw Thundercat with the Cinematic Orchestra recently, it was great. That was a new take on a jazz progressive, I guess. How would you define Thundercat? […] He's got the meow meow effects and stuff which is great and then it's all vocally led but it's also a group.

TM – 01:04:39
Put it this way […] I went to see him at Fabric a few years ago, probably 6 or 7 years ago – it was a Thursday night, the place was packed with a DJ playing. It was that kind of post-dubstep vibe; I remember they were playing tunes by Sbtrkt. It felt like a club as there were a lot of young people in there and then Thundercat comes on stage playing jazz fusion, shredding – it was cool, but I was unsure if people knew they were at a jazz gig or if it even was a jazz gig.

LL – 01:05:28
But that's what I'm saying. The taking away of his persona, as he's introducing himself, but as Thundercat, and he does have a presence where he wears headdress things, so it's not completely rooted in him and that allows a way in […]

TM – 01:05:45
The thing about this recent jazz explosion is […] there's been a real gulf between these two ages of jazz at least in this country and possibly America where it was the preserve of listening to jazz while drinking a pint of bitter and there was enough going on to sustain that scene. However, promoters up and down the country about 10 years ago were saying they couldn't get the numbers in […] in this time since social media started. Like when I went to music college was the same year, I got my first email address and then when social media came about I was lost. Now in the last few years you've got young players who are learning the art of jazz, knowing how to connect to other people their age and what works or doesn't for YouTube or Instagram – which leaves the previous generation in the dust, I think it's the new technology that's created this new epoch in terms of music and how it can live.

TM – 01:07:36
Yeah because I think things used to be on a more local scene-orientated thing but now you can see global trends which allows more ways in and within that it lets go of these parameters needed beforehand to make certain types of music i.e. only making jungle music if you were from London because you wouldn't have understood it being from somewhere else – now we're at a point where it doesn't matter, you can borrow from all those scenes and that's where I think rock music is so deep rooted in the location keeping it authentic but I think you can disregard that kind of thing.

TM – 01:08:32
Location is irrelevant now.

LL – 01:08:34
Because I think we're at this point where we are borrowing from so many things which are great to be involved in but also to be influenced by multifaceted genres now. I spoke about this with Adam; in some ways this leads to people getting frustrated with cultural appropriation and feeling like you're ripping off the genres due to where you live. However, at that point it was inaccessible […]

TM – 01:09:11
The interesting thing is; at that stage there was no internet, so you had no idea of how big this thing was beyond what you could experience in your physical reality – it's only now we're all on social media that you can find out about people in America for example and find out how they heard of it back then.

LL – 01:09:52
But that's something I find really amazing about Bjork for example; when she immersed into the jungle scene with Goldie and then the post-punk band, to how that slowly emerged into what her music became later was an amazing mix.

TM – 01:10:13
Yeah, but that journey was still taken in a physical geographical way at that stage. I feel like I'm a bit too old and former to […]

LL – 01:10:32
I don't think I had thought as much about it.

TM – 01:10:36
Yeah, when I was 15/16 and I wasn't really thinking about what I liked and where it was happening because I didn't really care about that as I could reach it all from where I was.

LL – 01:10:46
I did a lecture in Berlin last week talking about the divide between analogue and digital, about things being authentic in the scene or not authentic. It felt like it wasn't even a conversation […]

TM – 01:11:01
Authenticity is not even a question.

LL – 01:11:07
I asked if they minded seeing someone on stage that was a rock purist or slightly integrated with technology or a jazz player that wasn't playing score and they didn't seem phased by any of those. Which I don't know if it was a good or bad thing, but it was just interesting.

TM – 01:11: 29
But what is important to that audience now ?

LL – 01:11: 33
Yeah well, we want to be careful of is still that you can have disregard and have an original voice from within that, but what can happen is it can get saturated to the point of everyone sounding the same without that sort of creation in their mind – that creation was done through physically going somewhere, or a friend could be that to you but now saturated with so many options […]

TM – 01:11: 55
I think that forces people to dig a little deeper to create their identity. Obviously, there has always been an element that is about style and that becomes ever more important to make yourself stand out. I feel like scenes can be created and become obsolete so quickly now […] The aim is to create your identity and create your scene without creating it.

LL – 01:12:48
It's becoming more transient than ever.

TM – 01:12:50
Yeah and I think for me […] I don't know how that works because I feel like the music scene in the last 15 to 20 years has been very trend-based in the U.K. rather than people liking what they like, or they don't have a person to like depending on how they identify culturally. This is something you don't see so much in Germany. For example, where people just like what they like and there's no feeling that you're contravening your tribal or cultural code if you like this thing that isn't the flavour of the month – that's something that such a lot of artists that I have worked with have been concerned about with the U.K scene. They think people won't like it because it's not a certain way and I think that can eventually have an adverse effect on creative output because everyone will be trying so hard to be different that they all end up the same.

LL – 01:14:16
Yeah, I think the British culture used to be more so interested in celebrating the eccentric things but now it's more concentrated on being on trend which is diluting some things I guess

TM – 01:14:35
Being on trend but the trend is to be eccentric, so it's such a gamble.

LL – 01:14:43
It's such a gamble, it's a weird time. […]

TM – 01:14:52
We've probably gone so off topic.

LL – 01:14:53
Have you started to use Ableton?

TM - 01:14:55
I've been using Ableton since version 4.

LL – 01:14:58
Same here. So, part of the PhD is this studio/stage collaboration and why we engage in it. Do you use a DAW within a live setting?

TM – 01:15:15
No. I've used it in a very limited sense for live music – which is a real crime because I can imagine all the ways I could use it but I'm just lazy, I need to commit to it and try.

LL – 01:15:33
Well the point of this is basically what I'm doing for my own work – at the moment I'm completely restricting myself to acoustic guitar because some of the post-rock movement would be about losing some vocals, the popular structure and you become sort of a shoe gazer with this immersion of the effects and whether that is intrinsic to your creative voice, or maybe you could get away being completely acoustic. It seems like to you, you're quite sure of being good within your instrument. I think there's obsession with guitarists always wanting to expand the sound beyond them because it is quite easy – even when I was talking to Adam today he said he had a delay on his snare drum, which is quite progressive for drumming but for guitarists it's quite a normal thing to want to expand your sound. It's like guitarists can't just be happy with striking a chord because they know they can make it sound better or different.

TM – 01:16:35
I think what Ableton could offer for me is more in terms of live arrangement creation so, no, the manipulation of sound.

LL – 01:16:53
Within scene work?

TM – 01:16:55
Yeah, so recording a loop and then looping it but also coming back to it and building layers – the same way you would with a loop pedal but with more versatility.

LL – 01:17:13
Yeah. So, I spoke to this guitarist called Ian Williams from the band Battles.

TM – 01:17:16
I know of them.

LL – 01:17:18
Okay so, he uses a lot of loop stuff and the Akai loop pedal that came out in 2000 which everyone eventually started to use on guitar and I think that was an explosion of all this stuff that I'm interested in. Like you said, it's good for making multiple versions of yourself and then sometimes it's good for just[…] what Ian mentioned when he first got into battles was: it was just guitar-led, and he needed to make duplicates of himself, but then he was annoyed that it was coming out of only one amp, so he used multiple amps instead. He got really into pedals too, but adding too much stuff can just make your computer crash as it's all going through that one source – if you hear them playing it's very much like a Steve Reich piece, it's very call-and -response which I guess comes back to minimalist composition […]

TM – 01:18:34

The other thing I wanted to try if it's theoretically possible is rather than people playing to track, we've always been bound to a click of whatever it is that is recorded, to be able to run a track, but just tap the tempo on a MIDI control pedal so that the computer has to follow your tempo.

LL – 01:19:02

Yeah cause that's what people argue about - you becoming a slave to that interaction with Ableton - but you want the demographic to be equal in that setting.

TM – 01:19:16

Yeah, I think we can think about equal responsibility of the human and the computer to adapt to each other.

LL – 01:19:30

I think sometimes you can be quite passive and just put a backing track on or you could collaborate, which might get in the way of creativity – but actually I think we're trying to create these interactions in our playing as well i.e. you wouldn't drumming that drum and bass style if we didn't have that interaction with technology. It would be interesting to have the machine and the human jamming it out at the same time though.

TM – 01:20:02

We're so far off AI being able to create music but we can really help the computers to make music you know. I really think the best music is when there has been a real symbiosis and a caring co-operation between the human and the machine, knowing what you want to do but also knowing you can't do it without the computer – that respect for the machine and celebrating what it can offer as opposed to just using it. I think that's quite an important thing which great electronic artists do instinctively, because there it's more than a tool to them – there's a romanticism that isn't really acknowledged a lot when we go to our computer and make sounds with it. That might differ depending on age. I feel like my computer completes me when I'm making my music, I couldn't do it without, and the more we work with electronics, the deeper our pallets of imagination become. You have people like Squarepusher with Go Plastic and then you spend 2 years wondering how it was possible he could have created this sound – when you love it that much, you'll find a way to go back and make it or learn how to sing autotune.

LL – 01:22:26

I thought that was quite a good quote when you were saying that – it's quite a good quotable section. I don't know If I spoke about this before but; Brad Osbourne talks a lot about Radiohead, he also talked about the 'Spears/ Stockhausen continuum' […] we talk about in jungle and other genres for example how we play with the accessible popular and experimental things – so I just wondered where you placed yourself and your musical parameters within that?

TM – 1:23:10

I think I'm more on the experimental end.

LL – 01:23:18
So, you're happy for more long-formed things like jazz and jungle which would allow that kind of experimental side?

TM – 01:23:22
Yeah, I think it's more of an artistic expression than a commercial form overall. There's obviously a sliding scale but I've always been more concerned with unusual aspects of music - as a result there's so much music that I don't know that everyone else does i.e. stuff that's played on the radio. For many years I actively avoided what I considered to be mainstream music because I wanted my influences to be as different as possible and I wanted to be able to express myself in a more experimental and unusual way.

LL – 01:24:27
We haven't really spoken much about if you have much rock influences, but you did like Radiohead at the time so maybe their experimental music paved a way for you slightly at the time? Were you connecting to the rock scene or even the post-rock scene at that time of the early 2000's?

TM – 01:24:58
I think it was probably just Radiohead that I was into, I don't think I got into any scenes as such around that time. What turned me onto it as with any music was: anything to me that sounds ethereal and psychedelic […]

LL – 01:25:28
Could there be other bands that you relate to that present themselves in a rock formation […] within that Reynolds-thing he talks about bands that present themselves as a rock band but are starting to use that recording technology.

TM – 01:25:56
That's a good question. I didn't go to a lot of gigs so it's possible people were doing that, but I wasn't taking an active interest in how the music was being made.

LL – 01:26:22
Maybe you felt like the jungle scene music that you listened to gave you that cultural relevance that the guitar didn't necessarily give you?

TM – 01:26:32
I think that I had more affinity with electronical sound system cultured music – I don't think there's any sort of white colonial guilt that somehow seeped into my upbringing. I think I was searching for something other than what I perceived to be my British identity. Part of why I loved the sound of reggae or just the sound of Jamaican voices in hip-hop and in sound-system music which got filtered into jungle; there was a sense of wanting to be involved in something other than what I perceived my cultural identity to be, and with that came guitars as well. Guitars for me are a white instrument and I wasn't sure how much I wanted to engage with that.

LL – 01:27:51

That's interesting. One of my supervisors just brought out a book about post-punk and she talks a lot about cultural appropriation of how those post-punk bands were influenced by reggae into dubstep and how our use changed through that time i.e., the gatekeeper style with reverb which the white guitarists were imitating from funk like Talking Heads to Joy division etc.

TM – 01:28:26

There was an interesting bit at the bottom of the thing you sent me; it happens much more in the U.K. than in America, that black culture sound has been appropriated by post-rock, so I think there was an element of that. Although I did play bass guitar and I did love Nirvana but something about that music seemed quite otherworldly to me – the harmonic structures were quite jarring as they were powerful blocks of sound and that to me sounded a bit akin to how harmonies would be used in rave music. You sample a chord that you like and just play it with one finger up and down the keyboard so you get this ever-shifting, relocation of tonal centre and a Nirvana chorus has that same effect.

LL – 01:29:37

Maybe that could be down to the production value of jungle and rave having the same ethos as punk, where you didn't necessarily have to be a great player but you could move around the blocks of the screen. There's the engagement within that locked people in the scene and the emphasis on technique with more of an engagement of sound experimentation and simple shapes that are moved around.

TM – 01:30:10

Yeah, it was moving the shapes around and creating something that was constantly surprising – I think that's what I really loved about it as there were no rules there. I know rules are important for some people. Even if you're creating something that is very free, you'll often find there are limitations and rules - but how can you be constantly surprising within that framework is something that interests me.

LL – 01:30:54

That was one think I was going to talk about; there's this academic called Danielson and she talks about D'Angelo and Squarepusher – one term in particular she used was 'exaggerated virtuosity of the machine'[…] kind of what we talked about today, very micro-level use of rhythms and a hybrid version of that; that type of playing in D'Angelo would only have been brought through the production values etc.

TM – 01:31:49

Yeah […] what about it?

LL – 01:31:48

Do you think […] let's say, with D'Angelo it's almost inhuman to drag through the production, but it also sounds so human at the same time.

TM – 01:32:17

The way I understood it, and I'm not sure if I'm completely correct in this, but it sounds like: what happened is J Dilla was programming a beat and then maybe with the same sequence,

he loaded in some drums that hadn't been turned down, like a sample that would trigger, but there's a bit of air at the beginning of it to create that misalignment. It would have sounded completely non – human because when you react to it and it feels good, that's a human thing. What's interesting is; could the fact that it doesn't sound human make it sound more interesting to us, or is it something primal that in our rules of western music, quantization and electronic music that we've lost and somehow it's re-entered and everyone thinks it's new and appealing? It could be for various reasons, i.e. we can't explain what Is happening, it doesn't sound computerised, it doesn't sound mechanical, doesn't sound quantised and we recognise it. Similar to seeing your child win a prize or something. It's like 'the machine became human with the help of a human that understood the machine' and now 'we're going to do that still because it's still something different to what we can do'.

LL – 01:34:39
That initial exchange used to be much more conscious, but, like you said, that thread is getting lost as people don't seem to know what they're imitating anymore.

TM – 01:34:57
Yeah, but you don't understand how rigid the rules are that you were operating in until you come out the other side and realise that it doesn't matter, it just needs to feel good.

LL- 01:35:14
I think music academia and high arts music, it can move away from the musicality and how it makes you feel to try and be conceptual – some of these things could have started out as happy accidents within production or they could have those concepts i.e. making every beat delayed or slowly fade etc. but then you have to think about whether it fundamentally sounds good.

TM – 01:35:45
I had years of people trying to experiment with it and failing – I've heard music that sounds like it's slowing down the whole time when it's not, and it's so depressing, and I'm sure they were trying […] Bach mastered his art and there must've been so many people trying to do what he did and failing for decades, hundreds of years – it takes a genius like Dilla to nail it and for everyone else to figure out what is going on. Or Squarepusher and Aphex Twin, I don't think anyone has come even remotely close to those guys – there's amazing music being made in that tradition but they are like the Bach and Mozart of that world.

LL – 01:36:43
Yeah, when I spoke to Adam today, he said he felt that some people were on this constant search for new sounds, which is why we get into this technology, or for cultural relevance, but also when he talked to Tom it was almost like he changed the genre or way of music […] So, we've spoken about: between studio and stage accessibility, aesthetics; what can be afforded in order to synthesise parts; what you're doing with bass frequencies. I'm just generally wrapping up because I think we've spoken about a lot. Just two more things though; if you see the Heritage Orchestra engaging with this new age technology, how much visceral gesture do you think is important to see from them while they are playing?

TM – 01:38:08
Visual gesture?

LL – 01:38:11

They use this tone of liveness, so more towards laptop users or DJ's – you don't actually see them strike the chord or note, so it's not rooted in that authentic style, and it sometimes gets to a point where you're watching something that is triggered multiple times or there's a lot of sound sources playing at the same time etc.

TM – 01:38:37

There are so many things that play in a live situation now. Heritage Orchestra for example, when I first worked with them for the first Goldie Timeless concert in Southbank, just the fact that it was music that had only ever been created electronically but was held by a place in the hearts of the audience being performed by an orchestra – that was enough. Audiences that don't go to orchestral gigs won't know what it's like to experience that sound in a large place i.e. like listening to drum and bass music at home on your stereo isn't the same as hearing it in a big room through a Sound System – the same goes for orchestral music.
I think the way that Heritage Orchestra music does it holds a lot of integrity to both sides of the equation so it's inherently always going to be successful.

LL – 01:40:06

Did you ever wonder if it was going to an extravagant level, or could this have relevance with tracks played out in clubs? Why do we go through this expansive way of seeing it played by an orchestra?

TM – 01:40:25

I think people will always […] even if people don't have an active appreciation of what it's like to create music acoustically with a large ensemble and the sum of all the parts of training of the talents and the training of all the luthier instruments, how this adds up to an incredible display of human excellence; I think if people don't understand that actively they still appreciate it in a visceral way and some people don't even think about that – they just see a load of people who are going to play their instruments. Certainly, if you're not a person who goes to a lot of live music, when you do it can be quite overwhelming, but also an amazing experience. Even for me when I go to a classical music concert, I'm still blown away – I can take my performer hat off and just enjoy the sound, that acoustic sound is something that people in the digital age are not used to experiencing and I think that trumps everything else. If you don't have an orchestra there and it's just a person with a laptop, you are just hearing digital sound reproduced through a system but it's that effect being reinforced by the less visual creation side of it – people have been working more creatively to be more performative with electronic music and to introduce as many acoustic elements as they can.

LL – 01:42:54

Also in house/techno music. They embrace jazz players and they've become more human with it, but it feels like rock players are trying to become more machine-like – a genre that has visceral energy is trying to be machine-like and vice-versa with electronic music. It seems like everyone's going for this 'grass is greener' type of stuff but there could be a midpoint between the two.

TM – 01:43:32

I believe what it comes down to is; everyone trying to get comfortable and adjust themselves to the inevitability of impending singularity – we're in the embryonic stages of a real virtual

reality, I think the way people interact with social media is a real indication of that. I think we're inextricably woven into the digital universe now and we're trying to find, like you said, that mid-point. It's not inconceivable that we're going to a future where it doesn't exist, but now I think that it's more likely that we will get more interwoven with it and be these partly digital beings.

LL - 01:44:57
Yeah, well that was pretty much my last question, which was how this intertwined relationship of human/ instrument/ machine has affected music and its composition and I think the last conversation has covered that.
That basically was the point of today, how you summed it up then was […]

TM – 01:45:25
We're inevitably going towards a non-physical future as humans. If we don't work ourselves out, we will eventually end up as information […] I can see no other reasonable or rational outcome other than we find a way to shed our bodies at some point. The great thing about that is that all this digital music and acoustic stuff will become one – there won't even be a question of how they work together it will all just be one thing.

Mozgawa, S (2020)

Mozgawa, Stella (2020)
Artist Interview: Stella Mozgawa
Interview by Laura Lee.
[Online] 10.09.2020

LL - 0:00
So, usually I just start with an open question. I will structure today on your journey on how you became a drummer, and how it all developed into all the bands and projects you've worked with. But maybe before then also just an introduction of yourself, the bands or the projects you're related to, and then maybe we can go into a bit of your history of your drumming career.

SM - 0:47
Okay. My name is Stella Mozgawa and I am primarily the drummer for a band from Los Angeles called Warpaint. But I also have an electronic music project with my friend Boom Bip, which is called Belief. And I do a lot of session drumming. So, I play on records mostly with friends Kurt Vile, Cate Le Bon. Slowly getting into production, and producing a few bands and, leaning towards my electronic music interests more than ever. Yeah, that's pretty much that's my bio.

LL - 1:42
So now, it's nicely situated that you're in your studio with your dad's instruments- perhaps you can just start with a bit of the journey, what got you to where you are now, and perhaps you don't define yourself as a drummer at the beginning of your music journey but maybe just your overall music discussion on your music journey.

SM - 2.00
So, my parents were both professional musicians in Poland. And they moved to Australia in the early 1980s and I was born in 1986. And from birth till about my 12th or 13th year, they were also active professional musicians. So, their full source of income was playing in cover bands and gigging at restaurants. So those were my very early memories growing up. I would accompany them when I was a little bit older and accompany them to their shows. And also, very much kind of raised in a musical environment because it's a rehearsal room at our house and my dad had all of these, at that point in the mid 80s was all about sequencers. He had like the old Roland sequences and SH 101. And then Roland D50 sitting next to me right now. Yeah, like really 80s kind of electronic sequence instruments and music.

LL - 3.27
So, the digital studio space.

SM – 3.31
Yeah, definitely. But he's a bass player. So, he was using all of that stuff, basically as an accompaniment, because my mom was a singer. And because he was organising and arranging the accompaniment it meant that they didn't have to hire out other musicians because they were just a duo. So that was the house that I grew up in and the environment that I grew up in, so firstly, obviously introduced me to music. And secondly, it introduced me to the concept of being a professional musician or being a career musician. And that that was a possible avenue in my life. It wasn't all just lawyer, doctor, etc, etc. So that was obviously a

huge influence. My parents enrolled me in piano lessons when I was 6, and I did that till I was 9. And then around 9 and 10, I started to teach myself, with the help of my dad who was a bass player, how to play guitar. Now, that was my main instrument for a few years. And then when I started high school when I was 12, or 13, that's when I started to really obsess over playing drums. I was so preoccupied with it because I couldn't do it in primary school because one boy drummer wouldn't let me sit down at the kit and it drove me so wild. But as soon as I went to high school, which was also a single sex school, there was a drummer that was leaving, who was basically graduating, so I was very much encouraged to play in all different bands. So, we had like a contemporary wind ensemble, we had a jazz band, every year had a rock band. So, I started joining all the rock bands from year 8,9, and 10 with all the older kids because they weren't really other drummers in the school. So, I got a lot of gigs pretty quick. I was so obsessed with it. Like it was real like a white whale instrument for me, because everything else felt maybe a little more clinical. And drums felt, like, exciting and really, almost like a taboo kind of thing, but it's loud, annoying, it's aggressive.

LL – 5.48
And who were you listening to around that time who were loud and aggressive?

SM – 5.56
Well, when I first started, I just listened to Hanson. And I remember saying, Taylor, not Taylor, Zach Hanson who was the youngest member Hanson. He was maybe around my age at that time, and conveniently looked like a girl. So when I saw him on our kind of equivalent of MTV, I thought that's also possible. It's just that kind of thing where you'd have to feel represented in some way in, in the world of music. I was like, well, that's so you can be a 13 year old drummer, that's a thing you can do. So I think that was definitely like the first kind of influence, then I really got into like hard rock music, plus the poppier punk music that was going on at the time. So I really when I was 13 or 14, I started getting really obsessed with Primus and Tool. So I got, you know, the double kick pedals, and I had like 10 toms and multiple symbols.

LL - 6.56

Was that on a rack?

SM – 6.59
Yeah, eventually I got to the rack. At first I started with, like, a very classic rock kit, very generic and then I moved on. I started listening to that kind of music and wanted to replicate it. So I needed some extra tools. I had like a Pearl Masters drum kit with three rack toms and two floor toms and I had a china, splash cymbals and all that kind of stuff. So I really delved into that. I think it really taught me a lot actually about things like metre, unconventional kind of song structures. That was a big influence and also just to play hard, not playing, not coming into the world of drumming, with our kind of light touch. It was very much like, for me, feeling like I was playing was kind of going against perhaps the cliche soft hitting female drummer.

LL - 8.35
I wonder with bands like Tool or Mars Volta, this idea of virtuosity, if you're a good drummer you can drum Tool?

SM 8.44

Exactly yeah and all the boys that I was friends with that I was playing in bands with, to be able to play those songs, from Tool, perform them specifically, was the achievement. It was kind of like a test, if you could do this one song or one solo on Tool's *Stinkfist* on *AEnima,* then you could join the band. It was very much part of auditioning for different bands. If you could play some of Dave Grohl parts on Songs for the Dead, on the Queens of the Stone Age record, all those kinds of things. Everyone that I knew that was playing drums, or mostly the boys that I knew in different high schools, were all trying to nail those songs. It's kind of like this mutual challenge. Definitely for me, there was a musical aspect to playing drums, obviously, because I came from a musical background, but I definitely was exploring the more athletic aspect of drumming at that point, and I found that to be really exciting. So, I think it made a huge influence on me and I also stopped taking lessons around that time. So, I only took lessons for about a year. So, after that, it's pretty free for all, so learning all those songs helped to fill in a lot of technical and musical gaps that I had in my formal training.

LL - 10:09

So, were you sight reading or learning by listening to tracks?

SM - 10:20

Yeah, at first it was sight reading, doing like rudiments. I had a really great teacher. Instead of it being like this cookie cutter technique that he was teaching each student, he kind of noticed that I was responding better to listening to certain things and repeating the pattern. So mimicking things as opposed to concentrating on a score or on rhythmic patterns, I was much slower with that. So basically, after I said I couldn't come back and do any lessons he was quite adamant about, okay, you should just take in as much music as you can, consume as much music as you can and absorb it, and learn it because you're a good listener. And that's really, I don't read music at all, a little bit, I could get back into it probably more on a melodic instrument, and I kind of understand where I am in a score in terms of counting, but I've learned primarily and almost exclusively from listening to something.

LL - 11:37

So, when you were 14, 15-year-old learning Primus, and like you said, feeling athletically pushed, because you could do these ultimate chops to gain your worth in that environment, but what other music were you listening to? Maybe you might have been listening to other stuff that wasn't represented on your drums at the time. So, you'd be like, I'm playing this, but I'm also listening to this, or did you stick to that style and scene?

SM - 12:06

I started then playing in all the rock bands, and at school they were mostly cover bands. So we were playing Blink-182, and MxPx . And everyone was into Jeff Buckley at the time. It was all about the Grace album. And I also, throughout most of my childhood, and especially when I started playing the drums, through my dad's influence, mostly, was always listening to Steely Dan records, whether it was by osmosis, or by choice, because it was always playing in the house. And then I remember learning a lot of the tracks from *The Royal Scam*, which is still one of my favorite records. But that was like a huge pull back from that virtuosic, still very virtuosic, but very musical kind of approach to drumming. And I think that's set me off on that path. And then at 15, being introduced to Björk, that was a huge turning point, I think, musically, for me where I could actually experience the sensation of my musical mind expanding to

something that was, it had a different music that had a different objective. And this kind of, athletic, impressive, very cynical kind of music for the most part.

LL - 13:42

So, if you're influenced by Björk, how were you responding to that? Did you respond with home recording or trying to respond it on to your drums or other instruments? Or was that an external influence? Or mostly situated within band settings?

SM - 14:00

Yeah, the Björk covers never really came up in high school with friends, because everyone was just playing guitar and bass. So, it was hard to translate a lot of that stuff. So, it was kind of my secret, not so secret, but quite secret, musical passion. And I definitely remember that point, starting to play along to *Homogenic* that record and kind of realise, re purpose, my education in terms of drumming, and instead of trying to do something verbatim, where you hear a snare drum and you hear a kick, and you can kind of place everything in some kind of musical format and then learn that and mimic that. It was very much like a more expressive or interpretive, almost abstract, way of learning. So, listening to it, it's not a conventional snare drum. It's not a conventional kick drum. But there's these things that are representational of that, of those timbres in that music. So, I still do this a lot. It's just like trying to reinterpret something that's almost in-human or multifaceted in terms of textures, and trying, see how I can interpret that on a very conventional acoustic drum kit, basically, which sometimes sounds awful. From that point on I and I still feel that sensation of like my mind expanding to different possibilities.

LL - 15:50

Yeah, I definitely think we've touched on this before - some of these artists and bands who are using more of an abstract language to the source location. Instead of the recording rooted in the drum kit, there is more abstract percussion work that leads us to an almost source deformation. How do we respond to that? Or how is that getting you into another headspace? But yes, give us what happened after that, so you're in the school?

SM - 16:36

I played in a band from another school. There were these boys that were maybe a year or two older than me. And we started at that point playing out. I played out in pubs and clubs when I was much younger, so probably starting at 13, when it was very illegal to do so. And I needed my dad to accompany me. I joined my first band that felt like it had an objective, and it had a purpose that existed outside of school. So, we started playing together, around our suburbs, at the end of high school. We were making albums and finding producers and going on tour with bands. That coincided with the end of High School and having a little more freedom. I went to university and studied social work. And I was going to do that for four years. And I got about two years in, and that first two years, it was fine. I was doing okay, I wasn't extraordinary, because I wasn't committed to it, I started to play and I was at one point playing in probably 6 or 7 bands simultaneously, and then started getting into session work and in my late teens, early 20s. I was about 19 and 20.

LL - 18:49

Did you not decide to go to study music?

SM - 18:56

It was more of a backup plan because I knew what I wanted to do from a very young age, I was very determined that that was my goal. My goal was to be a professional musician, but, knowing what my parents' experience was like, and just knowing what it was like in Australia, which can be very, there's a huge glass ceiling here for musicians and there's fewer options. My parents worried that it wouldn't work out and I made my own escape plan, not escape plan, but more of a safety plan. I didn't really feel like a conventional or traditional musician. I was never a jazz drummer or like a classical composer or anything like that. I kind of felt like I wanted to separate those two worlds a little bit at that point. And I only got two years into that. During those two years, I was meeting a lot of people in music and lots of other bands outside of just my friends in high school. My musical tastes started to broaden a great deal. And it was a very inspiring and very kind of overwhelming musical period in my life. And it was as much about listening to music as it was about performing music. So, I really got into Captain Beefheart and John French as a drummer. Getting more into Krautrock and I got really obsessed with *Before and After Science,* the Brian Eno record. So that led me to think, who's playing on that record, who's Jaki Liebezeit and so getting into Can. It was the moment I think I was almost in a very self-aware, self-conscious way, trying to find the coolest music that has ever existed, that was kind of the objective, as opposed to sometimes I didn't even enjoy the music, I just enjoyed the fact that it was cool, rare, outside of music, also getting into The Shaggs. That period exploring and playing in a lot of different bands, I stopped playing with those boys that I knew from my high school years and then it was like, then it was just off to the races. I was playing with a lot of people, most of them were all much older than me, and they'd been in other bands and they were like, I'm going to burn you this CD and stuff, all the bands had such different musical landscapes and what they were doing. So, it was very much about like, this is what we're trying to do. We're trying to sound like Sonic Youth, here is *Daydream Nation,* or we're trying to sound like Nine Inch Nails. It was kind of that period of time that was so music heavy and so obsessive. I think I was trying to accomplish this, like tertiary education. It felt like a double life for a long time. 'Till I got asked to play in this band by my best friend's brother. I played with him when I was younger, he joined this band that was basically going to New York. And so right at the end of my second year, I deferred for a year. And then I lied on my deferral notice. And I said that I'm going to be travelling with music and touring, and I just don't want to jeopardise my place in the course. That absolute dogshit at the time. Then within two months of deferring was, I remember was, over Christmas, I got asked to join this band and moved to New York. So that was it. That was the end of, kind of, my Australian music life at that point. So, I was still 20 years old.

LL - 23:33

So where was that all happening? So, it was in Sydney?

SM - 23:40

Yeah, University of Sydney. That coincided with playing with a lot of different bands. And then the beginning of my 20th year, even before I had officially turned 20. So that following year when I was supposed to defer from university for a year and just focus on music. The first few months of that year was when I basically was starting my journey of moving to America.

LL - 24:14
It sounds like you were listening to a lot of challenging music like Captain Beefheart to push the norm rounds or Krautrock which was reforming what rock music is. Was this all done intellectualising and by sitting and listening or were you going to venues and bars or clubs also?

SM - 24:39
Yeah, it was more like an intimate process. So it was, it was a combination of listening, with people being introduced to music, but also excitedly introducing other people to music that I've found. So, absorbing it in more intimate environments. I was playing out a lot but it was very rarely in Sydney. There wasn't access to something like, I want to go to a jazz club and watch mind blowing jazz musicians. That was a possibility. But it was a lot harder to find in New York, or in London or somewhere. That wasn't really part of the process. It was more performing, meeting a lot of musicians and then this separate kind of educational part of it, which was obsessing over music, and also trying to play along with that stuff. And that included getting into Tortoise. Yeah, those post-bands, that kind of stuff, playing to those types of records, a lot of instrumental music and I got into the Boredoms and weirdo music.

LL - 25:52
Tortoise, what excited you about Tortoise?

SM - 25:57
The two-drummer thing is amazing, the drumming was always amazing. It was very much the emphasis, the rhythmic emphasis from the entire band, I'd never heard something like that before both in the production and in the instrumentation. It felt weirdly like a hip hop record, or something. Live hip-hop but without that awful kind of cliches of performing hip hop beats verbatim, it's a really interesting interpretation of a lot of music that I really loved, that was used, mostly, from the 70s, or the early 80s. It was just reimagined in this really interesting way that I'd never heard before. And I remember learning a lot playing along to that stuff and having that experience of trying to play, especially when they've got like stereo drumming on a track, trying to play both parts. Like being a bit more octopusly and attempting these impossible beats and how humbling that was, but also how it kind of led to approaching or solving different problems rhythmically that I wouldn't have otherwise done if I was just listening to one person planning playing? something.

LL - 27:21
It really interests me. Because of a particular studio recording technique, it almost allowed you to interpret like a new style of playing. You're like, oh, okay, I could try and replicate this.

SM - 27:36
Yeah, very similar to [..] anything electronic. It was a similar kind of objective for me. It was similarly humbling every time that happened, because I was like, I'm not going to get it the first time [..] but the focus was more about listening in the moment, and kind of being able to re-interpret something and then coming up with something completely different, but it's completely influenced by these programmed or impossible inhuman recording feats.

LL - 28:09

If you listen to early Kraftwerk, like when they were a band, and then they formed into like, what they became well known for, it's just really interesting progression. I will talk about this later. So you moved to New York? [..] Felt like you made it as a musician?

SM - 28:44

It was less about that, I always had like an emotional escape plan when it came to music less so now, but I think at that point, it was like, felt quite fluky, but it also felt I needed to do that even though the band wasn't particularly my style of music was very rocky music.

LL - 29:07

Why not your style? Rocky? What was it, was it too straight up?

SM- 29:13

Yeah, I think it was a bit too straight up. And it was a bit too blokey. And the kind of musical coordinates didn't really match up with my own. So it was about, like, Phil Rudd and AC/DC and those kinds of bands and,[..] I love Zeppelin and Sabbath and stuff growing up, but not really to the extent of wanting to replicate that music in my career. So it felt like a bit of a mismatch, but it also felt like on a musical performative and personal level I needed to go, [..]also, that's when I started, really, I met a friend of mine who's a bass player [..] my age and also a woman. And so we became very fast friends. And she was taking me to all the jazz clubs over there. So that was really, it was just the option every single night to be able to see seven or eight, unbelievable jazz gigs [..] where people who played with Miles Davis are playing to basically like the size of a small restaurant, [..] It kind of felt like it was my Rumspringa, I was probably gonna come back at some point, but it was my one experience[..] I just got this opportunity to be in America and to experience everything that's involved with[..] a bigger city and a bigger country and more music and more opportunity, and just really going there as a student, as opposed to feeling like, well, this is definitely my band, and this is definitely my career. It was more like, let's just say how long this can last [..] and enjoy the educational properties of being in that kind of environment.

LL - 31:08

It sounds like there's much more of, like, a locality to the music, when you got to New York. You actually got into more clubs and venues and actually experience gigs in a new way [..] being a part of a scene.

SM - 31:20

Yeah, going as an audience member. [..] I saw a lot of music in Sydney, but it was because I was playing that night as well. So, all the bands I saw were the bands that we were touring with, other bands that are supporting or supporting us, and so on and so forth. So, it was very insular, stylistically, very insular and stylish, and socially, very insular. So, it's sort of like New York was quite literally, like an explosion of opportunity in that way.

LL - 31:50

And so yeah, so how long were you there? So, you're in the straight up rocky band, and you weren't super comfortable. [..] We build our identity and how we feel like we can sit in this, we're part of a rock protectory that's very male orientated. [..] and you may not like aspects of

this performance or execution. And so that was happening. What was the next stage after this? You and you were going to jazz clubs… mind expanding things?

SM - 32:36
Yeah, and [..] then we recorded in this place called Avatar Studios, which was world class, was my first experience in a proper world class studio with a world class producer. And that was unbelievable for me, that was a huge that was kind of a zenith of my, of my musical experience up to that point. And I realised very quickly, I was like this is definitely what I want to do. [..] I enjoyed touring, and I enjoyed that. That was more like a social thing for me. But I loved being in studios, every time I got to go to a studio, even if I was visiting someone in the studio, I just felt like, Oh, this feels really comfortable. And it feels really creative. And it's, [..] I want to do this as much as possible, you know, catering to my experience as a musician to do as much [..] studio time as I can.

LL - 33:42
[..] I feel sometimes in a recording environment, it might be the first time you've heard your drums back, how you envision it on the record, or it might be just the experimentation or the time you are given, is it a little bit more reflective? I don't know, why do you think you enjoyed that?

SM - 34:00
I think that reflective aspect definitely plays into it, the enjoyment, [..] being able to recreate something or manipulate something, in a way that's really exciting. And not only that, but making a creative decision, and then being able to play into that sonic creative decision. So saying, I want more, I want an echo on my snare drum or something like that, and then actually being able to perform through that stuff is just so impossible when you're playing live [..] that's a visceral, immediate experience and being in a studio, it's very languid, if you're lucky, if it's a good experience, it's very languid and it's very reflective, and you can, it's a lot more creative and a lot more interesting. And I just love the environment of the studio. I love that. It's like [..] the same, not that this is maybe an attractive quality, but it is your office [..] or your creative space or your workspace in a way. And I feel that more in a studio than I do setting up on stage or in a green room at a venue or something like that [..] that's a different experience, I love how protected the environment of the studio is, as well, it's very, you only really letting the influence that you care to invite, as opposed to being kind of thrown into the elements as you are when you're on tour when you're in a venue.

LL - 35:38
I thought that was quite good. [..] Just simple things like you're saying from more of the perspective of a drummer. Like I think guitarists, we've been able to play with effects more immediately, for many more years. But as a drummer, like, it's still quite a feat. If you wanted to execute that straight up in the live environment, but like you say in the studio, you can just hear back with quick ideas.

SM - 36:01
Yeah, I've never really thought about it in that way in terms of how different it is the guitarist versus drummers, but yeah, I think we, for the most part, drummers do rely on a very fluid creative relationship with the engineer or the producer. And [..] I feel like a lot of the best producers that I can think of, the most celebrated producers are the ones that are able to

harness drums or manipulate drums in a very unique way. And they're kind of known for doing that, you know, because it is the stamp, the creative stamp in a way like you said, you know, texturally, guitars, synths, even vocals, there's there's enough of that, that you can those decisions you can make prior to the actual recording process. Whereas a drummer relies so much on the environment and the creative decisions made in the studio. Even in a way that can't really be always replicated live, but can be replicated live for a guitarist or vocalist or whatever, bass player. I never really thought about it that way. But that does definitely rings true.

LL - 37:14
Yeah. [..] When I spoke to Adam Betts, simple things like, he's using MIDI and audio triggers. So if you just wanted, like, an effects, expression pedal to sort of slowly put up some reverb on a hit or something. That we guitarists can easily do that, I didn't realise how lucky that is, with an expression pedal,[…] but actually to integrate that if you wanted a snare that slowly released it for a drummer can be more tricky. Things like that.

SM - 37:46
Yeah, you have to become a really great programmer, basically. Cos you can't really like, stop playing something and just like get up and, or even move. Just hit something with your hands, or manipulate something with your hand because all of your limbs are involved. So you're either planning something that's programmed that's creative, or you're relying on another human being to translate what it is that you want to hear or what how you want to express yourself. But yeah, I've always and still to this day, I just love being in studios. It's my favourite thing. If I could choose between live performance and studio, I'll pick a studio any day. Even though, I still like both, there's a definite… That was kind of that realisation when I was in that studio that first time just how lucky I felt to be there.

LL - 38:47
Because I guess it's a stereotype isn't it? That studios are for introverts and performances for the extrovert. So do you put yourself more in the introvert or extrovert?

SM - 38:57
Um, no, I think not I'm an introvert, but I'm also a drummer so it's kind of different. You know?

LL - 39:08
Maybe it's a control thing. So maybe you have more control over your sound and what you will get from it?

SM - 39:14
I've never thought about that, like the binary relationship or like, or like associating the studio with introverts because I feel very extroverted when I'm in the studio. You know what I mean? There's definitely more control.

LL - 39:53
Maybe it's not as simple as being an extrovert and introvert [..] Maybe for you, it's like a control thing as when you're on stage, there is so much [..] more that can go wrong. And then some of your values as a musician have to go out the window, because you might not even hear your monitor back. It's about the audience and their responses as well and the actual show.

SM - 40:19

Absolutely. I also like that, the studio is where you make those fundamental decisions that then you have to live and die by on stage and never the other way around. Really, unless you're workshopping songs when you're on tour and kind of figure out, oh, maybe we should play this one faster, because people tend to respond more when this is a big attempt at a faster tempo. But I haven't really experienced that so much as a musician. I feel like that's something that I read about in the music press, and a small tour and honed our chops and figured out which songs work [..] I think, conventionally and typically, my experience has been the decisions that are the important ones are decisions that are made in the studio, and then the rest of it is, this reproduction of those decisions.

LL - 41:22

I'll be interested to know as well, maybe about some of your session work and going from writing in the studio now, [..] how you respond to that, and then translate that live, especially if it's something electronic influences how you translate that, I'd be interested to know. But yeah, we'll keep going up. So you got to New York. And then, how long were you there until the next phase?

SM - 41:58

I was there over two years, something like that. Yeah. Because there was a period of time where I was going to Los Angeles, where I was still technically living in New York, but it was kind of this amorphous period of about six months, I think, where the band I was playing with is slowly breaking up. And I was kind of on my way to, to LA for different opportunities, more exciting opportunities. I left having had an amazing experience in New York, the band just naturally kind of dissolved. And at that same time, I went to LA to visit some friends of mine that we had just been on tour with, who said, anytime you come to LA, you can stay at my house, and let's jam and whatever I was, like, great. that was a lot more the energy of musicians in Los Angeles. It felt a lot more open, and a lot more supportive than some of the people we've met in New York. They were very supportive and very friendly but also, the opportunities were perhaps more limited. People played their cards quite close to their chest. So going to LA was very much this very generous, it was a generous spirit that I've not really experienced in any other city. And my friend who played guitar in the band that I've moved to America with, him and I went on the way back to Australia for Christmas, we stopped in LA. And we played some shows, and at the time, we had just been on tour with Perry Pharrell. […] And so he asked, knowing that we were in LA, because we were hanging out with some of those close band members, e said, why don't you come and fill in for this charity show for Tom Morello. Like a bunch of people are going to be there Slash and Mick Mars and just ridiculous, like, 90s rock legends. We went the first week and the first week I met Flea from the Red Hot Chili Peppers. And we talked about Tony Allen, for a while and he said I want you to give me your email before you go. And I was like, great, okay, whatever. Then, he was like, if you want, if you are interested, like we can collaborate on some music or like have a jam. And I was like, okay, sure. Yeah, that's definitely gonna happen. Went back to Australia. I was like, there's no way that Flea is gonna email me. He did and that was the reason why I moved to Los Angeles and I went and lived in his house. He was so generous with me, like, to the point where I just didn't really know, whether this was really happening or I'd been drugged imagining the whole thing. But he, we made an album together, or I recorded a lot of songs for his solo record, he'd never made a solo record before. And, he gave me a room in his house. And I just moved to

that city. And I didn't know a lot of people I didn't really imagine ever living in Los Angeles. But, it felt like, [..] it felt like I was supposed to be there, for some reason.

LL - 45:51
Like, he has a distinctive bass style, right? [..] And how did you respond to that as a drummer?

SM - 46:00
Yeah, it was very different to anything that he'd done before. So I hadn't really - we had very similar musical tastes. And I don't know if I'd even met or played with anybody who listened to a lot of the same music that I listened to and appreciated that scope of music and definitely introduced me to a lot of music as well. But we were like a really amazing match, and the kind of music that he was making was so set apart from what he was known for, which was even more exciting. And, yeah, and then through him, eventually, I met two girls from Warpaint, because they were friends. They had a lot of friends in common.

LL - 46:48
So you were living at Flea's house and you sort felt like this was actually happening? You made the album with him. [..] So in that scene, you were introduced to the girls of Warpaint. When you entered that band then, what was everyone listening to? Or what was the sort of vision for the band? How did you get excited about the project?

SM - 47:16
Yeah, I got to see them play. So I remember Flea talking about them to him, and his girlfriend at the time, she was very good friends with the girls from the band. And I just remember going to see them. And then I played a show and really liked them. They had another drummer and I didn't even really cross my mind. Maybe subconsciously, I was like, it'd be a really cool band to play with, but it also felt like, they probably wouldn't be interested. Like, I just didn't feel cool enough, I always felt like a music nerd. And potentially, I wouldn't be someone who would be chased to be in a band that had that kind of stylistic, fashion forward, conceptually strong kind of image. [..] It was like, oh, if someone needs a drummer that can play certain things or whatever, as opposed to like, I don't know. I felt uncool, in comparison, but I also really enjoyed the music and met a few of them socially over, like, a period of a year. And also really got along with them and felt like they were all very different. But I didn't really think too much about it. And then we played a show. Flea, John Frusciante and Josh Klinghoffer, who then became the new guitarist for the Red Hot Chili Peppers. The four of us played like an improvised concert where we did an Aphex Twin cover, I can't remember the name of the song but it's all numbers. Aphex Twin which I guess answers your question, everyone in that kind of group was all obsessed with Aphex Twin whether it was John, Flea and all the girls[..]. Okay, so that's how I kind of met them and I think that was the night where they decided or where they had some kind of conversation unbeknownst to me, that maybe we should try Stella out as a new drummer or if we need a drummer or whatever. So that was that. It was definitely like an adhesive musical or stylistic adhesive.

LL - 49:40
Why do you think you were obsessed with this sort of UK based electronic artists?

SM - 49:47
Bjork was probably the epicentre of that in a way. We talked about before, like Mark Bell and Aphex Twin [..] there were similarities but a lot of kind of reverence for that kind of music. And those IDM, I guess, you would call them intelligent dance music, artists, and future electronic music. So yeah, Venetian Snares, LFO, Autechre, all that kind of stuff and it was really exciting also to meet women who were really into it. I've only ever had that musical connection with men in bands that loved Aphex Twin or whatever. And they also love to work and so many of them, especially Emily and Teresa the singer and guitarist, grew up listening to Björk as well. So it was that same kind of thing, even though we've grown up in such different musical environments, and cultural environments, and had such a huge, massively different upbringing musically, there were still really pivotal things that we shared.

LL- 51:07
I'm always fascinated by that time, by that electronic UK scene of Warp records and things like what Autechre were doing and how explosive and influential that sort of music was. Yeah, it's just really interesting. And I'm obviously very interested how bands responded to that at the time as well. So then you got into Warpaint? Did they say you were saying that you tried out? And then they say right, you're cool Stella?

SM- 51:40
I don't know if that was a thing,[..] that I was cool enough. I met them socially after that. And then they said, do you wanna come in and play with us? And it wasn't really an audition, it was more like, they weren't playing with anyone at the time. And they were, they felt like a lot more creative than then than a traditional drummer audition process. It wasn't like, alright, we've got three other guys in the hallway. You got half an hour, let's run through these few songs. And then, we'll call you kind of thing.

LL - 52:17
You felt, like, more brought in as a creative individual, not just as a bond to your instrument. "Can you fulfil the job" kind of thing?

SM -52:27
And I've never really experienced that openness and that enthusiasm. I mean, not that people weren't enthusiastic in the past, but it felt like enthusiastic to share ideas, creative ideas, as opposed to just satisfying a musical role. I was encouraged to satisfy and explore a creative role in that band.

LL - 52:53
Yeah, sounds quite a lot that LA time, you're brought in as a creative individual, you should do the thing you do[..].

SM - 53:03
And that definitely was enhanced by that spirit of generosity, in that I had experienced moving to that city, really where everyone was so, I mean, some of it felt so nice that it was fraudulent. And I know that a lot of people have a similar criticism of LA versus New York or London or whatever. But it was really good for my confidence, I felt like it filled, it put the wood-filler in between the little gaps and the cracks in my musical competence and just that feeling of you

can do what you want you want to do, if you want to do it, you can do it. You don't have to go through some outrageous long form process to write your own album to perform at a venue where people are going to be watching you, like it all felt, really within reach.

LL - 54:05

I feel like Australian culture to the UK, I think, I feel like we're quite aligned in our sort of cynicism. So, when we people are super nice, or not entrepreneurial, but just like positive thinking we are like hmm, yeah. How we make connections or how we make friends. We're a bit more standoffish [..]. And also, I think, like, you've got like in LA got art schools like CalArts and all those sort of things. And maybe there is more this lack of inhibitions, I don't know what the word is. But yeah, let's just make it happen.

SM - 54:49

Yeah. And some of that probably is a little bit put on and there is a transparency or like, plastic element to those gestures. But at the same time for someone who was raised in Australia where the tall poppy syndrome was rife, and if you ever talked about anything that you've done, or any accomplishment or any dream that you had, you would be cut down in a minute. Huge amount of cynicism.

LL - 55:26

I think that UK-wise as well. Yeah. Just challenging that. And it was interesting in that time period. There's sort of a half liberalness in the UK, where you've got like Tony Blair, and Labour and, like, things can only get better, around that. So maybe they was a bit of optimism before England went to shit, but there was like, yeah, you always don't over talk yourself. You know, if you're going a bit above your station..

SM - 55:49

Oh, never, never, you're always downplaying. I had to kick out, I had to destroy a part of my personality that I thought was that I thought was absolute, an essential, and that was my unnerving levels of self-deprecation. I couldn't take the compliment, [..] things like that. So, it was a huge cultural shock, as well. And also, I mean, just on an emotional level, it's probably not relevant to our conversation. But I do remember being good talking to the bass player of my band, because I thought I was doing the thing that I do to all of my friends. I grew up in Australia, where everyone takes the piss out of each other. And that's how you express affection for other people. You make fun of them. And I was so unaware of the fact that I was doing this. But certain Americans don't enjoy that kind of game. So I had to learn very quickly too. Now I recognize it so much in a lot of Australian friends that I have and I find it kind of difficult as well. But I had to unlearn. I had to, like dismantle that brainwashing of feeling, like, not only hard on yourself, you're just so hard on everyone else. And it's this constant feedback loop of cynicism, and pessimism. That was a huge shift that I had to undertake, or wanted to undertake when I moved to Los Angeles.

LL - 57:32

Yeah, I think it's same with British, when you spend time in London, everyone's a piss taker and that sort of morale. But maybe it's interesting, that cynicism, like when we talk about Warp records and stuff, there's that darkness, if you're watching a Aphex Twin video, let's say like, Come to Daddy, sometimes it plays into the art as well, this slightly fucked up culture thing. Okay, so Warpaint then what happens then? but they had an EP before you joined, right?

SM - 58:12

When I joined it was less about, "we're going to play this EP out" and it was more like we're writing an album right now so if this works out, hopefully this works out, then you'll join us in the studio, and we'll make this record together. Just a couple of months before we actually went into the studio, I joined the band and started playing with them and during the process of making that record, I remember the conversation, having a gin and tonic at the bar in between takes, on our dinner break from the studio a being a conversation like, you're in the band now, whether you like it or not. So, it was a very organic kind of thing. It was never business. He was very friendly. It was very creative.

LL - 59:08

So that was the first time you felt like you're in a music project that really felt like your own because you've been in the other bands. But this felt like your own identity, creative vision.

SM - 59:20

There was so much enthusiasm and encouragement to develop and to introduce creative ideas and not just play the drums. I have a say in arrangements, I can play some synth in, I want to put piano on this song that was all free for all, there were no set roles or set goalposts that had to be adhered to. It was very free. And I loved that aspect. You know, and it just felt like that sensation of not really knowing what it is that you want, but then when you experience it, you realize that's what you've been looking for.

LL - 59:59

Yeah. I feel like that would be *The Fool* record, right? So then, but I feel like when I heard that, it was quite ambitious. I loved it how bass heavy it was like, my car almost rumbled but also you could tell that they were blending the worlds that you're talking about basically. So you'll see, I'm just interested to know the execution or was that all created in the studio, then you found a way to play that out? Or how did that sort of vision come out for that first?

SM - 1:00:36

I think we played some of those songs while we were recording, we were doing a few shows. [..] We were performing these really fundamental elemental versions of those songs live. And then in the studio, obviously,[..] we could put down a drum machine or we could sample something and fill up a space with non conventional or non-rock instruments. And, then it became once we decided upon that, then, to be honest, a lot of the songs that were more electronic, or were more ambitious sonically, we couldn't really play them live, or we had to, we had to reimagine them, if we wanted to play them live.

LL - 1:01:30

How would you do that, though? Were you taking stuff on stage with you?

SM - 1:01:41

Yeah, it was a lot of trial and error, basically. So like, I remember, everyone was like, we have to have this keyboard intro for this one song. So I remember taking like my little Casio SK1 and travelling around Europe with that and just like sitting and playing that and kind of just trying to figure it out.here was never a conversation about playing anything to track. I had the old SPDX but I feel like maybe I introduced that later. You know, that was halfway through that tour which were very long tours, probably two and a half years. But it was very flying by the

seat of our pants, trying to recreate some of those things and definitely discussing what the fundamental elements of each song were.. Like could we still get this point across without, a grand piano or, double tracking a bass or, a drum machine, or if there was a drum machine part, like there's a song called *Bees*, which I think initially, I think we tried to play it with a drum sample, which was like this called Korg KPR 77 that I had, we put it through like a POG pedal, like a harmonizer pedal a just didn't want to do that and we didn't have samplers at the time on stage. So I think I just decided I was going to play the intro. I'm playing the drum machine intro on the drums and just trying to. Like, yet, I'm experimenting with different solutions for those problems. And sometimes we just found that song called *Shadows*, which is really crazy rich in terms of the different instruments that are happening. Almost, I think critically, I would say, a bit too much is going on there. But when we tried to recreate that song live, we realised that we couldn't really get that message across in some functional way. So we just never really played that song live after that, after it had been reimagined in the studio,just like, we didn't even try a more stripped down version of or open or anything. It was just just not gonna play that one live. That's just it. Now through our albums, and the more experimental that we get with certain textures, you know we try and do things, we try and recreate things and sometimes it just, we just all know, deep down inside, we can all agree that it's not we're not serving the song by performing it or recreating it in this particular way.

LL - 1:04:51

I've got, like, a two folded question to this one. I want [..] the progression because I remember a documentary on the 808, you've got Phil Collins, he was this quite virtuosic drummer, right? And then he started doing tracks like *In the Air Tonight*. And it's just like a really simple beat. And he was like, I can do all these rolls, but I just want to serve the song with this drum machine. And I just wondered, on how your drumming style, when you decide to change, perhaps where you used to show off, show these feats of drumming but then maybe you've changed or your values might change? And, also [..] how you might be adapting a kit. So maybe if you wanted to create, like an 808 snare, you might have, like, cymbals on the snare and prepared different techniques like that.

SM - 1:05:48

More avant-garde techniques. Yeah, I think, I guess in answer to the first part of that question, I definitely have noticed, or made a very conscious decision to lean on the musicality of drumming more than definitely more than the athletic side of it, which I, as I said, was preoccupied with when I was younger, and as a female musician aswell, I always felt like I had something to prove. And I was [..] rewarded for being a typical, so I was rewarded, often for playing hard and for being impressive and having chops and all that kind of stuff. And so I definitely attached part of my drumming style to that need for approval and once I realised that there was a deep musical objective, that was more appealing and felt better to me, especially after joining a band and doing a lot of session stuff, where it really doesn't serve you to show off or to be the soloist. the most part, the more of that experience that I had in studios, the more there were certain requests and certain philosophies that became regularities. And so I almost adopted that wanting to please people-please but also wanting to be involved in the ceremony of music and wanting to be involved with as many genres as possible and as many artists as possible, because I found that so satisfying. I almost wanted to precede the request, or kind of predict what someone's going to ask me and be in that mental space already. And then over time, I realised that that was far more satisfying than chops and showing off and all that kind of stuff. Also listening back to a lot of songs where someone is asking me to play so

simple and in the moment, there's something in my ego that's battling up against that creative decision but because it's somebody's album, I have to satisfy that vision and then listening back to that and thinking, this is the greatest thing I've ever done. Or the greatest contribution I've made, where I'm musically so connected to this, regardless of whether I'm a part of it or not, I'm just enjoying this music so much more than I was really enjoying some of the music when maybe I was coming from a different place philosophically. [..] And also, I think that to your second question, or maybe a little bit of both. I'm just listening to, again, kind of expanding my musical education and maybe not consciously, but definitely, like leaning towards hip-hop structures rhythmically. So if you haven't been listening to a lot of that music, but also IDM and a lot Warp records stuff, they kind of follow a similar philosophy rhythmically. And I was listening to primarily just that music, so I thought it made a lot more sense to [..] absorb them and metabolize those philosophies and be able to express them in music. Like, I want to make the music that I want to listen to, I don't make music that people are going to be clapping and applauding and rewarding me for, for being fast and loud, there was very much like, I want to contribute to the feeling that I'm having, listening to this song. So, I want to be involved in the world of music. And those things like a lot of those what Warp records, artists and bands, and those albums and a lot of hip hop tracks. [..] The anatomy of the beat is so perfect, that nothing really changes throughout the whole song. Whereas in rock music and pop music, there's kind of this almost, it's like a very involved soundtrack in a film. So it's always telling you, this is what you have to feel the chorus is coming, it's going to be arrived and then the bridge, that's when you kind of go off and you do a big fill, and then you come back into the last chorus, and then you start playing on the crash, there's all these kind of these tricks and these structures that have been adhered to for decades now. And I was so obsessed with the way that, an Aphex song or Mark Bell song, or, even like a J Dilla track or something was one beat, and it's so good, that you don't need anything else. You hardly need melodic information. And so that hugely influenced how I approached drumming, and I'm not able to get there, but at least I'm, that's my intention. That's my absolute goal, as opposed to what it was before, which was, look at what I can do. No one really wants to hear that drummer on a record, the drummer is that that's asking you pleading for your attention.

LL - 1:12:14
I'm quite interested in it being longer form and this idea of egolessness because of the loop. So you can just be longer formed and less about yourself and put your print on it, serving the song and the other better. And again, I'm quite interested as well in the rise of hip-hop issues and use of samplers and then, like, DJ Shadow's album Entroducing coming out. And yeah, [..] everything became more focused on loop-based composition and longer form things. So I remember that on your playlist you had, like, Theo Parrish.[..] Influences from techno and house. So. it [..] expanded on what you just said about serving the song and loop based orientated genres like IDM styles. Maybe was that also an influence as well?

SM - 1:13:26
Yeah, [..] that became more and more than music that I found myself listening to above all else. And, I guess we've touched upon this a little bit, or a lot of this was in that article that you sent me where people were, like, now, I'm so obsessed with breaks, and I want to make my own breaks. But I'm also obsessed with not only the way that it's played (like a jungle beat is played, and being able to execute that on a drum kit) but also, what's the original break, playing that Amen break, playing the funky drummer break, like getting into the anatomy of that, of that rhythm, but then also, kind of trying to recreate that or replicate that at 150 BPM? The

way that it is in like a Goldie track or a jungle track or whatever.[...] And that's what's interesting about all those kinds of music that have a very clear connection and a clear bridge to a lot of the other music that I listened to, which is mostly 60s and 70s music, and 60s and 70s artists and bands. They're not separate, they're very much like made of the same quantum particles-basically musically. [..] I think when I started listening to, like, electronic music and a lot more hip hop, I realised that there was this real reverence in this. I mean even like a hip hop band sampling Steely Dan or something like that. To me that's like, that explains everything that I love about music right there.

LL - 1:15:20
And what's that? I just pushed it a little bit. And I realise.

SM - 1:15:34
No, no I'm not. I'm just really good. I just want to say this eloquently.

LL - 1:15:41
So let's think about the recorded format, right? So I'm quite interested in this thing I call this authenticity loop. I guess it's almost like we spoke that you would be sitting there, your headphones replicating parts, then you re-record that, then something else falls out that, then people play that again, live and all this, you get this chain of something recorded, imitation, recorded, imitation type of thing.

SM - 1:16:06
And then a band recreating the recorded imitation as a rock band, or it's like this? Yeah, it's this constant [..] lineage, musical lineage and there's so much reverence, and so much respect, for the raw material. But there's also the complete opposite, obfuscating something to throw something out the window, it completely disregards it at the same point. So it's made of those things it's made. There's a hip hop song that I can't remember who it was, but I've watched it on the classic albums on the Steely Dan, Aja classic albums, some hip hop group sampled Black Cow, which is I think, the first song on Ajaand they probably, they might love Steely Dan, I don't know. But also, it's not essential to the creation of that song, it's not a tribute to the songs, not a cover of that song. They couldn't care less, perhaps they could care less about the intention of that song, the lyrical content of that song, it's focusing on the attractive elements of every style of music, and then being able to (without real permission), being able to manipulate that and create a whole new art form from it. And then that's not the end of the process, the process continues when people, apply a baseline, that kind of sounds like that Steely Dan sample, but it's been tuned, it's been pitched, it's been played on an MPC, it's been cut up, and then someone's replicating that, and then someone's going to sample that band that's replicating. And so it's this regurgitation, but there's an irreverence and disconnect. There's so many elements of it, that I just… it's almost mind blowing that process. And for me, it was exciting because it connected so many things for me. Musically, I was attracted to all these musical coordinates, and I felt like I wanted to know more about them more to learn about them from the inside out, or learning a song or whatever it was, and then exploring and engaging in electronic music and hip hop music and sample based music, and just how, how linked these two things are. It's almost a validation for everything that came before. So yeah, that's, that's the least clumsy way I can put this.

LL - 1:18:50

[..] I got two things I was thinking about when you're talking. [..] I think it's, like, this weird myth that the rock band goes into the studio nothing gets manipulated, and it's the true voice of those people in the room and then you just replicate or you just execute that live, maybe with a longer outro traditionally, right? And then that's authentic. [..] The tradition of white guys going into a studio and then it replicates. That's just those guys who turn up and it's just like, even though it's heavily manipulated, the engineer has a massive role. And again, some of the stuff I've been researching, like, there's an article in 67', with a review of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* by The Beatles, and it gives George Martin the engineer like big heads up and they're like, we want to create these post-rock sounds, we want to push the future. And so yeah, I'm in a band, and you try and execute the authentic self and what's created in the studio, but what we actually say is we have great admiration for other artists who just treat it like a fine art and just say, I'm gonna just take this material and I'm going to leave or do that together and I can have also this freedom to perform in different ways. They're not restricted in this rock formation necessarily, they can just turn up with equipment like a beat artist just using a loop pedal. Yeah, you can do a new setup. So, you're playing festivals, and do you see other bands and if they have any different formation on stage, two drummers like anything?

SM - 1:20:27

Yeah, yeah, well, cuz most of the time now, it's very, it's less about like, oh, bloody rock band again! It's very… if there are three people on stage, there's like a female singer that is very aggressive and then just like to two men, with that London kind of studio acne look that are hiding behind laptops and controlling Ableton- that's become the conventional festival configuration for a band. there are a lot of festivals that we played in, a lot of festivals I've attended, that have very few rock bands and even from the time that we started touring as Warpaint to now, how that's just proliferated and how that's changed. It's so quick- the Reading and Leeds, still very, like, classically rock and roll or whatever. But, but for the most part, it's really the conventional setup, and so electronic now. It's changed so much.

LL - 1:22:13

So maybe we can bring our history up to date. So when this first album was released in 2010 [..] And we've just said about how the music scene changed so much in those 10 years. So perhaps we can bring up those sort of questions about, like you said, the use of Ableton. It's interesting with the whole discussion of festival lineups and representation [..] But we can chat about the last few albums, and maybe bleed out into a sort of expectation of what people want to see live. Okay, so then, because we were talking about you - were you taking certain equipment on stage and on tour with you in that first album to test things out? Yeah, then that, obviously, that was well received. And then, so what was the next stage? Because then also, when you were working with some of The XX also touring with them, as well, and then it was that sort of sound? Or?

SM - 1:23:31

Yeah, we did. Towards maybe halfway through that album tour, we went on tour with those guys. I'm still very close with them and still collaborate with them in different ways. The kind of music that they make, and also the kind of textures that they use, I can really relate to and I find them exciting, because they are kind of a hybrid band in a way. But they do perform the

things, there's not a lot of sequence or programmed stuff. It's very much performed, but it utilises classically electronic elements. But yeah, I think that we always wanted to play with more electronic textures. I got that new SPD-FX which was so much easier to program shortly after that tour. And when we started writing the next album, which was our self-titled album, we basically wrote most of a large chunk of it in Joshua Tree in a dome. o much of the textural sounds, so much of the stuff that we recorded there actually made it to the album because Flood was not opposed. He was very useful, so enthusiastic about keeping the things that we couldn't really recreate and keeping the kind of skeletal elements of the music that he felt would feel strange to redo or take out. So,I started getting more into recording at that point, kind of just by proxy, because I had Pro Tools, and I was using that a little more. So, we kind of just did a very basic set up in this living room, but a lot of the toys that we brought to that month-long period influenced, in a huge way, the kind of textures that we then use a lot more. So, we had a Nord Electro, I think, sorry, the Nord lead, which Emily had, I had just bought that new SPD- FX. So, I put so many samples on it, like 909 kits, 808 kits. I'd sampled like Nina Simone songs, just really started getting into the experimental aspects of certain machines. I had my SH101 there, I had some other drum machines, but for the most part, it was then the SPD-FX, and less about like, write these songs in this very basic way and then we'll kind of add these little sprinkles of electronic elements. It was very much from the very moment that we created those songs, those textures were essential to the way that we played them and they weren't an afterthought. They were (part of them was) structurally, foundationally important to the music that we're making. So, there's a very organic thing, it wasn't like, okay, we're gonna make our synth album now or something. It was just, that's what was around, that's what we had and a lot of that stuff we have always wanted to use and always enjoyed using. So that was a plus. And then that kind of that same approach. The third album, we did a lot more on the computer. Yeah, so a lot more on our individual computer. So when we made the second record, I was the proxy, almost by accident, I was kind of the in-house engineer, just like bringing up the sessions and kind of changing sounds and doing things on a very elemental level. And then, by the time we were making the next record, everyone had Ableton or Logic or whatever. So, everyone was kind of making demos for their solo records, or just had time off to learn how to do all those things. So, everyone had these demos that were living on their individual computers. And so a lot of the album was made, it's very much like a techie record, even though we did recreate a lot of that, and write a lot of that live and recorded live. The seedling of a lot of those ideas was made on computers. So yeah, I think the technology's always been a very dominant aspect in the way that we make music as a band. Whether we've harnessed any kind of expertise or anything, throughout that time is kind of irrelevant. It's more like the enthusiasm for those things and saying [..] what, how far we can get, basically, and then hopefully, those skills improving over time. And because I was the only one with Pro Tools or with Logic or whatever, on my computer. Through that, through having to have that role a few times, I've started to enjoy that role. And now I really love making music on the computer, and I really love engineering. It's not a chore. It's an experiment, and it's a creative venture for me, but I might have never done it if I didn't have to record a song that we were jamming on that weren't like voice memos on the iPhone, back in 2010. Not that I can remember. So, I had to bring my laptop to rehearsals. We were writing songs for The Fool so we had some form of demos, so we could remember what everyone was playing. But yeah, there is definitely, like, a thread of stuff. That same kind of enthusiasm for electronic textures and music that's been there for as long as I've been a part of the band.

LL - 1:30:05
Yes, I think always that some of the best engineers I know are drummers too because I think there's a whole different perspective. Maybe just literally because you're sitting at the back of it or there's just like a different aspect that sometimes is how the stereo image fits into your ears. So yeah, it's interesting that you said that you took that role for a while. And I just think sometimes drummers have that sort of overall "seeing the bigger picture", where I think sometimes guitarist (me being one) we end quite a bit more in in your own head.

SM - 1:30:41
I've never really thought about it.

LL - 1:30:46
So maybe, I don't want to take your time anymore. But this has been beautiful. I felt like we could just keep talking for ages.

SM - 1:30:57
We could literally talk for hours.

LL - 1:31:00
I think that would be nice - perhaps we could finish up on that second album. You started to, like, integrate more of your demos into each other. And it became like more of an intrinsic part of the creative process. We can talk more about the recent releases and if you perceive the studio as an instrument in itself, and how integral that is. And perhaps finishing on what the future looks like, like what we see performance going into. And so yeah, maybe we can talk about that record, your demo in that out. And then the next one came out after it and sort of that progression, perhaps and how things change?

SM - 1:31:54
So it went from less home recordings on the second album, and more still relying on demos, capturing the band playing live in some kind of environment and that being the fundamental building block of that record and the production. Yeah, but once we brought in another mind and another talent, and then, I think the leaning more into our own personal computers and Ableton-ing and Logic-ing. All that stuff got everyone kind of utilising these computer programs as compositional tools instead of relying on "Okay, I want to write this part, so can we get together at 6pm and perform this and arrange this song together." It opened up the possibility for individual experiments to occur and for ideas to be fully realised, musically and creatively without the need for anybody else's help or assistance, or, for that matter, their physical presence in the room. So that was a really interesting change and definitely, I can hear the difference in that record. And I experienced a difference with it because there were attachments to a certain thing, and I think some of that is really good and some of that can be very challenging, but it's just different. You know, it's a different way of composing than it is when you're leaning on and depending on the influence of your band members, it becomes a more insular creative experience. So we also recorded the whole album, for the most part with, like, very few sessions at kind of another home studio. We recorded it in our rehearsal space, which is acoustic. I mean, we had to do so much to get it to end up to snuff acoustically. It was really raw space- massive high ceilings, reflective surfaces everywhere, an enormous glass window that spans the width of the whole room. So we had to put up so many panels and, kind of, restrict and control the sound. But it was really interesting because certain things like

there's a sound on this song called *Dre* where I'm playing the SPD-FX and we're getting a direct signal that's going into the ProTools rig on the other side of the room but the sound of it coming out of the speaker into a room mic ended up being the ambient sound for that whole song and determined and influenced the sonic palette of that song. Nothing was even written before I started playing that part and so that was very much using the room or the room using us to make some creative decisions. A lot of that kind of stuff happened and I think that we're really good at harnessing, finding the excitement and the spontaneity and those kind of sonic experiments, even if they're not consciously experiments, just accidents. Being able to harness them and say, "Alright, yes!" and let's continue from that idea which on a very basic level is exciting to all of us at this moment so, let's continue that and build upon that. The other thing that I remember happening is, not so much a creative thing, but it was something that we were up against all the time- there was a guy that we called Dub man. He was a guy who just played dub music very loud in the two rooms down our studio hallway and it would always start at like 7pm so past then we couldn't cut vocals or do anything like that. one night it was so loud and it was just like this static white noise, the sound of, like, a vacuum cleaner and I had a new app on my phone called Looper. I don't know, if you've seen it, it's basically just, like, little dots that are basically sample destinations. I can press on one of them and it will capture a sound and then you can manipulate the sample, you can have it looping in reverse, you can chop it up, whatever you want to do. So we built a whole beat. I went out there and I recorded different parts of this horrendous white noise that was coming from Dub man and then went back into the studio plugged my iPhone into Pro Tools rig and played this beat, which has to sound like a vacuum cleaner. That was another way of, like, utilising this unfortunate musical environment that we found ourselves in. But it was a really good way to counter the fact that a lot of the stuff, that a lot of the songs, had started in this very "in the box" way and this very contained kind of fashion. So we went into this room which had its own restrictions and its own limitations but very much influenced by the structure of the room and our environment and our neighbours.

LL -1:37:52

Yeah, I think is [..] really cool example because I have this feeling that from you as a band, it's almost like you have this big studio influence in your work. But when you actually see you guys live, then it actually feels quite jam orientated. Some sections, obviously, you can just go for one. I wondered perhaps how you strike that balance because you said earlier, "I prefer the studio, but maybe not performance." But actually, it seems like you're really influenced by bringing that sonic palette, but then it also feels quite free at the same time so you're not always restricted to click or on grid. It feels like there's quite a freedom for you guys.

SM - 1:38:39

And I think we bring that into the studio as well, that same thing that you're talking about. And some of the stuff that we compose starts from that same kind of energy. So we do jam a lot, we write things when we're jamming. We definitely used to a lot more, but we still try to now get through creative roadblocks by just playing something even if it's already recorded, it's already been recorded already sitting in the box, getting it out of the box and into our hands, and then extending that and manipulating that and coming up with something that's probably going to be better. So, it's definitely not a restrictive environment in the studio for us. It definitely feels that jamming thing, that tendency we have to jam on stage is definitely a small part of the way that we function in the studio environment, which is even more experimental and even more free at times where anything goes and I don't have to be playing drums. Well, Teresa

could be playing drums and I'm playing my Juno or something, . I probably play as much of other instruments on the records than I do drum. I'm more than happy to have other people program a beat or whatever. The goalposts and the roles, so valuable. And that's what makes it really interesting because it's not just one person's mind rhythmically, and you're the only one that can come up with guitar parts. It's like, we're this creative entity. That's [..] all this creative whole, that's able to dip in and out of different responsibilities and different. Yeah, different responsibilities in different roles creatively, which make keeps it interesting for us.

LL - 1:40:42
I can definitely see that. I also think the points [..] I'm talking about the role of the guitarist that has dramatically changed. We've not got the Guitar Hero anymore. That's why I like more timbral effects of guitars or minimal approaches, or this sort of thing, like what you're saying. So if you're interested in EDM, the sort of rhythm parts can take more, not even a forefront. But just like you can end up with a slightly more transient state that's not so focused on roles. And yeah, and I think the switch of guitar playing has really helped with that. So I think, which is why I feel more comfortable in that zone. And I've related quite a lot to what you spoke about so far. I'll play these math rock festivals, because I feel like I have to prove my chops and my worth, but actually to restrain yourself and think less is more and all this is a beautiful place to be. I think letting go of ego and certain roles and saying, like, even if you feel you're not the best keys player, if you don't really feel the best guitarist, you can just switch instruments and input in that way.

SM - 1:41:57
Yeah! I think also in terms of changing the role of the guitarist, or like a melodic or harmonic player in a band and how much that changes, I also noticed just how interchangeable synthesizers and guitars are for the guitar players. And the same as in Warpaint - there's one in the same, it's sometimes both it's sometimes either or, but it's very much expressing the same thought. It's just using a different texture to express the same thought and what elements that song has in that moment. But it's not, it's never a feeling of this is definitely a guitar song, it's more just like, "what's the correct tone for it?".It doesn't matter whether it's soft synth or analog synth or a guitar through 500 pedals - what are you trying to achieve? It's less of a conscious electronic versus acoustic or traditional versus unconventional decision. It's very much about satisfying the role in that moment or achieving the goal musically, compositionally.

LL - 1:43:16
That was a beautiful soundbite, that last sentence was very cool. I like that.
I think what you spoke about, it's always really nice for me because I've been writing this for x amount of years and if I speak to other musicians, like yourself, and I think in this way, it sort of rectifies what I know, especially in the last 10 years that we've just spoken about. There's been such a shift and things like the mids in production when you talk about the girl ethereal singer with the Ableton producers, it is almost like it causes a loss of that role, because they don't really even need the mid in production. It's almost like you want, like, vocals on the top and low bass frequencies.

SM- 1:44:02
Vice versa. Bass and Sub.

LL - 1:44:05

I'm interested to know what the future will be and it's interesting [..] with the synth and modular revival. People think when you put synth on the guitar, it's like a nerd world, if you put it on the keys, it's okay. So I'm intrigued. I'm interested to see how this sits, or whether we'll still be playing in band formats, or?

SM - 1:44:29

I think I have no idea but I will say that the best way to answer that question, there are two things that come to mind. One is that there will never not be live bands. The performance of acoustic instruments will never go out of style, even if it's kind of a nostalgic reference, not so much something that's the stylistic choice,[..] it's always because that music, acoustic music and samples and stuff like that, they are always a fundamental part of any kind of music, whether it's electronic or otherwise. I don't think that will ever go away. And that will never go out of style. Even if it's reimagined, which is constantly being reimagined, so I don't know how that's going to look but it's always going to exist. I don't think people have completely explored the limits of that, or the limits of hybrid performance, yet. I think that's just starting, and there are still conventional rock bands and then there are these new schools, primarily electronic acts. But the grey area or the kind of the centre of that Venn diagram, I don't think that's been explored to its logical conclusion, just yet. I think there's a clumsy kind of pioneering spirit that now, or has, revolved around that small kind of niche market in music for the last maybe 10 or 15 years and I think that's only going to develop in a really interesting way over the next few decades. The other thing that I think about is this really amazing, sounds like a plug, but there's an amazing drum trigger company called Sun House. And so a couple of those things actually went to the factory and played the triggers. I realised that felt like a really amazing, extraordinary example of that hybrid performance, where it's not this, the thing that you kind of miss as a traditional instrumentalist is the expression and the velocity of certain parts of your playing, and that unquantize, or out of slightly out of tune, or inconsistent expression. When you're performing, or playing an acoustic instrument, even if it is an electric guitar, or drum kit, or whatever, there's still a human element to it and I think that technology like that, for example, bridges that gap in a way that I've never necessarily seen before. It is very exciting because it includes that human flaw and that human expression into a primarily electronic world so being able to use your natural physical velocity and playing a snare drum. That transforms the sample, however you want, whether it makes it softer and louder. whether you're turning up the effects, that thing that you're talking about, with the way the drummer kind of can't really explore sonic possibilities, because there's just not enough limbs and they don't have pedals the way that a guitar player has pedals. It kind of brings that freedom and that flexibility into the drummer's hands because of this remarkable technology. And so, who knows how interesting, it's right now, it seems more of like a performance tool than a studio tool. But it's very possible that that kind of bionic technology starts to influence the creative process of musicians. And there's going to be, I'm sure, so many different examples of that, that I can't even dream of or fathom, because even the knowledge of that new technology blew my mind when I first discovered it. And I thought, that's genius, you know. [..] I just think that there's going to be I'm excited about that technology and how it integrates the human, the very visceral experience of playing an instrument and how that's interpreted or trends transposed into these kinds of electronic textures.

LL - 1:49:54
Yeah, and again, another killer quote, like that whole bit [..] You seem to have quite an optimistic approach. We spoke briefly about Black Mirror societies, you have this sort of ultimate optimism, perhaps which I do too. It's almost like the same thing, when cameras were put in people's hands, they were like, that's not true art, that's just a representation of the photo. But what we're saying here is, don't worry the human will not get lost. But the execution or this hybrid approach, is gaining more what I think sort of happened with the laptop guys or something, [..] and I'm quite interested, I think people were so worried that they wouldn't be taken seriously if using laptop as an instrument.

SM – 1.50.20
Doctors of Ableton.

LL – 1.50.34
But what's happening with some stuff in tech like that. Don't worry, you can still move, you can still be performative with this, and you can let your ego go. And there's can be this optimism that we could explore this hybrid approach. And it's, it's all good. So I love that quote, then.

SM - 1:51:11
Yeah. And then I also think, maybe as a last point, or in addition to that, people still require and desire authenticity. So, if they didn't care about any of that human aspect of musical performance or composition, then everything would be programmed, and everything would be a Milli Vanilli show, and you would just have somebody on stage singing along to a track and there's nobody else there. And that happens sometimes. But that's not enough, I think, for people and I don't think that will ever be enough. I think the more rapid and kind of loud technology is in [..] a global scale, not just musically, but the more that we're saturated with technology and the speed of technology, the more that we require and desire, like authenticity and humanity in music. And so it's always going to come back around, it's going to reach this critical mass of just a little too synthetic for me and then there's going to be a shift back into something that's, you know, everyone's going to be playing hurdy gurdy music, Reading and Leeds, you know?

LL - 1:52:36
You never know. Because, like, you know, you're talking about using your dad's studio, if that sort of time is like 80s tech and stuff and then there was like a big, you know, sort of MTV Unplugged in the 1990s. The retaliation against the digital world. But then I think like, we're in the digital world, but then I think a lot of techno people are playing jazz and a lot of rockers are playing like techno. So I think this is weird, sort of like a hybrid of the two. But yeah, like you said, I think this is like this space to be explored.

LL - 1:53:09
But yeah, I'll let you go. [..]

SM – 1:53:14
A lot of great, great conversation. So I don't think an hour would have been enough.

LL - 1:53:23

There are so many more bits I could talk about, I think we touched upon a lot of points that I've been looking at and stuff. And it seems like a really quite similar wavelength to me. [..] I will transcribe this and send it to you. And then hopefully we can sort of like archive this time of music making and people's views.

SM 1:53:48

And don't hesitate. If there's something that you're like, I forgot to ask you about that. Or whatever. Just be in touch.

LL 1:56:41

So welcome to the world of academia. Please come again.

Oakenfold, P (2021)

Oakenfold, P (2021)
Artist Interview: Paul Oakenfold
Interview by Laura Lee
[Online] 02.02.2021

PO - 0.00
My dad would take my mum out and they would be getting ready to go out and they would be playing the Beatles and Elvis in the background. So as a kid my first understanding of music was when, you know, I am sitting around and you don't realise at that age that you're going to [...] cut to ten years later that I can sing all the lyrics to a bunch of people's tracks and I'm like – how do I know all this? – and then my mum said, "Well, you know it all because of, you know, me and your father would be playing all our favourite records and those records that you know every word to and learnt when you was that age, are these records." That's how it kind of came around.

LL – 0.50
So, was it just listening straight up, just audio, to the records or were you watching it on television and just performing [...]?

PO – 0.56
Straight up audio, you know they were playing 7 -inch records. And [...] without knowing it, that became a big moment for me [...] Cut to 14, 15 when you're living, growing up in England, you're listening to Radio 1, I started to buy records and I was buying 7-inch records that I was listening to on the radio, or my mum or dad would say, "Check this out." So that was the birth of my record collection. And to this day, I'm still buying vinyl.

LL – 01:34
So that's when the love of vinyl came around [...] How were you visualising that? Was it sort of [...] absorbing the artwork? Which first Beatle record was it that switched that for you?

PO – 01:49
I think you've touched on a great subject there – artwork. I mean in today's world there is no such thing, really. I mean, most music is streamed, you don't really get to hold a record or look at the artwork or the producing, the photography – you don't see all that. I mean there was gate-fold sleeves […] I know that some records are released on vinyl, some artists that are album signed artists do release on vinyl, but 95% of dance music is not.

LL – 02:25
Yeah, and that's what I sort of feel like, what I'm quite interested in. When I read about Sergeant Pepper and this switch for the Beatles, it's almost like to get artistic gravitas beyond them being pop artists, they had to venture into this exploration of artwork. I feel like that's when they started to get taken more seriously outside popular culture. I just wondered what you thought about that switch when they started to embrace the White Album and that switch for them?

PO – 03:01

What, in terms of the Beatles? I have a bunch of people's albums. I don't really play them much now, to be honest with you. I don't know too much about that to answer that question. I mean, I don't really know, to be honest with you.

LL – 03:32

I just think what was quite interesting about that time, is when rock artists started to really lean into some sort of experimentalism, some use of sound collage and they started going somewhere –

PO – 03:34

Do you think that had anything to do with drugs?

LL – 03.46

Yeah, obviously there was a big influence of drugs and spiritualism and this switch in the ethos of artmaking, and the visions and the sound words you could create in a record beyond authentic live takes in a room. And this is what I am particularly interested in.

PO – 04:08

I think that to try to help you focus on that question – which I think is a pretty good question, actually – I've been there, not in respect of where the Beatles were, but, when I was producing, remixing a lot, where it was U2, Madonna, Happy Mondays, Chilli Peppers, blah blah blah. That was a long time ago and music was so, so different. I would produce a Platinum album by the band called Happy Mondays – don't know if you've heard of them.

LL – 04:55

Yeah. I was going to get up to the Manchester scene soon, so, yeah, that's what I'm quite interested in.

PO – 05.03

So, we go to Peter Gabriel's studio in a small place called Box, just outside Bath, a residential studio and we'd spend six weeks. So it's me, Steve, and my musical partner at the time, and the band and we start working and then the band left and I stayed and started working on my own album. So, I spent 3 months living above a recording studio, totally locked into music, didn't go home, right? And you start to dig deep. You have time to think about music. You find yourself in a really, creative place. And I think that's where you see all these great albums – Queen to The Beatles. That was the method of how you worked, then. Then I came to Los Angeles. I spent two months working at Capitol Records and I had time to be creative. You know, you may one night get drunk, and smoke weed and listen to music in a completely different way to when you're listening to it now, right? So that was then. You cut too now. It's a business, it really is, and you don't have the luxury of someone paying for you to go to Peter Gabriel's studio - at a thousand pound a day. You don't have that luxury. So, what everyone does now, the modern producer, he produces music on his laptop and from anywhere. I have a recording studio at my house, but I don't tend to use all and everything that I used to because I don't have to – it's dance music. I don't necessarily like it, to be honest. I come from that school of thought where you put me in a room for five days and turn off the phone and I can really dig deep and get very, very creative. But now music's not made like that. Unless you are some of the old acts and what they do is they make an

album, then they go on tour, then they have a break, and then they make an album. In the electronic world, there is no break. You put a tune out. If the tune happens, great. If it doesn't – you're on to the next one.

LL – 07.45
I think it was quite interesting when you were saying that when you were brought in (as) producer, the sort of luxury of that experimentation. I'm quite interested in the role of producer. So, you think of some rock albums, they tried to start covering up the producer and say it was just all down to the individuals of the band and of the rock musicians. But then you have Motown, and people like yourself that are brought in, fundamentally, to shift that sound. The way that people like Happy Mondays knew how to make music was playing music in a room. So, why do you think that it was so fundamental to bring people like yourself in to shift that kind of vision?

PO – 08:30
What we did with the Happy Mondays was that we brought more than just producing the record in a stronger direction, which we think was important, but with my name at that time, coming from electronic music, it brought a different sound. If you listen to their album before me and then one with me, you'll see that the sounds, the arrangements, are very much, a lot different. That's kind of how it worked with that band. Now with other artists – I think that what George did with the Beatles, he just put it, in my opinion as a producer, I think what he did, he just put it all together in a great way. In some respects, he was known as the fifth Beatle. I would love to have heard The Beatles without his production because then you could see the value that he brings. You listen to Happy Mondays before me, and then after and you will hear what the producer brings.

LL – 10:02
And do you think that gets lost in translation sometimes? That's why I'm talking to a lot of producers. How does it get lost? Your time and value aren't archived or spoken about […] Why is it getting lost?

PO – 10:19
It does get lost. I think, it's just the understanding of the general public. Do the general public – do they know what a producer is? That's what it boils down to. If you go and watch a movie, you go and watch a movie for the actors. Think of an obvious big director – Steven Spielberg. I will go and watch every Steven Spielberg movie because I know about film, and I am a fan of the director. But generally, I think that people go and watch movies because of the actors. It's the same with music. People may not know the producer is a part of it. Of course, the band does.

LL – 11:18
Yes – and I wonder […] so, say for Happy Monday's you fundamentally shift and create a whole new sound world that they wouldn't do alone and you almost become part of the vision and part of the band identity.

LL – 11.28
Yes, I kind of agree in some respects.

LL: 11.:36

And you get sometimes lost and I wondered how you work with them, So they are, like, 'Great we work like this in the studio' so how is that translated live?

PO – 11:47

I've got to give credit to the band. I was very lucky with Happy Mondays because I did some remixes for them. So, what happened was I did some remixes, and they liked the remixes and they said, "That's the sound that we want." That being said, that's what we did. Now if I'd just come in from the cold, the process is you check out the producer's work beforehand and you say, 'You know what, I really like what he's doing let's get him in to produce my record.' And that's the process.

LL: 12:17

I just think, what I'm really interested in is how do bands [...] When people brought people like yourself in to produce records, that was the future [...] If you're inspired by Detroit Techno, that sound was like rave culture [...] that was the popular youth culture. How could the guitar or bands even compete with that sound? and I'm just interested in or even like I know you worked with Massive Attack. I think they've done great work in how they translate the studio into a live setting. Like, with them, how did you help them?

PO – 13:17

With Massive Attack, I did a lot of their mixes. I mean, that was a completely different approach. Massive Attack had their own vibe, their own sound and they just wanted my flavour on it. But, my background, because of my parents and my dad being a musician, me learning music was songs. So, I always play to the strength of the *songs* first of all. So, Massive Attack, even though there's a lot of good rhythm, the songs are there for me. So that's why I decided to work with them.

LL: 13:49

Like, with any of these artists, if you strip it right down to a piano and an acoustic guitar and then you can elevate it to something else that could never be communicated without this sort of electronic production [...] I don't know how you feel about that. Do you sometimes work like that, where you strip it right down to a song with the artists or [...] how do you work?

PO – 14.10

I can and I've done that. I think melody is really important. So, I might start with that, but then [...] I don't know. For me, there isn't a clear format where you go 'right, this is what we're going to do'. Each song, I kind of look at it in its own way and go 'OK, let's approach it in this way' rather than doing something different, if that makes sense?

LL – 14:41

That's what gets lost in translation sometimes, the role of the producer, the holistic or like intuitive [...] off the cuff. You might have X amount of days in the studio with people, and how you build a rapport and how you get the best out of people in that time.

PO – 14.49

You're right, it's the rapport [...] sometimes it doesn't work and it's not a good feeling that you can't get across in terms of communication. I come from the electronic world, and you come

from the rock world and we just can't figure it out. Lucky for me growing up in (England) I'm into all kinds of music, but I've done writing sessions in Nashville with Country writers – good writers - who write top lines and I wrote the rhythm, and they just don't understand dance music and I'm like, ok, there's an arrangement and structure there – what is there not to understand? And they don't come from that world, they just don't get it. "Well, where's the bridge?" Well, you don't need a bridge in dance music. "We need a couple of verses." We don't need a couple of verses in dance music. And they're like "Where's the song?" The song's there - the interpretation of the song is a different vibe. You've got a musical line that's as strong as the chorus. And they're like, "Really?" and I'm like, "Yeah," and you walk away, and you think, well it didn't work. That's music.

LL - 16:29
What do you think gets lost in translation, though, between the worlds? Do you think it is just like you're just dealing with sound and samplers or drum machines, or [...]?

PO – 16:38
It's the understanding of genres. There are certain things in a genre of music whether it's heavy rock, country, hip-hop […] If you are only brought up and only play that sound, that's all you know. So, then you[...] If you gave me speed metal, I wouldn't know what the fuck's going on. I'd be like, ok, where are we going to start with this? In speed metal, there's shouting, screaming – well that doesn't work in electronic music. So how am I going to make that work? I don't know if it *can* work. But I'm the producer going into it open-minded and going 'let me figure this out.' A lot of people are not like that. A lot of people don't grow up […] You're from England, right?

LL – 17:39
Yeah, I'm from London.

PO – 17:44
Right, so there you go. You've grown up knowing Radio One, whether you listen to it or not. We grow up as English, we have festivals where you've got a dance tent, where you've got all different kinds of music, right, from Foo Fighters to Chemical Brothers, to Massive Attack, blah, blah. They don't have that in America. Even on their radio stations, they have *one* sound. So, you can't go to a radio station and hear Nirvana next to Bob Marley next to blah, blah, blah [...] next to the Prodigy. There's nothing like that in America, you tune in to *one* station with *one* sound. So, if you grow up that way, you just don't get it. And a lot of artists *don't* get it. That's the way it is.

LL – 18.36
This research is the first time music research like this has happened in an arts university. And it's almost like artists tend to be able to switch around genre styles a bit easier. I feel that musicians get very set in their ways. That's why I always gravitate to electronic musicians because I feel like you can be a bit more experimental and starting to use the Ableton and all this and it sort of like I can just defuse this language and get over our egos. I feel like rock musicians are very ego-centric. As an electronic musician, you can almost de-centre yourself and not be such in the centre. I don't know what your thoughts are about this.

PO – 19.18

I agree with everything you've said. I've been in a studio, you know, where you've got egos with named artists, and you don't care– it's music at the end of the day. And, believe me, I take music seriously. It's my life. It's my love. But at the end of the day, when you hear this tune, you're not going to go "Well that bass drum's out of time". You're not even going to know. Music's a vibe; music's how you feel. That's what music fundamentally is. It's not analysing the kick drum and going, "Well, the guitar's slightly too loud". People don't know that.

LL - 20:03

No, the average listener doesn't know that. And I think both on the record and in live context sometimes there is only a specific, small minority you are trying to please if your head is in that space, you know? And that sort of perfectionism. I don't know - how do you get over that sort of perfectionism?

PO – 20:20

Well, look, I strive [...] everything I do in terms of the live performance or making a record, I strive for the best. I mean, it's got to be the best. My own music's a problem for me because I do over-analyse it because I just want it to be the best. But, saying that, I sometimes know when to let it go. You've got to also understand. And it comes from experience. That's where it comes from, because if you go in the studio and you make a track, what do you want? you want it to be the best that you can do, right? So, you know, you go on the track, and you try your best and it just doesn't come out that way, so then you don't release it. But when I'm producing acts and I'm like "Look – you trust me?" "Yeah, I trust ya," "Well, then the guitar's are fine. Leave it." Then you go, "I've hired this producer to produce my records and I've hired him because I trust him and he's told me 'It's good enough,' so now let's move on."

LL – 21:38

Do you get your own levels of values of what is good enough? Because obviously when we are using the studio as our main tool to make this happen, obviously we can cut everything, we can quantise everything. So, do you do a lot of quantisation, or do you allow a lot of single takes? How do you [...]?

PO – 22:01

Well, if I was recording you, I'd record you singing the song four or five times and then you're done and then I will go through your vocals and find the best parts and put it together as a song. I move fast. But, saying that, that's if I was recording you. Now, let's put the shoe on the other foot. When I produce Cher, I produced Cher, right? I produced Madonna. They tell me what they want: "Right, Paul, this is how I record my vocals, I'm going to do line by line until I get it right." "Really? Ok." And that's what we do. Everyone has their own techniques.

LL – 22.57

Definitely. But do you do recording techniques to liberate people out of that perfectionism? Like, you might do single takes for certain people, but some people want to concentrate on vocal takes [...] Have you told people sometimes [...]?

PO – 23:10

I go into the studio with a blank piece of canvas, and I collaborate, and I collaborate in what is the best for you. If I'm producing you, then it's your record and what's the best for *you*. Now, if you're a guest vocalist on *my* record, then my process is: come over, we'll write a song together and we do that, so I've already pre-wrote the instrumental and I've got an idea on the subject matter I want and then me and you will sit down and we'll start figuring out the song and once we've got the lyrics on paper, you'll spend four or five times going through it, singing it, singing it, singing it, and then I'll be like "Right, let's go, ready to record," and then you'll sing it and I'll tell you when I've got what I want and then you'll go home and I'll sit there and comp your vocals until I've got the best thing. Then I'll do a rough mix. And the next day I'll listen to it and I'll go "Got it!" or I'll ring you up and say, "Can you come back?" or "Can you just do this?" and that's it. I don't overthink it.

LL – 24:15

Yeah, I definitely get that from you, and I was thinking earlier, you mentioned about experience and taking it live and I was just thinking – when you started to DJ out, did you feel like people were challenging what is live? So, were you sort of playing as people turned to turntables in clubs (I'm still in club culture) but when it started getting more massive, you get bands booked for festivals and you, I know you played with U2 and people might be like why is the DJ playing with the band? Were there challenges to what was live when you were starting to play out?

PO – 24:49

Yeah. In the early days, people were like, well "You don't make music, all you do is play other people's records." That's not true. You're the ignorant one here because you don't know what a modern DJ is. I'm not a radio DJ, I'm a club DJ who produces his own music, produces other bands, and performs live. That was the big shift. Pre when we started it, or started club culture as we know it today - 'course there was electronic music before me - it was a different approach, because the DJ *was* someone who just blended two records together from a different artist. But that changed.

LL 25:37

Yeah. So when did you think that changed?

PO – 25:43

1988. When we took Ecstasy and realised [...] hang on, it's true! We were in Ibiza, we took Ecstasy, and it was like "Fucking hell, man!" and then, what happened is, we go back to London and then everyone's looking at you [...] If we went to a club […] you'd be standing on the dance floor in a circle with your friends and you had your handbags on the floor, and you'd be dancing. All the guys were at the bar drinking and that was it. Enter Ecstasy – suddenly everyone's looking at the DJ, listening to every track, and the birth of club culture as we know it today, started. So, then what happens is, most of the DJ's weren't producers – I came from a background of music so I was already producing. I would make my own music, and play it, and I would produce other bands and play it. So that became the birth of a modern DJ. So, now cut to now, if you want to be a DJ, you're not even a DJ first, now, you're a producer first. Most producers can't DJ. They make a one hour set and they press 'play' but they don't DJ.

LL – 27:02
Yeah. How do you feel about USB, turntables, auto syncing and cueing tracks and pre-cueing tracks?

PO – 27:12
The true art of DJing is gone. I mean, the art of telling a story through music has gone now. It's got to the drop as fast as you can and you've got one hour and you press 'play' and most of the sets are pre-recorded by the next generation or the current generation. But, hey, that's the way it is. I'm explaining to you, not being disrespectful to the scene – that's the way it is now. So what happens is change is upon us. Changes – you're in the middle of changing now without knowing it. Why? because you are learning things that maybe you like or maybe you don't, but change is there. So to stay ahead of the curve in terms of music, you've got to embrace change – now you don't have to necessarily like it, because I do like the old process of making music – but you can't afford to go to Peter Gabriel's studio for a month at a thousand pound a day. Those days have gone. They've gone. So, change is upon us, technology is new, so you move forward with it. But I can do both. What I like is, I can play three or four hours and *really* play. Or I can give you a one-hour, get to the drop, bang! done. So, I've got the versatility of understanding it and moving with it. I mean that's how you stay ahead of the curve in anything you do. That's how thirty years later you're talking to me and you don't even know who I am because I've moved with the times. And that's key with music, is to move with the times, if you want to stay relevant.

LL – 29:05
Yeah, and I just think I wonder if people do that through technology or do people do a rejection to technology and –

PO – 29:15
Technology, you must embrace it. Because technology has made our lives easier. It makes your life easier – I mean, can you imagine if you'd have to go to a call box and make a phone call? Can you imagine if you had to run around with a camera, taking photos? I mean, these mobile phones are unbelievable. You have everything, whenever you want it. You have so much in your hand, that you actually forget to talk to people. Next time that you go to the airport, whenever that is, take one moment and be in the moment and look around you and look how many people are looking down into their phones or their laptops or their iPads and not talking to one another. Or not being in the moment. And even when you see people walking, they're thinking, they're thinking about all their issues and problems and what they've got to do – no-one's standing there and in the moment. That's the bad side of technology. I do email every other day. I turn off my phone when I'm in the studio. The technology's not there for you to contact me, it's for *me* to contact *you*. Now, if I don't speak to you today, I'll speak to you tomorrow – what's the problem? I'm here. If I don't email you straight back, it's alright – I can email you tomorrow. The world can wait a day. It's a different approach. Don't let technology rule you, it's the other way round. And enjoy it, because then you *will* enjoy it.

LL – 30:14
So how do you create that presence again though? Because I guess club culture helped bring that sort of like that cohesion of mind, like a group mind in performance.

PO – 30.27
Club culture's the worst cos everyone's on their fucking phones. Come to a club, right, and then what do you selfie in the club next to your friend. You don't put your phone in your pocket and turn it off and just dance to the music and have a laugh with your friends – someone is always on their phone. When I go to dinner with my friends, someone is always on their fucking phone and I'm like "Turn off your phone!" and they get upset and annoyed because you may say that, right?. But they're so in the wrong place because they don't understand it - but that's them. Me? I'm different. Why am I different? I'm explaining within this situation, because I come from a different situation. I came from a time when there was no mobile phones, when you just got lost in music and its amazing feelings. And the reason why I tell you to switch off your phone is because I want you to feel what I felt. By just having a glass of wine with your friends *and talking*. Or just listening to music. Turn it off. Don't have it around.

LL – 31.24
Yes, I think it's weird because in Berlin, the club culture is a bit anti-phones. You can't go inside the club with your phones. You can't go in. And British culture is you're with your mates and you're with your phones and it doesn't work here. It's a very different, weird club culture in Berlin and they're anti that.

PO – 31:49
And here it's even worse! I love Berlin every time I go there, or I've played there. I mean, if you get caught taking a picture in a club – you're out!

LL – 31:59
Yes, they're quite strict on that aren't they? It's this whole German privacy thing, they are anti big corporations, phones, all this sort of stuff and I quite respect that.

PO – 32:02
When Michael told me you were calling from Berlin, I was very curious about you because I'm like, right she's English studying in Berlin and you want to know about all this [...] I mean we know where techno comes from. It was Detroit but Berlin took the ball and ran with it. I mean you think techno, you think Berlin!

LL – 32:34
Yeah, it's a far…. I live a mile away from Berghain. I mean, this is why I live here because in my head it's the birth of [...] that whole club culture and the appreciation of DJ's and the electronic music is here. My studio is based near Richie Hawtin… and all these techno artists that place themselves here. And I think it is interesting with the Manchester scene as well. Berlin is quite a stark, brutalist style city, do you know what I mean? And it has this sort of character to it that wants this sort of quite intimidating brutal music to it. Manchester did that as well. I used to study in Manchester for a while, so you've got the [...] I don't know if it happens out of that warehouse culture, but I think it is that sort of arts space as well shifts that culture. It's definitely a really exciting place to be.

PO – 32:58
Yeah, Good for you.

LL – 33:03

Yeah, I don't want to take up too much of your time, but I do appreciate you talking to me, Paul. This will end up hopefully in the British Library and hopefully this can be archived, like, trying to capture this kind of music and how we can make it sound present again. Like you say, you've got to embrace technology and I use a lot of Ableton Live in live performance and I put it back in the real time to try to make that feeling of presence. And I think that's what you say is missing in music quite a lot, which is what really resonated in this interview which is good.

PO – 33:27

Yeah. You've got my email. You got any more questions, email me, and I'll talk to you again and if I can help you, you know, of course I will [...] You know it sounds like you spoke to a lot of people, and you got a lot of information.

LL – 33:42

Yes, I've spoken to quite a lot and I just think if we don't talk about this, this will be lost and this time in history will be lost. And this can't be scored or archived in normal ways, it happens through conversation. People are not, like, musically trained and it's just like an intuition, subculture thing and technology has just caught up with it. It'll be amazing. I'll transcribe what we spoke about and if any more questions come up, I'll ask you because what you have spoken about, it makes me feel good because it's something I've been researching for like five or six years and it's actually happening and people are thinking what I'm thinking, which is great.

PO – 34:04

I like that you feel good! You're onto something.

LL – 34:07

Yes, we're onto something, Paul, it's basically trying to capture where we are right now and how we can make this feeling of present-ness bringing together electronic music in performance and basically making sure we archive this impact of DJ culture and how it's transformed all music-making. So, yeah, that's where I'm trying to get to. Good to talk to you.

PO – 34:24

You take care in sunny Berlin.

LL – 34:27

Thank you. And you in sunny L.A.

PO – 34:29

Pleasure.

Robert, M (2019)

Roberts, M
Artist Interview: Mark Roberts
Interview by Laura Lee
[Online] 10.09.2019

LL – 0:37
Thanks for doing this […]. I've interviewed a few people for the PhD – a thesis of this might end up in the British library from the stuff we say here but that's all, so your beautiful knowledge will live on. So far, I've interviewed; Adam Betts, Tim from TTNG, Ian Williams from Battles, Mark from Gallops and a guy called Tom Mason who is a bassist for Heritage Orchestra and I thought it would be cool to have someone from the producer end of the spectrum but also you as an individual artist/drummer. I sent you that info stuff. Did it make a bit of sense?

MR – 01:54
Yeah

LL – 01:51
So, basically should we just go straight for them?

MR – 01:58
Yeah, if you want.

LL – 2:05
I think it's quite exciting because I think we've spoken about this before anyway but […] there's a crossover that's happening with the rise of more DAWs like Ableton that allow that studio practice in real-time and that sort of thing. […] I'll start with an open question i.e. You're a drummer, an engineer and a producer, what else do you define yourself as?

MR – 02:47
Do I define myself? Well musically I'm a guitarist as well I suppose, there's not really much more to me than that to be honest.

LL – 03:01
Well you went to fine art school, so would you not be an artist too?

MR – 03:06
I wouldn't consider myself an artist, no. I basically stopped doing any artwork after Uni – I don't know if it put me off or what but I'm not an artist in my own right so no.

LL – 03:25
Okay cool. So now let's go into your journey of musician, then engineer, and maybe that mixed with art school – so maybe let's just start with an overview of your music journey.

MR – 03:43
I played in bands from the age of 12, I was just obsessed with Nirvana and Sonic Youth and The Melvin's etc. I used to just play with mates at school – we did do recordings and stuff but the studio just didn't interest me at the time. Having said that I did do work experience in a studio but I just thought it would be a cool place to go because I thought they might let me record some of my songs, it wasn't a thought of "this is very interesting" It all seemed too technological and I just wanted to be an artist, I didn't see how it was that interesting to record other people's work, I had that arrogant teenager thing going on where it was all about me […] well not all about me but more so the music and the playing – I didn't see myself wanting to sit and record other peoples music.

LL – 05: 01
Okay, so what year was this that you're talking about with this work experience?

MR – 05:05
This would be 1996 probably.

LL – 05:13
And where were you living at the time?

MR – 05:15
Reading.

LL – 05:20
So in 1996 you were entering the studio and interested in those influential bands but was this all happening through MTV or did you have some local bands too that interested you?

MR – 05:37
It was a mixture, I didn't have MTV or anything like that but my friends did so I would catch bits at their houses[…] I was definitely obsessed with Nirvana and I would get anything I could to do with them; bootlegs, books etc. – that's how I discovered bands like Sonic Youth and Dinosaur Jr. all those kinds of grunge bands. I would search record stores to find those bands which was a lot harder back then and you kind of end up with the one CD because HMV would never have the one you were looking for, but smaller record shops probably would. There were some on the local scene but I never really locked into it because I was at that age where I was into things that were cool in the previous years, so there were a lot of bands doing britpop who wanted to sound like Oasis but I wasn't really into that – the other end of the spectrum with Metallica I wasn't into that either, It seemed to be the deeply uncool bands that I was into for a long period.

I was singing and playing guitar in those bands and then when I went to college in the late 90's I got into […] I had always been into drumming on the side and I'd stay after school to use the school drum kit but my parents didn't want me getting one myself for obvious reasons. Some people I knew at college needed a drummer and I said I'd do it even though I didn't have my own drum kit – I was about 16 or 17 at this point. Playing the drums wasn't totally my thing but we found a middle ground, it was quite nu-metal type of playing and I did like Tool and the Deftones quite a lot. I wasn't really into Korn or Limp Bizkit that's where we found a mutual thing that we could all get behind – this was the first time I was in a band

where at the shows and gigs everyone seemed really into it, we would see mates band and wouldn't be the odd ones out.

LL – 08:42
It's interesting that you say you weren't connecting with the nu-metal bands because at the time they were quite progressive in their production value, almost like favoured production over authentic live. You have people like Steve Albini who has emphasis on recording techniques and even then, in the early 90's they try and put sub kick in or like Linkin Park with turntablism, you know they try to be unique with things like that.

MR – 09:20
Oh definitely, I don't know how much I was thinking about that stuff, like some of the Melvin's productions – I remember that would be more organic but more hi-fi production than i.e. Sonic Youth or Nirvana. Looking back now there were loads of albums by people such as Joe Barresi that I liked and I didn't know was him at the time […] I kind of liked that production but now if you listen back to the first Korn record at the time everyone thought that was such a hi-fi production but now it just sounds really weird.

LL – 10:23
Yeah, I'm not trying to defend it here as some of it did age terribly but It's interesting that it was the point of rock music in that age to favour production in the studio which made it quite obvious i.e. glitch production, reversed vocals and things like that which were quite explicit to the genre.

MR – 11:00
Yeah definitely, not so much in the live reproduction sense – it's like throwing the kitchen sink at it and worrying about the live show later. Again I think I interpreted it like that at the time but now when you listen to it as I know a bit more it's not as crazy i.e. the Deftones they have a dude using samples and scratches, having double tracks for guitars is pretty standard but at the time when you've been listening to really stripped back music it's quite different. […] I did like Korn from the aspect of how heavy and aggressive it was at the time but I never liked the vocals – I couldn't get behind it.

LL – 12:06
So that was around college time, was there any time that you ever experienced their music live?

MR 12:16
Yeah, so that was when the nu-metal started bowing up so there was a load of bands doing that. Rage Against the Machine came before that so I guess that kind of eased people in – they were obviously quite influential for those bands and bands like Helmet who were considered almost a grunge band because they were around in the mid 90's, early 90's but if you listen to them they are more in the nu-metal camp with the tight riffy, mesa boogie, PRS guitars – that kind of stuff.

LL – 12:58
Were you getting any influence from other genres at the time?

MR – 13:03
Yeah definitely, I had a few friends that were into rock music and the rest of my friends outside of bands were going to drum and bass nights and I had to be open to different types of music otherwise I wouldn't have gone out much. Although in the grand scheme of things […] people look back and say nu-metal was massive then but in Reading there wasn't really much of a scene i.e. a bar or anything where you could go for the night and it was the same with Nirvana, they're a classic rock band and that was a huge thing at the time but in my reality it wasn't it was quite an underground thing to like in my school and when you're young you like having your own kind of niche.

LL – 14:10
I think that the time that scene came out of Seattle and that was very localised, and I guess with the birth of the internet and youth culture that started to blur in turn. So, you connected with a band like Nirvana and felt that authenticity not only by listening to them but dressing like them and how you connected to that identity was through the record shops etc.

MR – 14:31
Yeah and through Kerrang and stuff. They were lumped in, every 3 weeks or so Nirvana would be on the cover and you'd have to buy that for some other bottom of the barrel story for Nirvana. In answer to your actual question I was listening to a lot of other genres as well and at that time I was definitely more open minded to other music but I think that was more polarized because there was no internet, it wasn't as readily available as you could only really get the biggest hits from each genre i.e. for drum and bass it would be Roni Size and then trip hop brought in Portishead […] going to festivals you'd see a lot more, Womad festival was in Reading which was cool.

LL- 14:32
So, at college you worked in that studio for a bit and were playing drums and guitar, then you went to art school?

MR 16:18
Yeah, that was an interesting time because that's when recording at home was becoming more tangible. When I was young it was a massive disparity – either you had a 4 track machine at home, I had a 6 track tape machine and it was either that kind of level or you would go into a studio. There wasn't much between. Around that time, early 20's when I was at university, a couple of mates had bought hard disk recorders and that was the first time I had heard people making demos and I thought it sounded pretty good or at least passable.

LL – 17:13
Where was this happening?

MR – 17:16
This was […] I had my university stuff going on but then I was also in bands in Reading – The guitarist in the band that I was playing the drums in had one of these 16bit/24[…] I can't remember what the recorder was but he had a hard disk recorder so we were playing around with our own stuff on it. I'm dyslexic, through my university they gave me a mac and a scanner.

LL- 17:57
Same here.

MR – 17:58
So, I got given all this stuff and I was just not a computer person at all. I got onto a course in Brighton which was music and art as I wanted to combine the two but one of the things that put me off is that there were computers everywhere and music technology quite put me off back then which is very ironic now […]

LL 18:25
Why do you think it turned you off?

MR- 18:25
I just thought mixing art with technology was wrong at the time for me, I thought that was someone else's job and I didn't see that for me as I didn't see myself as a technical person especially being dyslexic and stuff. I don't know about you but where I struggle with academic things I kind of put up a wall and I just looked at it and knew I wouldn't be able to use it so I didn't – which is often the case when you have an end goal and it seemed that there wasn't an in between thing so when I got that Mac and stuff I thought it would be great for word processing but what else could I do with it. I spent some of my student loan on hard disk recorders and drum mics with the only goal being I could make good demos for myself or as good as the ones as if I went to the local dodgy studio you know.

LL – 19:42
Why did you say dodgy? I feel like now in local studios […] you can lack that creativity from the engineer you're working with, that sort of thing.

MR – 20:03
Again, there was this big jump from […] even if you spent a lot of money and went to a local studio that had some pretty okay gear, we were still recording in rooms that were tiny and had carpet on the walls using DAP machines and stuff – it didn't sound that great. Then really quickly the technology spiked and I was getting results and my friends were that were probably as good as if we had gone to one of those studios and spent hundreds of pounds a day – we just needed to find a space to do it and that was really liberating and the fact that you've got that real incentive made the academic and technological side of it seem less daunting and I took it in my stride more as it felt like an artist thing rather than an academic one of "oh I'm the recording engineer". I saw it had an artistic aspect to it and locked in and started demoing mates' bands even if I didn't like them very much, I could get into it no matter what.

LL – 21:27
I guess that's the DIY ethos behind this, the fact that you could do it completely yourself – what kind of DAWs were you using or tech at that time, I know you said you had a recorder?

MR – 21:43
I realised I had the laptop and I had Cubase on it – I recorded everything on a Yamaha AW16G and a 24bit hard disk recorder, we could record the drums onto it and burn it onto a CD as it had a CD burner and then we could put that CD into the Mac and try and mix it

completely trial and error mixing. Even then you had the internet but you didn't have YouTube or anything like that so it wasn't like you could just watch a tutorial you kind of had to sift through a lot of bulllshit information.

LL – 22:33
Were you reading Sound on Sound magazine?

MR – 22:35
Yeah, at that point I was probably getting Sound on Sound magazine. I became a bit of a nerd after that, I was working in kitchens but taking every opportunity to go down downstairs and print stuff off the computer about microphone techniques and mixing techniques but it was also academic because it was reading about it – you'd make some mistakes because there's misinformation and misinterpreted information as well.

LL – 23:24
Did you find that at the time or even now, you would read stuff on Sound on Sound and the functionality would give you the step by step know-how on recording within these DAWs and stuff like that. But maybe there weren't producers being interviewed as sort of creatives, it seemed quite separate.

MR – 23:51
Yeah, a little bit. It's weird because thinking back there wasn't really a gear change where I became someone who wanted to be a recording engineer, it was always alongside doing my own thing, but I just became really interested in it. Then when I moved down to Brighton I really wanted somewhere to make and record music, so I hired a little warehouse space and bought one of those soundproofed rooms – to make that work I had to hire it out as a workspace and offered to demos for people and then suddenly you realise you're doing it for your living now. I never thought of becoming anything more than the guy who ran the shitty studio, the demo level studio, I didn't ever have that ambition with it – my bar was pretty low.

LL – 25:06
I just wondered because I always found it interesting with you going to art school […] it's cool that you found a course at Brighton that did art and music at the same time. Interestingly Music Tech A-Levels only started in '98 so you would maybe go to a London private tech school or get trained in studios i.e. the course I did was fine art/music and quite gallery orientated stuff and even when I spoke to Adam Betts he went to the Royal Academy and did jazz and he said that was the only place you could do a full degree in contemporary music in 96 […] ACM just began and you could only do a year.

MR – 26:16
Wasn't there a drum tech in London? I remember people going to drum tech in London.

LL – 26:20
Even then there wasn't a degree level. Maybe by the 2000's there was a degree level. It's just really interesting, it just always made sense that music tech or that sort of thing was situated in art schools – like you said when you started art school you thought your tools would be a paintbrush and more of a crafty thing, I guess you never expected your creative to be formed from the studio itself type of thing. What do you think?

MR – 27:00
Yeah it was a weird thing because things changed so much and are still changing, for people like me who are doing this for a living and have come up in a completely different way. It used be being a runner, a tea boy and tape op and then you'd work through the ranks and the system and now there's a bunch of people like me who have done it through a course i.e. studied it at ACM or something and maybe started a studio or maybe they've started it in this new way and moved onto commercial studios where they're getting fewer and farther between but there's a lot of people[…] a lot of what you'd hear on Radio One is done by people like me who have learnt on their own gear and didn't do it academically - it's just a weird thing and it's even changed a lot since I started getting into it, it's still like "oh you can make these cool demos" and it's getting easier and better etc. You can have the skills to go and use a commercial studio or you can have a mid-level studio and produce radio quality kind of stuff.

LL – 28:40
When was that switch for you, when you felt like you could produce radio quality? Was it when the DAW's came out or when you started to move out to the studio you rented in Brighton?

MR – 28:56
I started that one in Brighton, well actually Burgess Hill which isn't too far from Brighton. That was very much a demo thing you know, just making demos for people and I felt like an imposter as well because I was just charging a nominal amount of money depending on the job. That was my university time, making mistakes on other people's work but not for so much money that they would be angry with me – I'd do my best at it and I did feel, not so much now but then, there was a snobbery from some of the mid-level studios. I was only 24/25 at the time and when you had young bands or bands creating music that's not easily identifiable, like that slightly weirder music they wouldn't get understood when they went to these studios – some of the engineers would be like "whatever" take their money and go through the motions because they know they're recording something better next week which will pay better too. So I think I had this real ethos that I had an idea of how people should be treated in the studio, no question is too dumb and nothing is out of bounds – you're working for the band it's not the other way around […] you're the facilitator.

LL- 31:03
There's a thing especially historically especially in rock music where, the producers are nameless even though they're fundamental i.e. the Beatles albums where the role of the producer is quite fundamental in the creativity of those records but they still give the image that those guys just walked into a room and it was just the magic of the room – which is a little trick. You would have things like Motown at the same time where the producers are very fore-fronted and it was said who the record was produced by i.e. Quincy Jones or whoever it was – I always found that quite interesting. At the time you were working with all these bands but at the same time had people making drum and bass music and had things like Warp Records all this stuff, you were recording all these bands because they needed you or maybe they didn't have the skills but then you could have thought those people are making without a bunch of people in the room and sound futuristic – what did you think of that at the time, people using all the same stuff but in a whole different genre?

MR – 32: 22
Still now, I've not got as deep into that stuff as I feel I should've because I've been more geared to the stuff I know […] I've not sat and made electronic music for myself, I'd like to.

LL – 32:49
Was there anything at the time you were listening to because people liked to do crossovers of both i.e. Björk because she started a post-punk band around the mid 90's […] and that's the interesting thing about talking to people about this, Mark from Gallops told me he's not even playing his guitar anymore, he's at a point where he's more interested in his other stuff.

MR – 33:27
Yeah, well I've always been kind of impressed by it, it's always been a mystery to me. I've delved a little bit into using Ableton in the past and now it's one of those things that I need to create time to get more into – I've worked with bands that have those elements, like your band has those elements. Normally I'm the facilitator as they are the experts, I'm just trying to figure out how to get what's in their heads to come out of the speakers. I do put synths on stuff for people when I feel it's needed or if they want me to – my knowledge is still very rudimentary, I can flick through synth sounds and play chords but that's as far as it goes other than programming some glitchy drums to go on peoples tracks, I've not delved that much and I've played in bands where that stuff is going on but it's usually someone else that has done it.

LL – 34:48
So that music happened around the same time, the mid 90's – you've got Nirvana. Then there was this guy I researched called Simon Reynolds wrote about post-rock and he saw this switch where you had bands like Tortoise bringing recording equipment on stage and you had My Bloody Valentine who had more textual vocals and this changed what rock music was at the time but on the other side you also had rave culture which were sounds that came from the use of music technology - so then what I think was happening is that this had some sort of impact on rock music and guitarists at the time i.e. "I'm playing this instrument, that sounds nothing like it, is that more culturally relevant than my distorted guitar"

MR – 35:51
Yeah.

LL – 35:53
Then I think what happened is you have something like drum and bass […] you've probably tried to do this right; where you try and drum breaks?

MR – 36:03
Yeah, yeah.

LL – 36:05
That was only created by speeding up the jazz break […] so instead of imitating players were imitating production. So, I don't know if you've had that impact where it has impacted your playing?

MR – 36:19
Yeah, definitely. Especially with that first band I played drums in because we had a DJ – I'd be trying to play along to his samples and stuff. I remember thinking when I got into Refused, they were a big influence on me and they'd have brutal hardcore and then slip into a weird trance like beats and then back out using old jazz record samples. I definitely think that was interesting and I used to love going to see bands like Lamb, Portishead, Björk etc. how people started playing like machines - that cross pollination from different scenes. Bands like Couch, if you listen to their early stuff it's almost post-rock guitar music and then you through the back catalogue and it becomes more and more electronic and less identifiable i.e. is that a drum break loop are they playing it and defected it – it's more like a collage kind of thing. I've always wanted to play in a band that does more of that kind of thing, more experimental in those terms, there's a real influx of it at the moment with people like Adam Betts starting to physically incorporate electronic elements into a drum performance – it always used to be you'd have your drum pad and trigger a few samples, but when the triggering becomes as important as the acoustic sounds that's really interesting.

LL – 38:28
That's what he said to me, he said two things; "I've got to the point where I couldn't fully express myself without integration of electronics" and "I feel more improvisational with electronics than with my acoustic kit" – he said he needed the hybrid kit of cymbals and prepared stuff but also audio MIDI triggers just because he can't aesthetically convey what he wants but he still wanted the core element of the shells. When I talked with him he told me he fundamentally started out with metal and that was the fastest heaviest thing he had heard in terms of production and then all the electronic stuff he's into with Autechre being his main influences and just that merging of the two.
I just wondered if there was that influx of the two in your production, maybe we could talk about some of the bands you've worked with – are they embracing some of the innovations, especially when it comes to rock music because sometimes we strip it back even more like less tech, don't mess up with sense of the liveness in the room with all these toys etc.

MR – 40:00
Yeah that's it. it's a weird one because there's some bands that really want to embrace that stuff and I have wanted to more as I got older but I think coming from that punk rock background I was always a little more […] being a virtuoso wasn't interesting to me it was more about the artistic expression – I played guitar for a long time but I was never into being a really good guitarist, I learnt a few things and that was enough to get by and if I wanted to write something more complicated, then I'd practice it. With drums I was pushed a little bit further […] it's about having the incentive, the same with recording technology, the more you get into the more tech you get, and you actually want to sound good.

LL - 41:37
I was going to ask you about guitar, you were talking about Nirvana so you might have learnt power chords and bar chords and then there might have been a switch with the bands you worked with who did more post-rock or e.g. bands like Sonic Youth who did open tunings. Was there a point in your playing […] a bit of why I think people get excited by post rock is you can phrase something like that or do extended techniques beyond pentatonic blues but basically guitar playing became less riff orientated to more melodic.

MR – 42:18
There were some specific changes, one was hearing Refused. That definitely changed from a drummer view, it made me crave a bit more […] I saw emotion in technicality – It wasn't complicated for the sake of it, it was complicated to convey something. The same with bands like Botch and Minus the Bear was a big influence, that was the first time I heard some use guitar tapping – up until that point for me whenever people used to tap it was more heavy metal kind of stuff but this was more tastefully and artistically. I remember seeing bands like Lamb etc. it used to be a thing amongst all my friends where it was really magical to see someone playing drums in a drum and bass style really fast technical stuff which was mind blowing. Up until that point you're just listening to Dave Grohl which is great in another way. That again, was drum and bass but live, which is where I could get on board with my friends who were into drum and bass – that's where things could really crossover because you have samplers, computers, drummers, a bass player and a singer. Things like Prodigy, I was into dance music before I discovered Nirvana – one of my parents' friends, their son who was 6 or 7 years older than me was really into rave and had his own set up. I was totally down that Prodigy route in the early 90's and then somehow got into rock and stuff through someone at school, I think.

LL – 45:04
What other things were you listening to?

MR – 45:09
Alongside Prodigy? I don't know really. In the really early days, whenever I saw that guy, he would give me some mixtapes. He had multiple CD players that he would mix and MC his own tapes together so it would be a mashup of all this early 90's rave music – I couldn't even reel off the names, it would just be homemade tapes with their own covers, but I know it was the Prodigy.

LL – 45:47
I guess that was such an explosion for them, with samplers coming out and it being in the hands of people like yourself who aren't formally music trained and also you didn't have to worry about harmony […] there was a freedom in taking from different sources like that Charly song from the Experience album etc.

MR – 46:39
Also sampling kids shows was popular at the time, it was amazing.

LL – 46:43
I've written about the Fairlight coming out and being so expensive but then you had Kate Bush using it. what was interesting at the time, they could have created or sampled anything but when the first bit of technology comes out they're like "oh I'll sample a piano to make a synthesized version of piano" or something like that but you can use sound in any way – sometimes when these things are first invented, you don't get that explosion of people sampling everything.

MR – 47:21
It's more about recreating something rather than making realistic string sounds or something.

LL – 47:27
Yeah because that's what Mark from Gallops was talking about – the 808's and the Linn drum came out at the same time and the people thought the 808 was a bad version of the Linn drum but actually it was just a synthetic version whereas the Linn drum was audio sampled. The quality of the 808 became a cool thing and then that brought the beginning of house and techno […] You've got something like that coming out with the low-end frequencies and I think sometimes in production, the mid is lost a lot because you want the low and high end in gain. Post-rock reduces the guitar player so it becomes more textural, but some people don't want the guitar being so fore frontal in the mix, I don't know how you feel about how that production value has changed over time.

MR – 48:36
Yeah, especially in post-rock and stuff […] it will change from section to section. A lot of people will throw different stuff in where the guitar is painting a pad like sound behind the drums, and everything is being the main forefront of things which is a very anti-rock feel in a way. Things definitely play different roles in the music – I was talking about this with someone the other day. Tool is a good example of this, the guitar has basically become a percussive instrument, a lot of the guitar stuff in Tool is percussive and lets the vocals and the drums be the main push of the song – there's very little technical stuff being played in Tool with the guitars and that's quite a bit of a math-rock/post-rock type of thing. Depending on what your definition of math-rock is, it can be very guitar lead – guitars used to not even sound like guitars as they are so heavily affected. Like Don Caballero where the complete focus is drummer rather than the guitarist.

LL – 50:18
When I was talking to Ian, we were speaking about in the early 2000's when AKAI Headrush came out and it was designed for guitarists to play their chords and do those licks on top. He decided when he was recording American Don, Monk Harris left so he was going to use a loop pedal but he didn't like the fact that it would sound like it was coming from one amp, so he added multiple amps to get that call and response feel. I thought that was quite interesting as something like that creates a whole new world for guitarists where you can loop yourself and forefront drummers.

MR – 51:20
Yeah definitely, and it becomes more of a punk-rock thing i.e. "I'm just going to make this noise for a bit and so are you" there's less ego involved. I don't know how much that kind of thing means to me anymore but getting into all the stuff […] there's different aspects of what you're into and why you like certain kinds of music - through my 20's I certainly had different philosophies on music but now it's whatever is clever. I thought myself more small minded when I was younger but while we're talking I've realised there's a bit of hip-hop, dance, jazz and 60's – it was quite eclectic. I'm jealous of people now because we have the internet, your influences can be so much wider and you can discover these obscure bands or mainstream stuff and have their whole back catalogue to listen to.

LL – 52:52

Do you think with that explosion of accessibility […] I think people were more precious with the things they were sampling i.e. it would have to be connected to – I was talking about Prodigy doing it but even now beyond that people don't mind the execution of their music. Maybe people who do rock and electronic genres can just completely merge and you don't have to think "oh I don't live in Brooklyn, so I can't make this type of indie music" you can just make it.

MR 53:31

It just makes more of a globalisation of music and less elitism. I think music is part of your identity especially when you're growing up and I think it's really good that the identity can be almost anything now – you get so many original bands and really young bands that have drawn from these really different places, it's less about the radio rocks bands or the stuff that's immediately put to you by major record labels. It's much more liberating now and even crossing over into mainstream productions and bands- you'll hear much more eclectic music generally.

LL – 54: 32

Maybe let's talk a bit about what your take on post-rock is, the bands you've worked in over the years and how that's changed your creativity in the studio or your production values.

MR – 54:48

Yeah, I mean what would you define as post-rock?

LL – 54:54

This is open to interpretation […] Simon Reynolds coined it, he wrote a lot about post-rock but I wrote about rave culture and post punk – so he's like a music journalist. It was written in 1994 and he was talking about Velvet Underground to Neu!, krautrock as well as bands like Tortoise but in the mid 2000's it got adopted by Sigur Rós etc.

MR – 55:34

A lot of people think of it as that kind of slow moving, lots of delay, it's the same with what happened with punk and post-punk. Isn't it?

LL – 55:53

One of my supervisors, she's just written a book on post-punk and Joy Division and that's classed as post-punk but in Manchester at the time no one was referring to it as post-punk. So it's the same with post-rock, people started using technology and you get DIY bands a bit like yourself using a tape machine – it then got adopted by Explosions in the Sky and all that longer formed rock music and more recently its evolved […] the type of stuff I've been looking at is Kid A by Radiohead in way of where rock musicians didn't feel they needed to prove themselves with instrumentation. You can always pinpoint what Greenwood was doing in the album because it starts sounding like guitars and their sounds were shaped in the studio – a bit like what you were saying earlier. Make it in the studio and then you try to rectify it live, that kind of stuff. Basically, just turn of the century with experimental music.

MR 57:26
More in the sense of the ethos over the stylistic quality of it – which is the same with punk because punk everything thinks punk is grotty, three-piece guitar shouty bands. The bands that get put into the post-punk pigeonhole is down to punk being an ethos and not a style of music – it was more about an attitude. What was your question - how that affects production values?

LL – 58:09
You might have noticed since you've gone more into engineering and studio time, you've worked with a lot of bands that touch upon that genre so you might have seen a switch where; everyone wanted to sound like Nirvana in the beginning [..] now through the evolution of rock music we've had to be intuitive and find new ways […] it almost seems a bit pastiche using the blues orientated […] I think with the introduction of electronic music, people didn't feel the need for the ego along with the influence of art school – it wasn't like Guns n Roses how you get with your honey or anything like that it was a sonic pallet that you could use as an extension of your instrument and a creative tool.

MR – 59:29
That's what I was saying before about it not necessarily being about "here's my chops" I could be using a guitar and an amp but I could be making something that doesn't sound like a guitar.

LL – 59:42
So yeah, maybe you saw that there was a point where you go more into this when working with the bands. Like "oh this is very inventive how they are using rock instrumentation but they are presenting themselves as a conventional rock band and pushing production"

MR – 59:59
Yeah. I mean one of the things in that vein that strikes me is the pure eclecticism that a lot of bands have – when you're working with a band talking about reference material or trying to achieve a certain sound, they'll play something on their phone which will be the complete other end of the spectrum to what you see their band doing and that's what's informing a lot of this music. These post-rock bands, using this term loosely – they don't even listen to the kind of music that they are making which is interesting […] The drummer from Delta Sleep is very much into hip-hop, he listens to guitar music as well but he really brings that to the table – if he's talking about drum sounds he'll play me hip-hop and stuff that doesn't sound like them. I have to figure out what they're getting at and what part of that sound they want to achieve. When you've got bands that do a lot of different things in one song, you have to incorporate a lot of different things in one song, a lot of different techniques. i.e. A band like Black Peaks, they might sound like Dillinger Escape Plan and then the next minute they sound like Radiohead and you've got to figure out how to make that a cohesive thing and not cut and paste.

LL – 1:01:54
Before you might want to sound like something you're playing but now it's presented as a mixture of production and in your playing i.e. the Roots or a band like that, it's the playing but also the production value that you want to merge together.

MR – 1:02:22

Yeah exactly. I think that's how you come up with something original, that's what fuels creative originality – so indiscriminately taking your influences and creating something new and that's why bands like Fugazi exist. They've come from the hardcore scene but obviously listened to a lot of reggae, they weren't just trying to be what's in at the time they wanted to create something new.

LL – 1:03:03

That's what they say, that post-rock scene fundamental of dub music and how guitarists play on the 2 and 4 using reverb and delay – that whole push of that, moving away from distortion and riff orientated stuff so you can take from dub. It's almost like it's not for fronted but it's fundamental in that genre and it sounds great.

MR – 1:03:32

Yeah, that's it. It's using things in a different way i.e. you might be using traditional guitar, bass and drums but you're playing songs that are structured in the way of some kind of electronic music is what you're saying. The guitar does this for ages and gets louder and there's something else going on – it's definitely interesting when bands like Nitkowski – they're heavily influenced by tech stuff but there's guitar and drums, they've just taken something from past techno and put it into this.

LL – 1:04:22

Maybe that's the point, we all grew up with all these popular instruments around us like guitar and drums but then we were not quite at a point where we can play machines or these electronics genres. We've slowly integrated into our software but were not to a point where we can just play easily – well you could use drum machines and synths, you can play techno out but people still want that visibility of a band orientated/ group experience when they're watching it.

MR – 1:04:56

Yeah, and I think it's also for the musicians themselves to feel like they're expressing themselves – even an electronic music producer who plays live, they could just let it play and it would achieve the same thing but to see someone doing it and expressing themselves, I think there's something to be said for that. People still want to be in the moment for music because otherwise we could just record it and play it through a PA saying "yeah I made this" it wouldn't have the same effect as recreating it on stage.

LL – 1:05:39

Someone said to me, they called it 'liveness' if you see a band striking a chord vs someone just standing with a laptop, however even with post-rock stuff a guitarist could strike a chord and you wouldn't know where it came from. I think what is happening a bit is that rock musicians are wanting to become less lively and almost become quite techno so they become really rigid and locked into the grid and then the techno people are getting more jazz to prove their liveness – there's a constant to and fro […] James Holborn is a drummer in a band that's quite like live pop stuff, he makes electronic music too but he has done this thing that uses MaxMSP and we know with Ableton you don't have to be locked into the click but it

keeps track of the drummer changing tempo and allows everyone to change tempo with the drummer. There's all this sort of stuff that people get into, that could be seen as restrictive and I think more people want that seamless glue kind of playing now where you're playing and you don't even know what's happening.

MR – 1:07:28
I don't personally understand it, well not that I don't understand it but as a drummer it would kill me having to play to a click live.

LL – 1:07:45
Well you know when we did that track with you we didn't do it to a click but we wanted to sound sort of machine like so we did it to 120 locked in and it worked weirdly for that one. I think there is that constant to a fro with shuffle and groove sounding more live, I think that is what makes it sound more organic having the beat drag or pushing it. I find it really interesting that no groove music is the music that people want to dance to more so really regimented locked into a grid i.e. someone like D'Angelo

MR – 1:08:43
It's deliberately kind of lullgating isn't it.

LL – 1:08 :46
You can tell I've been reading a lot of things […] You basically use Pro Tools is that right?

MR – 1:08:59
Yeah.

LL – 1:09:25
What position do you take for yourself when you're working with these bands; Do you think you're more of a set up engineer, do you take an Albini approach to it?

MR – 1:09:27
It varies.

LL – 1:09:25
So you're flexible to that approach?

MR – 1:09:27
Yeah, I try to be a facilitator, but I don't go full Albini, I want to try and understand what the band is shooting for rather than just sit on the side and set up. Some bands know exactly what they're after and what they need to do so you can take that Albini approach inadvertently. Some bands it's just a live set up but if they can't get the sound, they want from the instrument then I can be of use in that way too – I guess it's somewhere in between facilitating and interpreting what they want. I will have creative ideas that I suggest but it's all down to what they want at the end of the day. I'll suggest ideas on the basis of them potentially liking them not on the basis of trying to take charge of the creative direction. There's the odd project where they want me to be more involved but even then I think I'm less involved than they think I am.

LL – 1:11:10

I think it is a strange dynamic. Do you ever feel like […] you don't realise cognitively all these skills you're building up for every scenario i.e. moving the mic position back if it has that delay attack. All these skills you've built up are beyond what a music tech course could have given you right?

MR – 1:11:49

Yeah.

LL -1:11:50

Then whenever you produce this stuff it's almost invisible what you've done but also fundamental […] or are you completely egoless and think "it's fine I just facilitate the magic to happen". A bit like with this YouTube channel, you're trying to reach out but there's potentially some lost skills within what you're doing because it's not physically tangible the things you're doing, do you think it gets lost in translation.

MR – 1:12:22

I think it's a mixture, I'm not completely egoless – I do think some things I have done sounded a certain way because of me, but I'm proud of what I do and I like to think I've helped someone achieve something they might not have been able to as it would have sounded different with someone else. You can't say that you're not putting your footprint on something.

LL – 1:12:51

Sometimes the humanistic experience is through pain but that's one thing. You're a human too and just because your artistic input is in digital form, that doesn't mean it's not a contribution at all – that's not visible, you can't see the chord progressions you played, if you get what I mean there?

MR – 1:13:12

Yeah, yeah. I do think there is responsibility even with just programming automation in bands – that can be what gives a mix excitement. If you left it at the same level depending on the kind of band it can make a huge difference and there's where I have my input. I'm wondering if I'm answering your question properly – I'm answering Part A with a view to Part B and then when I've finished part B I've forgotten what Part A was.

LL- 1:14:04

That's the phenomenon that's come up – the other day I was doing this reel to reel workshop of cutting up reel and automation to the extent we get to now would have been pretty difficult and then the stuff I've been doing in the studio here is […] each time you mix, it's almost like it's for a live show and I set my faders but I have to remember not to the automation in DAW's itself because sometimes I feel I go a bit over. So, where do you put your mark on automation and the interference of that? Did that take the energy out of the room? I feel like this sometimes I don't know if you do but the energy in the room which will push through in the production or is that naïve from a musicians perspective?

MR – 1:15:04

I don't think it's naïve at all, it's just, it's band dependent – if a band is playing dynamically then they are looking after a lot of stuff for you, you don't need as much automation because they've done it. You might choose to accentuate it for more drama.

LL – 1:15:29

I guess that's like what we did with you, we were quite dynamic but if you're doing multi-track then you need to create that punch […]

MR – 1:15:39

You're almost chasing your tail kind of thing. A lot of times you end up recording something step by step because you're chasing that thing of trying to make it sound live so you make the chorus explode more etc. – you're recreating something whereas some bands, if it's really live you're treading carefully to not take away from what they're doing. It's really material dependent. Sometimes I feel like I've had way more artistic input and other times I thought the band could have done it with anyone and it would have sounded good. Although I have heard bands that I've recorded and that someone else has recorded them and it's a weird thing […] Some of it is ego because I'll think "I wouldn't have done that" but does that mean it's better or worse, I think it's just different things.

LL – 1:16:48

It will be interesting what you think about these 3 new tracks – Mark no.1 did them. But then I think he was really inspired by you […] I think that helped us set the benchmark.

MR – 1:17:13

Yeah, I've had things like that before especially with a certain project i.e. the last Broker album, I got a friend to mix two of the tracks because I was going to try and not mix it – he didn't mix them how I would have done but it set the atmosphere for the album, so the rest of the stuff I was mixing was in that vein so it was all cohesive. It was interesting as it sounded very different than it would have if I hadn't got him involved at all.

LL- 1:17:51

So the PhD I'm doing Is quite practice based and I've done this project where I was completely acoustic – I'm interested in all these electronic aspects but can I still convey my artistic vision with just an acoustic guitar and I did it completely dry in a studio. I then did acoustic guitar and drum machines, next I did sampling my guitar in a band format and also resampling live tapes of guitars – it's almost like constantly sampling yourself and playing it out through Ableton and I found the more I removed myself, the more comfortable I felt. It feels like I'm quite excited by this hybrid instrument that you can be an engineer and a musician at the same time. You obviously love playing out too, would the dream for you be putting all the production and playing together as one?

I guess that's what Ableton allows you to do, it's like live production. So sometimes it's a bit painful going through especially with linear alternating along those strips […] would you like that flexibility of playing out some of your productions or would you like to be able to play live with a sort of crossover production?

MR – 1:19:31

I think overall I would like it separate. I have been talking to friends about this for ages but nothing has ever come together – we talked about doing a project that was much more experimental using our other friend who is a producer and does way more electronic stuff than me. I'd love to try something like that where I've got drums and samples and stuff like that but the reality of the moment is that it's quite refreshing to not have any technology around and for it to be quite stripped back.

LL – 1:20:23

Maybe the technology aspect of it almost feels like work as that's what you do as a job?

MR – 1:20:29

A little bit, yeah. The reason I do that band is much more for expression than anything else.

LL -1:20:42

Could you have that punk ethos, I think we're still at a clunky stage of that collaboration so it's not easy […] when you recorded us, I tended to sample my own guitar playing because then I feel like it sounds a bit more like myself – it's obvious if you put in chord sounds on a synth or a sample of a break etc. you can feel very disconnected, so to genuinely sound like you through the tech takes a while and to integrate it into you takes a while too. There's more things to go wrong, you want to be able to turn up to a gig and for things to not break. We played a gig the other day and I decided to play in Stereo cabs, a bit like we did – I had 10 pedals, Ableton and just a chain of multiple things that could go wrong […] For me personally, I've always got this thought of "maybe this collaboration will be the future and maybe the future will be just you with your instrument rocking out or whatever execution you want" but I think there's some weird futurism aspects of using tech.

MR – 1:22:10

I think it takes time to build your identity through technology i.e. I would want to do something through sample based stuff or more electronic based stuff and part of the reason I think this hasn't happened is because I would want it to be really ambitious. I'd want my drum samples that I use to be made by me and support the acoustic thing, so almost be seamless. I don't know how I'd do this but it would be seamless to the point of people not being able to tell I was using both electronic and acoustic sounds.

LL – 1:23:13

So do you think we're at that point where we can be seamless or are we getting closer than we've been before?

MR – 1:23:20

I think we're getting closer and I think that is just my personal feelings on it. I don't think it is necessarily overall. Sometimes it's nice to have that juxtaposition of that start when hitting the acoustic drums […]

LL 1:23:46

Maybe it doesn't even have to be electronic just imagine how you'd mix a drum sound well […] almost like you mic up the click and the boom, imagine you just got on a kit and sounded exactly how you would want it to sound in your ears straight away.

MR – 1:24:05
Yeah, that's another aspect of it which would feel like playing an electronic kit.

LL – 1:24:18
Would not that be around the realm of the V drums, or have we not quite got to that?

MR – 1:24:21
No they can do certain things really well but then again that's the side of technology trying to chase reality too much.

LL – 1:24:34
That's what I mean though, it wasn't trying to chase reality but then you've made a new sound that was never generated before that it can somehow sit well – instead of trying to sound like a 60's rock kit, you sound like you.

MR – 1:24:58
Yeah that's it.

LL – 1:25:01
When I started making music, my stepdad had an Atari and there was this program called Novation which had sound modules – we couldn't just make crazy sounds, you would have organs or harps but bad synthesized versions of what the actual thing sounds like.

MR – 1:25:33
Yeah, and that's where I'm at with it. Nitkowski is an example, they were a really abrasive sounding […] noise rock band with two guitarists, really spiky sounding shellacked guitar – they got another guy in who had a keyboard and sampler rather than getting a bassist, the drummer had pads too and these were all going through bass or guitar amps which was really nice. There's a bit of trepidation when you think it might lose what I like about it but it didn't, for the fact they found sounds that weren't out of place aesthetically in that context and they still had that grit and uncontrolled ability to them.

LL – 1:26:47
Yeah, that's what Mark from Gallops said – he uses triggers through scenes in Ableton and it's quite controlled so with that type of thing you have to be quite controlled. The point of live performance is that it is supposed to feel out of control which is where I think punk and rock music do it quite well as there's that element of it all collapsing on itself. That's why I am so excited by this movement – it's still so visceral and that's the fantastic ethos behind punk rock music, it feels so energetic and authentic to that person. Sometimes you'll see electronic music and they'll become soulless steel and you don't understand why they can't just use execute some of that energy i.e. when Peaches came out, she was just using a drum machine but she was so performative with it, in a way that she was like performance art which I loved. Maybe this isn't even post-rock anymore, maybe it sits in a popular context of experimental music. I'm not saying experimental academic sound art, it still sits in the underground of accessibility. Like you said when you were growing up you could get a guitar because it was cheap and I didn't know any posh people to go to a gallery as really the only

place you could go was the back of your local pub or something – I just so happen to fit into that context […] one thing I think I spoke to you about before was this Spears/ Stockhausen continuum. Have you heard of Carl Stockhausen, he's an experimental composer who did things with tapes in the 60's. So on one end you have experimental stuff with him and then the other end you have Britney Spears and I think a lot of the stuff were talking about sits in between, it still has structure – the exciting point is that you can present yourself in a rock formation which has popular instincts but then you borrow from experimental people like Stockhausen or Cage or all these other two but also there's the middle ground where you combine the two whether it is for commercial gain or in academic scene. You can merge the two which is exciting without it seeming poncey that you take from past shows without feeling like a sell-out. I feel like stuff you produce, it's not hookless you like experimental stuff but it does sit right […]

MR – 1:30:19
Yeah well I just like music, there's plenty of stuff that is super popular and super poppy – that's what's great about Delta Sleep they're in that post rock/math-rock scene and they just write great songs.

LL – 1:30:39
I think those extended techniques are still pop, they are just executed slightly differently. I think I might finish on what you see as the future of rock music because you might feel like even yourself […] it used to be the forefront of popular music and youth culture but now it isn't. there's 30-year-olds and 40 year olds that are going to festivals to see post-rock i.e. going to metal festivals or pink gorilla and thinking that's so 70's or 80's. Is it fore fronting music or do you think the guitar will slowly diminish and become like a jazz classical instrument and production will be fore fronted?

MR – 1:31:35
I honestly don't know, I guess it will just keep on developing and I think that's what's kind of good, that unpredictability of it. Something like Arctangent would have been unheard of 10 years ago and there's a lot of those styles of bands that are almost a bit passe when you hear them as there's so many others like it - so you're less taken aback by it. Some of the bands I was really into the early 2000's I think part of the reasons why is because they were a rarity at the time which is where I have to try and not be too cynical when listening to new music that might have derived from it as that doesn't necessarily mean it's not good – you have to give it a chance.

Yeah I don't know where it's going to go but I think it's going in a good direction. I went to Arctangent and I saw stuff that's just really good hardcore bands with interesting musical stuff going on and then saw Battles who are constantly trying to push the envelope. I think the two things can kind of coexist and to kind of cop out, it's anyone's guess and I guess the good thing about it being so varied is what you said about it becoming a past genre like jazz music. I think what it's got going for it is not so pigeon-holed because there is so much variation.

LL – 1:33:51
I think that's really good and when I was talking to Tim he was saying that he plays like a 90's mid-west sound but he says he is a bit bored of playing the guitar and I feel if you're not

pushing yourself forward in your instrument […] Some people turn to tech for a bit of inspiration when they feel stuck on their instrument and that's when you'll get people changing how the guitar sounds, looping it, flipping it on its head and things like that.

MR – 1:34:45
Most of the time people are coming at it from a truly artistic point of view, I think that's where Radiohead kind of personified if you look at their progression. It ends up as something quite like glitchy electronic and then you listen to Pablo Honey and it's almost a grunge/rock record and I like that authenticity of it – music that sounds like they would be making it whether people were listening or not is the best way to sum it up. It comes down to authenticity I think and that's where in this post-rock kind of thing where some bands kind of win over the others – does this band look and feel like they are expressing themselves or have they just jumped on the bandwagon trying to be clever and doing the whole trying to get girls through music.

LL – 1:36:00
That's another thing I was talking about with Tim as he was confused about how he feels as a guitarist towards the future but I said I think inclusivity will improve it when we see more […] so far rock music has been a white guy's vision which is cool but I think any time you see another race or a female representing it, it's a different story. I watched this documentary on M.I.A, she went to art school at St. Martins and then she picked up the drum machine and created that whole explosion of what she was doing and she was a refugee from Sri Lanka but she picked up that drum tech and it sounded amazing. I think for the other genres like hip-hop and electronica there was a quicker acceleration of not feeling so rooted in the authenticity of it whereas I think for rock, people worry about the pureness of the music or their instruments and tech and they're using the ideology of that movement but the others threw it aside. I think within these scenes they're starting to let go of it i.e. they're playing Derringer pedals or a valve amp, that sort of stuff.

MR – 1:37:50
That's the side of it that I like where it is going, it's a bit more of a punk mentality by appreciating virtuosity but not making that the exclusive benchmark or measure of how good something is i.e. when you see a drummer who is sloppy as hell but they've got really good feel, that could be really good for that reason or you could see a drummer that is technically amazing which could be off putting because it's just that expression. Some amazing drummers I'll see and think they're amazing and then some It won't hit me in the same way but I think it's still clever. It's the same the other way round with band like Fugazi, they weren't necessarily doing some amazing playing but they sound like they are making up their own chords and not playing by the book which is its own thing and it's a really undefinable phase of music which is completely subject to the individual and their own personal taste i.e. me going to watch Tron which I thought was okay but others around me thought it was amazing.

LL - 01:39:38
I think that was quite a nice little soundbite you did at the end there. Just looking at my notes to see if there was anything else, I should ask – I do it quite loose now, when I started I was a bit more strict to the questions which didn't work.

MR – 01:39:58
I've tried interviewing people and it never goes to plan.

LL – 01:40:02
I think we've spoken about most of it anyway. I hope you enjoyed this.

MR – 01:40:10
Yeah it was fun, it's good to actually analyse some of these things and not let them pass by.

LL – 1:40: 20
That's basically what this is all about, you play a certain way and someone will ask why you play like that to which you respond that you're interested in rock music and you find all the bands you are influenced by but then in philosophy this zooms out even more to why humans spend all our time with these tangible objects and what's the point of it all. I think there is something in this where we aren't quite seamlessly dealing with tech but you've obviously found a real creativity in the studio.

MR – 1:40:59
Yeah.

LL – 1:41:00
But you're not quite playing it out yet but you admire those people even though you might not even want that because studios are a completely separate creativity to playing live.

MR – 1:41:12
I'm more like that, I'm not a producer, I'm not writing music for people; I'm capturing and mixing it for them which does have a creative aspect to it. It's 20/80.

LL – 1:41:38
I think what you're doing with YouTube is good because […] one I think you're quite good at which I think you're passionate about is, not teching people out and marginalising their interest in it quickly which I think a lot of people do - You just play around with it, which I think is really good. Also I'm thinking of […] I've been looking at some guitar pedals as I need a smaller one for when I move to Berlin next month and I was looking at some reviews but I found it annoying how people were selling the pedals and gear – I think it would be cool to do a bit like what you're trying to do with interviews, to interview people about the artistry behind it and the functionality. Especially guitar reviews they're all centred around blues licks even though not everyone plays just that.

Williams, I (2019)

Williams, I
Artists Interview: Ian Williams
Interview by Laura Lee
[Online] 20.02.2019

(This interview had multiple audio cut-outs due to poor internet connection)

LL - 0:21
So basically, this week I've been talking to; Mark from Gallops and a drummer called Adam Betts who's in a band called Three Trapped Tigers and he plays for Goldie but he uses a lot of Ableton in his drumming as well. Obviously, I wanted to talk to you, as you are a pioneer in this style of guitar playing and I just wanted to have a short informal chat with you to pitch the subject and whether down the line we could talk more. I feel like there isn't this literature out there about […] I lecture on a music technology course here and people just want to perform live in a band context, but it takes a lot of jiggling around with the technology and this creative letting go of what technology can do for you. Should I start with a question?

IW - 1:46
Yeah, it sounds like an interesting topic, there are times where I'll feel proud of myself If I do something on a technical level but I know it will be completely lost on the audience as an outsider but it's sort of the technique of how it is produced, as sometimes it's part of the story that doesn't necessarily get told and it's cool that you're looking at that.

LL - 2:35
Yeah I think that's what I feel like with this story especially when you first emailed me back saying that people in academia doing cool stuff is a very niche thing – so you get people in academic worlds trying to make really complicated music and like you said the outsiders just thinking it sounds good but I quite like how you said there's a story behind it and why we decide to persevere with this new connection and new ways of guitar playing. Guitar playing is so entrenched in a blues orientated history that you just want to not be riff based, I don't know if that is how you feel?

IW - 3:28
I feel like I always have liked riffs, there's something about *audio cuts out*.

IW - 4:00
Sometimes when it happens you feel like my mind turns to jelly.

LL – 4:13
Do you feel like it was a slow progression between just you, your guitar and amp to adding pedals and effects and then adding Ableton push on top, was that a gradual exploration or was it just something that you felt like you needed to add to challenge yourself – why did you get to that extent?

IW - 4:49
It was a gradual progression. I was in a band from 1992 to 2000 and then the band broke up […] but there was a relevant chapter where I think I still am today, the last record we made in

1999 that came out in 2000 was called American Don and basically Mike the other guitarist quit so it kind of just came to a simple level of I need a pedal and the only thing I knew about *audio cuts*

IW 6:04
He sent me a Sound On Sound article about the Akai Headrush this was around 1997/1998 so then I went and got an Akai Headrush which I used to loop a lot and it kind of created its own aesthetic. It did this thing where you're playing a riff *audio cuts*.

IW - 7:22
So I played this interesting thing. When we recorded that record Steve Albini […] we had some technical problems that I didn't really like and Albini had these ways of recording that.

LL - 7:42
A purist way?

IW - 7:43
Yeah, sort of like he took it upon himself to be a documentarian so you are the artist *audio cuts*   and I felt like this record, I didn't know how to record the looper and make it sound good – I felt like the guitar sounded really small next to the drums and I was struggling with this disparity of sound between the two and then we ended up recording it again it again though someone called *audio cuts*

IW - 9:28
Pretty unfocused then Battles kicked off in 2002 and that solo guitar thing in a way morphed into Battles because I was doing solo shows and I didn't really know what I wanted to do or whether I wanted to be in a band again – I then met Ty Braxton […] and I said do you want to beatbox and I'll do guitar which is kind of how we started. *audio cuts* John started playing and it sort of morphed into the band […] When we started playing a lot in 2003 or 2004 we all had Echoplex that we could sync up and it helped us keep in time[…] the idea for me *audio cuts* multi-layer stuff from what I was [….] it was sort of 4 or 5 layers of guitar but it eventually sounded like a big wall of guitar jumping around in patterns. I think me feeling like it sounded small so the idea in the earlier Battles stuff was to take those riffs that were on one pedal and to spread them out *imitates sounds* so we would trade them in circles and John would play drums under it – the original Battles formula was just that unpacking.

LL - 12:38
So, you could sort of do a call and response in a different way than traditional rhythm and lead guitar players.

IW - 12:52
Yeah and it was a simple thing of taking our guitar loops and unpacking it to put it into different sounds and each of those voices came through a different amp to spread them out and make them bigger in that different sort of way.

LL - 13:14
I guess when you've got a loop locked in that gives a guitarist the opportunity to be a sound engineer on their pedals, it's sort of a slightly different creative zone like you said by creating that bigger sound of multiple layers with multiple players or more layered loops to expand it.

IW - 14:05
Yeah […] then at that point we started using Ableton instead of the Echoplex, although that made Ableton even more complicated […] If you know the song Ice Cream that was on the album, that main loop was actually guitar *audio cuts* track on track off that just rhythmically turned the fact that there's 3 guitar loops on certain tracks and that track on track off allowed us to create that pattern – so that was the idea of turning a loop pedal into a multi- track recording studio with Ableton and that encourage the interest more with the Ableton stuff.

LL - 15:32
And did you find any resistance between guitar purists that didn't like that digital switch? Because I think people could understand the looper being in a pedal format but when it becomes a completely laptop-based performance, it makes people question the true analogue tone.

IW 15:58
Right, yeah. I mean the pedals were still digital anyway […]

LL - 16:37
See that's why I always get really confused, you know within rock traditions they want the authentic sound of someone playing in a room but even some of the most iconic rock albums are heavily affected by digital production in the studio – I think we should just have the freedom and an open space which Ableton allows, that live studio set up and not worrying about the source orientation of it.

IW – 16:39
Yeah […] I have always enjoyed the perversion of I guess *audio cuts* making it. Like you said, it doesn't concern me about authentic things and there is something attractive about playing things through a laptop because it feels so wrong.

LL - 17:17
Yeah, and that's what I tend to like myself because it does feel wrong and it bewilders people. Yesterday I watched the performance that you did on Jools Holland which was I guess breaking through U.K. style, I showed it to my bassist, and he was like it feels like the future that must have blown people's minds – I went to Sonar in Barcelona in 2005 and it was such an exciting festival I don't know if you remember, there were electronic acts and bands collaborating […] not only does Ableton allow a mixing of genres but it allows a mixing of acts too, it must be frustrating to be rooted in one type of festival. I don't know if you feel like there is a bit of freedom within that?

IW - 18:36
Yeah, I […] it's a dream I guess to be in-between two different genres – we can exist in an electronic or a rock festival.

LL - 19:00
You had Squarepusher playing in the early 2000's with his double bass and some electronics and that really changed the festival format. But I think it allowed electronic music to be accessible seeing it in that band format – almost like sound art and electronic music allowed new audiences in, which excites me because some people would have only seen electronic music in house/techno or in the underground scene etc. but I think I just like that time from the mid 90's to the early 2000's where the boom of cheaper recording technology along with pedals allowed this new format for untrained musicians and studio engineers to make music without overthinking it.
Like you said when you had access to that loop pedal, I like these new cognitive formats of creativity which we didn't have before and then like how you said you were interested in your friend who was doing beatboxing; I think it's interesting that beatboxing didn't exist until we had drum machines and people tried to imitate the drum machine – so there's that point of voice imitation of machines who will then record themselves which creates this chain of imitation. Some of the stuff you do on guitar was rooted in rock but I wonder what electronic music you were listening to that made you expand your guitar playing if you know what I mean?

IW - 21:13
Yeah […] in the 90's I'd say I was influenced by a combo of things, I was in my twenties in the 90's so I had discovered jazz music and free jazz.

LL 21:39
Yeah cause you were in that band Storm and Stress and all the improv stuff must have been freeing not having to prepare anything as you could just impromptu get together with people.

IW - 21:41
I always thought with that band; it was close and actually *audio cuts* I wanted to sound more like ambient electronic music except with a guitar without any effects it was just 100% my guitar.

LL - 22:30
Well maybe that is going back to the point I was making; maybe until we heard that massive influence from studio production or those electronic artists we almost had to wonder how we could make our regular guitar sound like that.

IW - 22:44
It was sort of the impersonal sound of the machine but getting channelled into the guitar that is supposed to be a very expressive guitar.

LL - 23:10
Through soaring vibrato or whatever it is you do to make your guitar sing but you wonder why you can't make it sound metronomic or have a different slant on it. I quite like the fact that traditional guitar music is all around this expressive vibrato lead guitar playing and how we create feeling but on the other hand I feel like some of the very metronomic robotic sounding drum machines have been the one that get better reactions than that style of guitar playing.

Yeah so being signed to Warped that was quite interesting when they started to sign bands like yourself who are beyond electronic artists.

IW - 24: 10
audio cuts electronic sounds and sometimes the group does IDM but then in the early 2000's people returned to rock traditionalism with the Strokes and then all of a sudden Aphex Twin sounded like they were from the future but also the past and now Aphex sounds like the future again […] so I think Warped kind of just needed bands and luckily they found us *audio cuts* we're still on Warped and we're going to release a record soon.

LL - 25:30
It's an amazing label and it was really interesting when the electronic scene i.e. Chicago House or Detroit Techno and Europe adopted a lot of that music and brought it over to the U.K. which I think influenced the whole Warped scene of the 90's and the scene in Sheffield and like you said it was a great thing when they started to sign bands with that crossover. All this stuff there's not that much literature on it where I feel it's quite an important shift in popular music – so that's basically why I wanted to talk to you about my research and I know that you're over for Arctangent is that right?

IW - 26: 33
Yeah is that in August?

LL - 26:34
Yeah cause that's the main experimental festival I guess and quite a few of my friends […] it would just be really cool if you're interested to formally do this through a PhD – you just have to submit a form to say that you're happy for me to interview you for this academic use only and it would be cool for knowledge in the future to see this crossover of tech and how musicians work. If you're up for that it would be cool to do maybe an hour interview in person or what do you think would be a good way to do it?

IW 27:39
Well with the Arctangent thing, I'm pretty sure we're going to only be there for two days. So, one day we're playing and then the other is a DJ set so that would put us there for the most part of it and I don't think I would have time to kick around and do something like that.

LL 28:10
I think with the other artists and yourself and Ableton are really behind it - I'll be based in Berlin next year for all this research and yeah. I just think it's the way forward and I know Ableton are behind it because a lot of their users are in house and techno but a lot of bands are adopting it too and it's just a really cool exciting time for music making. So, if you're up for this in August then we can have a proper chat where I can ask you proper nerd questions about what you do and a bit of the history, the progression from initial guitar playing to adding loops that sound bigger similar to what we've been talking about today. So, if you're up for it then let's do it.

IW - 29:20
So Ableton is behind it?

LL - 29:23
Behind this research?

IW - 29 : 25
Yeah what does that mean?

LL - 29: 30
They want me to get involved in their loop conference to talk about my research and part of my PhD is to actually make work within the studio trying to test out some of these ideas and talk about it – I think they are just supportive of this and there's a bit a more within the electronic scenes and sound art but there's not much from the popular musicology. So yeah when they do these conferences called loop, they get artists talking along with academics to discuss where to go next and they are behind new forms of creativity. But yeah it's just really interesting how we are imitating machines by beatboxing and trying to make our guitars sound like arpeggiated synths we are influenced by a lot and I just think it needs to be spoken about how this is all merging.
What is interesting about the rock format, take Radiohead for example; you see them in a band format which allows you to be experimental as you are presenting in a band formation and that gives it the accessibility – so I'm interested in that extreme between very popular and experimental and how this genre allows both for musicians and the audience.

IW - 31:55
Right, yeah. It's fun dragging all the cliches of a rock band, it's somehow deeply rooted.

LL - 32:17
I find sometimes as well you find electronic musicians don't call themselves by their names and it becomes less about the ego and I think that is why I started in electronic music because rock is all about the persona - this allows someone like myself to have the power without my foot on the monitor and with the visceral energy of rock performances all that weird history feels nostalgic and strange to me being a female performer doing that. So I think what these crossover bands allow is this immersive experience without […] do you want to be on stage and be recognised, do you want this collective experience or just lock in with your players?

IW - 33:21
[…] What if they discovered modular synthesis?

LL - 33:33
Yeah it would have been mind- blowing. More girls got into Avant Garde stuff because of this hang-up of rock music and I think electronic music allows it to be less centre stage and more experimental – there's a lot of freedom in it and the same could be said for free improv. It's just really hard to implement tech and make it still sound like you even though it's a nice idea to have it.

IW - 34:35
Is the music the machine or is it the person?

LL - 34:41
Yeah. What are your thoughts?

IW - 34:52
audio cuts

LL - 35:16
Sorry I've got a bit of a poor connection with you but hopefully you got an idea of where I am at with my research and you're doing really good, exciting stuff Ian so if you want to contribute that would be amazing.

Wright, J (2021)

Wright, J (2021)
Artist Interview: James Wright
Interview by Laura Lee
[In-Person] 09.02.21

LL – 00:15
We've just finished this big project […] maybe you could start off by just introducing yourself and your role in this project.

JW – 00:22
My name is James Wright, I am the engineer behind the project. I am using this Audient desk to essentially combine studio techniques with live mixing – in a live performance you would typically use a desk something like this to mix levels but often the post-production is for this whole process. The aim for this was to capture the perfect take. So, although we're capturing the instruments as best we can we're also using things that you would further use to embellish the sound i.e. reverb, delays, different filters and effects. They are all done in real-time along with the performance with the aim to combine that into one big hybrid sound.

LL – 01:09
Maybe you could talk me through the steps that you went through to get it onto the desk there.

JW – 01:15
Okay. Well first we had to figure out what tracks we needed. So the final outcome of all of that is that you start off the record with a piano which we had a simple stereo X and Y recorded with some Neumann mics and then because we wanted to get some extra flavour in there we've got some effects pedals on the first track and the aim is that we play that back and mix the effects live […]. Then as we get to the full band set up, we went through a few alterations but we've got it all colour-coded now. So, green tape for Ableton as Ableton is providing a lot of sounds on your set and it is set up to come directly into the desk. Your guitars are purple and pink as there are two different amps with two different microphones in each amp and they are panned left and right to give a bit of stereo spread. The room mic captures everything in the room, so both yourself and Mark. This is primarily the lower side on the left and then onto the right […] we've got 24 tracks. We have talkback which we've been using to communicate downstairs because obviously this is in a different location to where you guys are performing. We have 7 drum mics; kick, snare, hi-hat, two toms and then two overheads which capture the cymbals. The way Mark has set up his kit is both dry and Ableton sounds come through the same track so essentially, it's just blending between different songs to get the best mix. Then onto the green, this is actually one of the best decisions we made I think – taking what is normally an auxiliary effect and putting it onto the track itself so any reverb that you hear generated by me is solely on these two tracks and any delays is done on these tracks and because they are a bit more tangible in the track format we can send one effect into the other via the auxiliary sends so you can get some really weird feedback sounds and delays within delays and just some pretty crazy stuff which we made good use of. But yeah, we did a lot of rehearsals and the aim was to get the optimum level input gain, try and EQ as we go which again is normally a post-production thing but we're trying to EQ from the source so each track has the best sound and then during the transitions of each song there is almost like a script that I follow in my head i.e. for this next song the drums are going to be louder so let's bring

them down a bit - I'm building this mental cue sheet of what's going to happen next in the song.

LL – 04:16
Could you talk through the workflow because you know normally this desk is not designed to be used in a live setting so how did we convert the faders and deal with live automation to stick to the concept of the commitment to capture […]

JW – 04:31
So, the way Ableton is set up on the screen […] we've kind of found the perfect solution of capturing like you would traditionally – each of these different coloured tracks would be a bounced version of each of these faders, so if we want to, we could do some post-production. But what we've also got is this red track, which is the final output of the desk, meaning that when I pull a fader down or add some extra reverb that is being added to the final version of the track. The live automation which again is something you normally do in post with the effects and the plug-ins of the programmes but in this case every decision I make is definitive which is something that isn't normally done – postproduction gives you a lot more flexibility but with this you have to be much more decisive. All the automation is done entirely in real time and after several rehearsals I think I was at the point where I knew what sounded best for it. So yeah EQ, volume and effects are all baked into the final track and in tandem to that to add a little bit of pressure they're all going into the tape machine so were getting a digital copy of the final output as well as an analogue version which again is something you would release after the post production – so the fact that we're going through it and you can immediately hear the album as if it's the end of the studio process straight away is pretty crazy. So that was the aim to have an instant product.

LL – 06:18
So we spoke about then, live automation and the commitment to tape […] as well as riding the faders through the tracks. You were also being expressive with the outboard effects so maybe you could talk a bit about that.

JW – 06:32
Yes. So some of the techniques I used just through doing research was creating a phasing effect, so before we get to outboard maybe we can play something from tape 3 *plays track* so there's a phase effect that you can hear which you probably think sounds like a pedal but in reality what you do is; you have an EQ and add a lot of gain to a very specific frequency which creates a sort of whistle, swirly effect – so again using the EQ for something you're not actually meant to do as I'm using it for an audio effect. That little bit of soft movement was essentially me just changing the different frequencies of the guitar while we did that, which was one of the techniques I discovered just by experimenting. As you were saying, I think a large part of what formed my pallet of expression were these 3 effects: An Eventide Reverb which gives you a different type of algo-rhythmic reverb like stereo, room, and plate – a nice clean sound. We did use the spring for a little bit but it was acting a bit funny so we didn't use it for the final thing, but I think a large part of what I used for the final was the Lexicon which is a multi-effects unit so not just reverb which Lexicon is known for but it's also got; delays, flange, phase, pitch shifting – lots of different forms of expression. The way that works is […] Let's say I've got a sound on the snare drum by using these auxiliary effects I can send a copy of that in parallel to the delays and then what you would get is that sound source coming

through. So, on certain songs that becomes quite apparent i.e., the start of YES *plays track* there's a lot of reverb in this track generated by Laura and Mark but to further the spacey-ness, I ran the overheads and Laura's guitar through this reverb to make it more spacey so that's an example of that being done. Or for example, towards the end of the project *plays track* Those swirly effects are essentially me running everyone and everything through a flange effect which allows you to flavour the entire output of the music – so playing with that and a lot of the settings allowed me to have control over the final output, so that's that in a sort of band setting. Other tricks that we developed would be on the piano tracks what we can do is create a sort of string like sound i.e., on the last track called ENID, there is a pitch shifter effect […] that I fell in love with straight away and by running it through a big reverb essentially what you get is very lovely string elements that you hear in this track *plays track*. Running it through a pitch shifter gives you this octave higher sound, so using it to compliment the piano and the acoustic quality of it but in a very digital way was quite interesting - You're using what is entirely a digital product and trying to make it sound more organic.

LL - 11:34
So we do two takes, with one being more controlled without an audience […] So not only were we committing it right to tape but you also had live automations and effects but it was also getting fed back to an audience. You basically became part of the band; we were hearing things through our headphones that you were manipulating while we were in a theatre space downstairs. So maybe you could talk a bit about how that felt for you.

JW – 12:05
Well these types of roles are usually designed for people with terrible social skills, people that don't like those kinds of environments and not to knock engineers but a large part of them are very detail oriented which I am – but I also love collaboration and as a musician myself it felt interesting to do what traditionally is an afterthought in the process, to sculpt it in real time. Also listening to each other and collaborating in real time and responding to each other i.e. when I throw a really heavy effect on something, both yourself and Mark respond to that intensity which kind results in a kind of call and response between us. Using this as an instrument is quite an interesting process as like you said it's not designed to do that – so it took a while to figure out how one could actually do that, as opposed to just getting the levels right which you would normally do. It was thinking of different tricks you could do to break the traditional way of thinking. I just remembered this as well, I don't know how much you'll use in the final product but, whenever you hit the cut switch that goes red; it will mute the track but not only mute the track but also what is heard by yourself and the audience as well as the recording – so that means I kill it from the actual output but if you tap it ever so gently you get a little cut out which I was actually using to create sort of glitch sounds at certain parts of the track. I didn't even google this, I just wanted it to sound a bit glitchy without having a glitch plug-in as I wasn't allowed to use plug-ins only outboard. I was thinking how do you make a glitch and what is a glitch – it's just a drop out. Using the faders wouldn't be quick enough and wouldn't sound natural, so I needed a very instantaneous drop out of signal would sound quite cool. Then for stereo tracks on the overheads both left and right – I could make the left track louder than the right and create some stereo by manipulating that, so I did that quite a lot during the live set. I was just trying to think what I would do in a post-production environment and how I could make that happen more immediately, so I came up with this bank of tricks that I keep in my book. All my notes and past discoveries have been written in here.

LL – 15:08
So my last question would be […] the whole point of this project is to kind of make the studio an instrument which we did with our instruments as we had; effected drums and manipulated guitars trying to blend the electronic and acoustic world […] something that associated with the studio which is control and perfectionism but the idea of this project is to keep it organic, spontaneous, live but with the value of high production. Do you think we achieved this in the project or is there anything that we should reflect on for the next time?

JW – 15:46
I think we've definitely achieved it. As I said before, a lot of this was hypothetical and it wasn't until we got into the studio in the last month where we were thinking how feasible is this? And after a lot of late nights and needing to take 5 for a while, we came across quite a successful way of doing this – it's not without its inefficiencies, there are ways to improve it. I think as much as I tried to create new ways to collaborate it by using the desk as opposed to an instrument, I've achieved some of it but I think there are still some ergonomic ways that could be improved i.e. if I'm modifying your guitar but the delay is all the way over there […] what am I meant to do? So maybe the implementation of foot switches, additional controllers or trying to consolidate the set up – I think if you had that, that would create a whole new world where instead of just having a producer in here you could have one onstage doing that. But yeah, with more thought behind the process, I think you can make that an actual tangible thing. In terms of combining production and post-production in a musical sense, I think we did it and I think a large part of the experiments that we found initially we actually carried through.