Being in the Band: *Exploring agency and structure in popular music*

By CLIVE RADFORD

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Abstract

Being in the Band: *Exploring Agency and Structure in Popular Music* is a practice-led, phenomenological auto-ethnomusicology that investigates the musical and social dynamics of a grassroots rock band's quest for recognition and its complex interactions with the music industry. Through a series of band histories, this research examines Kerb's setbacks and resilience after failing to secure a major record deal. The lived experience of making music is a critical feature of this phenomenological ethnomusicology. It combines an introspective narrative with thematic analysis to reveal how a rock band operates at a local level, constructs its sound, songs and identity, and navigates the interplay of personal agency within music industry constraints. The theoretical framework draws on Edward Casey's phenomenology of remembering and imagining, which is leveraged to reveal how musicians construct meaning through their creative practices, interactions with technology, and responses to industry pressures. Kerb's journey is traced from the edges of the Bristol music scene of the early to mid-2000s, confronting industry setbacks such as record label rejections and criticisms of the band's music and style. The band ventured to Sweden, funded by an independent record label, where they encountered the highly professionalised recording and production practices of Swedish producers. Ultimately, this study argues that first-hand, self-reflexive accounts are essential for understanding how musicians navigate their creative endeavours amid socio-economic and cultural forces. It offers a methodological contribution by demonstrating how phenomenological auto-ethnomusicology can illuminate the complex interplay between individual aspirations, artistic identity, and industry dynamics.

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CHAPTER 1

Prologue to a rock band

Encountering conditions [1]

I first encountered Kerb back in 2001. They were a rock band in the throes of trying to convince a major record label to sign them. The news of this exciting and potentially life-changing event was shared by the band's keyboard player, Jon. We were both instrumental teachers at one of the local schools in Glastonbury, a famous tourist location associated with the King Arthur legend and the Tor, its proximity to the Glastonbury music festival and now possibly Kerb. Like most instrumental teachers in this school, our day job was supplemented with professional music engagements of various sorts. One or two of us were jazz musicians, and others were classical players. Jon was unusual in that, although an accomplished (academy-trained) classical pianist, he was immersed and visibly consumed by this local rock band's activities. In the short time I got to know Jon, it was clear that his rock band was more than a passing hobby.

We were in the school most days during the week, and over time, I gradually got to know Jon, and we became friends. Conversations in the staffroom would often veer towards the exploits of his band; they were very active locally but also ambitious and played gigs in Bristol and London. It seemed like an exciting but

[1] 'Encountering' in phenomenology refers to the way we experience, perceive, and interpret the world and the beings within it. It is fundamental to phenomenological inquiry, highlighting the direct, intentional, and often interpretive engagement with reality. 'In every context of activity there is far more going on than the actor actually attends to, events or qualities that remain unnoticed' (Giddens 1984: 48).

equally fraught endeavour to me: the internal politics, elaborate recording sessions, demos, rehearsals, gigs, the band van, manager and, of course, the record deal. I became intrigued by them. It was interesting to see how Jon juggled the demands of his day job with the ongoing pressures of his band. Some tensions appeared to manifest around their recent album recording, a self-funded project recorded locally in a small professional studio. Jon gave the impression that the finished product had, in some ways, not lived up to their expectations. I had not heard the album at this stage but assumed that musical clashes could be the root cause of the issue. In my experience, recording studios capture sound and amplify any inherent tension in the musicians or problems in the music.

One morning, I saw Jon in the staff room, pacing. He seemed agitated and distracted. I asked him what was wrong. I assumed the band had come to blows again, but not this time. In fact, the opposite was true; he was very excited because an A&R representative (Nick Stewart) from BMG Records (Bertelsmann Music Group) had heard about Kerb and made an approach.[2] This new development provided much-needed momentum for the band. After what seemed to be weeks of uncertainty and anxiety for Jon, a further opportunity to meet the A&R representative manifested in the form of a showcase gig. The event came and went, and the weeks passed; the band waited, and Jon paced. Finally, another breakthrough came, and the band were asked to go to the London office for a follow-up meeting with the A&R. Even more time passed, and eventually, a decision was made. BMG decided not to pursue their interest in Kerb any further—a catastrophic blow for them. Jon appeared to be, understandably, despondent at the outcome.

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[2] A&R stands for 'Artist and Repertoire' and part of a record label's organisational structure responsible for scouting and overseeing artistic development for its songwriters and acts.

Soon after this event, tensions re-emerged in the band, and two members resigned. My musical involvement with Kerb begins here as I agree to help them fulfil some live engagements as a 'dep' for the bass player, eventually leading to a much longer, unplanned commitment to the band.[3]

*****

In this opening *vignette* (encountering the band), I am attempting to immerse the reader into my first experiences with this grassroots rock band as I now recall them.[4] More specifically, I reveal how I became fascinated by their attempts to garner music industry support for their songs and the trials they went through to try and achieve this goal. Kerb will become the focus of this research, although that was not my plan when I first joined them. The idea for developing this experience into a doctoral research project came much later after returning from Sweden following a recording of the band's second album. My original idea for this project was about the Swedish songwriting and music production industry. However, later in my research, it was clear that Kerb's experience in Stockholm would provide a much closer reading of the songwriting and production process that had initially sparked my interest. This shift in focus necessitated the integration of an autoethnographic methodology that aligned to phenomenological ethnomusicology. The musical study then unfolds in the pursuit of what Tim Rice (1994) defines as, the 'often unarticulated inner experiences we have performing or listening to it' (3).

What emerges from this thesis is a complexly layered project that attempts to

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[3] A 'dep' (deputy) is a shortened term given to freelance musicians who stand in for (deputise) for another musician. This role will be discussed in depth in Chapter Two.

[4] According to Rice, musical experience is defined by *'the history of the individuals encounter with the world of musical symbols in which he finds himself'* (1994: 6; italics in the original text).

draw the reader into the inner workings of this grassroots rock band in its ambitious pursuit of getting a record deal. My interpretation of the 'events' and 'encounters' offers an insider voice that is rarely documented in popular music studies. By revealing the complicated and frustrating experiences that the members of Kerb endured, this study provides insights into the often-overlooked challenges emerging artists face in their pursuit of mass-market appeal for their music. This exploration of the grassroots activities of musicians reveals the intricate dynamics of band relationships and music industry negotiations. It offers a nuanced understanding of the perseverance and adaptability required to navigate the highly competitive realities that surround songwriting and record production.

Chapter One defines the aims and rationale of the research, essentially the design of a phenomenological auto-ethnomusicology that enables a reflexive and introspective account of being in a grassroots rock band. It identifies some of the problematic issues connected with first-person interpretations, and meaning-making individuals inevitably develop in the sharing of a 'life-world'. The knowledge we have about the world is closely connected to our personal experiences and the situations we encounter. This knowledge consists of past experiences that, over time, become part of us. When we experience something new, it gets added to our ongoing life story and is understood based on what is important to us, together with that which we already have stored in our minds.[5]

The literature review defines three broad areas of focus: rock bands, recording studios, and music industry. These areas provide a context and setting for the 'band

[5] 'The lifeworldly stock of knowledge is related in many ways to the situation of the experiencing subject. It is built on sedimentations of formerly actually present experiences that were bound to situations. Inversely, every actually present experience is inserted into the flow of lived experience and into a biography, according to the set of types and relevance found in the stock of knowledge' (Schutz 1974: 99-100).

histories' presented in Chapters Two, Three, and Four. The methodology section, which follows, discusses the features of autoethnographic research, including its history, methods, and controversies. The final section of Chapter One outlines my approach to utilising and adapting phenomenology as a means to immerse the reader into the experiences of the rock band, its organisation, and sound.

Rationale for the research

What can be learned by exploring Kerb's actions after failing to secure a contract with a major record label? I contend that insights gained from this study will help focus a broader understanding of the music industry and unsigned bands that strive for recognition. The insider perspective I offer is valuable for anyone interested in how musicians manage and organise complex musical projects. For example, knowing the consequences of hastily signing contracts and what that can mean for copyright ownership and any future opportunities. I argue that studying grassroots rock bands is necessary for popular music scholarship because it provides knowledge and insight into how independent music scenes work. It reveals the incentives and motivations of those participating, often anonymously, and how musical innovation and experimentation evolve. Therefore, my research questions probe how a rock band produces its sound and music, what its decision-making process entails, and how it navigates the external and ever-present demands of the music industry. The nature of this kind of exploration not only enriches our understanding of Kerb's journey but also offers insights into grassroots music practices that often go undocumented.

While there are many significant contributions to the study of rock music in popular music studies, there are very few examples of accounts from practitioners

that reveal *their* lived experience represented in this body of literature. It is rare for an artist/practitioner (insider) to occupy the role of scholar/analyst (outsider). In Jeff Todd Titon's Powerhouse For God (1988, 2018), he sets out the parameters for a hermeneutical phenomenology that has some overlapping themes with this study and which contemplates the insider/outsider perspective of the ethnomusicologist. Both this dissertation and Titon's text frame the unique position of the researcher who is in dialogue with the community, continuously returning to deepen understanding. In my case, the dialogue is internal and contained within memory and personal history, yet throughout these chapters, I return to the events and encounters of the experiences in an attempt to continue the dialogue and, as Titon suggests, 'knowing that conclusions will never be conclusive' (13). Therefore, I make the case that the researcher's positionality in this context can add insights and interpretations to the field that may be hard to obtain through more traditional participant observation. The dual perspective I am attempting allows for a nuanced understanding of the creative and organisational work that defines the processual and collaborative nature of music-making in bands.

The reason for the absence of this kind of insider ethnography, I suggest, could be connected to the role academia plays in the 'real world' of the rock musician. There are college and university courses worldwide that cater to the needs of commercially focused musicians; however, the usefulness of post-graduate study, particularly the prolonged investigation required at the doctoral (PhD) level, is not all that relevant to a practising rock musician. PhD research is less common in commercial music-making than in, say, classical music, electroacoustic composition and sonic arts, whose practice-based culture thrives on a mutually beneficial relationship to the academy. Conversely, a rock musician's attention is directed

towards time-intensive activities like honing performances, writing songs, producing demo recordings, and seeking record label support. This research suggests a way to bridge this gap and offer further contributions to the broader studies of rock music, which I discuss later in this chapter. It will provide a theoretical lens to approach and engage with ideas that address grassroots rock musicians' experiences, which remain understudied and underrepresented in academic discourse. Furthermore, I contend that this dissertation presents a significant and original contribution to the growing field of phenomenological ethnomusicology. This new perspective lies in how I layer and integrate multiple factors within one study - drawing on Stones' (2010) analogy of the study object, where the music 'event' is treated as a 'bounded sphere of interaction' (2). For example, how the band writes songs, navigates recording studio technology, shapes live and studio performances, and handles record contracts. Most scholarship in ethnomusicology evaluates how one particular practice exists across a 'culture'.[6] This study only concerns one specific band's journey to attempt mainstream success. I suggest that the experiences and challenges faced by Kerb could provide valuable insights to other grassroots bands about songwriting and record production, primarily through record company involvement.

In *Being in the Band*, I offer an analysis of the creative and organisational practices of a local rock band based in Glastonbury (UK) around the early to mid-2000s in their pursuit of a record deal. A central feature of the study is an exploration of the band's work in a range of recording studios, the most significant being located in Stockholm, Sweden. *Being* in the band, in this context, refers to the

[6] See further Ruth Stone (1982, 2010) Let the Inside Be Sweet—a seminal phenomenological ethnomusicology that traces the significance of the musical 'event' across a culture; also, Harris Berger's (1999), Metal, Rock, and Jazz—which explores the deep interconnections between individual musical experiences and broader historical and social contexts that connect unique moments across various bands, musicians, and music genres.

phenomenological autoethnographic methodology used to understand meaning through 'lived experience'. This theoretical framework enables a deep immersion into the songs, demos, rehearsals, performances, and music industry dealings from a first-person (insider) perspective. It is important to state that this study is not an exegesis of the band's creative work. I am not claiming any intrinsic value in the songs, or the recordings presented. These are merely the artefacts that situate the analysis and wider discussion. The value in knowledge lies in the exploration of the band's process through a particular methodological lens.

Sharing my experience of being in a rock band is not straightforward. My positionality in the study presents some significant methodological hurdles. For example, I do not use participant observation as part of the data gathering process. Therefore, in order to make this research viable, I have explored and experimented with autoethnographic concepts that deal with subjectivity, generalisation, ethics, academic validity, and authenticity. Autoethnography is a method of qualitative research in which the researcher uses their personal experiences and cultural perspectives as the basis for understanding and analysing a topic or phenomenon. It is a methodology whose strength lies in getting to specific granular facets of an experience through narrative accounts such as a sense-making activity. Some data collection features common in autoethnographic research involve chronicling the past through memory work. Artefacts such as recordings, photographs, and text are the tools and stimuli used. In recent years, autoethnography has also emerged as part of the toolkit for the ethnomusicologist.

There is a growing body of literature in this field encompassing a variety of music-related topics; I give some initial examples here by way of an overview but will expand in detail later in this chapter. Bartleet and Ellis (2009) explore the

potential of autoethnography through the creation of original music, the analysis of existing music, and the use of music as a tool for reflection and self-discovery. Webber (2009) explores the relationship between music, personal identity, and intimacy. Daly (2021) utilises the philosophy and method of *Dalcroze Eurhythmics* to investigate experiential practice and the potential resonance for professional performers. PhD work in music and autoethnography is also gaining traction with practitioners such as Clive Maxwell Harrison's (2015), *A Songwriter's Journey from little-c to Pro-C Creativity: An Applied Analytical Autoethnography*, who attempts to show a professional songwriter's experience of what writing a good song and a great song entails. Dave Hook's (2018) *An Autoethnography of Scottish hip-hop: identity, locality, outsiderdom and social commentary.* This practice-based study attempts to translate ideas that constitute global hip-hop through Scottish culture. David Raymond Moore's (2019) *Self, Song, Other: Identity at Play in Song.* A practiced-based autoethnographic study which examines identity and professional songwriting experiences. '[A] wave of self-reflexivity is sweeping across the music profession and is gaining momentum in a number of areas, such as music practice, research and pedagogy' (Ellis et al. 2009: 6).

This research project offers a unique and in-depth perspective on grassroots musicians' cultural practices, beliefs, and ways of life. As Finnegan observes, '[m]usicians' external and public-facing identity masks the extensive organisation and the 'often hidden system behind local musical practices' (1989: 272). Understanding these conditions can contribute to knowledge surrounding the ontological status of music that emerges from the experiences and consciousness of listeners and performers. Therefore, an essential feature of this research is the theoretical framework used to capture and analyse the practices that constitute the

sound, style and organisation of the rock band. It provides a structure to confront some of the more problematic areas of the study that inevitably raise questions about bias and subjectivity. Nevertheless, I believe there is enough rigour in the established methods chosen to provide valuable insights into the lived experiences of musicians that I portray.

Two overarching questions motivate the direction of this music research project and occupy two viewpoints-—the experiences of the band, and the efficacy and application of the methodology to reveal how these experiences resonate more generally in comparable studies:

> **(1) What constitutes a grassroots rock band's sound and music practice?** This question inevitably unfolds into ideas about how well the band plays, what kind of sound they make, and how good the songs are. The band's practice also involves ways in which they navigate the music industry. What is life like for a musician operating at the fringes of the music industry?
>
> **(2) What can a phenomenological auto-ethnomusicology of songwriting and recording studio work contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how rock bands operate at a local/grassroots level?** In what ways can the experiences of the rock band in this study be generalised? What is the context that forms adjacent to the sounds and music? How can an analysis of music systems be shown in a larger cultural system?

These questions are broad in scope but enable the direction of enquiry towards three spheres of activity.

> **(A)** The development and production of the rock band's sound within various recording studios. Generally, rock bands are constructed within a tight musical instrumental format, guitar, bass, drums, singer, and a keyboard. The sound of these instruments combined form, what might be, depending on the kinds of players involved, a unique and identifiable quality, i.e., a combination of many factors, put more simply, the musical and sonic structure of the songs made by a specific group of people. For the band in this study, probing questions are asked of their collective sound, and, as a result, the recording studio becomes embedded into its creative processes.
>
> **(B)** The musical and non-musical organisational work required to attract a record label's attention. Once the band has achieved some measurable quality within its musical offering to the world, it is ready to engage in the equally complex process of

attempting to attract the interest of music industry partners. Although the band modestly achieves this aim, the deal's outcome will be disappointing in its ability to live up to their expectations.

(C) The exploration of memory and imagination in this phenomenological auto-ethnomusicology forms the basis of this study's methodology. The use of vignettes to structure moments in time underscores the reflexive and introspective narratives, which enable an immersive exploration of the emotional and cognitive landscapes that underpin my experiences of being in the band.

In this thesis, I examine the challenges, successes, and failures faced by the rock band as it seeks recognition from the music industry while attempting to attain some commercial success for its songs through hastily signed record deals. While I am presenting Kerb's musical journey through a highly subjective lens there are some broader themes that are relatable more generally. For example, the struggle for recognition, negotiating ideas of creativity within the constraints of commercial economic forces has been a theme in much of the literature in this field. So, while the observations in this thesis reveal a very personal perspective the underlying narratives will resonate with musicians, bands and other stakeholders who are engaged in and strategising their professional careers.

In 1991, Sara Cohen identified a gap 'in the academic literature on rock music, and the absence of musicological and ethnomusicological data on Western popular music' (7). Furthermore, since the publication of *Rock Culture in Liverpool,* there are still very few ethnographies documenting the life of grassroots, rock bands that reveal insider perspectives of music-making and organisation. Apart from memoirs, biographies, and histories, self-reflexive (autoethnographic) studies that reveal the experiences of bands attempting to break into the music industry are scarce. Therefore, this research project will focus on the same key areas clearly defined in Sara Cohen's work but will seek to expand the scope of study to account for songwriting production in studios as part of a musically directed phenomenological

auto-ethnomusicology. My emphasis is on a closer reading of the rock band through a first-person account. It builds upon the pioneering ethnographies of Sara Cohen's (1991) *Rock Culture in Liverpool*, Ruth Finnegan's (1989) *The Hidden Musicians: Music-Making in an English Town*, H. Stith Bennett's (1980) *On Becoming a Rock Musician* and Harris M. Berger's (1999), *Rock Metal and Jazz: Perception and the Phenomenology of Musical Experience.* It also makes reference to and adaptations of ideas presented in seminal works that sit outside of popular music studies but which offer significant insights into examining and writing about musical cultures, including Jeff Todd Titon's (1988) Powerhouse for God: *Speech, Chant, and Song in an Appalachian Baptist Church;* Tim Rice's (1994) May It Fill Your Soul: *Experiencing Bulgarian Music;* Barz and Cooley's (2008) Shadows in the field: *new perspectives for fieldwork in ethnomusicology*; and various works by Ruth Stone including Let the Inside Be Sweet: *the Interpretation of Music Event among the Kpelle of Liberia*.

Literature Review

On rock bands

Introduction

The grassroots activities of rock musicians, rock bands, and rock music scenes offer a potentially exhaustive field of study into amateur and professional musicians' complex lives and experiences. This section of the literature review aims to address two central ideas: first, how rock bands attempt to navigate a path from outside the elusive boundaries of the music industry, and second, to understand what life is like for musicians operating at these outer fringes where there is significantly less attention in terms of scholarly writing. In brief, this review will address the following constitutive practices: grassroots activities of rock musicians; the role of record companies and musicians at the local scene level; the prevalence of style and genre and its relevance to the period covered in this dissertation; the electric guitar's role in performance and sonic influence in rock music. The aims of the review and the limitations in terms of scholarly work begin to establish the gap in the field of rock music studies that underpins the intentions of this thesis. While I acknowledge the work generally in popular music studies covers a vast array of topics and themes that when considered collectively appear to offer a comprehensive coverage of this growing field, I nonetheless contend (echoing Finnegan and Cohen) that there is still necessary work to be done that concerns the practices of grassroots musicians.

Overview of the field

Rock's historical interconnection with mass media has provided the stimulus for a host of writers to attribute meaning to its sound, participants, audiences,

politics, relevance, and historical legacy. Consequently, the academic study of rock music has grown in parallel, with a diverse group of scholars exploring its many dimensions. From the late 60s, there was an emergence of popular press publications dealing with rock as a 'serious' art form, the most influential of these being *Creem* and the *Rolling Stone* magazine in the US (Bangs 1974; Christgau 1973; Marsh 1971; Landau 1974), and in the UK the *New Musical Express* (Murray 1973; Parsons 1976; Burchill 1978), and *Melody Maker* (Reynolds 1987; Jones 1974; Williams 1970). Musical aesthetics, along with social meanings, emerge in academic journals and book formats (Tagg 1982; Moore 2003; Wicke 1990; Regev 1994; Hennion 1997; Gracyk 1996), record industry and music institutions (Burnett 1995; Hesmondhalgh 1996; Straw 1984; Frith 1990; Negus 2011, 2013; Shuker 2016; Garofalo 2016; Toynbee 2000; Tschmuck 2006), ethnography and musicology (Moore 2018; Nettl 2005; Cohen 1991, 1993; Bennett 2017; Meintjes 1990, 2003; Finnegan 1989; Dawe 2013) and rock histories and biographies (Gillett 2011, Inglis 2006), examination of the links between places and cultural identity (Connell and Gibson 2003; Bailey 1994; Bennett 2000; Boyes 1993; Burnett 1992; Krims 2000; Bachleitner & Werner (Eds.) 2022; Biddle and Knights 2007), cultural and subcultural readings about 'deviance', youth culture, punk (Frith & Goodwin (Eds.) 2005; Regev 2019; Worley 2017).

Rock aesthetic and Meltzer

Rock occupies a critical place in the study of popular music and culture. It begins to surface in serious writing in the early 1970s with Meltzer's *'The Aesthetics of Rock'*, an early cultural critique of rock music. Meltzer's unique and now infamous book presents rock as an art object interconnected with both low and high culture, drawing on references as diverse as *Playboy*, Kant, Beatles, and 'Dr Seuss'. The book

could be viewed loosely as an interpretive and descriptive personal account of rock music presented as a 'parallel artistic effort' (1970: 7). Tagg criticises it as 'exegetic guesswork' (1982: 43), 'a wild, often esoteric, and sometimes loosely coherent manifesto' (Powers 2013: 119-120); and a work that embodies 'as much incoherency incongruity and downright self-contradiction as rock 'n' roll itself, and this is good' (Meltzer 1970: 7). If nothing else, Meltzer's 'effort' shows rock's impact on him as a young person living through arguably rock history's most iconic era. He manages to capture in his writing a sense of the absurd nature of what making rock music entails. A personal playlist of metaphorically connected songs, bands and lyrics demonstrates the effect and power of the musical text through a 'lived experience'.[7] This insider perspective engages the sound of the music while at the same time showing its connection and relevance to the world outside it. Meltzer is a spectator that reveals an intimate knowledge of the symbolic production of musical works albeit highly subjective.

Finnegan and the amateurs

> The situation of rock players was thus a complex and heterogeneous one and one where individuals were participating in many different settings. Contrary to the views of some of the earlier academic theorists there is no one single profile of 'the rock musician' or the role and background of rock/pop music (Ruth Finnegan 1989: 130).

Ruth Finnegan's (1989) documenting of grassroots rock musicians in Milton Keynes during the early to mid-1980s is vast in scope and cautiously defined in terms of the boundaries of her participation. Finnegan uses a range of ethnographic

[7] Lived experience is a preoccupation in this dissertation and frames not only the direction of the research but the theoretical analysis as I attempt to reveal the experience of musicians and how and why they make music in the way that they do.

methods; in some settings, becoming much more deeply immersed in the musical activities, while in others, such as the rock and pop chapter, she identifies as 'non-observational' (ibid.: 343). The methods used to gain access to various field settings were, in her words, 'perhaps rather haphazard'—sometimes as a full participant and other times as a more distant observer (ibid.: 343).[8] *Hidden Musicians* still offers much to the ethnographer and, more widely, to musicians curious about grassroots-level music making. In context to this study, its importance lies in how it shifts the focus from musical works that have reached symbolic status to the ground floor level, where rock music practice takes on different meanings. In other words, the situatedness of local musical events in relation to a broader macro-level context.

Finnegan gives equal consideration to the precarious and often temporary nature of groups formed by young people to bands established for many years becoming well known on the local scene. Band rehearsals, routes and access points to joining and forming ensembles, performance spaces, stakeholders and audiences who collaborate in the formation of the scene, to how people learn music are carefully revealed. Local music scenes are portrayed as vital spaces and networks for cultural expression, social interaction, and creative development. An important topic at the grassroots level of music-making is its intersection with professionalism. When is something amateur or professional? This question is explored through the local conditions of the rock musician and sets up a tantalising problem for future work where professional boundaries are less clear-cut. I offer some additional thoughts about how amateurism and professional overlap later in this chapter.

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[8] 'In all cases *some* of my understanding was drawn from personal observation, but particularly in the rock and pop chapter and for the account of social clubs, pubs and the small bands generally I relied more heavily on non-observational methods than in my descriptions of the classical world or of school and church settings' (Finnegan 1989: 343).

Local bands in Liverpool

Sara Cohen's (1991) ethnography of local rock bands is, in many ways, a continuation of Finnegan's chapter on rock and pop. Except where Finnegan isolates a particular timeframe (c.1985), Cohen weaves a musical cultural heritage into the present unique to Liverpool and is completely absorbed into the bands' worlds she documents. In *Rock Culture in Liverpool*, the emphasis shifts from a somewhat idealised amateur practice to a serious grassroots-level scene whereby rock musicians are in pursuit of music industry recognition. It is the most extensively documented study of local rock bands in the UK and has become a primary text for music researchers across a broad spectrum of interests in popular music studies.

Record companies are at the centre of everything and create the conditions in which these local rock bands succeed or, more often, fail. As Cohen reveals, record companies depend on a vast pool of people already out there making music in order to be able to curate, commodify, and distribute what could eventually emerge as 'symbolic goods' or products for mass markets. Record labels rely heavily on the cooperation and involvement of aspiring amateur rock musicians eager to reach these mass markets and audiences. The experience of Liverpool bands is starkly contrasted to the often over-hyped media-driven narratives of rock musicians (see Meltzer 1970). The everyday reality of rock bands attempting to get signed by record companies is a challenging process that often exposes the harsh realities of the music industry—contrary to the seductive ideas of rock stardom and wealth.

While *Rock Culture in Liverpool* now represents what might be defined as a pre-digital music industry era, many of its themes are still relevant for rock music studies today (2023). Particularly those that deal with issues of authenticity, commerce, and originality. However, the socio-musical landscape Cohen presents, while rich in

interpretation of the band rehearsal, performance, music industry, demos and songwriting, there appears to be room for studies which explore in more detail how sounds and songs are made in bands. There is scope to ask why bands sound the way they do and how specific musical style emerges to form a band's sonic and musical stylistic identity.

Recording consciousness

Howard Becker affirms this question in the *forward* to the legacy edition of *On Becoming a Rock Musician* by H. Stith Bennett,

> [f]or the most part, studies of pop music focus on the symbolic content of the words of recorded songs, the political and social attitudes those words, all the business arrangements that underlie the music and make the whole thing possible – they never get around to the notes the players play, the sounds they make, and how they make them (2017: vii).

Like Cohen and Finnegan, Bennett's (1980) monograph was lauded for how it presented rock music and rock bands as worthy of serious musical study. Since its publication, it has become a classic text in popular music studies, and as the title suggests, it is an investigation into how a musician becomes a rock musician. According to Bennett, the definition of a rock musician is at best a speculative endeavour. A central idea in this study concerns how individual musicians are absorbed and, in some ways, transformed through the collective goal and sound of the rock band. These ideas connect to technological factors that manifest within the instruments used to create the sound of the band, the recording studio tools, and the musical and sonic imagination.

Bennett constructs a theoretical framework around this idea in what he terms '*recording consciousness*' (129): a theoretical construct that addresses the relationship between recording technology and the imaginations of the humans involved. 'The

ways of talking and playing and generally attending to music which typified the interactions of the local rock musicians I studied—are directly and explicitly related to recently invented magnetic and electronic devices' (ibid.: 132). *On Becoming a Rock Musician* shares the same temporal sphere (c.1980) as Finnegan and Cohen in that the rock musician, as Bennett understood it through his socio-ethnographic study, is a largely self-taught entity emerging through group formation. These are some of the boundaries and, in some sense, limits to this generalised study. However, situating technology to underpin how music emerges from bands is a vital clue to understanding style, identity and self-expression—fundamental concerns for all practicing musicians.

Style, genre, and politics

Attempting to describe music entails making assumptions about its most identifiable and repetitive features. Applying rules and ideas that appear as conventions to ways of interpreting songs and music generates systems of taxonomy which do not reveal the specificities of the music in any truly satisfactory way (Fornäs 1995). The idealisation of style is a difficult concept for musicians and academics alike (Toynbee 2000). If we consider the encounter with the rock band Kerb in the introduction of this chapter, it is clear that the rejection by the major record company (BMG) had everything to do with the band's sound and style, image, band name, quality of songs, and how they could be located and be relevant within the current rock scene. What the band call themselves is an important cue, 'band names often [fall] into certain genres and fashions, perhaps indicating the bands' politics, image, or style of music' (Cohen 1991: 37). One might locate Kerb to a specific rock genre, not only because it existed in a particular time and space, that

being the late Britpop era (c.1997), but as a result of the stylising of its name, a branding process that aligns it with other more famous bands of the Britpop era that utilised a singular word with no definite article for example, Blur, Oasis, and Pulp rather than bands a decade earlier such as The Smiths, The Cure, or The Damned.[9]

Britpop

Aside from the fact that Kerb did not think of itself as a Britpop band, this positioning nevertheless provides a practical, cultural location point. Britpop, like all musical genres, is a predetermined set of conceptual constraints that exist inside the musical structure and extends to the material cues outside the sounds themselves in what Becker defines as 'complexly interdependent systems' (2008: 32). For example, Bennett and Stratton (2010) suggest that Britpop was a concept defined by region and an idealised reimagining of the past. And as with much of the music of the 21st century, it is 'an atemporal time of replicas, re-enactments, reissues, revivals, and other syndromes of cultural recycling that put the "past" into pastiche' (Reynolds 2020: 305). Moore (2001) adds further distinction, '[t]he key feature of Britpop, as a genre within rock, is perhaps its lack of (or even refusal of) conventional originality' (172). Musical ideas are bound to a set of conventions that are socially constructed in much the same way as any art form or creative practice (Bennett 1980).

Britpop is widely considered to be a genre that borrowed and recycled from British rock bands of the 60s and 70s, such as The Kinks, The Who, and The Beatles. The reassembling of glam rock, psychedelia, and punk defined the general musical characteristic of bands in this period (Bennett & Stratton 2010). Academics have

[9] This idea was also conveyed to me by Jon when I asked him how the band decided on the name 'Kerb'. I explore this in much more detail in Chapter Two.

tended to explore this recycling culture by analysing the economic structures that enable its reception. For example, Negus dissects how the recording industry develops, what he terms 'identifiable products' (1996: 359), which influence and direct creative activity within a given musical form or genre.

> Later bands of the 1980s, such as The Smiths, Joy Division and Happy Mondays, continued the subculture of obscure non-commercial rock, often political and anti-Thatcherite. However, the unexpected commercial success of Blur and Oasis turned the previously independent and anti-commercial rock into a marketable mass movement (Navarro 2016: 236).

Navarro maps the rise of Britpop to New Labour and Tony Blair and suggests that this period represents a time when British rock embraced commercialism in ways that it had not been inclined to do so in previous decades. This commercialism is evident in how recording and production become systematised towards ideas of sonic perfection: production values that have become more rationalised in response to the demands of commercial and global market expectations. Recording and production have a dedicated section later in this chapter; though, at this point, we can look at how technology emerges through the electric guitar, an instrument that essentially defines the parameters of all rock music genres and, therefore, needs some mention.

Electric guitar

The electric guitar is arguably the most iconic and identifiable instrument in rock music and, as such, needs to be deciphered and positioned within the overall framework of this study.[10] Rock is a broad categorisation that identifies a popular guitar-driven genre whose aesthetic form evolved substantially from the blues in the early part of the 20th century (Regev 2013). Throughout its history, rock music's

[10] The electric guitar features in discussions about recording sessions in Chapter Two, Three, and Four.

sonic identification has been stylised through the evolution of the amplified electric guitar; it is a fundamental component of rock's existence. This hybrid electronic instrument symbolises rock music and unifies all its genres and myriad sub-genres. In some ways, the electric guitar's existence reflects the transformation towards an everyday technological reality; it symbolises industrial society while visibly connecting to the past. Academic studies have traced the origins of the electric guitar from the jazz age to the modern rock era and captured its symbolic and technological impact (Waksman 1999, 2020; Narváez 2001; Ryan and Peterson 2001, 2020; Port 2019; Herbst 2019, 2023).

The sonic characteristics of the electric guitar are defined by a raw, emotive quality that connects deeply with the listener. Its appeal lay in an ability to convey almost vocal qualities when used as a soloing instrument. As part of the rhythm section, its range and sonic texture extended the expressive scope of the accompanying backing track (Macan 1997). The guitar sound is often accompanied by overdriven or distorted tones that convey intensity. This sonification is achieved through tube amplifiers and effects, such as fuzz and overdrive pedals, that extend the guitar's sound into a realm of expressiveness previously unattainable (Gracyk 1996). Experimentation with sound and performance techniques continued to develop the guitar's sonic capabilities through string bends, vibrato, and rapid picking, creating a new musical vocabulary for the instrument (Bennett 1980). The most well-known guitar brands have become fetishised and totemic for consumers and rock producers alike. 'Following the electric guitar's initial invention in the early twentieth century by Les Paul and the subsequent modifications and improvements by craftsmen like Leo Fender, the instrument is used in all forms of popular music' (Coelho 2003: 142).

Historical instruments, such as *Fender* and *Gibson*, are etched into the recordings of the 'classic' catalogue of the rock music *oeuvre*. From this condition, all rock music ensembles appear to coalesce.[11] The same status also applies to the amplification systems on which the electric guitar depends. There is no electric guitar without the amplifier. Like the guitar, the 'amp' is emblematic of a transformational power and a vehicle for the sound of rock music genres. The set of properties that make rock music what it is fundamentally, in essence, is bound to the partnership of guitar and amp and, without which, would lose much of its identity. 'The guitar has become more than a sound-producing instrument. It is the icon of rock, incorporated into the brand logos of rock museums, cafes, and musical equipment stores' (Weinstein 2013: 149).

'Rock musicians exploit technology for new and richer timbres while still maintaining recognisable melodic contours' (Gracyk 1996: 118). In many ways, the electric guitar in rock is an audio experiment that continually attempts to change its fundamental sound quality through myriad external effects central to the formation of new sub-genres. 'Post-rock has a fuller, more richly embodied sound than the previous lo-fi/ minimalist ethos of indie rock would allow' (Hibbett 2005: 65). The electric guitar and all its electronic paraphernalia could be more appropriately categorised as a synthesiser. Its core sonic features are changed and augmented by an infinite array of modular pedals. Modulation effects like chorus, flanger, phaser, and delay and reverb add 'depth and drama' and complexity to songs (ibid.: 65). The

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[11] Wheeler, T., 2004. The Stratocaster Chronicles: Celebrating 50 Years of the Fender Strat. Hal Leonard Corporation. Brosnac, D., 1986. Guitars Made by the Fender Company. Bold Strummer. Waksman, S., 2001. Instruments of Desire: The Electric Guitar and the Shaping of Musical Experience. Harvard University Press. Provide a useful overview of the status of the Fender guitar as an icon of popular culture. Bennett, A., Dawe, K. (Eds.), 2001. Guitar cultures. Berg, Oxford; New York. Suggest that Fender and Gibson "guitars must rival the production of Henry Ford's 'Model T' in scale with their firmly established 'Stratocaster' and 'Les Paul' models and variations on these themes" (6).

indie-rock musician is defined by the quality and individuality that sound modifiers can make to performances and compositions (Bennett 2001).

More broadly, Kevin Dawe suggests that the guitar 'has received little attention in ethnomusicology', which is surprising considering its cultural significance locally and globally (2013: 1). The guitar's presence in many different music genres has made it a vehicle of expression for players, guitar builders, and recording engineers. It is an omnipresent symbolic object and a visual part of modern culture often associated with rebellion and counter-cultural ideas. The electric guitar, perhaps more than any other musical instrument, has emerged as an intentional object that has the power to express freedom and mediate social agency.[12] Dawe's ethnographic writing emphasises the guitar's significance by looking at its role, function and meaning across a range of cultures in what he describes as 'guitar-ness'.

> 'The guitar travels around the world largely intact, via its 'guitar-ness', in form and function, potential role and associations, providing for what I suggest is, at least, a globalised sonic and visual signature, however loosely it might hold on to its original symbolic and, indeed, physical integrity on entering a highly localised musical world that both customises and re-interprets it' (ibid.: 11).

The focus of this section of the literature review attempts to define the conditions of the grassroots rock musician. Each text presented unfolds particular aspects of the rock musicians' reality at this level. Finnegan reminds us how little grassroots music practices have been addressed in 'systematic research or writing' or academic work 'on the micro-sociology of amateur music' (1989: 4). Insider perspectives of the work involved in rock bands, songwriting, studio production and music industry engagement are largely missing from extant writing in popular music

[12] See Dawe (2013) p. 14 and the discussion of Alfred Gell (1998) concerning instruments and objects of social action.

studies. As Sara Cohen suggests ,'[t]here has also been a preoccupation with rock's origins and relatively short history—which is perhaps to be expected from any new discipline trying to establish itself by historicizing and documenting its own development. What is particularly lacking in the literature is ethnographic data and microsociological detail' that documents 'the countless, as yet unknown bands struggling for success at a local level—and the actual process of music-making by rock bands' (1991: 6). In the next section, the focus of the review shifts towards the technological domain of the recording studio and the potential for its inclusion in the dialogue surrounding grassroots rock musicians.

On recording studios

How does the recording studio become embedded into a band's creative process, transforming its sound and organisation? The strategy of attracting record label attention requires bands to organise themselves and find ways to produce demo recordings. The barriers to accessing recording studios and the affordability of spending the time needed to produce recordings that show the songwriting potential of the bands are problems that most face, especially in the pre-digital era. 'I often wondered how some of them could afford the equipment they had and several recording and rehearsal studio owners, band managers, promoters, and journalists also expressed bewilderment over this' (Cohen 1991: 50). In less than a decade after the publication of *Rock Culture in Liverpool*, the means to afford more sophisticated recording technology becomes available for grassroots bands willing to learn the subtleties of binary systems over tape. As Adam Bell attests at the arrival of the computer-based digital audio workstation (DAW) in the mid-90s, 'in theory at least,

the DAW in its current form has signalled the dissolution of the technological division that once shielded the so-called professional sphere' (2018: 29).

The musical work is inextricably bound to its manifestation as a recorded sound product. In other words, how music is captured and produced in a recording is an essential part of the musical work. Therefore, the recording studio and its associated technologies are part of rock music's ontology and fundamental to its understanding. For example, and in the context of this study, the way songs are created, negotiated, and assembled in the recording studio occupies activities before and after Kerb's experiences in Sweden (Chapter Three). Thus, the recording studio becomes both a facilitator and collaborator in how songwriting develops.[13] The transformation and innovation of creative ideas and processes are intrinsically linked to the sonic imprint that studio machines offer (McIntyre 2015). In later discussions, the studio is often presented as a complex and sometimes alienating environment whose agency extends beyond merely facilitating pre-organised musical structures devised in the rehearsal room or live performance. '[I]nnovation is a complex system embedded within other complex systems (…) complex systems have evolutionary histories, and innovation is no exception' (Strumsky et al. 2010: 498). The question to answer is, how does the recording studio become embedded into the band's creative process, supplant its everyday practices and conventions, and ultimately transform its sound and organisation?

Methodologies of record production

Rock music's development and distinctness are mediated through the

[13] For similar discussions see Kealy 1982; Théberge 1997; Bates 2012.

technological advances of the recording studio (Gracyk 1996, Zak 2001, 2019). It is a symbiotic relationship whereby audio engineers and musicians negotiate science and art. As a result, new fields of academic study have emerged to investigate the phenomena of recording and its affiliate practices. Musicologies of record production have become an essential part of the conversation within broader popular music studies and attempts to construct methodologies to analyse recording techniques, understand practices and workflows, and interrogate meaning, (Burgess 2013; Zagorski-Thomas 2014, 2019; Danielsen 2010; Bates 2016; Bates & Bennett 2018, 2022), explore identity, geographic space, and the intersection of musical expression as it dissects everyday life (Bennett 2016; Connell and Gibson 2003; Krims 2012; Frith 2012), use empirical analysis of science and sound from an engineering perspective of studio recording and production has become increasingly important as researchers seek to understand the mechanics behind the creation of rock music (Bartlett 1989; Benson & Blair 1988; Eargle 1996; Howard & Angus 2013; Massey 2009; Moylan et al. 2022), this has led to investigations into historical practices, workflows, formats, and aesthetics, highlighting the importance of recording studios as sites of innovation and collaboration within popular music (Moylan 2012; Cox and Warner 2005; Kronengold 2008; Brøvig & Danielsen 2016).

Eliot Bates (2013) argues that if so much of popular music studies is dependent on research about recordings of commercially-released music, then studies should also incorporate the operations of recording studios, at all levels, within the discourse.

> '[S]uch as, audio recording and film studios, or live concert stages, the sorts of professionals who help create these recordings engineers, editors, studio musicians, arrangers, producers, foley artists, field recordists, FOH mixers, and the effect of the social networks and interaction of these and other individuals (for example, artist managers, publicists, critics) on the resulting musical product' (ibid.: 18).

The recording studio and all its associated activities are part of the social and musical assemblage that enables a more nuanced and granular understanding of humans and technology and how this convolves musical works. The transformation in digital workflow and organisation within recording studios introduces novel approaches for examining music production methods blurring the lines between human creativity and machine intervention. For instance, computer-aided processes, instruments, and visual representations of audio allow everyone in the studio 'to see what they need to hear in order to do the work' (Bates 2016: 274). This evolution in sound capture and processing affords new relationships between actors and their environments. Instead of solely viewing arrangers and engineers as intermediaries and their work as a type of mediation, Bates argues that 'studio work is a complex heterogeneous assemblage that changes through time, and much is lost if we reduce this mess to a binary relation' (ibid.: 280). Bates suggests possibilities for analysis that considers the recording studio as not an objectively-driven functional technology. Instead, it is better understood as a collection of machines that offers many affordances. These include social, technological and temporal dimensions of digital representations of musical culture, which ultimately reveals how institutional agendas, aggregated music socialities, and mediated national identities are arranged and produced. Narratives involving discussions about work in the recording studio have the potential to enrich the connection between musicology and ethnomusicology, ultimately revealing why people create the sounds they do.

There are a number of ethnographies of crucial importance to the study of recording studio practices and music production that seek to situate the work in the studio to a wider socio-cultural context. *Sound of Africa!: Making Music Zulu in a South African Studio* (2003) is the first book-length ethnographic study of recording studio

practices. Louise Meintjes makes a case for the importance of the recording studio and symbolic production as a vital socio-cultural site which examines the identity and power relations of its participants. 'The studio represents a microcosm of the society within which it exists' (9). Musical sounds are produced and mediated, revealing ways that 'local practices interface with perceived national and transnational musical trends' (8). *Sound of Africa* offers a framework to step beyond the immediacy of the material structures of the music by connecting ideas to national and musical traditions. Later in this chapter, I will attempt to frame the studio practices of record producers based in Stockholm in terms of industrial production and the socio-cultural implications of why they gravitate towards specific modes of songwriting and record production. The unique features of Stockholm's music production scene can be understood as a combination of the practicalities of commercial music production alongside the embedded traditions of its producers and recording studio culture.

From a musicological perspective, the study of rock music, as exemplified by recordings, should encompass all the instruments and tools within the recording studio that contribute to its material sonic representation according to Frith and Zagorski (2012: 8). For example, discussions and analysis of the voice, singing, range, and quality must involve the way electronic devices such as compressors and time-based effects enhance performances. However, developing a workable method to represent the recorded work within a musicologically structured text is difficult, given the absence of accurate and meaningful ways to represent sound and music in writing. The authors suggest that while conventional musicological methods are useful for analysing score-based works, the scope of analysis needs to extend to the recording itself. Though, defining the recording is not straightforward because

finished tracks are constitutive of many layers of production that are not easily accessed.

Zagorski-Thomas has been at the forefront of a relatively new branch of popular music studies that he terms the musicology of record production. With an emphasis on research that addresses the problem of representation and interpretation in sound recordings, solutions and methodologies have included SCOT (Social Construction of Technology) and ANT (Actor-Network Theory). Music studies that use ANT concepts attempt to understand the complex relationships between human and non-human entities in the social and technological worlds; for example, the technologies of record production alongside human interlocutors. ANT posits that human and non-human entities, termed 'actors' and 'actants,' can have agency and participate in social and technological networks. Rather than one singular theory, as the title implies, ANT offers a range of theoretical approaches (Law 2004; Latour 2005; Fenwick and Edwards 2010). It is an experimental and looser collection of concepts that offers a way to understand and investigate social and material associations as they form, dissolve and reassemble. Zagorski-Thomas's contribution to the broader musicological study of recording studio practice offers the potential for examining the socially-constructed and collaborative dynamics of record production.

What of the songs and music themselves? Moore suggests, '[t]o analyse a popular song is, of its very nature, to offer an interpretation of it, to determine what range of meaning it has, to make sense of it' (2012: 5). In essence, what Moore is saying is that there is only subjective interpretation and this is the default mode to which meaning is constructed. However, there are some caveats with his methodology that situate a variety of perspectives on where meaning can be

construed. The most useful of these ideas, for this study, concerns ways to imagine 'texture' as part of the recording and production process. Texture is 'the presence of, and types of relationships between, identifiable strands of sound' (Moore 2018: 149). Textural density, therefore, becomes a useful analytical tool to describe the process of, for example, tracking and layering multiple guitar parts in the recording studio. Moore's distinction between style and genre is also helpful in locating what happens inside the boundary of the rock band in the way it constructs itself. Genre attributions, although useful in broad terms, only serve to generalise the process and agency of the performers, whereas defining ideas in terms of style offers more acute ways to account for the particularities of the performers and their specific musical patterning. How the rock band defines itself within overarching ideas of musical genre is one of the main aims of this thesis.

Much of the discussion in later chapters focuses on the band's immersion into ever more sophisticated studio scenarios. These begin with elementary systems assembled within the rehearsal space, whereby some early portable digital multitrack recorders begin to mediate the sound and structure of songs. This activity occurred around the early 2000s when powerful digital recording systems became more affordable. There is an inevitable overlap in technology, the old and the new existing in the same space (in Chapter Four, I present this idea through a 'lo-fi and hi-fi' lens). The technological evolution in recorded music that emerged in the early 1990s saw the arrival of digital storage and playback systems. The Atari 1040 game console adaptation, along with music sequencing software programmes Alpha Notator and Cubase, became the basis for affordable electronic music production.[14]

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[14] Robinson, P., Edwards, J.R., 2013. *Atari ST* [online]. The Reader Wiki, Reader View of Wikipedia. Available from: https://thereaderwiki.com/en/Atari_ST [Accessed 10 Apr 2022]. Anon., 2018. *Emagic - Company* [online]. Archive.org. Available from:

Summary

This section of the literature review considers how the role of the recording studio becomes imbedded into the musicians world. Record production is an essential factor in how band's write songs and transform the quality and presentation of the sounds made. The evolution of recording technology and its impact on songwriting is traced from analogue through to digital domains showing the impact of how more affordable recording machines have democratised the participation of grassroots musicians. The recording studio's complex ontology is explored and defined as enabling a symbiotic relationship between machines and humans. The recording studio can be seen as both a facilitator and a collaborator in the creative process. Methodologies of record production have evolved to reveal the interactions of musicians and audio engineers, and the socio-cultural implications of recording practices. The recording studio's role is presented not just as a functional technology but as a complex assemblage that can include social, technological, and temporal dimensions. Ethnographies of studio work are important in the way that record production can be scrutinised and included in discussions about symbolic production. Academic work on studios suggest the operations of recording studios at all levels is crucial for a comprehensive study of popular music.

On music industry

What is life like for a musician operating at the fringes of the music industry? According to Gross and Musgrave (2020), life for musicians is highly

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https://web.archive.org/web/20040412230810/http://www.emagic.de/company/company/index.php?lang=EN [Accessed 10 Apr 2022].

nuanced. Their survey data reveal that while musicians are driven by passion and ambition, they are often constrained by economic opportunity. They observed that for most musicians, personal goals did not centre on economic rewards; rather, they demonstrated a shared ambition, desire and commitment to the music. Suffering is an inevitable price to pay for the potential rewards of self-expression. Life and art become entwined. 'In a musical setting, many of the social and professional boundaries that might apply in other areas of one's life are much more entangled and so are far more difficult to identify and unravel' (32). Yet, to sustain any kind of musical career, even if it is at the ground floor level, being able to monetise some activities is essential and incredibly difficult. For rock and pop musicians, disappointment often feels inevitable no matter how much belief there is in the music and the people involved: disappointment in having no access to financial support, performance opportunities, or a quantifiable career trajectory.

Michael Jones (1997) argues that 'all acts that make original pop music, whether (…) stylistically innovative or not, are in one of four states - either they are seeking a deal, making a record, enjoying success or suffering failure' (15). For the rock musician (there is no difference between a rock or pop musician), these 'states' serve as a meta-structure for how a career in commercial music is likely to play out where most end up in what Jason Toynbee defines as proto-markets. 'What distinguishes proto-markets is that they bring together performer and audience in arenas which are not fully commodified' (2000: 27). The music that accumulates in this arena is then, according to Jones thesis, 'proto-pop music' (1997: 24).[15] These kinds of

[15] 'The term 'proto-pop music' is, admittedly, an unusual one, but it is useful 'strategically' in the sense that it draws attention to the fact that 'hit' records represent only a fraction of the total of the music that aspires to popularity at any one time' (Jones 1997: 24).

musicians are central to Jones' study and suggests that their activities have been largely overlooked or left out of the discussion about music industry and popular musicians. Later in these chapters, I refer to the products of studio recordings of the band (Kerb) as prototypes.

In many ways, Jones' auto/biographical self-reflexive account of his band's (Latin Quarter) lived experience of the music industry is the closest study to *Being in the Band. Organising Pop* (1997) offers nothing short of a thorough deconstruction of the then-current scholarship in rock and pop (i.e., Frith, Negus, and Hirsch). Arguing that pop music research had focused on themes such as the nature of rock music, the organisation of record companies, and how music is culturally defined. For Jones, these studies have not adequately addressed the large-scale failure of pop acts from the perspective of the acts themselves. By examining the commodification process and the experiences of failed pop acts, a different perspective on the transition from 'proto-pop music' to pop music might be gained. For Jones, Frith's analysis does not go far enough in considering the experiences and agency of the musicians themselves. Instead, it views them as passive by-products of the industry's workings. At the same time, Negus' preoccupation with 'cultural intermediaries' (A&R personnel) weakens the argument in the part that artists play in transforming compositions into records. Jones's project seeks to redirect the focus towards the musicians' experiences and the systemic nature of failure within the music industry—this positionality forms the rationale of my study.

Crossley (2023) offers a contemporary perspective of Jones's early work on the nature and structure of the music industry by returning the focus to the realm of the DIY enterprise. The huge failure rate of popular musicians is more of a norm than success, or perhaps 'success and failure are relative terms' (Jones 1997: 38). For a DIY

'musicker' unable to breach music industry barriers, there has to be an alternative way to exist and continue developing through their own DIY conventions. For more experimental musicians, survival depends on the strength and shared value in a network of devotees for support. Therefore, the grassroots scene presents a system of dispositions and structured tendencies individuals acquire through social and cultural experiences. These conditions, in turn, determine musicians' orientations to artistic self-production bonded through 'lifestyle politics' (Bennett and Guerra 2019: 9-10). 'Because they are all organised around the same fundamental opposition as regards the relation to demand (that of the "commercial" and the "non-commercial") (Bourdieu 1984: 161 in Grenfell 2008: 109). However, despite resistance, the DIYer's conventions are intertwined with the organisation of the music industry, even at the (trans) local level. As musicians navigate the field, they must balance their artistic integrity with the commercial imperatives of production processes, which often involves negotiating the tension between artistic expression and marketability emerging as a united stance and rejection of a neoliberal reality.

Producers and vendors of cultural goods who focus solely on commercial interests and profit might negatively impact their reputation and opportunities within the cultural field according to Bourdieu (1984). By neglecting the specific demands of institutions, conventions and hierarchies, which equates to symbolic value and prestige, producers miss out on the benefits that come from appearing disinterested or focused on the intrinsic value of the cultural work. Navigating the cultural field then requires a careful balance between the commercial and economic necessities with aesthetic taste and alignment with the ethos of the local conditions. By maintaining an image of disinterestedness or genuine passion for the cultural work, producers can leverage reputations, prestige and even influence in the 'field'. In the

longer term, this inevitably has to evolve and become profitable.

Bourdieu (1983) states that the manifestation of hierarchies within independent creative fields determines artists' levels of recognition and prestige received from peers. This recognition is, or can be, considered more legitimate than market success. It might also be an ideal position that newcomers to the field accept as part of what appear to be the rules of the game: or the political factors that shape the conditions for participation in local creative scenes. Local conditions appear to operate independently of mass-market economic rules with a focus on the 'fields' identity and uniqueness. Bourdieu proposes, '[t]he more autonomous the field becomes, the more favourable the symbolic power balance is to the most autonomous producers and the more clearcut is the division between the field of restricted production' (320). As the artistic field becomes more 'independent', the distinction between those who create art for their peers (restricted production) and those who create for the mass market becomes more pronounced. This predicament is a common in music scenes where there appears to be a conflict between the need to be financially secure with the struggle for artistic integrity that ultimately eschews commercialisation - or put more bluntly 'selling out'. Artistic success often differentiates groups. Less successful artists can be seen as adhering more to an uncompromising ethos and aesthetic values. Lack of success is not always an indicator of artistic merit, as some artists may still have high artistic status even if they establish commercial success.

Entirely how far musical acts are willing to 'go commercial' is an ongoing dilemma for musicians and audiences alike. Those who are resigned to the idea that commerciality is the only long-term prospect know full well that the immensity of the task and the likelihood of success is narrow at best. However, *pop* acts appear willing to make considerable sacrifices in their personal and professional lives to

break their music into mass markets, despite their existence being problematised by local scene rules. '[L]ife in the music industries is about conflict and inequality' (Williamson and Cloonan 2007: 319). Yet as Toynbee notes, 'the many musicians who are not selected (see Jones 1998) can always explain their lack of success as a consequence of having stuck to non-commercial principles' (2000: 27).

The connections between social stratification and the consumption of particular genres or styles are essential for a deeper understanding of how popular music works (Coulangeon 2005). Consumers interested in less commercially oriented and more experimental music have turned towards local scenes, independent labels, and online communities (Florida and Jackson 2010). As Cohen (1991) suggests, the conditions that local record labels operate within are often obscured by major record companies' allure and financial power. Building a model to understand the value of local scenes depends on knowing the conditions of local production and the distribution and marketing processes it uses (Power and Hallencreutz 2007). Major labels have been quick to exploit this kind of insider knowledge and use indie labels to gain access to and control emerging artists. Large corporations follow, imitate and ultimately assimilate these musical inventions into products directed towards mass consumption (Tschmuck 2006; Florida and Jackson 2010; Hibbett 2005; Strachan 2007).

The emergence of communication technology, which has evolved into virtual infrastructures for music producers to access and distribute globally, has interested researchers in new possibilities for local artists (Hardaker and Graham 2008). Reaching audiences through web technologies has enlisted a powerful mechanism for exploiting music. Fanbases have emerged as powerful and influential contributors being able to sidestep traditional record industry gatekeeping practices

Fans ‘spread and endorse the music in places and ways that the artists and labels cannot’ (Baym 2009: 8). It has become the 'norm' whereby the internet has shaped new music industry practices through social-media networks that enable more extensive and potentially inexpensive connections to wider audiences (see Baym 2022 on the culture of ‘fandometrics’ and artist rankings).[16]

The manifestation of the digital terrain has enabled the rise of modes of digital interaction, such as playlists and virtual concerts where geographic borders become blurred and enable the spread of diverse musical styles and access to musical artists from all parts of the world. 'Myspace was the first global social medium to facilitate musicians' and artists' opportunities to express themselves and reach audiences and communicate with fans and fellow musicians' (Mjøs 2012: 58). As a result, a realignment of how music is mediated redefines the boundary between production and consumption, makers and end users. In addition, music industries have had to reappraise business structures to account for the digital era, where new formats replace traditional listening and production modes. Within a few years, the rise of streaming platforms epitomised by Spotify and Deezer and music consumption moved from ownership to access. Subscription models became the norm, and the industry shifted focus to maximising listenership and engagement, with royalties paid to artists based on the number of plays. As Wikstrom noted, 'the number of technological innovations related to this third period of change has literally exploded: BitTorrent, Facebook, iMeem, iTunes/iPod, Lala, Last.fm, LimeWire, MySpace, Napster, Pandora, Qtrax, Rhapsody, SpiralFrog, Spotify, are only a few out

[16] Fandometrics refers to the quantitative analysis and measurement of fan engagement and activities within various media and entertainment fandoms. ‘Fandometrics often places direct responsibility on users to do the work of engagement if they truly love their fan object enough’ (336).

of an overwhelming amount of music technology brands' (2009: 8).

This literature review begun by asking questions about how grassroots musicians understand and position themselves in relation to the stark realities of the powerful economies of the music industry. A reality that is defined and contextualised through economic constraints driven by systems that seek to commodify creativity. While musicians are driven by a commitment and desire to make careers they are often conflicted by the non-commercial conventions of local scenes. This predicament is amplified when record companies seek to commodify and formularise the creative work of musicians. As Jones suggests 'musicians are not clear-cut business partners; they are not clear-cut workers; they are not clear-cut commodities' (2013: 74).

It is almost impossible to understand music as a cultural phenomenon without taking into account the complexity of its economic systems. In theory, music industry can be understood as a constellation of existing power structures that constitutes ideas of individual agency. This complex interplay is central for Giddens who suggests that 'structure has no existence independent of the knowledge that agents have about what they do in their day-to-day activity' (1984: 26). Systems of power are not separate from individuals but are inherently influenced by human actions. Echoing this sentiment Jones argues, '[t]he inter-relations between musicians and music companies are a form of production relations. Rather than consider their actions separately, it is of greater analytical benefit to consider how the actions of one party bears on another in a joint effort that results in the production of symbolic goods in music' (2013: 32).

Music becomes popular through a symbolic coding process defined by aesthetic value and taste of the product. The economies that enable the transmission of

'symbolic goods' are controlled through the intricate network and social relations of musicians, producers, and consumers. '[This] field, as Bourdieu emphasizes throughout his work, is never fixed: it is the product of historical actions and held together by processes of social reproduction' (Buchanan 2018: 101). Therefore, the lot of the everyday grassroots rock musician can be seen as a negotiation between two distinct power systems. Negotiations identified by de Certeau as concepts of 'strategies' and 'tactics'. 'Strategies' define and create the spaces of production and are manipulated 'as soon as a subject with will and power becomes isolated' (1988: 35-36). Once the individual chooses a 'trajectory', then the conditions of management begin to be exerted. The individual then discovers ways of operating within the spaces controlled by strategies through opportunistic interventions or 'tactics. De Certeau says, 'the space of the tactic is the space of the other' (37) and highlights the idea that 'tactics' are not merely resistances to dominant power structures but represent intricate negotiations made inside them. Sometimes, subverting and leveraging these spaces to their advantage or a way of 'making do'.

Throughout this dissertation, I will overlay a sociological perspective that attempts to reveal the intrinsic interconnectedness of everyday activities with the wider structural configurations in social life. In order to fix this discussion, I use sociological perspectives loosely configured around practice, praxis, and practitioners. While I situate the individual lived experience at the centre of the study, it is also essential to locate the individual within a broader social world. If the question is what the individual experiences, we must also ascertain the conditions in which the experience forms.

Summary

The main aim of this literature review is to underscore a research gap that concerns the micro-sociology of grassroots rock musicians. Literature across a range of musical sub-disciplines continually calls for more nuanced understandings of musical practices at the local level. These kinds of studies necessitate insider perspectives to understand the music-making process and the constraints and opportunities for musicians on the fringes of the music industry. The recording studio's importance is a pivotal component in how we piece together musicians' everyday practices. New technologies have opened the door to new kinds of creative approaches. These evolutions can be seen as part of how the production of records and songs has changed how humans integrate with sound and machines.

The recording studio is not just a functional tool but a complex assemblage of social and temporal dimensions. The work of grassroots musicians in makeshift studios could be more developed in music studies. Popular musicians' lives are intertwined with music industries and reveal an area greatly underrepresented in literature. How grassroots musicians navigate the complexities of power structures is worthy of close study. Discovering how musicians balance the demands of local scene dynamics with the demands of the economically-driven record businesses is part of the conversation about local musicians and a way to understand how innovation emerges from DIY scenes.

In the next section of this chapter, I will set out the methodology and theoretical framework for exploring the 'band histories' in Chapters Two, Three, and Four. Here, I will introduce and set out the phenomenological concepts that will further establish my subjective and personal experience in a systematic way.

Methodology

> [I]ndividuals are more than their membership of and participation in collectivities, and, (…) collectivities are themselves the products of their individual members (Cohen 1994: 133).

Autoethnography: self, memory, experience

As stated in the introduction section of this chapter, I want to construct a methodology that is fundamentally an ethnography focused on more reflexive and interpretive forms of data collection and analysis, as the researcher's subjectivity and personal experiences are integral to the research process. In order to examine my own experience—one that 'connect[s] the autobiographical and personal to the cultural social and political' (Ellis 2004: xix), I decided that an autoethnographic research methodology was the most effective and flexible solution to some of the general questions I intend to answer. Furthermore, the effectiveness of this methodology provides a means to tackle the complex layers of meaning contained within musical experiences. These are important considerations that shape identity as it emerges within specific kinds of cultural events (Chang 2008).

Autoethnography is a method of qualitative research in which the researcher uses their own personal experiences and cultural perspectives as the basis for understanding and analysing a particular subject or phenomenon. It is a method often used in the social sciences and humanities to study culture, identity, and the subjective experiences of individuals within a particular cultural or social context. In brief, autoethnography combines elements of traditional ethnography with the personal experiences and perspectives of the researcher. Chang (2008) defines autoethnography as storytelling that involves autobiographical accounts of the field; however, a further dimension to this methodology involves an analysis of the cultural setting. The story allows for the exploration of personal accounts to inform

socio-political themes. Autoethnography 'consists of three characteristics or activities: the "auto," or self; the "ethno," or culture; and the "graphy," or representation/writing/ story. Projects defined as "autoethnography" engage all three characteristics' (Adams et al. 2022: 3). However, not all self-narrative writing is autoethnographic; its characteristics need to encompass critical responses to culture (Holman 2013). Autoethnography seeks to avoid auto-biographical distortion while giving 'voice to previously silenced and marginalized experiences, answer unexamined questions about the multiplicity of social identities' (Boylorn & Orbe 2014: 15). It is different to ethnography in that it uses an intersectional approach for discovering and interpreting representations of power (Denshire 2013).

Maréchal (2010) refers to autoethnography as a research method involving self-observation where the context of writing forms a reflexive investigation of the fieldwork.[17] For example, Ellis (2004) writes extensively about evocative autoethnographies with emotional perspectives that seek to reveal authentic and lived experiences. 'The meteoric rise of autoethnography testifies to a strong desire to invigorate the human sciences, energizing a generation of researchers and practitioners across the globe who believe that one of the most interesting things about life is its unpredictability' (Bochner and Ellis 2022: 9). Bringing the self into the heart of the research's subject has become contentious with more established ethnographic practice. Exponents of autoethnography see it as a way to challenge the power base that has historically evolved out of colonialism, questioning notions of representation. How knowledge is sought and generalised beyond a subjective experience in autoethnography lies its greatest controversy. Critics suggest that it is

[17] Maréchal, G., 2010. Autoethnography. Encyclopedia of case study research, 2, pp.43-45

not scientific enough, ethically flawed, and lacks an analytical outcome (Harrison 2016). Sara Delamont is strident in her condemnation of autoethnography, describing it as a 'narcissistic substitution' for the 'essential, practices of autobiographical and reflexive thinking about fieldwork' (2009: 51). On closer inspection, what troubles Delamont is not autoethnography that involves conducting research in a subculture to which the researcher has personal connections (such as ethnicity, language, or biography), but autoethnography where the author places themselves in the research without an external subject of study. In contrast, Caroline Ellis is robust in defence of autoethnography suggesting '[c]ritics want to hold autoethnography accountable to criteria normally applied to traditional ethnographies or to autobiographical standards of writing' (2011: 7). Most scholars agree that autoethnography should be viewed as a methodology for discovering new ways to produce knowledge that otherwise might not exist.

There are many definitions and ways to interpret what constitutes the theory and practice of autoethnography. Its rationale and uses share some common ground in that it advocates that 'truth is always relative' (Borjian 2017: 5). Although originally known as an insider methodology, autoethnography has evolved myriad interpretations making an absolute definition challenging. Muncey elucidates on the temporality of autoethnographic research and suggests that as life is lived in an ongoing present, its understanding lies within a 'messy iteration [of] looking backward and forward, examining images and memories through a lens that has been influenced by experience and reflection' (2005: 71). This viewpoint begins to suggest to me that closer integration with phenomenology could be advantageous, as I will discuss later in this chapter.

'The poetic or narrative text is reflexive, not only in its use of language but also

in how it positions the writer in the text and uses the writer's experiences as both the topic of inquiry and a resource for uncovering problematic experience' (Denzin 1997: 217). I suggest autoethnography offers alternative ways to write critically about music-making in the recording studio. For example, in the early phases of this research project, the intersection with new and complicated recording devices revealed drastic shortfalls in knowledge and, more importantly, competence on the part of the users to reveal what could best be described as 'failure' and a much closer look at the human in the process. In studio sessions, I reveal how digital recording devices presented barriers for the users, in some cases, a severe lack of knowledge of fundamental engineering principles that needed to be overcome before any progress could be made. The autoethnographic accounts of these sessions allow the reader an intimate connection and immersion into musical practice.

Even though there is an emphasis on documenting the researcher's personal written account, the importance of the analytical agenda remains essential. There is a balancing of the author's insider perspective, often through memory, along with valuable empirical data to understand broader social phenomena (Anderson 2006). 'The definitive feature of analytic autoethnography is this value-added quality of not only truthfully rendering the social world under investigation but also transcending that world through broader generalization' (ibid.: 388). Sikes (2022) contends that '[a]utoethnography can, therefore, be seen as existential (…) practice that offers a means of interrogating what being may involve as we live through particular contextualized experiences' (24).

In 'doing' an autoethnography, the researcher will implicate others within the context of the study (Tullis 2022). Therefore, ethical considerations extend beyond that of the individual as experience intersects with others through the construction of

critically reflective narratives. Ethnographies are constructions of others and ourselves through others (Clifford 1986). Therefore, as in all ethnographies, the autoethnographic researcher's position can be seen as one of authority and power.

The autoethnographic method is predicated on the idea that the researcher is embedded within the study and, therefore, is subject to bias. Rather than attempting to dispel these conditions - which would be impossible in any case - the researcher then has to be open to the way that autoethnographies construct evocative narratives which positively 'extends outward (…) inviting readers to put themselves in our place' (Ellis & Bochner, 2016: 71). Many of my experiences concerning the rock band are revealed as openly as possible, and while the situations I depict are subjective and relate to me personally, I also acknowledge that the narrative could be one of many possible realities, each with its own conclusion and significance. As social research has become more complex, so too have the methodologies. 'There has been considerable diversification in qualitative research, including the rise of discourse and narrative analysis, of various kinds of action research, of autoethnography and performance studies, and so on' (Atkinson and Hammersley 2007: 10).

This thesis is constructed within an autoethnographic framework. I offer my 'story' as the primary data source and as such it will constitute all aspects of my musical identity (self), memories, and experience. I relate the differences and similarities of my musical make-up within the rock band setting: guitarist, composer, producer, and music teacher. The data collected and which forms the source of all the writing (which will be explained later in this chapter) is drawn from remembering my experiences of past events, which could be construed as privileged from other voices. However, the intention of the study is the experience of one musician's creative and professional practice. Even though multiple interpretations of these

experiences might be possible, it does not weaken the context or intentions of what is represented as one possible truth. The interrogation of data, which I discuss later, will provide some context about how I avoid descending into merely story-telling and autobiography and remain closely knitted to the principles of qualitative research. Autoethnography is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural (Ellis & Bochner 2000: 739).[18]

Being in the band is my lived experience of being in a rock band. My intentions here are to present a written account of my experience creating music in a band, recording songs, and channelling all of this activity and organisation towards getting a record deal. I am, therefore, structuring, writing and presenting ideas, memories and experiences of this process that took place over many years. It concludes, at least for me, in the body of this thesis. My aim is to reveal a personal journey reflecting how a musician navigated the processes of being in a band. I therefore become the observer and participant in my own study.

[18] Denzin, N.K., Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.), 2000. Handbook of qualitative research, 2nd ed. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, Calif.

Data Generation and Collection

> It is an inescapable fact about human existence that we are made of our memories: *we are what we remember ourselves to be* (E. Casey 2000: 290).[19]

Autoethnography is research that is centred on personal memory. Memory, therefore, has to be extracted, transcribed, and coded in the process of becoming primary data. The issue then is how to extract this data and not fall into some of the pitfalls, which Chang suggests are:

> excessive focus on self in isolation from others; (2) overemphasis on narration rather than analysis and cultural interpretation; (3) exclusive reliance on personal memory and recalling as a data source; (4) negligence of ethical standards regarding others in self-narratives; (5) inappropriate application of the label autoethnography (2008, 2016: 54).

Exploring the potential of personal memory, with these overarching guidelines in place, can inscribe the narrative with what might be considered deep insider access to past experience which will inevitably be of great relevance to the study. Yet, remembrances over time will change, be revised, and reframed, so the fundamental role of autoethnographic methodology must be 'in its user's ability to capture, probe, and render understandable problematic experience' (Denzin 2014: 36).

The challenge in memory work, then, is in ascertaining which moment of the past to enter into accurately while figuring out what stimulus or tools are needed. Chang suggests a system of 'chronicling' as 'a useful strategy through which you give a sequential order to bits of information you collect from memory' (2016: 72). For

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[19] Edward S. Casey has made significant contributions to memory, human experience and phenomenology. *Remembering: a phenomenological study* (2000) offers a comprehensive exploration of memory, which he defines as primary and secondary. These category types enable a closer exploration of the continuous and often unnoticed forms of memory and the act of recalling experiences that have entirely lapsed from consciousness. Place and spatiality are a feature in much of his work - concepts he feels are neglected in philosophical discourse. Another interesting feature of Casey's work is how he defines and emphasises the importance of understanding phenomena from their surrounding context rather than just from the central core of experience.

example, a simple timeline of events that carefully locates experiences as they played out in the narrator's life and is significant enough to recall essential features of the events and encounters as they unfolded would suffice. This device helps locate additional artefacts that cross-reference data and, therefore, solidify the memories accessed. In this research project, that is achieved through record contracts, instruments, photos, recordings, demos, places, studios, emails, and other organisational documents.

Each additional artefact of the experience magnifies an identification with the memory.

> Identity is found in all the properties—and property with which individuals and groups surround themselves, houses, furniture, paintings, books, cars, spirits, cigarettes, perfume, clothes, and in the practices with which they manifest their distinction, sports, games, entertainment, because it is the synthetic unity of the habitus, the unifying generative principle of all practices (Bourdieu, 1984: 173).

The individual's disposition, attitudes and behaviours are bound to the interpretation of the experience as it is perceived through memory. These internalised structures of perception thought, and action acquired through socialisation shape the individual's experiences, practices, and judgments pertaining to a particular social field, they are essential guides for people's actions as they define their understanding of the world.

'As the signature form of data collection in ethnography, fieldnote writing not surprisingly represents a core method of inquiry in autoethnographic research' (Holman et al. 2013: 66). However, the construction of contemporaneous journalling (as was my case) might not be possible, viable, or even appropriate. Autoethnographers, by definition, 'create fieldnotes from more distant memories' (ibid: 66). In this thesis, I do not claim that I am following the traditional disciplinary rules of ethnography. The question then is, without field notes, how is it possible to

remember what happened? Ellis (2004) offers a perspective, fieldnotes are 'partial interpretations (…) and one selective story about what happened written from a particular point of view at a particular point in time for a particular purpose' (116).

In the early phases of this research and writing project, I constructed various chronologies of the band's activities. These were assembled on a timeline and revealed key moments and events and encounters. Although the experience of the musical life of the band feels like a whole logical process in thought, in reality, as they emerge in my memory, are best thought of as a series of *vignettes*. While I attempted to construct these sequentially, arriving at this final representation was achieved in a much more ad-hoc manner. For example, one event later in the story often reminded me of something significant that underpinned this earlier. The reflections that I recalled formed a series of vignettes that, although not emerging in a logical and sequential format, were effective in that critical details of events and encounters could manifest through cross-referencing artefacts such as recordings and photos. What transpired throughout the research study was an iterative process of reflection and analysis of the data that formed my personal memories. Ellis suggests using a 'thematic analysis (…) to [treat] stories as data (2004: 196). The first of these themes can be achieved through coding.

Codes are a means to organise and structure events and encounters. For example, the experience of Swedish culture through interactions with its culture on a day-to-day basis, of being there, compared to a micro-level analysis of how a musical event was captured in the studio and the conversations and interactions that defined that particular internal experience. This kind of data collection requires an organisational structure as part of the process of sifting and decision making about the relevancy of information (Chang 2016). The coding process serves as a means to

understand and explore what can often appear as unconnected fragments. Once all the pieces are assembled, organising and demarcating information into specific themes and groups is possible.

Not all of the data assembled will be of use. The decision about exactly what to use depends on the overarching timeline of events—an iterative process of review and exploration of data towards establishing 'epiphanies'. 'Epiphanies are interactional moments and experiences which leave marks on people's lives' (Denzin 1989: 70). And which have the potential to be generalised beyond the self - towards a mode of interpretive interactionism where the personal meets the public (Boylorn and Orbe 2014). Denzin argues for studies that reveal biographical experience and meaning in the pursuit of truth and authenticity. 'All writings are in some ways autobiographical because they reflect authors' perspectives and preferences in their choices of topic, writing style, direction, and conclusion' (Chang 2016: 35). The method, in this thesis, for capturing this personal narrative is constructed through the use of vignettes.

VIGNETTE: Writing process

> In writing this dissertation, I am confronted with the sinking feeling that this is, at least, the third time through this part of the thesis. There seem to be infinite ways of putting the meaning onto the page, only to be disappointed with the results the second I finish the sentence. However, I've begun to trick myself into not immediately deleting the attempt—I remind myself that it's a lot like getting a musical idea down (into the computer or on the guitar). Sometimes, you just need a bit of space between your hyper-critical state and your more pragmatic self that will hopefully take control tomorrow. Writing about myself and allowing for a less analytic writing style will achieve one of my main aims, which is to share the experience of what I did while in this rock band—this is the ultimate goal of the whole exercise.

As an example, this vignette of being in the moment of the thesis expands my perceptions of what is possible to garner from what could be defined as raw data. The analytical self-doubt moment I connect to making music - the art of creating

something out of nothing and allowing the result to be not perfect resembles songwriting work in the studio. As the first iteration of an idea, the vignette could have far-reaching potential in written descriptions of work in the recording studio, technology, and music composition: a prototype for drawing the reader deeper into the experience of being there, as I was. According to Pitard (2019), in the context of autoethnography, a vignette serves as a powerful narrative tool. Vignettes capture specific moments or episodes of 'lived experience' that might otherwise be hidden. In the process of revisiting and narrating specific encounters recalled from memory, researchers can use the vignette as a framework to examine reactions and biases. Vignettes can be effective in facilitating the inclusion of dialogue, emotions, and other sensory information, which enable a holistic portrayal of experience.

The methodology used in this project is primarily an interpretive humanistic ethnography. It does not test a specific hypothesis but instead develops a way of understanding culture and meaning by finding ways of interpreting a society's signs and symbols from the perspective of the people who make the culture. More specifically, it documents an oral history and uses an autoethnographic methodology that relies solely on my personal experiences, memories and accounts. With respect to the ethical framework of the study, I have not collected any sensitive data, used interviews, or directly involved anyone else in the research. As a willing participant in this research by design, I have taken significant actions to limit the impact of revealing information about myself, particularly as it may indirectly compromise the privacy of others. As such, I have been cautious in how I have represented others that feature in the study's narrative. I have not disclosed details about them that would compromise their professional or personal lives, such as private information and stories that may have legal and professional ramifications.

My connection to this study as both subject and author adds some novel complexity to questions of research ethics. In order to maintain confidentiality and minimise the risk of exposure, I have written the band history accounts with minimal reference to any individual, save where it is necessary to comment on a specific contribution. As the story's author, I have to be aware of how I depict the people I am including and ensure that this is done respectfully. Interpreting events and data could shape and bias an argument to privilege my purposes, even though some individuals cannot be identified.

Ethics and data

In response to the University of Birmingham's ethical review process, I have decided to anonymise some individuals mentioned in this study. However, information about the rock band and its protagonists is available to the public if anyone should wish to explore any of the content presented in this dissertation. The writing of this doctoral thesis began while I was still part of the music project and, as such, has provided some first-hand accounting of activities within the field setting.

The data for this thesis was collected throughout my involvement with the rock band *Kerb* (which later changed its name to Safehaus). The fieldwork primarily maps recording and songwriting processes spanning around 13+ years. It includes two main sites, Stockholm and the South West of England: a general location encompassing Bristol, Wells, Glastonbury and Shepton Mallet. Songs were recorded in studios and rehearsal rooms in each of these locations. In 2005, I spent a month (August) in Stockholm, where it was possible to collate data for the initial phases of the research project and then intermittently over the next 6-7 years as the recording process edged towards its conclusion. The fieldwork is divided loosely into three

band histories. Band History One: *pre-album phase,* presents an illustration of the rock band before recording in Stockholm (2002 - 2005). Band History Two: *Album recording phase,* the period spent in Stockholm (2005 - 2006 and then at irregular intervals from 2007 - 2011). Band History Three: *post-album phase,* the band's activities after the Stockholm sessions (2007 - 2015). This overview helps to situate the overall trajectory of the project and maps the entire timeline of my musical involvement with the band.

Before commencing this research project, and while still involved with Kerb, I considered that the music production studios I encountered in Stockholm would be the main topic of the research. However, the scale and scope of conducting such a project were not viable for several reasons. First, gaining access to music production studios in Stockholm would not be easy due to the generally elusive working practices of record producers; second, observing the practices of Swedish record producers, even if access could be gained, would require months of fieldwork - this was a significant barrier to this scenario as I was working and self-funding the study; third, although I was interested in pop music and the way that Swedish songwriters wrote hits, ultimately, I was more interested in how songs were recorded and produced. The enquiry was more than merely a study of the rock band in the studio. It needed to involve how the band arrived in the Stockholm studios in the first place. What needed to transpire before the band could access the somewhat privileged sites of high-end recording studios and professional producers? I could begin to answer this question through my work with the rock band. By the time I had decided to embark on the research project, it was clear that I had access to a substantial volume of various kinds of data to tackle the research problem.

The characteristics of this research project focus on uncovering the intrinsic nature of how musical identities assemble and interact by analysing the music and

sounds made by the band, the sound engineers, and the producers. Consequently, traditional field notes are not used; instead, I collated emails and documented events, project plans, diary entries, demo recordings, multi-track sessions, and visual media such as photographs and videos. These sources are comparable to archival research, but the archives in this research were personal and non-institutional collections. I began to amass these artefacts in preparation for the research proposal about 18 months before commencing the doctoral programme in July 2014. As revealed in the band histories in later chapters, it will be shown that I played a pivotal role in recording the band's compositions over the timeline shown in this project. As a result, I have amassed an archive of well over 30 songs in various stages of completion. In addition, I have access to multi-track recording sessions, all digitally stored, which track and illustrate the writing and production process of songs. These audio files provide a means to analyse our approaches in different arrangements and productions. The recordings reveal processes of writing, arrangement, and production workflows. There are examples of songs showing experiments with instrumentation, key, structure, and tempo. Songs were rarely deleted, even if they had failed in some way to achieve the desired outcome. Analysis and reflection of this material show the extent of negotiation involved in co-writing. The impact of complex recording studio technology is an ever-present theme. Participation in conversations about the musical direction and career aims drove the impetus for the project for more than a decade.

Theoretical Framework

Phenomenological positioning

In this section of Chapter One, I will outline the rationale for the theoretical framework. This section primarily deals with phenomenology and its place in ethnomusicology. I explore a range of texts that demonstrate the vast scope of extant studies which I use to broaden the scope of observations and reflections made in the technological sphere of the recording studio. I show how the phenomenological tradition in philosophy is directed towards a practical *doing* of phenomenology and why understanding memory is integral to narrative writing in this study.

While both autoethnography and phenomenology are established qualitative research methodologies that focus on subjective, 'lived experience', there are some subtle differences between these two fields, which, used together, bring a more intimate reading of the experiences I am attempting to share with the reader. First, let us look at the similarities. Both phenomenology and autoethnography emphasise the subjective experience as a primary source of data. Researchers actively draw on lived experiences to understand and interpret phenomena they encounter. Both methodologies require deep introspection, which can involve emotion and reflection to derive meaning. The outcome of these kinds of enquiries can reveal rich and detailed descriptions of experiences of the culture observed. Second, the differences. While phenomenology seeks to understand the essence of a particular phenomenon by exploring it from multiple perspectives (including but not limited to the researcher's own), autoethnography focuses specifically on the researcher's personal experience within a cultural context. Phenomenology often aims to identify universal or shared aspects of experiences, seeking themes or essences that might apply

broadly. In contrast, autoethnography is deeply personal and does not necessarily aim for broad generalisability. Instead, it offers insights into a specific cultural or social context through the lens of one individual's experience. From a cultural perspective, autoethnography situates subjective experiences inside a social context, probing the relationship between the individual and societal norms. Phenomenology, on the other hand, considers cultural influences through 'lived experience' by questioning the phenomena at hand. Lastly, autoethnographic writing uses a narrative style, whereas phenomenology is thematic and analytical of experience. In my writing, I frequently blur the boundary between these two methodological frameworks and see this as interdisciplinary practice - practices that have been the cornerstone of much ethnographic writing over the past 30 years.

In Harris Berger's (2015), *Phenomenological Approaches in the History of Ethnomusicology*, he presents a comprehensive overview of how phenomenology has furnished ethnomusicology with 'a way of returning the focus of attention to the experiential and praxial reality of music and a set of intellectual tools for studying it' (8). The 'lived experience', our sensory understanding of the world, is a necessary part of how musical meaning can be understood. Gaining access to and participating in musical encounters is then the primary objective of the ethnomusicologist.

Extending the 'toolkit' to include phenomenology offers deeper interpretive readings of how musicians work and make sense of the world. Berger advocates for ethnomusicology 'that extends across the entire reach of experience, from the minutest micro-constitution of the temporality of sound phenomena to the broadest historical (geological or even cosmic) cross-situational trains of events, grasped in reflection and consequential for practice' (1999: 297). A symbiotic relationship between ethnomusicology and phenomenology enables a closer reading of how

meaning is located within sound. This idea extends to the perception of a person's experience through engagement with sound as it is in the world. As presented in phenomenology, the study *object* enables ways to deepen the involvement with the ethnomusicological project through interpretive analysis of time, power, and technology.

An analysis of musical practice, as defined in Berger's study, provides a mechanism to understand how musical meanings are construed from the songwriter's perspectives - while also acknowledging the importance of how the audience or social scene contributes to meanings in expressive cultures. Berger (1999) reveals a close reading of a musical encounter where he focuses the analysis of a rock song through the experiences of tonality of one musician. The analysis reveals an intimate connection to the harmonic structure of a rock song from the subjectivity of this performer (later in this chapter, I offer a method for 'doing' phenomenology which echoes Berger's approach). Berger writes, 'given these "hermeneutic rules" (Ihde 1977, 32) and my brief explanation of the idea of tonality, Chris and I got down to the work of describing the musical experience' (187).[20] This example is one way to 'practice' phenomenology and extends the scope of the autoethnographic methodology I have presented here in this chapter. The band histories reveal many ways to explore lived experiences, primarily through its songwriting and recording work. More broadly, this study attempts to understand agency and structure through ways songwriters make sense of their creative work against the backdrop of music industry forces. Employing some of the process of phenomenological theory

[20] See Berger 1999: 187-193, for a detailed and interactive exploration of a song's structure and tonality between Berger and a musician named Chris Ozimek from the band Dia Pason.

can prove useful. For example, incorporating Husserlian concepts that underpin the *'Natural Standpoint'* in interpretive readings enable alternative ways of how we perceive and relate to the world through subjective experiences (2012: 51).[21]

Phenomenological ethnomusicology

> Like a visiting dignitary at a formal reception, phenomenology has been "introduced" many times, and the scholar interested in making a first approach to this literature often has difficulties selecting a starting point from among these many works (Berger 2015: 35).

Berger (2015) suggests that 'to understand phenomenological ethnomusicology, one must have at least a general idea of the character and project of the philosophical tradition' (2). Essentially, we are writing about musical experience and practices. There can be no phenomenological ethnography without the transcription of observation to the written text. The structure and content of the text will contain technical descriptions of phenomenological concepts and embedded theories that are part of its deep tradition, often appearing dense or even obscure to the uninitiated. This technical language facilitates a deeper, nuanced analysis of subjective experience and consciousness, allowing scholars to engage in richer, more detailed interpretations. Discovering ways to understand the musical experiences of individuals remains a central priority for ethnomusicology. Therefore, 'phenomenological ethnomusicology continues to offer a profound potential for plumbing its depths and tracing out its connections' (ibid.: 26).

In the following overview, I will explore the principles suggested by Berger (above) and present some seminal works and their interconnectedness to

[21] Natural standpoint or attitude is how Husserl sees an 'everyday' or ordinary way of existing in the world.

phenomenological concepts. There are many diverse contributions to phenomenological ethnomusicology since its relatively recent emergence in the early 1980s. I will begin with texts that resonate with my aims, starting with Tim Rice's (1994) work on Bulgarian music, which is deeply grounded in the philosophical and hermeneutical frameworks of Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur.[22] For Rice, the utilisation of Ricoeur's 'hermeneutical arc' helps reframe problems of subjective interpretations of the world. Rice likens his experience of Bulgarian music to 'being thrown into a world of symbols'. His 'encounters' were, in his words, 'largely haphazard and serendipitous' (20), much like my involvement with the rock band. The metaphor of being 'thrown' is intrinsically embedded in Heidegger's construction of the 'everyday' reality, where our *Being* is cobbled together in an assemblage of relations to the world around us. The things we decide to care about are defined by the construction of our own facticity or *'thrownness'*. 'The sense of thrownness, colloquially put, is the potentially stunning realization that I find myself thrown into a world I did not make and into a life I did not ask for' (Davis 2010: 25).

Jeff Todd Titon has made significant contributions to phenomenological ethnomusicology particularly on his writing and interpretive accounts of American folk and blues music communities. In the Chapter 'Knowing Fieldwork' (Shadows in the Field), Titon states that 'much of [his] work from the 1980s is based in hermeneutic phenomenology, yet this text-based approach to understanding musical meaning, underpinned by Ricoeur's structuralism, should be set aside and that 'actions be experienced as music, not read as text (…) [t]he world is not like a text to

[22] One of Ricoeur's significant contributions is the concept of 'narrative identity', which suggests that people construct their identities through the stories they tell about themselves and their lives. 'The essential difference distinguishing the narrative model from every other model of connectedness resides in the status of events, which we have repeatedly made the touchstone of the analysis of the self' (1992: 142).

be read but like a musical performance to be experienced' (2008: 28-29).[23] Titon extends this idea in 'Studying Congregational Music', where he states that ethnographer's attempt to understand ideas from the field before moving to interpretative conclusions and analysis that lie outside of the social groups capacity to understand it. He suggests that ethnographic methods lead to conclusions that reveal, represent, and encapsulate the coherence and complexity of native points of view (2021: 65-76). There are many similarities between Titon's methods and those I am set out in this study, for example how individuals encounter music with pre-reflexive understanding and the subsequent self-reflexive process that emerges through sustained engagement is a central idea—not just a passive experience; it involves active engagement and confrontation with the music.

Time is a fundamental preoccupation of phenomenological ethnomusicology and is a concept that enables a deep exploration of personal history and memory revealed in musical cultures. 'In Search of Time in African Music,' Ruth Stone (1985) offers a comprehensive examination of the nuanced temporal structures in African musical traditions. She explores the idea that music can transform aspects of an individual's experience, including time, citing Alfred Schutz, who argued that in musical events, the central experience is not merely the synchronisation of drums in outer time—a focus of previous categories—but something deeper (ibid.: 146). Here, 'outer time' denotes the objective, measurable temporal structures that facilitate synchronisation among musicians, challenging the Western predilection for metronomic consistency. In 'Let the Inside Be Sweet' (1982), Stone highlights the complex, non-linear rhythms

[23] See also Titon's (1995) essay which advocates for 'bi-musicality' which is a personal reflection about music as a mode of being where understandings directly relate to the transformative idea of experiencing meaningful actions as music that goes beyond traditional textual or analytical methods.

characterised by additive and variable-length beats prevalent in how music is felt and experienced, encouraging a deeper exploration of how musical time is both constructed socially and experienced personally. Again, drawing on Schutz, she notes, 'we exist together in multiple dimensions of time' (69). This idea is made vivid through her observations of the Kpelle people, where their conception of time is likened to an expandable bubble, which is ultimately controlled by the participants and relates to how they are able to expand notions of the 'present' through various techniques within songs. 'Kpelle time is like a bubble in that while it is variably expandable, at some point it must cease to expand' (74).

Porcello (1998) posits another dimensionality to this phenomenological framework by examining the temporal flow of musical performances on sound carriers.[24] "Tails out": *Social Phenomenology and the Ethnographic Representation of Technology in Music-Making* is an autoethnographic exploration of an experience of technology through an aberration manifest in tape-based recording devices commonly known as 'print-through'.[25] Porcello argues that these technological 'encounters' have significant 'epistemological and phenomenological ramifications for music', challenging the formal notion of time-based musical structure (485). The print-through effect foreshadows the listening experience culminating in anticipation and tension of what eventually flows from pressing play on the tape-recording device—an activity that involves complex interplays of memory, anticipation, and sensory experience. Porcello extends the temporal metaphor into his own presence

[24] Sound carriers often refers to the physical formats which audio recordings are transferred to such as vinyl, cassette and CD.

[25] Print-through is an audio effect associated with magnetic tape recordings. It is ordinarily an undesirable blemish on the recorded artefact caused by the transfer of signals from one layer to the next on a wound tape reel.

within the written text and suggests 'where it intrudes, is a type of print-through, mediating my own learning about, experiencing, and subsequent representations of the building of collective and individuated *we-nesses* in the flow of internal and external discursive and musical time' (500). In essence, Porcello acknowledges that his narrative presence is shaped by the content of his research, creating a layered understanding of how his insights and the phenomena he studies influence each other.

In a more recent study, Day (2022), explores an auto-ethnomusicological perspective of Shakuhachi playing and meditation where the phenomenological approach is deepened through introspective and meditative aspects of musical practice. 'Mindful Playing' presents micro-phenomenological interview methods to explore and articulate pre-reflective experiences of individuals. Day outlines a self-interviewing technique (auto-elicitation) which enables the researcher to 'relive the experience and rediscover the images, sounds, emotions, sensations that were associated with that experience' (147). (A self-interview technique is one of the themes I use in Chapter Four as I attempt to make sense of the band's Swedish album). Day's methodology alludes to Husserl's concept of *epoché* in that she seeks to uncover subtle, pre-reflective, and often unnoticed experiences.[26] This redirection of attention mirrors the gesture of phenomenological reduction as described by Husserl, which is a key aspect of epoché whereby individual human perception of the world is defined as natural knowledge: something that begins with and remains in the bounds of experience, such as perception or intuition, as directed by the objects

[26] Central to Husserl's phenomenological ideas is located in the concept of *epoché* or bracketing. It is a component of *phenomenological reduction* which addresses the way access is gained to the experiences of the everyday lifeworld (Van Manen 2014). The experience being observed has a set of brackets placed to ascertain its subjective/objective quality or characteristics.

in the field.[27] It avoids the imposition of external systems on understandings of the world experienced. Moran (2000) adds further clarity and suggests 'explanations are not to be imposed before the phenomena have been understood from within' (4). For the researcher involved in autoethnographic methods, phenomenology offers ways to extend the scope of analysis and interpretation and avoid the overemphasis of descriptive narration bound to preconception.[28]

Improvisation in music is a theme that extends, in this dissertation, to ways that musician's interface with technology through experimental processes that defines an emerging songwriting style. Improvisation is a fundamental process in music-making that underpins ideas of agency and individual expression. Charles Sharp (2022) interprets improvisation through Gadamer's concept of play and dialogue—central to understanding human experience.[29] For Gadamer, play is not merely a recreational activity but a transformative interaction that transcends the individuals involved, revealing something essential about our collective *being*.[30] Improvisation in music, then, becomes a hermeneutic act—a way of understanding and interpreting the world. It involves a back-and-forth interaction among musicians that mimics the dialogic process of interpretation. Gadamer argues that art has the ability to convey

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[27] Husserl, E., 2012. Ideas: general introduction to pure phenomenology, Routledge classics. Routledge, London ; New York. (9)

[28] Epoché (ἐποχή) has, in theory, much to offer the ethnomusicologist. Provided that the practitioner is able to suspend judgement of the phenomena: however, it is not clear how this critical state of being is achieved. In fact, it is very difficult to put aside one's assumptions about the familiar things in the world as they appear to us. If it is achieved, then a clear set of criteria need to be met in order for any meaningful suspension of pre-existing beliefs can be attained.

[29] See Sharp's chapter (9), Playing and listening: Phenomenological Hermeneutics and Improvisation in Berger, H.M., Riedel, F. and VanderHamm, D. (eds.) (2021) *The Oxford Handbook of the Phenomenology of Music Cultures*. Oxford University Press.

[30] For Gadamer, play is not just an activity but a form of presentation and representation, involving an interplay of showing and concealing, engaging both the player and the observer. See Gadamer, H.-G., (2013: 106-114) *Truth and method*. London: Bloomsbury.

truths about the human condition through its unique form of expression. Sharp extends this to music, suggesting that improvisation, as a spontaneous and creative act, reflects fundamental aspects of what it is to be human, such as our capacity for adaptation and change. Improvisation in music, as an activity of speculative creation, shaped through the interplay of musicians and technology, often mirrors the dynamic and unpredictable nature of human life.

Berger suggests that 'phenomenology offers new possibilities to scholars interested in the macrosocial life of music'. For those of us interested in studying the effects of music industry on music-making, such as the one I offer, there is much to explore from an experiential perspective. Phenomenological approaches to the study would begin to reveal how musicians understand their roles within music groups be it rock, jazz, or otherwise. How musicians are selected, and how a collective identity forms through institutionally driven agendas such as those imposed by record companies, promoters, and audiences. 'Such work would seek to show how power relations are both established and resisted by the constitutive practices of their participants' (2015: 25). In so doing, it would advance the approach of practice theory by giving the theoretical building blocks of that tradition a firmer ontological foundation in lived experience.

In the following section, I will explore ideas that constitute the domain of post-phenomenology, focusing specifically on how technological agency shapes human experiences. These phenomenological approaches examine the intricate ways in which our interactions with technology influence our perceptions and engagements with music-making in recording studios.

Post-phenomenology

Phenomenology provides an essential part of the interpretive toolkit for this autoethnographic study. Its function serves to probe beneath surface descriptions of experiences and extends the scope of analysis and interpretation, i.e., experiences derived through events and encounters with *objects*. For example, the work in the studio encounters technological objects in the form of musical instruments and sound tools, networks and systems. Therefore, while phenomenology can provide some analysis of this experience, further dimensions can be accessed by contemplating technological agency.

Digital technology, as outlined at the beginning of this dissertation, is a vital component in how I see the rock band in its time and place. As it begins to emerge in the early phases of the band's trajectory, the recording studio and its associated technologies offer alternative solutions to songwriting. However, reflecting on the experience of these technologies needs to embrace what Don Ihde describes as an 'embodying process' (2007: 243), where human and non-human actors mutually constitute outcomes.[31] Technologies are not merely deterministic tools but actively shape our experiences, perceptions, and actions.

Post-phenomenology can be compared to Latour's Actor-Network Theory (ANT) in many respects as each represent a niche field of study. Importantly, they have begun to resonate with writers concerned with the technologically-related experiences of musicians and producers (see Pinch and Bijsterveld 2012; Born 2005;

[31] Jim Johnson's sociology of a door closer analogy is useful here, he writes 'every time you want to know what a nonhuman does, simply imagine what other humans or other nonhumans would have to do were this character not present' (1988: 299).

and Bates 2012).[32] The realm of the technologically defined space that is the recording studio represents a dilemma of sorts in situating our ideas about what constitutes sound in terms of its *object → subject* and *subject→ object* relationship. If our intentions are to interpret experience as it is perceived in the overall aim, that is to figure out what the band did in order to get a record deal. This musical organisation requires a prolonged gaze at what the band creates, i.e., songs. How they make songs is a crucial factor in the experience that I write about here. The experience they and I had in the studio is then a primary focal point. The studio and its machines are more than passive tools that merely assemble preconceived ideas about sounds and musical structure that may or may not exist in the musicians' imagination.

What kind of contribution can a post-phenomenological (Ihde acknowledges the work of Latour in this domain) make to analytical auto-ethnomusicology? [33] The overriding concept which defines these approaches to the *subject→ object, object → subject* relationship is to enable the discourse to move beyond basic cause-and-effect observations. It offers ways to avoid technological determinism which is an easy trap to fall into when writing about studios and machines. A simple example, and one that has been used often, are ways to perceive the relationship between humans and technology/objects through the DAW (Digital Audio

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[32] Rather than one singular theory, as the title implies, ANT offers a range of theoretical approaches (Law 2004; Latour 2005; Fenwick and Edwards 2010). The emphasis in an ANT method engages in what is described as a flat ontology in examining socio-material assemblages. There is no *a priori* assumption, only the observed or experienced phenomena. Networks are intrinsically messy and entangled; therefore, accounts of the world through ANT approaches will inevitably challenge the ordered way of things (Law 2004).

[33] Arianne Conty (2013) suggests ways that Martin Heidegger's and Bruno Latour's philosophies of technology attempt to clarify the process by which the natural world, objects, and tools come into existence despite Latour's stance on ANT's incompatibility with phenomenology. Both philosophers strive to overcome the divide between subject and object that characterises modernity and reveal a greater interdependence between nature, culture, humans, and machines. They both deconstruct the paradigm of techno-science that has imposed a subject/object experience, and they use a similar approach to achieve this goal.

Workstation). As non-human actors, DAWs have their own agency, meaning their rationalised functional systems not only enable complex orientations of audio signals but also change the perception and experience of the phenomena itself.[34] The DAW shapes the recording process by providing audio engineers with an array of tools to manipulate sound while simultaneously recalibrating the expectations of engineers and musicians. For example, the DAW allows for non-destructive editing and automation, meaning audio engineers can work on sound recordings without affecting the original sound recording. Non-destructive editing, as a consequence of digital storage, editing, and playback devices, has profoundly changed the methods and working practices of audio engineers and musicians. What might have emerged as a practical solution to tape editing and splicing has now unfolded into a complex repositioning of how the post-digital recording engineer determines competency, quality, and efficiency.

Using the recording studio as a stimulus offers an excursive interpretation of phenomenological concepts. For example, a hermeneutical perspective might recognise sounds based on memories of other or past tracks.[35] These become the texts for an interpretative process that defines the producer's or musicians' unique perspective or experience. The tracks made by the producer are multi-layered objects

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[34] See Williams, A., 2023. Journal on the Art of Record Production» Putting It On Display: The impact of visual information on control room dynamics [online]. Arpjournal.com. Available from: https://www.arpjournal.com/asarpwp/putting-it-on-display-the-impact-of-visual-information-on-control-room-dynamics/ [Accessed 26 Mar 2023].

[35] In "Truth and Method," Gadamer explores how understanding is not merely a cognitive act but an event that involves the whole being of the interpreter and the historical tradition in which they are situated. Gadamer, H.-G., 2013 *Truth and method*. The Bloomsbury revelations series.

that define its *being*. It is not just about the individual sounds but also the immaterial essence of what the track represents, its intention, vibe, and the potential to connect to audiences. To understand being, one must distinguish the track's existence from the producer's. In this way, the producer exists alongside the track. So, observations about the track are inevitably bound to the observer's history and emotions. The track's production enters into a societal sphere of generalised interpretations where the track's contents define a symbolic meaning either from within the conventions of a genre or from a deeply personal perspective. I explore this idea further in Chapter Two, where I analyse the stimulus for a song arrangement, and in Chapter Four, I conduct a critical listening exercise on the band's long-awaited Swedish album.

Doing Phenomenology

There is a profound difference between the discourse found in the theoretical and philosophical world of phenomenology and that used in practical everyday research and analysis. The question remains: how does one do phenomenology? How can it be applied to a real-world scenario? Despite the complexity surrounding the positioning of self and experience, a much more straightforward and common goal is to put aside learned and prevailing assumptions to understand the phenomena that draw our attention. However, putting aside common-held beliefs requires an approach or a systematic method.

Michael Crotty (1996: 158) offers some solutions to this problem which he suggests in a five step approach. I have adapted his example which originally focuses on the theme of emotional 'stress' and replaced it with 'harmony', specifically the musical construction of chords (see Fig. 1 below). While the topic of 'stress' may

seem somewhat removed from the system of musical harmony, from a phenomenological perspective both are experienced by humans.

1. Determine as precisely as possible what phenomenon we are focusing on	We put the question: what is harmony?
2. Consider the phenomenon precisely as phenomenon.	We take harmony purely as phenomenon, i.e., as it appears in our experience of it, and ask ourselves: what is harmony like? How do we recognise harmony? Lay aside, as far as we can, all ideas, judgments, feelings, assumptions, connotations, and associations that normally come into view for us when we think of this phenomenon. We disregard, as far as we can, all the expositions of harmony we have read, all the understandings of harmony we have come to accept, everything we have come to associate with harmony. We try to look on harmony as if it were the first time we have encountered it. Open ourselves to the phenomenon as the object of our immediate experience. We focus on harmony as a musical phenomenon in a sustained and penetrating, but not discursive, fashion.
3. Describe what has come into view for us.	We say what harmony appears to be in our immediate experience of it (taking care to describe harmony and not ourselves).
4. Ensure the phenomenological character of this description.	And ask whether what we are saying of harmony does genuinely stem from our experience of it as a musical phenomenon. Or does it spring, rather, from some other source? From theories elaborated about harmony? From associations with harmony which we learned to make in the course of our musical education and training? If what we are attributing to harmony comes from anything other than our immediate experience of harmony, we jettison it.
5. Determine the essence of the phenomenon, i.e., the element or elements in the phenomenon as phenomenon that make it precisely what it is.	We ask: What is it, in our immediate experience of harmony, that makes harmony, harmony? If harmony has appeared to us as 'this chord' and as 'that progression', how essential are 'this chord' and 'that progression'? Would it still be harmony if 'this chord' and 'that progression' were not there?

Figure 1 Adaptation of MJ Crotty's (1996) method of phenomenological enquiry.

Using a framework like the one illustrated above enables an interpretive musical analysis to begin addressing practical phenomenology. For example, thinking about harmony in terms of 'our immediate experience of it' alongside formal structural descriptions begin to embed the phenomenological perspective. This approach is particularly useful for someone starting out and not used to these kinds of investigations. I place myself in this 'neophyte' category whereby trying to navigate the highly dense phenomenological language of Husserl et al. often presented a barrier to my progress. A more sophisticated example is achieved in Berger's (1999) examination of a musician's 'most intense experience' of a song by juxtaposing theoretically structured description with the *lived experience* of the song

and its harmonic content (241). Using an ethnographic approach, Berger elicits what could be defined as 'an immediate experience of it' (see item 5, Fig. 1 above). 'Doing phenomenology [means] rigorously exploring the various ways the object can be grasped in perception and fantasy variation to reveal its possibilities and boundaries' (254).

There are clearly more complex implications for doing a phenomenology of music than the method above reveals. For example, trying to identify a multi-layered phenomenon like a sound recording would likely require attention to many interconnected elements, such as recording technology, the studio, the musicians, etc. Phenomenological connections and meanings ascribed to musical objects are bound together in complex orientations and extend into myriad scenarios. The band histories in this thesis make enquiries into subjective relationships of phenomena, temporal structures and meaning and identify transformational technological frameworks within recordings. From a phenomenological auto-ethnomusicology perspective, memory is a fundamental component in understanding and documenting self-reflexive narratives. I identify Edward Casey's phenomenological studies on memory and imagination as essential texts for this study and note that Casey's work, in general, is largely missing from phenomenological ethnomusicological studies and discourse.[36]

[36] See Chapter Two, where I use Casey's concept of 'imaging' as part of the musical analysis of a song. In Chapter Four, I explore ideas of fantasy and 'audializing' to gain an introspective account of sound in recordings.

Phenomenological Autoethnography and Memory

Narrative writing is an essential part of this thesis. It provides the experiential structure for all the discussions and analyses that take place. Nonetheless, there are inherent problems with how to put experiences from the past on the page, which are only accessible via memory. The problem manifests itself in numerous ways. From my present position, I might be convinced I can remember past events through various tactics and stimuli. I am the observer of my past, but from the present; therefore, I have the advantage of knowing the outcome of any action, which is bound to skew my perception. For example, if I recall a moment in the recording studio, an experiment with sound or song structure, at the time of doing this, I would not know how successful the outcome would be. It is only in the present that I can know the outcome. Therefore, my account of the past is constituted by my future knowledge of it.

> The act of remembering is never entirely empty of content. To be remembering at all is to be directed, however deviously or indistinctly, toward *that which* we remember (Casey 2000: 65).

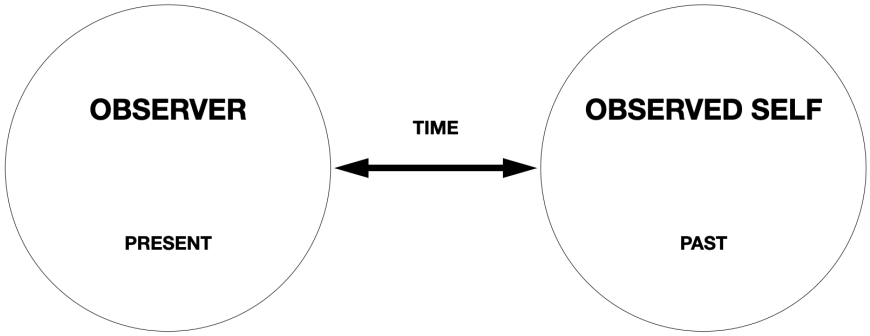


Figure 2 Diagram of Present and Past considerations of memory and content.

The diagram above (Fig. 2) gives a visual representation of the challenges that emerge when attempting to recount events and encounters from the past. My past, the life of experiences I remember, appears to me as a whole, not necessarily a

continuous stream of the past in playback mode, but as an internally logical manifestation of events and encounters. Edward Casey (1987) defines this concept as a non-linear conception of time and memory whereby memories are often recalled thematically or emotionally rather than simply chronologically. 'There is no such object without an act by which we attain it'; therefore, the present is inflected by past experience and, in turn, colours what we remember (65). This retrospective circularity adds layers of meaning to memory that were not present in the original experience while also serving to remind us that care needs to be taken in translating memories into narrative accounts. These narratives are constructed as vignettes and are the basis for each 'band history'.

The use of vignettes in narrative and qualitative writing has long been established in various disciplines (c.f. Bernabeo, Holmboe, Ross, Chesluk, and Ginsburg 2013; Sampson & Johannessen 2020; Barter & Renold 1999; Halberstadt-Freud 1980). While not exclusively used in memory work, it has proved useful in how I connect personal and introspective accounts of experience that underpin my ethnographic data. Van Manen (2016) uses 'anecdotes' in much the same way as I use the vignette example. The end goal is to evoke as vivid an account of the experience as possible. Van Manen suggests using a series of steps that cover experiential narrative material to decide the things that have meaning. Align the narrative accounts to any significant research themes developed, for example, the ones used throughout this thesis that concern agency and structure. Anecdotes are collected, read and reread to discover themes. Raw anecdotes need refining and editing in order to make them vivid, removing extraneous accounts such as those I discuss below, for instance. Van Manen urges that care must be taken to avoid distorting the account through overwriting the text. 'Ask: Does this anecdote show what an aspect

of your experience is/was like'? (255). In most cases, the anecdote will need strengthening and refinement to add direction.

How do we try to remember things from the past so that there is enough of the story to describe the events that the rock band experienced accurately, and that might be recognised by others who had their own experiences? Most of what I have recalled and presented as vignettes have been accessed directly - they have hung around in my head or consciousness, as it were, for all these years. Not all of what I remembered is relevant or, more precisely, has use. In nearly all instances, the memories that I omit have provided an access point to other memories. 'A consequence of this strategy is to extend time in a linear, forward-and-backward, way'. 'Incidents are "strung out" over time—a time that is not, however, homogeneous in its unfolding' (Casey 1987: 75).

Having now explored the theoretical framework of the thesis and outlined how memory and phenomenological autoethnography can be utilised in this study, I conclude the chapter with a vignette about my experience of Stockholm. It sets the scene for what transpires in Chapter Three and provides some context for the band's activities upon my involvement in Chapter Two. The time spent in Stockholm was a pivotal moment in the band's history and story, revealing one of the many complex and demanding aspects of its work.

Encountering Stockholm

Although Stockholm was not a local scene for Kerb, it nevertheless featured prominently in its activities for several years. As such, it is worth noting the places encountered in Stockholm as we went about the business of recording an album

there (Stockholm becomes the main topic of discussion in Chapters Three and Four). In addition, I will include a brief overview of the route from where we stayed to the studios, the various bars visited after recording sessions, studios, and cafes.



Figure 3 Exterior view of Villa Årsta, Svärdlångsvägen, Stockholm. (Map Data ©2011 Google).

For most of the trips to Stockholm, we stayed in the Villa Årsta, in Svärdlångsvägen, and our closest tram station was Årstaberg. We travelled east, by tram, to Linde Spårv, the nearest station to Basecamp studio in Möckelvägen.

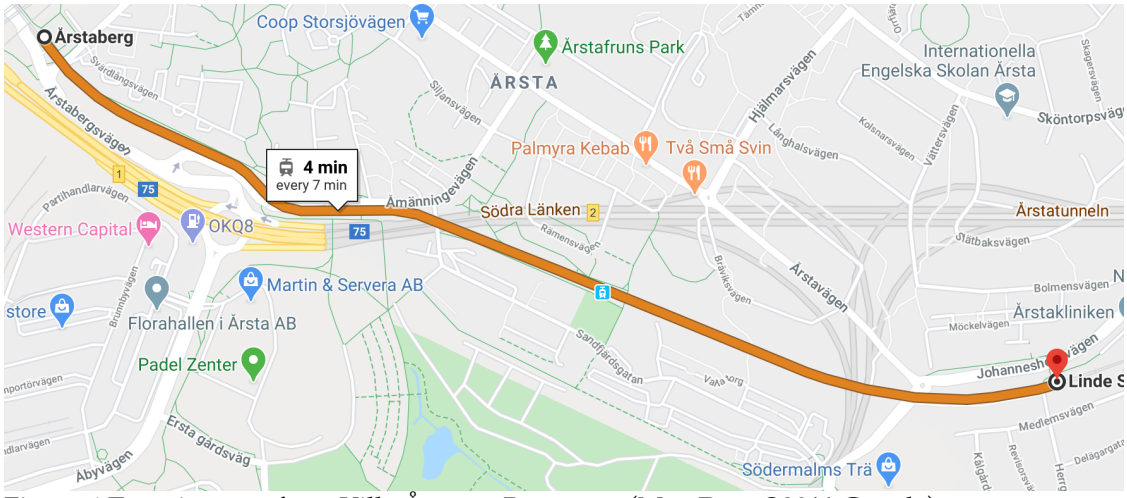


Figure 4 Tram journey from Villa Årsta to Basecamp (Map Data ©2011 Google).

This trip was taken during the day, and in the evening, we often travelled the 3km northeast to Medborgarplatsen via Slussen or Stockholm's Södra Station. We would spend most of our time after the recording sessions in this area of Stockholm as there were a number of bars and cafes to visit.

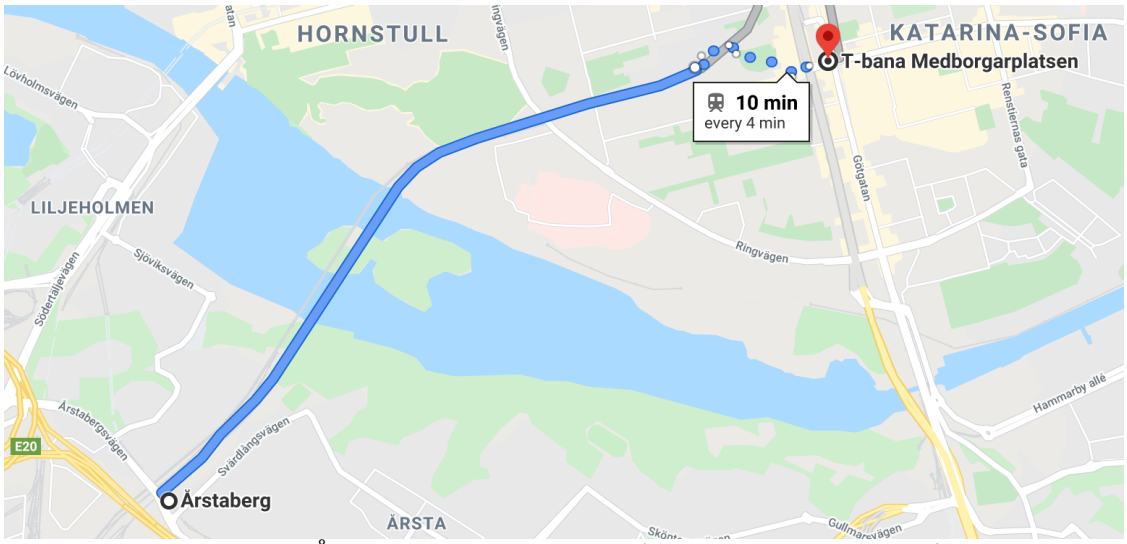


Figure 5 Route from Villa Årsta to Medborgarplatsen (Map Data ©2011 Google).

We adopted *Kvarnen*, a traditional Swedish restaurant and bar which became an unofficial band HQ for the duration of our visits to Sweden. We would spend the evening debriefing the day's recording session and socialising with people curious about our presence in Stockholm.



Figure 6 Interior of Kvarnen, Tjärhovsgatan, Stockholm. Courtesy of Kvarnen.

Our understanding and experience of Stockholm came through our collaboration with the record producers, as well as informal and social visits to the city. We experienced Swedish culture from a tourist's perspective; however, the nature of our visit to this country, and the way we engaged directly with its culture, gave us some unique insights into the ways and customs of our hosts.

When we were in Sweden especially, the small, inconsequential moments have given me an access point to certain parts of the day that have remained hidden. I remember, for example, the place on the landing in Villa Årsta where Ben, Jon and Jim would congregate to smoke. These remembrances trigger conversations about the album: what would we do the next day? When would it be finished? Would we

tour it? Would we need to give up the day job? We nearly always visited the same corner shop not far from Villa Årsta and attempted to buy food at the end of the day, most of the time trying to work out how much things cost and whether or not to buy something that looked familiar with an unfathomable Swedish name 'Filmjölk' and then discovering, of course, that it was not milk and the inevitable consequences of that.

We went to Kvarnen every night, if for no other reason than to extend the conversation about the album. We met people entirely unconnected from the album recording that played an important part in the story, even while seemingly positioned on the edges of our preoccupation with the album. As you write down the memories, others form, and eventually, you are transported into the studio and discussing some aspect of the album.



Figure 7 Kerb in the control room in Soundtrade August 2005.

The photo above (Fig. 7) was taken early into the first few days at Soundtrade. Kevin was taking a break from drumming duties while we all sat pensive, observing the session unfold. Ben sat next to the acoustic guitar he would have used for the guide

tracks. I have a video camera on my lap, and I remember Cent had asked us to capture moments from the recording sessions. I remember we were conscious that we had to document the process either with videotape or camera. It often seems like a pain to have to do it. '[E]verything remembered constitutes a relevant trace—precisely because it is remembered for the formation of identity' (Haug et al. 1999: 50).

In the chapters that follow, these kinds of anecdotes or vignettes have been essential to aid the descriptions of the encounters in the studio. They help to construct powerful texts that have lurked in my consciousness for all these years. Combined with visual stimuli like the photo above, they can convey powerful phenomenological themes. As Max Van Manen suggests, 'phenomenology does not necessarily have to follow the standard social science practice of empirical data gathering through interview, observation, written solicitations, or the narrowly conceived procedural practices of thematic analysis and the like' (2016: 31).

Chapter overview

In Chapter Two, I delve into the rock band's world, highlighting the band's loose ties to the Bristol music scene during the early to mid-2000s and challenges like record label rejections. The chapter evaluates the band's music and style against industry criticism. Chapter Three shows the band travelling to Sweden for an album recording supported by their record label, Cent Records. The chapter outlines the recording process, interactions with studios, producers, and production challenges. It touches on professional studio practices and tensions about musical experimentation. The relationship between Kerb, their label, and the producer deteriorates, leading to the band's renaming to Safehaus. In Chapter Four, the album's completion is delayed

due to conflicts between the producer and label. The band's entanglement with another label, BorderBlaster Records, is discussed, leading to a collaboration in Paris with Manu Dibango. The chapter also delves into recording technology, exploring concepts like 'lo-fi' and nostalgia. The final chapter offers a reflexive review of the Swedish album, using a ‘Feedback Interview’ technique derived from Ruth Stone’s method. This introspective approach focuses on my memories associated with the album, concluding my musical journey with Safehaus, in which I aim to bring a present interpretation to the work of the past.

CHAPTER 2

Rock band perspectives

Pre-album recording phase

Introduction

In this chapter, I explore ways to answer questions about the experience of joining a grassroots rock band. I will reflect on the challenges faced by the band as it negotiated its position in the local scene and its ambitious pursuit of a record deal. The following questions form part of the rationale for this chapter:

- In what ways does the rock band's identity and sound reflect the broader cultural and societal influences of their time? How can their musical style be seen as a response to or a product of the specific historical and social context in which they emerged?

- Considering the band's experiences with record label rejections, what strategies did they develop as a response to these industry-wide challenges? How can these strategies be understood as a micro-level reaction to macro-level industry dynamics?

- How did the processes of recording and experimentation evolve as adaptive solutions for the band in the face of industry obstacles? Can these developments be seen as individual-level responses to broader trends and changes within the music industry?

These questions frame how I explore the social organisation of the band in response to its specific temporal and spatial contexts, which ultimately define its constitutive practices. I examine traces of the band's activities through the signs and fragments left behind in sound, vision, memory, and text. Much of how I account for these encounters is contained within a hermeneutic phenomenological lens that reveals how I experience and interpret the band's journey and navigate the subjective meanings and significances attached to its collaborative and creative efforts. This

approach allows a close reading of interactions with the music industry.

My gradual immersion into the band's *lifeworld* as a participant and researcher is a central feature of this chapter. I ponder the band's music, particularly as I encounter it for the first time through recordings, rehearsal, and their involvement and connection to music scenes, especially Bristol during the early to mid-2000s. I establish that my musical identity has the potential to disrupt the musical *status quo*, yet change is inevitable and an overarching theme throughout the chapter.

This process of change is fuelled by interactions with music industry people, which is a fundamental driving force for the band's existence as they seek to position and negotiate their music, sound, and identity. Rehearsals, gigs, songwriting and recording are explored to ascertain how the band thinks about itself and why it makes the sounds it does. All of these factors are important to the band as they deal with record label rejection. Their solution to this predicament is a dogged determination to reinvent themselves, but this comes at considerable expense to each member as they adjust to new 'rules' that challenge established practices that have aligned closely with how they, as individuals, express themselves musically. Change is difficult. The band have a complex problem to solve and has little choice other than to explore new horizons.

In short, I am interested in showing how different kinds of musicians come together to understand the complexities of breaking into potentially lucrative careers in popular music. I will reveal that being in a rock band involves a tremendous amount of work, not just in rehearsing and organising performances but also the process of acquiring new skill sets, such as I document in the sections on recording and studio production. The mediation of technology is a fundamental feature in each chapter and subsequent 'band histories' in this thesis and defines the band's outcome

to a large extent.

There are two distinct phases of studio activity explored. First is the work done by the band (in the recording studio) to attract the attention of record labels, A&R, and record producers. The second shows the outcome once studio professionals become involved. Chapter Three is the outcome of the work done by the band in Chapter Two. I attempt to immerse the reader in the band's organisational process, from home recording to professional studio production practices in Sweden. This future scenario is important to remember while reading through this stage of the band's journey. There are many twists and turns along the way, especially as the band attempts to court the attention and interest of two independent record labels.

Eventually, the work done on transforming the band's songs opens the door to other industry collaborators, and this process forms the experiential focus of this study—it is all the effort that goes into making musical things happen. The goal throughout this chapter and those that follow is to provide a critical lens through which to view musical practices that detail an individual's account and experience in this rock band. Central to this thesis is a sociological perspective that emphasises the meanings individuals attach to experiences. Experience, in this instance, can be defined as social interaction: the process of negotiation and communication between individuals or groups, which influences behaviours, thoughts, and feelings. As Denzin (2014) posits, interactionism interprets social action through shared cultural symbols, norms, values, and expectations. The world seen through social interaction is then a dynamic and continually evolving landscape that defines the conditions of the field.

This chapter offers insights and an insider's perspective on the challenges, dynamics, and intricacies of how a grassroots rock band navigates the music

industry, which inevitably asks further questions about the broader socio-cultural and economic forces that define the lived experiences of 'ordinary' musicians striving for recognition and success. The way that I have situated the band in its place - a somewhat 'ordinary' location outside its more vibrant urban setting (Bristol) - resonates with Finnegan's looser observations of 'ordinary' musicians (1989: 18, 148). Ordinary musicians are described in relation to both the 'untrained' and the 'highly accomplished', suggesting a continuum where ordinary might occupy a middle ground or perhaps a broader category that encompasses a diverse range of possibilities that emphasises fluidity in how individuals construct identities (18). It is this sense of ordinary that I align with and that, over time and through closer examination, reveals life that is not so commonplace or that experiences straddle the ordinary and not so ordinary. I see musicians as people able to reflect and communicate complex facets of everyday life that have the potential to resonate with audiences of all descriptions in profound ways. Therefore, understanding what life is like for a musician operating at the fringes of the music industry has the potential to reveal the subtle power dynamics and structures that permeate everyday life.

To capture the story of ordinary practices, I have structured this chapter around eight vignettes, which are, as Denzin (2014) describes, 'life documents' (35). Each vignette represents a moment in my life as it is constituted through the activities of the rock band. In writing these vignettes, I am mindful, as Denzin emphasises, 'there is no empirically stable I giving a true account of an experience' (2014: 2). My perspective of experience is filtered through my emotions, memories, and interpretations. The recounting of my memories in itself forms part of this subjectivity. The world that I present is not static or singular but dynamic interaction with the reader's understanding within the broader cultural context (Ricoeur 2016).

Narrator: Subject in the subject

> [P]aying attention to the individual and to self consciousness does not privilege the individual over society, but that it is a necessary condition of the sensitive understanding of social relations (Anthony Cohen 1994: 192)

Cohen maintains the need for a nuanced reading of social analysis where individual and group perspectives are essential to understanding the complexities of social phenomena. However, this interpretation does not imply that the individual should be elevated above the collective; rather, a careful balancing of the two domains should be sought. Cohen scrutinises practices, regulations, and theories which captures individual experience and perception within large-scale social structures. This viewpoint adds a broader perspective and clarity to the phenomenological autoethnographic framework I have set out in Chapter One. It sets the scene for this introduction to the rock band Kerb and asks, who, when, how, and where am I (the ethnographer/musician) in relation to this study?

In this chapter section, I will locate and outline a perspective of my individual musical biography in relation to wider institutional practices—an essential requirement to understand the *macroscopic* framework (C. Wright Mills 1959).[37] In essence, this thesis is entirely focused on what can be learned and understood from a micro-social analysis of an individual musical journey within how we might perceive broader societal and historical contexts, such as rock music and the musical institutions and industrial practices that shape it. The topics in this section include a detailed overview of professional music practices and a brief portrait of my musical identity as I recount it at the time of joining the rock band.

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[37] 'When we understand social structures and structural changes as they bear upon more intimate scenes and experiences, we are able to understand the causes of individual conduct and feelings of which men in specific milieux are themselves unaware' (C. Wright Mills 1959: 162).

Deputising

I begin by returning to the theme in the opening vignette in Chapter One, where Kerb is attempting to find a solution to the problem of two of its members leaving. This solution manifests in my deputising ('depping') for their bass player. As I suggest later in this chapter, I am somewhat of an odd choice for this role for reasons which I will explain and clarify by giving an overview of my musical 'make-up'. This description will, in part, provide a framework to imagine the initial awkward phases of my introduction to the rock band. In brief, the musical clash can be understood in terms of stylistic and aesthetic differences inherent in my musical attributes. This musical encounter, then, is defined by how a jazz musician attempts to play rock music.

Jon had weighed up whether or not to ask me to 'dep' for the band for a few weeks: I imagined there was some apprehension based on the fact that I was fundamentally a jazz guitarist and not an ideal replacement for their rock bass player. I was a reasonably proficient jazz bassist, I could read music, played jazz gigs on bass, and studied how to play the double bass. Still, I was puzzled as to why he would ask me. Auditioning another bass player would have been a much better option. On reflection, I think the decision had to be made very quickly. Gigs were pending. I agreed to listen to their songs, and he gave me a handful of recordings in CD format along with a DVD recording of the band playing live at the King's Head in London. For me, this was just another of many different kinds of 'depping' jobs that my professional life consisted.

Deputising is a necessary part of life for freelance musicians and is an effective way to build networks and reputation. It is part of the general work of professional musicians where there is a necessity to be flexible and adaptable. It is a practice

defined by a negotiation of individual freedoms within broader musical and socio-cultural norms of the music industry. As a jazz musician, I had 'depped' for many different bands in Bristol (where I lived). It was common practice in that scene. Depping for jazz bands usually happens when a core member gets offered a better paid gig. On these rare occasions a substitute is an acceptable compromise. Stephen Cottrell (2004, 2017) defines deputising as a mode of *cultural capital* where the musician constructs a personal significance to the event within their wider career trajectory. I was speculating in this endeavour. Kerb's recent encounter with a major record label motivated my interest and was the only reason I agreed to take the job. I began with a practical mindset. What kind of rock band were they and what were they expecting of me? I had to quickly weigh up whether the project would have any value in the long term - either financially, artistically or preferably both. In this sense, deputising is not just an individual choice but a response to the economic and social dynamics of the musician's professional world.

Preparation for 'depping' work entails learning material before the event. Jazz band leaders usually produce 'charts', which make for a smooth integration into their ensemble.[38] Therefore, it is possible to perform live, having never met the players or played the music before the gig. Conversely, rock bands do not tend to produce 'charts' of songs. They rely wholly on regular rehearsals to instil the music gradually into the memory of the performer. Music emerges and forms in the rehearsal and exists only in the group's collective consciousness. As Bennett observes, local rock musicians are engaged with ideas that constitute a musical score, but these 'notes are remembrances of the partitions which the group placed in the playbacks of a

[38] 'Charts' the term given to music given to jazz players that might only consist of a chord sequence and the main melody line. They represent the bare outline of the composition.

recording while it was being gotten' (1980, 2017: 153). The rock band expected me to rehearse before the gig, which seemed unusual, seeing how little they had offered to pay me. I was reluctant to rehearse more than once so I decided to transcribe the songs and make rehearsal charts. Expediting the song-learning process was a priority. At this stage, I could not tell whether they were a good or bad rock band.

Personal history

I had not played rock music since I first began learning the guitar. Even then I only really dabbled with it. My initial interest in the guitar was sparked by blues players - I was more fascinated by improvisation and soloing than songwriting and attempted to transcribe BB King, Albert Collins, and Rory Gallagher's solos. I thought that blues and rock were intrinsically related through the guitar solo. A friend had taught me the basics of playing solos, which fixed the idea in my imagination. My absorption into these distinct styles of playing music did not last long enough for me to become a fully-fledged 'rocker' or blues player. Neither did I become involved in playing with local rock bands. Instead, my instinct headed towards complexity within the harmonic and rhythmic structures of jazz. In contrast, as far as I was concerned, the rock guitarist's complexity existed fundamentally within the frontiers of noise.[39]

That said, I identified with rock music, or more specifically, post-rock, especially the music of the 80s, which resonated with me as a teenager; bands such as Echo and the Bunnymen, The Smiths, New Order, and The Cure were my primary

[39] Rock guitar is defined by its experiments in noise and music which continue to shape its evolution in the digital age (Waksman 2003). Noise is a defining characteristic of all rock genres. It is the sonic quality that reveals a space outside of the norms of acceptable musical practice (Attali 1985, 2009).

listening sources back then. As Gracyk (2001) suggests, rock music shapes, limits, and expands our understanding of who we can be in the world. It is interpreted in a multitude of ways; as an art form that proclaims its emotional authenticity and resistance to convention and as a cultural milieu that forms political and personal identity. This past experience was my access point to rock music. I understood it more as a fan than a practitioner. My late-teen experiences of pop culture, by and large, defined my rock music tastes, political attitudes and positioning. 'Music fans have no difficulty in identifying music that they like because it seems to speak on their behalf' (ibid.: 235). I hoped that the rock band Kerb situated themselves somewhere in this musical and artistic twilight zone.

In the absence of a means to certify a rock musician's credentials, 'the musician has only the remembrance of past groups to support a musical identity' (Bennett 1980: 18). Musical imagination is composed of past experiences projected and accumulated into the present. My attitude to sound, performance and metre, fixed by an interest in jazz, works against this new rock orientation. I faced the quandary of trying to piece together rock's evolution over two decades to arrive at a point where my immersion in this rock band would be anywhere near authentic enough to be credible. For any musician wanting to sound authentic in a specific music genre, there must be a deep immersion into its sonic and musical structures for it to manifest in notes on an instrument in any convincing way. This attitude is an internalised orientation towards specific sounds, notes, and performance gestures - in my opinion, it is rare to find jazz performers that can convincingly articulate rock and vice versa.

My playing style and attitudes to music and professionalism was cemented not long after I began formal guitar studies in Liverpool in the late 1980s. At the time,

Liverpool had one of the few courses in the UK that taught jazz and popular music. The course was run by many of the region's leading players, and they reinforced in me ideas of music professionalism—being able to read music was a core skillset in the curriculum. By the end of the two-year course, students graduated with a diploma in *light* music.[40] By the mid-90s popular music courses began to emerge in universities and colleges across the UK and thereby redefining attitudes towards music professions. Popular music becomes worthy of serious study.

Both Cohen and Finnegan deal with notions of professionalism in music. Seen through some of the Liverpool rock bands' perspectives as 'playing the game' or as a definition of work and organisational practice. Finnegan (1989) expands on ideas concerning the complex boundary between amateur and professional musicians across a range of different music genre conventions and practices - although never arriving at a satisfactory conclusion reveals the conditions in which most kinds of popular music emerge at the grassroots level, that being through self-learning, self-funding and self-organisation.

Another viewpoint of the grassroots musician is Cottrell's study of professional music-making, which provides an examination and experiential account of a professional musician.[41] As Cottrell suggests, and I agree, 'the most important thing for the young professional, and the thing which makes the greatest impact on your peers, is to be paid to play (…). Everybody at this stage wants to be paid for their

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[40] Mabel Fletcher Technical College became Sandown College and then eventually closed in 1991. Sandown College of Performing Arts (SCOPA) was located on Mossley Avenue housed in a Victorian era school. For many, SCOPA was in fact the precursor to LIPA (Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts).

[41] Cottrell structures his observations within what he defines as an ethnographic methodology that incorporates a level of autobiographical data; it is an 'accumulated experience of one musician among a community of professional musicians whose beliefs, ideas and expertise he has pillaged at will; for better and for worse, this is a natives point of view' (2004: 30).

performances, and the concept of gaining valuable experience, although significant, comes a poor second' (ibid.: 10). The role of the academy is a fundamental component in this orientation of 'professional' musician.

Professionalism means being paid but also contains a set of ideals and attitudes that manifest as social, organisational, and the quality brought to musical performance whereby recordings are equally valued. Funding for music projects, including tours and recordings, in classical and jazz fields, does not rely wholly on direct music industry support such as record label deals; instead, it is supported directly or indirectly through national public agency funding such as the Arts Council. However, despite this state of affairs, the recording still becomes a tangible expression of the group's sound and reveals the musicians' creative and professional aspirations.

Cottrell's perspective about the freelancer helps establish a way to think about musicians that operate outside of the idealised world of the rock musician whose future appears locked into some kind of bargain with a record label. The rock musician appears to have no choice if they are serious about making a living from their music. Very few venues offer financial incentives for the rock band, like Kerb, intent on playing original songs. In contrast, being paid as a jazz musician is relatively more straightforward. Attitudes to what constitutes a professional musician are structured differently. Although smaller, jazz audiences seem willing to pay to watch jazz acts perform, even at a grassroots level.

By now, I have now firmly established that I am not a rock musician - in fact, I doubt if I ever really became one throughout my entire involvement with Kerb. So, one important facet to reveal at this stage of the band's narrative is what precisely is my musical identity if I do not consider it to be rock oriented. What kind of jazz

musician am I? One way to elicit an idea of me in c. 2001 is through a series of dissertations I wrote for a Master of Arts degree that I was part way through at the time of joining Kerb. The title of the degree was *Musical Culture and Individual Voice in Music*. Its outcome was to explore the creative practice of musicians. My response to the aim was to investigate the guitar-playing styles and sounds of particular contemporary jazz players of that time. I chose to analyse Bill Frissell, Wayne Krantz, and Pat Metheny. Each offered a distinct approach to the way the sound of the jazz guitar, and for me, their sonic identities marked them out from more traditional post-bebop-style players. I explored ways to compose music that avoided the conventional harmonic language of song-based chord progressions common in post-bop forms. Instead, I was absorbed by the 'free' playing of Ornette Coleman, Eric Dolphy and John Coltrane, among many others. In conclusion, it would be fair to say that my musical language was directed towards complexity in both a harmonic and rhythmic sense. As far as a creative direction, I planned to establish a more free and avant-garde approach to composing music and improvising solos. I attempted to step out of this condition ('bracket') and into the world of the rock band out of curiosity and partially through eventual frustration with the jazz scene as I experienced it.

Throughout the rest of this chapter, I explore the dynamic relationship between the 'life documents' of the individual musician and the broader dynamics of the music industry as revealed through the ongoing musical project of the rock band (Denzin 2004: 35). Individual agency and the broader ideas that embody structure underpin Chapters Two, Three and Four, where I aim to show that lived experiences in music are deeply embedded in and influenced by the externality of larger social and economic forces. Kerb's journey illustrates this interplay, their struggle for

recognition and the need to adapt to industry norms are not merely external challenges but are experienced and interpreted from within. Rock cultures are largely defined by region and place. They are understood through the traditions and politics of a particular scene and constituted by and constitutive of the broader social systems in which they operate. The demands of the work to gain recognition in these kinds of music-making communities set the participants off from the rest of society.[42]

Context: Locality, place, and Bristol

This next section will detail the geographical location that situates and contextualises this study. I will present specific cultural and symbolic ideas commonly defining Bristol's identity: politics, history, sounds and style. This part of the thesis serves as a framework to situate the sound of Kerb in relation to the indie bands that defined Bristol's positionality, mainly as it emerged during the early 90s. I will show that while Bristol is an important cultural location, Kerb only manage to exist on its periphery. They are unsuccessful in attracting local record label support. Benjamin Brinner (2009) suggests that 'beyond the interactive network of a single ensemble (…) professional musicians are always enmeshed in larger sets of relationships as they join, create and reshape networks relevant to their musical work' (163). These are ingrained dispositions shaped by individual and collective experiences—*habitus*.

[42] John Blacking suggests that individuals who excel musically, like the Venda solo instrumentalists, often emerge outside of societal or communal incentives. He describes a specific type of minstrel known as "tshilombe," related to spirit possession, indicating that these musicians connect with spiritual forces, thereby expressing experiences broader than most people's. This unique role allows them to operate outside the standard societal structures and reflect on a more extensive range of experiences (2000: 49).

> The authenticity of the 'local' is partly created from within: the activities of a few bands might lead to the growth of new venues and attract interest from record companies and the music press, and the city, time or region is entrenched in music folklore as a place of origin (Connell and Gibson 2003: 111).

Reputation building is a necessary requirement of bands on local circuits. They are decided and built on an ability to engage with stakeholders at the centre of a music scene. These stakeholders are promoters at music venues, journalists who review gigs and recordings in the local area, other more well-known local artists who would be associated with up-and-coming acts as support, locally-based record labels who are actively curating the scene, and band managers who have an established roster and reputation. Bands must balance these intricately connected social groups and know how the scene is formed and regulated. Knowing the local scene defines taste, identity and specific social practices within often tight-knit geographical boundaries (Kruse 2003, 2010).

Scenes are both symbolic and imaginative, without definitive categorisation, and conceived as part of the phenomenology of modern life (Blum 2001). They are spaces where culture is experienced through an intersection of creative practices involving music but not exclusively. A thriving music scene depends on infrastructures and social networks that enable it to situate its activities locally and globally. Straw (1991, 2001) argues that a scene is a cultural space where a range of musical idioms exist in a process of dialogue and exchange which extends to connections at a local and international level.[43] Here, two scene distinctions coalesce, one as a local mode fixed partly by historical community activity and the other,

[43] The concept of scenes is explored and acknowledged through the influential and scholarly work of Will Straw (1991, 2001). Straw's 'Scenes and Sensibilities and Systems of articulation, logics of change' make seminal contributions to the conceptualisation and formation of scenes and are often cited as benchmarks for academics investigating notions of cultural space and the site-specific practices of music communities.

which seeks to disrupt and counter through external relevancy. During the early 90s, Bristol was defined by a particular sound and attitude towards experimentation in music and style, resulting in a unique take on the post-rock phenomenon propelled through distinct 'multi-accented musical identities' (Henning 2015: 104).

Like all cities, Bristol defies simple characterisation due to its complexity and diversity. The city has a rich history, having been a major trading centre since the medieval period, and has played a significant role in British maritime industry (Sunley 2017). It is known for its vibrant culture and arts scene, with a variety of music and theatre venues. The city is also home to several institutions of higher education, including the University of Bristol, the University of the West of England, and Bristol Old Vic Theatre School. Bristol has been at the forefront of many social movements, including the abolitionist movement and the struggle for LGBTQ+ rights, and is known for its progressive and politically engaged population.[44] Bristol was awarded the European Green Capital Award in 2015 and, in 2008, was Britain's most sustainable city.[45] The city has a rich history, with many architecturally important sites, such as Brunel's Suspension Bridge at Clifton. Bristol's past as a major centre for trade and industry is visible in its many historic buildings, while many of these structures have become key redeveloped sites in recent decades. Its aerospace industry and shipping yards also made it a strategic target during WW2. According to the Evening Post article (2022), many of the city's medieval, Tudor, and Georgian buildings were completely destroyed during the 'Bristol Blitz'.[46] The

[44] https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/jan/05/four-cleared-of-toppling-edward-colston-statute

[45] https://web.archive.org/web/20131203011951/http://www.bristolpost.co.uk/Bristol-Britain-s-greenest-city/story-11233026-detail/story.html

[46] https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/bristol-news/gallery/story-bristols-long-lost-city-4721882

remnants of the 'Bristol Blitz' are not just historical markers but living memories etched into the city's landscape and its people's consciousness. As the city shapes and redevelops its physical and cultural significance, each generation adds layers of meaning to the place's story, a continuing reminder of the past preserved in the present. Colston Hall is one of Bristol's most well-known and controversial cultural landmarks. It was named after Edward Colston, a 17th-century slave trader who had made significant donations to the city of Bristol (Tallon 2006; Chivallon 2001). However, there has been resistance over the use of Colston's name in recent years, given his association with the slave trade. In 2020, Colston Hall announced that it would change its name to the 'Bristol Beacon' as part of a major renovation project.

By the early 2000s, Bristol had already established itself as one of the UK's most influential musical and cultural centres; it ranked alongside Manchester, Liverpool, and London and produced international artists who have become pioneers in electronic and alternative genres. The first signs and manifestations of Bristol's creative scene began as far back as the early 80s with Rip, Rig and Panic, Black Roots and The Blue Aeroplanes. The most prolific period for Bristol bands emerged during the 90s, when the so-called trip-hop, downtempo era rose to prominence. Portishead, Massive Attack and Tricky are the most celebrated exponents of the new wave of electronic and experimental dub-influenced music in a scene that was anointed the 'Bristol Sound'.[47]

For musicians like me, who had newly arrived in the city in the early 90s, the

[47] 'Whether a Bristol Sound scene existed or not, the term 'Bristol Sound' has become a recognisable sound: an experimental music, sometimes described as 'trip-hop' an influenced by an eclectic mix of dub, reggae, punk and soul, jazz and hip-hop, and characterised by a heavy bass, use of sampling and a laid back beat (Henning and Hyder 2015: 98). 'Despite the artists' objections, music industrialists, fans and academics continually label their music trip hop or its alternate term 'Bristol sound', though specifics are never given as to what, if anything, distinguishes the two terms' (Wragg 2016: 40).

sounds and influence of these bands defined the place, its soundscape, and its lifeworld. There is a deep connection between place, personal identity, and history. The city (place) is not just a backdrop but a living context shaping experiences, interactions, and creative processes. 'The point is that place, by virtue of its unemcompassability by anything other than itself is at once the limit and the condition of all that exists' (Casey 1993: 15). The unique characteristics of Bristol—its streets, venues, cultural atmosphere—cannot be fully encompassed by descriptions of its geography or history alone. It defines the limits of the musician's experiences and also conditions how those experiences are lived and understood. The city itself, with its distinct identity, becomes an integral part of the musician's life and work— a further illustration of Casey's point about the fundamental role of place.

Phil Johnson's (1996) account of the Bristol scene around the mid-90s is still used as a primary source in other texts on the subject. Connell and Gibson (2003) dedicate a small section to Bristol in 'Sound Tracks', relaying Johnson's account of the scene during a particular time. The Dug Out club is often cited in discussions about Bristol's music culture and has been elevated to mythical status, instilling imaginary ideas about the 'Bristol Sound' (Henning and Hyder 2015). While the musical legacy of Bristol, especially during the 90s, is foundational in understanding its place in British music culture, scholarly activity around the scene appears slow to emerge. Areas that warrant exploration could include Bristol independent record labels such as Sink and Stove—who made a significant contribution to the indie-rock scene by establishing Chikinki, Mooz and The Playwrights. Another important label, Cup Of Tea Records, includes Monk & Canatella, The Experimental Pop Band, and Sissi. The Bristol jazz scene has also been neglected to some extent. For example, the impact of the jazz boom in the late 80s-early 90s produced a vibrant scene of young

experimental musicians, many of whom became mainstays in the international acts that evolved out of this era.

Bristol is a small city and ranks around 10th in the UK for population size (c.465,900 in 2021).[48] It has a limited number of music venues compared to other UK cities; however, musicians who work in the city tend to regard it as a big town. This description might be one of the reasons why it appears to have a comparatively close-knit musical community. An article posted in The Guardian in 2011 expresses this perspective:

> [N]ext stop is Idle Hands (74 Stokes Croft), one of the few remaining independent record shops in Bristol. It specialises in home-grown vinyl from local dubstep and drum'n'bass producers. Chris Farrell, the driving force behind this important space for Bristol's tight-knit musical community, greets us with a smile as I dig into the racks to find a few new tunes for my set on Saturday night. Result! (Nielsen 2011).

These identities are fixed for both musicians and audience alike; each contributes to the experience through complex, interconnecting systems and protocols. Peter Webb talks about the same thing in his history blog article and emphasises the sense of intimacy that the music scene in Bristol was about around the 1980s:

> (…) [a]t the Dug Out, Bristol's unique combination of close-knit communities and openminded attitudes created a musical space focused on experimentation, which refused to accept genre boundaries. Here, people mixed up hip-hop, funk, soul and dub, with the occasional punk or post-punk tune thrown in (Webb 2007).

Local musician, Jake McMurchie, comments in the 'Bristol Live Music Census Report' (2016) that the identity of the music scene in Bristol is intrinsic to its size and supportive communities:

> [T]he music scene is big enough to attract lots of great musicians but small enough that we all know each other. The community is supportive, and at gigs, there is often a significant

[48] Bristol population according to the https://populationdata.org.uk/bristol-population/ [Accessed 10 Apr 2022].

> number of musicians in the audience. The community is strong and healthy (2016: 12).

Music manager Stephen Barnes indicates the geographic factors that influence how its location and size shape the Bristol scene:

> The music industry is still very London- centric. But because of the wide range of talent in Bristol, there is a good skeletal structure of support in place. You have a supportive music press. BBC Introducing is very strong in the West. National promoters have a presence in Bristol. Artists work very closely with each other and learn from each other (2016: 14).

The research carried out in 2016 by Bucks New University in partnership with MAP (Music Academic Partnership) also revealed some of the challenges that music venues faced in light of residential building programmes in creative sectors of the city. For example, the owner of the Fleece and Firkin, one of Bristol's most well-known music venues, illustrates how residential developments in the commercial and industrial sections of the city are now forcing out the creatives who tend to gravitate towards these spaces. The report suggests that the redevelopment of commercial properties threatens as much as 50% of live music venues.

The music industry depends on the economic potential of thriving scene networks like those emerging in Bristol during the 90s. The vitality attributed to this scene can be understood in a wider context where a range of interrelated industries, such as media, film and fashion, and the co-location of niche producers, generate a 'critical mass of economic activity' (Hauge and Hracs 2010: 17). These forces extend to what Bennett and Guerra define as 'translocally connected DIY cultural scenes' (2019: 10). Kerb's connection to Bristol was made through its performance venues, The Fleece and Firkin, The Louisiana, Ashton Court Festival, Moles, and many others.[49] They held symbolic importance to the band as well as being key to building

[49] For an overview of these venues see Appendix A.

reputations, at the local level, and beyond.[50]

Next, I will introduce the rock band Kerb in more detail and explore their musical identity and interactions within the Bristol music scene. As already stated, Bristol is an important cultural centre for Kerb, but what ideals are they attempting to align to exactly? Soon after meeting the band members, I discovered a tension between the bandleader, Ben, and how I perceived and understood the cultural sphere of Bristol. There are specific music venues, such as The Fleece and Firkin, where the band places symbolic importance. Yet, how the band related their music to the scene's creative and socio-political ideals felt distant and unconnected.

I base these observations on my experience of being ensconced in the Bristol scene for over a decade. I had experienced the political upheavals through the 90s (poll tax riots and protests) and came to view Bristol and its musical culture as existing in a unique political domain (as already outlined earlier in this chapter). Harris Berger (1999), in his phenomenological ethnography of a hard rock scene, suggests that 'large-scale social structure does not generate a cultural style' (49). An individual does not become structurally encoded to produce a cultural style through the existence of a political system. However, this is not to say that the individual does not mediate political ideas to a greater or lesser degree of effectiveness. Therefore, an important theme that emerges in Chapters Two through Four is how Kerb aligns with the creative ideals of Bristol and in what ways it fails to produce

[50] For Bourdieu (1983), the researcher's understanding of the field setting through its symbolic meanings is essential to access hard-to-obtain data. When considering how music or 'artworks' are able to contain symbolic significance is then dependent on the how they are identified and become socially established by audiences. The work created encompasses 'not only the material production but also the symbolic production of the work, i.e. the production of the value of the work, or, which amounts to the same thing, of belief in the value of the work' (318). This dynamic interplay of symbolic meaning and 'lived experience' encompasses the concept of distinction: an intrinsic concept in how symbolic goods manifest within cultural fields.

songs that resonate fully within that local scene. These chapters will outline an album production process that explores the band's record deal and build-up to recording in Sweden.

Band history: *pre-album phase* (p.1)

Kerb: Biography, history, and members

In this section, I will introduce the rock band Kerb as I embark on being their 'dep' bass player. I explore the band's membership, thoughts about their music - as I encounter it, how they organise themselves and the gradual emergence of a development deal with a local independent record label. My involvement with Kerb initially lasted around 18 months or so, and at the end of this period, I left the band but continued working with its lead singer and songwriter. In this opening section, I will reveal who they are in more detail. I begin with Kerb's biography, a representation of who they are in their own words.

> Kerb have played live consistently all over the UK since their formation in 1997. Past dates include 4 Glastonbury Festivals, regular slots at London venues The Half Moon, Putney and Kings Head Fulham and supports with Jools Holland, The Alarm and Ezio. Their most recent demo contains tracks recorded in Bristol earlier this year and a number of live recordings engineered and produced by the band. The band's music is created using 2 vocals, 2 guitars, drums, bass and various sound modules and loop stations. The style is rock/alt and combines quality songwriting with unique arrangements and sounds. Overall, the style is reminiscent to early Radiohead/Elbow, but has drawn musical influence from bands as diverse as the Beachboys (Pet Sounds), CSNY, Beck and Jeff Buckley (c.2003).[51]

This brief biography reveals that Kerb had been around for some time before I joined them - at least four or five years - and had a list of some somewhat prestigious

[51] For more information about the band, you can visit their SoundCloud page https://soundcloud.com/the-band-kerb.

(at least on the indie-band circuit) venues to boast. For example, The Half Moon in Putney has been around for decades and is known nationally along with the King's Head in Fulham for its music gigs. These venues are often referred to as part of the 'toilet circuit', a network of music venues where indie-rock bands strive for prominence, build fanbases, gain recognition and attract the attention of record labels and promoters.[52] Kerb had also supported some well-known acts, and showing this in the 'biog' adds credibility and further indicates their style and genre. The band perceived their overall style as reminiscent of early Radiohead/Elbow but also drew musical influence from bands as diverse as the Beachboys, Beck, Jeff Buckley, and CSNY.[53] How accurate this self-assessment of style will be debated later in this chapter. Nevertheless, Kerb's biog forms what might be considered their collective intentionality serving as vital clues for promoters programming and curating events looking for signs of a band's competency and selling potential to their audiences.

[52] Miller & Scofield describe the Toilet Circuit as "grime-pits play[ing] a vital role in the ecology of Britain's music scene and broader cultural sector" (2016: 1).

[53] CSNY (Crosby Stills Nash and Young).



Figure 8 Kerb from left to right Ben Kench Jon Boyle Ryan Stevens, Jim Kench (c.2000).

The photograph above (Fig. 8) was taken a few months before I became involved with the band. I remember the context of this image and the occasion that it captured. Kerb is preparing to go on stage at an open-air concert near Taunton (A large town in Somerset, UK) hosted by Orchard FM, a local radio station. This gig held some significance to them partly because of the size of the event (by all accounts, there were a couple of thousand people in attendance) and the fact that they had gone down well with this audience. I imagined that it was a reassuring moment that somewhat negated the experience of the BMG rejection (see Chapter One). They had joked to me about how they decided to wear matching sleeveless tee-shirts and pretended to be a boy band, playing up to the crowd's expectations. This admission revealed to me an attitude towards commercialism that I would have difficulty aligning myself to. Perhaps this kind of underlying confusion in style and identity was partly the cause of the record company rejection—this is speculation on

my part at this time. Generally, I learned about the band's history through stories of gigs (good and bad), incidents in the band van, recording sessions, band arguments, and of course, the meeting with BMG. Through these stories, I gradually built up a picture of what they had been doing, their aspirations, how they understood their music, why they were captivated by the enterprise of being in a rock band, and their intentionality in pursuing music careers in this way.



Figure 9 Kerb on stage at the Orchard FM event (c.2000).

In this picture (Fig. 9), Kerb can be seen on stage at the Orchard FM event with the attendant crowd. They are now only four members of what was a six-piece outfit. They are performing an 'unplugged' set. There is no bass player. Ryan (the drummer) has a stripped-back percussion set-up, Jon (keyboard) fills out the arrangement, compensates for the lack of 'bottom end', and supplies additional vocals. At the same

time, the two brothers, Jim and Ben, lead what would have been a vocally-driven performance. This acoustic line-up would often emerge as an alternative configuration of the band. Kerb was in a state of flux at this point in their trajectory and would have been wondering how to move forward with their plans for the band.[54]

As I have already established in the opening section of Chapter One, the point where I first encountered the band, Kerb had been working on securing a record contract and had pursued the route of many aspiring rock bands, playing showcase gigs in London, finding opportunities to appear on or have their records played on local radio, and sending demos to record companies. The culmination of their work attracted an A&R representative from BMG, who was initially excited by some of the band's material. This initial interest led to a series of meetings and showcases. However, despite a period of optimism for the band members, the interest from BMG soon dissipated. They had come very close to achieving the difficult aim of advancing from an unsigned to a signed band. The encounter with a major label was, if nothing else, evidence that there was some potential in the music they were making and that it might only be a matter of time before another opportunity arose. The disappointment of this rebuff did not dissuade them from their endeavours, and they continued to believe that another chance might arrive if they continued working on material and rehearsing their live set. As Sara Cohen observed, rock bands believed 'there was always that element of luck, the hope of being in the right place at the right time, the belief that persistence, talent, and sound planning would win through in the end' (1991: 103).

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[54] See Appendix B for a table of band members and dates.

In the conversations I had with the band it was clear that they were not ready to give up just yet. In fact, they were determined to continue even more resolutely than before. Over the years that they had been pursuing this single-minded aim, writing songs, playing gigs, and looking for opportunities to progress their careers had instilled a robust belief and commitment. As new recruit, I felt that this was an attitude I needed to buy into almost immediately. It was their tactic to cope with what is an almost impossible task in attempting 'to make it big'. The element of luck extends to the band formation and whether or not there is enough talent in the songwriting and chemistry between the individual members to produce songs that have the potential for mass-audiences.

Rock bands are, for the most part, extensions of friendship circles that identify with specific sounds and musical styles. Bands are often formed at schools, colleges and universities (see biographies of Radiohead, Pink Floyd, Coldplay, Muse and many others).[55] They are assembled through a subjectively organised rationale and defined by the consensus of its members. In effect, the overall group sound is constructed by a collection of individually centred human musical systems partially formed before enlisting (Bennett 1980, 2017). After which, an individual's musical language becomes fused with the other participants to form the band's overall sonic and musical identity. The process of selecting the right voice and musical personality is crucial and can have a significant impact on the band's sound and style. Therefore, the criteria for joining a rock band depend on how individuals have learned to play their instrument and developed a conducive musical vocabulary. The band's

[55] Osborn, B., 2017. Everything in its right place: Analyzing Radiohead. Oxford University Press. Itzkoff, D. and Sinagra, L., 2006. Pink Floyd: The Dark Side of the Moon: The Making of the Pink Floyd Masterpiece. Biography, 29(3), pp.536-537. Roach, M., 2011. Viva Coldplay: A Biography. Omnibus Press.

aesthetic and collective coherence depends on the willingness of its members to adapt and perform within specific musical conventions. These mutually agreed musical boundaries can be interpreted as a process of 'bracketing' where musicians suspend their preconceptions and judgments about how music should be in favour of a collective organisation sound.[56] All participants must work towards fulfilling these shared creative aims that will ultimately express their style and coalesce in authentic performance. The band sound and style is, therefore, a collective idea grounded in hours of rehearsals, recordings, and performances.

The following vignette offers a reflexive interpretation of my initial musical encounter with the band as I recall watching their live video recording. This was my first experience of hearing the band before playing with them. In preparation for the first rehearsal, I used the video performance to understand the distinct features of the band that will be essential to reproduce in the rehearsal room. The moments captured in the video performance are, to some extent, the band at their most recent best. The event at the King's Head marks an important symbolic milestone for them as they attempt to promote their music and gain music industry attention. The video represents more than just a rehearsal aid; it reveals the band's serious intentions. In this following vignette, I return to the business of 'depping' and the preparation work that was needed in order to rehearse with the band.

[56] 'Bracketing' in phenomenological research is the suspension of presupposition, assumption and bias.

Kerb: Live at the King's Head, London

Before the first rehearsal, Jon gave me a collection of CDs that constituted most of Kerb's current repertoire, along with some video footage of the band performing at the King's Head in Fulham - this was my first sensory encounter of hearing and seeing them—an immersion into their 'lifeworld'. The rehearsal was due to take place about a week after receiving these materials.

At this stage in the dissertation, it is important to add that I am aware of the inherent complexities involved in recalling these past events in my life and that it is impossible to avoid bias in retelling these stories. However, I use various techniques to provide checks and balances pertaining to chronologies of the band's activities, which I discuss comprehensively in Chapter One. Before arriving at these vignettes, I assembled a series of interconnected written accounts before selecting and curating the most appropriate story. Vignettes need to be seen as snapshots of time and, when combined, form a more complete picture of the whole.



Figure 10 Kerb video still of live performance at the King's Head, London (c.2000).

I rewatch the video to remind myself of this early snapshot of the band (Fig. 10). It was buried on the hard drive of an old computer which was lurking in a cupboard.

> Jim (front of stage on the left): "Thank you, we've time for one more (guitar: dung dung dung) I would like to take this opportunity to introduce our keyboard player Mr. Jon Boyle everybody, is in the house, Mr. Jon Boyle" (audience: whoop and clap).[57]

The keyboard is near the front of the stage, on the opposite side of the lead guitarist. Stood behind a dual-keyboard stand, Jon begins with a dramatic rendition of the introduction to Greig's Piano Concerto in A minor, Opus 16. After a few bars, this morphs into an arpeggiated chord sequence, developing the epic grandeur of the introduction. The interesting thing I noticed at this point was that the song was in 3/4 or a 6/8 time signature - a little unusual, I thought. As it transpired, the band

[57] Transcription from the video (not publicly available).

had several songs in 3/4. After a few more bars, the drums enter and gradually build momentum and energy, preparing the way for the lead guitar. Next, the guitar enters, adding a smoothly distorted and what sounds like a multi-effected (lots of reverb, delay and possible chorus) riff. The guitar sound is not heavy, though and, to some extent, is dominated by the presence of the piano. Once the lead vocals begin, the overall sound shifts in texture and becomes distinctly lighter. The distorted lead guitar fills out phrases behind the dual-lead vocal style of the two brothers. Jim adds an acoustic guitar layer to the arrangement. The obvious question to ask here is what do they sound like, as in what other well-known bands could I compare them to? It is difficult to say precisely, although the lead singer reminds me a little of Michael Stipe (REM) and Phil Collins - he has an expressive quality that suits the band's slower-tempo songs.

At this point in the song, I am more interested in the sound of the band rather than assessing any potential that the songwriting might possess. I presume my own lack of knowledge of current rock bands is the reason I am unable to place them and their sound in the bigger scheme of things. As far as I was concerned, the group's overall performance and competency were fair; they could play tightly, and the drummer held a solid groove and built energy into choruses. They were a well-rehearsed outfit. Apart from the dramatic *intro*, where the attention shifted and showcased Jon's piano playing, the band remained relatively static on stage. They were dressed casually, with no theatrical antics of any kind despite the 'prog' piano intro. The drummer (Ryan), who seemed to be the most animated of the group as far as he could be, sat down behind everyone else. They were, in many ways, quite understated, given the drama of the opening to the song. Through conversations with Jon, I figured they positioned themselves somewhere within the Britpop oeuvre.

The main thrust of Britpop had largely passed me by, although I recalled seeing a broadcast of Blur live on stage and thought that the edge that they exuded had a 'punky' kind of attitude, and this was partly driven by the guitar sound and the vocal delivery. This sound world was not part of Kerb's aesthetic they were softer and played a lot of ballads.

I found it challenging to place Kerb in terms of a specific genre. They did not fit the framework of a typical Britpop-era band yet had some of the hallmarks of bands from that era. The band's name, Kerb, sounded as if it could belong to Britpop. However, on a practical level, Kerb, by definition, was no longer the band I watched in the video. They were about to undergo a transformation in their musical identity as a result of two key members leaving. These two members were an integral part of the Kerb sound, as it appeared in the video. There were now three versions of Kerb the version I watched on the video, the version that performed at the open-air concert, and now the version that involved me. Later in this chapter, I attempt to frame Britpop in more detail, mainly because of its relevance to the time Kerb attempted to establish itself in the world.

The description and interpretation I offer of Kerb's performance in this video reveal how I attempt to categorise the band upon seeing and experiencing their music for the first time. In essence, I am finding a way to access this new musical world to quickly assimilate into their style with as little friction as possible. I have to speculate how they might be perceiving what Kerb now is in terms of their understanding of the sound they make and the complications that I might bring to bear by merely being me. They might be more accommodating of something new or might want to closely replicate their existing sound prior to the split. Either way, I will inevitably add a new component to their musical formula and change them

further.

In preparation for the rehearsal, I decided to dial back as much of my usual musical way of interacting and thinking to present a musically neutral persona - as much as this was possible. The purpose of watching the video had a very practical purpose after all, and that was to enable me to prepare for and plan a strategy for the first rehearsal. What I observed was 'not a fixed image' but rather a shifting reality that underpins the dynamic temporal nature of experience (Berger 1999: 121). Kerb will now have to confront the unknown and changing dimensionality of their sound and music. I had yet to get to know the band members individually, so my experience of them in the video represents only one possibility; it is just a frozen moment in time. Even before the preparations had begun on the songs, I was certain of the band's intentions towards the serious pursuit of a record contract and sensed that all of their efforts were directed towards this aim.

Rehearsal: Monday night, Wells

> It has been estimated that there are 50,000 rock groups in Britain, of which less than 1000 had even a hope of getting a recording contract, but even without recording such musicians are vital economically to the music industry (Frith 1978: 76).

Society needs and demands the contributions of musicians at all levels. Not only do musicians collectively support the musical instrument industry but they are also the consumers and audiences. Grassroots scenes are vital for upcoming bands and musicians to explore ideas. They provide the infrastructure to nurture new talent. Unsigned bands are often incubators for musicians to evolve unique identities. The continual process of forming and reforming of bands where musicians move between musical projects creates the conditions for breakthrough artists to emerge.

Assuming that Firth's estimation was translatable in 2002, the implications are

that it is extremely difficult for a rock act to break into the music industry's inner sanctum despite being organised and knowledgeable of their local scene and beyond (Cohen 1991). Kerb faced a compounding problem in that, by 2002, they had had a long time to make the breakthrough if it was going to happen. In many ways, the BMG encounter was a conclusive moment for them. Cohen reminds us that 'those (bands) that had been around for a long while without being signed were said to have '*missed the boat*' (108). Kerb were not yet ready to 'throw in the towel'. Narrowing their odds even further, they were gambling on the idea of being the first band to break through from their locality; although, Reef had achieved mainstream success in the early 90s and had initially formed in Glastonbury.



Figure 11 Kerb's rehearsal space located on Mendip industrial estate, Wookey Hole Road.

The first rehearsal with Kerb took place in an engineering works unit situated on the outskirts of Wells on the road to Wookey Hole (see Fig. 11 above). A location,

that represents a kind of symbolic representation of Kerb's position on the periphery of the music industry. I met them outside the unit, located on an industrial estate, where Jon introduced me to the rest of the band, this was the first time meeting them. They were all smoking (I was the only non-smoker). We chatted about the band for a few minutes and what was needed of me over the coming weeks before proceeding inside the building. Inside it was cold and smelt of metal and grease. On the first floor of the building was some kind of steel mesh cage that formed the room where they kept all of their equipment. The drums, PA, and keyboard were all set up and ready to begin. On one of the walls inside the cage was the band's banner - bold white text on a black background emblazoned with the word KERB. They already had a bass amplifier set up, and I tested the sound and nervously wondered what they might expect. I asked them if they minded me using a music stand, and they said no, but they found it amusing once I had set it up. Using music stands was not part of their visual apparatus or performance aesthetic. As far as I was concerned, there was no other way to remember all the songs in the setlist without using charts and for that I needed a music stand. I was conscious that the music stand represented something outside of their internal collective ideas about themselves. Perhaps this was a layer of professional 'muso' contrivance that had no place in how they viewed themselves externally in the world.

Once we had organised ourselves in the space, tested out the sound and made a few adjustments to levels, the conversation switched briefly to the gigs which were looming. The first one was about a week away. I had to learn an entire set of songs between now and this first performance. They agreed I would do one rehearsal and two gigs when they booked me. I was a hired musician and not auditioning to be in the band, and this condition was made clear from the outset. Jon asked me what I

would like to play; I chose a song from the setlist, which I could vaguely remember when I looked at the charts I had written for each song. Even though I had transcribed the entire set and had a visual map to navigate the structure and chord sequences, this only accounted for a basic outline of the song. I still had to learn all of the performance dynamics that the band were used to hearing.

I managed to get through the first song without any issues; it had a conventional harmonic sequence, this is how it appeared to me, and the bass part merely underpinned the root notes and mapped to the drummer's kick. I could quickly lock into the band's sound as they were clearly well-rehearsed. The drummer and the keyboard player did not have to rely too much on my performance to anchor their parts. My first impressions of the sound of the band were similar to my assessment of the video I had watched in preparation for this rehearsal. Although the band felt loud to my normal level of group playing, they did not sound particularly like a rock band or what I idealised a rock band to be, they were more pop than rock. The prominent elements of the ensemble now consisted mainly of piano and acoustic guitar. Some arrangements had to be adjusted as the lead guitar parts were missing. We worked through each song systematically until the setlist was complete - they were relieved that the rehearsal went well and they did not have to teach me the songs which would have meant hours of additional sessions. The use of chord charts enabled us to concentrate on performance dynamics and subtle adjustments in note choices. Although I was ambivalent about the band's sound in this first session, I liked the camaraderie and exuberance they all had for their music. They, on the other hand, were apprehensive about me as a musician, although they were not explicit, the fact that I was a jazz musician created a tension that needed to be navigated and negotiated. The musical rules of the band, the things that made Kerb what it was,

had to be carefully relayed to me through musical instructions and direction.

After the rehearsal, we chatted about the band briefly, and Ben conveyed their rehearsal ethos and potted history to me and, in doing so, their seriousness in what they were trying to achieve. There was an expectation that each band member had to commit to a rehearsal schedule, usually Monday and Wednesday of every week. Kerb might occasionally perform once or twice a week in addition to these regular rehearsals. Apart from the practicalities of meeting regularly, they met because they enjoyed each other's company; I observed a social dimension to these day-to-day operations. At the end of most rehearsal sessions, everyone went to the local pub and socialised with the landlord, a keen singer, guitarist, and close friend of the band. This pub also served as one of a few music venues in this area; the band performed there regularly. Kerb had been on this local circuit for many years and was well-known in the area and garnered a small but loyal following. A few weeks passed, and they asked me if I would be interested in staying on at least until they could find a permanent replacement bass player. I agreed - I had grown to like them as individuals and began to appreciate their songs. Although I still had some slight reservations as to precisely what their style was about. I wanted to understand how they fitted into the local rock scene.

It took me some time to develop and shape my bass parts to their songs. In the beginning, I tended to overplay, filling the spaces in song arrangements with superfluous embellishments of the chord sequence: partly misinterpreting the looser style of the rhythm section. My thinking was still in jazz and not rock. The piano and drum parts were not rigidly constructed, nor were they improvised. However, the band's dynamic energy came from these two elements; adjusting to this was challenging and undoubtedly had something to do with my transitioning from jazz

guitarist to rock bassist.

Most group members were comfortable improvising or 'jamming' within the boundaries of the ensemble's musical style and song structures. Ben preferred a tighter rein on this in rehearsals and was not overly keen on jamming, especially in live performances. Rehearsals tended to focus on new material unless a gig was imminent, and then the setlist took priority. Kerb's setlist consisted almost entirely of original songs, but several cover versions were also included. These cover songs showcased the dual harmony vocal style of the two brothers, which they performed as an acoustic duo: serving as a 'warm-up' act before the whole band played, depending on the venue and audience.

Musicians in rock bands tend to work entirely from memory to realise the musical performance; the rehearsal process reinforces the song form, arrangement, and performance dynamics. The group composition activity involves an intense staged process an evolution from loose ideas to fully 'worked-up' and evaluated arrangements of songs (Bennett 2017: 149). **T**his staging procedure is an experimentation that allows the style to emerge within the immediacy of the group. The evaluation stage is where the most contention may arise between members and is dependent on many factors. The collective approval of songs and their arrangements primarily centres on how cohesive the group members are in their overall evaluation of the musical direction.

In rehearsals I participated in, Kerb appeared to have a unified voice in how the songs were written, arranged and performed. Each member still enjoyed participating in the collective sound they were making. Their sound had been honed after many hours of rehearsing and performing. Now that the line-up had settled into its current configuration, and despite my arrival on the scene, decision-making

processes appeared smooth, with occasional debates over vocal arrangements. More often, we would record songs in rehearsal, especially new songs, and discuss the merits and weaknesses of what we heard openly and positively. It was apparent to me, the outsider, how each individual member of the band had agency to affect Kerb's music and sound despite their quite diverse musical backgrounds.

While we were all aware of the perceived failure that accompanied the BMG rejection, its impact was contained. I was often struck by the band's optimistic mood, which I initially interpreted as a form of denial. Nevertheless, they had absorbed this rejection. I observed Jon living through the experience daily, and I concluded that embarking on this kind of enterprise would take a lot of resilience and determination. Giving up at the first difficult obstacle is not a strategy that ultimately wins through in the end. The band's lead singer and songwriter (Ben) was the key motivator in this scenario. His energy and charisma lifted the band's mood and gave an aura of positivity, eliminating any possibility of self-doubt. They believed they were great.

The question remained for me, though, was how were they interpreting and navigating these music industry encounters, which they were acutely conscious of and determined to prevail. The problem that loomed still was how to categorise their sound, style and relevance. Where were they going to fit into the current trends of rock band genres? In the next vignette, I recall the way I tried to situate Kerb musically and stylistically. I focus this observation on my perceptions of the songwriter's musical history and background along with a brief deconstruction of one of the songs from their self-released album.[58] It represents a moment in time

[58] See Appendix C.

where I would have been weighing up whether the band was worth any committed effort on my part.

Encountering: The band sound and genre

Music genres are a set of conventions and practices that determine specific categories of artistic style and form which reveal recognisable features. Conceptually, they codify human expression, the design of a composition, its historical context, and the kinds of audiences involved in its dissemination (Becker 1982). According to Bourdieu (1993), two corresponding fields contain the phenomena of the musical genre: the structural content of the work (the musical object) and the conflicting structure of the cultural field in which it is situated. These connections represent specific forms of what Miller (1984: 151) defines as 'rhetorical action'; acceptance through an appeal to shared community values.[59] Local music communities, which are, in essence, 'scenes', support a variety of channels that enable the organisation of specific genres within stratified assemblages. These local mechanisms transmit industry-based ideas of genre within a more generalised field of popular music practice. However, these distinctions are not so neatly connected and organised within the realm of the rock band's sonic identity, which then becomes conflicted in how style emerges within the constraints of the genre (Tagg 1982; Moore 2001; Fabbri 1998).

[59] Carolyn Miller (1984) discusses the challenges of defining and classifying rhetorical genres suggesting some theorists define genres based on similarities in discourse strategies, audience, modes of thinking, or rhetorical situations, others argue that genre criticism leads to reductionism and formalism. Music genres are not traditionally considered part of rhetorical genre theory, which typically focuses on written and spoken discourse. However, considering music as a form of communication and symbolic text can be a useful way to expand the basis of rhetorical theories.

The Stylistic Emergence of Kerb within the Britpop Context

It was difficult trying to pinpoint what kind of rock band Kerb was, and something its members found equally hard to define. They emerged during the latter phases of the Britpop era, but this was not an overwhelming feature of their style as far as it can be deduced from such a vague depiction of a genre. Yet, while some of the songs had Beatlesque features, their sound since I joined at least became more 'middle of the road'—perhaps as a result of a missing lead guitar. There were no absolute defining features to the sound we made. The band mostly supported the songwriting and direction of its lead singer and songwriter. Ben's songwriting style utilised conventional song structures that emphasised distinct verses and choruses. Lennon and McCartney significantly influenced the songwriter's style, which had started as far back as when Ben and his brother Jim were both young and began exploring the Beatles' songs. Their early partnership and its subsequent manifestation as Kerb propelled the essence of how its sound and musical direction evolved. The two brothers had developed a sonic identity in their vocal arrangements that was the band's signature sound. It is often noted that family members produce sonically homogenous singing harmonies, e.g., Bee Gees, The Corrs, and The Beach Boys.[60] Jim was also the rhythm guitar player, which became a crucial feature of the song arrangements. Although not a founder member of the band, Jon also became a core part of its sound. He contributed primarily as a piano player but also supplied additional vocal harmonies, complimenting the two brothers when needed. As a result, vocals were predominantly the feature of the

[60] 'it is interesting to note just how many popular music vocal ensembles are made up of people who are, or appear to be, related: the Mills Brothers, the Andrews Sisters, or the Everly Brothers, for example' (Warner 2005: 2).

band's sound rather than a specific instrumental quirk such as a heavy-riff based lead guitar. From this description, I deduced that Kerb was more pop-rock than hard-rock.

Kerb's situation within Britpop can be seen as a tension between 'subjective and objective culture' where form, those things that manifest through life's creative impulses such as music, songs, art, etc., manifest through institutionally driven norms that appeal at a surface-level which, over time, increasingly loses meaning for the human subject (Simmel 2000). Britpop, as an objective culture, encompasses music, fashion, media representations, and other cultural artefacts and products associated with the genre. Kerb navigates these established forms, reflecting Britpop's broader trends and expectations while endeavouring to carve out a unique sound. The social forms and interactions within Bristol's music scene further illuminate how Kerb's sound struggles to evolve.

As I navigated through Kerb's repertoire (primarily through the band's album), I discovered that some songs had been phased out - they were no longer deemed good enough.[61] 'Dub Waltz' was one of those songs. Although it appealed to me because it was easy to remember. It had a cyclic 16-bar chord sequence - as seen below (Fig. 12). For Ben, the lead singer, it failed to meet some of his ideas about what made a good song.

[61] For an overview of Kerb's album see Appendix C.

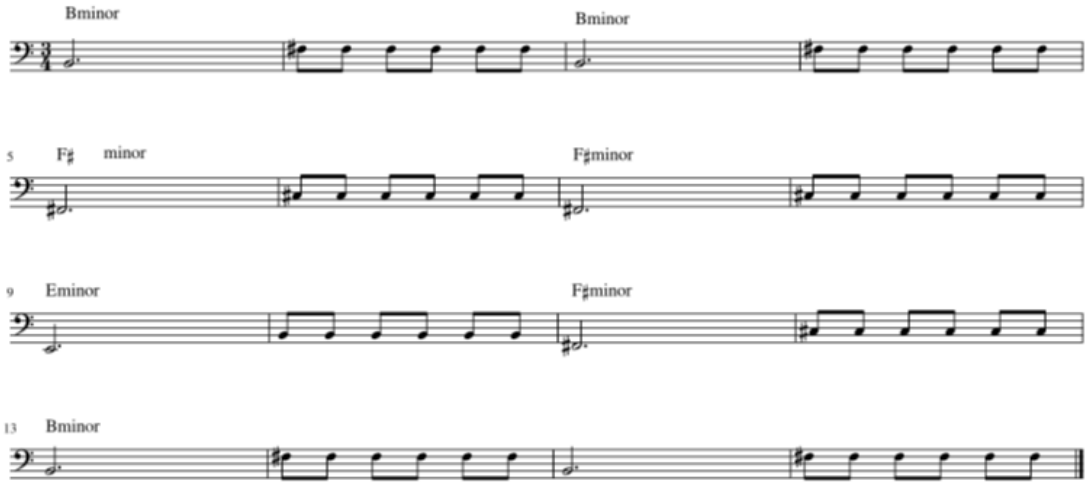


Figure 12 extract from the rehearsal chart for Dub Waltz.

'Dub Waltz' was now part of Kerb's 'back catalogue' (this is how Ben referred to it), a collection of songs that had been replaced with newer material and not forgetting that many relied on a lead guitar part which was now missing from all the arrangements. Later in this chapter, I will discuss how some songs in the 'back catalogue' were resurrected, which enabled a new sound and approach for the band. But before this phase can begin, it is necessary to understand the perspective of the lead singer and songwriter in more detail. I remember talking with Ben about 'Dub Waltz' and was curious why he no longer liked performing it. For him, once the song had reached the first chorus, there was nowhere left in the arrangement for it to go. The transition from verse to chorus seemed to be held back due, in no small part, to the verse's last and the chorus's first notes, both of which were Bs (this static shift is also reflected in the chord sequence in Fig. 12). Despite the dynamic build from the drums, this fixed point in the arrangement is further compounded by the repeated B minor chord.

This song would eventually catalyse experiments and re-arrangements of

abandoned songs. It became a recycling process partly driven by my curiosity about the band's older repertoire. I was interested to discover what they considered a 'good' song and why others were considered not. What kinds of criteria were they using to make these decisions? I suspected at this stage of my involvement that it was driven by Ben's dissatisfaction with the outcome. Within a very short period of getting to know the band, I realised Ben had a single motivation for his songwriting—trying to write 'hit' songs. His reluctance to embrace 'Dub Waltz' appears to have been based on its lack of some of these 'hit' characteristics as he would have perceived them, although he never spoke about his songs as potential 'hits'. He would say things like, 'I think this song is a classic'. If we explore why this particular song was less popular with Ben than others, it probably missed some fundamental markers that were significant from his perspective.

Why does 'Dub Waltz' not have the potential to be a 'hit' song? I think this question is essential, and its answer reveals much about how Ben thought about songwriting generally. As a devotee of Lennon and McCartney, he had performed, studied, and tried to emulate those musical moments that transform simple melodic and harmonic structures into potential hits. As I got to know Ben over several years, I can attest that this aim was paramount in his songwriting. I would, eventually, spend many years writing, producing and co-writing songs with him. Early on in this partnership, though, I discovered that he organised his attention towards a way of thinking about songwriting that encapsulated much of what he considered and recognised as what songs should do and how good songs should come about. This process had to do with the idea that a song ought to be able to be performed with just a voice and a guitar. Ideas for songs also had to adhere to another kind of testing whereby they had to stick in your head or linger in your imagination before

committing further effort. These were Ben's broad guidelines for his songwriting, and while he was yet to write a 'hit' song, he had to believe that this formula could one day leverage his 'prototypes' if given the opportunity.

This brief insight into the sound and songwriting of Kerb reveals some relevant themes in the band's first self-financed release. Even as an unsigned band, they were still driven by the desire to produce an album despite the logistical demands and expense. The pre-production phase for this album could be seen as evolving over several years. Some songs were written and arranged many years before this eventual album production. Changing personnel and instrumental line-ups further complicated the recording and eventual release of the album. Another challenge for the band, and one that persisted, is finding a strategy to capture a sound that might encompass and unify a diverse collection of songs. Even though Kerb has a style that is unique to them, there are no established musical devices that serve to connect their material in any obvious way. That said, the album became the band's calling card and was used on gigs to generate extra revenue. In addition to the challenges of producing albums, bands then have to develop a strategy and organisation to deliver their music through live gigs and record sales, hopefully making the whole process financially viable.

As Finnegan (1989) observed, the intricacies of music-making in rock bands can become an essential factor in everyday life. The conventions of rock music and bands 'made up a special world in which they found a unique opportunity for personal expression and creativity' (130). At times, it seemed as if the day-to-day life in Kerb occupied more time than day jobs - life outside became almost secondary to the business of being in the band, *they* were each motivated to commit time and energy to the project through a shared purpose and vision for the music. This condition

motivated them to continue week after week despite having many setbacks along the way. It forms a state of mind where they are in constant engagement with and reaction to the work of the band. They are each drawn into the possibilities of what this musical world might offer and, as such, defines and shapes their moods and emotions. Moods define a process whereby creative expression, in this case musical ideas, can exist and be part of the collective desire. These perceptions of aesthetic value are enabled through an ongoing process of co-creative participation in things that matter to the whole. Once this condition is established, it leads to a mutually agreed 'commitment that nothing comes before the music' (Bennett 2017: 135).

People who take part in the serious enterprise of being in an unsigned rock band (I use grassroots, local, and unsigned interchangeably) do so knowing that it is a speculative endeavour at best: the financial rewards are virtually non-existent. Other musicians in bands of all kinds understand these conditions, yet for onlookers, friends, family, or work colleagues, the amount of attention given to such an unpredictable activity can be viewed as delusional. As the years pass in pursuit of the 'dream', the sacrifices made on family, friends and conventional career pathways becomes magnified. What is often hidden from view, though, is the resilience required by musicians to continue pursuing music careers despite these challenges.

For me, observing the rock band as a newcomer, I was struck by the willingness of the members to accept little or no financial reward for their efforts. This was a jarring reality for me, as since leaving University, I had fulfilled the role of the freelance musician in much the way Cottrell (2004) defines professional music-making. I realised very soon that the band subsidised the payment I received for being the 'dep'. The gigs we played hardly covered my fee. I observed that each player in Kerb did not expect this kind of short-term reward and instead focused on

the 'big prize', securing a record deal. Cohen (1991) details this predicament by describing the financial hurdles faced by rock bands. The sacrifices of bands in this serious pursuit often extended to family and friends who were called upon to provide backing. '[T]he general ideology of being in a band incorporated a notion of hardship, the suggestion that to struggle and perform for little reward over a substantial period of time was part of a process all bands should pass through' (56).

Navigating Britpop

As outlined earlier in the chapter, Kerb formed in the later stages of the Britpop era.[62] The associations to this musical genre while not that important to Kerb, was something that I noticed later in conversations with record industry people who would attempt to locate Kerb in this way usually by reference to Coldplay, Radiohead, or Keane. This way of interpreting Kerb suggests the music industry's symptomatic tendency to organise new acts into pre-existing frameworks to capitalise on market-proven formulas—a market-driven economic imperative for familiar and sellable products. Whenever I experienced these kinds of conversations, I felt that the music and songs we were making were lacking in some way or, worse, that the industry people were not listening to or liking what they were hearing. Ultimately, it is difficult to tell in the moment and time that these dynamics unfold, but for each band member, there was an ever-present pressure to make the work commercially viable. The complex and experimental road taken to create novelty does not feature as a valid or interesting part of the process. As I outline Britpop, in

[62] *BBC NEWS | Entertainment | Music | Are we in Britpop's second wave?* (2023). Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/4745137.stm (Accessed: 31 March 2023). Petridis, A. (2004) *Roll over Britpop ... it's the rebirth of art rock*. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2004/feb/14/rock.pop (Accessed: 31 March 2023).

this prelude to the band's first encounter with another record label, it is possible to get a sense of how bands like Kerb are always in a shifting present, anticipating subtle stylistic changes in audience tastes. As I unfold Kerb's history in this chapter, I will show how the band attempted to adapt their musical style in anticipation of gaining industry support.

Not long after leaving university, Ben and Jim began putting the band together at a time when there was a surge of interest in more pop-oriented rock. Till (2010) sees this Britpop movement as a reaction to the heavier US grunge rock movement popular in the early 90s. Despite being driven by guitars, the emphasis of the 'pop' in Britpop conveys a more commercially oriented aesthetic. This commercial emphasis was not something that Kerb objected to especially. However, by the time they began to explore its potential, the Britpop era had already evolved and shifted its musical focus. Coldplay and Keane seem to encapsulate much of this softer sound. How Kerb positioned themselves in these new parameters was now their primary focus.

The first wave of Britpop ended around 1997 and started to evolve into what some press critics describe as a blander wave of pop bands. There was a departure from overtly nationalistic British themes, 'Cool Britannia', and the sense of an indie-band scene. Regional identity, which came to signify the forerunners of early Britpop, was not as prominent in this period. Groups such as Coldplay, Travis and Feeder had a much more universal and commercially oriented sound. The electric guitar, a distinct feature in some Britpop bands such as Blur, Oasis, and Elastica, became less of a feature in this post-Britpop era. More significantly, in this new phase of British pop music, there is also an emergence of male solo singer-songwriter

performers, e.g., Damien Rice and Damon Gough.[63]

The post-Britpop era also saw the emergence of the 'authentic' solo singer-songwriter, in contrast to the X-factor-based solo artists such as Will Young and Gareth Gates et al., who also came to prominence then. David Gray, Tom Baxter and Damien Rice all came into vogue, continuing the tradition of guitar-playing singer-songwriters. Jeff Buckley, too had a significant influence on many bands and artists of this period, as did Tim Buckley. There was a renewed interest in these two iconic performers. Singer James Walsh affirms this in an interview where he describes the process for choosing their band name as a direct result of the main influences on his singing style. 'I was inspired by Tim Buckley, and Starsailor is the most fitting band name' (Strutt 2014). Another piano-driven band, Coldplay, attributes Jeff Buckley as a significant influence '(...) Chris Martin has admitted that the band's 2000 single 'Shiver' was essentially a Jeff Buckley rip-off'. He made the admission while speaking on the Chris Moyles Show. 'It's a blatant Jeff Buckley attempt not quite as good, that's what I think. We were 21, and he was very much a hero, and as with those things, it tends to filter through' (Martin 2008).

Against this depiction of current trends in the music industry, Kerb is situated in a precarious position. As Jones (2013) argues, musicians are subjected to powerful and established industry market demands. These conditions extend beyond the

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[63] Music journalist Dave Simpson (2005) offers a particularly bleak view of the British rock climate in the post-Britpop era: (…) 2005 has been an exceptional year for Coldplay, with their album X&Y achieving 29 number ones around the world. But it's been a very good 12 months for bands who sound like them as well. Keane have gone from the backrooms of pubs to shifting 4.5m albums. Coldplay soundalikes Athlete (…) have sold half a million copies of their Coldplay-lite album Tourist. He then adds some ideas about the way he sees bands emulating more successful bands or becoming surrogate bands: (…) Keane and Athlete are what might be called surrogate bands, who sound and sometimes look similar to another, already much more successful, group. A surrogate band is signed by a label seeking a copy of something with a proven market. Right now, there are so many it can seem as if we're approaching a doomsday scenario where everyone is remaking the same handful of similar-sounding records.

activities of the recording studio and rehearsal room. The industrialised practices of music companies demand musicians to be commercially organised if they stand any hope of reaching wider markets. So, while Kerb has little interest in the musical aesthetics of any specific bands located under the Britpop umbrella, it is difficult for them to exist outside of its conventions.

As I learned about the band and its motivations, it became clear that while there was an aspiration and drive to appeal to mass markets, it also aligned with the tastes of its local followers. Kerb coexisted with the ideals of its immediate and eclectic local scene structure; their sound, to some extent, appealed to the values of this community. The age demographic of these local fans could be classified as adult, with an age range of 30 and up. Some regulars to gigs had an extended interest in the band's day-to-day operations, occasionally watching rehearsals and offering feedback about new songs. The band's sound and musical style had emerged from the many years they had spent together. They were comfortable with their middle-ground musical direction and enjoyed the sound they made and the interactions of their core audience. This position was underpinned by their belief in their lead singer and songwriter's capacity to write songs that would open music industry doors.

Encountering: Cent Records [64]

In this next segment of remembrances, my first and most significant encounter with the band occurs with a local independent record company. This was a prolonged and torturous period that held some promise in the early discussions that

[64] See Appendix I for Cent Records listing in The Music Business Guide

took place but then descended into a gloomy outcome for the band. I will piece together what, in effect, transpired over many months but lingers in my memory, almost entirely contained within a brief recounting of events. It is, as Edward Casey describes, a 'telescoping of many memories into a central memory whose density is itself an expression of the extreme compression that has occurred'. The encounter with Cent Records presents itself as a memory 'high in density-as concentrated, heavy, solid-from the very beginning' (2000: 80).

It begins with a chance opportunity presenting itself in this early phase of my joining Kerb. Cent Records, a local independent record label based in Wells, heard about Ben's songwriting and wanted to meet and discuss his music. The label was mainly interested in pop music, had an emerging track record in artist development, and released a single. Ben took the label's interest seriously despite its propensity for commercial pop. This meeting was an opportunity for Ben to establish his songwriting credentials, and any support gained could only benefit the band. Although I was relatively new to Kerb, I was sceptical about what Cent could do them. Ryan (drummer) remarked how lucky I was, having only recently joined them and already being asked to meet with a label - anticipating that any potential deal would be good. My assessment of the meeting was that the label had no significant releases nor presence on the local scene, Bristol or otherwise. While their interest was flattering, this alone would not give us any kudos in the longer term.

The meeting took place in the label's recording studio. The BMG encounter was alluded to, and I felt that this had partly sparked the interest of the record label—although the reasons for the rejection was never discussed in the meeting. We listened to some of Kerb's demos and discussed various songs, and comments were made about the band sounding a bit like REM. I got the impression they liked Ben's

songs, though. The meeting concluded with the label suggesting they were tentatively interested in working with Kerb, wanted to hear more material and see us perform live. A renewed optimism followed, and we continued working on new songs, recordings, and performances. On reflection, this was the point that I began to be drawn deeper into their world. Anxious discussions flowed about the possibilities of recording, working with a producer, going on tour, and the all-important 'advance'.

What started as a positive breakthrough for the band soon came crashing down. Somewhere in the label's busy schedule, they found time to go to one of our gigs in Bristol. It was a low-key venue; we treated it like playing in our local pub and misjudged the significance of the event. Cent was not impressed with our performance or songs and thought including 'covers' was odd.[65] Our 'middle of the road' sound was the root of the problem and why the label changed their mind about us. Naively, we underestimated the precarious situation we were in with the label and should have thought more about the impact of the live performance on their representatives. 'The risk management strategy of music companies means that companies can be profligate with acts; acts, though, cannot afford to be profligate with themselves' (Jones 2013: 55). We had been profligate. This second resounding rejection from a record label was enough evidence for me to believe that the band could not continue on the same course if it were to stand any chance of fulfilling its ambitions, which, by now, I had begun to buy into. We were careless in assessing our situation, which led to this 'cooling off' period. Our attention now would have to turn to the songs and sounds we made. Somewhere along this frustrating interaction

[65] A 'cover' refers to the performance of a well-known song.

with Cent Records, I had become deeply involved with the band and its objectives. After a few months, the appeal of trying to attain the almost impossible-to-achieve record deal had a tantalising allure for me. I began to abandon my idea of being a freelancer and turned down offers to play in other bands. The time commitment needed to keep Kerb in the running was an all-consuming endeavour.

Back in the rehearsal space, a slow dissection of the songs and musical direction began. The lineup had settled into its current configuration; I became the bass player, and the lead guitar was no longer featured. The band slowly established a consensus for a new approach. Imagining different ways of approaching sounds and songs seemed straightforward to me, but I was less emotionally caught up in the band's musical history. Rebuilding would be a more fraught process for the others, it meant unravelling years of work. While new songs emerged, the most radical changes happened as a result of reworking some of the band's older material.

In Chapter 1, I delineate a phenomenological auto-ethnomusicology methodology to understanding the interplay of personal experience and collective musical creation inside the band–revealing an insider perspective and shared experience. This approach is explored in the following vignette, which details a reworking of one of Kerb's abandoned songs, October Rain. The interpretive and self-reflexive framework is leveraged to show how this song is reimagined and restructured (here, I make specific reference to Edward Casey's phenomenology of imagination). I use some conventional music analysis devices; I represent the song's structure in a music score format, which illustrates how I attempt to de-clutter the song's arrangement, but as important is the exploration and interplay of memory and imagination, which drive the underlying motivations for the rework. Imagination is interconnected to an external objective reality, defined as a pre-

existing formula contained in an established musical product. *October Rain* is the mechanism through which the subjective reality bridges the objective reality. By revealing the process of reworking October Rain, I am attempting to articulate how personal and shared experiences influence the music creation and reflect broader cultural and emotional shifts within the band. The phenomenological perspective underscores and drives deeper understandings of the dynamics of musical creativity and collaboration.

Encountering: October Rain

This multi-layered analysis of October Rain (OR) aims to discover the underlying features and intentionality for how the new arrangement eventually materialises and its subsequent impact. There are some obvious things to include in the analysis, such as musical structures and how sonic and textural devices combine to establish a mood. I will attempt to recollect the moment that initiated the idea or impetus for the musical decisions. The new arrangement of OR comes about through a chance 'encounter' with another song called Soul System Burn (SSB).[66] SSB appears to me to contain the solution to the problems in the arrangement of OR.[67]

It is important to state here that analysing OR has two purposes. First, to show how we (the band) will eventually experiment with songwriting and second, to show the impact that the new arrangement of OR carries into the songwriting partnership

[66] The track 'Soul System Burn' (by King Black Acid 2002) is available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ibbjzOSrhXA

[67] Listen to October Rain the original Kerb arrangement here: https://soundcloud.com/search?q=the%20band%20kerb

between Ben and myself, which is dealt with in part two of this chapter. In brief, from my perspective, our (the songwriters) musical *directedness* eventually situates around a particular kind of mood. Much of the impetus for this mood stems from this experiment with OR.

We played OR a couple of times in rehearsals and occasionally on gigs, but Ben was not all that enthusiastic about it, and it rarely featured in the setlist. The song's arrangement featured a guitar solo, which was difficult to replace without a lead guitarist. As a band, we were moving forward without one; as a result, some songs needed to be drastically reworked, and others abandoned. In deconstructing a rock band's sound and style, the guitar solo, if featured, must be understood as a musical phenomenon freighted with symbolism and contrivance. The guitar solo in the time we were operating needed to be handled carefully. Goertzel (2008) claims that 'over the last ten or fifteen years "art rock" has gradually been abandoned, so has the power of the guitar solo declined' (91). The electric guitar provides a code to access stylistic and genre norms and locates the music in a symbolic universe that either verifies or rejects the band's position and relevancy. It was no longer enough to demarcate 8 or 16 bars to showcase the virtuosity of the lead guitarist. As Goertzel implies, this way of thinking belongs to another era.[68]

The inspiration that led to the OR rework was a result of my listening to the song SSB, which immediately established a *sound world* in my imagination. It became a musical resource as a result of my 'intuitive or introspective' reaction to the underlying 'musical message' (Tagg 1979: 112). Why does this song resonate with me? It is likely due to the music I was listening to during this period c.2000. An

[68] Goertzel defines the 'art' rock era through Sergeant Peppers, Pink Floyd and Yes.

example of my listening playlist would have consisted of Mezzanine (Massive Attack 1998), particularly the song, 'Angel'; Kid A (Radiohead 2002) and the song 'Everything in its Right Place', and Sigor Ros's album () and the song 'Untitled (Álafoss)'. There are many others, but each of these tracks has some affinity with SSB, at least in the way I heard and associated them. These songs are part of a long list of what Tagg defines as '*interobjective comparison material* (IOCM)' (1982: 49), songs that share musical and sonic features. In the case of SSB and its 'IOCM', these manifest as slow tempos, atmospheric and experimental soundscapes often electronic in source, very low key choruses - if any at all, predominantly minor keys, and the use of drum machines and breakbeats, and a general gloominess or solemn introspective quality. A lot of the music on my playlist could be identified as having significantly programmed rhythm section parts. A more sophisticated and layered handling of drum loops, drum machines, and other percussion sounds. SSB's breakbeat had these qualities, the production of the kick and open high-hat pattern, which loops throughout the song (see Figure 13 below).

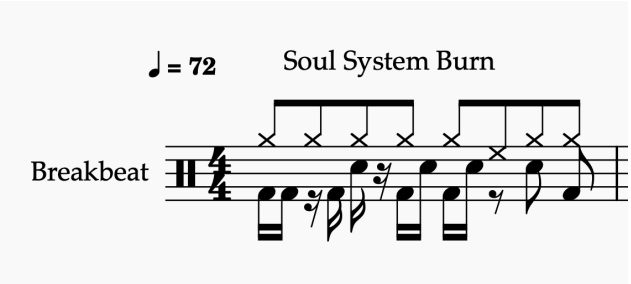


Figure 13 Breakbeat loop featured in Soul System Burn.

I began experimenting with loop-based arrangements during this period, primarily in jazz composition. Groove-based jazz tracks were a common feature on gigs and recordings, mainly through the 90s. Production processing of sample beats

around this period underwent significant technological developments.[69] SSB had some of this familiarity and production aesthetic. As my first attempt at writing for and arranging a 'pop' song, it offered some connection to how I might approach writing jazz.

Using Casey's (2000) analogy, my memory of SSB is not just about the song as an isolated event (the song itself) but about the song as part of a broader musical, emotional, and technological complex. I remember the song's mood, sonic texture, aesthetic resonance, and imagining how it was produced. This auditory mental image becomes the creative stimulus for how I approach the rework of OR. In my imagination, I combine the sound of OR within a similar sonic and textural frame as SSB. The transformation of OR involves a process whereby memory (of SSB) is part of an internally articulated structure that makes the transition from the old to the new possible. It is the intentionality that forms the rework of OR. SONG A (OR) is transformed by SONG B (SSB) in imagination. The two songs then merge as a kind of *phantasy*.[70] This virtual arrangement has yet to materialise—this is what Casey (1979) refers to as imaging. 'To image is to form an imaginative presentation whose content possesses a specifically sensuous—an "intuitive" or "imagistic"—form' (41). It could

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[69] Digital Audio Workstations (DAWs) such as Cubase SX and eMagic Logic introduced the capability for direct track editing within the software interface, a feature that significantly streamlined the production process. Subsequently, breakbeat production became faster and cleaner. Another notable advancement was Propellerhead's Reason and Recycle software, which revolutionised loop-based music production techniques. Recycle, in particular, allowed for the dissection of breakbeat loops into individual sample hits, which could then be key-mapped in a virtual sampler. The producer is now freed from the toil of sampling from the source material, i.e., crate-digging and manual transference from the turntable to the sampler. There is also a dramatic emergence of sharing via internet platforms and companies curating pre-produced loops and individual sample hits. Using sample loop libraries becomes a standard approach in music production.

[70] 'All of us bring along from ordinary life a certain concept of phantasy, phantasy appearance, phantasy presentation; and like almost all concepts of classes of psychic phenomena coming from common life, it is vague and ambiguous. Thus it is plain that one understands under the title "phantasy" now a certain mental disposition or ability and now again certain actual experiences, activities, or results of activities, which arise from the disposition or testify to the ability' (Husserl 2005: 1).

be perceived as a kind of rehearsal of a way to achieve something (the production of the new OR arrangement) and how it should eventually sound.

What follows is a breakdown comparison between the old arrangement and the rework of OR transformed by ideas from SSB. Apart from the guitar solo issue mentioned above, my overall impression of the song was how cluttered it felt. The overall feel or mood of the original arrangement is defined by its swing/blues/jazz feel. You could perceive the song's pulse as a swing half-time feel (see Fig. 14 below). Much of what exists in OR's arrangement needs to be removed to reveal just enough of the core components.
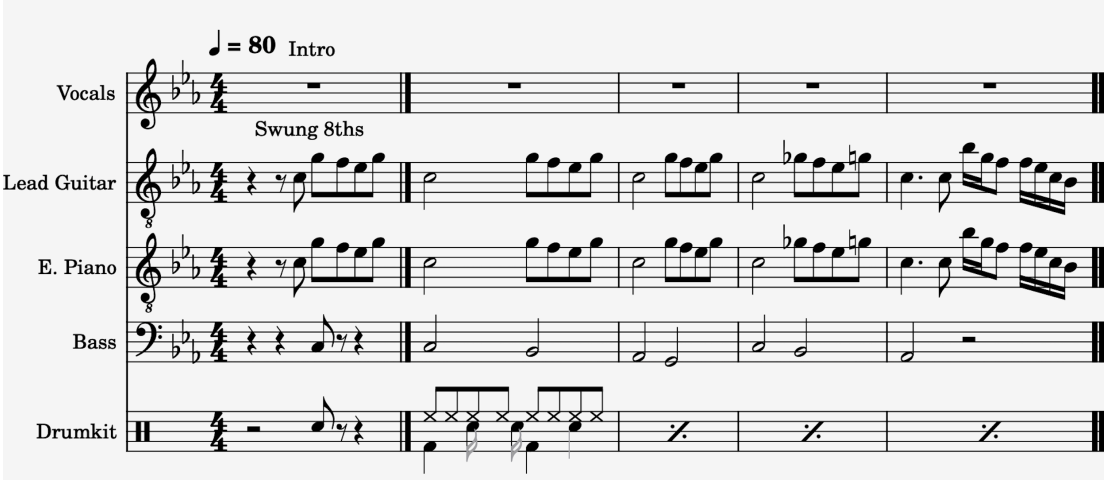


Figure 14 Introduction to October Rain - original arrangement.

The vocal melody offers the potential for space. The first phrase (2 bars) is succeeded with a 2-bar gap. In this gap, the piano and lead guitar provide a fill based on a blues/pentatonic scale similar in style to the introduction (see Fig. 15 bars 3 and 4).

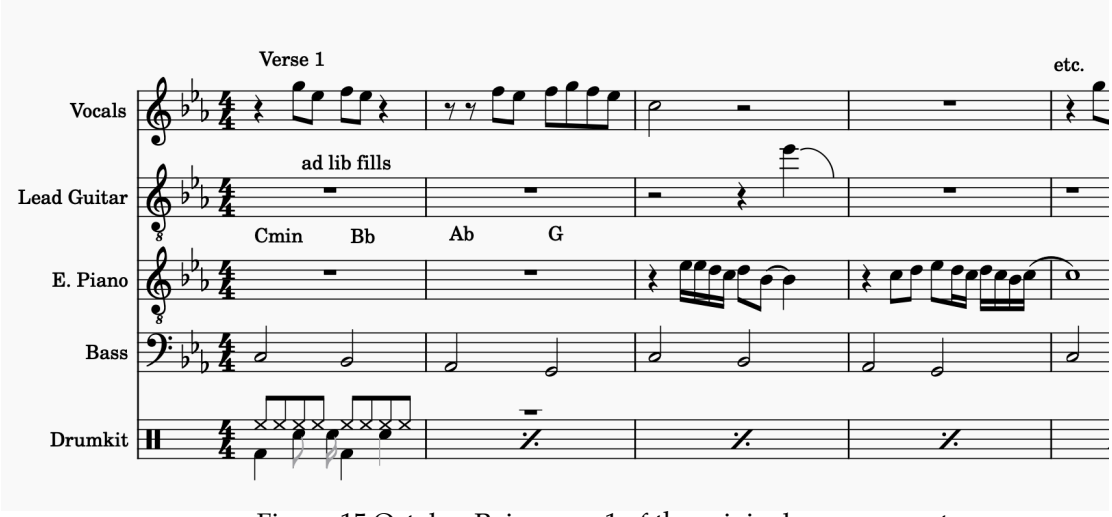
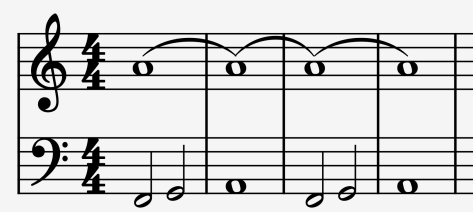


Figure 15 October Rain verse 1 of the original arrangement.

The answering phrases played by the keyboard and guitar (on the recording) sound as if they are competing for the same territory, this is more noticeable later into the song where the fills become dominant and detract attention from the focal point of the song, which is the vocal top line part. I imagined the rework anchored by a sample drum loop, a pared back bass line, and an unharmonised vocal. Here is where the connection to SSB is made more obvious. SSB is built around a simple ascending bass line motif with a pedal note that sustains the intensity and mood of the track throughout (see Fig.16 below). This song has no explicit chorus and relies on gradually building momentum as other parts are layered into the arrangement.


Figure 16 Soul System Burn bass line and pedal note.

As I perceived the track, I imagined the vocal line of OR set in a similar mood. What attracted me to this kind of arrangement was the simplicity and intensity that came from loop-based sample composition. The realisation of the song arrangement

suggested a move towards electronic instruments, which the band had not explored before. In Figure 17 (below), the descending bass line motif becomes the main hook, allowing space for the main vocal. The tempo of the song is now reduced from 80 to 75 bpm.

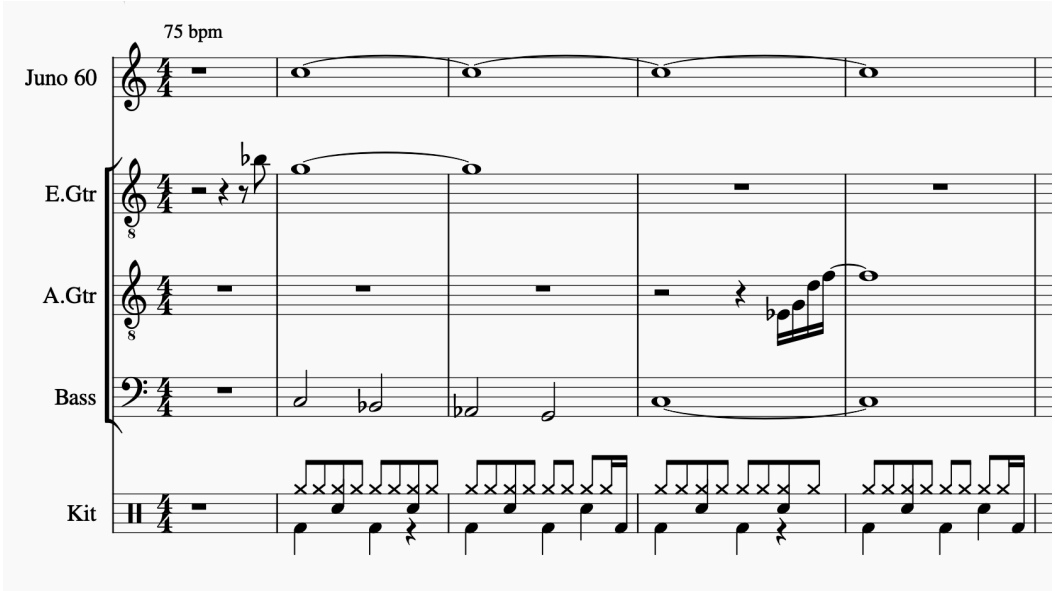


Figure 17 October Rain - rework opening section.

As shown in Figure 17 (above), the rework is an idealised sound world. It exists outside of the band and makes sense only to me. In practice, I have replaced all negotiation, persuasion, and political manoeuvring with a Windows-based PC and Logic 6's stock sample loops and preset patches. The guitarist's role, in the verse, has been reduced to one isolated moment (bar 4) and complicated by the harmonic structure and voicing of the chord. Eb major 7 with an added 9 does not exist in any of Kerb's harmonic repertoire. The arpeggio voicing is common in jazz guitar and implies an extended C minor 11 in conjunction with the C in the bass note. The keyboard part is pared down to one pedal tone suspended across the verse sections and requires a specific synth pad sound created on a Juno 60. There are no ad-lib fills.

Each of the parts interlock and together recreates a mood reminiscent of SSB.[71]

Returning to the rehearsal room with the finished arrangement was a politically tricky move, and initially, there was some resistance to the idea. However, once the initial shockwave passed and the band played the parts as they were presented in the demo, the overwhelming response was positive. After that, we established a way of working that involved finding an obscure song, reworking it using the computer and DAW and presenting the result to the band at rehearsal. This new approach to songwriting dramatically impacted how songs were arranged, rehearsed, and performed. Rehearsals involved much more consideration of how to produce the sounds on the reworked demos. It meant that we had to spend more time creating specific sounds individually. Sounds that emerged from the computer sketches had to be recreated in the rehearsal room. It was a period where the focus shifted the purpose of rehearsals from live performances to writing and recording. Kerb adopted a new approach to songwriting where greater focus could be applied to song arrangements, instrumental parts and the freedom to explore different versions of songs unconstrained by the expectations of the local fans and low-level performances.

Organisation: Songs and networks

Despite the setback with Cent Records, the A&R (Iris) kept in contact and remained optimistic that things would again work out with the label. So, we decided to stay positive and made plans to record a demo of our best songs which included

[71] Rework of October Rain c.2003 can be found here:
https://soundcloud.com/search?q=the%20band%20kerb

October Rain. The relationship with Iris focused our attention on producing and writing, and unexpectedly, Cent let us use their in-house recording studio. Logistically, we were now able to transfer my computer sessions to this new location, thereby allowing all band members to be involved. Kerb now had some tenuous label support and relied on the conversations with Iris to keep the *status quo*. Overall, it was a considerable upgrade to our working methods: we rehearsed and recorded each week. On average, the band increased its work rate from 2 days to 5 days per week.[72]

Recording was a permanent juggling act. There was the building and its security system, codes and alarms, the studio glitches, managing the hard drive and its contents, making new content, dealing with musicians, band politics, not to mention frequent visits by the record company secretary. Everything always happening at once, a persistent assault from all directions at the same time. We were barely able to take it in our stride. There was only so much that could be done on any given night - we went home, not because it was ever finished, but simply because it was late, and time had run out. All the problems left behind would be waiting for us on our return.

This state of limbo with the label lasted another two years. During this time, Kerb clung to its tentative links with them as it continued to nurture its relationship with Iris. Ben sometimes met with the label's boss, if nothing else, reminding him that we were still around. It became the norm that Ben would have some new glimmer of hope fed to him from the label, which he then disseminated to the rest of us in the hope of buoying us along. It was a difficult time for the band as the focus

[72] See Appendix D for details of the emails that were sent during this period.

had shifted far away from the regular gigs it had been doing when I first joined them, and now the enthusiasm for the project was beginning to wane.

One of the main reasons for this mood was that we spent most of our time rehearsing and making demos and had abandoned gigs entirely: even though we had all agreed that the change in direction had to take priority now. There was constant pressure to work towards something just out of reach. The keyboard player had one of the most challenging jobs in this new vision for the band. The reworking of songs, which came to define the rehearsals, had transformed the role of the keyboard. There was a shift of emphasis from piano sounds to synth and textures, and this new definition of the role became problematic for Jon, who suddenly decided to leave.

Kerb was reduced to only four members now. Instead of finding a replacement for the keyboard player, we decided to implement some recording technology to playback live what we had produced in the studio. So, we replaced Jon with the 'soundworld', the nickname we gave to a Boss Loop Station and an Akai DD8 hard-disc recorder. This machine had pre-programmed/written synth and sound effect parts synchronised via a click track and fed to the drummer's headphone feed. For a while, it felt like cheating, but the transformation of the band's sound happened very quickly. Song arrangements conceived on the DAW were loaded directly onto the hard-disc system. Within a few weeks of working in this new configuration, we felt confident about performing again.

This work is ongoing and part of the organisation of songs that can be best represented as *prototyping* - a version of the style that has yet to be fully verified or agreed upon by either the band or other external agents. In many ways, our situation accurately encapsulates how Negus (1999) defines the imposing structures of how

corporate edifices are reproduced in the everyday social actions of musicians, audiences and institutions. In this condition of *being*, Kerb is always anticipating the future possibilities of its existence. An uncertain and shifting present whose activities portend successful future events and opportunities. All aspects of the band's activities had greater urgency and attention to detail. As the band edged towards new working methods, these conditions were a source of both inclusion and alienation for some individuals.

Rock bands encompass much more than just their outward-facing objective and career aspirations. While this was a fundamental and serious ambition for its members, Kerb also provided a social life and extended friendship network. Cohen (1991) reveals that bands' provide[d] its members with both a context and a focus for their relationships and thereby a measure of security in their relationships and activities' (36). Yet, when you leave the band, those relationships can dissipate, and you remain outside the 'gang' and its codes.

After Jon's departure, Kerb began playing live again and focused all its energy on Bristol and Bath venues, including The Louisiana, Moles and Ashton Court Festival.[73] There was more enthusiasm for Kerb's new direction, and we found getting gigs easier. Our performance at Ashton Court Festival was the most successful in my time in the band, partly due to the acoustic set we played, which in hindsight, was the territory in which Kerb was at its best. However, while it appears we were on an upward trajectory, the ongoing issues and involvement with the record label had lessened its appeal for me. I felt too much time was being taken up dealing with the fickleness of the arrangement: it was difficult for me to see a future

[73] See Appendix A.

with Kerb and their ongoing involvement with the label. From my perspective, Kerb was more productive when it did not rely on third parties. I played one more gig with them at Moles in Bath in the summer of 2004; after that, I decided to leave.

Summary

One of the main aims of this first part of Chapter One has been to explore how Kerb negotiates what appears as a shifting musical landscape in which to establish some relevancy beyond the studio and rehearsal room for its songs. From the band's perspective, the music industry is a challenging and complex terrain that offers few opportunities and a constant need for adaptability. Kerb embarks on a strategy to counter their label setbacks by rethinking their sound and approach to songwriting. This process challenges the interpersonal dynamics of the band and results in more departures. Evolving the sound and style of songs proves to be one of the most challenging features of this phase of the band's life. Pressures are felt internally and externally as they try to make sense of their situation and predicament.

Although Kerb is located outside Bristol, the city played a pivotal role in shaping its identity and self-perception. It was important for the band to be seen performing at some of Bristol's more well-known venues, such as the Fleece and Firkin, Louisiana and Ashton Court Festival. The importance of these venues is elevated through their reputations for hosting national and international artists. These are essential signifiers of how grassroots bands develop reputations and influence local stakeholders as a consequence of performing at these venues. In addition to the band's connection to this music scene, we also gain some insights into the internal dynamics that reveal elements of their songwriting process and the

struggle to establish new songwriting methods, effectively, the band's response to record label rejection.

The power dynamics of the music industry, even at the grassroots level, are influential. Even though the band directs its attention towards record companies outside of Bristol, its locality still significantly influences its decision-making. We can begin to situate Kerb's position in the constellation of rock bands that relied on and shaped Bristol's live music scene around the early-mid 2000s. While I was involved with the band, they appeared to me as outliers in this field. To better understand the indie band scene, you need to look at bands like Halo, The Playwrights, and Mooz, who had local indie label support and gained kudos in local and national press. The sound of bands at the heart of the Bristol rock scene is more alternative. At the other end of the scale was a highly experimental post-Portishead/Massive Attack influence where electronics and alternative beats dominated the vibe.

In essence, this chapter provides a detailed look into the life of a grassroots rock band, showcasing the influence of large-scale economic forces on the immediate organisation of the band. It begins to reveal the immense effort needed to be in a rock band: work that requires attention to live performance and developing skills in the recording studio. Contrasting these conditions is the significance of the local scene in its capacity to influence identity and define musical direction. I explored questions about strategies the band developed to adjust to the record label rejection, the impact this eventually had on the group dynamic and morale, and the eventual redefining of goals as seen through more intensified periods in the recording studio.

Lastly, while I am seeking to share some of the lived experiences of this rock band through my gradual immersion into their unique musical world, I would argue that making broader generalisations based on these individual encounters is not my

sole intention. Instead, I echo Berger's (1999: 148) assertion that while 'the search for universals' also occupies the phenomenologist's attention to some extent, the primary focus remains the source of where those generalisations emerge.

Band history: *pre-album phase* (p.2)

Songwriting tactics

Introduction

So far, the analysis of Kerb has focused on a variety of organisational practices contained in self-reflexive narratives. The process of this research process has led me to consider any number of lived experiences to include in this autoethnography. However, I have had to edit and remove some of these accounts to try and contain the events in the timeframe I am trying to share. When recalling the events that took place back then, prompted by recordings, photos, emails, diary entries, and calendar information, all seem essential and worthy of inclusion. The content of the artefacts act as the 'things' in the landscape of my memory, pivotal points that give substance and focus to recollection 'in the realm of (…) self-remembrance'. Memory, much like places, has intrinsic horizons. '[T]he inner and outer horizons of the lived body act to draw its actions into the dense center of its own memories' (Casey 2000: 169).

With this in mind, my strategy and rationale is only to include events and encounters that have a substantial cross-referencing of information from the artefacts. This process might also be seen as a tracing of 'landmarks' on which lasting memories are situated and accessed (ibid.: 198). Just as there are multiple pathways to access a place or a memory, there are multiple accounts and artefacts that can lead

me to a particular event or moment in the band's history—like those I write about in the conclusion of Chapter One ('Encountering Stockholm'). Yet, some events linger more clearly in memory than others, much like how certain places or things have a stronger 'horizonal structure', making them more memorable (ibid.: 203).[74] In essence, the process of curating the contents for this autoethnography is not just about selecting the most relevant or significant events but understanding the interplay of horizons, pathways, and things in the landscape of my own memory.

This next section of Chapter Two explores the songwriting partnership between Ben and I, which partially evolved in Kerb. As my involvement with the band concluded, we both seemed inclined to explore our songwriting collaborations further. The partnership is entirely situated in a studio we named Stormore.[75] This phase and project would eventually be reabsorbed back into Kerb despite my resistance to this outcome. Before this re-formation happens, we write a collection of songs outside of the constraints of the band and its politics. As a result, these songs further advance the stylistic direction of Kerb by introducing a 'concept-album' approach, which I discuss at length later in this chapter. This creative tactic can be seen as a further reaction to the label criticism of the band carried forward into this new studio-based venture.

A significant part of this chapter consists of further autoethnographic narratives in the studio, the songwriting partnership, and analytical investigations of the song Safehouse. The musical analysis attempts to reveal the song's structures and its relationship to the concept, it uses devices such as score notation and descriptions of

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[74] 'Horizon is essential to the reservative role of memory and place, each of which involves a sense of intrinsic delimitation. The delimitation is intrinsic because it comes from within as well as from without, resulting in a double horizonal structure' (Casey 2000: 203).

[75] Stormore is a small hamlet near Dilton Marsh in Wiltshire - the location of the garage studio.

sound as they pertain to the studio's design. My aim with this analysis is to reveal a more intimate discussion of ideas and the thought process behind the songwriting. It shows how the songwriters negotiate and mediate their disparate musical languages through digital recording technology.

While we agreed on this initiative outside of Kerb, our interpretation of the band's predicament diverged. My attitude leaned towards acceptance of the situation and a preference to explore new musical ventures. I had had enough of 'playing the game', the fraught challenges and the ongoing disappointments. Conversely, Ben's strategy was one of persistence, an active push against rejection. He saw unexplored potential in Kerb. He believed the band, with our emerging partnership, could break through these barriers. Despite its prolonged and concerted efforts, I perceived Kerb as a local rock band that had reached its limits within these existing structures. Accepting this reality and deciding to explore new ventures was, in my view, a necessary step towards breaking with the past. As Giddens suggest, '[t]he individual must be prepared to make a more or less complete break with the past, if necessary, and to contemplate novel courses of action that cannot simply be guided by established habits' (2013: 73).

On reflection, Kerb's trajectory highlights the intricate balance between individual and collective agency and the music industry's cultural, political, and economic power or 'strategies'.[76] Music companies' power is the 'primary text'. These are perceived as 'operational schemas' that establish norms, standards and gatekeeping practices and underpin economic and commercial imperatives (ibid.:

[76] The system of power wielded by music companies can be seen as 'strategies'. And in de Certeau's framework, are the tools and processes used by dominant institutions to maintain control and order. These power bases can establish boundaries, create rules, and shape narratives (1984: 29).

30). What Ben and I embarked on in this phase of the project could then be seen as an adjustment to 'ways of operating', actions in response to the 'field that regulates them' (ibid.: 30). It was also a reaction to the internal political organisation of the band whose attempts at an interpretation and reading of the 'primary text' had thus far failed.

Moving away from the established group structure meant usual negotiation channels were bypassed and greater freedom to explore ideas that often became too contentious within the band formation. Ben viewed this new studio venture as an extension of the band's activities, even though tensions existed between the two entities. His commitment to both projects required a strategic allocation of his time and careful management of resources, i.e. songs. He was continually caught between these two positions. This 'tactic' would eventually impact our ability to progress as songwriters, as I reveal later in this chapter and throughout Chapter Three. The next vignette establishes the space where the partnership develops and the attention to audio quality and experimentation begins to transform our songwriting.

Stormore: Recording studio

The home garage location is a factor that made the studio feasible within the small budget we had available. The plan, from the outset, was to record and track guitars and vocals, very similar to how we had been working in Cent's production studio. Although the studio was flimsy in its capacity to be important, it was a physical escape from the boundaries of the rock band—perhaps it embodied

something outside our fixed ideas of the band's 'limits and horizons'.[77] Excited by its remoteness, we imagined anything could be possible in this small technological space. It was like a self-imposed exile that opened new possibilities as we navigated through myriad connections from our brains to the machines and back again.

Some practical considerations: Soundproofing is an essential factor in the design of recording studios and requires the construction of an airtight room in order for it to work effectively. Additionally, in the case of a commercial operation, compliance with an array of local council regulations to do with lighting, air and fire safety would also be incorporated into the design and build. However, the expense of factoring building controls into this recording studio would have been beyond my means. So, instead, as with home, garage, and bedroom studios, I constructed it around loose interpretations of these guidelines. It had some safety features, a fire extinguisher and a smoke alarm, but ventilation came via gaps under doors; it did not have the luxury of having a window either, and subsequently, the space tended to be slightly claustrophobic. Heating was also an issue, particularly in winter. I had a small convector heater that provided an immediate source of heat and meant that when not in use, the studio was cold, often damp and corrosive to the equipment.

Despite these shortcomings, the studio had a good 'vibe'; the claustrophobic and secretive locality added to its intensity - it felt like the container for what our music could become, an intangible quality, hidden, yet essential. The studio's entrance was through the original up-and-over garage door. Once inside, a partition wall and door led to the control room. The space between the entrance and the

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[77] When we humans use technologies, both what the technology "is" or may be, and we, as users undergo an embodying process—we invent our technologies, but, in use, they "re-invent" us as well (Don Ihde 2007: 243).

partition wall worked as a booth to track vocals and guitars. This room was approximately 3 meters by 1.5 meters. The overall dimension of the control room was approximately 3 meters by 3 meters and 2.2 meters high (see Fig. 18 below).

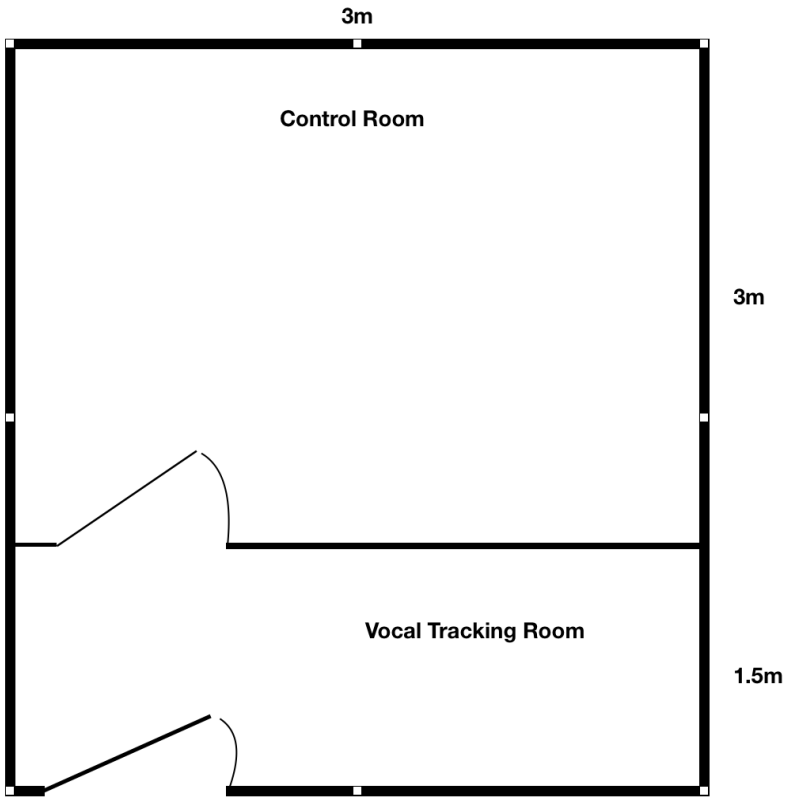


Figure 18 Floorplan of the Stormore studio.

Although the studio looked aesthetically pleasing, the room acoustics soon became an issue. Sections of the walls and ceiling needed to be treated with acoustic foam to counteract ever-present room modes. I discovered many of these acoustic anomalies through trial and error—detected through repeated comparative listening to the space via headphones—what I heard in the space was not the same as what I heard in the headphones. However, despite some initial shortcomings, it had the capacity to record vocals, guitars, and keyboards and various digital tools and VSTi

(Virtual Studio Technology instruments) commonly known as 'plugins' (still quite a novel idea in the early 2000s).[78]

In the early stages of setting up this studio, most of our time was spent figuring out the connectivity between each machine and ways to record using basic signal paths. In many respects, this entire phase of the project is defined by us foundering in the studio. As time went by, we became more integrated into an elaborate network of ideas made possible by the isolation of the recording space. It was both a source of invention and failure. This space, and all the co-mutual relations between the objects contained in it, necessitated a homogeneous integration of both human and machine—where, quite often, the desires of the human were subordinate to the machine and the acoustic space that contained it. In the early stages, we cautiously demarcated specific roles. Initially, Ben fulfilled the songwriting elements while I focused on the technical facilitation of the recording and, to some extent, song arranging.

I felt overwhelmed by the technical demands of digital audio: a science domain topic, as far as I was concerned, my musical training had not prepared me for any of this. While I attempted to become conversant in what seemed like impenetrable technical jargon, how audio becomes digital and vice versa, it was difficult to relate this theoretical world to the musical sounds we were making. Most of what I learnt was through trial and error and occasionally through a book or magazine article, usually 'Sound On Sound'.[79] The inclusion of a piece of vintage gear, a 1990s Yamaha

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[78] VSTs were developed by the Steinberg in the mid-90s.

[79] By today's standards, our efforts to leverage some kind of uniqueness and knowledge would appear very limited; the internet was available only through a dial-up modem and was consequently very slow by comparison. [3] As of today (2022), the sheer quantity and availability of training materials either through online communities or through the business models of major software and hardware manufacturers mean that it is possible to learn in-depth about all areas of digital audio production

02R, only exacerbated my predicament. Most of my time was spent making old gear communicate with new gear. I was comfortable using a DAW, but the professional design of the Yamaha 02R, while appealing to look at, presented a range of digital conversion protocols such as AES/ EBU, ADAT, Tascam, and other digital formats. Now nearly a decade old and, in many respects, the 02R was obsolete.[80]

Nevertheless, it was essential to how we perceived our work. Bringing a digital console into the arrangement added a level of complexity and sophistication to the studio's interconnectivity. It elevated the studio's status to something other than a mere bedroom set-up; its presence alluded to authenticity and certainty—if we could get the machine to work, then surely 'better' quality production should happen and everything else would fall into place. Learning about engineering and production was essential as without it there would be no records just demos. This outcome would inevitably depend on our ability to adapt and negotiate with the constraints and affordances of the technology at hand. The first few weeks of using the studio were dominated by sound anomalies, which we had no control. Audio errors, not always unwelcome, found their way onto recordings: phasing issues, spill from other tracks, stray reverb sends, and feedback created elements of chance in our process. The console became the focal point of the studio. At times, it felt as if we had replaced the intricate negotiations with band members for the complex operations of this machine - the relationship between the human and the machine is 'subtle and graded' (Ihde 2012: 143). The technologies we use reshape our experiences and perceptions. In time, with all of its technological constraints and complex signal

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almost instantly.

[80] AES/EBU (Advanced Encryption Standard/ European Broadcasting Union) see https://www.pcmag.com/encyclopedia/term/aes ADAT (Alesis Digital Audio Tape) see https://www.pcmag.com/encyclopedia/term/adat

paths, the studio became as familiar to us as the guitar.

Tactic: Concept album

Technical problems aside, our songwriting got off to a slow start. It needed more direction as we were no longer writing for other musicians. The solution presented itself as a 'concept', which triggered a method or approach we used in all the songs we co-wrote from that point onwards. In this chapter section, I will unpack the concept and discuss and analyse the song Safehouse. This song is wholly attributable to the studio offering technologies and sonic 'possibilities to influence the perceptions and imaginations' of us, the songwriters (Bennett 2017: 131). Our new process marks a distinction in how we now think about recording and production as integral to songwriting, not just as a means to capture the finished idea.

The in-between moments sitting in the studio, waiting for the computer to boot up or backing up a song to a hard drive, were times when we could imagine the possibilities of what we were trying to achieve. As Cohen (1991) writes, music 'has power and autonomy, creating its own space and time where all kinds of dreams, emotions, and thoughts are possible' (191). The new studio was a space where we dreamt of making something on an epic scale. Our discussions revolved around how to make an album on a grand scale, perhaps something that might resemble Kid A or Sgt Peppers.[81] These ideas seemed to float around in these moments that pushed us

[81] Concepts are a technologically enabled phenomenon as well. For example, the introduction of the LP (Long Player) in 1948 significantly influenced the consumption of popular music in many ways. As the format gained popular and commercial appeal, the technical specifications also expanded and eventually became the standard for the record industry. The extended playing time, which ideally suited classical music recordings, also enabled popular music to be curated in conceived programmes

towards attempting to write something within our version of a concept.

What is a 'concept'? Academics and music journalists define them in various ways. For example, within socio-political contexts, such as Woodie Guthrie's 'Dust Bowl Ballads' and the more abstract musical experimentalism of The Beatles, Mothers of Invention, Zappa, Pink Floyd, etc. (Borders 2001; Schab 2021). Bands and artists who have used the idea of a concept in their albums also suggest a differentiation between themselves and mainstream popular chart-oriented music. This idea appealed to me. A more elitist and discerning audience might appreciate the elaborate ideas and drama contained within the concept album.[82] For us, using a concept was a compositional device. We hoped it might provide a loose template to situate our somewhat disparate ideas.

Prompted by a media story, Ben calls me and says he has an idea for the concept album—it is about a man arrested and shot for murdering his wife and family. I thought it sounded a bit grim. The next time we discuss the concept, we are sat in the studio watching some DVDs on the large TV screen. It was raining outside, and the noise echoing from the corrugated roof halted any recording. I mentioned to Ben that his idea for a psychological concept reminded me of an old movie, 'Night of the Hunter'. Substituting the media story with the movie might be an easier way to

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and specific play orders (Borders 2001; Decker 2013). Some comparisons to the great song cycles of the 19th century can be made in that the relatively short duration of each of the songs is unified in a collective idea (see Shubert's 'die Winterreise').

[82] The Beatles were, of course, one of the pioneers of the concept album, both 'Revolver' and 'Sgt. Pepper's' have become some of the most lauded recordings in popular music history. The Beatles' engineer Geoff Emerick has meticulously detailed the innovation of recording and processing techniques created during the making of 'Revolver'. In his book, `Here, There and Everywhere', he describes some of the sampling and processing techniques invented on this album. Nowadays, these approaches to music production have become systematic procedures due to the accessibility of powerful computing technology. Methods for creating loops and samples, painstakingly realised using tape by the overall-clad Abbey Road engineers, have transferred into the modern DAWs' basic functionality whereby editing and processing are standardised procedures (Emerick 2007).

deal with the subject matter in an 'artier' way. Also, there were other characters, songs and the soundtrack, which could prove useful at some point. I outline the main plot of the story below for context.

Night of the Hunter

Charles Lawton's film adaptation of the Davis Grubb novel *The Night of the Hunter* (1955) is a story about a recently widowed woman who becomes entrapped in a relationship with the main protagonist, Harry Powell, a serial killer masquerading as a preacher. As the story unfolds, Powell is revealed to be only interested in one thing: obtaining money that the woman's late husband had stolen in a robbery. On his release from prison, Powell locates the widow, stopping at nothing to discover the whereabouts of the now-hidden loot. Her children, who know where it is hidden, then become the focus of his attention, and as he gets nearer to discovering the whereabouts of the stash, they eventually escape to a safe house (The song Safehouse emerges from these experiments which I discuss later in this chapter) .

The vivid cinematic imagery and eerie film score suggested many creative possibilities. Its dark subject matter resonated with how we imagined our music to take shape. We wanted to use this darker expression to challenge the claim often levied towards us as being too 'middle of the road'. For Ben, it would provide a different context for lyric writing. His songs tended to be romantic and relationship-based, evoking people and places, and they were also autobiographical in subtle ways.[83] For me, it was a way to move back towards a more complex musical world.

[83] One of the songs that typifies Ben's instinctive style of writing was Everybody Loves You. This song was one of the main reasons for the BMG interest. It was the closest to what might be defined as a potential hit record available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uLzOjBLA9Ow

Ultimately, we were looking for strategies to mediate between our musical identities while maintaining the credibility of Ben's songwriting and, simultaneously, trying to push the boundaries of our understanding of sound and song production.

As songwriters, combing the 'concept' and the recording studio becomes an incubator for a completely different way of forming musical ideas and sounds. We inhabit the studio in what Malm (2017) depicts as 'hibernation mode', where the recording studio becomes a place of contemplation and scrutiny. 'During hibernation mode (…) the band (…) face the task of rebuilding new production and complexity' (3). The outcome of this process eventually forms a sound and stylistic, which contrasts starkly with the music we made in Kerb. We begin to drift away from rock towards what might be described as 'alternative'.[84] Within our definition of 'alternative', our music and songs allude to a more folk/country sound; lyrically, we borrow something out of the past from the movie and combine it with our interpretation of the story.

Borrowing

The storyline of *Night of the Hunter* can be traced in the concept album in subtle ways: musical ideas, including lyric writing, are implicit. It is important to state that the concept for the album was not an attempt at a rock-style reworking of the movie or story. In fact, the storyline is merely reflected in the songs. The concept's overarching movie narrative became a sacrificial idea used to situate songwriting ideas. It was a practical solution that relied on borrowing something from the

[84] Merriam's dictionary provides a general description which, in many ways, is closer to where we eventually end up: 'music that is produced by performers who are outside the musical mainstream, that is typically regarded as more eclectic, original, or challenging than most popular music (such as conventional rock, pop, or country), and that is often distributed by independent record labels' (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2023).

movie—it is subtly quoted here and there.[85]

From the songwriters' perspective, the movie could be loosely separated into two parts: the soundtrack, and the storyline (as seen from the main protagonist, Harry Powell). I used ideas from the movie's soundtrack to expand or inflect the production and arranging process, while Ben focused on aspects of Powell's psychological state to write lyrics. However, these two domains blurred once the songwriting process was underway. We also did not dissect the movie in any systematic way. The movie was kept at arm's length to avoid being too rigid in our interpretations and representations of its content.

Although numerous songs are placed throughout the film score, such as 'Leaning on the Everlasting Arms' and 'Bringing in the Sheaves', Walter Schumann's arrangement of the song, 'Once Upon a Time There Was a Pretty Fly' seemed to resonate.[86] The song appears briefly at the start of the journey the two children take as they escape the clutches of Powell in a small boat. They appear to run along the boundary of life and death like the power of the mythological river *Styx*[87]. They become invulnerable to evil as they encounter larger-than-life creatures of the marshy underworld. The lyrics to the song Pretty Fly (see Fig. 19 below) touch on the impermanence of life and relationships. These ideas permeate Ben's lyric writing for a while, especially during this studio phase of the project. The "pretty fly" seems to have everything—a beautiful wife and children—but loses them unexpectedly, a

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[85] There are further implications for musicological analysis when extending the scope of intertextual interpretation to collected musical works recorded in rock album format. This territory belongs to what Lacasse (2000) has defined and adapted in his work on intertextuality and hypertextuality.

[86] 'Once Upon a Time There Was a Pretty Fly' can be found on this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dEQkhZRYylM

[87] See the movie still https://film-grab.com/2014/03/20/the-night-of-the-hunter/#bwg1625/101269

theme that links back to the initial story that Ben had discovered.

Pretty Fly
Once upon a time there was a pretty fly
He had a pretty wife, this pretty fly
But one night she flew away
Flew away

She had two pretty children
But one night these two pretty children
Flew away
Flew away
Into the sky
Into the moon

Figure 19 Pretty Fly lyrics from the song (Grubb 1953: 150).

Encountering: Safehouse

The first new song to emerge out of the concept was Safehouse. The opening line of the lyric begins with 'Go to Sleep You Silly Girl, You Won't Want to See This'. The first verse is the voice of the 'hunter' and situates his psychological perspective as he surveys the unfolding horror inflicted on those around him. It is worth noting that Ben's lyric writing style tended not to be overly literal in content (see Figure 21 below). In composition, words often flowed from their sounds and assembled as they were written and simultaneously recorded or written down. The flow of one word to the next and the subtle balancing of vowel sounds and consonances were integral to the musical construction of the lyric. What emerged from this process were sketches that would then undergo further development through subsequent recordings. Ben

rarely arrived at the studio with completed verses and choruses as he did in the band. We often wrote and recorded one line at a time until the whole verse or chorus was constructed and then re-recorded the whole section entirely before moving on to the next part. Even though the back story to Safehouse is troubling, the finished song does not convey this terror too explicitly. However, it becomes problematic when trying to fix any exact meanings to the usage of the material. There is a sense that the fictional character provides a focal point but is only a compositional device.

Safehouse

Go to sleep you silly girl
You won't want to see this
You were once so beautiful
What the hell happened?

Run to the Safehouse
You will find somebody waiting
With their hands against the wall

Go to war you silly boy
It's what you started
You will leave your family
Broken-hearted

Life has a habit of surprise
Is there nowhere left to hide
Put your hands against the wall
Put your hands against the wall

Figure 20 Safehouse lyrics (Ben Kench c.2004). [88]

[88] Ben Kench's first demo recording of Safehouse recorded on a portable digital multitrack recorder (c.2004). The recording can be accessed on the band's Soundcloud page here: https://soundcloud.com/the-band-kerb/03-too-late?in=the-band-kerb/sets/cage-records-demo-2003-kerb-or&utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing

A closer look at the verse melody line reveals an odd tension in bars 4 and 8 (Fig. 22). In bar four, a lingering major seventh (G) suspends across the Ab minor chord on the word 'girl' and then again on bar 8 on the word 'this'. There is no resolution as the phrase ends on (D) - the augmented fourth interval. These kinds of interval destinations in melody lines are common enough in jazz, but from Ben's perspective, this was a dramatic departure from his instinctive way of melody writing. It was far too dissonant to be recognised as a 'pop' melody. However, that was not the plan from the outset, this song was just an experiment to see how far we could distance ourselves from Kerb.
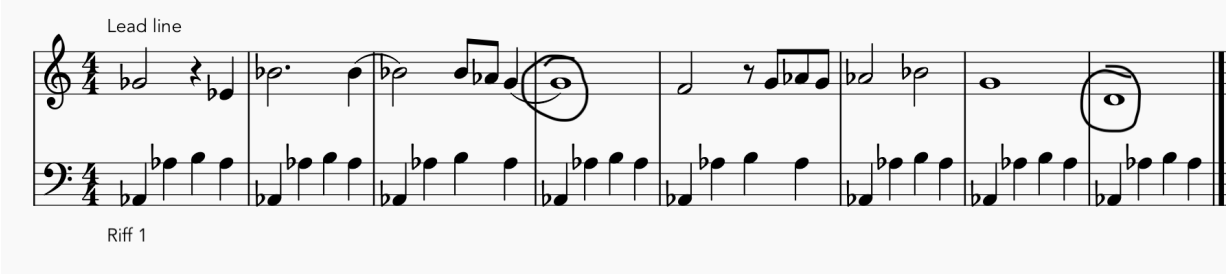


Figure 21 Safehouse verse melody line and opening riff pattern.

If anything of *Night of the Hunter* exists in this experiment, then it might be contained in its mood or intensity. In many ways, Ben is not merely referencing ideas in the source material but internalising and processing them through his psychological and emotional filters. These emotional perspectives are layered onto Safehouse and other songs of this period. I recognised them as a way he navigated and expressed the complexities of his personal life, in particular, the recent death of his father. This state of mind pervaded throughout all the time I wrote songs with him. It was the first fundamental expression that manifested in each of the songs. Figure 23 shows the main chorus idea, a slow melodic line over a descending harmonic phrase, which is the release from the heavier mood of the verse—a return to something more familiar.
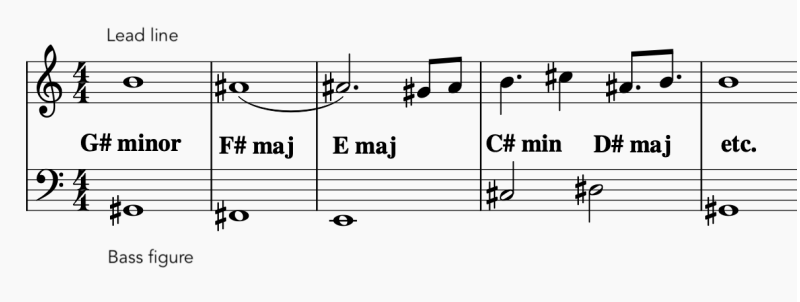


Figure 22 Safehouse chorus melody and harmony.

We often began the arrangement and writing process using two guitars; Ben supplied the main rhythm and harmony structure, and I embellished with additional parts sometimes using alternative guitar tunings. I also created moods and textures using a live minidisc system configured to act as a makeshift sampler. The sounds created by this sampler tended to be ambient and harmonically ambiguous, allowing us to play over the top in various ways. A better analogy for interacting with the machine was more like a textured canvas—or a mood setter. Sometimes, we recorded and saved these loops for use later in the arrangement. The way the device(s) were connected meant that it was impossible to recreate a sound once the loop had been deleted. Thus, it was constantly changing and evolving, sometimes successful and frequently not so.

This machine consisted of three minidisc players and a Boss Loopstation (see Fig. 24 below). Each minidisc recording consisted of looped sections from the film's soundtrack, approximately 1.5 minutes in duration. These audio scenes had both spoken and musical content. They were each loaded onto the minidiscs, *played,* and resampled through the loop station and other outboard effects such as delays and reverbs. The configuration of this system looked like a guitarist's foot controller but instead was operated by hand. Inevitably, the results were often experimental and less predictable than using the plugin synths from the DAW. Nevertheless, these exploratory sound approaches were effective because they allowed for an element of

unexpected performance and collaboration to be integrated into the songwriting and pre-production process.

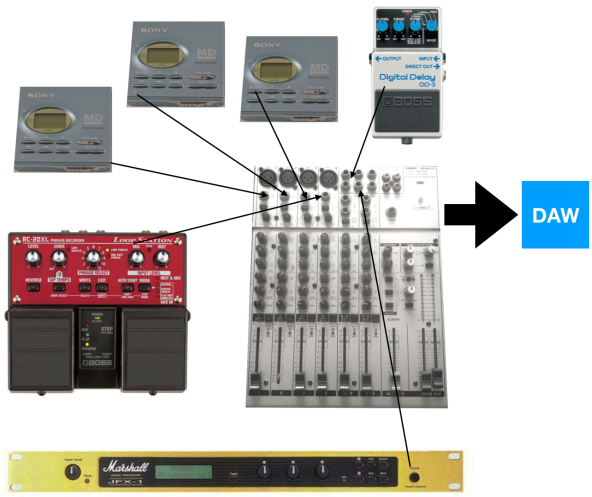


Figure 23 Sampler/looper.

In Ben's arrangement, an additional section, an instrumental coda, reverted to a 3/4 rhythmic pattern with a bar of 2/4 at the end of the phrase (see Fig. 25 below). In the only recording of this song with this ending, the song plays out as an instrumental, whereby the rhythmic figure above provides a platform for free improvisation[89] —further distancing us from Kerb. While not too complicated from a musical perspective, the Coda section of this song challenged our digital recording techniques. It took some time to work out how to incorporate meter changes into the *arrange* window on the DAW.

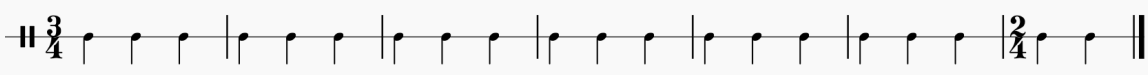


Figure 24 Ending/Coda rhythmic pattern in Safehouse.

[89] Safehouse recording with the extended coda available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wIgq42JrEAI

The writing process for Safehouse had a much more radical process than Ben or I had previously used. As this song was not intended to be performed live yet, we decided to use some of the devices and arrangement techniques we had developed in October Rain, specifically, to create as much space for the mood to establish and to try and move away from conventional harmonic structures and instrument configurations.

The songwriting activities at Stormore lasted around 18 months, by which time we had established a working relationship that was situated entirely in the recording studio; we became a studio project. The recording studio was the key to unlocking the door to our access to other collaborators, despite the immense task of building the studio and then figuring out how to use it. During this time, we began to improve our grasp of the operation of the studio and how to record. Our plans did not extend to assembling a band and all the implications this scenario entailed. We were still firmly rooted in writing and producing in the studio for the foreseeable future. Our primary goal was writing and producing songs and finding other collaborators, such as producers or record labels. We gave ourselves a year to produce an album that would achieve these aims.

The Stormore project ended abruptly in early 2005 when Cent Records contacted Ben to arrange a meeting to discuss a plan to record an album. While it had been many months since I left Kerb, Ben had maintained some contact with the label's A&R, who had remained enthusiastic about his songs and optimistic about the band's relationship with the label's boss. The band's association with the US record producer Thom Russo contributed to this renewed interest (see earlier in this chapter on discussions about October Rain). After another meeting, the band again managed to get itself back onto the label's agenda; including Russo as part of the album

production plan was a fundamental component. Russo's reputation and Cent's A&R made a persuasive argument for reconnecting with Kerb. Nevertheless, Cent Records had always made their intentions clear about how future developments with Kerb would work; they saw themselves as facilitators of the album project and ideally wanted to license the recording to another label that might offer a greater affinity with the band's musical direction.

Conclusion

My aim in this section of the chapter has been to examine how a rock band made meaning in its music and attempted to negotiate its position and reputation locally and further afield. The band faces rejection and criticism of their sound and style, presenting a dilemma and difficult decision about how to respond and solve the problem. Feedback from music industry people suggested the sound was too 'middle of the road' and lacked the innovation and cutting edge needed to break into mass audiences. The band were committed and persevered through these difficult times, but this was not enough in the end to persuade a major record label to sign them. However, their efforts yielded a development deal with a small independent record label facilitating an album recording in Sweden. This event is the topic in Chapter Three—the album recording phase of the band's history.

While Kerb's experiences are unique to them, some themes resonate more broadly, especially considering the challenges faced by many unsigned rock bands. There is constant pressure to produce recordings of a high enough production quality to attract the attention of music industry people, including promoters, managers, other well-known bands, record labels, and producers. The advent of digital recording technology, while enabling in many ways, also presents problems

in terms of how to develop the skills to produce high-quality demos. Here, the recording studio plays a defining role in how the songwriting develops, which I expand on more fully in Chapters Three and Four.

Despite the band's shortcomings in trying to get the studio to work with it, not against it as it often did, it was a place that extended and *embodied* the band's ideas. The Stormore project reveals a complex and nuanced relationship between the songwriters and technology. 'Technologies shape our ontology' and, consequently, reveal other possibilities that 'enable and constrain our behaviour and actions' (Kiran 2015: 125-131).[90] The discussion about the recording studio not only describes the work involved in songwriting but outlines a tactical practice that attends to the constraints and limitations of knowledge, opportunity, and individualism (de Certeau 1980). The songwriters are 'making do', which, in itself, organises a 'way of operating' that emerges out of experimentation with how studio systems are configured. While the studio and its complicated machines presented barriers, they also enabled resistance to the band's preconceived musical and sonic conventions. Despite its modest capacity, the recording studio will eventually define new networks and musical space. Chapter Three reveals the next phase in this journey as I rejoin Kerb, and we merge these recording activities into one inevitably compromised project.

Kerb's musical identity and sound seemed always under scrutiny. This condition begins with long-established members leaving and new people arriving, but also from outside the band—questions about who the band were like, in terms of

[90] Rosenberger & Verbeek. (2015) Postphenomenological Investigations: Essays on Human–Technology Relations. Lexington Books.

other more famous bands, were commonplace. Post-Britpop bands like Coldplay and Keane (to name but a few) defined the mainstream rock landscape, and for the most part, Kerb struggled to find a way to define themselves in relation to these dynamics.

The unifying factor that connects much of the diverse content in parts 1 and 2 of Chapter Two is an exploration of the subjective experiences of being in a grassroots rock band set against the backdrop of broader cultural, societal, and industry dynamics. I see the fragmentary stages that form the band's social organisation as constitutive practice.[91] These are the connections between individual experiences that come together to form a collective expression that engages with and reflects how they perceive larger cultural and industry trends. Rock bands like Kerb navigate a complex interplay of personal, professional, and cultural dynamics in the process of imagining and producing style. As they grapple with identity, personal ambition, and recognition, musicians construct meaning and value through the ideas and sounds they create and produce in the studio. Kerb's failure to locate themselves securely into the local scene and beyond is a major theme of this dissertation, where the band's lived experiences and intersubjective dynamics are explored. The band's 'lifeworld', its interactions with sound, music, and the impact of technology reveal a rich area of analysis that encompasses embodied experiences and temporality. The band members' introspections contribute to a richer understanding of the dynamic interplay between personal agency, artistic collaboration, and cultural expression.

[91] In this context, 'constitutive' refers to the way consciousness actively constitutes or constructs the world of experience. Instead of passively receiving data from the outside world, consciousness is seen as actively shaping and organising this data into coherent objects and experiences (Zahavi 2003: 74-77).

CHAPTER 3

Recording and production perspectives

Album recording phase

Introduction

The focus of this chapter concerns professional recording studios, record producers, and the production of Kerb's album. It will give an account of the relationship that evolves between the band and the producers and explore the dynamic process of how musical ideas are negotiated in various recording sessions. As a result of the recording contract, Kerb becomes locked into a mode of production wholly defined by the record producers in response to the label's commercial ambitions. As Louis Meintjes writes, commodity production in the music industry is controlled through the 'critical gatekeeping practices' of music producers who are 'institutionally positioned to negotiate between laborers (musicians) and management (the record companies) and between aesthetic and market concerns' (2003: 258). Kerb's predicament is made more complex by their record label's activities with its main artist, Jamie Pearce—a solo pop act aspiring to broaden his appeal to 'boy band' audiences. Kerb's prospects depend wholly on Pearce's success. As such, the label gravitated towards commercial definitions of what a rock band could be; their interpretation was narrowly defined by the popularity of Coldplay and its pop-rock appeal.

Kerb and the producers are thrown together quite hurriedly. There is little time before the recording in Stockholm to establish any rapport, unlike the work done with Thom Russo (see Chapter Two), where songs were shared and arrangements

developed over time. Chapter Three examines the interactions of the band and the unfolding of the album recording in Soundtrade studio in Stockholm. It examines the specific techniques, technologies, and approaches used to create the album. The band's lack of preparation and amalgamation of two different repertoires, i.e., Stormore and Kerb, hampered the project. I suggest that there is an unconnectedness between all involved in the space - past versions of the band, manifest in old recordings, reinstated past members, and repertoire from Stormore (Chapter Two) that has barely had enough time to be established in the imaginations of the musicians. All these factors constrain the progress in reaching a satisfactory conclusion.

I examine each player, including myself, drawing on themes such as studio monitoring, distortion, and groove—each signifies a disruption in the track-laying processes during recording sessions. These events and encounters further overlay with what I define as a pursuit of perfectionism—the meticulous layering and multitracking of instruments to the rigid grid system used in DAWs. I critique these encounters through contrasting ideas about groove and feel and how this vital ingredient was missing from the recording sessions in Stockholm. I use Harris Berger's concept of 'organisation of attention' in how I situate experience and its directedness towards an action.

'Organisation of attention' can be understood as a framework in which consciousness actively directs itself towards various *objects* or phenomena. It draws on Husserl's notion that 'attention' is not merely a passively received stimulus but rather an active 'modification of *intentionality*. The way that we 'attend' to things has the potential to shape and modify our relationship to the world that we experience. Put simply, *intentionality* is about the target (directedness) of our mental acts,

while *attention* is about the intensity or focus with which we engage with that target. Therefore, the organisation of attention involves a dynamic interplay between things at the forefront of our experience and those that remain in the periphery or lie within a broader horizon.

For example, the musicians and producers' organisation of attention construct a complex layering of ideas and meaning that involves the mediation of rhythm, technology, and identity. This kind of interjection in the narrative aims to share the complexities of tracking different instruments, the influence of the producers on the sound and direction of the album, and how I experienced this process. Ultimately, recording the album in the high-end studio environments of Soundtrade and subsequently Basecamp is intricate and fraught with challenges for me and the band.

Chapter Three further explores the phenomenological auto-ethnomusicology framework, where my goal is to share an experience with the reader and provide insights into the recording process that transpired in Sweden. From when I enter the studio on the first day to the last day of recording, I am attempting to present an 'organisation of experience' to get beyond the basic descriptive outline of the encounter towards understanding the embodied nature of the experience itself as I perceive it. In my case, this frequently involves attempts to understand the nature of groove in rock beats against a prevailing idea I harbour in jazz. Schutz (1974) states that individual experiences are 'biographically molded' in that they occur in the unique context of each person's life. However, there is also a 'systematic character' where these experiences are integrated into broader, socially and culturally defined frameworks of meaning. These frameworks include typical life courses and roles that society imposes, which guide individual expectations and behaviours (180-181).

As in Chapter Two, I continue to use the vignette to capture the narrative

through various musical events and encounters. Given the time compression in this phase of the band's history—the account covers approximately one month of intensive studio time. The first vignette begins with a closer examination of the contract between the band and the record label. This contract was initially introduced in Chapter Two (see Cent Records). What are the implications for the band and the record producer in this agreement? Furthermore, what are the obligations of the record company? By revealing Kerb's experiences in Sweden, I will illuminate the struggles for creative control between musicians and record producers. These conditions then reveal why the album took so long to complete. Once it finally emerges, there is a gradual realisation that the album fails to meet the band's expectations (I will explore this further in Chapter Four).

Encountering: Contracts and promises

Even though most of the discussion in this Chapter concerns the recording experience in Stockholm, the contract that enabled it is a crucial component and, therefore, needs some explanation. Contracts between artists and music companies are fundamental to record production. In theory, they are a formal mechanism through which two or more parties agree on a mode of production which defines the creative work and product. Without 'legally enforceable agreements, joint work between musicians and music companies could not be undertaken' (Jones 2013: 125). On a practical level, and from the artist's perspective, contracts are daunting legal frameworks that require considerable skill and resources to comprehend fully. In Kerb's case, the absence of any third-party representation to fully communicate the implications and consequences of the contract and thus being able to negotiate and refine its contents put them at a disadvantage.

Notably, the agreement that defined the working relationship between the label and the band was vital to securing the engagement of our producer. For example, it was unlikely that conversations would have progressed beyond an initial interest phase with Russo had we not had the prospect of a deal in the pipeline. Even though it was slow to emerge, our contract with Cent held some value in these early negotiations. The deal (between Kerb and Cent Records) was drawn up in April 2004. It included a recording and publishing contract for four band members: Ben, lead singer and songwriter; Jim, singer and guitarist; Ryan, drummer; and me, the bass player. We eagerly signed the agreement. It held significant meaning for the band, but I suspected less so from the label's perspective (they never appeared overly enthusiastic to me). In discussions with the label, I had the impression that it was merely a formality. The deal facilitated the production of an album only. There were no advances for the band (see Appendix E for contract details).

The carefully worded legal jargon that recording contracts are written can be complicated to interpret as a layperson, i.e., us, band members. We spent many hours poring over the complex document, deciding whether we would regret signing it at some point in the future or how we should shape our work to facilitate its conditions. One specific clause resonated with us and defined our relationship with the record label. It was their 'get out' clause and would eventually be implemented later into the album's production; it states:

> Nothing herein contained shall be construed so as to obligate us to manufacture, sell or release any phonograph records embodying your performances.[92]

Although the band is obligated to deliver an album and singles in line with the specific contract period, the record company is not obligated to release the recording

[92] See Appendix E for specific contract wording.

if, for whatever reason, they no longer wish. This clause echoed what was said to us in meetings, but in writing, it starkly amplified the precariousness of our position with this company. The contract that we all eagerly signed became a significant part of Kerb's plan and, as such, held value and symbolic meaning. Each of the clauses emphasised the importance of what we were attempting. As Jones (2013) suggests, signing the deal is a 'badge of honour' for musicians (127). However, the significance of the contract, while potent on some levels for the band, lacked any real substantive meaning. It presented a series of possible outcomes - if the band were to do *this*, then the company might do *that* - much of what transpired as a consequence of the contract was invisible to the clauses designed to contain the relationship. I wondered what Cent Records wanted to do with a band like Kerb, seeing as they were so motivated towards chart-oriented pop music. The contract represents an asymmetric obligation whereby the band are set to deliver the content within a specific timeframe yet the label, if not willing for whatever reason, are not equally bound. The band has clear, unavoidable responsibilities, while the record company has more flexibility and control over the outcome.[93]

Negotiating the album

After Cent Records suddenly reinitiated discussions with Ben, all discussions initially centred on us recording an album with US record producer Thom Russo. As I alluded to earlier, his affiliation with and interest in Kerb convinced the label of the band's potential. Russo's record production credits also impressed them—around the time of our association with him (c.2003), these included Johnny Cash, Macy Gray,

[93] For a comprehensive overview of standard recording contracts between artists and record companies, see Jones 2013: 123-141.

and Audioslave.[94] Yet, the initial excitement and promise in the preliminary conversations quickly dissipated. Although we were never entirely privy to the dialogue between our label and Russo's management, the cost of production was likely a fundamental issue. Specific logistical talks indicated that flying the band to LA was turning out to be expensive. Russo's management was also keen on understanding the label's release commitment and plan. The combination of these concerns effectively halted any progress. This outcome was disappointing, considering we had established a productive relationship with Russo over a few years. He had lent his expertise to our song arrangements and had even invested time in early pre-production work on an album. Despite this setback, Cent remained resolute and presented us with an alternate solution—travel to Sweden and collaborate with a producer already known to them in Stockholm.

In order to understand the Swedish connection to Kerb's project, a closer look at Cent Records' main signing is needed. By around 2005, Jamie Pearce had already spent 2 or 3 years working on songwriting projects in Stockholm. His first single, Tabloid Queen, was a hi-NRG production by Levine and Scott but had various remixes, including one from the Swedish production team, Murlyn.[95] Cent's first release was followed up by an album project, this time with the Stockholm-based production crew Basecamp. By the time Kerb's album project was scheduled, Pearce was already underway with promotional tours in the UK. We occasionally met with the head of Cent Records, who shared potential ideas they had for us, all subject to Pearce's progress and success. The label's activities focused exclusively on marketing

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[94] Russo's professional and business information can be found here: https://www.thomrusso.net/

[95] The Murlyn Music studio created many international pop hits around the 2000s for artists such as Madonna, Celine Dion, S Club 8; a complete list of artists can be found here https://www.discogs.com/label/286139-Murlyn- Studios.

Pearce's 'single' and were preoccupied with gaining access to national radio airplay.

Cent Records' primary interest was chart-oriented pop music. Despite being a small label, it established a professional infrastructure and planned ambitious projects and events. For example, in the summer of 2002, they launched a new pop music festival (The Big Gig) showcasing in-vogue pop acts like Blue, Liberty X, and H&Claire (Steps)—following in the wake of TV shows like Pop Idol and The X Factor.[96] The festival was an opportunity to expose their pop artist nationally and increase his fanbase before finalising his album. The event was also part of the marketing strategy to build hype for Pearce's first single release (Tabloid Queen) in 2003. Kerb did not feature very prominently in Cent's overall business strategy.

Ben, and the rest of the band, found it difficult to understand why the label had invested so much time and energy into one act, especially now that it had Kerb in its sights. We were not prepared to fully embrace the fact that Pearce and Cent records were locked into a mode of production, and we were wholly dependent on their success. Even though the logical view suggested that Cent were not a good fit for a band like us, this fact did not assuage our impatience with the slow progress that continued to hinder us. Now that the deal with Russo was off the table, we were in a queue, waiting for Pearce's album to be completed so that work could start on our album.

While the label showed some interest in facilitating our album, quite how far they were willing to invest in promotion, if it ever materialised, was still being determined. For example, there were no specific marketing plans presented to us. It was a development deal and a way for the label to open doors that might otherwise

[96] https://generationsteps.co.uk/news/h-claire-to-play-charity-gig/

be closed. In comparison, Pearce's relationship with Cent was leveraged through a 360◦ deal—a contract whereby the record company expects to receive income streams beyond the sale of records.[97] Meetings were infrequent, but when they made contact, we eagerly made ourselves available in the hope of some breakthrough or progress. It was a perpetual state of limbo.

In hindsight, we would have benefitted throughout this process if we had a manager to mediate discussions. The content of meetings usually involved potential collaborations with other industry people, such as producers and record labels, as well as updates on what Cent was doing to advance its reputation. We heard about high-level events they attended, such as the *Brit Awards*, and how they were making opportunities for Pearce. Cent was in a very competitive marketplace and was no doubt dwarfed by the power of larger entities. Their focus on commercial pop markets and readiness to push us towards a more mainstream sound reveal some limitations for our project. It would have been more beneficial to have a label that understood our local scene dynamics (Bristol) and who could work with us to establish a greater foothold.

For me, recording an album was not a priority until we could emerge with some credibility in our locality. The deal with Cent Records represented a flawed side-stepping of the checks and balances required at the grassroots level. The label's reluctance to immerse themselves into contemporary UK rock music, as it appeared then, leads to an oversimplification of how rock bands break into mass markets. We seldom discussed our songs or listened to demos during the meetings. Plans were sometimes alluded to but rarely materialised in any actionable form. The label's rock

[97] The 360° record contract, developed by Sanctuary Music Group defines a key shift in music industry operations (see Jones 2013: 141-2).

band reference points were firmly fixed on what I identified in Chapter Two as a post-Britpop era of 'bland' rock. As Dave Simpson (2005) suggests, bands heavily influenced by Coldplay are fulfilling a commercial gap due to the desire and popularity of its chief exponent. Cent would have been happy for us to fit this idea of a rock band, and that is where the motivation for sending us to Sweden gravitated.

> It is musicians who choose the notes and the beats but they do not make their choices in isolation; in either 'romantic' or 'autonomous' spaces. Managing of music can be a fraught affair because that music and the way it is meshed with other textual dimensions of performance rely on the intangibilities of nuance to have their effect (Jones 2013: 69).

Jones underscores the idea that there are subtle elements within how we quantify or describe agency. The impact and success of music lies beyond the notes and sounds themselves and include a myriad of factors beyond immediate control or desire.

The challenges we faced illuminate the power dynamics often perceived when describing music industry interaction. These relationships are commonly depicted as unseen struggles for creative control between artists and their record labels. '[M]usic and music-making' that 'emerge (…) into a conceptual pattern based around (…) dichotomies' of 'creativity/commerce, experimentation/superficiality, artistic integrity/selling out' (Cohen 1991: 134). What does it mean to sell out exactly? If it is the actions and choices of the rock band set against the constraints (commercial imperatives) imposed either directly or indirectly by the record label, then this condition might also be perceived as, according to Anthony Giddens, a 'duality of agency and structure'—a nuanced interpretation of human activity across an overarching system of rules and practices that enable and constrain agency (1984: 25). This state of affairs is subtly balanced.

In theory, it does not assume large-scale 'collectivities' (like record labels) being dependent on cooperative individuals (like rock bands) for their existence. Bands that enter into agreements with record businesses do so willingly knowing that

compromise is a necessity for survival. Musicians become pragmatic acknowledging the realities of navigating a complex system of relationships and expectations. Organisational structures are created by people's actions and simultaneously influenced by those actions; they are not something external or separate from individuals. Therefore, '[s]tructure is not to be equated with constraint but is always both constraining and enabling', not fixed or unchangeable, but dynamic and evolving (ibid.: 25).

Pragmatism enables the band to adjust to unexpected changes in direction and choice of producer. They proceeded optimistically with the new album recording plans—a take-it-or-leave scenario. A few weeks later, we flew to Stockholm and met the Basecamp producers, we discussed songs and arrangements for the album's production. The producers commented on musical structure, tempos, vocals, and commercial appeal. Songs from the Stormore sessions were also included. It sounded as if we were discussing two different bands rather than one project. The gloomy, downbeat material contrasted significantly with the older Kerb repertoire. Despite my reservations, the initial meeting with the producer appeared to go well. We agreed that there was some potential in the project, and more importantly, the producer and his assistant liked the direction of our musical ideas for the album. When we returned to the UK, Basecamp contacted our record company to make further production arrangements. Our subsequent encounter with the Swedish producers occurred in our rehearsal space. This meeting would be the next significant milestone of the album recording.

Band history: *album recording phase* (p.1)

In this section of Chapter Three, I explore a pivotal phase of the band's journey, focusing on the time spent in two recording studios in Stockholm. This period was marked by a collaboration with the Stockholm-based producer Soren Von Malmborg and his assistant, Niklas Andersson. The recording sessions at each studio were defined by a particular workflow and organisation. These dynamics existed not only between the musicians and producers but also within the complex technological environments of the studios. In addition, this section aims to shed light on the aesthetics of Swedish record production as I experienced it, which includes an exploration of the characteristic sounds and production styles that I interpret as a Stockholm sound. By the end of this chapter, I draw some conclusions about the impact of these studios and individuals on our music during this crucial phase of the band's history. This exploration will highlight the technical and aesthetic aspects of recording in Sweden and offer a personal perspective on how these experiences shaped us as musicians and as a band in the post-album recording phase, which I discuss in Chapter Four.

Encountering: Stockholm record production

One of the most interesting aspects of Kerb's encounters was its unique opportunity to see and experience the Swedish recording industry first-hand: a purely serendipitous encounter that took the band from practical obscurity to the heart of a vibrant musical scene. Most of what inspired me to write this thesis directly resulted from my experiences in Sweden. In this part of the chapter, I will outline some of the features of the Swedish music industry as I experienced it being

signed to a small UK independent record label and also through a broader exploration as I tried to understand why we were recording in Sweden and not the UK. The first thing I had to come to terms with was the intensity of interest surrounding writing pop records. This was the modus operandi of the producers in the Basecamp team. They were primarily involved in songwriting and production for artists and actively pitching songs to labels, publishers, and established singers—a collective of like-minded professionals striving for a shared goal. Their most recent production was 'Insania', a song written and produced for Peter Andre in 2004.[98] Production crews like Basecamp are part of Stockholm's creative hub, a highly competitive songwriting network. During our time in Basecamp, we observed writing sessions involving a producer and a singer working for hours in small writing and production studios. Our album project entered this highly organised and rational musical universe.

A brief history of Swedish pop

Since the early 1990s, Stockholm has established itself as a global hub for songwriting and production. It is common for successful songwriters and producers to own a production company and studio and recruit associate producers. A production company oversees or is responsible for producing and delivering master recordings ready for commercial release. It may consist of one or more individuals doing business together in a room inside a home, an office building, or someone's basement or garage.[99] Each of these producers will contribute and share the ethos and

[98] Details about the release can be found here: https://www.discogs.com/master/104759-Peter-Andre-Insania

[99] Ola Johansson (2020) offers the most complete account of Sweden's pop production culture in *Songs from Sweden: Shaping Pop Culture in a Globalized Music Industry*. Springer Nature. However, insider

sound of the production company and, in turn, support the writing and pitching of songs for established artists. This system is often defined as a 'factory line' model, a physical location that often incorporates artist management, publishing, and recording. Songwriter-producers with international reputations can earn significant incomes due to publishing and ownership rights.[100]

Sweden's songwriting and production scene has developed into a global phenomenon characterised by 'hit-making' formulas. These practices are typified by collaborative activities involving high-quality control levels. Roles in this field broadly involve songwriting, audio engineering, and mixing but also extend to mediating between the artist and the record company. Max Martin, Sweden's most successful songwriter, remains largely anonymous preferring to remain, as John Seabrook suggests, 'in the ghostwriter's milieu' (…) because the public likes to believe that pop artists write their own songs'. Often, songs are written before the artist arrives at the studio. The song may fit any number of artists - bespoke hits for a range of compatible voices. Songs composed in this way blur the boundaries between the singer and songwriter/producer to such an extent that the artist might be seen as 'covering' the original version of the song. More importantly and crucial to the understanding of this definition of a record producer, '(…) the artists [Martin] works with sing his songs exactly the way he sings them on the demos' (ibid.: 2015).[101]

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accounts about the work in these studios is largely contained in biographical and journalistic texts.

[100] The emergence of Stockholm-based record labels during the late 1980s began the concept of Nordik Beat, which eventually gained national and international recognition. Music companies loosely assembled under this banner were Stockholm Records, SweMix, Sonet Records, Cheiron, Murlyn Music, Maratone, and A Side Productions. Over the past few decades, all have contributed to Stockholm's reputation for producing and writing popular music for international artists.

[101] Quotes taken from the magazine article: Seabrook, J. (2015) *Blank Space: What Kind of Genius Is Max Martin?* Available at: https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/blank-space-what-

Swedish pop music traditions are intrinsically connected to the tastes of its producers and audiences, reflecting a collective *habitus* deeply rooted in music festivals such as *Melodifestivälen* and *All Sang På Skansen*. These musical traditions are not directed and controlled by the producers alone; instead, they are fields that depend on the participation of whole communities for their meaning. Johan Duncanson of the band Radio Dept offers another perspective on Sweden's enthusiasm for pop music by revealing a distinct form of cultural capital that defines Stockholm's music scene as being less 'laddish' than the UK and US.[102] Sweden's pop music industry is founded on mass appeal rather than any distinct anti-establishment aesthetic. One reason for this, suggests Lars Trägårdh, is that the Swedes identify themselves within their social democracy and are less suspicious of the state.[103] The Swedes have a proud tradition of championing their welfare system, 'the relative success of Swedish economic and social performance, beginning in the 1930s, sometimes created among Swedes a kind of national hubris, built on a myth of political and economic superiority' (Lundberg 1985: 4).

In the early stages of this research project, I discovered a useful interview that offered some scepticism of the Swedish pop production scene. The interview reveals a controversy: Sweden is now seen as a service industry for the Anglophone music industry.[104] The interviewee, a successful Swedish producer, argues, 'we have

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kind-of-genius-is-max-martin (Accessed: 13 May 2019).

[102] Sweden's musical culture's less laddish than elsewhere. So much indie music in America and Britain these days is very male... Dirty, smelly, heterosexual music. We're less about getting drunk and more about sitting with friends, playing around with keyboards and guitars, finding different sounds and textures (The Guardian 2006).

[103] The linchpin of the Swedish model is an alliance between the state and the individual that contrasts sharply with Anglo-Saxon suspicion of the state and preference for family - and civil society-based solutions to welfare. In Sweden, a high-trust society, the state is viewed more as friend than foe (The Guardian 2017).

[104] In the blog 'Don't Stop The Pop', the writer (Robpop) interviews an anonymous Swedish record

independent labels and brilliant pop acts (…) But we as an industry need to be more independent and more cutting edge (…) We need to follow what's going on in the UK and the USA but not by copying (sic) your acts' (ibid). National music competitions, he suggests, have come to valorise and dominate the commercial musical landscape and, in some way, constrain a potentially more diverse scene. 'Sweden is (sic) pre-dominated by a competition called *Melodifestivålen*. It is dominated by *Melodifestivålen*-related acts or somehow connected to *Idol'* (ibid); although not all successful Swedish acts result from these competitions.[105] There is a deep connection in Swedish culture between popular music and how political power structures are reproduced in its society. Popular music praxis is sustained by *doxa*, and reinforced by the practices and engagements of individuals (*illusio*) within the field—the unchallenged, taken-for-granted beliefs and practices within Swedish pop music. With such an influence over the local domestic scene the *Melodifestivålen* music competition is a crucial identifier of how taste-making and opinion-building shape the local scene.

The late 1980s through 1998 is a crucial period for Sweden's record producers. In this decade, DJ, producer and songwriter Dag Volle (*Denniz Pop*) became one of the most influential figures in Sweden's pop music industry.[106] *Denniz Pop* was

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producer who suggests that the Swedish pop music industry is in some ways 'corrupt'.He goes on to make the case that the pop music industry has become less independent and original. Record labels own radio stations and CD shops, making it difficult for unsigned artists to breakthrough. The full interview transcript can be found here: http://dontstopthepop.blogspot.com/2010/04/swedish-music-industy-is-corrupt.html [Accessed 10 Apr 2022].

[105] *Melodifestivålen* is a nationally televised music competition, while less known outside of Sweden, has close associations with Eurovision: the Eurovision Song Contest and its most famous export, ABBA, until the 1990s, both form a significant part of Sweden's international musical persona (Adams 2015; Johansson 2010, 2013; Åkerström 2014; Aldskogius 1993; Burnett and Wikström 2006; Davis and Henrekson 2006).

[106] Dag Volle (Denniz Pop) is largely unknown outside Sweden and there are only a few interviews with the producer in the public domain. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gbVcgEucMdY, is an interview where Volle describes how he came to work with Ace of Base and also introduces his

inextricably linked to the Cheiron studio, located in the Kungsholmen district of Stockholm; you could say this was Stockholm's *Hitsville*, and through his legacy, propelled a new wave of record and songwriting producers in the city. The reputations of Stockholm's most successful producers are embedded in the work that took place during the Cheiron studio era (Hallencreutz 2002). The most complete written account of the Cheiron studio era has been documented by Seabrook (2015), who traces a timeline from 1992 through to the studio's closure in 2000.

My interest in Swedish popular song production extends into a theoretical domain that is common enough in ethnomusicological studies. This is a sociological interest concerning the way music locates an expression of culture, often elusive but deeply felt within the sounds themselves. In this chapter, my observations of 'Swedishness' manifests through the recording sessions as an embodied sensibility, encompassing the lived experience of Swedish musical practices. This embodiment is intricately linked to the aesthetic agency of our Swedish producers. The aesthetic dimension is constrained and enabled by musical culture, sound practices, and a shifting political and social landscape. Our record producers are part of a network that not only respond and reflect local cultural dynamics and customs but also influence global trends. Underlying the analysis of the recording phase of the album is a way to express these nuanced ideas in the discussions about song arrangements, rhythm and the eventual, albeit somewhat imagined, sound of the band.

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partner Martin Sandberg (Max Martin). Other documentaries in Swedish show Volle's importance to the Swedish pop scene https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGku7vj8b2g&t=188s and more on his legacy here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gm51knLrJek&t=42s [Accessed 10 Apr 2022].

Event: The album pre-production

Pre-production on the album began about a month after we returned from our trip to Stockholm; the Basecamp producers then visited the UK to listen to the band perform and rehearse. Before they arrived, we had an unexpected line-up change and had to replace our long-standing drummer, a complication that was difficult to fix in the short period we had left to prepare. The producer and his assistant planned for two days of pre-production. The band's line-up was as it had been when I first joined them. Jon had re-joined on the keyboard, and Kevin O'Rourke became the band's studio drummer once all preparations for the album were confirmed. These changes were to significantly impact how the album project would unfold in the studio sessions, mainly as our new producers had only heard recordings of the band as it was prior to this most recent line-up change.

The three day visit's objective was for the producer's to experience and hear the band's sound and understand the songs more intimately. The first pre-production session for the album consisted of playing through each song, establishing keys, tempos, and general arrangement ideas. The producers captured the songs on a mobile recording device that later served to plan subsequent studio sessions in Stockholm. It was a straightforward process running through Kerb's repertoire. Deciding how to play the Stormore songs proved more difficult. We were all unsure of these new songs; they had never been performed live, so the work of 'bedding-in' musical ideas was slower than anticipated. The demo recordings from Stormore were used to work out specific parts.

During the rehearsal, I had to swap over to the electric guitar from the bass to make sense of specific song arrangements. I effectively had to start from scratch as a

guitar player in the band. The producers' preferred the line-up with me on the guitar, which added another complication to the process - who would play the bass? The band now occupies a liminal space, transitioning from established roles and songs to new and undefined ones. Ideally, we needed another few months to refine and develop this new material; if we had this time, we would have more than likely replaced some of the much older songs as well. As this deal with our label had been so precarious, we decided to make the best of the scenario in which we found ourselves. If we had asked for more time to prepare, the label might have changed their minds again.

After the second day's session, we discussed the next steps for the album recording. The pre-production sessions showed some weaknesses in our performances; we were under-rehearsed and unprepared. Our predicament led the producers to conclude that as the album recording was only a matter of weeks away, they preferred to use session musicians. They suggested using their 'in-house' rhythm section to save time and expense. The Basecamp brand had been constructed around a group of musicians and producers; it was logical for them to offer this solution for the recording. They suggested using a bassist and drummer who had recently recorded and toured with Britney Spears and also recorded a song for Peter Andre at Basecamp. I remember having a conversation in the pub after this session, and it was difficult for us to contain our annoyance about the suggestion of using these session musicians. We declined this solution to the problem, preferring the authentic sound of our band—however flawed it appeared in its current state. In hindsight, this decision proved to be the root of all the problems that led to the failure of the project. After they left, we wondered how they could even suggest using session musicians on our album; it emphasised an antagonism that would

develop during the recording in Stockholm later in the coming weeks. Following the pre-production sessions and the producers returned to Stockholm, we planned regular rehearsals to solve some of the issues they highlighted during their short visit. We were unrealistic in our estimation of how long this process would take and unaware of the limitations in the budget the producers had to work.

There was now only a little over a month before we were due to fly back to Stockholm and record our album. The pre-production sessions with the producers revealed an issue we had to resolve very quickly: recruiting a bass player. Ben had already planned this and decided to use one of the band's original members, Greg Shepheard, Kerb's original lead guitarist. This choice seemed odd to me, seeing as we needed a bass player. However, using him had several advantages; he already knew half of the songs we would record. In addition, we were now working under a time constraint and did not have the luxury of embarking on a long search for a new bass player. The new band line-up now had six members, including a new drummer. Conversely, Cent Records had made plans based on a four-piece band and did not want to distribute further record contracts to the new members. Ironically, they were each offered session fees for the duration of the album's production, leaving only Ben, Jim and me as the remaining signed component of Kerb (Ryan had now left the band). The album recording was planned for the first week in August 2005. We forged ahead with rehearsals and prepared the twelve songs identified in the pre-production sessions.

The main emphasis in rehearsal was to find ways of reconstructing the arrangements as they were revealed in the Stormore demo recordings. We listened to these original demos and gradually worked out structures and specific parts. The Stormore material tended to have less overt rock drum rhythm patterns, and the

arrangements were sparse and less cluttered overall. This approach to the 'groove' component in each song was a defining characteristic of the Stormore material. It was a completely different aesthetic to Kerb's older repertoire. Between signing the record contract and embarking on the trip to Sweden, Kerb had assembled a new line-up and, although having not performed live with this new configuration, were now set to record their album in a 'high-end' studio with a professional producer with some support from a record label. Outwardly, it appeared the band was now on course to complete their ambitious goal. However, this would only be the start of even more setbacks and disappointments that would continue to hamper the band's progress.

Event: Soundtrade, *Solna*

The involvement of a complex and prestigious studio, like Soundtrade, in the process of capturing a band's sound, style and music is an alluring idea. The studio control room is the central node in a distributed network that enables the interface of music, state-of-the-art technology, and socio-cultural dynamics. This dimensionality forms the basis and potential outcome of the musical project. The studio represents what Ihde (2007) describes as an *embodiment relation*, whereby the relationship between the technological space and the musicians' agency constitutes aesthetic experiences and values. These conditions formulate the music and the production, which 'are no longer merely materialized performances; they are "constructed" pieces of repeatable musics' (261). Soundtrade studio will now define the interplay between the internal reality of the musicians and the standardising processes of commodity production.

The negotiations between us (the band), the label, and the producer finally

established a date and a plan to record the album. It was a tortuous process that almost did not happen on several occasions. Once the studio and producers were contracted, we were all locked into an agreement, the outcome of which would be defined by compromise. The band's collective vision now included each of these three parties whose primary objective was to lead it to financial success and increased recognition. As Menger surmises, '[a]rtistic labor is shaped by uncertainty. An artist's activity follows an uncertain course, and its end point is neither defined nor guaranteed' (2014: 3).

After further negotiation between the record label and the producers, travel arrangements were made for the band to stay in Stockholm in early August 2005. Basecamp had booked Soundtrade in Solna, just north of Stockholm's centre. For a brief few hours travelling to the airport and journeying to Sweden, Kerb's career trajectory appeared to be upwards. However, our ideas about greatness soon came crashing down once we arrived at our accommodation at the Villa Årsta (see Chapter One). It was around 1 am, and we had to take a late flight because this was the cheapest option, which meant travelling all day and most of the night. We took a taxi from the centre of Stockholm to our hotel, but on arrival, it was clear that no one was expecting us. There had been some mix-up in the booking arrangements with our label, who forgot to finalise the band's arrangements with the hotel. The most likely explanation for the mix-up was probably because we barely registered on the label's list of priorities. As it turns out, we were being squeezed into a narrow window while work on Jamie Pearce's album had momentarily paused.



Figure 25 External view of Soundtrade studio in Solna: Courtesy of Google images.

Monday, 1st August 2005

The next day, we were collected from the Villa Årsta, and Soren and Niklas drove us to Soundtrade in Solna (Fig.26 above). The studio was situated on the ground floor of what appeared to be a high-rise block consisting of residential and business occupants. From the outside, it was barely noticeable among all the other blocks in the neighbourhood. The SAE Institute (School of Audio Engineering) sign revealed the studio's entrance. Outside, the studio was unremarkable, but inside, it became awe-inspiring and intimidating. I tried to imagine how Kerb and Soundtrade would coalesce here. Was there a sonic design in place that only producers and engineers could fathom, I wondered? This studio was a precise physical space with a specific acoustic quality. Whatever Kerb had mustered itself to be today would be subject to this isolated forensic environment, a 'rarefied atmosphere' (Meintjes 2003: 98). Soon, the gaze would be on us. What would the assessment be? How would Kerb resonate in this space, and what would be revealed? There seemed to be any number of options possible here, none of which I imagined as sound, only an

awkward collection of technology, as I gazed around at the cases of instruments piled on the live-room floor, the uncertain bodies moving around, and the occasional quiet conversations between the sound engineer and producer. Why were we in this specific studio? Would all this anxiety and musing dissipate once Soren set about his work? After all, we were now in the hands of someone who understood the complexity of this space; he must have already begun to imagine the possibilities of Kerb and Soundtrade, even if I was not able to.

I thought we had only managed to bluff our way to this stage (I never revealed this to the others). We were under-prepared for what was about to take place. The changing line-ups over the past few years meant Kerb only vaguely resembled the band initially courted by the BMG in 2002. I wondered which version of Kerb we each imagined. The producers had old demos before I had joined, the studio album, and the recordings from the Stormore sessions. I think that we all quietly knew that the job of piecing an album together would be a challenge. Although we had rehearsed before coming to Sweden, the songs had not been ingrained through sustained performance - we had not lived with the songs nearly long enough. The first day involved getting into the studio and orienting how the sessions would unfold over the coming weeks. The Basecamp producers and Soundtrade's in-house engineer organised the logistics of this fourteen-day phase. We were briefed on the itinerary, told when and where we needed to be and given a tour around the studio complex.

As we oriented ourselves, we noticed photos on the wall of famous artists and bands recorded here. Part of the studio's heritage revealed and to remind us, if we were not already aware, that this place played an important role in Sweden's popular music history and culture. Soundtrade's 'economic success' is its 'enrolment into

processes and networks of production that span geographical space' (Watson 2012: 256). Soundtrade claims to be one of Stockholm's most well-known and oldest studios and is at the forefront of many commercially successful albums and recordings. It has played a significant part in Sweden's popular music history through ABBA, Avicci and Dirty Loops recordings and international artists such as Cher, Westlife and Gary Numan. Although Soundtrade might not have the mythologised status of Abbey Road and RCA Studio B in Nashville, certainly not outside of Sweden, it is nevertheless an internationally recognised site. Recording studios like Soundtrade are 'elevated to global fame via famous artists and scenes, but always subject to varied industrial and technological changes' (Gibson 2005: 205). The engineer recalled a time when Westlife had been there and had attracted dozens of female fans to camp outside in order to get a glimpse of the boy band. These kinds of studios are enshrined in stories that magically connect the place, people, and album recordings in a product that appears fated to be legendary. Zak Albin makes this observation:

> There are many studios whose distinctive sound is forever linked with the recordings made in them. Phil Spector, for instance, returned to Gold Star Studios in Hollywood again and again to capture the sound of its spaces and incorporate them into his tracks, each time tapping into a sonic resource with which the public had become familiar through its appearance on past Spector hits (2001: 100).

Soundtrade is a 'high-end' studio, but it did not feel like the place where Kerb was going to find their sound. The production was constrained not only by budget but through the time factors in place, which defined the economic parameters of the manufacturing costs. My first impression of the studio was that it felt a little sterile, but my last experience in a studio was in my garage and, before that, Cent's basement studio. By comparison, both were budget studios yet held a claustrophobic quality that seemed to manifest in the music we were making. Nevertheless,

Soundtrade was impressive. It consisted of a large live room, approximately 100 sqm, which contained two isolation booths. According to the studio's website description, the ceiling height is 6 metres and has some acoustic panelling treatment, as seen in the photo below (see Fig. 27 below). The control room overlooks the live room - positioned behind the mosaic stone wall. Entrance into the live room was through an air-sealed door, seen to the left of the picture. It was a high-tech space, expansive, neutral, but not quirky.



Figure 26 Live room and control room,. Image courtesy of *Soundtrade Studios*, Stockholm, Sweden.

The control room (c.2005), the nerve centre of the production process, had a Neve VR 48-channel console configured to work with a Pro Tools HD system. It took me many hours to determine how the digital connectivity worked with the console. DAW technology is constantly evolving, and around the time we were in this space, many updates to Pro Tools began to emerge. The cutting edge at the time was Pro Tools 7

and its DSP (digital signal processing) hardware. These systems expanded the capabilities of large studio configurations enabling the support of 96KHz and 192KHz sample rates. These technological advancements in sampling drove the pursuit of high-resolution waveform capture and recorded bandwidth.

High-end consoles such as Neve and SSL are the centrepiece of many internationally renowned studios. The construction and configuration of the studio spaces that house them require considerable maintenance and upkeep. Consoles with computer control have separate machine rooms, usually air-conditioned to acclimatise power supplies and processors. All of this interconnectivity adds to the sense of the studio being complex, mysterious, and alienating. The design was clean and uncluttered; some studios resemble archaeological sites where layers of new and ancient equipment sit side-by-side in racks—a comforting spatial reminder of all the sonic possibilities.

'Creativity interacts with physical form, acoustic properties, technologies and landscapes in complex and dialectical ways' (Gibson 2005: 193). In an end product, i.e., the recording, we are listening to the complex interactions of artists, producers and technical engineers facilitating the aesthetic qualities of a specific space. Recording studios are not neutral sound capture spaces; instead, they are, by default, highly nuanced sound containers with specific electro-acoustic identities. A form of symbolic and economic capital exchange manifests that relies on 'the acquisition of a reputation for competence and an image of respectability' (Bourdieu 1984: 291). The relationship artists form in and of the space will likely be unique. Musicians, engineers and producers orchestrate the music and the space into branded identities.

Session 1: Drumkit



Figure 27 Pool table in the lounge of Soundtrade studio (August 2005).

We all made our way to the hospitality room, drank tea, coffee, ate some cinnamon buns, and sized up the pool table (Fig. 28). Soren quietly explained what would happen over the course of the next few hours. The first job was to rig the drum kit and microphones. I thought this would take a couple of hours, but it spanned two days. We played a lot of pool, of which I was the least capable. The drum kit was assembled in the live room, and acoustic screens isolated and controlled the sound (see Fig. 29 below). Eventually, the band would play in the same space as the drums: the guitar amps were located in isolation booths. The drum kit was the focus of the first recording session, and a lot of attention went into capturing its sound. The assistant producer, Niklas, was responsible for the technical operation of tracking to the computer system, organising the DAW sessions and

cataloguing the sessions' audio files.



Figure 28 Kevin O'Rourke in Soundtrade live room August 2005.

The acoustic qualities of the live room were a significant factor in the overall sound, so the kit was assembled, dismantled, and rebuilt in several different locations until the desired aesthetic, 'sweet spot', was captured. This process took many hours to complete. During this time, there was very little to do except sit on the control room sofa and watch Niklas, Soren, and Ian fine-tune the drum kit and the

room acoustics. Kevin needed to be available throughout the set-up for sound checking and test recording. I watched the DAW session being created and how Niklas integrated the studio's Avid hardware system into the software. The work looked complex; Ben and I exchanged glances as we remembered the pathetic attempts to get sound out of the Stormore studio - sometimes never working and uncomplicated compared to this session. There were intense bursts of activity where fine adjustments were made to microphone arrays. Each microphone positioned around the kit was considered and tested. There is noise on one of the Neve channels; it is crackling, Soren investigates with Ian, and soon the session comes to a halt as the repair is made, a channel replaced. After an hour, everything works as it should, and the session continues. There is no music yet - just testing. Niklas is busy building templates in Logic. Close mics and room mics were all assembled and began to reveal the sound of the drum kit and Kevin—a sonic upgrade to Kerb's rhythm section.

The first test recordings revealed a spacious clarity across the kick, snares, and toms sound. A combination of different snare drums was used and finely tuned to match the natural sonic qualities of the cymbals and hi-hats, all interchangeable within the dynamic stereo field. Kevin was isolated in the live room and only connected via a headphone monitoring system to us in the control room. We are all removed from the reality of the kit in its acoustic space, mediated by microphones, the control room monitors, the Neve and our producers. In this era, technology and the implementation of multiple microphones transform the contained sound of the drum kit to enable its individual components to be manipulated, separated, and augmented. The drum kit is by far the most complex instrument to capture in the recording studio due to its loudness and multiple parts. But the desire to control each

of its individual parts is essential in this sound production process. Kevin seemed to enjoy the assembling and the gradual coming together of the sound of the drum kit recording, his playing style and the room acoustics.

The carefully crafted sonic reality of the kit being played back through the control-room monitors establishes the power and authority of the drummer in the production. After two days, the sound captured is precise. Soren and Kevin commented about the tuning of the toms; they would need to be adjusted before the start of the next day's session. The cymbals are expansive. From the position of the control room, we experience the drums in a disembodied way, partially resembling what the drummer hears behind and what the audience hears in front of the kit.

Session 2: Bass and Guitar

Greg Shepheard was one of the founding members of Kerb. He had spent years working with the band, rehearsing, recording, and performing. Greg is embedded in Kerb's deep history. As the lead guitarist, he shaped the band's identity and, as a recording engineer and producer, steered the musical direction of Kerb's first self-released album (Chapter Two). I learned about Greg through the band but also became aware of him when I was teaching at a local college near Glastonbury. We sent some students to Glastonbury Recording Studio to get some 'real world' experience; Greg was the manager of the facility at the time. He is a well-known musician on the local Glastonbury scene, playing in many bands and occupying both guitar and bass chairs. Greg's inclusion in the line-up was conflicted in many ways. If things had worked out for him with Kerb, then I would not be here, and he would now be preparing to record the lead guitar parts, which he had spent many years

honing. As things have evolved since the pre-production sessions, Greg is now occupying my role as the bass player, while at the same time, I have to carve out a new identity for myself as the lead guitar player. Therefore, Greg's intentionality is complicated by his past experience and ideas of his role in Kerb as revealed in this social present—'a present of and for others'.[107] The bass session is overlaid with this contention and is ultimately exposed in the unfolding music event, underscoring the complex interplay of agency and history within Kerb's collective identity.

Soren hired a selection of electric basses for the recording session. These included a *Fender P* bass and a *Music Man Stingray*. These basses and others like my *Fender Jazz* are among the most recognisable bass sounds in modern recording history. They represent a sonic trademark, an ideal or link to the great recordings of the past, a standardised part of professional recording practice. The amplification of these instruments is also a critical factor in producing their sonic signatures. An *Ampeg SVT Pro*, with a 6 x 10" speaker cabinet, was used in these sessions. Amplification for the guitars was varied and depended on the song and included a *Vox AC30*, a *Marshall Stack*, a *Fender Twin* and an *Orange* cab—all permutations of classic rock amp configurations.

There are essentially two possible options when recording bands in studios. The first is recording the band together in the same room, where everyone is immersed in the overall sound made. This method ideally captures the authentic sound and performance of the band as it manifests within that space. The musicians once acclimatised to the acoustics of the room, would begin to get a sense of the band sound: an embodiment that involves a mixture of adjusting to the room's natural

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[107] See Berger 1999: 147- 148 defines the organisation of experience in musical performances not just an individual act but a socially shared and constructed reality.

ambience and their instrument's direct and reflected sound in that space. Some separation or control of the sound might be achieved through acoustic screens if there is a desire to repair and edit takes later into the production: although 'spill' or 'bleed' from sound source to microphones is inevitable. Clear sight lines are maintained for the band members, who can set up and perform as they might at a live gig. For example, bass players often like to be in a particular position near the drum kit to 'lock in' to specific elements of the kit, such as the snare or the kick. The bass player and drummer establish a rhythmic understanding of each other's playing and are in close proximity as part of this balance. The relationship between the bass player and drummer develops over time and becomes a fundamental component in how the band grooves. Once the drummer and the bass player are in 'sync,' the band can become 'tight'. A well-rehearsed band have this performance quality and can often translate these dynamics in the studio.

Bands that do well in this scenario usually have significant live performance experience, which is regarded as essential preparation for recording. Live performances of repertoire solidify dynamics, tempos, and overall cohesion of the sound. Conversely, an under-rehearsed and under-prepared band, such as Kerb are now, will not be 'tight' in the studio. Capturing the band's liveness presents some serious problems. Slight mistakes mean whole takes have to be abandoned. The potential benefits of this way of capturing a band's performance can reveal an intricate dynamic interplay which adds excitement to the performance of the songs—a desirable attribute for the recording. The negatives to this mode of capture for an under-rehearsed band are that more time will be needed to coax and orchestrate a great performance.

We are constrained by the time available to record the planned repertoire of the

songs for this album. Soren and Niklas, at this early stage, are anticipating additional vocal work in the Basecamp later in the month. The producers are acutely aware of the band's lack of cohesion and opt for the second option. Like the first option, the band are assembled in the live room as they might be in live performance, but rather than being in the immersive sound of the band, the totality of its sound, the guitar and bass amps are isolated in separate rooms within the live room. This technique ensures that the drum kit setup will not pick up any spill from the bass or guitar amplifiers. The bass player then monitors their sound through a headphone mix—a standard procedure in tracking and isolating instruments. However, the method has some implications on the feel and vibe of the group performance. When recording instruments with this degree of separation, the performer is not immersed in the sound of their instrument as they might be in normal playing conditions. The relationship to the instrument is distorted. In this configuration, they listen to themselves and others through a monitoring system, i.e., headphones. The headphone mix is managed from the control room, where the producer or engineer can send a version of what is being played in the live room to a specific player. This compromise, felt by the band as they adjust to the experience of their disembodied sound, offers greater editing possibilities and solves, to some extent, the problem of performance mistakes and ways of fixing errors in playing. In the scenario that, say, the bass player stumbles on a particular note or drifts in terms of timing; these minor errors can easily be fixed through editing. As the sound source is separated from the whole, it is a relatively straightforward task to locate a place in the arrangement where the problematic phrase is duplicated and, therefore, easily copied to replace the error. A future iteration of the phrase might be more stable later in the song's structure. One drawback to this method of recording is that it is more challenging to

capture performance dynamics. Multi-tracking is usually configured and controlled through strict tempo mapping via a click-track sent to the drummer's headphone mix, adding yet another layer of artifice to factor into the performance.

Session 3: Guitars

Setting up the guitar was achieved in the same way as the bass. The guitar we used for these sessions was my Yamaha SA 2100 - a replica of the classic Gibson ES-335. I bought the guitar in 1988 while I was a student in Liverpool (see Fig.30 below). It had been my main guitar for nearly 20 years - we had done hundreds of jazz gigs together. While not having the kudos of the original American guitar, it was a high-quality instrument with a unique sound. Its active controls and humbucking pickup system offered great variety in tone.



Figure 29 Clive Radford in the live room at Soundtrade.

On day three, we made our first attempts to record the rhythm section to the first song. The instrument configuration in the live room was drums, bass and rhythm guitar. Ben and I were required on rhythm guitar, and the bassist and drummer were permanent fixtures for the week. Just before we began the first take, Greg seemed uncomfortable and complained that all he was getting in his headphone mix was a 'square wave'.[108] This prompted a prolonged negotiation between him and the producers about how best to resolve the issue. Greg seemed reluctant to step back from the engineering work and decided to cross the boundary between us and the producers, which up til this point, had been mutually established. For us, the 'rules of the game' were defined by the producer's wishes, and we were eager to maintain this status quo. Unlike Greg, we had transitioned in how we viewed the organisational structure of the relationship, from the cautious pre-production conversations and song analysis to arriving in Stockholm for this first phase of recording and accepting the consequences of making this decision. The 'organisational goals' of the production team are part of a symbolic process that validates our belief in their actions and so orientates our interaction.[109]

Greg's square wave *distortion* had now destabilised the atmosphere of the rhythm section, which took time to repair. Once the headphone issue had been resolved, we commenced with recording. The first take was nervy. There were some minor adjustments to be made with the cue mixes. We could just about make out the figure of Soren behind the control room's glass. Soren's voice emerges from the

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[108] A square wave can refer to the way an audio wave clips and distorts (see http://www.ovnilab.com/articles/clipping.shtml).

[109] See Silverman 1987: 6; French and Raven 1959: 163.

talkback monitor in the room, 'Let's try another take'. Kevin cues us, and we begin again. I monitored my guitar through the headphone mix, as did Greg and Kevin. At this one point in the take, each participant has a different mix. There is no definitive version of the song being heard - us with headphones and the producers with studio monitors. We are all adjusting to and negotiating this multi-channelled soundscape.

There was a lot of physical space between us in the room. Greg sat to my left and Kevin to my right. Kevin received the click track through his headphones, and we each had a mix of Ben, who was singing the guide vocal from inside the control room. All these parameters in place guided and regulated our performance, but it was not functioning well. I had no sense of interplay and enjoyment. We were all terrified of making a mistake at this stage. There was no real sense of feel in what we were playing or how Ingrid Monson describes 'the emotional and interpersonal character of groove - something negotiated between musicians that is larger than, themselves' (1996: 68). The two days rigging up this first session had only added to the anxiety, the drums sounded great, but we were disjointed. The kind of intimacy that comes with live performance, eye contact and gestures were all absent in the room. Once the red recording light was on, the underlying stress in the band seemed to reveal itself. The nervousness in our group performance and the tensions between us combined our collective 'red light fever'.[110] Soren was listening, but he was not smiling. We were now in a predicament of our own making, had we accepted Soren's suggestion of using his session musicians, we would not now be wondering whether the album would ever materialise.

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[110] Red light fever is a euphemism for the challenging and complex set of emotions musicians struggle with when tracking in recording studios. It is performance anxiety that results in mistakes and due to knowing people are listening intently to what is being tracked, coupled with the fear of making mistakes.

After several attempts to record the first song, we assembled back into the control room and assessed the results. Soren picked up on a lack of energy in the band, and this began to worry him. The DAW's audio waveforms showed that my guitar playing was ahead of the beat. As a jazz player, I knew I was inclined to push the beat forward, and I used this kind of dynamic in my playing. However, while I was pushing, the drummer and bass player were somewhere else on the beat and, in this recording context, created too much rhythmic uncertainty. I handed the rhythm guitar playing over to Ben, who was much more used to accompanying himself - he was the rhythm guitar player in the band, whereas I, until recently, had been the bass player. Ben earned the title of 'campfire strummer' from our producer, relieved to have rhythm guitar parts that gelled with the rest of the ensemble (see Fig. 31).



Figure 30 Ben on guitar and Kevin on drums in the live room of Soundtrade, summer of 2005.

Timing, feel, and technology

The advent of greater computing power and sample manipulation during this early 2000s era began to create a trend, especially in rock and pop, of music that sits precisely on the time grid; rhythmic parts align squarely on the measure of the beat or as near to it as possible: human performance is never exactly on the beat. The natural expression and dynamics of musical performance inevitably mean that rhythm moves across the beat and is an essential part of the 'feel' of the music but does not necessarily imply speeding up or slowing down. Bill Evans expands on this idea when he compares the differences between jazz and rock in how the beat is understood by using the term 'liquid' to illustrate a jazz musician's interpretation of the beat or pulse in the music. The performance dynamics of jazz intrinsically explore the possibilities of implying the beat rather than continually stating it. Evan's describes rock music as 'not subtle, I think we can all admit that', elaborating on the idea that the rock generation has developed an excellent understanding of where the beat is, evidenced in how dance forms have evolved alongside rock and roll. People are moving with a good sense and location of the pulse. 'Now that they know where the beat is, the thing is to feel it, and to do something a little less obvious with it, there is a pulse that underlines the whole thing that doesn't have to be constantly pounded' (Evans 2014).[111] While this analogy of the beat expresses the contradiction between rock and jazz, and to some extent, me and the rhythm section—the producers and the rhythm section, other factors need to be in place before the groove can truly be established in a musical performance. This component needs the cooperation of all players, but the solution does not veer towards a freer and more

[111] Verulashvili, G., 2014. Bill Evans on Rock Music. *YouTube* [online]. YouTube Video. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gY9tF5aXSXQ [Accessed 5 Apr 2022].

ephemeral translation of the music; in fact, it becomes the opposite, as I reveal in these studio sessions.

DAWs in recorded popular music have pushed the expectations of what recorded sound should 'feel' towards the pervasive quantised grid structure in computers, which, in itself, is merely an extension of a musical score, albeit one that plays back the sounds assembled. While the placement of notes on a music stave is visually rigid, it is fluid in performance. The rigid perception of time, manifest in digital playback machines, has shaped and conditioned a very particular way of listening, especially in popular music genres, and has become, in many ways, the record producers' version of the manuscript score. As audio production software develops, more tools become available to smooth out human imperfections.

Record production and technology would make another gear shift towards this pursuit of perfection in 2007 when Avid released its Pro Tools-based tool, *elastic audio*. This breakthrough in audio sampling manipulation allowed audio waveforms to be moved around as easily as MIDI data and eliminated time-consuming manual editing processes. What is this kind of rhythmic perfection trying to achieve? The conditions of modern digital recording techniques and the scope and impact that software packages like Logic and Pro Tools have on the way records are produced drive the pursuit of perfectionism: a conditioned mindset that many producers would have thought about at some stage of a recording. The importance of 'groove' and the placement of beats in record production is one of the fundamental components of modern recording, but adherence to the 'absolute grid' system in used DAWs is not a universally desired aesthetic (Harper 2014, Fonarow 2006). Later into the recording sessions Soren would discuss the possibility of fixing timing issues using a Pro Tools 'rig'. The kind of rhythmic perfection demanded by our producer

was at the heart of how he saw a great recording emerging.

The Swedish record producer's pursuit of perfectionism may be hard-wired into its culture. For example, Robyn suggests Sweden has its own version of R&B, developed through an obsessional attention to detail that manifests in something that is, 'maybe a little bit weirder and, yeah, a stranger version of it'.[112] Andreas Carlsson expands on this idea when he talks about writing the song 'Bye Bye Bye', 'it's got that Swedish, rigid, everything perfect...It doesn't have a natural, laidback R&B feel to it. It's... It's something else'.[113] Perhaps perfectionism is established in Sweden's recent pop history, typified through the work of ABBA, which according to Johansson (2010), forms a 'role model thesis' - a framework to understand the gradual impact of a Swedish product in the world that contains 'a barely audible Swedish component' (135). In the decades that follow ABBA's success, their global impact contributes significantly to how Swedish record producers begin to organise their professional business and creative practices. 'Swedish pop is also, from this perspective, often considered to be unabashedly commercial' (ibid.: 135). Part of this commercialism is a consequence of a technology-driven reality which 'contains residues of previous modes of producing and composing popular music' (Negus 1992, 2011: 89). The Cheiron formula, according to Andreas Carlsson, was directly influenced by ABBA.[114] 'Every third chorus had a B hook. Denniz took that from 'The Name Of The Game' with ABBA. Which is the verse, and then he, kind of, made that

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[112] Robyn Carlsson, known as Robyn, is a Grammy nominated Swedish pop icon whose career began in 1995 and collaborated with Denniz Pop and Max Martin.

[113] Flat Pack Pop: Sweden's Music Miracle · Box of Broadcasts, 2013 (https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/bob).

[114] Andreas Carlsson is an award winning Swedish songwriter and producer and part of the Cheiron studio era.

connect with the last chorus, so it creates this enormous lift. It's actually two choruses going against each other, and we used that for every song'.[115] In fact, adaptation and recycling of practice have become part of the perfectionism in Sweden's popular music norms.

Album formula

Within the first three days of being in the studio with Soren, we soon began to appreciate his technical knowledge and skills as a producer even if we were uncertain about what the overall direction was for the album. We asked him how he would tackle the different songs and that we had reservations about how they might coalesce into a coherent collection. They played us extracts from Jamie Pearce's album and we got a sense of the overall production quality and the scale in which the song arrangements might be assembled. These recordings were perhaps representative of a Basecamp production formula. Soren and Niklas had created a sound designed for the pop chart-oriented market. One of the singles from the album 'More Than Enough' (2007) is an example of the approach used by Basecamp to layer sounds throughout the arrangement to create an epic-sounding hybrid of rock and pop.[116] Guitars were treated similarly to a violin or string section in an orchestra through many layers of interconnecting parts forming a single homogenous wall of sound. The gradual layering and building of song arrangements in this way would take place later once we established the rhythm section recordings. Although

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[115] Flat Pack Pop: Sweden's Music Miracle · Box of Broadcasts, 2013 (https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/bob).

[116] More Than Enough is available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=poS9P9jxwlY

stylistically different, Kerb and Pearce's albums shared a standard methodology of layering and building song arrangements. More importantly for us, each guitar and keyboard part would need to be played squarely on the beat; otherwise, the overall impact of the expansive harmonic textures created would be lost.

This approach to perfection, or the eradication of imperfection, had been the hallmark of 80s bands like Def Leppard and, more specifically, the production style of Robert "Mutt" Lange.[117] In some ways, it necessitated a change from our natural way of playing - we were much looser than they wanted. Once Ben took over the rhythm guitar role, this seemed to improve the mood. However, there was still some tension between the drummer's concept of the 'feel' and what the producer wanted. Several 'takes' happened; the producer pondered the timing, velocity, and various aspects of the recorded groove and tried to work out what was missing. Kevin would take the long walk from the live room to the control room and discuss what was happening. Even after he quickly adjusted his timing to be right on the beat, and this was checked many times, there was something that the producer seemed not particularly to like about what was being tracked. I am not entirely sure that our producer had adjusted quickly from the record he was currently mixing and how we sounded in the studio. It was evident that he would have preferred his hand-picked session players in these sessions. It would have been a neater solution to the problem and ensured a homogenous production style across the two projects.

I think the decision to multitrack the band was made because of the pre-production sessions, after which the producers suggested using session musicians - still a moot point. They were less confident about what might transpire in the

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[117] For more information on Mutt Lange's record production discography, see https://www.discogs.com/artist/239886-Robert-John-Lange. [Accessed 11 Apr 2022].

recording studio than we were. The time that we had been allotted in Soundtrade had the potential to evolve from the pre-production phase. First, we could have set up the session and worked on a collective band sound, which was a riskier strategy. Initially, the results might have yielded looser, less technically secure performances, but capturing some unplanned moments would have been desirable. Second, in the two weeks available to us, it was possible to have shaped a much more cohesive band sound especially given that we had the potential of playing for ten hours per day for fourteen days: this was a luxury that we did not have before we arrived in Stockholm. In the end, the preferred option was the less risky strategy of tracking the rhythm section with as much separation as possible.

Session 4: Keys



Figure 31 Jon Boyle keyboards Soundtrade live room summer of 2005.

The next significant phase of the album recording involved tracking the grand piano and various other keyboard instruments (Fig. 32 above). This followed the week of arduous tracking of the rhythm section, which established the song list for the album: eleven songs in total. Although the plans to move to Basecamp studio for the second phase of the album recording were now in place due to the complexity of recording the keyboards, these sessions needed to be completed during this first phase at Soundtrade. The acoustics of the live room are a crucial part of the sound. The emphasis on this part of the album recording in terms of the keyboard, became elevated beyond a merely functional and supporting role. This creative decision was driven by the producer and seemed surprising to me as, up until recently, Kerb had not had a keyboard player. It was an intervention by the producer to build more harmonic content into the song arrangements while also nodding towards the prevailing trends at the time, which saw the piano taking a prominent role in rock bands.

I realised at this point in the production that my ideas about what was being arranged in the songs were at odds with the core ideals of the producers. The time spent in Stormore was more about aligning to what we understood as our local 'field of stylistic possibles', that being Bristol.[118] The value for me at least lay in the possibilities of creating a niche 'cultural product', which then legitimised the studio activity and the investment in its infrastructure. The songwriting was more experimental, less about rock music, and in some ways incorporated jazz elements directly through my harmonic and rhythmic vocabulary, even though I was negotiating this through Ben's singer-songwriter filter. In our own studio, somewhat

[118] Bourdieu 1984: 226

removed from 'large-scale production' formulas, we rarely used the piano as it represented something too familiar and safe. We never replaced Jon after he left the band; instead, we transferred the keyboard element into sound and pre-recorded loops.

As the deal with Cent began to look like it would happen, I re-joined the band, and we played a gig in the Folkhouse in Bristol. It was an acoustic set; Ryan played the kit with brushes, me on double bass, Jim and Ben guitars and vocals and some gentle background sound effects and textures. This line-up and acoustic sound seemed to be the most authentic iteration of the band to date. It had settled into a 'left-field' acoustic quartet that had some distinct appeal to the audiences and promoters at this Bristol venue. As we jump forward to this Swedish studio, that ideal state seemed a distant memory and unrecognisable from the thing unfolding in this session. I was not against the commercialisation of our music, but I wanted it to emerge from a more abstract and potentially original position and not just follow a trend that had already been circulating in mainstream music for a few years. It needed to align more closely to the specificities of our local scene, which ultimately determined its value from our experience.[119]

The trend during the mid-2000s sees the piano form a fundamental part of the modern rock soundscape. Almost all the contemporary rock bands at this time, such as Coldplay, as I mentioned earlier in Chapter One, have utilised the piano's rhythmic and harmonic potential in some cases more prominently than the electric guitar. Historically, the piano in rock music has had a significant role in the shaping

[119] 'There is a fairly close homology between the specialised fields of production in which products are developed in the fields (the fields of the social classes or the field of the dominant class) in which tastes are determined' (ibid.: 230).

of major recordings and songs since the 1950s (Moore and Carr 2020). Much like the electric guitar, it has developed a collection of idiosyncratic performance techniques such as 'boogie-woogie' that have significantly impacted the stylising of early rock and blues. Modern rock piano playing techniques, especially in pop music, have since the mid-1960s been a kind of optional rhythm layer and rarely as a lead instrument (Macan 1997). 'From the late 1960s forward the piano was most regularly associated with the "softer" styles of rock and pop then taking shape, other keyboard instruments became aligned with the era's heavier sounds' (Moore and Carr 2020: 86).

Throughout the rhythm section recordings of the previous week, there was a back-and-forth between the band's demos and the new tracks being recorded. In some instances, sessions were scrapped because what had been captured had moved too far away from the band's demos. One song, in particular, 'Coming Home', we had recorded in Bristol and had some potential to be a single. Somewhere between setting up the drums and constructing the guide vocal, something had been lost. The tempo had shifted slightly too fast, and it no longer possessed whatever quality the producers were 'hunting'. Soren used this expression often to refer to the process of exploration and experimentation to find an elusive phrase, note, or texture. The subtle shift in tempo in the song had removed this 'sweet spot' in the original. There were other more complex issues, though, which had yet to be revealed in these keyboard sessions. The Stormore demos were part of the production process here in Soundtrade but had also been blended with the pre-production session recordings made by Soren and Niklas when they visited us in the UK a few months ago. I had begun to think that rhythmically they had travelled too far towards a more conventional rock drum sound, the demos consisted of drum loops, and I had gotten

used to the more electronic vibe and style of the arrangements. In addition to this shift, a more dramatic layering was about to take place in these keyboard sessions. To raise my concern here would have been too much of a controversy, and I think I accepted that the Stormore songs would now have to be controlled and brought back to a more Kerb-like sound world.

Like Greg, Jon had spent some time out of the band before this recording and so returned as a session player. The momentum built up before the new Cent deal prompted Jon to enquire about a return. He spoke with Ben and knew we needed someone to cover the keyboard role. At first, Ben and Jim were reluctant to let him back in. He had missed out on the time the band had been out in the cold, working on new material and experimenting with sounds, and had never really explained why he wanted to leave in the first place. Although, I could empathise to some degree as I had grown weary of Cent's comings and goings and the constant scrutiny we had to put ourselves under to reinvent the music: the demands of being in the band were onerous at times. Unlike Jon, I continued to work on songwriting with Ben, so I suppose this was partially forgivable in the scheme of things. I remembered what Ryan (our old drummer) had said to me as we entered the Cent office for the first time back in 2001 about how lucky I was to get this opportunity having only just joined. Four years later, I no longer felt lucky. It did not take long to recognise that Jon would be crucial to the whole recording and that no one else could have covered the job at such short notice.

Jon's natural style of piano playing might fall into the category of what Macan identifies as progressive rock, although I would use this categorisation loosely. This definition locates the classical piano repertoire as the building blocks of a particular way of playing and understanding harmonic structure. In the grand scheme of rock

piano, this way of playing the instrument, in a rock context, has only a passing reference to its more traditional beginnings in 'boogie-woogie'. Identifying these ideas into something more concrete might suggest the repertoire of 'Liszt, Debussy, Ravel, and Bartók' (1997: 54) as a broad set of musical references (in Chapter Two I describe Jon's theatrical intro to the song 'Epic'- where he incorporates Grieg's Piano Concerto in A minor). If I compare this to the Bristol music scene at the time, bands that used the keyboard were doing so as part of an extended electronic organisation of sounds. When I first met Jon (in the opening vignette in Chapter One), I discovered that he had studied piano at university, having spent years as a child working through the piano grade syllabus. 'Survivors of childhood piano lessons have inevitably absorbed plenty of music theory and possess genuine technical ability' (ibid.: 50). The years of preparation and study required to play the 'classical' repertoire is frequently referred to as being 'classically trained'. This stylistic manifests itself in rock songs through various complex approaches to harmony, texture and rhythm. Pianists with this level of training possess advanced understandings of the mechanics of the instrument, its tonal capabilities and subtleties, techniques to execute elaborate arpeggiated harmonic passages and a vast resource of chord voicing and combinations to accompany and adapt to song arrangements.

Jon's 'organisation of attention' can be identified through specific musical techniques that he utilises to solve the problems in song arrangements.[120] In addition to the habits of his classical training, Jon's perception of his role now is shaped by his experience of a past Kerb, as it was when he was a member, along with how he

120 Berger 1999

interprets the new material in this present iteration directed through the filter of our Swedish record producer. It is a collective reality through which it seeks to 'effect a particular, situational aim'.[121]

While the rhythm section for each of the songs shortlisted for the album was now captured, there were, in fact, at least twenty takes of each on the hard drive. Soren and Niklas planned to select and edit a definitive take before commencing with the next layer of recording. However, time constraints meant that this would not be possible, and tracking the piano and keyboard parts would have to be managed with the best-unedited take. Soren was apprehensive about continuing with the recording, given this technical drawback and the implications for creating a tightly focused harmonic layer. With no options for rescheduling these sessions, it was down to Niklas to extract the best take of each song the night before the keyboard sessions commenced. Kerb's album would, like Pearce's, be imagined from a deep, sonically rich aesthetic. This idea begins to manifest in this next series of recordings, where the first significant change in sound begins to emerge through the studio's Hammond C3 with Leslie 730 speaker model, Wurlitzer 200 A, and a Steinway B Concert Grand.

The methodology for tracking worked in a formulaic way that we came to understand as each session unfolded. A couple of hours were spent setting up the grand piano, and like the drums, it was recorded from the performer's perspective as it was heard playing back in the control room. The positionality of a traditional stereo recording - a split pair microphone technique captures the piano's lower frequency and note range - the left hand and the upper note range of the right hand.

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121 Ibid.: 304

As with the drum recording, the sound of the room was also captured and formed part of the overall acoustic piano sound. A combination of direct and reflected sound. The piano was tracked separately to the drums, bass and guitars to limit spill. The Steinway in this recording was tracked to capture the pure sound of the instrument. Jon monitored the rhythm section through headphones. Listening to the click track along with the rhythm section on playback became essential to capture accurate recordings. The Steinway was tracked to every song, and then, in turn, the Hammond organ and then the Wurlitzer.

These sessions had far fewer retakes than the previous rhythm section sessions. Any retakes were primarily about finding slight alternatives to what had been played. Soren occasionally offered suggestions for different arpeggio configurations, adjustments to chord voicings, and rhythmic patterns that were integral to locking each keyboard part together. This process continued with the Hammond organ, which had the addition of the Leslie speaker in the room. And finally, the Wurlitzer, whose signal was split between the amplifier in one of the isolation booths and a DI to the console.[122] Additional microphones were set up close to the Wurlitzers soundboard to capture the natural acoustic sound of the keyboard. All of these components would then combine to form the entirety of the Wurlitzer recording.

[122] DI stands for Direct Input or Direct Inject and is a common term used by studio engineers and producers.



Figure 32 Soren adding xylophone textures to various songs.

The keyboard sessions were completed with some time to spare. Soren was more upbeat, impressed with Jon's playing and work rate and relieved that there was now something he imagined might work for the album. With a few days left in Soundtrade, Soren decided to add some additional 'luxury textures' such as a xylophone and glockenspiel (see Fig. 33 above). On the last day in the studio, we listened to the songs in the control room and tried to assess what we had accomplished in these two weeks. Despite the setbacks in the first week, the addition of the keyboards seemed to have masked the unevenness in the rhythm section performances. Although we only had the guide vocals to assess the songs, generally, the recording sounded exciting and, more importantly, began to feel like a collection of songs with a unified production design. The systematic approach Soren used ensured consistency in how the instruments glued the concept. What manifested in

these sessions did not sound like Kerb, and neither did it sound like Stormore - it was situated somewhere between the two. We left a few days later and returned to the UK. I saw it as a time to do some practice before the next batch of sessions due to take place later in the month. There was still a considerable amount of work to be done on guitars. I practised with a metronome and tried to get into the habit of playing on the beat; otherwise, this would be an issue on my return to Basecamp.

Summary

The recording studio is a complex organisational system central to the production of musical culture. They are spaces that shape creative expression while simultaneously reinforcing power structures. Elite studios are more than just a physical location equipped with technology for capturing and shaping musical performances. They are also social spaces shaped and defined by the artists, producers, and engineers who enable interaction and collaboration. Studios are specialised spaces of production and are inaccessible to the general public. As a rarefied space where only a select few can enter, the studio offers an allure of mystique exaggerated by those outside it. For the musician granted access, they offer the potential to transform raw materials into commercial products. Those who do not have access due to lack of resources, connections, or other barriers become controlled, marginalised or excluded. Studios like Soundtrade uphold norms and organisational standards that regulate style and voices and become sources of efficacy. Sounds produced become fixed to dominant trends within industry standards, fulfilling the generation of cultural capital. The studio, therefore, is not just a place of artistic creation but also a site where power dynamics, cultural trends, and social hierarchies are played out.

Band history: *album recording phase* (p.2)

Event: Basecamp Studio

The second part of this chapter tracks the album project as it relocates to Basecamp studio.[123] Apart from the detailed guitar and vocal sessions that typify the work to be done in this new location, there is a rebranding of the band name from Kerb to Safehaus. This renaming indicates a significant shift in identity and a deliberate move from past ideas of Kerb to its present incarnation. Safehaus is not just a direct representation of a musical idea but also symbolises deeper meanings bound partly to the Night of the Hunter concept (see Chapter Two). The sounds now heard in the Basecamp control room monitors only vaguely resemble our ideas of Kerb. It is a transitional moment marked by distinct stages - personnel changes and shifts in musical style. These stages are charged with the anticipation of record label support and a professional producer and, as such, form the apparatus of an imagined, idealised future scenario where the recordings appear detached from reality—the deal, success, a completed album, or any promise of these things. Much of the discussion throughout this chapter concerns ways to interpret music and sound as it materialises in studio recordings. As Louis Meintjes (2003) suggests, music producers play a pivotal role as gatekeepers in determining and curating the musical landscape. They are institutionally positioned between musicians' creative agency and the music industry's economically organised structures. This grants producers significant influence and power over which artists get promoted, and

[123] This social media site is the public view of Basecamp studio c.2023. https://www.instagram.com/basecampstudiosstockholm/

trends are embraced. Producers are not neutral facilitators of art and commerce but strategise their own careers in parallel to those of the artists they produce - the desire for success can be seen as a drive towards homogeneity.

With phase one of the album now complete, the session files were transferred to Basecamp in Möckelvägen. The studio, although small, was equipped with a range of expensive outboard processors and synths; it was set up for 'high-end' pop production. The main control room was linked to a small purpose-built tracking room, big enough to house a range of guitar amps and microphones and serve as a vocal booth; there was also an array of vintage analogue synths and outboard equipment, an SSL console, and a TC Electronic Reverb 6000. In addition, 2 or 3 other rooms adjoined the central space with some basic Apple-based setups running Logic software. These spaces were hired out to other producers associated with Basecamp, each working on songwriting projects and part of the company's collective firm of producers. The studios we had worked in before this were essentially hourly-rate facilities. Basecamp operates on a different business model, where the owner carefully selects songwriters and producers. These associates would ideally contribute to the firm's quality standards and broader reputation on the Stockholm production scene (as I outlined earlier in this chapter).

We returned to the UK and planned our next visit to Stockholm scheduled for the end of August 2005. The break in recording gave the producers time to work on some editing tasks which involved sifting through multiple takes of every song recorded, in some instances, well over twenty takes per song and with the additional keyboard parts. We anticipated the recording sessions at Basecamp would focus on vocals with perhaps some additional guitar parts to finish the arrangements and to fix some of the timing issues that emerged at the Soundtrade sessions.

The return trip involved Jim, Ben, Jon, and me. Greg and Kevin were no longer needed as the rhythm section recordings were completed. I was apprehensive about the return trip; my lack of cohesion at Soundtrade had weighed on me during the hiatus. However, I had worked on some song ideas and rehearsed shifting my beat positioning with a metronome and various DAW mockups of the songs. I knew there were some intricate parts left to track on the Stormore songs, and they needed to be precise. Ben had also recognised that "the pressure would be on me now" as he frequently reminded me. We jested with each other all the time in the studio. There was an underlying competitive streak between us that served to keep us focused on the work at hand. He would say things like "don't worry if you're not up to it, I can always do the guitars", in an attempt to provoke a defensive response which he would then laugh at. This interplay between us was part of the band 'banter' that served to intensify our relationships. The four of us now present at Basecamp had forged a close friendship that extended beyond the boundaries of Kerb. We each recognised that while the band was important, we also valued the social aspect of our interactions.

Rock bands exist in both performative and ostensive states, the latter being fulfilled within the socialisation of the group. For these conditions to materialise, the band needs a cohesive idea to unite each of its constituent parts and, if strong enough, can sustain it for a long time, in some cases many years, as seen in Kerb's case. Additionally, the collective musical identity of the rock band is simultaneously individual and social: it is an assemblage of autobiographical memories socially traced (Schutz 1951). '[T]he everyday world of lived social experience is always *perspectival*' (Berger 1999: 123). This idea, in essence, provides the foundational stimulus that enables a structural creative organisation to unfold and

reaffirm the motivational incentives that propel individuals to join and remain in rock bands. These pre-conditions are inextricably linked to the negotiation and pursuit of our collective musical aims.

More guitars

Monday, 22nd August 2005

We all felt the pressure of this return visit because, in the back of our minds, we knew that Soren was not entirely happy with how the Soundtrade sessions had turned out. He expected to have the whole album recording wrapped up and then use most of the time at Basecamp focused on mixing. The album was a long way off this stage in the production. We arrived around 10 am and familiarised ourselves with the Basecamp studio layout. The first sessions in the studio began with electric guitars. Soren decided to re-record all the guitars tracked at the Soundtrade sessions rather than spend time editing and sifting through the numerous takes of each song. Before the first session commenced, he insisted we change all the strings on the guitars to very heavy gauge strings - he never really explained why, but I offer some suggestions here.

It is a theory that heavy gauge strings produce increased harmonic resonances. Yet, there are conflicting ideas about whether heavier gauge strings can produce a better tone than lighter gauge strings. Some suggest that heavy gauge strings tend to have a more focused sound and that the resonant frequency of the string is reached much more quickly once it has been plucked. The extra tension caused by the thicker gauge creates less scope for the string to flap around; this might happen if the string is played with more velocity. Compared to lighter gauge strings, the heavier strings contain more metal and subsequently create more kinetic energy through the

magnetic coil of the pickup. This resonance will then transmit through the wooden body of the guitar—a sonic quality that contributes to the guitar's tone. Thicker gauge strings contain more sustain due to the energy created and the time it takes to disperse. While having apparent tonal benefits, they also require more physical energy to pluck and produce the sound. The extra tension makes the string harder to fret and can slow down the ability of the player to execute musical phrases and intricate solos. This tension can transfer to the player's mental state as tiredness creeps into the hand, affecting accuracy and confidence. It is common for guitarists who like to play very fast solos to use light gauge strings where hand movements and fretting become much less physically demanding. These lighter strings are also easier to bend, enabling expression and performance dynamics. The advantage of using heavy gauge strings is that tuning becomes more accurate and stable.

The decision to use heavy gauge guitar strings connects to my observations earlier in this chapter, where I discussed the 'wall of sound' approach to recording guitars.[124] The successful arrangement of guitars in a multitrack recording done in this way depends crucially on the accuracy of the instrument's tuning. It appeared to me that there was less emphasis on capturing the individual personality of the performer. The guitar parts were assembled in much the same way that a violinist's role works in an orchestra section. Similarly, the way an orchestra's string section is organised, in terms of instrument range and coverage within different octaves, the guitars are also arranged to span as wide a note range as possible. Building this pseudo-orchestral guitar section was achieved by selecting different guitars a

[124] Wall of sound refers to the production style of Phil Spector who created a dense arrangement and orchestration style to many hit records of the 1960s, see the Righteous Brothers 'You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin''.

baritone guitar, a bass guitar and a mandolin. See Figure 34 below, where I am recording an additional bass guitar part while the producer simultaneously manipulates notes in the higher register of the neck.



Figure 33 Clive and the Soren working on a guitar part at the Basecamp, 2005.

I was the first to record at the new location, and I was a little apprehensive. The studio environment was intimate in that we were only working in two small spaces; the control room was at capacity with all six of us present. It was also crammed full of high-end analogue outboard gear such as Chandler and Fairchild compressors and racks of vintage synths. Tracking to the computer was done via a bank of MOTU (Mark of the Unicorn) HD 1296 PCI systems configured with Logic 7.[125] This room

[125] MOTU (Mark Of The Unicorn) is an American recording technology company that have pioneered audio interface solutions for low-budget to professional users.

adjoined a much smaller vocal booth containing guitar amps: Vox, Orange, Marshall, and Fender.[126] I was located in the vocal booth enclosed by the sound of the amps with the headphone feed ajar over my ears: a typical makeshift arrangement when multi-tracking. Playing to the pre-recorded tracks was easier than being in the live room at Soundtrade, and the atmosphere was more relaxed despite the forensic listening of Soren, Niklas, and the rest of the band in the next room.

The first session loaded onto the studio computer was a song written at Stormore called 'Don't Let Yourself Down'.[127] We listened to it in its partially assembled state. The main idea for the song had evolved out of the opening arpeggiated guitar part, which Ben had written and had loosely developed out of a classical guitar study he was playing around this time. It begins with an opening arpeggiated pattern in B minor (see Figure 35 below).
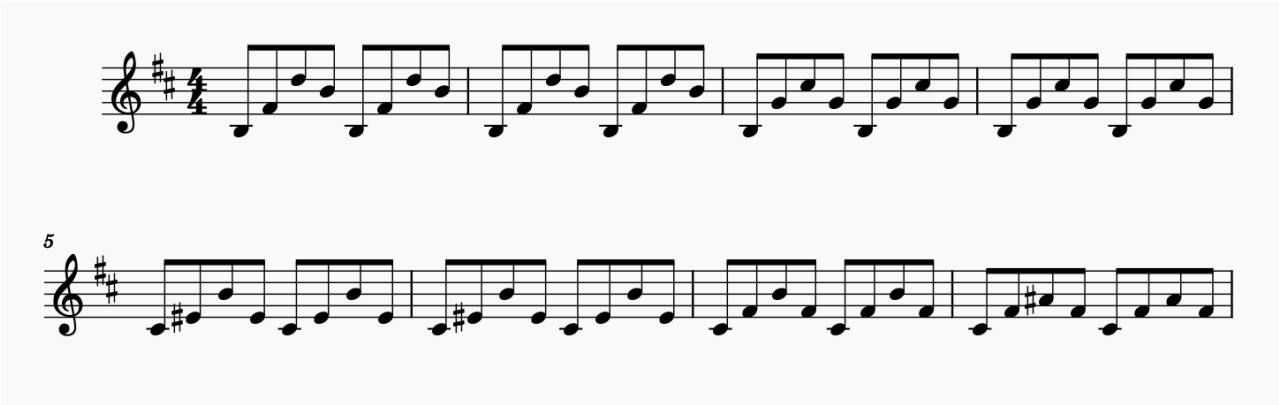


Figure 34 Arpeggiated guitar figure in 'Don't let Yourself Down'

The song's opening verse section has a low arpeggiated pattern that repeats

[126] Vox, Orange, Marshall and Fender amps are the mainstay of the guitar amp brands and have a long history within record production. Hunter, D., 2012. Amped: The Illustrated History of the World's Greatest Amplifiers. Voyageur Press (MN).

[127] Don't Let Yourself Down final mix is publicly available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Rle7FwlCKo&list=OLAK5uy_n_yc-uIr--6TGUqnoiGbBRW3SlLex_Jz0&index=1

throughout the verse sections of the song. The pattern itself is straightforward to execute in fingerstyle, but this did not work well on the electric guitar. The solution was to use a plectrum instead. After some experimentation, it only seemed to gel with the other parts of the arrangement if performed strictly with a 'down and up' pick direction.

There were many moments like this of intense focus on the quality of how sounds were made and recorded. The micro-attention to detail at all stages of the recording seemed in stark contrast to how we had made the demos. Once we began to listen to minute changes in the tone, attack, and duration of notes, the possibilities of layering sounds began to manifest as a kind of synthesis method. Like a semi-modular synth, the band members, fragmented guitar parts, and various guitar and amp types each become an interchangeable component of the overall design of the sound and architecture of the song. All decisions are filtered through the musical formula of the producer, Soren. We accepted his 'superior knowledge' and never questioned his decisions.[128]

Soren's formula for the layering of sounds cumulatively thickens the overall texture. Tracking guitars, particularly in the choruses of many of the album's songs, in this way created a less identifiable guitar sound, especially when combined with the keyboards and piano. Each part that is created functions as a small building block towards the overall end result. After the initial guitar recording was completed, the process of working on each song systematically continued, much as it had done in Soundtrade. The guitar sound created on one song was then tracked to all the others.

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[128] French and Raven (1959) provide a mechanism to understand the power relationship between the musician and the producer in this example. 'The strength of the expert power of O/P varies with the extent of the knowledge or perception which P attributes to O within a given area' (163). In this example, O is the producer and P the musician. 'Whatever influence occurs it seems to be necessary for both P to think that O knows and for P to trust that O is telling the truth (164).

Either Ben, me or Jim recorded these parts, and we rotated through the songs as and when needed. The guitar amps were set up in the isolation booth and subsequently monitored within the control room, especially when the amp was loudly overdriven. The sessions usually started with the song being played back from where it had been reached in Soundtrade; the guitarist could then monitor both the track and the new part without needing headphones.

Gradually over the next two weeks, the songs began to build. Layer upon layer of guitars was added until it was difficult to know which version would make it to the final arrangement. Soren was very focused on how he 'hunted' for the right sounds and textures. He was often remote and not prone to much talking or discussion; we had no shared vision for what was being created; other than that, we liked the process and discovering subtle ways to record music - Soren's influence was not exerted directly, more from a 'passive presence'.[129] Each day began by listening to the previous day's recording, usually just one song, and then deciding on the next song. It was not long before we established a routine and relaxed atmosphere, in stark contrast to how we were in Soundtrade. Most guitar parts recorded during this period were written and conceived at Basecamp and represented a new musical and sound direction. There was a creative flow between the producers and us; Soren would have an idea for a sound, and then we responded on the guitar while playing along with the track. He usually decided on what would then be captured. As we progressed through the songs this way, the number of takes needed reduced as we became more at ease in the space.

During the sessions at Basecamp, the producers often commented about the

[129] 'Indeed, influence might result from the passive presence of O, with no evidence of speech or overt movement' (ibid.: 152).

amount of editing work needed before the mixing phase could be started. We were anxious to get the album finished and delivered to the label, but a quick turnaround was not likely due to this extra work. Album production is a multi-faceted operation that continually shifts its focus from surface-level attention to close-up analysis and minute adjustments to sound. Record production requires a continual back-and-forth assessment and adjustment of sound as it edges towards an ideal state. I experienced this as a complex negotiation between the overall experience and, in some ways, evaluation of the song, its potential for success, to the forensic manipulation of moments contained within, which, when combined, reveal the perfected whole as we might be hearing it from inside the production process and organisation. Using Don Ihde's phenomenological deconstruction concept, this perception of two-states, the audio as it appears in its totality and simultaneously close-up, or zoomed in at a specific location point, is a 'multistable perception' whereby an ambiguous uncertainty prevails (1977: 45). The technological systems used for accessing the hidden background of the song are a fundamental part of this organisation. As the multi-track recordings expanded, so too did the editing workload, and therefore a solution would need to be found.

Editing

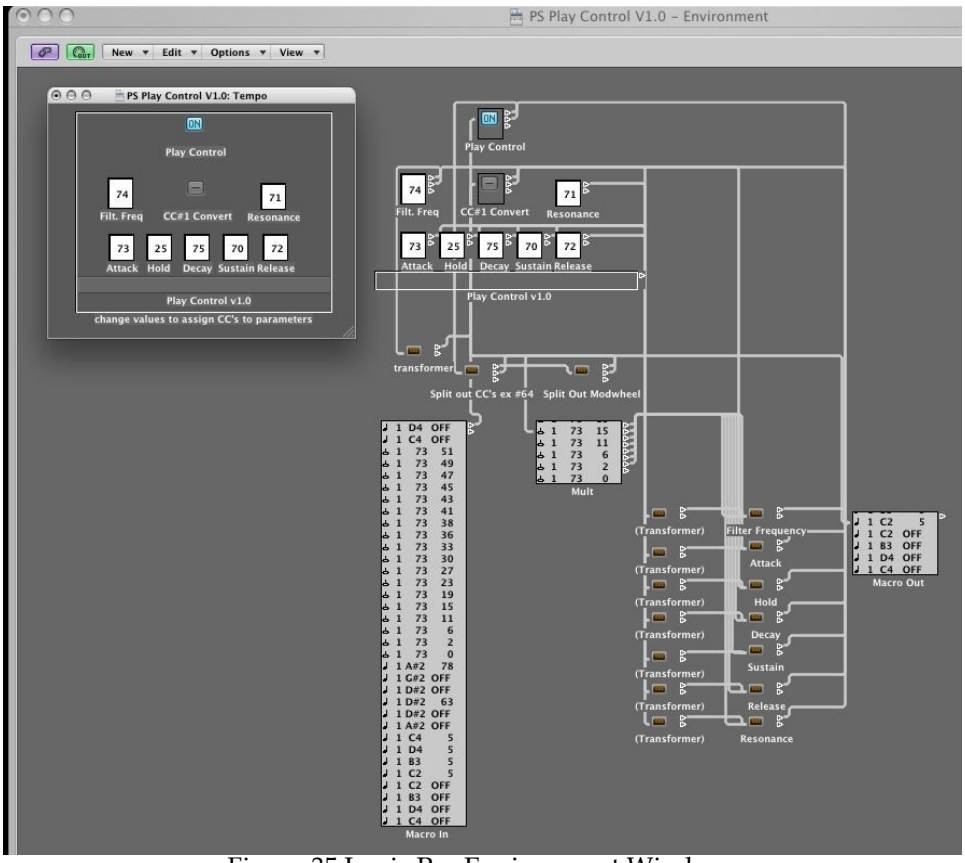


Figure 35 Logic Pro Environment Window.

In 2005, there were essentially two solutions; editing could either be done manually using Logic Pro 7 or with Pro Tools' *Beat Detective* operation. Logic Pro 7, at this point in its development, having been acquired by Apple in 2004, was not yet the 'prosumer' interface we have come to know today (2023). Many of the automated features in current versions of Logic Pro, such as track creation and signal routing, had to be configured manually in its *Environment Window*: a kind of background *object-oriented* programming window that enabled the configuration and expansion of the main arrange window audio tracks (see Fig 36 above). By comparison, Pro Tools 7 and its supporting PCI hardware systems were still aimed directly at professional users. Avid's development of bespoke DSP hardware, namely Beat Detective, made advanced audio signal processing possible. The descriptions of these recording

studio tools I offer here are essentially a historical snapshot of how audio technology emerged in the early to mid-2000s. It is a recollection of how audio engineering shifts dramatically towards the quantised grid systems and functionality of DAWs, which extends processes generally associated with MIDI data now being assigned to audio data. Experiencing this evolution in audio technology seemed quite miraculous in how complex audio recordings can be manipulated on the DAW's timeline. Anything was now potentially fixable: guitars could be aligned to drums, bass, vocals, or any part of the ensemble arrangement. It is not that it is only used to fix poor performances per se, but rather it adds a layer of hyper-perfection to already good performances in recordings.

Beat Detective enabled the quantisation of drum performances at a much higher integrated level than was possible in Logic Pro 7 by automating editing process of the whole drum kit. Manually editing mono recordings such as vocals and guitars, although laborious, is relatively straightforward compared to the complexity of a drum kit. The sound of each drum in the kit will spill onto the microphone of another, and so forth. If editing is done manually, great care is needed to select, move, or duplicate the audio regions. Cutting off cymbals' tail-end sounds is easily done, immediately revealing the edit on playback. Once the edit has been made, a crossfade must be applied to each track to avoid high-frequency pops and clicks, a common problem with digital editing. Editing is a lengthy process. *Beat Detective* can analyse all the component tracks as one unit through automated transient analysis. Slicing the audio regions is also achieved through a simple function called *Region Separation*. With all stages complete, a quantising step is applied. Then finally, one further click of *Edit Smoothing* removes all digital pops and clicks, which are revealed when the process is attempted manually (see Fig. 37 below).

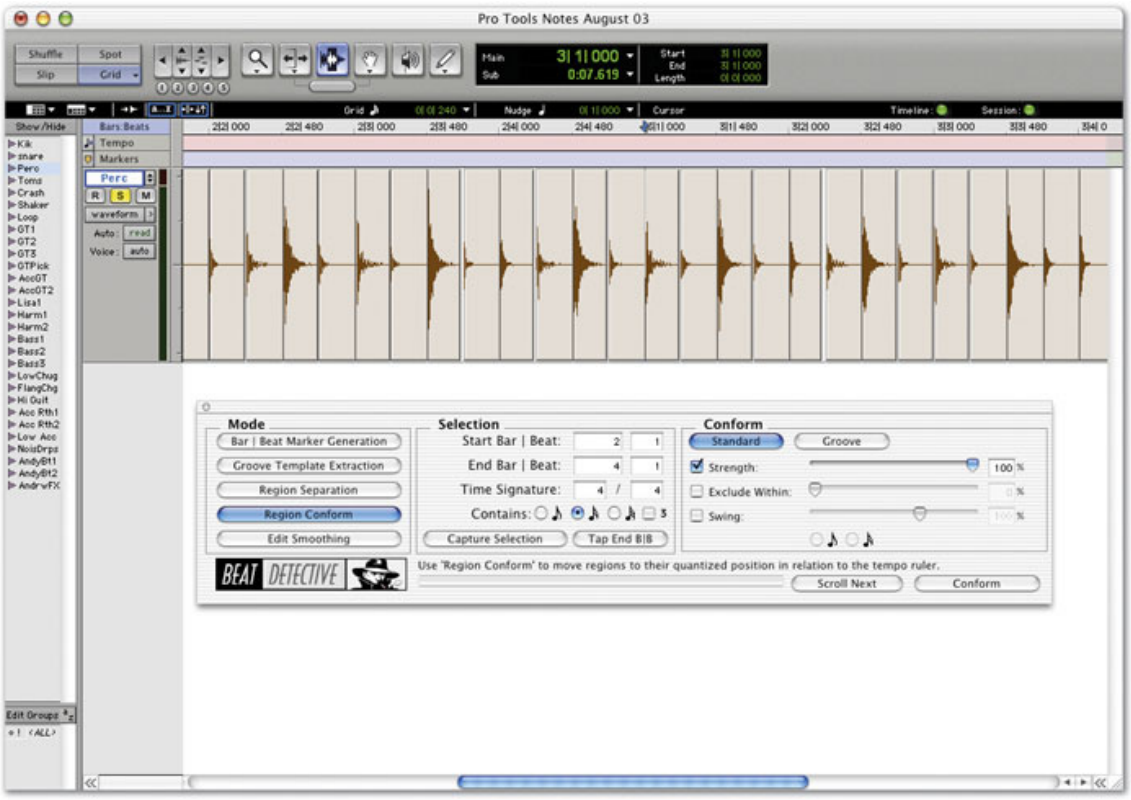


Figure 36 Screenshot of Pro Tools' Beat-mapping function.

Software programmes have evolved to solve sonic flaws as well as address time-consuming processes associated with analogue systems. Historically, manual tasks common in record production have been automated through pre-determined musical formations. For example, instrument presets, pre-made loops and patches form what might be considered a rationalised system of production. This 'preset' reality has further implications in how AI (artificial intelligence) composition and production software has enabled ways to simulate composer stylistics, automate mastering processes, and write parts for instruments.

Vocals

Modern audio tools focus the attention of the production process towards hyper-detail and perfection. Not just cleaning up uneven performances but

overlaying a sonic aesthetic that does not exist outside of the technology-enhanced reproduction. What do these systems of production affect in the way that the vocal performance is both attended to and experienced? In Berger's analogy, Rubin's goblet becomes a metaphor to expose the foreground and background of this experience (see 1999: 123-125).[130] Applied to the song and the recording of the vocal, the foreground of the performance, the execution of the lyric and the melody against the backing track can be heard as a continuous human performance, perhaps conveying the meaning of the song. It is what we understand as our natural perception of the song. Conversely, attention shifts to the background where the focus is on individual syllables and of words sung in verses and choruses. Like the black and white image of the goblet, it is possible to hear both audio images simultaneously or, as Berger suggests, 'depends on how you treat the parts of the diagram' (123). Critical listening to vocal recordings as they are being constructed involves a specific kind of attention facilitated by the audio tools available in the DAW. Avoiding what Berger suggests is a 'narrow momentary experience of it' (303). The horizon of this experience depends on the organisation of attention between two complex states, that of the performance of the vocal as revealed in linear time and that of a focused and forensic condition that reveals the distinctness of words and breaths. Once assembled, the lead vocal forms a 'gestalt' image that embodies both the 'foreground and the background' content 'that mutually define each other and the basic unit of experience' (123).

Up to this point in the album production, we had become used to the guide

[130] The analogy of the goblet where the optical illusion of seeing either two faces or the hour glass appears depending on how it is being viewed and experienced by the observer. See also Don Ihde's (1977) example of the Necker Cube - again an optical illusion that reveals both a foregrounding and backgrounding of the experience.

vocals together with the multi-tracked instrumental backings. Although presentable, the guide vocals that we had become accustomed to over the past weeks were not nearly 'polished' enough now that the new arrangements were in place. When we heard the songs played back, usually at the start and the end of the day, Ben would grimace at some point, something slightly out of tune or articulation of a word that did not scan correctly: a reminder that the important work of capturing the vocal performance was now urgent. Ben was apprehensive about how these sessions might unfold and felt that the pressure would now be on him to produce a lead vocal that would gel all the songs and make sense of the elaborate layering in the arrangements, and, more importantly, convince our record label that the project still warranted their time and resources.

The vocals were recorded using Logic 7, this studio's main DAW software package. The assistant producer, Niklas, engineered these sessions using a vocal comping technique that spliced each word of a phrase or line of the lyric. Thus, the singer was required to sing multiple takes of the same verse or chorus section, which usually amounted to around 5 or 6 versions. The aim was to capture alternative versions of almost every word or sometimes syllable of the lyric. The guide vocal acted as a map for the editing process; all lyrics were printed out for the producer to see and check while recording. Verses were recorded in turn, followed by the choruses, and finally, any other part of the song that did not fall into these two main categories. The verse and choruses were systematically edited and spliced together, usually accompanied by microanalysis of the performance, scrutinising timing, tuning, and tone. The composite (comp) vocal could contain elements from all or any of the multiple takes. The illustration (Fig. 38) indicates how this might look on a DAW's 'Arrange' window and shows the waveforms of each word within a four-bar

phrase.

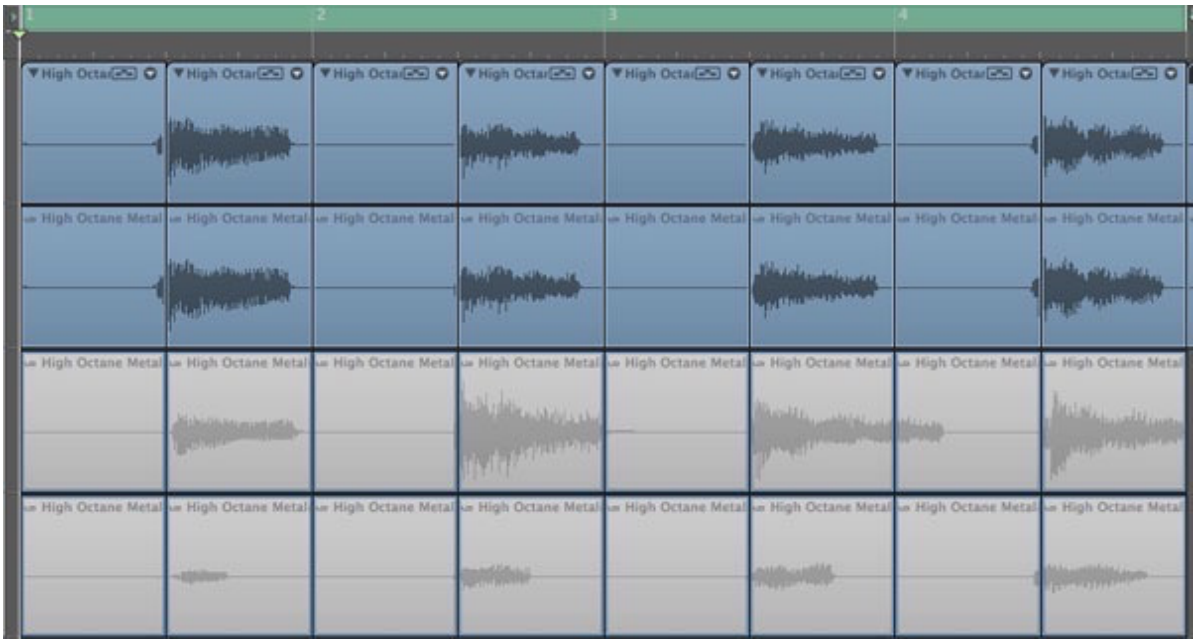


Figure 37 Screenshot of vocal recording of a verse assembled in *Logic*.

Compiling the vocal arrangement meant auditioning every recorded word in turn. This procedure was executed by soloing the vocal track, looping each spliced segment, moving to the next track, and so on. For example, a lyric that contained the word 'the' would be listened to six times in isolation. The favourite 'the' was then eventually chosen after a short debate. The debate focused on how 'in tune' the word was and whether there were any unwanted extraneous sounds. After auditioning each word, the favourite was highlighted and compiled into a coherent whole. Ben would have the deciding vote on the choice of words. Occasionally, one word might not quite scan well enough with another, so a substitution was made. Auto-tune would also be used to solve issues with troublesome words or syllables. Once assembled, the next verse was treated similarly, followed by the choruses until the whole song was completed. A further presentation edit was also needed to eliminate 'clicks' and 'pops' between edited audio clips.

Crossfades were then applied to every edit manually, which, as mentioned

before, was an essential stage in transitioning from one edit to the next. With the comping, crossfading and auto-tuning completed, one last process was added before mixing. This phase involved stripping out unwanted noise between words or phrases in the vocal recording. These unwanted noises might be the singer's coughing, talking back to the control room or any audible headphone spill present from the monitored track. The result was a neat and clean-sounding vocal take. This same technique was used on all the backing vocals. It took an average of two hours per song to complete and was an intense listening experience. It was an exhausting process for Ben, not only trying to sing in such a controlled environment where the focus demanded accuracy and expression but also the auditioning process required a prolonged and intense concentration on micro-analysis.

At the end of the second week in Basecamp, we recorded all the essential guitar parts missing from the Soundtrade sessions and began working on the vocals. At some point during these two weeks, we decided that the name Kerb no longer seemed to fit what had manifested in this month-long expedition to Stockholm. Our producers agreed that 'Kerb' belonged to another era conceived nearly a decade earlier. We decided on Safehaus; it seemed to distance us from the Britpop tag. It was the title of one of our songs and tied the album loosely back to the 'Night of The Hunter' concept, although neither Ben nor I elaborated on this to the rest of the band. It seemed too distant to warrant any consideration.

By early 2006, all recordings were complete except the additional 'luxury textures', as Soren would say. These eventually consisted of string parts, a human whistle and percussion. We wondered what our producer intended regarding mixing the album and whether we would be involved in this stage. He tended to be elusive about mixing but remained enthusiastic and genuinely excited about

realising the potential of the songs and the album.

Unfortunately, events did not run as smoothly as we had hoped, and a lengthy hiatus emerged to hinder our plans with our label. As a result, we did not hear the album again until August 2008 and many years beyond this before it was completed. At the same time, our label's main act failed to make the breakthrough with his singles and album despite some high-profile promotion campaigns. He had also been featured on a Radio 2 playlist and appeared to be getting national exposure. Our future at the label depended heavily on the success of his project.

Conclusion

In Chapter Three, I aimed to explore the process of recording an album in a prestigious studio in Stockholm. Despite the promise of potential success this arrangement implies, facilitated by a record label and a professional record producer, the reality for the band is disappointing. Why does the album recording fail to meet expectations? Firstly, the band mismanaged the preparations leading up to the recording, which compounded issues around the production logistics. As a result, despite its best efforts, the band fails to deliver a product that might elicit further investment from the label. The constant personnel changes and its disparate collection of songs offered complicates progress. Second, the producers face external budget and time constraints that impede the album's completion—a direct result from the labels unwillingness to continue with the project.

As I explore the experiences of the musicians and producers in this band history, a complex picture emerges concerning the musical and sonic design of the album. The identity of the potential product is embedded within fluid cultural parameters that are intrinsically Swedish. I contend that Swedish record production

modalities are oriented towards audio perfectionism (a view ascertained from personal experience and anecdotal evidence, e.g., Robyn et al. mentioned earlier in this chapter). Stockholm's music production scene protagonists are enmeshed in cultural networks that drive innovation through collaborative and predominantly male-domain, competitive practices. Over the past three decades, this value-driven praxis has challenged the dominance of US and UK record producers and enticed music businesses to outsource songwriting and production to Stockholm.

Stockholm becomes the interface for the band to negotiate their sonic and musical identity. It is the space where aesthetic ideals meet institutional market-driven expectations. The band's Swedish producers are positioned as the mediators of commercially viable products. They formulate the conditions that extend the potential of songs to become symbolic products which are made possible through 'the symbolic production of the work, i.e. the production of the value of the work, or, which amounts to the same thing, of belief in the value of the work' (Bourdieu 317: 1983). Soundtrade recording studio becomes the high-tech container for a particular production process made more powerful due to its historical status and reputation.

This nuanced exploration of events underscores the reciprocal relationship between my temporal articulation of daily experiences in the studio and the overarching narrative of the band's journey. It reveals how individual and collective identities are forged and re-forged within the complexities of personal ambition and the structural realities of the music industry. A further aspect of 'biographical articulation' pertains to the unique flow and sedimentation of my experiences during the recording process (Schutz 1974: 56). As highlighted previously, my position within the life world of the music industry is shaped not only by the general structure of world time and my boundedness to it but also by the historicity of my

situation. Autoethnographically, my present situation is 'historical' in so much as it encompasses the history of my experiences within the music industry— a blend of autobiographically determined elements dictated by the structural norms of this present understanding of the music industry. While some generalisable elements derive from sharing the experiences, like how the pressures and practices of the Swedish music producer and the broader industry expectations shape my creative decisions, there are also intensely personal, private lived experiences or aspects of my experiences that remain largely incommunicable, unique to my inner subjective time. Since every situation and every studio session has a horizon of the past, every current creative decision and musical expression is inevitably co-determined by the uniqueness of my personal and professional journey. These experiences often play a pivotal role due to the specific point in time at which they occur.

In Chapter Four, I will trace the band's progress as it deals with a lengthy delay in its completion. The recording studio becomes the focus for a further reorganisation of activities. During this phase, the band does not perform live and remains a studio project. Eventually, Safehaus gets an opportunity to release its music on a French record label, which leads to a chance collaboration on a Manu Dibango album. The Swedish album finally arrives, and I revisit my reaction to it and why I find it difficult to listen to or even like.

CHAPTER 4:

Music industry perspectives

Post-album recording phase

Introduction

Chapter Four serves as a mechanism to connect past experiences and the associated memories to the very near present. This process illustrates a hermeneutical arc in my experience of the music made in Sweden—from understanding to explanation, actions that broaden the horizon of my comprehension of being in the band. To understand the whole text or phenomenon, one must understand its parts. Conversely, to understand the parts, one must refer back to the whole. This process is iterative and dynamic.

Understanding the post-album recording phase completes the band's history from my perspective and enables further scrutiny of what the Swedish album signifies. This chapter is structured in two parts. The first establishes a way to locate my thinking about sound, studios, and music. The second part reveals my reaction to listening to the Swedish album.

On our return from Stockholm, relations between the label, the producer, and the band faded away. No recordings were made available for either us or the label. We had only a monitor mix of one song. All the multitracks of our songs were deposited on the hard drive in Basecamp. This state of affairs prompted a return to the recording studio (Audiobase) to revitalise the project and the band's fortunes. Eventually, the Swedish album arrives, an event that adds a further layer of meaning to the ongoing work taking place in the studio. '[A]ny effort to understand musical

experience must bring both time and the individual to the center of the enquiry' (Rice 1994: 8).

Part 1: Audiobase

The first part of this chapter concerns the band's work in a new studio (Audiobase), which sets the scene for further songwriting and strategising much of it in reaction to the Swedish album. Much of what is conveyed in the first section of the chapter concerns studio aesthetics and how the blend of vintage and modern technology enhances ideas of quality and 'warmth'. It is a space that seeks to juxtapose modern digital technology with vintage analogue machines. The design and layout of the studio are also important factors and influence the way sounds and songs are recorded. The band gained some national airplay with their self-released EP. If nothing else, this verifies the creative direction and a mild confirmation of its symbolic value to the songwriters as they situate themselves in their local scene. Experimentation with sound and songwriting structure leaves the band vulnerable insofar as their music begins to appear too niche for their record label, rapidly losing interest in Safehaus. The question remains for the band: how to systematise this organisational process beyond the walls of the studio in order to gain access to much wider audiences.

Another way to think about the content of Part One is the way that it reveals my organisation of attention. As the participant and observer in the enquiry, I am bound to the content and structure of the music, sound, and its situation within an objective and subjective reality. I would argue that the assemblage of technology in the studio is the focus of my attention. It is constructed from memory, fantasy, and imagination and constitutes the horizons of my thinking. Therefore, my engagement with technology is influenced by past experiences (memory), creative possibilities

(fantasy), and the mental image or expectation of what might be achieved (imagination). All this information is accumulated through interactions with local scene dynamics. This process of knowing—gaining understanding and insight through focused attention and interaction— transforms into specific actions and then experience.

More importantly, it sets up my perspective to the experience of listening to the Swedish album. In phenomenological terms, this is rooted in the 'natural attitude,' a pre-reflective stance where the world and its objects are taken for granted as existing independently of my perception. My thoughts about the Swedish album at this point (I have yet to hear it) is that it has no specific features; it is an album that belongs to a world of professionally manufactured albums. This notion extends into quality, which is perceived as an objective reality recognised by its generalisability - top-quality professional productions made by producers and record labels embodying a state of affairs where specificity and uniqueness are often obscured by the perceptions of what is an industry standard.

Part 2: Feedback interview

In the second part of this chapter, I analyse my reaction to the Swedish album through a self-reflexive methodology developed from Ruth Stone's feedback interview. This method involves an introspective listening exercise that recounts past events and deepens the understanding of these experiences through a phenomenological and ethnomusicological lens. By critically engaging with the music, I explore how personal and collective memories and perceptions shape the album's reception, concluding my active participation with the band.

As already established in this dissertation, memory plays a significant role in

shaping the present perception of the Swedish album, acting not as a static repository but as a dynamic, reconstructive process that warps the perception of time—a process which underscores how past experiences continuously inform and reshape the present (Casey 2000). From a phenomenological perspective, memory is interwoven with our ongoing sense of self. In the context of the Swedish album, this translates to how my memories of its production and its associated experiences constantly evolve and influence my emotional responses in the present. Memory is not merely about recalling events as they happened; it is an active process of interpretation and re-interpretation, where past experiences are revisited and recontextualised in light of new experiences and insights.

The importance of subjective experience in this context can be understood through our perceptual horizons. Layers of memory, emotions, and past events reveal perceptions framed within a horizon of past experiences and future anticipations.

> The outer horizon contains everything that is given contemporaneously with the theme, in consciousness. It therefore contains the retentions and memories which refer back to the original constitution of the current theme, and the protentions and expectations which refer forward to possible further developments of the theme (Schutz 1974: 193).

My perception of the album is not a simple, direct apprehension of sound and music; it is shaped by the memories of the recording sessions, the emotional highs and lows experienced during that time, and the future aspirations for its completion. These layers of experience create a rich, multifaceted perception of the album that goes beyond the auditory experience. Each listening session is a temporal journey where past, present, and future interconnect, demonstrating perception as an ongoing, dynamic process rather than a fixed point in time.

Band history: *post-album recording phase* (p.1)

The studio as a lived experienced

'[S]tudios are chosen for their atmosphere'. They tend to take on a character and identity that can significantly impact the creative work at hand. '[T]he studio interior may be small, dark and intimate with low ceilings and no natural daylight' or 'a cavernous well-lit room (…) in a barn' (Negus 1992: 84). From a phenomenological perspective, Negus is defining a musical encounter in popular culture where users condition activity and practice through the norms and customs in their particular fields. Why do musicians and sound engineers prefer claustrophobic or open-plan spaces? These ideas play out in both small and large-scale studios where creative work is defined through actors' social histories. One way to enrich this understanding is how Meintjes (2003) describes the 'studio as fetish', a combination of iconicity, 'inner worlds' and the 'phenomenological links between space travel and (…) movement' (84-85). These technological fantasies give clues to how and why musicians want to be in studios, which often has more to do than merely recording a song.

The professional recording industry is a highly complex and hierarchical working environment; therefore, how musicians situate their performances and interactions within these power relations requires careful negotiation that enables and constrains creative work.[131] Musicians, who do not necessarily see themselves as engineers, must be aware of the studio's implicit rules and tactfully steer a course

[131] Thompson and Lashua 2014 suggest that as a 'somewhat neglected' site, the recording studio offers insights into 'collaborative' and often 'fractious relations' that are part of music's organisation.

through its internal politics and communication protocols. For example, the language which constitutes audio and music embodies two fundamentally different interpretations of the production space. Bates (2016) details this in his study of Turkish recording studios, where the engineer's role is starkly delineated from that of the musical arranger.[132] I am not suggesting that this mode of being for the sound engineer is conventional in all studios; however, it helps to illustrate the overlapping spheres of music and audio and those individuals who seek expression through them.

Musicians who want to be in studios do so because they offer the possibility of expressing sound in a way that is on an infinitely grander scale than they can achieve on their instrument alone or even within a group setting. I emphasise a distinction here between the musician's and the engineer's perspectives of working in the studio. My experience with engineers in studios, and this is a broad generalisation, is that they are primarily concerned with the technical operation of the space and the facilitation of audio capture and processing in ways that produce 'high-quality' professional results. This process encompasses everything from the capture of sounds, the organisation of the session and audio files. Of course, not all engineers are entirely relinquished to technical matters. Whereas musicians seek creative expression in whatever musical contexts they are working, and although concerned with the sounds being made and captured, the work remains music, not audio. The use of language to describe recorded sounds and the relationship to the entirety of the recording are instinctively musical. For example, as a rookie sound engineer, I

[132] Bates, E., 2016. Digital tradition: arrangement and labor in Istanbul's recording studio culture. Oxford University Press, Oxford ; New York. 'despite the centrality of engineering to all recorded sound, engineering remains a "hidden" profession in Turkey' (8).

found it peculiar to refer to elements of music as 'audio'. However, once music enters the studio's systems, it becomes a 'signal' to be manipulated and the pursuit of 'quality' requires a close analysis of sound that moves far beyond standard musical vocabulary and has to embrace the conventions of the sound engineer to even make sense of the studio's instruments.

Much of how I describe and analyse the studio work in Audiobase, the focus of this chapter, concerns the experience of the musician caught up in a particular and deliberate organisation of sound through technology, old and new. The role of the sound engineer and the musician, in this scenario, become integrated. I attempt to show how musicians interested in recording are excited by studios, the sounds they make, and the machines that make the sounds, whether or not they fully understand at the engineer's level. Experimental work in the studio is essential for the musician intent on discovering novelty and desperately trying to avoid redundancy. It is a delicate balancing act between creating obscure or potentially commercial products. I frame this practice primarily as a contrast between 'lo-fi' music-making in a budget studio (Audiobase) and the 'hi-fi' production mode in the Basecamp recording studio.

Audiobase: lo-fi technology fantasies

Audiobase was the name I gave to the new studio. Its etymology is a play on words reflecting my growing predilection for technology, implicit in the use of the word 'audio', and secondly, 'base' seems to suggest a starting point, a location (the basement), and a connection to the experiences at Basecamp studio in Stockholm—a reminiscence. These elements combined shape the technological design, the physical layout of the space, and its physical organisation: room size, acoustics, decor, and

musical instruments. Audiobase was an upgrade to the limitations offered at the Cent Studio and, therefore, required a more sophisticated understanding of technology at either end of a spectrum: the physical construction and design of the studio and the granular analysis of sound.[133] The diagram of the studio floorplan below (Fig. 39) shows three interconnected rooms. To the left of the *live room*, the *drum room* was 3 metres by 3 metres and felt like an abandoned World War 2 bunker due to its damp stone and concrete construction. The live room, in the centre, approximately 9 metres by 4 metres, contained the entrance door from the street and two isolation booths at the other end. There was a small window near the entrance that provided natural light. Like the control room it had wooden floors and ceilings, and painted orange stone walls. The uneven stone surfaces offered some diffusion properties and a layer of sound insulation from the outside street noise. The overall dimensions of the control room to the right of the *live room* were approximately 3 meters by 4 meters and 2.4 meters high. Squeezed into this space was a large mixing console.

[133] Cent studio was essentially one small room in a basement. It had no windows and a low-arched ceiling, like a wine cellar. It was only possible to record vocals, guitars, and keyboards. The recording gear comprised mainly a G4 Apple Mac, a sound card, and various bits of outboard gear. Over time, we augmented this basic setup with our own equipment.

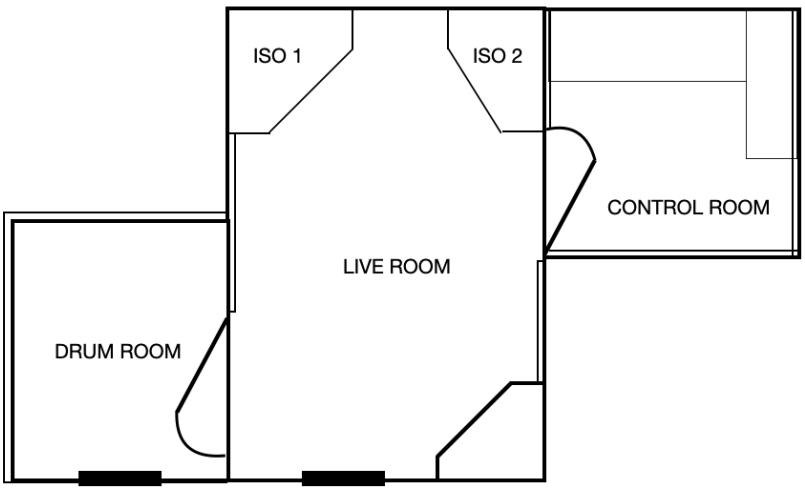


Figure 38 Audiobase recording studio floor plan showing each of the three interconnected rooms.

The mixing console, a Soundtracs CP6800, at nearly 7 feet in diameter, dominated the space in the control room. Its presence added a layer of sophistication and visual credibility to the overall vibe of the space.[134] It was a relic from the 1980s, costing then around £30,000. It was a serious machine and had no doubt already been at the heart of other studios and recordings. This vintage quality was part of its allure. Initially, I struggled with the complexity of its routing and interconnectivity, and it required many hours of experimentation to coerce sounds. Older digital recordings were reconfigured through its systems, and they sounded better, more natural, and 'warmer'—completely subjective descriptions that initially offered no real improvement on my ability to produce 'quality'. I could only judge my productions in relation to ideal reference material, albums and songs that I perceived as having these aesthetic markers, which I will discuss in this chapter.

[134] Here is some information from the website where I bought the mixing console. It is useful to read the dealers thoughts particularly the way the EQs are described and its so-called 'classic Britishness'. 'The Soundtracs CP6800 from 1988...A large 7ft, 32/12/24 console with Bantam Patch Bay (see https://www.studiosystems.co.uk/soundtracs/cp6800.php). [Accessed 20th July 2023].

Sound engineers are fond of using the term 'warm' to identify a complex sound that exhibits specific auditory characteristics. Despite the vagueness of the expression, 'warm' has come to mean something in opposition to 'cold' digital audio systems.[135] An audiophile might romanticise vintage Neve amps and EQs or SSL compressors and discuss the finer points of 'vintage' transformers - all crucial electronics that locate the idea and experience of 'warmth'. Compression, saturation, distortion, and equalisation are the primary elements of warm audio signals. These characteristics are not outside the capabilities of digital replication, but analogue circuitry, tape machines, and valves are typical. EQ circuitry is an essential element that can add second and third-order harmonics, together with non-linearities that contribute to the richness and sharpness of the signal. When I first acquired my vintage mixing console, I experimented with the digital and analogue worlds. I created mixes of the same song using purely digital and analogue routing. I blind-tested the finished mixes to ascertain which of the two I preferred. Although not a truly scientific experiment, I always preferred the analogue mix, and the reason for this was that it appeared to me to have a glue-like quality—a colouration that unifies different elements and instruments being mixed. As a relative newcomer to analogue machines, I suspected I had entered an obscure and somewhat obsessive way of thinking about sound that only a few people would ever discern. Nevertheless, it forced a different way of listening and embodying sound: a shift from the computer mouse to physical interactions with machines that did not always behave in predictable ways.

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[135] In terms of how signals are captured and stored, the general criticism of digital systems tends to focus on their ability to represent the resolution of soundwaves. It does this through sampling and is achieved using a DAC or digital audio converter.

Even though capable of tracking 24 separate microphone sources, the console's primary function was to increase the number of analogue EQ (equalisation) channels in recording and mixing (see Fig. 40 below). This process and additional complexity added to the DAW system is a kind of 'technology fantasy' where the preference for vintage machines supersedes the logic of the purely digital realm: an aesthetic argument that seeks to imbue digital recordings with pre-digital or analogue qualities. A fantasy that relies on a 'utopian' past to solve problems in the present (Ihde 1979, 2007).

I discovered the Soundtracs mixing console while researching possibilities for using purely analogue EQs in the studio via an interview by Dave Maughan, the producer and engineer of Katherine Williams' album 'Little Black Numbers' (2000).[136] Like many Mercury Prize nominations, it was an album that emerged from relative obscurity into the mainstream. A unifying quality of all 'Mercury Prize' nominees, as Simon Frith suggests, is 'albumness'. 'Album entries had to have an overall identity that extended beyond a 'collection of singles' (2018: 124). I was drawn to this 'album-ness' in Maughan's production and used it as a reference. He elaborates on his approach and says:

[136] https://www.soundonsound.com/people/dave-maughan-recording-cathryn-williams

The album's overall aesthetic was close to how I imagined the new studio's sound could be. I was drawn to the album's overall musical direction, sound and Williams's creative convictions. 'Little Black Numbers' is a folk-based album - in so much that the instrumental arrangements of the songs are acoustic and feature cello, flugelhorn, classical guitar, flute, and percussion.



Figure 39 Soundtracs CP6800 1980s console located in Audiobase studio control room.

I'll fiddle around. I just instinctively put a microphone somewhere and say 'Right, I want you to keep your double bass like it is, or keep your guitar like it is, such that that bit of it is pointing always towards that edge of the mic. I don't want you to move one way or t'other. If you can do that, that's fine. And let's see what we get.' And then, when I hear it, I think to myself 'Yes, that's how I heard it happening through there.' And that's usually my yardstick. I come back into the control room wanting it to sound a bit like I perceived it sounding in there, and if I'm getting somewhere close to that, I think I'm on the right line (Dave Maughan in Sound on Sound 2000).

For Maughan, the musicians he works with are a fundamental part of the creative process in how sounds are recorded and performances captured. Recording decisions are in response to the particularities of the musicians' playing styles—what he identifies in the studio's live room in terms of the sonic quality of the instrument as well as the performance becomes the basis for his decisions in capturing that sound. He embodies the aesthetic that Brian Eno has famously written about concerning studios as integral to the creative process. It is a process that seeks experimentation and improvisation, which is not limited to the music alone but can manifest in the imperfections of analogue circuitry built with tubes, transistors, and

physical wiring schematics. These imperfections give the equipment and the music a particular sonic characteristic. 'You're working directly with sound, and there is no transmission or loss between you and the sound (…) it puts the composer in the identical position of the painter' (Eno in Cox and Warner 2017: 129).

What follows is the translation of the studio through the band's first release: a four-track EP (See Fig. 42 below). The most important track on the mini album was the song *Fear Inside*, for no other reason than that it was later released as a single in France and had some national radio airplay in the UK.

Fear Inside: Post-Sweden songwriting

The production of a physical artefact, the CD and its cover, was significant because it was the first manifestation of 'Safehaus' since its name change from Kerb. It was a symbolic act that, while unimportant in the grander scheme of independent releases by musicians, solidified our understanding of the sound that we made. The EP consists of four songs: Everybody Loves You, which had a complete rework, Going Down, Fear Inside, and Safehouse. The visual impression and sound of the work are much closer to how I imagined the Stormore sessions (Chapter Two) to have evolved.

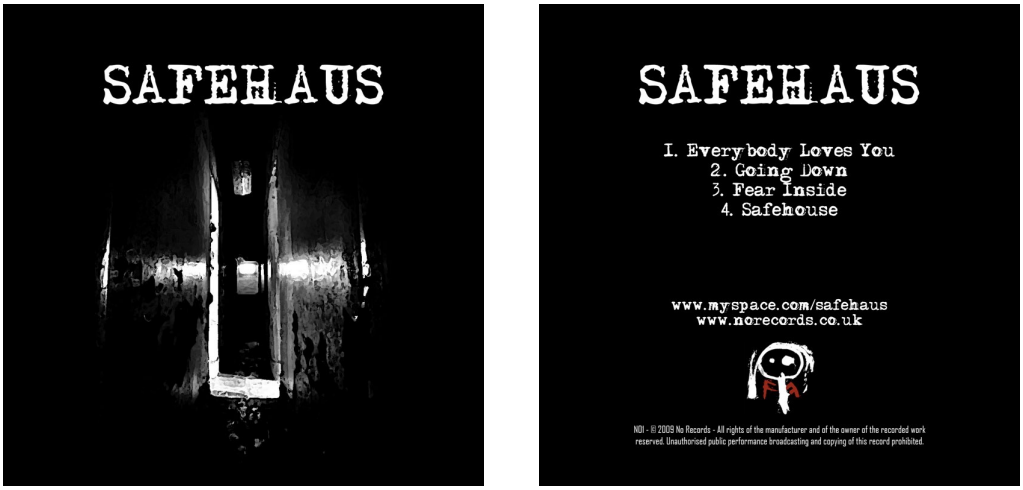


Figure 40 Front and back cover of the Safehaus EP.

The song Fear Inside, we agreed, was possibly the best song we wrote and produced in all the time that we had been writing in the various studios we occupied. It became a benchmark by which all other songs had to be measured, and the reason for its dissection and discussion here. The way that the song was written is directly related to the assembling of the studio and the sound that I now sought through Maughan's work. Like the 'Little Black Numbers' recording, Fear Inside leaned towards an acoustic and alternative style. The song emerged from a fragment of an idea that Ben had written before coming to the studio, which consisted of the main vocal melody and lyric with an accompanying acoustic guitar part. As now established, Ben had only partially arranged the song, leaving room for us to interpret. Fear Inside has to be viewed within the album concept (outlined in Chapter Two), and the following analysis refers to the Night of the Hunter.

Fear Inside: Lyrics

There's a fear inside, I've done things I can't hide
Oh, I'm scared of you and these things I do
I'm an only child, I grew up in the wild
I want nothing from anybody new
Cry you pretty girl, shed the weight of the world
There is no one here, watch me as I move
Around you
Cry you pretty girl, shed the weight of the world
There is no one here, watch me as I move
(Ben Kench c.2007)

Figure 41 Fear Inside song lyrics.

Implied in the lyrics of Fear Inside is a reflection of the twisted psychology of the villain, Harry Powell . The recurring theme of fear and hiding again resonates with the story and conveys Powell's looming presence. 'Cry you pretty girl, shed the weight of the world' can be seen as a manipulative tactic, feigning empathy while actually revelling in the power and control over the victim, similar to Powell's interactions with the widow. 'There is no one here, watch me as I move / Around you' evokes a sense of stalking, a predatory movement around the prey. This line encapsulates Powell's obsession with finding the hidden money and his relentless pursuit of the children. Much like the film, the song delves into the theme of appearances versus reality. Powell's masquerade as a preacher, a symbol of trust and morality, starkly contrasts with his true malevolent nature. This theme is subtly woven into the lyrics through the guise of concern and empathy. I should add at this juncture that this is my interpretation of the song; it is an after-the-fact reflection on how I saw the connection between the concept and the emergence of Fear Inside. It was not part of any discussion while writing the song in the studio.

Encountering: Songwriting session

Jon and I were in the control room, and Ben was in the adjoining live room. We had established the tempo on the DAW and adjusted the click track levels. Ben was happy with the balance in his headphones. Getting the bulk of the finger-style acoustic tracks recorded did not take long. Initially, a drum-loop sample was added - a placeholder until a better solution could be found. We built the rhythm section quickly, adding bass and some additional guitar parts in the main verses. Next, we set the microphone up to track the vocals. Ben was always apprehensive at this point in the process. The pressure to deliver the defining vocal line was ever-present. One further guitar part, a unison line to the lead vocal, was recorded and so peculiar to Ben's playing that we were never able to reproduce the part again due to the way he used his nail to scratch across the strings. We often had these obsessive moments recording whereby once we had gotten used to the sound of something, even if recorded quite casually, it became fixed. It was a moment that could not be manufactured again.

The song retains a mood primarily through its loop-like structure. There is one primary harmonic loop **|Dm |Am | G |**, which underpins the structure of the entire song with only slight deviations, as shown below. The overall structure of Fear Inside forms a typical A A B A form. Alternatively, this structure might also be considered as two *hypermeasures* (H1 and H2).[137] After a couple of hours, the basic arrangement of the track was established, although it was not all that interesting at this stage. Sometimes, small sections would be looped when we wrote songs as we

[137] As Moore writes, 'sections of songs will very frequently consist of 8, 12, perhaps 16 and sometimes 32 bars' (2012: 52).

assessed their potential. Quite often, songs never progressed very successfully from the initial idea, no matter how promising it first seemed. Fear Inside looked as if it might be one of those tracks. There was no obvious way forward beyond the verses [A]1 and [A]2 (see Fig. 43 below). Ben suggested the idea for the bridge [B]1, but this was just the harmony (guitar chords), and no melodic content emerged as yet. I found that this has been one of the peculiarities of writing music using a DAW, whereby the potential for rapid track laying and building often resulted in nearly fully worked out sections that had yet to establish any forward development. In this case, the first and second verses were nearly complete, but the Bridge [B] and the final Verses [A] were only vaguely scored.

[A] Verse | Dm | Dm | Dm | Dm | Am | Am | G | G | **(H1)**
[A]^{1} [A]^{2}

[B] Bridge | Dm | Dm | C | C | Am | Am | Dm | Dm | **(H2)**
| G | G |
[B]^{1} [B]^{2}

[A] Verse | Dm | Dm | Dm | Dm | Am | Am | G | G | **(H1)**
[A]^{3} [A]^{4} [A]^{5} [A]^{6}

Figure 42 Song structure of Fear Inside.

The mood of the D minor key is anchored in what eventually fulfils as a Dorian mode, but this is only really heard once the final verses and extra instrumental parts are layered in verses 5 and 6. The vocal melody notes in the verses are shown here as they sit within the Dorian sound. 'The distinctive flavour of the DORIAN mode

comes from its unique combination of b3, Δ6 and b7' (Tagg 2014: 99).

Dorian	1	2	b3	4	5	Δ6	b7
	D	E	F	G	A	B	C

Figure 43 Dorian mode.

Figure 46 shows the main verse riff of the song. It can be heard, with slight variations, in the vocals and the main guitar parts.
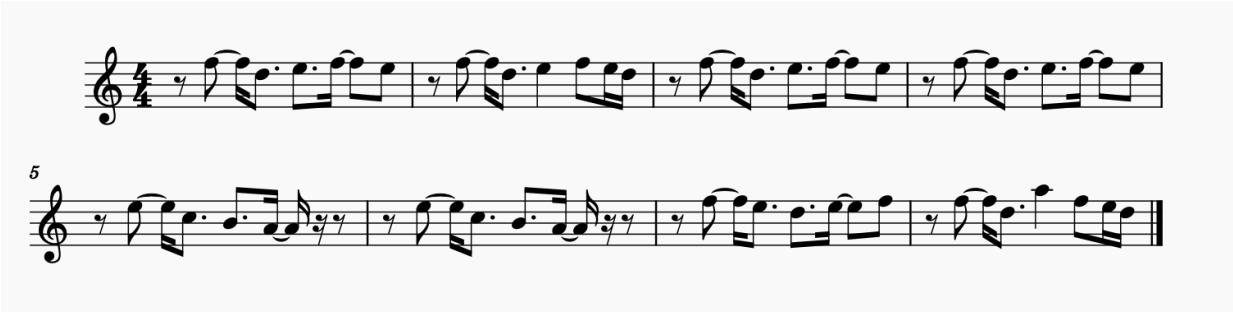


Figure 44 Acoustic guitar riff of Fear Inside.

Experience of tonality

Berger's (1999) observations of tonality and how people experience it bear some relevance in this analysis of Fear Inside. Drawing on Don Ihde's hermeneutics, Berger suggests that 'rules give shape to an interpretation' (2012: 17).[138] The rules that govern the identity and structure of the Dorian mode, a textual interpretation, define my tendency towards this way of shaping minor keys. It is, in essence, a part of my

[138] 'I have stated this hermeneutic rule more positively by calling for the horizontalization of all phenomena at the onset'. Ihde's horizontals appears to be similar to how Latour defines his flat ontologies. As Ihde states, 'by horizontalization, I mean that initially all phenomena must be thought of as "equally real" '*within the limits of their givenness*' (2012: 21).

jazz vocabulary and harmonic language. However, for us, writing songs does not begin with a harmonic plan so much; this is something that may emerge through the negotiation of musical ideas. Solving the problem of what comes next in a computer-driven production process has the potential to unfold in any number of ways. While I was aware of the potential direction of the song's tonality, I would not have been able to insist on a possible idea based on the principle that it fulfilled a Dorian mode. In his interview with a rock musician, Berger reveals that the language individuals use to understand and imagine the sounds they are making can often push against traditional harmonic theory used to define melodic and harmonic relationships. I was hearing and imagining the song in D Dorian, but knowing this harmonic information was not part of the negotiations in how the song was written. My musical suggestions for parts inevitably contained the Δ6 (B); this eventually surfaces in the solo section in verses [A]5 and [A]6.
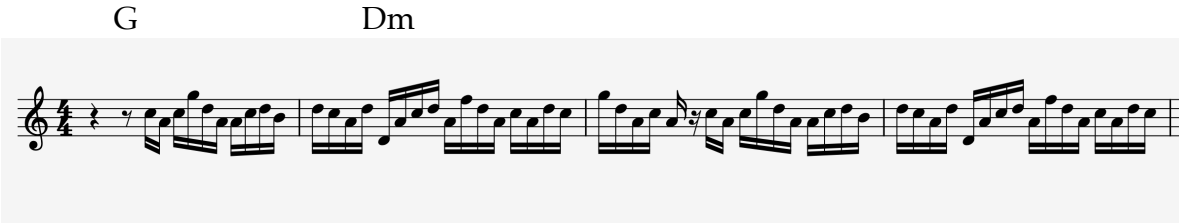


Figure 45 Moog solo section [A]5 and [A]6.

Perhaps the most experimental element of Fear Inside starts at 2'04" into the song (see Fig.47 above).[139] As the recording gradually came together there remained a missing melodic part on the last of the [A] Verse sections. This problem was solved with a demo version of a Minimoog VST plugin. Once the pattern was written into

[139] Fear Inside publicly available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GeGhLwkJsko

the instrument and it scanned across the chord sequence **[Dm | Am | G]** it then had to be processed from MIDI to audio. As the Moog was a demo version it injected a burst of white noise intermittently. As a quick fix for the noise intrusion, I edited the waveform and removed the noise and shifted the remaining pattern roughly into a continuous 1/16th note melodic phrase.[140]

While this description of the track explains its structure to some extent, the arrival at this overall sound needs some unpacking. Most of the writing and production was a joint effort. We would meet in the studio and begin resolving the problems of the previous session. In the case of Fear Inside, I was left on my own for the day while Ben and Jon were at work. At some point, I decided to be very experimental and not just prepare the track for the next session where the others would be present, as was our usual routine. Once I discovered the sound of the Moog and the melodic line, I decided to play around and see what it sounded like and then delete it before the others returned. All the time I am doing this experiment, I second-guess my ideas and think that I have become too jazzy. Ben and Jon arrive at the studio and ask what I have been up to and want to hear the track. At this point, I am reluctant and suggest that we delete this last verse instrumental because I was messing around and using it as a filler before the next session began. After a brief listen and debate, they decided we should keep the Moog solo. The 1/16th note rest in bar 3 above (fig. 47), which features intermittently throughout the recording, is a mistake that was eventually left in—we became used to it being slightly off.

[140] Minimoog is an analogue synthesiser manufactured in the 1970s. As its name suggests, it is a portable version of the Moog synthesiser. Hugo Montenegro, Moog Power (RCA, 1969) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=STFf3UZRwQs and Wurman, Hans, The Moog Strikes Bach (RCA, 1969) show how the synthesiser was being explored in popular music.

Bentley: ***lo-fi vs. hi-fi***

Embedded somewhere within the discussion about old machines is the notion of a 'lo-fi' musical culture, which appealed to me then as a new studio owner drawn to experimentalism and ideas of empowerment—scenarios that are directly antagonistic to the 'hi-fi' recording experience in Sweden. What is lo-fi in the context I am defining? The answer begins by acknowledging Murray Schafer's (1994) definition of lo-fi and hi-fi: a 'hi-fi system is one possessing a favorable signal-to-noise ratio (…) sounds may be heard clearly without crowding or masking', whereas 'lo-fi is an unfavorable signal-to-noise ratio (…) resulting in masking or lack of clarity' (272). Modernity has transitioned the sonic landscape from a pure 'quiet ambient soundscape to an overdense population of sounds' (43). In my view, the album recording in Sweden (Chapter Three) is 'hi-fi'. A hyperreal audio realisation of the band that could not exist in such perfection in reality: 'the overkill of hi-fi gadgetry not only contributes generously to the lo-fi problem, but it creates a synthetic soundscape in which natural sounds are becoming increasingly unnatural while machine-made substitutes are providing the operative signals directing modern life' (91). Lo-fi is a familiar enough label given to any number of cultural ideas, movements and thinking. In music, it is an aesthetic that exudes imperfection like vinyl crackle, tape hiss, and even digital 'glitch'- not so much obscuring but acknowledging imperfection and decay. Politically, it represents a way of thinking, such as DIY production ethics against the industrial processes of the music industry and mass consumption. It is a cultural space where art could emerge against the constraints of mass production.[141]

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[141] Kromhout 2009, suggests that lo-fi, originally a product of necessity due to financial constraints, has become a fashionable artistic choice by the end of the 2000s, as noted by Pitchfork Media.

Audiobase's first production (Safehaus) is the lo-fi response to the Swedish hi-fi predicament. It became an enterprise driven by a desire to create records with unconventional instruments and limited budgets. The dynamics of the songwriting process changed as a result. The content and meaning of the work now only exist through the production aesthetic. Fear Inside sounds lo-fi, according to me, but why, what makes it lo-fi? I will attempt to shed some light on this production aesthetic next. Producing and writing the song forced us towards experiments with sounds and instrument combinations that had not occurred to us before. A brief overview of its structure reveals Fear Inside as a series of overlapping loops. The first of these can be heard in the opening bars of the introduction, where the distinctive sound of a Bentley Rhythm Ace drum machine provides the basis for the rhythm section and an overall fundamental sound to the arrangement (see Fig. 48 below).



Figure 46 Bentley Rhythm Ace drum machine interface.

The Bentley Rhythm Ace is a consumer machine made by Acetone in the 1970s, an early incarnation of the Roland Corporation. It had a configuration of 16 preset rhythms, including tango, bossa nova and rock'n'roll - none of the preset patterns were useful to us within their intended parameters. However, they were infinitely corruptible if combined with other machines or pushed to extreme settings. The constitution of my musical experience with the machine can be ascertained through the user interface, which represents a series of preset parameters. Limitations in the operation of devices often yield more decisive actions. A preset rhythm pattern produces an instantaneous result. I became nervous about using the preset patterns in isolation. It seemed like too simple a solution, and instead, I settled for combining different presents, such as *Rumba* and *Rock and Roll* or *Waltz* and *Samba*. I forced buttons into these formations as the machine was not designed to yield this kind of corruption of its interface. Its tactile design was part of its appeal, no longer bound to the computer interface mouse and keyboard to exclusively access sound parameters. With a bit of effort, what appeared to be unique rhythm patterns began to emerge. Lo-fi machines like this artificial drummer are not pre-determined to follow their design intentions (Ihde 1992). Rather, like other tape-based devices, vintage drum machines such as the Bentley offered ways to subvert the digital realm. The tempo setting was achieved through a potentiometer that produced a range of options from very slow to very fast. None of the tempo settings would map to the DAW; in fact, the tempo would often drift if recorded directly to the computer system. A considerable amount of editing was required if long passages were captured. Again, the preference in this scenario was not to immediately digitise the Bentley—I could have sampled each drum element separately; instead, I opted to use the machine as close as possible to its natural performance and sound.

I had never heard of a Bentley Rhythm Ace until I discovered one on eBay. It was a relatively cheap bid, £40—an obsolete technology. Initially, it felt like a strange device to experiment with, but its 1970s design theme held some appeal. It reminded me of the TV show *UFO*, which depicted the future (c.1980) where Earth was under constant threat from a technologically advanced alien force.[142] At the heart of the defence system, located on the Moon (Moonbase), the purple-wigged operators were surrounded by instruments of the future that resemble the user interface and design of Bentley Rhythm Ace [143]. This analogy is perhaps part of my own studio fetish. As Meintjes alludes, 'it is not a long leap to link Apollo and Sputnik and a space station on the moon to the studio via the look of things' (2003: 88).[144] These kinds of machines contain an inner and outer world that each holds some allure to the user. Outside is the promise of what the machine's design might bring to the song, its potential impact in the world, 'travel, discovery, excellence, and accumulation'. Somewhere inside the lo-fi circuitry is the solution to discovering a sonic novelty through 'fetishized worlds of sound and science'(ibid.).

The excitement of the studio for me began with assembling the 'gear' that would eventually define the sound of the recordings to a large extent. I became fascinated with so-called lo-fi and vintage gear, which, like the mixing console and the Bentley, have an element of obsolescence as part of their sonic and visual charm. Analogue instruments offer an escape from the purely digital realm - perhaps an illusion or fantasy that Casey (2000) defines as 'audializing' whereby the sensory

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[142] *UFO* available here: http://www.screenonline.org.uk/tv/id/455714/index.html

[143] See image
https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0063962/mediaviewer/rm3653110529/?ref_=ttmi_mi_all_48

[144] Meintjes suggests that 'this sonic world encoded in complex electronics is more extensive than the object within it resides (…) (2003: 89)

experience is not just about recognising a particular sound but involves immersing oneself in the nuances of the sound—its pitch, timbre, volume, and emotional affect that exists outside of a digital processor—like the sound of the Bentley Rhythm Ace. The computer screen no longer dictated the perception of the sound solely as a waveform. Instead, the machine, the room, and the tactile interface of knobs and faders embody the sound-making experience. The physical act of creating specific sounds through trial and error added a performative dimension that relied intently on close listening and adjusting to subtle colourations in audio signals and interfacing with machines whose behaviours often ran contrary to the logic of the computer. Digital conversion processes seem unable to capture the full dynamic range of sound achieved through integrating electronic hardware, valves and magnetic tape. I subscribed to the notion that tape-based devices were essential to humanise the DAW system—humanising a digital system through analogue hardware. Magnetic tape in 2007 had long been an obsolete format for recording studios in the mainstream. Audiobase acquired a Revox A77 two-track recorder, an open reel 1/4-inch tape recorder designed for professional use and made in the 1970s, it was used to transfer individual tracks to and from the DAW. It functioned more as a tape effect rather than a recording medium. I systematically ran all software synths through the tape treatment in pursuit of 'warmth' through analogue harmonics and overtones (See Fig. 50 below of the studio schematic).[145]

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[145] The legacy of tape has influenced our notions of what resolution and quality means. Tape recorders, by comparison, can be described as physical storage devices that use magnetism as the primary physical means of audio capture. The budget end of this market was the cassette-based multitrack recorder and had a limited function of 4 to 8 tracks. At the top end of the market, 1/4-inch tape systems increase capacity considerably from 16 to 24 tracks. Although compared to digital systems, this is a very limited capacity. The physical characteristics of magnetic tape and the mechanism needed to enable audio capture also contributes to the recorded sonic artefact. Ultimately judgements about these systems will come down to personal choices and perceptions of quality, and the surge towards this becomes entangled with audio production technology and its historical legacy.

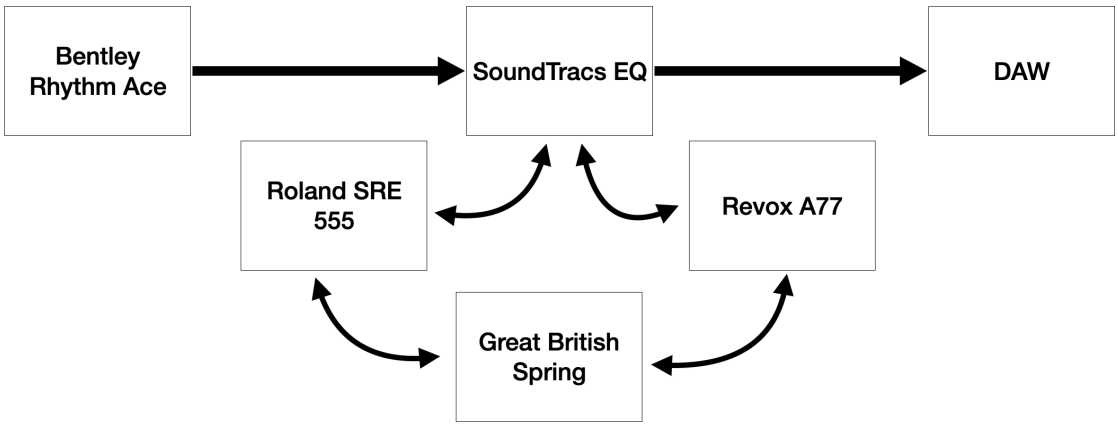


Figure 47 Visual depiction of analogue signal routing in the studio.

In the beginning, incorporating and listening to the 'grainy' textured sounds of tape-based effects like, for example, the Roland SRE-555, an analogue delay, reverb and chorus processor made in the 80s, was not as straightforward as it appeared. From a practical perspective, the digital system provided a relatively cheap solution to overcome some of the drawbacks of tape, that being noise and hiss. The artefacts that were associated with low quality were now flipped and were high quality. It seemed to be a backward step to me in some ways. Having spent years grappling with tape-based multitracks and producing demos that sounded too 'homemade', even if they were then transferred to CD. Why would I now be reverting to this technology for audio solutions? The rationale for this way of thinking about technology ultimately lies in what I was listening to, not only Dave Maughan's album (see above) but other recordings that came out of the Bristol scene that encapsulated an alternative to mainstream record production, such as Ilya's 'They

Died For Beauty' and Jukes' A Thousand Dreamers'.[146] [147]

I used these recordings as references in mixing and production work. They represented imaginary sonic worlds or, as Casey (2000) posits, 'imagined content'. What I attempted to create is in relation to these recorded sounds. They are purely sound objects and form a sensory status that contains the experience of listening as an 'event' and 'imagining-how', the way the sounds are made, and the experience taken as a whole. '[W]hen we imagine, we always imagine something in particular; we apprehend, however dimly, an imaginative presentation having a certain content' (49). This particular preoccupation with a form of sonic quality is akin to studio fetishism that Louise Meintjes (2003) alludes to as a mental state that relies on specific, sensory, and intentional aspects of imaginative experience that go beyond mere technical considerations to encompass personal history, experience, and creative interpretation.

Summary

Safehaus' EP, its underlying concept and now the analogue domain of Audiobase Studio, can be viewed as a deliberate stylistic break from the Swedish

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[146] 'The only downside to this album is that due to the almost universal incursion of trip hop on our lives, we suffer an incessant overexposure to it. Trendy bars, designer clothes shops, your friends' dinner parties, stylish adverts selling everything from cars to perfume - it's everywhere. Ilya's Bellissimo has already been seconded to sell the latest Cacharel perfume! We're subconsciously saturated with trip hop and lounge jazz, so much so that when we hear something of genuine quality and imagination, like Ilya, our instinctive reaction is 'that sounds awfully familiar'. And it does, but that's no reason to dismiss it. Being original and sounding original aren't always the same thing, and if you take the time to really listen to this nugget of musical inspiration, you'll hear what I mean.' https://www.counterculture.co.uk/album-review/ilya-they-died-for-beauty.html [accessed: 1 September 2023]

[147] 'It begins well, though: She Walked for Miles is a lovely, haunted thing, singer Tammy Payne's voice blowing ghostly through a cavern of reverb, carrying by far the prettiest tune on A Thousand Dreamers while insistent bass smoulders beneath her. Unfortunately, nothing else lives up to this substantial initial promise'. Peschek, D. (2004) *Jukes, A Thousand Dreamers*. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/music/2004/dec/03/popandrock.shopping [Accessed: 2 September 2023].

album. The conditions that have given rise to the studio also constitute the horizons of my thinking, influencing my engagement with technology and the creative processes within the studio. These actions can be understood as a dynamic interplay between the parts (individual studio sessions) and the whole (the overarching narrative of the band's journey). Therefore, returning to the interpretation of this action via textual analysis, or 'structural analysis', would show that my understanding of the music and its sound qualities precedes this transcription. Ricoeur (2016) suggests 'if (…) we consider structural analysis as a stage (…) between a naive interpretation and a critical interpretation, (…), then it would be possible to locate explanation and understanding at two different stages of a unique hermeneutical arc' (180). The EP and studio and its general function represent a basic interpretation of the hermeneutic arc. My interpretation of the studio as a representation of my memory, imagination, and fantasy is the critical component and establishes the basis for understanding my reaction to the Swedish album once it finally arrives. Part Two of this chapter deals with my critical interpretation of the Swedish album.

Band history: *post-album recording phase* (p.2)

Encountering the Swedish album

> For we exist only through what we possess, and we possess only what is actually present, since so many of our memories, moods and ideas leave us and travel to faraway places, where we lose sight of them! (Proust 1923: 548) [148]

Although we had been working in the studio on new material, Ben had been relentlessly trying to persuade Basecamp to finish the album. What transpires is yet another recording contract that initially held some promise. I reveal these final events in the band's history by reflecting on the Swedish album, which became integral to the negotiations with the label BorderBlaster in France. I use the songs that form the completed album to outline events and memories of the band's encounters with the label and, ultimately, its failure to progress.[149] This final analysis completes the phenomenological autoethnographic exploration of my involvement in the band's history.

As I attempt to make sense of the sound and music of the Swedish album, it is impossible to separate the past and the present in my imagination and memory. As Edward Casey suggests, memories have the capacity to warp the perception of time, '[w]e cannot dissociate the remembering of our personal past from our present self-identity' (2000: 290). Our understanding of the past is not static but evolves over time and continually informs and shapes the present along with our associated emotions. Memory is a dynamic, reconstructive process rather than a static repository of information. The experience of the album through listening and remembering

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[148] Proust, M., Prendergast, C., Clark, C., Collier, P., 2003. The prisoner. Penguin, London.

[149] BorderBlaster are a small independent record label based in Paris and Stockholm.

becomes a compressed musical encounter revealing part of the band's history, observed through my reflexive accounts and interactions.

This chapter concludes with a self-reflexive review of the Swedish album. Re-evaluating the album at this point in the thesis serves several purposes, including but not limited to the exploration of memory and remembering as an ethnographic tool, understanding creative practices over time, and ways to document personal journeys using recordings as a 'mnemonic mode'. Like a photo or video, the album is the stimulus and reminder of the event and experience (ibid.: 90). Much of the narrative content throughout this dissertation has relied on a systematic engagement with memory. However, it is distinct from reminiscing in that these memories are isolated thoughts and follow a narrative structure. For example, the method for assembling the structure of the band's account has not been subject to a shared process where discussion informs recollections of the past event. This kind of reminiscence tends to focus on events that bear significance for the individual and can be a form of selective remembering (ibid.). 'Memory requires more than mere dating of a fact in the past. It must be dated in my past. In other words, I must think that I directly experienced its occurrence' (William James in Casey 2000: 42).[150]

Revisiting the album is a problematic event for me. I would rather not have to listen to it again, but forcing myself to engage with it will no doubt uncover some ideas that have been forgotten or lost to sight. In any case, the entire thesis has been structured around the activity leading up to the album recording, the pre-album phase, the album recording phase, and the post-album phase. The album production is deeply situated within the phenomenological autoethnographic aims of this

[150] James (1890, 2007: 425-426)

research. Therefore, by the end of the listening exercise, I will show not only why I do not like the album but also how it works as a stimulus to bridge the gap between near and distant experiences and events, allowing for more nuanced interpretations and meanings to be made of the music events I am attempting to access. A reflexive review of the album makes the connection not only with the music itself but as a 'thick description' of my musical practice and history.[151]

The process to enable this analysis I have adapted from Ruth Stone's 'Feedback Interview' technique whereby participants accounts are obtained through a review of a recorded interview. The technique is particularly useful for accessing information that might not be voiced during a more traditional interview setting. The feedback interview is '[defined] by the 'playback and recall of a completed *event* in which the researcher and participant attempt to reconstruct its meaning' (51). The interpretation of specific performances is defined as 'music events'.[152] These events can be recalled from memory through 'the use of notes, to videotape' (2010: 51). 'The feedback interview allows for one form of encoding to stimulate communication about another form of encoding in situations where maintaining the same form of encoding may make the understanding difficult' (Stone and Stone 2013: 5).[153]

I propose to adapt and reframe the feedback interview technique as I, of course, have no external participants. Instead, I will be engaging in an internal feedback loop

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[151] Geertz 1975.

[152] 'The ethnomusicologist makes inferences about music event interaction by engaging in interactional behaviour' (Stone 2010: 10).

[153] 'The feedback interview, though seldom labelled as such, is not a new research strategy (Harris and Voegelin 1953; Hall 1974; Krebs 1975). Ethnomusicologists who play back audiotapes, show photographs, or present musical instruments for participant comments implicitly, at least, use elements of this technique. Researchers who perform music for their informants to critique for the purpose of analysis are conducting a feedback interview (Blacking 1971; Berliner 1978; Chernoff 1979)'. Stone, R.M., Stone, V.L., 1981. Event, Feedback, and Analysis: Research Media in the Study of Music Events. Ethnomusicology 25, 215.

with my past self and memories, which continues the process of my phenomenological autoethnographic methodology. Adapting the feedback interview will involve listening to the Swedish album in full. The purpose of this listening exercise is to recapture memories of the time when I first heard the album in my studio in 2013, which was the only time I listened to the album in full until this listening exercise. Although I had occasionally listened to snatches of it, I always found it difficult to listen to in its entirety, probably due to being too close to the project and that I associated failure to it. In this listening exercise, I will force myself to engage with the songs and the sounds again.

Reflexive Feedback Loop

The method used for this listening exercise is devised in part by the feedback interview, which I have renamed a *Reflexive Feedback Loop* and will unfold in the following ways. I aim to immerse myself in an introspective music *event*, whereby I will attempt to revisit the past experience of listening to the Swedish album for the first time. The album will serve as an instrumental tool that will challenge my assumptions and biases about what it is and how it sounds. It will act as a mnemonic device in much the same way as a photograph or video captures discrete moments in time. However, I also need to avoid the urge to merely reminisce. Instead, the process should endeavour to dissect and interpret the subtle nuances of memory as they are elicited from the sounds of the songs on the album.[154] It will not be a musical analysis as such, although I will comment on sounds and musical parts as they appear to me. I am also interested in how the songs are associated with the events

[154] The plan for how the listening exercise should take place can be seen in Appendix G.

surrounding their production - for example, time spent writing in Stormore (Chapter Two), recording in Soundtrade and Basecamp (Chapter Three), and other events that have not found themselves in the preceding chapters thus far. From the notes I created in the listening session, I used open coding to develop themes, which I then prompted through a series of questions extracted from the descriptive notes.[155] I have structured my observations about listening to the album in the form of questions, which I then give full answers and explanations.

Questions in theory

The foundational process of formulating questions in heuristic research facilitates an introspective inquiry into the nature of reality. It foregrounds an individual's internal struggle and desires to understand often problematic experiences. Questions are essential and require an inward-looking focus to ascertain fundamental truths. 'Discovering a significant problem or question that will hold the wondering gaze and passionate commitment of the researcher is the essential opening of the heuristic process' (Moustakas 1990: 40). Therefore, the intimate nature of the questioning from a phenomenological perspective is fundamental to sustaining the focus of the researcher. The self-questioning method I have developed directly applies the phenomenological autoethnographic ideas and principles developed throughout this thesis. As part of the *Reflexive Feedback Loop* (outlined above), the method leverages self-questioning as a means of personal exploration

[155] 'In open coding, the ethnographer should not use preestablished categories to read fieldnotes; rather he should read with an eye toward identifying events described in the notes that could themselves become the basis of categorization' (Emerson et al. 1995: 152).

and a rigorous analytical tool. The aim is to facilitate an engagement with the music and its impact on my memory, identity and experience.

The listening session preparation

How will memory influence and impact my experience of re-listening to the Swedish album? The act of remembering is a complex interplay of cognitive and emotional processes. When applied to this re-listening experience, it has the potential to elucidate layers of depth and context. Each song is an event in itself and has a unique history and story: in some cases, spanning many years, different arrangements, and occupying multiple iterations or demos. In each of these locations lie specific human responses and recollections, and these fragmented memories form a tangible and intangible sense of self, each bound to the present and acknowledged. Some memories will be vivid, while others are in the background. Edward Casey defines these potential moments as primary and secondary memories whereby the revival of a thought is given a 'second life' (2000: 52). If done systematically and with serious intent, remembering has the potential to transform the re-listening experience from a mere auditory encounter to a self-reflexive, temporal journey. Casey suggests we should embrace memory and, in doing, 'begin to undo the self-forgetful forgetting' that has been perpetrated by our willingness to 'hand over to machines' (2000: 18). In the process of becoming modern, we have passed the responsibility of remembering to computers. This externalisation of human memory brings to mind Proust's reflection that 'we only possess what is present to us' (259). The question remains: are memories stored in machines truly present to us in the same way as those we hold internally, and will the process of re-listening solidify or alter

memories?

Where will the listening experience take place and why? The studio location is where I work (in 2023), Bournemouth University (see Fig. below). It has the essential qualities of a professional recording studio—an acoustically treated room, high-quality monitors, and all the usual technological paraphernalia. I had to book the studio and make an event rather than listen to recordings on my laptop. The studio's design offers a relatively neutral environment to play back the recording and minimise external influences that could affect the listening experience. The act of booking the studio forced me to listen to the album in a deliberate and eventful way. I could easily have listened to the album on, say, my laptop, but I would have been tempted to interrupt the procedure. The time constraint of the studio booking was an essential component in how I focused on listening to the album.



Figure 48 Bournemouth University recording studio c.2023.

Feedback questions [156]

What do I remember about hearing the album for the first time? I remember being amazed that it had finally arrived because our last session in Stockholm was around mid-2006. It was now July 18th, 2013, and we were nearly at the end of a relationship with BorderBlaster, which I will elaborate on further in this section. Soren notified Ben, and he then texted me. We decided to meet up in the studio and listen to it. I remember feeling detached from the sounds as they blasted through the

[156] See Appendix F for coded notes made on the listening experience. These notes were then refined and thematised into questions.

studio monitors. We cranked the volume up to get the full impact. Songs were chosen at random, and we were transported back to the recording sessions in Basecamp and Soundtrade. It took about an hour to get through the whole album; we chatted between each song and pondered things like the vocals, the guitars, sounds and musical parts that we could no longer recall even playing. At the end of the session, Ben appeared marginally more enthusiastic about the album than I was. Soren had done a lot of work on the album since we last heard it in our absence. There were now additional string and percussion parts —Soren's 'luxury textures'. We were not privy to the mixing sessions, and the mastering had already been completed. The album and its songs were all fixed and ready for release. There was never any suggestion that we could query this finished product or have access to the multitrack sessions for potential remixes. The album was locked into place and primarily reflected the producer's overall vision. I interpreted this action of freezing us out of the final process and sound of the album as typical of the asymmetrical power dynamic that had existed almost from the first encounter with the producer. According to Giddens (1984), agents continuously monitor their actions and the social and physical context in which they act. It is difficult to know why Soren decided to exclude the songwriters from these important final decisions, but it is more than likely part of his reflexive assessment of the album project. His professional judgment about the album is part of his rationalisation process, whereby decision-making about mixing is not questioned. In this scenario, his power is contained within this narrow set of circumstances. We had used the promise of the album as collateral, attempting to leverage ourselves into a position of some relevance in our relationship with BorderBlaster. At best, this was another 'making do' tactic, which was wishful thinking. After that one session, I never listened to the

album again. I sometimes started with the intention of listening to it and then would have to turn it off, experiencing only fragments of songs. It did not do much for me anymore. The excitement of recording it all those years ago had long worn off.

What are my thoughts about hearing the album again after all these years? How has my emotional investment in the music affected my analytical perspectives on the album? Once I had completed the entire listening session, I came away from it feeling that my position about the album had not changed in all these years and that I still did not like much of it—although I enjoyed listening to All Over Again and Ring of Gold. I remember that I particularly liked performing All Over Again live, but that version and arrangement were transformed in Sweden into something more elaborate, multi-layered, and dense. Listening to this song brings back memories of socialising with the band and preparations for the album recording. We rehearsed the song in Stormore, and I recall that we debated the structure of the bridge/instrumental section. Ultimately, we decided it should have a country feel rather than a funk-rock groove. It was the first song on the agenda of the newly reformed Kerb. There was a gig in the Folkhouse in Bristol, and this song was on the setlist. It was an easy sequence to play on double-bass Dm Gm A. The band was a four-piece, and Ryan was still the drummer. For some reason, we messed it up in the performance. No one knew what to do with the bridge section and the ending. Still, we managed to bluff our way through.

Ring of Gold was a song that people, promoters and audiences liked. It was written towards the end of the period at the Stormore studio and is more closely related in style to Fear Inside (see earlier in this chapter). However, in the demo version, there is much more emphasis on acoustic instruments and electronic sounds.

The song contains Ben's familiar musical motives; it is in 6/8 time, and the acoustic guitar features throughout the arrangement but is far removed from the Kerb-style ballads we used to play. The opening instrumental motif is played on the electric guitar, which introduces the first [A] section. The texture of this guitar part sets the mood and feel, along with the heavy use of reverb on this track. The verses develop further with the acoustic guitar, double bass, and egg shaker—the arrangement is minimal, and we were never too sure whether the song was complete. The final section [C] develops into an instrumental arrangement with a contained acoustic guitar solo towards the middle part. The song finishes with a copy of the last two lines of the second verse layered onto the last section of the song, where it happened by chance to fit the chord sequence (see Fig. 52 below). Structurally, the song deviates from the usual verse-chorus format used in many songs written for Kerb. ROG is an example of how we were experimenting with form and sound.

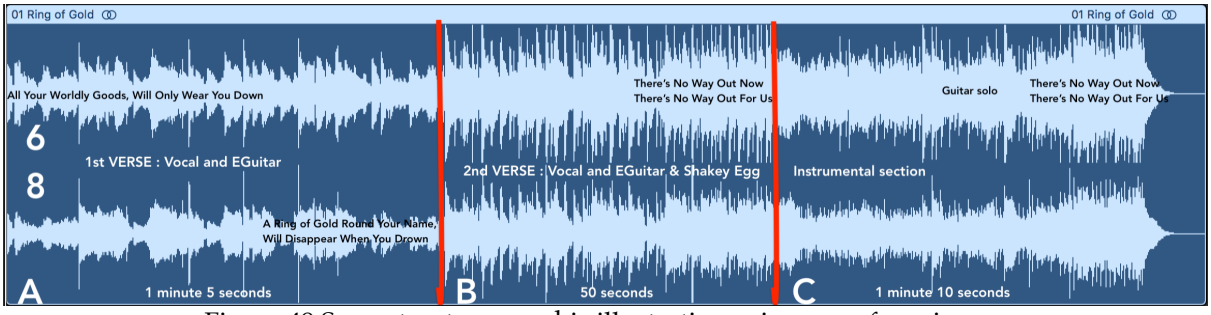


Figure 49 Song structure graphic illustration using waveform image.

However, despite attempting to produce a 'lo-fi' vibe to the track, we discovered a fine line between this aesthetic and recording errors that had no charm.

On the demo recording of ROG, it can be heard very clearly how the vocal has been squeezed and has exaggerated both the sibilance and breath sounds. This blemish is most noticeable in the word 'goods'. Another problem is the delay pushing the 's' sound on 'goods', making it jump out of the overall mix. These audio flaws are exacerbated by how the delay on the vocal is timed, subsequently drawing attention

to them. Another issue we had was recording the double bass, particularly the bowing in the last section of the song. Poor performance technique and microphone placement create a messy feel to this part of the recording. However, the instrumentation of this song's arrangement shifts the emphasis away from the rock band aesthetic towards a hybrid acoustic sound, which, in itself, became more important than the recording shortcomings in production we were encountering.

In the Swedish version, the arrangement is underpinned with organs, piano, and much heavier guitar parts, creating a lush atmospheric texture. These are the only songs I would listen to again if forced to do so. Why am I inclined to like these three songs? When I think about the production process in Sweden and compare the demos we made of these songs, the Stockholm production treatment pushed their potential to a professional level that we had not been able to achieve. By that, I mean the capture of Ben's voice in particular and the balance and impact of the arrangements. However, the problem of having two repertoires housed in one entity does not work. Too many compromises are being made in order for the songs to fit together as a whole experience. The method of production, which I discuss at length in Chapter Three, results in a musical experience that expresses the sound of the album and songs before the band's identity. The band sounds too manufactured in this album for my tastes. I find the absence of human performance in the recordings alienating and disappointing. The overall sound is clinical, and all quirks have been carefully smoothed out. My interpretation of the album in this present mode of listening is overlayed by the years spent working in Audiobase (as discussed early in this chapter) and assembling a sound and production method that is, in many ways, antagonistic to the Swedish album production.

How did the band dynamics in the studio affect the recording outcome, and what impact did this have on the expressive quality of the studio album? Chapter Three addresses the same dynamics of the recording sessions in Sweden - particularly the time spent in Soundtrade. It is difficult to detect the lack of cohesion in these sessions listening to the final mixes - all of the arguments and tensions appear to be airbrushed out of the product. Some tension might have served the album in hindsight. The lack of cohesion between the rhythm section was problematic from the outset and derailed much of what the producer had organised. We were Kerb when we arrived in Sweden, and by the time we left, we were Safehaus. This transformation was fixed into the creative and organisational album-making process. As I listen to these tracks again, I remember the awkwardness of Greg's intervention in the control room - even though it was well-intentioned and the distortion 'square wave' incident, which seemed to deflate the atmosphere. I had to address some timing issues with my guitar playing - my desire to inject energy into the rhythm section by pushing the beat was not a welcome dynamic. We were all grappling with some kind of personal issue: Ben and the impending vocal recordings, the ongoing issue with the drums, which nobody seemed to be able to pinpoint precisely, Jon's readjustment to playing in the band, having spent so long away from it - he was now a session player and not a core member as he once was. And Jim's ongoing development of his role as vocalist and guitarist. These personal and social tensions threatened to destabilise the recording at any time.

How has the evolution of musical style and production processes influenced the album's overall artistic direction and identity? The gradual transformation from raw material to the glossy finished product is most noticeable between the arrival of the

monitor mixes in 2008 and the finished mixes in 2013. As a rough mix, October Rain contained some of the textures and darkness our original had - the version Thom Russo had helped structure (see Chapter Two). This song is the best example of how our Swedish producer gradually channelled the sound of the track towards a less edgy sound. Although it might be that he thought of it as being more edgy - this is impossible to know as conversations about the album were vague. If we asked him how he thought it would come together, he would reply, 'I have some ideas'… My perception of our musical style, represented in this album, is that it has very little to do with us in 2013. I think about the sound of the nylon-strung acoustic guitar in all of the recordings of October Rain, and they sound best when they are degraded - by this, I mean that the way the original sound was recorded in the demo version ended up sounding more like a sample - slightly lower resolution and the reverbs were cheaper. The opposite transpires in Sweden, where cleaning up and refining song arrangements becomes the producer's desired aesthetic. The overall sound of the songs of the album is generally polished and smooth in a bid to make them more commercially appealing to BorderBlaster. This process often involves adding or enhancing effects (like reverb or delay), adjusting the equalisation to make the sound brighter or more balanced, layering additional instruments or vocals to fill out the sound, or editing and mixing to remove imperfections. In All Over Again, the production approach works; the song's rawness is present, but the playing dynamic is missing. All the notes are perfectly placed, but the production is too orchestrated. In the song's last chorus, a solo violin part sits on the top of the arrangement and pushes towards a softer edge - I would have preferred it to be a raw-sounding synth. I think my ideas have become stronger over the years due to having built Audiobase Studio, where I deliberately sought to distance our sound from Basecamp's.

What were the contractual and logistical processes that enabled the completion of the album? The arrival of the completed album only occurred once we signed a new deal in Paris with BorderBlaster Records. In many ways, this new record contract facilitated the album's completion. My feelings about the album are bound to the protracted negotiations and long intervals of no contact with this new label. It is impossible for me to see the Swedish album outside of this partnership. It began around mid-2007; after some persuasion, Soren finally agreed to send us monitor mixes of the album; not long after this momentous event, we were invited back to Sweden to meet one of his contacts - a record label MD based in Stockholm and Paris. The label BorderBlaster was looking for a rock act to add to its roster. Until now, it had focused on Swedish hip-hop and reggae artists. However, they were interested in our project and saw some potential in an off-the-shelf product like ours. Basecamp, Safehaus and BorderBlaster created a joint venture agreement (JVA) to develop and promote Safehaus as a recording artist.[157]

The initial term was due to commence from October 2007 and be terminated twenty-four months after or until mutually satisfactory completion of the terms of the agreement had been fulfilled by the JVA— this followed another contract in the form of a publishing agreement between the writers of Safehaus and Basecamp Publishing. This new contract was scheduled to commence simultaneously with the JVA in October 2007. In this contract, Safehaus agreed to assign to the publisher all rights to compositions created by us in whole or in part alone or collaboration with others during the term, extending till October 2010. It also covered compositions that

[157] See Appendix H for Joint Venture Agreement contract details.

had been written before this agreement. The list of songs, the 'schedule', included all songs recorded at the Stockholm sessions and songs written while at Stormore and Audiobase.

The delay between organising this phase of the contract and the actual delivery of the finished album took another five years. From 2008 until 2011, we were on our own as the relationship between the label and the producer became fraught. The joint venture agreement existed in all but name as the relationship between the parties stalled; we never fully understood the reason for this predicament either. Life outside of the band project became another complicated factor. Safehaus was not making any money despite our best efforts, so we needed to re-focus on the world outside the studio until we could find a way through this present impasse. As a result, time became a much more precious commodity, and the regularity of the studio sessions inevitably decreased.

Were there any opportunities for the band as a result of the album and the band's association with Basecamp and BorderBlaster? Safehaus's prospects with BorderBlaster records were as unpredictable as anything else we had encountered thus far in the project. However, unlike our dealings with Cent, they appeared to have a strategy for releasing some of our music. These releases consisted of three tracks, two singles, and a guest feature on one song from the Past Present Future album by Manu Dibango. The first single was Fear Inside and was released shortly after Past Present Future in 2012.

In August 2011, unexpectedly, BorderBlaster contacted Ben and urgently arranged a meeting with us in Paris. Within a few days of the telephone call, we were planning to travel to Paris to meet them at a studio where they were busy producing

songs with another British artist. So, for a few short days, our 'rock and roll' careers were back on track as we travelled to Paris at the expense of the record label. From our hotel in Boulevard Garibaldi, where we stayed, we took a taxi past the Eiffel Tower, across the Seine, through the Arc de Triomphe, to our destination at Avenue Charles de Gaulle. Ben called the label on his phone, as there was no sign of a recording studio, just a busy shopping mall. We were given directions to meet at the studio's entrance. On closer inspection and down one of the pedestrian corridors inside the mall, there was an inconspicuous-looking door. Surprisingly, once inside, the space opened up into a vast complex of interconnected recording studios - completely cut off from the activities of the shoppers milling around above. The BorderBlaster MD was waiting for us. The initial meeting was slightly awkward; after all, we had only met once in Stockholm in 2007. There had only been very low-level contact between the label and us for many months now. Communications consisted of Ben fruitlessly texting or emailing the label.



Figure 50 Studio Grande Armée, Paris. Image courtesy of Hannes Bieger (2017).

The rationale for going to the studio was to meet other people on the label and get to know label MD a little more. We were shown around the complex and were amazed at the scale of the operation. The label's session in Studio A was the largest of three and overlooked a vast live room. Down at the far end of this room was a drum tracking room —this space was larger than the whole Audiobase studio (see Fig. 53 above). [158] We observed the engineer recording a group of singers; Wayne Beckford directed and produced the session. The engineer managed the files on the Pro Tools DAW session; it seemed like an elaborate use of space and equipment for the type of session. The MD had organised a photographer for the session and snapped Ben and

[158] See studio article on Sound on Sound magazine (https://www.soundonsound.com/music-business/grande-armee-paris).

me in one of the production studios (see Fig. 54 below). The main topic of conversation was about Safehaus recording a new album in Paris. The issues with Swedish album appeared to be too complicated to unravel. I got the impression from talking to BorderBlaster that they were not that interested in what we had done in Sweden back in 2005.



Figure 51 Clive Radford left, Ben Kench right Courtesy of RockRiderRecords Paris c.2011.

That evening, after we returned to the hotel, we decided to go out and revel in the conversations that had taken place that day about recording a new album in Studio Grande Armée. For now, talk of the Swedish album had been left to one side. Ben was now much more optimistic about how a new album might be produced here in Paris. Much of the substance of the deal we had struck with BorderBlaster had hinged on us delivering a fully completed mixed and mastered album - this seemed less important now. In 2011, Soren had sent through mixes of two tracks from the

album. This offering provided some leverage for us to contribute to activity surrounding the label's main project, Manu Dibango's Past Present Future album, which was also being recorded at Studio Grande Armée.

BorderBlaster had negotiated an album deal with Dibango, his first album release in over 16 years. The album's format was along the lines of 'Wakafrika' (1994), which featured a collaboration of 'all-stars' including King Sunny Ade, Youssou N'Dour, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Peter Gabriel and Sinead O'Connor. The featured track on 'Wakafrika' was Dibango's 'Soul Makossa', a catchy hybrid of Makossa, soul-funk, and jazz that became a major hit in the early 1970s.[159] On this new album, the producers and Dibango decided to make a recording showcasing a range of diverse artists, much as 'Wakafrica' had done in the mid-90s. The line-up included Wayne Beckford, a British/Jamaican songwriter and producer; Passi, a Congolese and French rap artist who came to prominence in the 1990s with the group Ministère AMER; singer-songwriter, Oum, a major recording artist in Morocco for over a decade; Chantal Ayissi, a well-known exponent of modern bikutsi on the Cameroonian music scene; French rapper and producer Pit Bacardi; and Safehaus (whom nobody had heard of). The completed album is a hybrid of musical ideas that showcases Dibango's eclectic musical style, fusing afro-funk, soul, hip-hop, jazz, and rock. 'Soul Makossa' again appears as the main track on the album. Dibango became the sound of Africa in popular music recordings, the most well-known of all African musicians for over 50 years. Part of his formula was his ability to hybridise and

[159] Soul Makossa c.2009 becomes part of a lawsuit involving Michael Jackson and Rhianna. https://mjthekingofpop.wordpress.com/2009/02/27/26-2-2009-cameroon-musician-manu-dibango-75-failed-with-his-court-case-against-michael-jackson-and-rihanna/

absorb musical influences, which was the premise for the album ‘Past Present Future’.

The collaboration with Manu Dibango was part of a more comprehensive marketing campaign to promote his presence and other artists on the 'Past Present Future' compilation album. Shortly after Dibango's album release, the label released a revamped Fear Inside. It consisted of both the original song and an instrumental version. Fear Inside was released initially in France, with some airplay on several regional radio stations. From the label's perspective, the single was the first phase of an ambitious plan to evolve over the next 18 months that would see them launch two more singles and then the Swedish album - once it was finally mixed.

In what ways did the album mark a turning point or a continuation of your creative journey? The experience of the record-making process in Sweden was valuable insomuch as it offered a chance to observe and participate in the production of what might be described as a professional album. However, as time went by, my initial feelings about what constitutes the work of a musician extended beyond the composition and songwriting to include the ability to produce the record. I then became consumed by the idea that we (Safehaus) ought to be able to make our own records - and by that, I meant that we should write, record and mix our songs. I felt there was something more intimate about this way of thinking. The work in the studio, as I describe in the first section of this chapter, attempts to circumscribe the standard production model that defines how records should sound. In terms of Safehaus's songwriting partnership, which began back in Kerb in 2002, it viewed the world from two perspectives. I wanted nothing to do with record labels and the handing over process, which was an inevitable part of these partnerships, while Ben

only saw progress and success in these terms. As convincing as I could be with my argument for independence, he could never relinquish the Swedish album: it held a captivation for him that seemed to defy any logical reasoning. He was impressed by Soren's technical skills and equated that sound as having greater potential for success than our own efforts. The album was a fantasy for many years. As far as I was concerned, we had nothing to lose by 'going it alone'. When I re-listen to the album now, it only confirms my feelings about its lack of potential because the authentic voices of the artists are missing.

How did the experiences leading up to and during the Stockholm recording sessions influence the future direction and dynamics of Safehaus? All the negotiations and disappointments that led up to the Stockholm sessions, starting as far back as when we first started discussing the album with Cent Records, were put to one side once the album recording was imminent. Despite the long odds of anything emerging from the completed album, which we all imagined would be completed within the year, there was a feeling of optimism and enthusiasm for the band and its future. Sweden might not have been the first choice for where we recorded, but it still represented a considerable injection of resources into each of our musical careers. Despite the shaky start to the recording at Soundtrade, by the time we had completed the second part of the recording in Basecamp, there was optimism and enthusiasm for what the future might hold, which was shared by our producers. However, this state of affairs lasted only a few months, after which the relationship between the label and producer put pay to any momentum with the band.

Despite the somewhat gloomy picture I am depicting about the band's outcome, the process of recording the album and working alongside our Swedish

collaborators greatly enhanced our ways of working and songwriting in the studio. The experience in Sweden transformed our approach to recording vocals and guitars. Our usual hesitant demeanour in the studio was replaced with certainty and confidence. Even though our musical direction in Audiobase differed from the Basecamp aesthetic, their superior production processes were adapted and became part of our vocabulary. Despite Ben's preoccupation with the Swedish album, we never attempted to emulate the sound of it exactly - from what we could remember of it. Instead, the musical direction remained more experimental and aligned more with the song Fear Inside.

The protracted negotiations surrounding the album fostered a deception or fabrication of reality. At times, while fully immersed in the studio in new songwriting projects, the Swedish album seemed to linger and had the potential to lessen the work we were doing. One of the staggering facts that accompanied our present state was that we did not control the copyright of all the songs that had been part of the new deal with BorderBlaster, Basecamp, and Audiobase.

We had written so many more songs in the time it took to complete the album that my aspirations for what I thought it should sound like had shifted. Safehaus did not sound like this album, and the album did not sound like us, either. However, BorderBlaster eventually released one of the tracks as a single (Warning Signs). This release would be a follow-up to Fear Inside, and like this release Warning Signs was part of a larger marketing plan that the label was coordinating in conjunction with Manu Dibango. Warning Signs was the first and only song from the album released on the Swedish label. A brief flurry of activity involved more meetings about videos; treatments were pitched, but they never materialised. Warning Signs was released on April 22nd, 2014. Unfortunately, the relationship between BorderBlaster and

Basecamp was still complicated and hindered the impetus of any further action. By the following year, though, Safehaus's involvement with the Swedish label had been terminated, and shortly after, I decided that I could not continue with the project and left in April 2015 leaving Ben to continue with Safehaus.

Conclusion - closing the feedback loop

In this chapter, I have shown how Safehaus's experiences dealing with complex relationships in the music industry ultimately led to a disappointing and frustrating outcome. The short time their Swedish album was recorded and its prolonged completion date ultimately contributed to the band's retreat to the studio. The handing over of the recording to the Swedish producer of the album and a share of the song's copyright undermined any negotiations the band had with subsequent labels. By the time the album arrives, there is little enthusiasm for it and what it represents. My revisiting of the album shows, if nothing else, how alienated I am from the sounds and the songs. The production process strips away the connection between us, the artist and songwriters, the musicians who created the ideas, and the end product. My elaborate process of re-listening to the album in the way detailed in this chapter shows the deep connection between musicians and their products. Once this fragile state of affairs is handed over to others, motivated mainly by a financial agreement, the possibilities for failure are inevitable. In Safehaus's case, they seem unlucky in their choice of producer - had the label managed to broker the deal with Thom Russo, we all knew our chances of success would have been far greater. While the account I have presented of Safehaus's experience in Sweden and then Paris is highly nuanced, it does bear some comparison to how Michael Jones (1997) describes his experiences with the band Roadhouse, where he concludes that it is not enough

to rely on talent alone, organisational and management infrastructures also need to be in place in order to make sense of and be effective in music industry negotiations. Safehaus, like Roadhouse, were too reliant on and absorbed by writing and producing songs, thinking that this alone would be enough to secure a future for their music.

Interpreting the Self-Interview Technique and Memory

The methodology of self-interviewing, particularly within the framework of phenomenological auto-ethnomusicology, is unusual but nevertheless provides a unique lens through which to explore creative processes and personal histories. It is an example of how Casey describes 'remembering-what' (2000: 61). When we engage in 'remembering-what', we recall an overall situation or event (a state of affairs) in a summarised form. Instead of remembering all the intricate details, the aim is to capture the essence of the experience concisely and descriptively—the main idea or feeling of the situation without delving into its full complexity.

Casey describes remembering as a mental act that is intentional in structure (48). Intentionality frequently manifests throughout this thesis and is a fundamental principle of phenomenological thinking. The *act* of remembering always involves some content or *object* that is being remembered. In this framework, the *act phase* is how we remember (the reflexive feedback interview), and the *object phase* is what we remember (the content of what is remembered). Two further distinctions can be observed, and these involve *primary* and *secondary* remembering. Primary remembering involves the immediate retention of experiences, forming a backdrop to new experiences. Secondary remembering, on the other hand, involves recalling experiences that have lapsed from consciousness and require deliberate recollection.

Both forms of remembering are integral to the self-interview technique, as they allow the participant/interviewer to access and reflect on past events, encounters, and creative process.

If we reflect on the content of the self-interview technique, we observe that the Swedish album is a stimulus for past experiences. The album acts as a mnemonic device, similar to a photograph or video, stimulating the recall of specific events and encounters. The listening exercise elicits memories, emotions, and creative decisions. It triggers a complex interplay between my past and present self, revealing how memories of the album's production impact my current identity and understanding of this musical journey. Primary memories are those immediate impressions and feelings experienced during the album's initial listening sessions. These memories are vivid and detailed, directly connecting to past events. Secondary memories involve the broader context and subsequent reflections on the album's production, which have lapsed from immediate consciousness but can be recalled through deliberate introspection. This reconstructive process is not merely a recollection of facts but an active re-engagement with the past, informed by present perspectives.

The self-interview technique (Reflexive Feedback Loop), grounded in Casey's theory of intentional remembering, offers an experimental yet robust methodological approach for capturing and analysing the essence of past experiences concisely and meaningfully. I found probing my own reactions to the album revealing insofar as I was forced to challenge my preconceptions about it. This scenario is complicated by recalling the past event as I attempt to reconstruct its meaning. However, despite the interview's complexities, I believe it offered a way to engage with personal and creative histories and add a further operational dimension to phenomenological auto-ethnomusicology through the dynamic and reconstructive nature of memory.

CHAPTER 5

Epilogue to a rock band

Introduction

Being in the Band is the result of a prolonged and heterogeneous research process that attempts to understand what being in a rock band entailed as it attempted to acquire a record contract. The experience, as described in Chapters Two, Three, and Four, reveals an evolving relationship with the recording studio, which is fundamental to the songwriting process. My main concern in each chapter is understanding the musical practices I contributed to and observed, which unfolds into how well the band performs, what kind of sounds they make, and why. In Chapter One, I set out the rationale for the study and suggest that two overarching questions encapsulate the content and design of the research; these are:

> **(1)** What constitutes a grassroots rock band's sound and music practice?
> **(2)** What can a phenomenological auto-ethnomusicology of songwriting and recording studio work contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how rock bands operate at a local/grassroots level?

These questions concern the activities of the band, as I experienced it. I present myself as part of the study object intersecting with the established structure of the band. My observations and analysis are based on the band's repertoire, attitudes, dynamics, and organisation. From this viewpoint, we need to know what motivates individuals in these kinds of creative pursuits. Being in a rock band is an all-consuming enterprise for its members, whose rewards are often overshadowed by frustration and disappointment - a recurring theme throughout this dissertation. Like

Sara Cohen, I contend that understanding grassroots rock bands' organisation and musical practices is vital to popular music studies. In this study, I have explored ways to reveal the 'struggles' of one specific 'unknown local band' (1991: 6). Seeing the world through a grassroots rock band can provide unique insights into local music scenes. The phenomenological autoethnographic methodology I developed allows a close reading of the lived experiences of musicians operating in the south-west of England in the early to mid-2000s. The unique experiences of this band, as they embark on an album recording in Sweden, provide insights into record production and music industry practices.

Studying the practices of rock and popular musicians offers ethnomusicologists a rich ground for scholarly enquiry. Understanding the complex relationships that develop and exist between the artist and music industry people at all levels of engagement is essential and generally missing from academic scholarship. However, I contend that total immersion into the world of rock/pop musicians is essential and thus requires the active participation of one or all music group members. This perspective on the study led me to phenomenological auto-ethnomusicology—a methodology that involves the researcher's deep reflection on and analysis of their own musical experiences to gain insights into broader musical practices and cultures. In many ways, it would appear to conflict with more traditional ethnomusicological approaches. Not least, those that concern ethical dimensions and problems with overly subjective, biased readings of the culture. Traditional studies in this field appear to overcome this issue through outsider observation, which is perceived as a way to maintain distance from the observer and the culture being observed. However, this is not always as straightforward as it outwardly appears. For example, Jeff Todd Titon describes the complexities of immersing himself into the

Appalachian community, in one encounter declining to participate in a congregational hymn. Titon writes, '[t]they found out I played the guitar and asked me to accompany their singing, but I refused, not wanting to intrude myself into what I was documenting' (2018: 18). Despite his efforts, Titon acknowledges the impact of his presence, noting how community members gossiped about the researchers and questioned their intentions, viewing them as 'uninvited guest[s] with strange concerns and priorities rather different from their own' (Rice 1994: xxiii). While auto-ethnomusicology may appear to sidestep some of these problems, it introduces new challenges by embracing autobiographical self-reflexive narratives. This shifts the focus to the self-reflexive account, changing the observer's perception of the study as they recreate, reconstruct, and reinterpret actions that determine musical practice. Nevertheless, this methodological approach provides a valuable, introspective lens that can yield unique and deeply personal insights into the musical cultures being studied. This perspective can be seen as the starting point of this study whereby the choices of the individual, bound to the objective and subjective reality of practice, are seen as shaping meaning.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework Reflection

One of the many challenges of this kind of self-reflexive research is establishing a framework that accounts for the dual position of the observer/practitioner. Throughout this dissertation I have contended, along with others (Becker 2008, Jones 1997), that first-hand accounts are needed and indeed missing from the richly established work already existing in this field (Bates 2016; Berger 1999; Finnegan 1989; Cohen 1991; Bennett 1980). However, these texts represent vastly different

perspectives on what appear to be closely related themes in popular music studies, such as studio work and technology, the experience of music-making by performers, the effort involved to gain recognition, and the inner reality and organisation of the band.

The methodology and theoretical framework I have adapted in this research overlap with work already established in popular music studies. However, I add a further dimension through the use of phenomenology and ethnomusicology. As a practice-led research project, I contend there is no other way to share the lived experience of the musician other than through a phenomenological auto-ethnomusicology framework. My rationale for this way of thinking is that both phenomenology and autoethnography foreground subjective experience as a primary source of data. Both methodologies require deep introspection in order to arrive at descriptions and interpretations of an experience. Yet both methodologies offer something unique and complementary to interpretation—autoethnography, deep insights into particular experiences, and phenomenology, which strives to reveal how specific experiences are perceived in different contexts. I maintain that although the individual is socially constructed, the essence of experience itself is not universally generalisable.

One of the primary themes for the band is its self-identification within the historical context of the latter phases of the Britpop era in the UK. Despite their ambivalence toward being labelled as part of this movement—preferring a more nuanced identity—their sound and style were often compared to this phenomenon. They emerged and operated within this musical tradition, which profoundly shaped their lived experiences. Britpop itself is a movement that arose from a deeper history, imbued with nostalgia and a benign form of nationalism. The band observe these

events, interpret and make meaning in the moment. It is an engagement with history encountered within an everyday life—all the paraphernalia associated with how this cultural moment, in time, unfolds—stylised performances, sounds, and texts that define the present. In this context, phenomenological auto-ethnomusicology appears to be the most effective framework to contemplate the transmission between the actions of the participant (me) and the intersubjectivity of the 'fieldworker' (also me). For example, Chapter Three offers insight into recording studio work in Sweden, an analysis and interpretation that relies wholly on a phenomenological perspective bound to my individual historicity and present situation. Once revealed, the autobiographical narrative reveals intensely personal moments alongside more generalisable elements, such as the problems experienced in monitoring the band's sound through headphones, which disrupted the vibe and feel of the recording session.

Yet, there are limitations to the methods used in this study. Not least, the (not deliberate) omission of other voices. In an ideal world, I would have interviewed key contributors to the band and the Swedish album. The content and design of this study would then have been contained within what I present in Chapter Three, *the album recording phase*. There were many logistical and personal reasons why this was not possible. The internal political dynamics of the band which often manifested as jealousies and a gradual demotivation for the project began to isolate me. I was viewed as a disrupter of the *status quo* which led to friendships and the regular communication channels gradually ending. By the time I reached an important milestone in this research which could have opened the door to the others, I had lost contact with all but one member.

The most important voice, that of the songwriter Ben Kench, is missing because he is no longer around. He died unexpectedly in 2017 shortly after we had begun speaking to each other again after my decision to leave Safehaus in 2015. I could have envisioned interviewing Ben and capturing our differing perspectives on the relationships we had with record companies and how we diverged in our interpretations and expectations from these contractual arrangements. It would also have been enlightening to have conducted the 'Feedback Interview' (Chapter Four) using Ben as the participant. As it stands, I had no option but to adapt and reflect on my position concerning the Swedish album an omission of some kind of reflection and acknowledgement would have severely undermined the research process as so much of the band's attention was focused on this production. In many ways, I have to over-compensate for the lack of Ben's voice though the 'feedback loop' device which explores my memories, feelings and biases.

In the end, the direction of this research has thus become more intimate and focused on my musical experiences. However, I found autoethnography challenging to do. It required a level of revelation about myself which was uncomfortable. After all, the account of being in the rock band is one of failure—this is difficult to acknowledge. As the author and subject of the text, I have to place myself in often vulnerable scenarios that have painful memories associated. Doing an autoethnography requires the researcher to relive these painful moments to discover if there is anything of use to the reader and wider contribution to the project. For example, in earlier drafts, I would gloss over remembrances and rely too much on bare descriptions of the experience—rather than discuss how I felt about a sound, I might just describe the instrument that makes the sound.

As I state throughout this dissertation, this narrative is but one of many that could exist. Yet as it stands, I am the only contributor who is likely to embark on this kind of enterprise due to my professional life and work and its natural alignment to this kind of academic endeavour.

Memory remembering and imagining

An essential component of how I use phenomenological autoethnography in this study concerns memory and imagining. The experience contained in the encounters and events that constitute the band's distant and near story relies on my memory and the act of remembering. I acknowledge that this reliance is inherently problematic. Yet, I also offer a solution through Edward Casey's (1987, 1976) phenomenological concepts of memory, remembering, and imagining, which are rarely utilised in music studies. Casey's theories significantly enrich this study and, as such, make a significant departure from more traditional ethnomusicological studies whereby cultural practices are understood more as a linear identification of phenomenon. This study attempts a vertical integration—a layering of multiple elements and themes within a whole life span—for example, the formation of the band, songwriting, recording studio work, record contracts and record companies, record producers, the songs, and all of the interactions that happen within their locale. It is one band's specific journey told by one of its contributors. This context emphasises the subjective and introspective nature of musical experience and acknowledges the complex, often contradictory ways musicians navigate their social and historical contexts.

Being specific about memory and remembering is essential and Casey's theories provide a subtle yet powerful differentiation between reminiscing, reminding, body memory, fantasy and reality. Memories recall events thematically and emotionally, thus revealing the experience through non-linear concepts of time. An added layer to this ideation is that the past event contained in memory is inflected with the present. As Casey suggests, remembering is a circular process, and care needs to be taken in how we translate memories into narrative accounts —time is not 'homogenous in its unfolding' (1987: 75).

Connecting memory to written text takes place in the form of vignettes. These written accounts I present as a series of events and encounters encompassing the experiential narrative account being recalled. I wrote many more vignettes than those that have ended up contained in each band history. Some accounts offered only peripheral information and appeared distantly relative to the research themes. In most cases, the first draft of these remembrances was raw and needed refining and editing in order for deeper readings and connections to be made. I often had to abandon accounts that imposed too much of my present attitude to the scenario. Most vignettes began as outlines of the encounters they portrayed and needed time, reflection, and balance with other accounts in order for them to avoid distortion.[160]

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[160] Husserl's concept of 'distortion' in the context of perception and representation relates especially to images and their physical substrates (like photographs). He differentiates between the physical image *thing* (e.g., a photograph) and the image as it is perceived or intended in our minds. The physical image is the substrate or base for the mental image. Therefore, distortion refers to those appearances or perceptions that deviate from the 'normal' or intended image. These distortions are not direct representations of the image object itself but are transitional phases or tendencies that lead towards the normal perception of the image. He uses the example of a rubber sheet with a drawing on it: when the sheet is stretched, the drawing appears distorted. This distortion reflects a change in the object's appearance but does not represent the object's true nature or intended perception of the object drawn on the sheet. Substrate (photograph) distortion amounts to an alteration or misrepresentation of the object from the physical medium to how it is perceived in our minds (Husserl 2005: 587).

While I place specific emphasis on the subjective lived experience and the knowledge gained through close examination of the insider, I have not abandoned ideas that form a macro-level view of music making. The accounts I give are actively informed by social contexts directly perceived by me, the subject, and the participant. I observed that the rock band did not have any overtly political ideas they wanted to leverage through their music. It was difficult to know what precisely the members' political motivations were. There appeared to be no correlation between the music made and any social ideology. My observations suggest that while theoretical depictions of macro/micro social perspectives neatly align individual cultural behaviours with broader societal structures, they need to capture the complexity of individual agency within these analysis models.

As I have observed, musicians are indeed influenced by the social structures surrounding them, but these influences are absorbed and reflected in their practices in varied and nuanced ways. These practices are primarily mediated through individual choices and actions rather than directly dictated by external power systems. Therefore, the connection between societal power structures and musical choices is not straightforward but is mediated through the individual's agency, indicating a complex interplay rather than a direct causal link. My position on this throughout has been that social structures influence the musicians in this study as they are absorbed as historical practices.

Phenomenological autoethnographic methodologies for musical practice

Phenomenological autoethnography is a powerful lens through which to explore the subjective realities of musicians. Themes, such as memory and emotion,

are valuable in revealing the complex inner landscapes of musicians and producers. Caution is needed, however, in the pursuit of 'timeless universals' as tempting as it may appear to generalise musicians' experience the goal of this research is to discover the essence and emergence of generalisations. 'No generalised musician has ever had an abstract goal and organized attention to achieve it' (Berger 1999: 148). That said, the inner reality of the individual musician, while deeply personal and in some ways private, is simultaneously part of a social system, 'informed by the broadest historical and social context' (ibid.: 173). The everyday life of the musician is not in isolation, agency consists of negotiating the complexities of the externalities of the cultural practices that define the field. For example, the deeply personal ways in which artists interact with the symbolic elements of the studio and its technological design are necessary to further our understandings of artistic creation and expression. Being able to draw on personal experiences as primary source data is contentious yet essential for closer readings of how specific kinds of musical culture work. Getting to the core of the experience is the goal and while challenging methodologically, autoethnography is shown to be apt in revealing the multifaceted challenges artists face, from creative struggles and studio dynamics to contractual negotiations and industry pressures. Autoethnographic methodologies demonstrate how individual stories can reveal broader cultural, economic, and social dynamics within the music-making.

Phenomenological autoethnographies when applied to musical practice have the potential to yield new theoretical insights that have significant implications for music studies. By foregrounding the subjective experience and personal narrative a more intimate sharing and immersion can transfer to the reader. These experiences extend not only to what was being produced and written in studios but the thought

processes that form the decisions and negotiations. When applied to creative processes, it connects the logistical dimensions of the music industry to the musicians perceptions, emotions, and identities. This in its self becomes a framework to explore the dialectical relationship between individual agency and structural constraints highlighting the interplay between personal aspirations and external pressures. This perspective offers a nuanced understanding of how people negotiate artistic careers within the backdrop of a complex array of factors that extend beyond mere talent or market forces. The relationship between individual actions and the broader structures of society are an ongoing phenomena (Giddens 1984). Individual freedom is mediated from conditions that are continually shaping and defining actions that emerge from both internal and external practices.

Key Insights from Each Chapter

In Chapter Two, I present the band through a series of vignettes labelled 'events' and 'encounters'. My decision to use vignettes is based on the necessity and need to explore and connect memories within the textual narrative. As presented in the band histories, vignettes are used to both precipitate and reveal data that might otherwise be inaccessible across the timeframe in this study. Vignettes represent moments in life, my specific remembrances, which serve to highlight the journey with the rock band. They convey the band's story, particularly the songwriters' everyday social interactions and how they connect more broadly with the cultural, social, and political spheres in which they operate. Essential to the autoethnographic account is how I establish myself, the researcher, as the subject. Therefore, in order to understand my musical interaction with the band, I have to establish my musical

history. As a jazz musician, I see myself situated outside of what I perceive as conventional rock music practice—its music and musicking. Although I am not presenting a jazz study per se, my interpretations and analysis are directly informed by my background as a jazz musician.

I have utilised a range of analytical methods and theoretical frameworks to capture the rock band's musical and non-musical organisational work. For example, I reveal insights into the band's songwriting methods in song analyses, such as the rationale for instrument choices, song structures, and sounds, and how the band locates itself in their time and place. I include links to published songs and deconstruct composition ideas which I present through music notation and illustrations. At the same time, I incorporate aspects of recording and sound production practices from different studios, along with insights into the songwriter's motivations and decision-making strategies. My approach to analysing songs extends into social and cultural connections to creativity and memory. All of these elements combine to make a multidimensional reading of musical practices, which is essential in order to make an immersive account of how they (we) try to write and produce songs that might one day fulfil our career aspirations. To echo Stan Hawkins, the ultimate aim is to position music analysis 'within an active interdisciplinary field', which ultimately reveals a richer reading of cultural practice that depends on knowledge of all its parts. The end result is revealed through 'a more holistic critical enquiry into the music' (1996: 18).

In this early phase of my involvement with the rock band, it is clear that while they had come close to attaining a record deal, they were, in fact, still attempting to find that elusive but essential song/recording that would open the door to success. This songwriting and recording practice, viewed from the band's perspective,

functions within what could be characterised as a 'proto-market' (Toynbee 2000: 25). This context, in which many unsigned bands find themselves, is loosely connected to the established or mature market they aspire to enter through innovative and creative practices. The proto-market represents a stage of formation and development where the musical product may not be fully refined within an evolving market's governing rules and standards. From my viewpoint, every song the band creates constitutes a musical product of sorts. I am not conflating the notion of the 'product' with how Jones (2013) defines 'symbolic goods' either. Instead, I see the product *prototype* as a manifestation of the songwriter's or producer's sense of achievement when an idea forms into a completed work—'people are engaged in music-making sometimes for the love of it, sometimes for the esteem, and sometimes because they expect in the future to enter the music industry proper' (Toynbee 2000: 27). Part of the appeal for me and the band was the idea we might be able to invent something new that would possess what Toynbee describes as the idiosyncratic qualities inherent in innovative work that the music industry demands. Songwriting and studio work exist against the endless rejections and disappointments of failing to make breakthroughs alongside the psychological mechanisms to cope with these conditions. Consequently, all songs can be considered prototypes, and the activities surrounding their creation are marked by uncertainty and experimentation.

In Chapter Three, the band's ambitions unfold in Stockholm through a collaboration with a small UK-based independent record label. Kerb's story is elevated from its local setting and exposed to professionalised recording studio practices in Sweden. The backdrop to Kerb's plans is set against the cultural and historical significance of Stockholm's international popular music scene. A somewhat disorganised Kerb enters Stockholm's highly organised and commercially focused

record production environment. I describe the album's pre-production phase in detail, which revealed some drastic shortfalls in the band's preparedness for this significant investment. Line-up changes and a disparate collection of songs complicated a precarious situation.

In this chapter, I unfold the experience of this high-end recording studio and reveal the tensions that eventually permeated the sounds and performances. It begins in the pre-production phase of the album recording but then manifests more acutely in the track-laying sessions. The recording is supposed to last two weeks, whereby the band would record most of the album's songs. The session would then transfer to another studio where the finishing touches would be added. In both these examples, I show that studios are more than merely neutral places of assembly. The experiences in Soundtrade and then Basecamp are revealed as spaces where both social and musical interactions come together and create the studio's all-important 'vibe'. It is not just about machines either, but the interactions of the humans in these spaces that reveal the potential for innovation.[161]

I devote most of the discussion to the studio sessions where the musicians and producers 'organisation of attention' construct a complex layering of ideas and meaning that involves the mediation of groove, technology, and identity. These studios and producers are the mediators of our raw materials or prototypes. Through these recording sessions, I show one example of how a Swedish record production model unfolds. I suggest that Sweden's recording industry can be characterised as an industrialised process of song production. Prominent exponents of the scene describe

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[161] Eliot Bates makes the same observation that studios possess a quality that transcends the collection of tools and systems .'Studios are unique; they have a sound, a vibe, and even, in the case of legendary studios such as Abbey Road that become vacation destinations or pilgrimage sites, a transformative effect even on those who never professionally use the studios' (2012: 3).

Swedish producers as perfectionists, a characteristic hard-wired into their culture. While deeply influenced by US and UK pop music history, the Swedish interpretation becomes more rigid and not so laid back.

Soundtrade Studio is a part of Sweden's popular music heritage and the site of many international artists' recordings. Before we arrived in Stockholm, it did not seem like the place where a sudden transformation of fortune would occur. The whole enterprise had been built on a series of compromises that began with the repertoire, the band's new line-up, my switching to guitar from bass, and even the producer was not the first choice. Recording in Sweden was a more economically-driven solution to what was a speculative venture for their label. The band's recording experience in Stockholm underscores a common scenario within what is often described as a tension between artistic creativity and the commercial obligations that translate as music industry pressures. I portray the band's Swedish experience as a moment where they meet pressures to conform to an industry standard and subsequently struggle to find their identity within its framework.

The third 'band history', the post-album recording phase (Chapter Four), is another studio-based analysis which attempts to show how technology shapes the aesthetic direction of the sound of the band. The new studio is presented as a solution to the Swedish album and its delay. The narrative emphasises the phenomenological aspects of the studio environment, from its physical layout and acoustic properties to the psychological dimension within songwriting. The studio is presented as both a physical and symbolic space where songwriting and production are entwined with technology, atmosphere, and personal experiences. The song Fear Inside, is presented as a case study, another proto-type, that defines the present sound of the band and its musical direction. Fear Inside is a result of moving on from

the Swedish album, and while it can viewed as encompassing some of the production ideals the songwriters were exposed to in Sweden it is also a reaction against that experience.

In the second section of Chapter Four, I present a reflective analysis of my reaction to the Swedish album. For me, the album's arrival marks the beginning of the end of my involvement in Safehaus. Even when we finally received the finished album, I found it challenging to listen to and engage with from a musical perspective. That said, I conclude this last part of the band's history through a listening exercise. Rather than merely reflecting on the album, I developed a critical listening exercise, a *reflexive feedback loop*, which analyses the album. In doing this, I attempt to prompt ideas, some distant and some near, about what the album means and my feelings about it from a musical perspective. This critical evaluation is intended to reveal biases and emotional connections to the music, which elicit memories of events and encounters surrounding its production. I tend to like the demos more than the finished production, and I have become aware that I am drawn towards more experimental sounds and ideas. This attitude puts me at odds with the intentions of the producers, the record label, and Ben, my co-writer. As a phenomenological study, revisiting the experience reveals how memories are not static but continually shape the present. The emotional responses I give to re-listening to the album underscore the complex relationship many creators have with the products of their work—for example, it is difficult for me to get away from feelings of detachment, disappointment, and unfulfilled potential and I often contemplate the time factors that served to prolong and hamper progress.

Implications for Future Research

This research project tracks the journey and story of a *rock* band over many years in some detail, and in this respect, it is unusual in its scope. Even though there are ethnographies of music scenes and movements, very little has been written about the musical life cycle of unsigned *rock* bands as they intersect with music industry actors. Specific music studies, particularly of rock bands, tend to focus on the scenes as a whole, as in the seminal works of Finnegan (1989), Cohen (1991) and Bennett (1980). In many ways, this ethnography explores music that struggles to fit into neat categories and music scenes. The descriptions and findings of this project move from ethnographic accounts to socio-cultural analysis and could be applied to broader grass-roots level music projects and music scenes. Taking Finnegan's (1989) monumental study of Milton Keynes as a starting point, there is a rich field of study to be discovered in the most seemingly ordinary places, as already discussed in these chapters. If nothing else, this thesis shows how everyday activities- such as playing music in groups in amateur scenes- absorb so much of participants' lives.

If the case for self-reflexive study has been made in this thesis then there are clearly many applications for this methodology in music studies more generally. Questions that interrogate the first-hand experiences of musicians in the music industry would complement the established academic writing in this field and provide a more balanced reading. Interactions with technological innovation are at the core of music industry studies. The evolution of the internet and digital technology has now been established and transformed musical practices in ways that were not imagined initially. In 2024, artificial intelligence is the new frontier for technology as it emerges in everyday life. It will transform the working practices of

musicians and our perceptions of identity and authenticity. 'Insider participant observation methodologies provide the greatest data yield, as well as a richness and variety of data that is not obtainable through other means' (Bates 2016: 282). Questions that need asking will concern where the human is in this new domain and, more importantly, the musician's experience. These questions are ideally situated for autoethnographic studies whereby introspective, emotional and psychological accounts are vital for understanding.

Appendix A

An overview of Bristol venues

The geographic layout of Bristol's live music venues presented here reflects the timescale of Kerb's activity in the city. It is a retrospective account of each of the spaces mentioned and where a first-hand account of the venue can be made through the band's performances during this time.

The Fleece and Firkin

Capacity: 450; Established: January 1982; Closed: N/A Notable Acts: Radiohead, The Alarm, Oasis, Jeff Buckley, Coldplay



Figure 52 Exterior of The Fleece and Firkin, Bristol. Image courtesy of the Bristol Post. [162]

[162] https://i2-prod.bristolpost.co.uk/incoming/article335064.ece/ALTERNATES/s1200e/2_29944614JPG.jpg

In the centre of Bristol, The Fleece and Firkin is a medium-sized venue located in a listed building formerly a wool hall. It occupies one of the most developed areas in Bristol. There has been significant redevelopment of this area which has seen an increase in living accommodation and business premises. The venue, throughout its history, has played a significant role in creating a credible live scene for the region; its capacity makes it appealing for local bands and artists breaking into the national circuit. Since 2010, the Fleece has been owned by Chris Sharp who re-established its credentials as a serious music venue while avoiding the corporatised business models of other Bristol venues (Hammond 2014).

The interior of the venue has an intimate basement feel and has some characteristic cast-iron pillars that appear to prop up the ceiling, which breaks up the space between the audience and the stage. There is a bar that spans the length of one side of the floor space. The floor is bare stone with an exposed wooden beam ceiling, while the walls are adorned with posters of past gigs. The consensus is that the acoustic sound quality of the venue is good. There are many bootleg recordings available on the internet of performances at the venue. These include Jeff Buckley and Matt Bellamy (Muse).

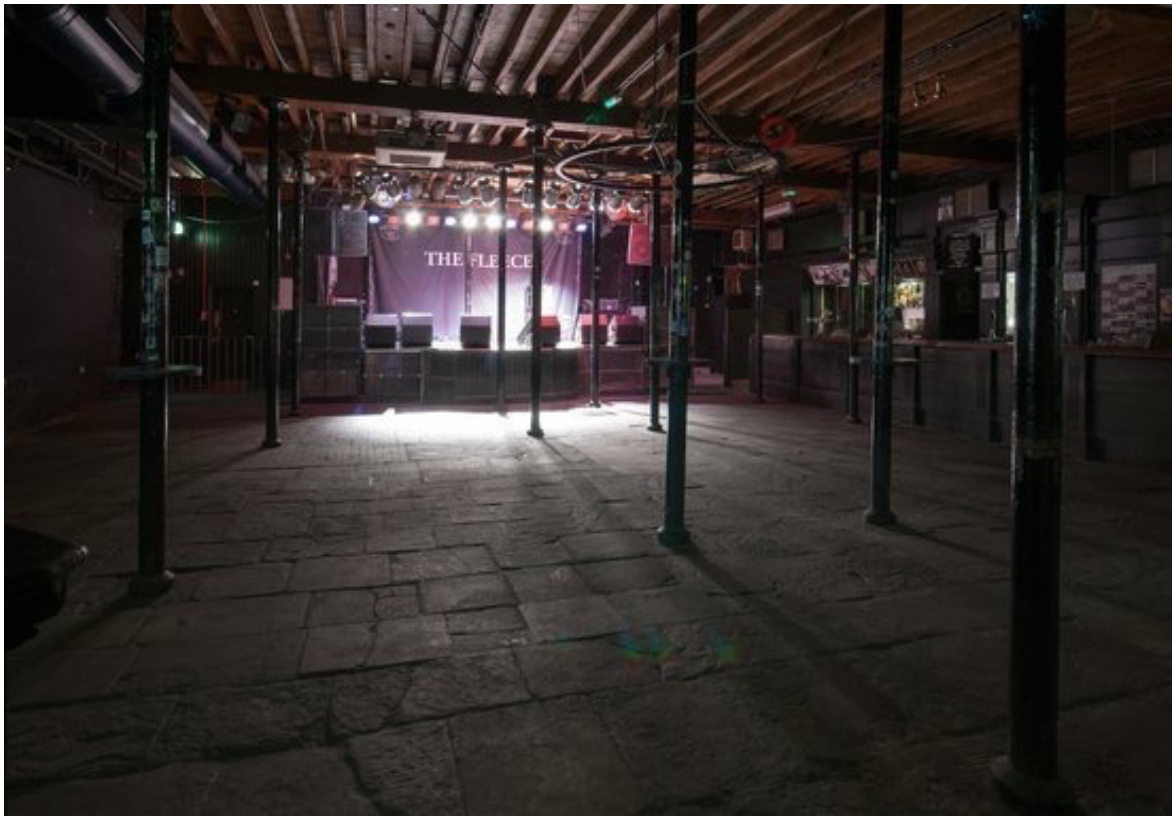


Figure 53 Interior of The Fleece and Firkin, Bristol. Copyright: https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk.

The Louisiana

Capacity: 140; Established: January 1996; Closed: N/A Notable Acts: Super Furry Animals, Amy Winehouse, Placebo, Coldplay, Muse



Figure 54 Exterior of The Louisiana, Bristol. Courtesy of Google images 2008.

Located near the centre of Bristol, The Louisiana is a small venue situated on the upstairs floor of the pub. It is regarded as one of Bristol's most important places to play. It has a reputation for attracting international artists as well as supporting a thriving local scene. Local bands are given opportunities to support visiting bands which often attracts the attention of managers, promoters, and record labels. Main event acts are usually supported by two other local bands who perform short sets as a warmup to the main act. The Louisiana is considered a small venue that operates with minimal support facilities; a common scenario for venues across the UK where bar takings are essential in the business model. There is often pressure on bands to

encourage bringing support to gigs as part of the conditions for performance.

Ashton Court Festival, Bristol
Capacity: ?; Established: 1998; Closed: 2007 Notable Acts: Steve Hillage, Portishead, Mad Professor, Kosheen, Reef, Robert Plant, Simple Minds



Figure 55 Ashton Court Festival 2006, Bristol. Image courtesy of Dash.

Located in the grounds of the Ashton Court Estate a few miles to the west of the centre of Bristol, Ashton Court Festival was held annually during July in part of the grounds to the estate. It was a free festival and featured various local bands who would support more well-known headline acts. In addition, several performance venues catered for all kinds of music, rock, jazz, tango, folk and acoustic, and the Main Stage events.

Moles, Bath
Capacity: 200; Established: 1978; Closed: N/A. Notable Acts: The Cure, Blur, The Smiths, and Mumford and Sons.



Figure 56 Exterior of Moles, Bath.

Even though Moles has a relatively small capacity, it has become one of the UK's most well-known live music venues. The venue has a dedicated stage area and a house PA. Local promoters, Purr, booked acts on Thursday nights which included up to 4 bands on the roster.

Appendix B

Kerb personnel from 1997 to 2005

Kerb formed in Southwest England during the latter part of the 1990s. It consisted of five members: lead singer/guitarist Ben Kench, singer/guitarist Jim Kench, lead guitarist Greg Shepheard, bass player Paul O'Reilly, and drummer Ryan Stevens. This line-up was in place from 1997 to 1999. Paul replaced Rich Bessant in 1999, and the keyboard player Jon Boyle was also enlisted soon after. Kerb remained in this formation until 2002, when another line-up change led to the lead guitarist Greg and bass player Paul leaving the band.

Kerb	**1997- 1999**	**1999**	**2001 - 2005**	**2005**
Lead Singer/guitarist	Ben Kench	Ben Kench	Ben Kench	Ben Kench
Singer/guitarist	Jim Kench	Jim Kench	Jim Kench	Jim Kench
Lead guitar	Greg Shepheard	Greg Shepheard	None	Clive Radford
Keyboard	None	Jon Boyle	Jon Boyle	None
Drummer	Ryan Stevens	Ryan Stevens	Ryan Stevens	Kevin O'Rourke
Bass player	Rich Bessant	Paul O'Reilly	Clive Radford	Greg Shepheard

Figure 57 Kerb personnel from 1997 to 2005 (pre-album and album recording phase).

Appendix C

Kerb's first album: 'She's Behind the Wheel'

Kerb's most significant recording milestone before the Swedish album consisted of a 12-track album. The songs on the album were an eclectic mixture of funk-rock, reggae and mainstream rock. Songs written within this time signature edged the writing style towards a more traditional or 'folky' direction which may or not have been the intention.



Mr Rainman 03:17	6/8
Landslide of Angels 03:38	6/8
She's Round Here 04:31	4/4
Welcome 04:37	4/4
Dub Waltz 04:36	6/8
Real Time 05:53	6/8
Suzie 03:25	4/4
Always 04:38	4/4
One By One 05:16	4/4
Love 03:09	4/4
You're Not Alone 03:47	4/4
Dusted Angels 04:53	4/4

Figure 58 Album cover and track list for She's Behind the Wheel c.2000.

Further information can be found here: https://kerb.bandcamp.com/album/shes-behind-the-wheel

Appendix D

Email communications between Cent Records A&R and Kerb

Below are some of the emails exchanged between Iris and Jim, which outlines the kind of work that took place in the summer of 2002.

> **31 August 2002:** Hey Jim, I had a long conversation with Cent and I know they are not able to move forward with you just yet. I know they have every intention of proceeding onward with working with you. I have already played your project for a couple of people here. I love the CD's that I have. I am on my way to LA tomorrow, and I am going to meet with several producers and labels while I am out there. I would like to find producers that are interested in working with you. To me, that is the best way to get yourself set up to come to the US. Are you writing more songs? If so, please send them so I can hear them. Have you been performing? Let me know what you think. Again, I am on my way to the West Coast tomorrow. Talk with you soon.

Iris eventually put Kerb in touch with a record producer Thom Russo, who was working with some well-known artists in the US at the time. He had heard the demos that Iris had been given on her visit to the UK when she first met the band, and he was interested to hear more. Emails went back and forth, and we established a working relationship with the producer and sent the results of our demo recordings and some multitrack sessions. He, in return, sent us suggestions for improvements to song structures, and we began to accumulate an outline for a new album. By this time, the band's activities focused on building a relationship with the producer while at the same time still relying on the label to re-establish meaningful contact.

> **15 September 2002:** Hey Jim, I need you to try and call me on my cell. I have a producer that is interested in working with you. He already won 2 Grammy's. I want to do a conference call with you and your brother and him. His name is Thom. Iris

Having spent months reworking songs, rehearsing and scrutinising everything we were doing, it seemed our efforts were not in vain. The email from Iris prompted a surge of enthusiasm from the band at a time when our everyday life had become

strained. We had begun to spend more time in the studio than the rehearsal room favouring the computer over regular band interaction. For a while, we all rallied, and our belief in the project returned briefly. We contacted Thom and began to think about a scenario that did not involve Cent Records, as other label possibilities were also emerging due to this potential partnership.

1 October 2002: Hello Thom

Further to our telephone conference on the 17th September, we've now had the opportunity to cobble together a compilation of some current work. Enclosed is a CD with two songs that we are currently working on, both of which we're experimenting with in terms of sound and texture. Hopefully, it will give you some idea of the way we see our sound evolving.

TRK 1 - Coming Home: This song was recorded at one of our rehearsals on some stone-age recording gear, but it will give you an idea of how we're exploring sounds in our songs. Unfortunately, we were unable to capture accurately some of the textures and layers we had created in an earlier demo of this song as the sampler we were using was borrowed. We are, however, recording this song on Saturday (5th Oct) in a decent studio, so we will send you an unmixed multi-tracked/Logic version of it next week.

TRK 2 - October Rain The recording of this song was one of our first experiments into using sounds outside of our usual guitar/piano led arrangements. We are also recording this song on Saturday in the same format as Coming Home. So, this is the first instalment. As mentioned above, we are recording on Sat this week (a session that's been booked in for some time) and we'll send you the Logic files on CD as requested. There are also a few more new songs were working on and we'll mail you a version of these just as soon as they're done. Hope you enjoy the enclosed and we look forward to speaking to you soon.

08 October 2002: Hello Thom

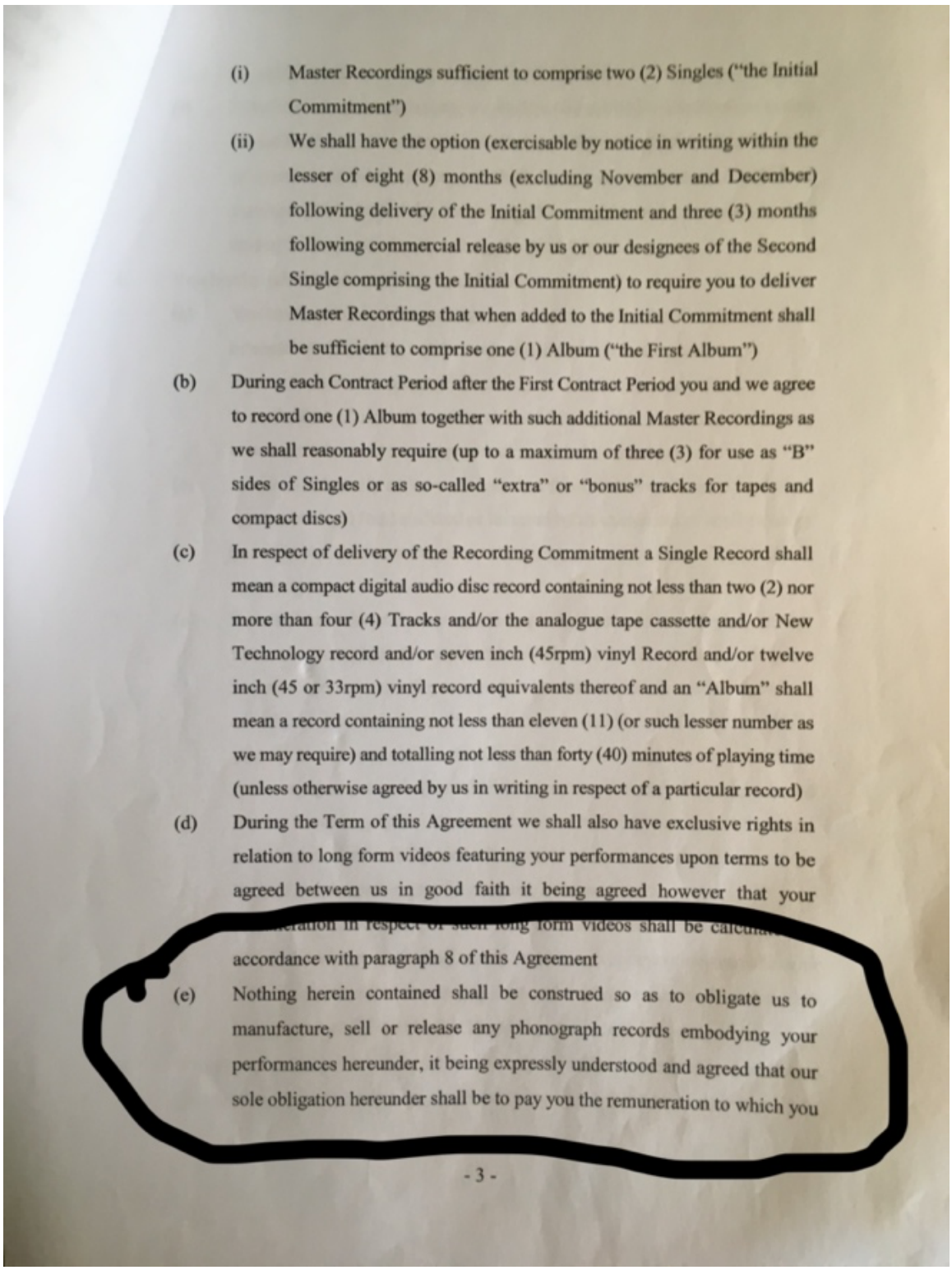
Here are the two tracks that we recorded in Bristol on the 5th October. We've taken some of our sound ideas a little further on these recordings and the quality of this recording is much higher than the previous one. However, due to time constraints, we didn't get around to mixing, but no doubt it will give you some idea of what we're trying to achieve. A CD of the Logic files will follow very soon.

Appendix E

Contract between Cent Records and Kerb

The contract consisted of four periods, followed a relatively standard format, and protected the label from over-committing financially to the project. Each of the four options could be exercised at the label's discretion. The most important aspect of the contract was contained in the clauses of the first contract period, which outlined the band's obligations to record songs. These clauses included providing master recordings of two singles, also defined as the *Initial Commitment*. Within this period, we would record and provide master recordings of one album and up to three master recordings to be used as '*B'* sides of singles and *bonus* tracks for various formats such as tape and compact discs: the delivery of the singles needed to contain no less than two tracks, and the album needed to be no less than eleven tracks totalling around forty minutes of playing time. Essentially, the contract establishes Cent's ownership of the songs and full control over the promotion and marketing of the product.

Selected pages from the record contract



(i) Master Recordings sufficient to comprise two (2) Singles ("the Initial Commitment")

(ii) We shall have the option (exercisable by notice in writing within the lesser of eight (8) months (excluding November and December) following delivery of the Initial Commitment and three (3) months following commercial release by us or our designees of the Second Single comprising the Initial Commitment) to require you to deliver Master Recordings that when added to the Initial Commitment shall be sufficient to comprise one (1) Album ("the First Album")

(b) During each Contract Period after the First Contract Period you and we agree to record one (1) Album together with such additional Master Recordings as we shall reasonably require (up to a maximum of three (3) for use as "B" sides of Singles or as so-called "extra" or "bonus" tracks for tapes and compact discs)

(c) In respect of delivery of the Recording Commitment a Single Record shall mean a compact digital audio disc record containing not less than two (2) nor more than four (4) Tracks and/or the analogue tape cassette and/or New Technology record and/or seven inch (45rpm) vinyl Record and/or twelve inch (45 or 33rpm) vinyl record equivalents thereof and an "Album" shall mean a record containing not less than eleven (11) (or such lesser number as we may require) and totalling not less than forty (40) minutes of playing time (unless otherwise agreed by us in writing in respect of a particular record)

(d) During the Term of this Agreement we shall also have exclusive rights in relation to long form videos featuring your performances upon terms to be agreed between us in good faith it being agreed however that your remuneration in respect of such long form videos shall be calcu[illegible] accordance with paragraph 8 of this Agreement

(e) Nothing herein contained shall be construed so as to obligate us to manufacture, sell or release any phonograph records embodying your performances hereunder, it being expressly understood and agreed that our sole obligation hereunder shall be to pay you the remuneration to which you

- 3 -

ISD/13827/4/16.04.04/0947

From: Cent Records Limited
Melbourne House
36 Chamberlain Street
Wells
Somerset BA5 2BJ

To: Clive Radford
[redacted]
Dilton Marsh
Wiltshire[redacted]

And: Ben Nicholas Kench
[redacted]
Wells [redacted]

And: Ryan Stevens
[redacted]
Mudgley
Somerset[redacted]

And: James Richard Kench
[redacted]
Croscombe
Somerset[redacted]

Dated: 16th April 2004

Dear Clive, Ben, James and Ryan,

We write to confirm the agreement reached between us today

1. We hereby engage you and you hereby agree to render your exclusive joint and several personal services to us as recording artists throughout the world in connection with the making during the Term specified in paragraph 2 of the Master Recordings specified in paragraph 3 embodying your performances of musical compositions ("the Recording Commitment") and you hereby accept such engagement and agree to render your services to us to the best of your ability

2. (a) The Term of this Agreement shall be for a period commencing on the date hereof and continuing for one Contract Period ("the First Contract Period")

Appendix F

Coded notes from the listening session

I listen to the Swedish album in full. The venue is a studio in Bournemouth University. The album tracks are arranged on a DAW so that I can move from one song to the next.

REFLEXIVE FEEDBACK LOOP

Based on the notes taken on the day of the listening exercise and review of the album, the following themes and questions were identified:

1. Overall Reflections on the Album:

1. General feelings about the album - strengths and shortcomings.
2. The album's role in my life and its significance in my musical journey.
3. The lasting impact of the album on me and possibly on others involved.
4. Contrasting reactions to the album.
5. The finished and un-negotiated product.

1. What do I remember about hearing the album for the first time?

2. Personal Connection and Emotional Response:

- Emotional reactions to listening to the tracks
- Nostalgia and memory.
- Personal favourites and least favourites among the tracks.

2. What are my thoughts about hearing the album again after all these years? How has my emotional investment in the music affected my analytical perspectives on the album?

3. Songwriting Dynamics and Collaboration:

- Maintaining band cohesion, internal conflicts and tensions.
- Identity and transformation Kerb and Safehaus.
- Individual and group dynamics.
- Roles and expectations.
- Preparation and cohesion
- Mixes and energy

3. How did the dynamics within the songwriting partnership influence how the band project evolved after the album recording?

4. Evolution of Musical Style and Production:

- Shift from raw, original material to a polished, finished product
- Role of the producer
- Disconnection in 2013.
- Demo versions vs. polished final versions.
- Production techniques
- Personal growth
-

4. How has the evolution of musical style and production processes influenced the overall artistic direction and identity of the album?

5. Contract Negotiations and Deals:

- BorderBlaster Records in Paris
- Protracted negotiations
- Joint Venture Formation
- Music production and rights management.
- Delays and logistical challenges
- Partnerships.
- Financial viability and survival.

5. What were the contractual and logistical processes that enabled the completion of the album?

6. Strategic Collaborations and Opportunities:

- Releases and airplay: Fear Inside and Warning Signs
- Professional networking.
- New album discussions.
- Manu Dibango and "Past Present Future"

6. Were there any opportunities for the band as a result of the album and the band's association with Basecamp and BorderBlaster?

7. Navigating Independence and Authenticity:

- Professional Production Experience: Sweden
- Independent and authentic creative process.
- Conventional production model
- Contrasting views between band members
- Scepticism internal conflict, commercialisation and authenticity.

7. In what ways did the album mark a turning point or a continuation of your creative journey?

8. Safehaus's Stockholm Saga:

- Pre-production Negotiations
- Optimism and Sweden
- Label and the producer momentum.
- Contractual limitations and copyright agreements
- End of the Journey

8. How did the experiences leading up to and during the Stockholm recording sessions influence the future direction and dynamics of Safehaus?

Further notes:
These themes reflect not only personal experiences and reactions to the music but also broader aspects of the creative process, production, and performance.

Each of theses eight themes are then reconfigured in the form of questions. The methodology behind this approach is derived from Moustakas' 'heuristic research questions' which have the following characteristics:

(1) It seeks to reveal more fully the essence or meaning of a phenomenon of human experience.

(2) It seeks to discover the qualitative aspects, rather than quantitative dimensions, of the phenomenon.

(3) It engages one's total self and evokes a personal and passionate involvement and active participation in the process.

(4) It does not seek to predict or to determine causal relationships.

(5) It is illuminated through careful descriptions, illustrations, metaphors, poetry, dialogue, and other creative renderings rather than by measurements, ratings or scores.

(Moustakas, C.E., 1990. Heuristic research: design, methodology, and applications. Sage Publications, Newbury Park. p.40).

Appendix G

Listening exercise plan

1. Preparation:
Recording Studio: I will perform the listening exercise in a recording studio, as this is designed for a focused and critical listening experience. The album will be assembled on a DAW prior to the session.

2. Initial Reflection:
Before I press play, I'll take a moment to gauge my current emotional state. Ponder any expectations or apprehensions about revisiting the album. Recall any immediate memories associated with the album.

3. Active Listening Session:
I will begin with the first song and I'll choose the order on the day of the session. This is how I listened to the album when it was delivered in 2013.

4. Capturing Real-time Reflections:
After each song I will annotate ideas as I remember them. I anticipate having memories from when I first joined the band and to conversations about the album with the record label. As I listen to each song I'll note down my immediate reactions, feelings, and memories. I'll try to capture both my analytical thoughts (like the songwriting process or recording challenges) and my emotional responses and recollections.

5. Pausing to Reflect: After each track, I'll take a short break. I'll delve deeper into my initial notes and ponder any additional insights or memories that come to mind.

6. Post-Listening Reflection:
Once the album ends, I'll document my overall feelings and thoughts about the experience. Any recurring themes or patterns in my reactions. How my current feelings compare to my past emotions and experiences.

7. Analysis and Reflections:
I'll review all the notes and thoughts I've gathered, searching for patterns, significant moments, and overarching themes.

8.Closing the Feedback Loop:
After a few days or weeks, I'll revisit my notes and ponder any new insights or perspectives that have emerged since the listening session. If needed, I'll refine or expand upon certain sections of my dissertation based on these new reflections.

Appendix H

JVA contract sample page

ARTIST AGREEMENT

This agreement made the February 14, 2011 between:

BORDERBLASTER FRANCE
Company number (Siren): 498 064 500
Address: 140 Avenue des Champs Elysées, 75008 Paris, France

hereinafter called "the Company",

and,

the group "Safehaus" consisting of the members

BENJAMIN NICHOLAS KENCH
Address: [redacted] Wells Road, Emborough [redacted], UK

CLIVE RADFORD
Address: [redacted] Somerset BA4 5EQ, UK
Birth date: [redacted]

hereinafter called "the Artist", on the other part.

1. PARTIES AND SCOPE

1.1 Contracting parties are the Company and the Artist.

1.2 The Company and the Artist have agreed to enter into a collaboration relating to the Artist's future career in the media and entertainment business and this work shall include:

(i) Recording, sales and other exploitation of the Artist's performance;
(ii) other artist related activities such as live performances, advertising, promotion, sponsorship, endorsements and merchandise.

2. RECORDINGS WITH THE ARTIST

2.1 The Artist has agreed to render performances exclusively for the Company for the purpose of making recordings. For a compensation in royalty the Company acquires the exclusive right without limitations to dispose of the recordings made with the Artist hereunder as a singer or musician.

A Recording shall in this agreement mean a recording of the Artist's performance of a litterary or artistic work for reproduction through phonogram and videogram, such as tapes, cartridges, Compact Disc, picture disc, Digital Compact Cassettes, MiniDisc and any other now known or future audio devices.

CK

GB BK

SONGWRITERS PUBLISHING AGREEMENT

The following agreement is deemed to have been made on the 18th of March, 2008

between

Basecamp Songs / Basecamp Group AB

reg.no 556504-2321

Box 753, Möckelvägen 44
SE-12002 Årsta, Stockholm
Sweden

hereinafter referred to as the Publisher, and

Benjamin Kench

Passport No[redacted]

[redacted]
Wells
Somerset
[redacted]
UK

Clive Radford

Passport No[redacted]

[redacted]
Shepton Mallet
Somerset
[redacted]
UK

with performing name / pseudonym: Safehaus

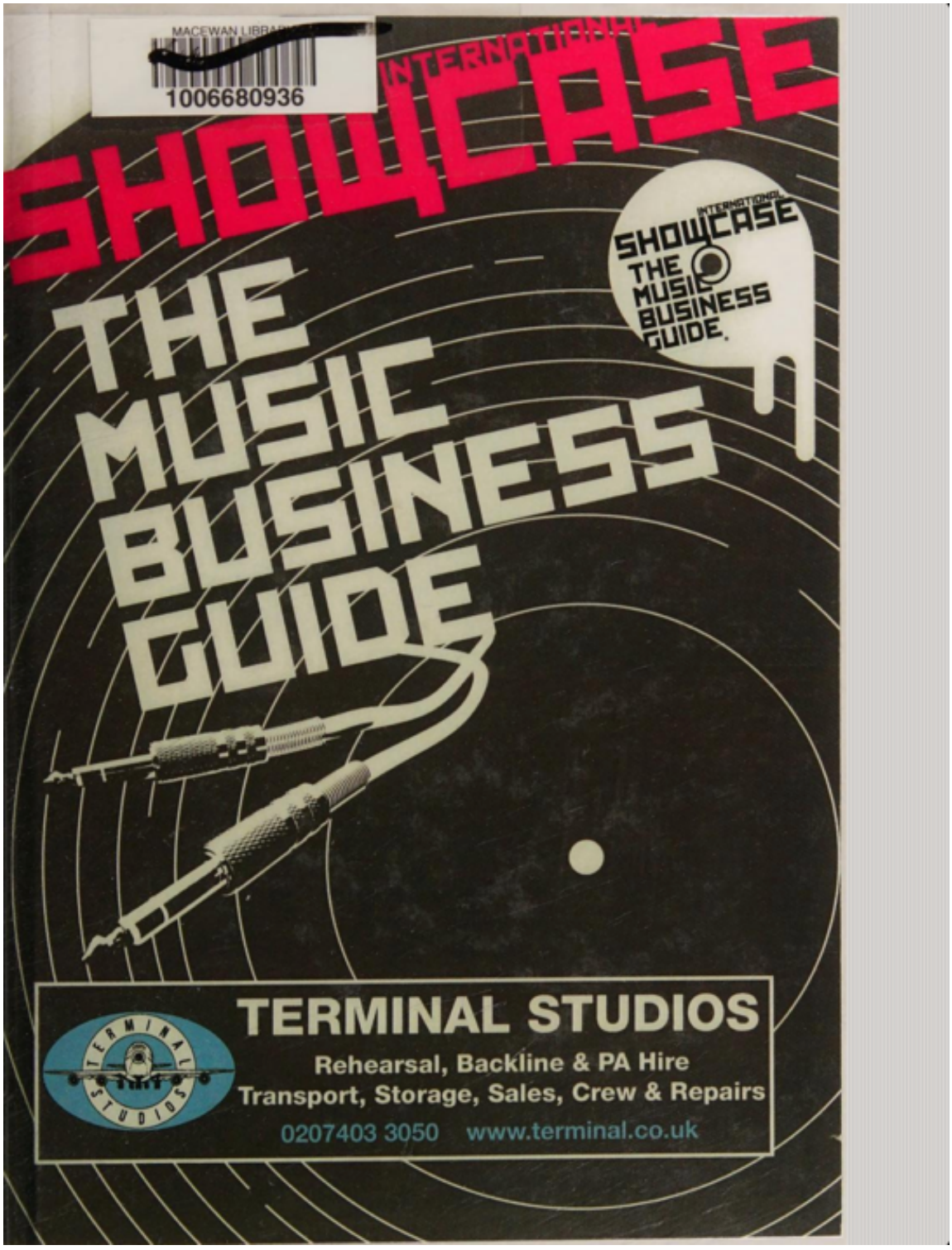
hereinafter referred to as the Writer:

1. **Publishing Agreement**

1.1 The Writer assigns to the Publisher all rights to the compositions which have been created by the Writer in whole or in part (and if in part to the extent of that part), alone

Appendix I

The Music Business Guide (selected pages)



M: = Artist Management B: = Booking Agent R: = Recording Company *For full contact details, see relevant headings, Section 7.*

James Yorkston and The Athletes - *B: 13 Artists R: Domino Records*
Jamie Cullum - *B: Creative Artists Agency*
Jamie Foxx - *R: RCA Label Group*
Jamie Hewlett - *M: CMO Management (International) Ltd*
Jamie Lidell - *R: Warp Records Ltd*
Jamie O'Neal - *B: Buddy Lee Attractions Inc*
Jamie Pearce - *R: Cent Records Ltd*
Jamie Reeves (Ol' Blue Eyes) - *B: Buzz Entertainment Consultants*
Jamie T - *B: International Talent Booking (ITB)*
Jamieson - *M: Bermuda Management*
Jamiroquai - *B: International Talent Booking (ITB) R: Epic*
Jan Akkerman - *B: NEM Productions*
Jan Ozveren - *M: Solar Management Ltd*
Jan Vayne - *R: Sascha Van Esdonk Produkties*
Jana - *B: Nene Musik Productions, Llc*
Jane Bunnett - *B: LiveTourArtists*
Jane Monheit - *M: B.H. Hopper Management*
Janek Schaefer - *R: FatCat Records UK*
Janet Jackson - *B: Creative Artists Agency R: EMI Records (UK)*
Janet Martin - *R: Lustig Talent Enterprises Inc*
Janet Russell - *R: Greentrax Recordings Ltd*
Jango Edwards - *B: GLP Artist Marketing GmbH*
Janice Long - *M: One Fifteen Ltd*
Janice Robinson - *B: Nene Musik Productions, Llc*
Janine Jansen - *R: Decca International*
Janis Ian - *B: Asgard Promotions Ltd R: Cooking Vinyl Ltd*
Janis Martin - *B: Paul Barrett Rock 'n' Roll Enterprises*
Jann Arden - *B: S. L. Feldman & Associates (Canada)*
Jann Klose - *R: Gotham Records*
Janove Ottesen - *M: Vox Management Ltd*
Janus Stark - *R: Earache Records*
Jarvis Cocker - *M: Rough Trade Management B: X-ray Touring R: Rough Trade Records Ltd*
Jarvis Humby - *R: Detour Records Ltd*
Jasmine Baird - *M: Safe Management*
Jason Aldean - *B: Buddy Lee Attractions Inc*
Jason Blaine - *B: LiveTourArtists*
Jason Boland & The Stragglers - *B: Buddy Lee Attractions Inc*
Jason Hodges - *M: Organised Representation*
Jason King - *B: Beverley Artistes Agency Ltd*
Jason Mraz - *R: Atlantic Records UK*
Jason Reeves - *B: Red Entertainment Agency*
Jason Ricci & New Blood - *B: Intrepid Artists*
Jason Scheff - *M: Air Tight Management*
Jason Yates - *R: Vapor Records*
Jasper Carrott - *M: Acorn Entertainments Ltd, Highfield Productions*
Jasper van't Hof - *B: JARO Medien GmbH*
Jassi Sidhu - *R: Moviebox Birmingham Ltd*
Jauida - *R: Optimum Records*
The Javelinas - *B: Tantrum Management & Touring*
Javine - *M: Shalit Global Entertainment & Management R: EMI Records (UK), Shalit Global Entertainment & Management*
JAW - *B: Primary Talent International*
Jay Bharadia - *R: Lumenessence Recordings*
Jay Jay and the Pistolets - *B: International Talent Booking (ITB)*
Jay Nash - *B: Red Entertainment Agency*
Jay Reatard - *R: Matador Records*
Jay Sean - *R: EMI Records (UK)*
Jay Taylor - *M: Yellow Balloon Productions Ltd*
Jay-Z - *R: Def Jam UK*
The Jayhawks - *B: Asgard Promotions Ltd*
Jaz Klash - *M: MWM Music Management Ltd*
Jazmine - *B: International Management & Agency Ltd*
Jazz Couriers - *R: TKO Licensing*
The Jazz Dynamos - *M: Danny Brittain Band Management (DBBM) B: Danny Brittain Band Management (DBBM)*
Jazz for Juniors - *R: Jazzizit Records Ltd*
Jazz Jamaica - *B: CODA Music Agency LLP R: The Dune Music Company Ltd*
Jazz Jamaica All Stars - *R: The Dune Music Company Ltd*
Jazz Mandolin Project - *B: Skyline Music*
Jazzanova - *R: Disctrade*
Jazzie B - *M: Soul 2 Soul*
Jazzie B (Soul II Soul) - *M: Dusted Management & Events Ltd*
Jazzy B - *R: Moviebox Birmingham Ltd*
JC Chasez - *B: Creative Artists Agency*
JC Lodge - *R: Greensleeves Records Ltd*
JD-Remix - *M: UFP Management*
Jean Carne & Friends - *M: Yellow Go-Rilla Productions Ltd*
Jean Izbell - *R: Suspended State Records*
Jean-Luc Tingand - *M: Tennant Artists*
Jean McLean - *R: Gotham Records*
Jean Redpath - *R: Greentrax Recordings Ltd*
Jean Vincent - *B: Paul Barrett Rock 'n' Roll Enterprises*
Jean Yves Thibaudet - *R: Decca International*
Jeanette Gondry - *B: The John Boddy Agency LLP*
Jeanie Tracy - *B: Nene Musik Productions, Llc*
Jeanne Newhall - *R: Blix Street Records*
Jeannie Ortega - *B: Nene Musik Productions, Llc*
Jeb Loy Nichols - *B: Asgard Promotions Ltd*
Jeff Bates - *B: Buddy Lee Attractions Inc*
Jeff Beck - *B: CODA Music Agency LLP, Creative Artists Agency*
Jeff Buckley - *R: Columbia Records UK*
Jeff Daniels - *M: Fleming Artists, Inc*
Jeff Foxworthy - *B: Buddy Lee Attractions Inc*
Jeff Hooper - *R: Beacon Music, Kevin King Music Publishing*
Jeff Klein - *B: International Talent Booking (ITB) R: One Little Indian Records*
Jeff McKenzie - *M: Allan Wilson Enterprises*
Jeff 'Tain' Watts - *R: Columbia Records UK*
Jeff Tweedy - *M: Tony Margherita Management*
Jeff Wright - *B: Beverley Artistes Agency Ltd*

Record Companies, UK

BMP - Broken Music Publishing
c/o Worlddomination Music Ltd, 52 Upper Selsdon Road, South Croydon, Surrey CR2 8DE
T: 020 8657 5565 **F:** 0871 714 2670
Contact: David Buskel.

Bolts Records
PO Box 346, Enfield, Middlesex EN3 5EL
T: 020 8292 5073
E: info@massmediauk.net
Contact: Nicky Price, Proprietor.

Boss Records
5 Slater Street, Liverpool L1 4BW
T: 0151 702 6855 **F:** 0151 703 0503
W: www.bossrecords.co.uk
Contact: Adrian Perry, Jon Barlow, Directors; Tim Condran, Promotions Manager; Anton Powers, A&R/ Label Manager.

Boulevard
16 Lime Trees Avenue, Llangattock, Crickhowell, Powys NP8 1LB
T: 01873 810142
E: info@optimumrecords.com **W:** www.optimumrecords.com
Contact: Kevin King, Managing Director.

Brewhouse Music
Breeds Farm, 57 High Street, Wicken, Ely, Cambridgeshire CB7 5XR
T: 01353 720309
E: enquiries@brewhousemusic.co.uk
W: www.brewhousemusic.co.uk
Contact: Eric Cowell, Managing Director.

Bright New Day Records Ltd
Cunning Cottage, Crank Road, Billinge, Wigan, Lancashire WN5 7EZ
T: 01942 262526
E: info@brightnewday.co.uk **W:** www.brightnewday.co.uk
Contact: Tony Molloy, Company Secretary.

Bronze Records Ltd
17 Priory Road, London NW6 4NN
T: 020 7209 2766 **F:** 020 7813 2766
E: info@bronzerecords.co.uk **W:** www.bronzerecords.co.uk
Contact: Gerry Bron.

Brown Punk
c/o CEC Management, 65-69 White Lion Street, London N1 9PP
T: 020 7837 2517 **F:** 020 7278 5915
E: brownpunk@hotmail.co.uk
Contact: Emily Taylor; Matt Willis.

The Bunker
29 Stockton Road, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear SR2 7AQ
T: 0191 567 1777
E: info@bunkeruk.com **W:** www.bunkeruk.com

Buttercuts Records Ltd
PO Box 150, Slough SL1 1HD
T: 01753 759701 **F:** 01753 759749
E: contact@buttercuts.co.uk **W:** www.buttercuts.co.uk
Contact: Andy Oury, General enquiries/Press.

Cacophonous
231 Portobello Road, London W11 1LT
T: 020 7792 9791 **F:** 020 7792 9871
E: info@cacophonous.com **W:** www.cacophonous.com
Contact: Julie Weir, Label Manager.

Cadillac Records
15 Tileyard Studios, Tileyard Road, London N7 9AH
T: 020 7619 9111 **F:** 020 7619 0901
E: info@cadillacjazz.co.uk **W:** www.cadillacjazz.co.uk
Contact: John Jack, Director.

Cala Records
17 Shakespeare Gardens, London N2 9LJ
T: 020 8883 7306 **F:** 020 8365 3388
W: www.calarecords.com
Contact: Paul Sarcich, Publishing Manager.

Candid Productions Ltd
16 Castelnau, London SW13 9RU
T: 020 8741 3608 **F:** 020 8563 0013
W: www.candidrecords.com
Contact: Alan Bates, Managing Director; Nieves Bates, Director.

Candlelight Records
Avtech House, Hithercroft Road, Wallingford OX10 9DA
T: 020 7286 1106 **F:** 020 7289 8679
E: abstractsounds@btclick.com
W: www.candlelightrecors.co.uk www.absractsound.co.uk
Contact: Edward Christie.

Canny Concerts Ltd
Stone House, Market Place, Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire OX7 5NA
T: 01608 641813
E: cannyconcerts@talk21.com
W: www.fairportconvention.co.uk
Contact: Rob Braviner, Managing Director.

Caprio Music
16 Lime Trees Avenue, Llangattock, Crickhowell, Powys NP8 1LB
T: 01873 810142
E: silvergb@aol.com
Contact: Kevin Holland-King, Managing Director.

Cargo Records
17 Heathmans Road, Parsons Green, London SW6 4TJ
T: 020 7731 5125 **F:** 020 7731 3866
E: info@cargorecords.co.uk **W:** www.cargorecords.co.uk
Contact: Philip Hill.

Caritas Records
Achmore, Moss Road, Ullapool, Ross-Shire IV26 2TF
T: 01854 612938 **F:** 01854 612938
E: caritas-records@caritas-music.co.uk
W: www.caritas-music.co.uk
Contact: Katharine Douglas, Professional Manager.

Carrack UK
PO Box 450, Chorleywood, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire WD3 5YX
F: 01923 282167
W: www.carrack-uk.com
Contact: Paul Carrack; Paul Copley, Shop Contact; Alan Wood, Availability & Booking Manager.

Casket Music
c/o Copro Productions, PO Box 4429, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire RG9 1GH
T: 01491 575516 **F:** 01491 412571
W: www.coprorecords.co.uk

Cent Records Ltd
Melbourne House, 36 Chamberlain Street, Wells, Somerset BA5 2PJ
T: 01749 689074 **F:** 01749 670315
E: info@centrecords.com **W:** www.centrecords.com
Contact: Paul Scates, Label Manager.

Centu[illegible]edia Records Ltd
6 Water Lane, Camden, London NW1 8NZ
T: 020 7482 0161 **F:** 020 7482 3165
E: mail@centurymedia.net **W:** www.centurymedia.net
Contact: Dave Gulvin, Label Manager.

Rory Campbell - *R: Vertical Records*
Rory Motion - *B: Adastra*
Rosalie Deighton - *R: Chrysalis Group Plc, The Echo Label Ltd*
Rose Falcon - *R: Columbia Records UK*
Rose Kemp - *R: One Little Indian Records, Park Records*
Rose Royce - *B: Denis Vaughan Management, Red Entertainment Agency*
Rose Tattoo - *B: International Concert Service GmbH*
Ross Copperman - *R: RCA Label Group*
Rothko - *R: Bella Union*
The Rough Diamonds - *R: Fury Records*
The Roulettes - *B: Steve Allen Entertainments*
Rowland S. Howard - *R: Cooking Vinyl Ltd*
Roxy Music - *M: The TCB Group B: The Agency Group Ltd*
Roy Ayers - *B: GLP Artist Marketing GmbH R: Chrysalis Group Plc, Rapster Records*
Roy Davis Jr - *R: Peacefrog Ltd*
Roy Haynes - *M: Ted Kurland Associates B: Ted Kurland Associates R: Columbia Records UK*
Roy Mette - *B: Blues Matters Records R: Blues Matters Records*
Roy Orbison - *R: EMI Records (UK)*
Roy Wood - *M: Roy Wood Information Bureau B: Jason West Agency*
Roy Wood's Army - *B: Barry Collings Entertainments*
Roy Wood's Rock'n'Roll Band - *M: Roy Wood Information Bureau*
Royal City - *R: Rough Trade Records Ltd*
Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra - *B: Incredible Artists Ltd*
The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards - *R: Scotdisc*
Royal Treatment Plant - *R: Human Condition Records*
The Royalties - *B: Hihat*
Royce Da 5'9 - *B: LiveTourArtists*
Roys Iron DNA - *B: The Day Job*
Rozalla - *B: Mission Control Artists Agency*
RSJ - *R: Casket Music*
Ru Paul - *B: Armin Rahn Agency & Management*
Rua - *R: Greentrax Recordings Ltd*
Ruarri Joseph - *B: Free Trade Ager*
Rubettes - *B: Jason West Agency*
The Rubettes feat. Alan Williams - *M: Alan Williams Entertainments Ltd*
The Rubettes feat. Bill Hurd - *B: Barry Collings Entertainments*
The Rubettes - *B: Jason West Agency*
Rubén González - *R: World Circuit Ltd*
The Ruby Suns - *R: Memphis Industries Ltd*
Ruby Turner - *B: Miracle Artists Ltd*
Rue The Day - *R: Casket Music*
Rufio - *B: X-ray Touring*
Rufus Wainwright - *M: MCT Management B: Primary Talent International*
Ruins - *R: Neurotic Records*
The Rumble Strips - *M: Scruffy Bird B: CODA Music Agency LLP*
Rumours of Fleetwood Mac - *B: Hal Carter Organisation*
Runestone - *R: New World Music Ltd*
The Runners - *B: i2i Music*
Runrig - *M: Runrig Management B: The Agency Group Ltd*
Rupee - *B: Nene Musik Productions, Llc*
Rush - *B: S. L. Feldman & Associates (Canada), The Agency Group Ltd*
The Rushes - *M: CMO Management (International) Ltd B: X-ray Touring*
Ruslana - *M: Fame International*
Russ Jones - The Hackney - *B: Musicians Incorporated*
Russ Taff - *M: Glickman Entertainment Group Inc*
Russell Mills/ Undark - *R: Bella Union*
Russell Watson - *B: The Agency Group Ltd R: Decca International*
The Russian Futurists - *R: Memphis Industries Ltd*
Russian Tornado - *B: The John Boddy Agency LLP*
Rusted Root - *B: Creative Artists Agency*
Ruth Gordon - *M: Yellow Balloon Productions Ltd*
Ruthie Foster - *B: Adastra, The Rosebud Agency*
The Ruts - *B: Jason West Agency*
Rx Bandits - *B: The Agency Group Ltd*
Ryan Adams - *R: Cooking Vinyl Ltd*
Ryan Cabrera - *B: Creative Artists Agency*
Ryan Leslie - *B: Creative Artists Agency*
Ryan Shaw - *B: Monterey International*
Ryan Star - *B: Creative Artists Agency*
Rye Bros - *B: Deri Promotions*
The Ryes - *M: Safe Management R: Long Island Records*
The Ryoko Trio - *R: Candid Productions Ltd*
Ryuichi Sakamoto - *B: Primary Talent International*
S & M Project - *R: Bless UK Recordings*
Sa Dingding - *B: Musicians Incorporated*
Sa-Ra - *R: Epic*
Sa-Ra Creative Partners - *B: Primary Talent International*
Sabor Flamenco - *M: Latin Arts Group*
Sacconi Quartet - *M: Young Concert Artists Trust*
Sacred Mother Tongue - *M: 7 Management R: Transcend Records*
Safehaus - *R: Cent Records Ltd*
SaFire - *B: Nene Musik Productions, Llc*
Safri Duo - *B: Helter Skelter*
Sage Francis - *B: Primary Talent International*
Sahara - *M: Gekko Entertainments B: Steve Allen Entertainments*
Saian Supa Crew - *R: EMI Records (UK)*
Sailor - *B: Barry Collings Entertainments, Incredible Artists Ltd*
Saint - *R: Bless UK Recordings*
Saint Etienne - *M: Heavenly Management B: EC1 Music Agency*
Saint Low - *R: Cooking Vinyl Ltd*
Sajjad Ali - *R: Moviebox Birmingham Ltd*
Sakurai - *R: Casket Music*
SAL - *R: Casket Music*
The Salads - *M: The Management Trust Ltd B: LiveTourArtists*
The Salford Jets - *M: Bullet Management Ltd*

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