‘The Stillness’: Electronic recording and production methods in a contemporary context

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Abstract

This exegesis explores the ideals and outcomes resulting from a practice based research project. It will provide some context in regards to my transition and migration from the music industry into the academic setting, and addresses the interests, influences, as well as this project’s aims and objectives. It features detailed descriptions around the use of a home-based studio, especially in regards to how DAW technologies – in the form of a laptop and basic audio interface – are applied to achieve creative and commercially viable results. This exegesis focuses on the creation of an original album, called ‘The Stillness’, which will be released internationally under the name Pacific Heights. The album applies contemporary and vintage technologies alongside my own unique production techniques. After exploring relevant literature and methods, the exegesis provides in-depth and personal reflections on each of the tracks that feature on the album. Through this description, primary elements from each track are detailed. Screenshots show how specific plug-ins are used, and channel strip settings are revealed. In the conclusion, I discuss the international strategy through which the album will be released. I will also answer some introspective questions that respond to the objectives and aims that I have set for myself as an artist who is new to academia.
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Chapter 1: Introduction, Scope and Scholarly Context

“As in any area of science, combining old methodologies with fresh understandings and capabilities can produce exciting new results.” (Richard James Burgess, cited in Frith, Zagorski-Thomas 2012, p.95)

The mantra of production techniques for this Masters project is summed up in the above quote by the producer, musician and academic Richard James Burgess. My approach to making music involves the use of historic and vintage machinery, styles and genres combined with new and emerging production processes and technologies. This exegesis accompanies a full-length album that demonstrates this practice and forms the basis of my Masters in Studio Production project. It represents my third commercially released full-length solo album under the name Pacific Heights,¹ and builds on a fifteen-year career as a professional musician, composer, performer and record producer. I will begin by outlining the objectives I have set for myself:

- To produce (record and co-compose) a full-length album;
- To collaborate with a variety of artists and musicians;
- To attract a record deal in NZ and internationally;
- To reflect on the creative process and outcomes through this exegesis;

This Masters applies a practice-based research methodology and reflects a growing trend in academia that recognizes creative work as research equivalent. Scholars have offered frameworks to consider this in relation to music. My method draws heavily upon the work of Leavy, who provides a clear definition of practice-based research around music and culture. Leavy suggests that through practice-based research, musicians develop “new meanings based on the music they created, and thus [gain] new insights and understandings... through the

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¹ Pacific Heights represents two geographic locations with significant meaning to me. Pacific Heights is a suburb in San Francisco, the city in which I was born and the Pacific refers to New Zealand being the area in which I was raised and still reside.
music making phase of the project.” (Leavy 2015, p.137) I will return to this framework later in this chapter.

This exegesis is structured into three sections. The introduction chapter below begins by exploring the broader scholarly methodology, as well as situating this exegesis within the conventional scholarly discourse on the topic of home-based recording and production. Following this, I explore and outline my own professional background as a producer and musician, touching on over fifteen years of experience. I then provide some information on my studio and its equipment, while also looking at the relevancy and growth of the home studio. In the fourth section of this chapter I propose my aims, objectives and influences, highlighting some of the production and composition techniques I wish to utilise in this project. Finally, I introduce the purpose and benefits of collaboration, and the collaborators involved with the album.

The remainder of the exegesis is structured into two further Chapters. The main Chapter is titled Chapter 2: The Album. This section details and elaborates on individual songs in the order in which they appear on the album. I focus specifically on production and composition methods and techniques that I deem particularly important. The final Chapter, titled Release Strategy, Reflection and Conclusion outlines the contractual arrangements I have lined up and discusses the strategy that is currently in place for the album. I also reflect on the artistic process by exploring four key questions surrounding the creative, academic, and industry aspects of this project. This section serves as a critical reflection and concludes by outlining how this project has impacted my personal, emotional and professional development.

1.1 Scholarly Context
As mentioned above, this project is framed broadly by a practice-based research methodology. A central concern of this project is the blurred definitions between artist and researcher. Leavy states that the scholar as artists’ “[field] of inquiry include[s] [both] autoethnographic reflections on... [the] grieving process and theory and philosophy of arts-based research” (Leavy 2015, p.137). Similarly,
Nelson argues one of the keys to practice-based research is that the learning is in the doing:

“some will approach PaR [Practice as Research] from the professions perhaps because they have found opportunities for study or employment in the academy. Others will come from the kinds of practice-based arts BA and MA programmes ... in which their learning is already located more in doing than in the tradition of the Arts and Humanities dominated by book-based study with written outcomes.” (Nelson 2013, p.23)

This point personally has significant relevance to my position within this project, as I approach it as a practicing professional (as I discuss further below), and as a new academic staff member of a major New Zealand University. I am drawn to Nelson’s work, as it resonates with my own experience of marrying the arts and academia; the “double articulation between theory and practice, whereby theory emerges from a reflexive practice at the same time as practice is informed by theory” (Nelson 2013, p.29). My work also builds upon that of a number of record producers turned academics, but is unique in that it focuses on electronic music production, and occurs outside of the ‘old school’ big studio model. It has been produced almost entirely by using digital recording technologies, what have become known as ‘in the box’ recordings (see Prior 2008 for example). This exegesis’ original contribution to knowledge is in the form of description of, and reflection on how I applied various highly specific electronica production techniques in a ‘real world’ commercial project.

There has been much debate and writings about recording and music production in many different forums. From Mixerman’s (Eric Sarafin) books such as ‘Zen and the Art of Producing’ (2014) and ‘Zen and the Art of Mixing’ (2012), to online forums such as Gearslutz (www.gearslutz.com) and IDM Forums (www.idmforums.com), there is a steady stream of opinion and information available on the subject of music. Books that found their way into my studio over the last year included Bruce Swedien’s ‘In the Studio with Michael Jackson’ (2009), ‘Audio Culture’ (2001) edited by Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner, Lloyd

The interest and emotion involved with such subject matter has also crossed over to the academic writing as well with many scholars such as Paul Theberge, Simon Zagorski-Thomas, and Mike Howlett providing ideals and opinions. Paul Theberge provides a seminal insight into the way computers and DAWs (Digital Audio Workstation) are impacting music production, and how they are changing the way music is being made and altering the uses of traditional studios.

“The added emphasis on routines related to cutting, pasting, looping, micro-timing, pitch correction, and onboard signal processing place an increased emphasis on the computer itself as the primary tool of contemporary sound recording, thus further altering the relationship of digital audio production...” (Théberge 2012, p.82)

Similarly, Nick Prior fortifies the view of the computer being the centrepiece in modern studios, focusing on the portability of the laptop:

“For musicians, the popularity and portability of the laptop opens up a series of possibilities for music that sends it beyond spatial anchorages such as the recording studio or domestic space.” (Prior 2008, p.916)

One of the key techniques I apply in my work is collaboration. Collaboration in the modern era allows mobility and geographical freedom. For me as a producer, the laptop has allowed me to collaborate in a number of ways that would have been previously impossible, such as recording and writing within my own DAW setup in a host’s studio or workspace. Once again Prior touches on this:

“According to many’ musicians, open-ended collaboration is fundamental to the appeal of the laptop. Mirroring flexible work and leisure patterns in late-modern capitalist formations at large, the laptop supports planned and
unplanned jams, spontaneous gatherings and modes of composition.”
(Prior 2008, p.916)

Simon Zagorski-Thomas postures some ideals within his seminal text, ‘The Musicology of Record Production’. He argues that technologies (in this case around sampling, which is prominent in electronic music) have altered the way music is being composed and developed:

“Sampling has to some extent altered the idea of composing to include collage and assemblage in ways that were previously perceived to be the domain of the DJ (the editor, the selector, and the impresario), driving changes in the way that non-linear recordings is used.” (Zargorski-Thomas 2012, p.148)

However, little research has been done on the laptop as a primary production tool in popular music. The existing research on the laptop as a performance instrument tends to be in an art music context (see Collins and Mclean 2003). Another modern tool used with ease in the home studio, and of great importance to my production is MIDI. Matthew Homer sums up the advantages of MIDI perfectly; “Compared to previous methods of making music... the introduction of MIDI opened up new ways to manipulate and experiment with sound. It also gave rise to fresh approaches in creating and playing music.” (Homer 2009, p.7).

MIDI itself isn’t a new thing as it has been around in a commercial sense since the 1980s, but with the sonic quality of software now; it has taken an even greater role in the studio. MIDI has also allowed artists to record ideas quickly and if necessary remotely.

1.2 My Professional Background

Théberge notes that due to the global spread of relatively cheap digital recording technologies (including DAW software such as Pro-Tools, Logic, Ableton, and others, as well as small pre-amps and audio-digital converters – see the section on my studio below) “the distinction between what can be considered a ‘professional’ or ‘commercial’ project studio and simply a ‘personal’ or [amateur] ‘home’ studio has become increasingly difficult to make” (Théberge 2012, p.83).
When considering a studio as professional or not, more emphasis can be placed on the person using the studio. If the technologies are similar in both professional and amateur studios, it could then be assumed that the fundamental difference is not the equipment, but the person using the studio. The whole concept of a ‘professional quality studio’ might be better understood as ‘professionally-operated studio’. It is with this in mind that I begin by divulging my own experiences.

From the age of ten, I have played/performed and composed music. I began with guitar, and then moved to alto saxophone, followed by piano and bass. I played in many bands during my time at high school, from marching, blues and gospel bands in the U.S.A to acid jazz/fusion bands that made the Rockquest (national high school band competition) finals back at home in Christchurch. After high school I attended the Christchurch Jazz School for a year where I met the other founding members of Shapeshifter. In 1999, Shapeshifter formed and quickly became more than a side project. The band was doing national tours within a year and released its debut album ‘Realtime’ in 2001. From 1999 until 2006 I managed Shapeshifter, as well as producing/composing/performing on all the subsequent releases. All five of Shapeshifter’s albums have gone gold, platinum or double platinum in New Zealand, with two reaching Number 1 on the Top 40 charts. Alongside Shapeshifter, I started my solo project Pacific Heights in 2000, releasing my debut EP in 2001. Pacific Heights has always been a project without musical or genre parameters. It’s about complete freedom of artistic indulgence, as opposed to the band dynamic and artistic compromise of Shapeshifter. With Pacific Heights, I have released an EP, two albums, and a remix album. Both acts have taken me around the world several times through touring and performing at festivals.

As Theberge discusses, the notion of the producer/person within the studio environment is the key to the success and outcomes of a musical export commercially. In the past, my own studio environment would have been considered hobbyist at best, but yet has still contributed to several highly successful commercial releases. In terms of technology, I often employ software emulators of vintage analogue pieces of equipment, such as the Arturia synth
bundle (emulating classic Roland and Moog synths, etc.). I chose to go in this direction (to be ‘in the box’ – computer-based composition, production, and engineering) at an early stage in my career due to budgetary constraint and a desire to be independent of the more traditional studio model. As Nick Prior notes the advantages of ‘in the box’ music production:

“Indeed with the right software it replaces the function of a host of hardware devices, including multi-track portastudios, hardware synthesizers, mixing desks, samplers, channel strips, compressors, guitar amplifiers, effects units and sound modules.” (Prior 2008, p.914)

This album will be the third Pacific Heights album created with my home studio set-up. The album will be composed and produced within my current studio set-up (see below for more details) using a combination of all the skills I have learned from previous releases and projects. During the twelve months study period for this masters, I have also worked on a number of other musical projects in a professional capacity. One of these involved recording, producing and songwriting for a new act on a major label (see appendix 3). On top of this, I also co-mixed another project for an independent release (see appendix 3). I also manage a local electronic act (see appendix 3) and have been developing a new degree program with one of New Zealand’s major universities.

On all albums I have been a part of (except the Shapeshifter album ‘The System Is A Vampire’ – in which I undertook every usual role except producer), I have taken a holistic role in the production. I’ve been the artist, the executive producer, the manager, the producer, the songwriter, and the co-engineer. I feel the producer role has been the most valuable learning experience for me. This role is paramount to completing projects promptly within rigid budgetary constraints while capturing the best of a performance and reaching a song’s full potential. I feel the modern role of a ‘producer’ has shifted dramatically from the traditional role, which was seen as more of a managerial role in liaising between the band, the studio, and the label. These days within the more electronic musical genres the ‘producer’ is seen as the talent and the manager in one, a role in which I have been practicing with my solo project Pacific Heights for over
fifteen years. For this album I intend on working between all of the roles I have previously engaged, from the conceptual stage of the album through to the promotional and touring stages. I have credits as Composer, Performer, and Producer (* non-producer on this album) on all of these albums:

Since focusing on my solo career from early 2015 onwards, I have also worked on two other notable recordings. These are the Drax Project, a Wellington-based five-piece dance/pop act (who have just signed to Universal New Zealand), and Happiness Stan, a Christchurch-based country singer-songwriter. Both of the projects were EPs. They are included as appendix (see appendix 3) to this Masters project. I have included these as they reflect the reality of professional
work in this era. I am required to multi-task. I must balance working with clients (such as other artists and record labels), teach at a university, and mix projects, all while working on my own, perhaps more satisfying release.

1.3 My Studio

Theberge highlights a point that resonates with my own studio experiences and set-ups - “the distinction between what can be considered a ‘professional’ or ‘commercial’ project studio and simply a ‘personal’ or ‘home’ studio has become increasingly difficult to make.” (Theberge 2012, p.83) There haven’t been a lot of publications that cover the home/project studio. However, a couple of people have added theories around the success and growth of these. S.J. Cole suggests that the progress around computer technology, processing and affordability has opened up the possibilities in home studios:

“... the increasing power of computers ... [have] substantially reduce[d] costs and narrow[ed] the gap between project and commercial studios. Unlike the ADAT-Mackie based studio, one can increase a computer’s multi-track capabilities by simply buying a faster hard-drive. Similarly, since computers can internally mix separate audio tracks, large, expensive, external mixers are no longer required. Finally, software plug-ins allow users to process numerous audio tracks with special effects (equalizers, reverb, compressors, etc.) therefore significantly reducing the cost and need for dedicated ancillary hardware. In short, computer technology was vital for positioning the project studio as a viable economical alternative to traditional commercial studios.” (Cole 2011)

My studio is located in my home in Wellington, New Zealand. I have used this space for almost six years as my main space for creating, writing, and producing music. It is not an acoustically treated space, so final mixing has to be completed elsewhere. However, it has been an extremely balanced (inspiring and stable) environment, conducive to me creating content and working with others. My equipment is as follows:
Machine – 2013 Apple Macbook Pro 15” Retina

D.A.W. - Logic X

Operating System – Yosemite

Audio Interface - Apogee Duet 2

Monitors – Genelec 8030As and Genelec Sub 7050

Microphones – Rode NTK Valve Condenser, Sennheiser MD 441 Dynamic, Telefunken M80 Dynamic

Instruments – Moog Voyager, Dave Smith Prophet 08, Fender Rhodes 73 Suitcase

Software – Waves Mercury Bundle, Native Instruments Komplete 9, Arturia V Collection, D16 full Bundle, Valhalla Reverbs, U-he (Diva, Zebra) Rod Papen (Blue, Predator) Fabfilter Bundle. ARC (a monitoring corrective plugin that I run on my master output in Logic X)

These images below collectively show my home-based studio. Missing is the Iso booths, large tracking rooms, big mix console, stereotypical of recording studios. Instead, they show a basic collection of contemporary recording technologies and tools. The most powerful of these are the software programs that are not visible. In the second part of this exegesis, I will make these visible by exploring the productions more in depth.
The above image shows my desk and monitor position.

I think it’s important to show the above image, so as to highlight my outlook and work environment. As a musician, artist and creative entity, the environment has always had a large impact on my frame of mind and well-being, which positively affects my creativity.
Figure 3. Analogue Equipment

The above image shows some of my analogue equipment. (Moog Voyager and Fender Rhodes suitcase)

Figure 4. Record Collection

This image shows my microphone of choice for my own vocals, alongside some of my record collection, which I have sampled in the past.
1.4 Project Aims, Objectives and Influences

I aim to make an album that stands as the best I have produced to date. My aim may seem obvious, but I feel it is worth articulating. To achieve this, it must be a kind of ‘sonic adventure’ that takes me outside of my comfort zone. To step out of my comfort zone, I will employ several tools including collaborating with new people, using new software, experimenting with new tempos, new composition techniques, and new creative routines. I will return to these points throughout.

One of my primary concerns involves the idea of being ‘fresh’, which I equate with being original and new. This broad concept has underpinned my entire career and is something I wish to develop further in this project, which is my first solo album in seven years. Being original/fresh means that a listener hears something new, which in turn, makes them feel something new. For example, I experienced this myself the first time I listened to ‘Burial’s’ self-titled debut album in 2006. This album featured vocal treatments that I had never heard before. His pitch editing and stretched techniques, as well as sample placement, gave it a sound that invited repeated listening in order to try and understand it.

My motivations to produce this record are therefore deeply personal. It is a response to a personal search for music that makes me feel a particular way. I have always felt there are gaps in music; what we hear now only reflects a small portion of what human creativity is capable of achieving. Specifically, I believe that new music – including electronic music - can express emotions and feelings that others and I haven’t been able to access through existing music. My objective is to create music that firstly, makes me feel a particular way. This feeling is hard to describe but is not a feeling I can get from other music. In this sense, I am trying to evoke new emotional responses from listeners. I believe this is fundamental to its commercial viability; being fresh and original is a key element of success.

Linked to creative objectives are technical and pragmatic approaches. These are the creative product when you treat sound as an electronic signal. Specifically, some of the techniques I wish to explore with this album are:
**Vocal production** - Octave pitching, reverb and distance experimentations, aggressive automation, more rhythmical use of chops and cuts of vocal recordings. The tracks ‘Zoos’, ‘Breath and Bone’ and ‘Drained’ display these techniques.

**Composition style** – Trying to steer off the grid (tempo lock) and have a more human feeling. Following a more traditional song method of verses and choruses within my electronic environment. Exchanging primitive ideas online with fellow collaborators and allowing space and time to develop concepts. Experimenting with existing drumbeats that I have created, and listening to them alongside published classical and folk music for inspiration. I explore some of these ideas in the tracks ‘Ibanaka’, ‘So Love’ and “Breath and Bone’.

**Instrumentation and sound palettes** – I would like to combine some of the analogue instruments that I have in my studio (Prophet 08 synth, Moog Voyager synth, Fender Rhodes, piano) and layer them with VST instruments that I use regularly (U-he’s Diva and Zebra, Arturia synths, etc.). I would like to use a lot of pad sounds as these would link this project back to my signature sound, which focused on the lusher side of synths. Alongside the pads I would like to use rolling sustained bass sounds as they would also tie and continue the sound of Pacific Heights forwards. Please see song links for ‘Lavenia’ and ‘The Sourcerer’ in the appendix as examples.

**Audio editing and signal processing** - these possibilities have been increased through CPU power. My purchase before embarking on this project was a new MacBook Pro at maximum spec available at the time of purchase.
Stylistically, the album will feature a mixture of jazz, folk, ambient and electronica influences that have been proven successful to me as a composer; *Electronica* is a broad term that describes the use and combination of the following genre/descriptors, which underpin this project, namely;

**Jungle/Drum and Bass** - a genre that utilises breakbeats and significant engineering to accomplish a balance between the sub frequencies and the beat produced, usually around 170bpm.

**Ambient** - a genre that is about the surroundings and space within the music. A genre that features the sounds usually used as colours or layers within electronic music.

**House** - a genre that holds a repetitive beat focused around the kick drum (affectionately known as ‘4 to the floor’). A historic genre within electronic music that dates back to the early 1980s and holds many sub-genres within itself.

**Techno** – the harder side of the *house* genre using more industrial drum textures and machines as the heart of the beats. A genre that often uses the infamous 909 drum machine that I have always loved.

Outside of electronic music, there are many key influences that I have; including *Jazz* (specifically Bill Evans, John Coltrane, Dave Brubeck), *Folk* music (Simon and Garfunkel, Nick Drake, Bon Iver), *soundtrack* music (Max Richter, Hans Zimmer, Cliff Martinez) and *Alternative* (Radiohead, War on Drugs, Efterklang) genres and artists. I have always kept an open mind and ear when leaning on influences and inspiration musically speaking. See appendix 1.

**1.5 Collaboration**

I will also work with new artists whom I have not collaborated with before as a means to ensure the uniqueness of this project. I have mostly chosen to collaborate with new and developing artists. I have chosen to work with new
artists as an opportunity to have license and creative freedom. With new artists you often get fewer inhibitions, and I view their naivety as a positive form of artistry and enthusiasm. These artists are:

**Alexander Green:** Producer and vocalist for the group Groeni (see appendix 3), which I currently manage, features throughout this album. Alexander studied drums at the New Zealand School of Music in Wellington and is a very accomplished producer and composer with his act Groeni, which have enjoyed much critical acclaim alongside radio support from BBC and KCRW in Los Angeles. Groeni released their second EP with Germanys Project Moon Circle Label. Alexander has contributed immensely as a collaborator on this project as you will see on the song credits in Chapter 2. As a drummer and producer, he has added many rhythmical ideas to the tracks he has co-produced. Alexander co-produces and or is credited with additional production on the following tracks: ‘Realms’, ‘Hana’, ‘Ibanaka’, ‘Airborne’, ‘Field of Shadows’, ‘Zoos’, ‘Breath and Bone’, and ‘Buried by the Burden’.

**Louis Baker** – Best known as a solo singer-songwriter, Louis has released a self-titled debut EP, performed around the world, attended the Red Bull Music Academy and received nominations for several New Zealand-based music awards. This collaboration came about from several casual conversations at events about our desire to work together. Upon hearing his voice for the first time, I was mesmerised by his talent and style. Louis features on the track ‘Buried by the Burden’.

**Deaane Krieg** – At the time of writing this, alongside Jen Turner, Deanne is one of the most unknown artists I have collaborated with. Deanne recently completed her music studies as a vocalist at the New Zealand School of Music. She is currently in groups ranging in style from folk, jazz and electronic music. Alongside her vocals she is also an extremely competent guitarist. Her collaboration on this album will be her debut commercial release. Deanne features on the songs ‘Realms’, ‘Airborne’ and ‘Breath and Bone’. ‘Airborne’ is the lead single from the album (please see video link in appendix 5). It’s music video also features Deanne.
**Shaan Singh** – Shaan is a very accomplished local jazz musician. He completed his studies at the New Zealand School of Music at Wellington’s Victoria University in 2013 on Saxophone. While attending the School of Music, he formed the band Drax Project with several of his fellow students. The Drax Project have toured nationally and have just signed a record deal with Universal New Zealand. Shaan is a multi-instrumentalist. With Drax Project, he is the lead singer and plays sax and keys as well. I initially found Shaan on YouTube, singing a cover of Kimbra’s Goldmine with Drax Project and was completely intrigued by his vocal sound and warmth. Shaan features on the track ‘So Love’.

**Jen Turner** – At 17 years of age, Jen is a very mature vocalist. Jen has yet to release her own material. However, she has already written nearly 100 songs to develop her sound and style. Alongside being a vocalist, Jen also plays piano and consistently uses it as an instrument in her compositions. Jen is currently finishing her last year of high school. She has also enrolled to study jazz vocals at the New Zealand School of Music. Jen features on the track ‘Drained’.

1.6 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has outlined some key literature around recording and production within the modern era. It has looked at creative arts practice based research as method and its relevance. The chapter also covers my background and successes as a professional musician/producer/composer and performer. Also included are images and details of my home studio where this album was composed and produced. The chapter also highlights my aims, objectives and influences for this project and how they link to me, and my past. Finally, it touches on the importance and creative benefits of the collaborative element to the project, with some details on each of the collaborators.
Chapter 2: The Album

In this section, I will highlight the aspects of the compositions and productions that I feel are most important to either or both the sonic and emotive characters of each song. I will look at production techniques that tie into the mantra and ethos of the project, especially around use or emulation of vintage instruments and sounds. As a way of helping visualize and articulate some of these techniques, I have included screenshots taken from each Logic X session. I have chosen to use full-screen shots so that it is easy to visualize the channel strips alongside any highlighted plug-ins and soft-synths. Each song’s credits sit below its respective track title. My descriptions draw heavily on music-production terms that while commonplace among producers may be unfamiliar to some readers. Therefore I begin my discussion with a description of key terms.

**Key Terms:**

* Automation (DAW/Software) – is a way of recording change in a parameter over time.

* Arp – short for arpeggiator. An arp is traditionally a musical technique where short notes are used consecutively to create a repetitive pattern. In electronic music or how I describe it, it refers to the traditional musical technique as performed on a synthesizer.

* Bit Crush - is a lo-fi digital audio effect, which creates distortion by the reduction of the resolution. It is a great way to put additional warmth into sound.

* Break - is an instrumental or percussion section taken from a song – being a "break" from the main parts of the song or piece. A paramount term to the electronic music genres - Drum and Bass and Jungle.

* Buss – or how I have used it, is a way of grouping channel strips into one output to send to the master. For example, it is a very useful technique when working
with electronic/sampled base drums – snare, kick, hats, etc. and getting them to gel as sound together.

*Chorus* – is a type of effect applied to a sound. It emulates the sound that occurs when sounds with approximately the same timbre and similar pitch converge are perceived as one source. While similar sounds coming from multiple sources can occur naturally, as in the case of a choir or string orchestra, it can also be simulated using an electronic effects unit or signal-processing device.

*Compression* – is a type of audio processing. It reduces the volume of loud sounds or amplifies quiet sounds by narrowing or "compressing" an audio signal's dynamic range. Compression is commonly used in sound recording and reproduction and broadcasting and on instrument amplifiers.

*Decay* - the physical process by which a sound gradually disappears from the audible spectrum until it no longer exists. Simply put, decay is the time that it takes a musical note to die away once the musician has stopped producing the sound.

*Demo* - an early stage production of the composition.

*Distortion and Overdrive* - are "gain" type effects used in amplified music, originally derived from the sound of a saturated vacuum-tube guitar amplifier, though they are produced in a variety of ways in the 2010s. The effects add harmonic and inharmonic overtones to a signal leading to a compressed sound that is often described as "warm" and "dirty" depending on the type and intensity of distortion used.

*Equalization*, or *EQ* for short - boosting or reducing (attenuating) the levels of different frequencies in a signal.

*Filter* - being a frequency dependent amplifier, an audio filter in its most basic form is designed to amplify, pass or attenuate (negative amplification) some frequency ranges.
*Foley* - is the reproduction of everyday sound effects that are added to film, video, and other media in post-production to enhance audio quality.

*Limiter* - is a type of compressor designed for a specific purpose — to limit the level of a signal to a certain threshold. Whereas a compressor will begin smoothly reducing the gain above the threshold, a limiter will almost completely prevent any additional gain above the threshold.

*Low Cut* - also known as a high pass filter. Basically, this is a type of filter that removes low frequencies from an audio signal.

*Low Pass* - a low-pass filter is a filter that passes signals with a frequency lower than a certain cutoff frequency and attenuates signals at frequencies higher than the cutoff frequency. The amount of attenuation for each frequency depends on the filter design.

*Multi-band Compression* - can act differently on different frequency bands.

*Octave* - is the interval between one musical pitch and another with half or double its frequency.

*On the fly* – off the cuff or in other terms improvisational, and instant.

*Panning* - Panning is the distribution of a sound signal (either monaural or stereophonic pairs) into a new stereo or multi-channel sound field determined by a pan control setting. A typical physical recording console has a pan control for each incoming source channel.

*Resonance* - is a phenomenon that consists of a given acoustic system amplifying a sound whose frequency matches one of its own natural frequencies of vibration.
**Saturation** - typically, this is when a gain stage overloads and the signal level exceeds the available headroom. When this happens, the signal is saturated. This is similar to what a compressor does, except that saturation affects the shape of the waveform itself.

**Sawtooth** - the convention is that a sawtooth wave ramps upward and then sharply drops. However, in a "reverse (or inverse) sawtooth wave", the wave ramps downward and then sharply rises. It can also be considered the extreme case of an asymmetric triangle wave.[1]

**Side-Chaining** - side-chain compression has two inputs. One is a signal for processing, and the other to control the compression.

**Stereo Field** - the entire space of width, height and depth in the audio landscape.

**Squarewave** - is a non-sinusoidal periodic waveform (which can be represented as an infinite summation of sinusoidal waves), in which the amplitude alternates at a steady frequency between fixed minimum and maximum values, with the same duration at minimum and maximum.

**Sustain** - denotes the period of time during which the sound remains before it becomes inaudible, or silent. Additionally, sustain is the third of the four segments in an ADSR envelope. The sustain portion of the ADSR envelope begins when the attack and decay portions have run their course, and continues until the key is released. The sustain control is used to determine the level at which the envelope will remain. While the attack, decay, and release controls are rate or time controls, the sustain control is a level control.

**The Drop** - a term often used in dance music to describe the point when the beat and the bass line hit at the same time for the first time.

**Tremolo** - is a variation in amplitude, an effect I use often to give a sound a sense of swelling or pulse.
Velocity - a measure of how rapidly and forcefully a key on a keyboard is pressed when the player initially presses the key.

Wetness - amount of an effect in the mix, ranging from 0 – 100%.

Realms:

(Written by Devin Abrams and Deanne Krieg.
Produced by Devin Abrams and Alexander Green.
Mixed by Devin Abrams and Benny Tones.)

‘Realms’ is the opening track on the album. Inversely, it was written and produced last. The song composition began with the opening sample, which is a heavily manipulated edit of a vocal sample taken from leftover takes of Deanne’s vocals. As opposed to focused writing, this was a moment of experimentation. I was trying to make some of her unused material into samples for future use. After I had started adding a drumbeat to the sample, I felt inspired to pursue the idea as a full composition.

When I was writing 'Realms,' I still felt that the album was complete, so there were no expectations or pressures to do anything in a hurry. However, this song quickly felt like it was starting to work. For me, the standout feature of 'Realms' is the drum production. It features contrasting drum sounds, each with their own energy. At 1:01 minutes, the beat enters. It is sparse, which reflects current electronic music production trends. At 2:29 minutes the second half beat kicks in, this is influenced by retro electronica and touches on elements of early jungle/drum & bass and breaks. I believe that drum production is where I can blend the production techniques and sound of my past and present music.
One of the challenges when using ‘in the box’ electronic music production is making certain soft-synths sound convincingly analogue. Pictured above in Figure 5 (Main Pad) and below in Figure 6 (Arp) are the channel strips for the arp, which you can hear at the top of the song alongside the vocal sample, and the main pad, which comes in at 1:31 minutes. The soft synth I used for the arp in this instance is the Waves Elements synth. I really like the combination of sawtooth, squarewave and detune on this synth. It has an element of grit in the midrange and top end that other soft synths don’t seem to have. For the pad, I used my favourite synth for pads, the U-he Diva synth. To further add colour and warmth through processing and make these parts sound more analogue than digital, I used a combination of; overdrive (subtle), bit-crushing, tremolo, tape emulation, saturation and stereo compression. The overall balance of these effects gave the sound much more warmth and highlighted the grit that was already present in the synth. It’s a very common trick in my production at the moment and brings a lot of the digital synths I use closer to the sound of the analogue ones they are emulating. It’s so close that even during blind testing (which I have done), I haven’t been able to tell the difference between most of them.
There are a lot of automation and stereo effects in the mix. These are used to create movement within the background elements such as the pads, arp and vocal sample. When mixing, it was extremely important to me that stereo field had substantial energy and movement to accentuate the climb sections and gel the contrasting sections together. With the success of the recording technique used on Deanne’s vocals in ‘Breath and Bone’ (as you will read further down), we decided to use it again for the tracking of this song.

For the two contrasting sections in the song, we decided to treat the drums completely differently in the mix. Each section of drums has its own buss for ease of treatment. For the first half of the tune (the sparser drums), the drum buss includes the Soundtoys Decapitator to add more grit, an API 2500 compressor, the Brainworx Shredspread for more space, and an Oxford Inflator to add some mid-range energy. The second section of the tune features pre-recorded sampled breaks. Due to their sampled nature, I did not have as much control over the individual drum notes, so we used multi-band compression and the API 550a for some extra overall EQ boosting.
Hana:

(Written by Devin Abrams and Alexander Green.
Produced by Devin Abrams and Alexander Green.
Mixed by Devin Abrams and Benny Tones.)

This track starts with ambient pads in a similar style to my earlier productions. In fact, the opening pads are a combination of audio samples that I made around the time of my first album in 2003, along with several layers of soft synths. This tune starts with the most ambient and subdued atmospheric vibes, which then build to the highest dynamic point of the song at around 3:00 minutes. I really wanted a consistent string of layers coming in one at a time until the climax, to give the listener (or dancefloor) a sense of constant steady evolution and change.

Around the time I produced this track I was listening to a lot of Brian Eno's early material, hence the ambient intro. My vision was to combine that style of ambient music with modern electronic production. I used a lot of delay on the drums to create swing within the beat, alongside unconventional percussive instrument layers. For example, at 1:22 minutes you can hear the vinyl sample panning from left to right, giving the first section of drums a nice swing.
As above in Figure 7 you can see the delay and channel strip on one of the percussive samples that come in at 1:22 minutes. The delay is aggressively high-pass filtered, and low in feedback and wetness. Though subtle, for me the delay added depth and feel to the drums.
To my ears, an interesting moment in the drum production is heard at 2:28 minutes. Here, a high-pitched de-tuned tom can be heard. It highlights the use of delay for creating and adding more swing and notes to the composition. If I were to take the processing off the channel strip (see above Figure 8), it would sound extremely cheap and almost humorous, but within the mix and treated this way, it has a very fresh sound. I really wanted to push this sound as a feature in the mix. I feel it is one of the most unique sounds on the track.

One of the key characteristics of this song’s mix is the stereo movement. I spent a significant amount of time automating each instrument to move within different areas of the stereo field. I feel this creates an interesting and energetic listening experience. I used emulations of older 70s style equalizers and compressors such as the Teletonix LA-2A compressor and Pultec EQs to try and create a more natural analogue sound. One thing that did differ with this track from the rest of the album was that I wanted to create more of a dancefloor-ready mix. An aggressive approach was necessary to create this dancefloor mix, especially with the drums. They have heavy compression as well as subtle distortion and heavy EQ boosting. I wanted ‘Hana’ to be appropriate for a nightclub dancefloor.

So Love:

(Written by Devin Abrams, Jed Parsons and Shaan Singh.
Produced, Arranged and Tracked by Devin Abrams.
Mixed by Devin Abrams and Benny Tones.)

This song is about traveling. Fittingly, it was created in three different studios across two cities. The composition process started with a very simple drum loop not too dissimilar in rhythm and texture to what’s within the final track. I set up in the guitarist Jed Parson’s studio and let him improvise over the beat. One of the key melodic components to this song is the acoustic guitar; everything came easily after recording it. I tracked the acoustic using my Sennheiser MD 441-U microphone, which was pointed directly at the 12th fret of Jed’s guitar. The microphone ran into my Apogee Duet 2 (which I think has great sounding
converters), and I tracked it into Logic. The Duet was used a lot on this album as a good portion of it was tracked in remote non-studio locations.

Figure 9. Acoustic Guitar Effects

The above screen shot, Figure 9, shows the significant amount of effects used on the acoustic guitar. The Toraverb is placed on the chain first, and then there is a guitar rig plugin, which is followed by a channel EQ. Lastly, a small amount of the D16 bit crusher/preamp modeller decimort. Within the guitar rig, there is some noise reduction, tube compression, more EQing, a pitch pedal and some more reverb. With the reverbs I found the D16 reverb worked well with the highs, and the guitar rig one worked with the mids.

My favourite element of this song is the piano sound and part. Jazz pianist Darren Pickering performed this. The inspiration behind the sound was the film score for the Japanese animated film *Spirited Away* (see appendix 1). The opening scene of this film features a solo piano part that I drew on for the sound style. I wanted it to be a focal point in the mix, and a little dissonant in places. The FX chain is very important in achieving this sound. I captured the performance via MIDI using the Native Instruments Alicia Keys plugin. As opposed to a real piano (audio), the plugin is more versatile, which made it easier for me to get the
desired warm tone. I softened the attack, added some wavering tuning using Fab Filters Volcano and added a solid reverb, in this case, the Valhalla Room reverb.

Figure 10. Velocity Limiter

As pictured in Figure 10 above, there is also a velocity limiter on the channel to make sure the softness is upheld without losing too much feel from the performance.

I wanted the drums on this tune to reference original jungle/drum & bass music production (which is where I started as a producer over fifteen years ago). The song tempo is 163bpm, which is common in that genre. The feel created through the snare is sparse, which lets the kick pattern take centre stage alongside a classic break taken from Kurtis Blows’ ‘Do The Do’ track. This break is a processed sample from a piece of music recorded with my former band Shapeshifter. In the track these are the bright drums, placed relatively distantly in the mix, which are crucial to the overall feel and urgency within the rhythm section. The other break sample that features (and is more audible) is the iconic Lyn Collins ‘Think (About It)’ break. The break has been pitched, stretched and re-programmed, using some EQing and overdrive. The kick, breaks, snare, and cymbals are all routed through a single buss, which has some compression adding a little bit of crush to the sound. All the individual drum channels have
EQing and saturation on them. All additional drum programming was done on individual channels within Native Instruments Battery plugin.

**Ibanaka:**

(Written by Devin Abrams.
Produced by Devin Abrams and Alexander Green.
Mixed by Devin Abrams.)

This song was born out of audio pollution. The key ideas came out of a combination of watching Jim Jarmusch's *Ghost Dog* film and hearing some ethnic music similar to Indian meditation music (from another room) at the same time. I thought that the two crossed beautifully, creating a certain tension that was calming by contrast.

I started composing with some snippets of the *Ghost Dog* film audio alongside some samples from ambient vocal recordings (open source meditation albums that I found online) and used them to create a bed of audio. Thick slightly detuned pads and a lot of foley noise seemed to fill the low and mids space, leaving plenty of room on top for the beat to breathe and pulse.

I wanted the beat of the song to be futuristic and energetic in contrast with the sedative nature of the surrounding sounds. The beat is multi-layered; textural percussion, multiple kick patterns, hats, shakers, vinyl crackles and cuts, and a snare/rim shot made from a pitched gun-clocking sample from the movie. Many of the percussive elements have tape delay added to give even more rhythmic movement and complexity. A lot of the delays on the percussive elements are side-chained from a ghost (muted) kick, which follows the audible kick but is slightly simpler.
One of the sounds/samples I heavily manipulated was the meditation singing. The sample was pitched, stretched, EQ'ed, and coloured with reverb, stereo delay and effects within the guitar-rig plugin (as pictured above in Figure 11). I also reversed this sample post-processing and pitched it lower, so there were two different images of the sample to use. I found that an alternating combination of the original processed sample followed by the reversed image gave the track an interesting energy and motion. I also tweaked the vocal sample at 1:50 minutes. Here, I pitched the processed reversed sample up an octave and froze the delay when the beat kicks into the song. In my opinion, this adds thrust, and a new pulse of energy to contrast the previous section, which is relatively sedate. At this point in the track – to create more energy and alertness - I opened up the stereo field more as pictured below in Figure 12 with the pad sound using the Brainworx Shredspread. I purposely kept the stereo width and imagery quite minimal to allow for a dynamic change in the stereo field when ‘the drop’ hits at the 1:50 minute mark.

Another key element to this track is the overall wetness. The most commonly used effect to accomplish this was reverb, which is quite present in almost every individual channel. I used the D16 Toraverb on a lot of the channels. For a few
standout samples (the beep sounds, etc.) I also used the Lexicon Hall reverb and the Valhalla Vintage Verb. I really wanted this track to have a sense of depth to it, so choosing darker textures (pads, bass, and samples) and wet reverb seemed natural.

Figure 12. Brainworx Shredspread

As I've mentioned, most of the album was mixed in Benny Tones studio. However, because I wanted to mix this song myself, I worked on it in my own studio. Doing this created balance and environment issues. The choice to mix it myself was based purely on my creative desire, as I felt that the mix was much more integral to the composition and arrangement than usual.

**Drained:**

(Written by Devin Abrams and Jen Turner. Produced, Arranged and Tracked by Devin Abrams. Mixed by Devin Abrams and Benny Tones.)

"Drained, I have nothing left, I need to be with you."
Some friends of mine were managing the vocalist Jen Turner. They sent me the stems (just vocals and piano) of an original demo song of Jen's, also titled 'Drained'. I took portions of the vocals, and wrote the current backing theme, focusing on the emptiness and darkness of the lyrical mood. Below are some more detailed notes on the production.

For me, as with most of the songs on this album, the real feeling and soul of this song was created through the vocals. I ended up using the original demo vocals because we simply could not get a better feel, even when we took additional takes in my studio. Jen recorded her demo takes at the piano (which bleeds into the vocal mic, which is fortunately only audible when soloed). Doing this made her feel comfortable.

With the demo take, she captured a level of performance that we couldn't recreate. Fortunately, the demo was tracked on a decent mic, so all I had to do with them was apply a small amount of EQing, and add a touch of reverb (Toraverb). For the chorus vocals, I decided to add a layer pitched an octave lower to give her vocals a dark shadowy presence. The pictured Figure 13 below shows the lead vocal channel strip and processing within Guitar Rig.
The sparse and heavily-reverbed clap sample is one of the most distinctive sonic signifiers of this piece. It is a Roland TR-808 Drum Machine (modeller) hit, taken from the inbuilt Logic drum synth. I wanted this bright sample to contrast with the rest of the tune within the EQ spectrum. It is bright and percussive in comparison with the tom, which is dull and persistent. The reverb plugin I used here is the Polish made D16 Toraverb. I set it to have a long feedback and low cut filter setting. Reverb was also used quite differently for the tom, which frequently features in the track. The tom sound was taken from the Logic drum synth as well. This is of note, as both the snare and the tom are not samples, but sounds generated from the synth. I wanted the tom to sound like a dulled old military snare call, so I used the Valhalla room reverb to filter and sustain its sound. The screenshot below Figure 14 shows the room reverb settings for this sound. It shows that the mix is up at 100% wet, with a short decay. The high cut filter, as previously described, is reducing the high frequencies dramatically. Also in this instrument’s effect chain is another reverb, (Toraverb again) capturing the little amount of highs left after filter reverb to further add breathiness.
The bass sound is a texture that is familiar from my past productions. I haven't however, used this specific patch before, but the vibe of the patch is very similar to many bass tones I have used in jungle/drum & bass tracks. I wanted the bass to be haunting and to represent the darkness of the lyrical and melodic content. I used a substantial amount of portamento to give it a ghostly and mysterious character. You can notice a substantial amount of glide on the tuning setting in Figure 15 below. As also shown below, there is a 24db low pass filter on this sound and very little resonance. Also in the chain, is the FabFilter Volcano, which I have used to give the bass some tuning movement. Also used is the PSP mix saturator to additionally push some of the bass synth's harmonics into the mix. To get the relationship between the bass and kick working together, I used some side-chain compression from the kick to the bass to get the kick to pop a bit more. I also used a multi-band compressor on the bass to allow room for the bottom end of the kick drum, as well as a small amount of chorus, to spread the sound out.
The song also features multiple synths layered up to generate a de-pitching sound that increases in volume and becomes wetter with reverb as it progresses. My aim was to create a musical metaphor for the last remaining water draining from a bath. This sound can be heard from 18 seconds to 23 seconds in the song.

**Airborne:**

(Written by Devin Abrams, Alexander Green and Deanne Krieg. Produced and arranged by Devin Abrams. Mixed by Devin Abrams and Benny Tones.)

Like ‘Breath and Bone’, Airborne originally started as a demo for vocalist Jen Turner. After some initial writing and recording with Jen, we decided that the song was not right for her, so I shelved it. After several months, I sent the instrumental version of the demo to another vocalist, Deanne Krieg, who had recently completed the ‘Breath and Bone’ vocals. While listening to ‘Breath and Bone,’ I was instantly sold on Deanne’s abilities and vibe. Her initial efforts became the first verse.
Compared to 'Breath and Bone', Airborne took a greater collaborative effort to complete vocally. We spent several sessions together tracking melody and lyric ideas at my studio until we were both happy with the composition and recording ideas. We laid down the final take at Benny Tones Organic Music Works studio (where the album mixdown later took place) almost six months after Jen's version of the song was shelved.

The highlight of 'Airborne' for me is the synths in the chorus. The soft-synths are pictured below in Figures 16 and 17. Both synths have multiple voices and are adding different characters to the overall sound. The lush-101 (D16s digital polyphonic answer to the classic Roland SH-101 mono synth) is generating all of the high-end energy of the chorus synths. It has just the right amount of glide and volume envelope along with side-chained compression to create some space and give the impression that it is hitting hard sonically. The lush-101 is melodically playing three-note chords in unison with the following synth, the Arturia Mini V-synth (pictured just below). The Arturia Mini V is providing all of the bottom-end and is identical in melody and rhythm to the Lush-101 high-end synth. This synth has two voices; the root note and one a 5th above it, once again adding to the overall thickness of the synth melody in the chorus. The Mini V is also heavily side-chained and saturated to boost some of the harmonics.

With the mixdown, we made a separate heavily side-chained reverb auxiliary to create more space on the synths. Both synth sounds started at a preset level but were heavily manipulated, especially with regards to the enveloping and voicings. Also pictured in Figure 18 is the compressor used for the side-chaining to help illustrate the extremity of its use. With the vocal production, it was hard to find the right balance between the synths and vocals in the chorus. One had to feature more than the other to achieve an effective mix. In the end, the synth was placed higher, this is because the vocals have plenty of space in the verses, so during the choruses I treated the vocals as more of a colour that creates some stereo energy around the synths.
Figure 16. Airborne Synth 1

Figure 17. Airborne Synth 2
As I mentioned earlier, one of the biggest challenges with the mixdown of this song was balancing the size of the synths in the chorus with the vocals. Traditionally a chorus vocal would take precedence, but electronic music has shifted this philosophy, and the placement of the vocals is up for experimentation. In the mix, we also took a lot of the bottom-end out of the vocals and pushed them into a wider position in the stereo field that didn’t clash with the synths. I felt that it was important to keep both of these aspects in the song, but it took a lot of trial and error to land it in place.

**Field of Shadows:**

(Written by Devin Abrams and Alexander Green.
Produced by Devin Abrams and Alexander Green.
Mixed by Devin Abrams and Benny Tones.)

'Field of Shadows' was one of the easiest songs to write and produce for the album. It took shape quickly and naturally. The song started with Alexander Green coming over to my studio with a looped sample, the gamelan sound you
can hear at 48 seconds. We got the sample to swing a bit more by applying an envelope effect and a low feedback tape delay as pictured below in Figure 19.

The next sound we added was the processed piano stab you can hear at the top of the song, a one-second sample from Bill Evans’ ‘I Wish I Knew’. I tried re-playing that note using the piano at my friend’s studio, but I couldn’t replicate the colour and noise that was in the Bill Evans recording. I decided to use the sample, as it was an integral to the overall sound of the song. In previous productions, I have often found it’s best to stick with using a sample as opposed to recreating it.

Figure 19. Enveloper and Tape Delay

An hour into the production session, we had the piano and gamelan samples grooving as we wanted them to. We then decided to move onto the next layer. We felt that some simple guitar parts would sit nicely between the two samples. Alexander pulled up some guitar that he had already recorded at his home studio. As with many modern producers (due to finances, set-up space, or mix-production flexibility) the guitar was recorded straight into an audio interface, bypassing the traditional amps and pedals. We did, however, add some amp modelling within Logic as seen below Figure 20. You can hear the first guitar
layer at 1:05 minutes. This guitar part is played lower and looped. The second guitar (also using the same amp modelling as the lower one) comes in at 1:20 minutes, and adds some higher notes. With the guitar, I hard panned the lower one to the left and the higher one to the right.

Figure 20. Amp Modelling

After sorting the feel and sound of the guitar and balancing the two other samples, we added a simple but sonically expansive pad progression (which fades in from the start of the song) as well as a bass line that followed the pad progression.

Once we had an initial loop, we fleshed out the basic arrangement. I often draw on two writing-composition methods. The first is subtractive writing: adding many layers and ideas, then subtracting to a point of completion. The other being loop-based writing: building a loop to the point where I can hear the song at its fullest, then using those parts to make a full arrangement. This song leaned on the side of the loop-based approach. In the early stages of arrangement, this approach told us that there were a need and space for vocals. The first vocals we recorded were a combination of Alexander and myself singing long non-lyrical lines (similar to a choral style), which we both felt contributed immensely to the mix and overall aesthetic of the tune.
You can hear Alexander’s first vocal line come in at 1:23 minutes. These vocals not only added some beautiful sonic colours, but they also gave the lead vocals a feeling of support and warmth that helped deliver the emotion and story of the lyrics. You can hear the pinnacle of these choral vocals at the end of the song at 2:57 minutes. The idea here was to leave the listener with a sense of longing. As I am relatively new to writing and recording my own vocals, the lead vocals were left until last. I wanted to be certain that they were required. At the time, I was still very uncertain about having my vocals as the lead or focal point in the composition.

The composition process for the two lines that are somewhat of a chorus was very easy and painless. The upside of having such a quick composition process (completed in only one day) was that the emotion and energy of the song were still very fresh and inspiring. The lead vocals (melody and lyrics) that feature on this song were written as they were tracked. I also partly used this method in the song ‘Zoos’.

After writing the song, we used several production elements to highlight key compositional moments. With the first lead vocal section, we layered some reversed versions of the vocals underneath. The story behind the lyrics is that of a spirit-ghost trapped on the empty misty field where he fought his last battle. The battle could be taken literally or metaphorically, representing a deep internal battle of depression and loneliness. The reversed vocals served to enforce the haunting and supernatural nature of the story. I gave the chorus vocal layers a very breathy and encompassing feel by using a combination of stereo delays, reverbs, EQ’s, and stereo wideners. I really wanted these vocals to feel as thought they were haunting the lead character (lead voice) and anchoring him within a distinctive sonic space.
Zoos:

(Written and produced by Devin Abrams and Alexander Green. Mixed by Devin Abrams and Benny Tones.)

Mostly written on a cold rainy studio day, 'Zoos' started from a simple three-chord piano riff. On the day, I was harbouring a lot of dark feelings (relating to my personal life). I quickly tracked all of the lyrics and vocals on the fly, while hoping for something healing. It was a writing technique I had never used before, as I was still very new to singing on recordings. However, I had such a build up of emotions on that day that it seemed natural. The lyrics and melody took about 30 minutes to write and demo. It was an instant capture of the headspace I was in at that time and feels very true to me personally.

The song features really clean verse vocals and processed chorus vocals, and has strong dynamic movement throughout the backing track. The spaciousness of the verses sets up the chorus ("I need your loving") which leads into an even bigger sonic moment following it (actually my favourite moment of the song), detuned synths, chopped vocals, syncopated drums and a lot of side-chaining all coming together like an explosion in a sense.

Figure 21. Vocal Effects
The chorus vocals ("I need your loving") feature some significant octave layering, as seen above in Figure 21. The vocal line has an octave above panned on either side. Set at a high level, it had an additional lower octave part sitting centre and placed low in the mix. I felt this gave the vocals a similar quality to an analogue synth, which made the hook seem unique and sit in contrast to the verses. It also served as a nice segue to the sections following the choruses, which are very synth heavy.

I really wanted the verse vocals them to be as intimate as possible. The fragility and soft nature of my voice needed to be exposed and bare. I felt this would mirror the lyrical content, and reinforce the song’s emotional intent. For me, the verses really are the soul of the song. They encompassed a time when I was personally struggling with a lot of things in my life. Capturing these feelings and translating them into the production was my main goal with this track.

I initially thought I would get a more accomplished vocalist (such as Louis Baker, who features on the ‘Buried by the Burden’ track) to record the parts I had written. After deliberation, I decided that only my voice would be able to sing with the exact emotion and delivery I was after. In line with the song writing process for this song, the final recording session several months later was about returning to that headspace. As a producer, this would normally entail enticing, inspiring and massaging the talent into the right headspace. Since I was the producer and the singer in this instance, it required deep self-focus. I adopted a method-acting style approach. On the day of recording, I sat in the booth by myself for a while, eyes closed visualizing the things that had caused me to enter the period of pain I was in when I wrote the song. It wasn’t long before I became overwhelmed with emotion again. I knew straight away I had to hit the record button.

I am focusing a lot on the emotional aspect of this song because, for me, this was the most important part of producing this song, more so than the technical aspects. As with most songs on this album, emotional delivery has been the focal point when capturing the vocals, but this one, in particular, required a much more involved approach.
Breath and Bone:

(Written by Devin Abrams, Alexander Green and Deanne Krieg.
Produced and Arranged by Devin Abrams and Alexander Green.
Mixed by Devin Abrams and Benny Tones.)

This song started as a draft demo for Jen Turner, the vocalist who featured on 'Drained'. The version with Jen never fully eventuated. Feeling a little burnt on the song, I decided to send the consolidated Logic session to my co-producer Alexander Green so he could continue to develop as an idea. We decided to send it to Wellington-based folk/jazz singer Deanne Krieg and ask her to write some melodies and lyrics over the production. This process led to a re-birth for the previously abandoned song. We emailed Deanne a mp3 of the backing track, which is almost identical to the finished version featuring on the album. Deanne returned a demo version with her vocals a few weeks later. Little has changed as far the composition goes from that original demo. Alexander and I imported her demo stem into our session and continued tweaking the arrangement. The tweaks were minor and limited to adding 16 bars into the arrangement and writing a slightly different ending to the original demo.

My general rule is to mix the instrumental as close to finished as possible before tracking the final vocal takes. I like to do this so that the vocalist is listening to the best possible version of the backing track. I believe the mix/sonic aspect is important to maximising the emotional content of the song. I have found from personal experience recording others and more recently my own vocals that this plays an integral part in getting the best possible emotional outcome from the vocal takes. This technique was a uniform approach used across all of this album.

With Deanne's vocal, we used a dual micing technique to create an interesting combination of vocal takes, with the finishing product being a unison lead. For this, we used a top end condenser (Violet-Globe) mic for the main lead and then a softer ribbon mic (SE Voodoo) for the unison and the harmonies to add warmth. We tracked these at Benny Tones - Organik Muzik Works Studio (see Appendix 7). Deanne's vocals were very high in pitch, so we decided to layer an octave underneath the lead, to give a bit more depth to the overall sound with the mix.
With Deanne being a more softly-toned vocalist than others that feature on the album, it was necessary to record her with Hushtone for most of the takes; this helped to capture the intricacies that are present in her voice.

The highlight of this song for me is its dynamic range. It starts fragile and light, and then crescendos to a peak just before it ends. A few of the sounds that really help this progression are the arp synth that comes in at 2:07 minutes, and a secondary distorted single note pulsing synth that sits underneath it in the arrangement. Both sounds have significant movement/automation including volume and filter settings. The first synth is pictured below in Figure 22.

**Figure 22. Synth Processing**

![Synth Processing](image)

The screenshot shows the amount of processing in the channel alongside editing within the AU synth. Reverb/detune/distortion/tape emulator/EQing and gating feature on the channel strip to colour the original patch made on the synth. I really wanted to create a kind of floating sensation, as far as the pitch and swing were concerned with this synth.
Regarding mixing, the Logic EQ post analysis on the output for this song drew my attention to the consistent push at around 10k, which is where the breathiness of the track comes from. See the master output EQ analyser Figure 23 below.

Figure 23. EQ Analyser

**Buried By the Burden:**

(Written by Devin Abrams and Louis Baker.
Produced by Devin Abrams and Alexander Green.
Mixed By Devin Abrams and Benny Tones.)

The production and composition of this song happened rather organically. The vocalist Louis Baker came to my studio for a Logic lesson with me. He brought a short session he had already started on, containing some vocal and guitar ideas. Instead of completing the lesson, we ended up working on this track together. In only a few hours we had something down. It all started with me adding the chorus drums/percussion, some bass, pads and an organ. From the first session, we managed to sketch a rough arrangement so Louis could draft some more lyrics and melodies. I sent the session to Alexander Green, who remixed the verses that I had initially done. He changed the guitar movement by chopping it
up and also added some additional ambience samples, which gave the song a more cohesive feel between sections.

One of the defining sounds in this song is the organ/pad sound that features in the chorus. There are two layers that make this sound overall. First, a soft pad that is a low passed filtered sawtooth synth (pictured below Figure 24) that features some chorus, and an internal plate reverb (inside the soft synth). The second layer (also pictured below is Figure 25) is a Native Instruments Kontakt Hammond organ preset. Both sounds have the same side-chain compressor on them, chaining from the kick drum.

Figure 24. Chorus Synth
Another one of my favorite parts in this song is the bass in the chorus. It’s a patch from the SH2 (Roland modeller) synth. Without processing, the patch sounds somewhat similar to the classic jungle/drum and bass bass sound known among electronic producers as 'The Terrorist'. Originally heard on Kevin Saunderson’s ‘Just Want Another Chance’, this ‘Reese’ bass sound became a staple of jungle/drum & bass when Ray Keith and Gavin Cheung sampled it for the tune ‘Terrorist’ by Renegade².

In 'Buried by the Burden', the channel strip settings are simple but incredibly important in regards to the feel and swing of the track. As pictured below in Figure 26 you can see the tremolo waveform on the bass synth. This is the feel generator and gives the bass a quivering movement and modulation. The bass is also side-chaining from the chorus kick, giving the overall chorus a heavy swelling motion.

² To listen to this track, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dnY5q-IYqfw
The second chorus leads to the outro, which is the section that I wanted to be the highest dynamic moment of the song. I wanted this song to crescendo to the very last moment, hopefully leaving the listener stunned and held in a sense of pause. To achieve this, I set about keeping an eye on the overall dynamic level of the song preceding the outro, making sure there was headroom left for the outro synth (church organ sounding). It's here where the low-pass on the synth opens to its fullest, highlighting the high end of this synth and the small amount of white noise that is also present within the patch. There is also a pulsing arp that is moving from side to side within the stereo field giving the section a sense of rhythm and pulse. I really felt the mastering of this song brought out the overall warmth of this arp and made it a much stronger sound than it was at the final mix stage.

The Wilderness:
(Written and produced by Devin Abrams. Mixed by Devin Abrams.)

The main pad sample (the first sound you hear in the song) is made up of two sounds layered together. These were samples created several years ago. Both sounds were generated on analogue synths and recorded as long free takes/jams (around five minutes each). I cut out a very small section from each (around
three seconds) and copied and pasted them to give the sounds a repetitive and overtly-sequenced feel. I wanted these two pad sounds to drive the whole track and be a consistent foundation for the listener.

I used wind Foley as a texture to add environment and nature to the song. I felt that it highlighted the track’s feeling of solitude. As the pads both sat in the middle of the stereo field, the wind really needed a lot of movement to create the sensation of space and position of the listener. Vigorous panning and automation were used to create this effect. With the mix of the track, I didn’t actually process it too much. I deliberately left in the flaws and perhaps less desirable frequencies within the pad samples and guitar. I simply presented well-recorded source audio through some nice rack gear at the studio.

One thing that I feel is important to discuss with this song and its placement in the track listing is the musical and emotional release it gives following such an intense song as ‘Buried by the Burden’. It has a sense of pause and peace to it that was greatly needed to allow the listener to digest the previous tracks without silence. To me, the closing song on an album should give the listener a sense of completion and satisfaction alongside room for contemplation.
Chapter 3 - Release Strategy, Reflection and Conclusion

The final chapter of the exegesis outlines the release strategy. I then reflect upon the creative process by investigating four key questions. These are:

- How do I approach making records differently as a result of this album project?
- How do I approach collaboration differently as a result of this album project?
- How do I approach commercial recording industry and strategies as a result of this project?
- How do I conceptualise the relationship between art and academia as a result of this project?

I lastly offer my concluding remarks, linking academia to artistic practice. I outline how I now view the relationships between my art and academia, not only as a student but also as an educator. My experiences have influenced how I view the works of other scholars, who discuss the relationships between their jobs as academics (practice-based research frameworks etc.) and artists, and thus relate closely to my own position, and the process outlined in this exegesis.

3.1 Release Strategy

At the time of writing this exegesis, I have secured two licensing deals for this album. Due to the commercial nature of these agreements, I am unable to disclose all of the details of this plan. Below, I outline the loose schedule and strategy for the release of the album and singles. This is important to include in this exegesis, as it relates to two of my initial goals:

- To attract a record deal in NZ and internationally;
- To publish/release and promote the album in an appropriate and commercially viable way.

The album was shopped and negotiated by entertainment lawyer Rob Glass from Media Arts Lawyers in Australia. It took several months of shopping and review
to settle with what I believe to be the best partners for this album. For New Zealand, we went with Warners New Zealand and signed a licensing deal (the details of which must remain confidential, however, involve the rights over this record for a specified term and territory). I believe that Phil Howling, the head of Warners New Zealand understood the music after listening to some early demos, as he showed no hesitation about the project. Initially, we were looking at a deal with Warners for both New Zealand and Australia but decided to go another route with regards to Australia as a territory. For this, we had interest from several labels, but the one that I felt that I would align with the best – in terms of how I would fit within their existing roster – was Create-Control. Create-Control is an independent label with formal affiliations with Universal. Their roster is especially strong in the areas of electronica and progressive new music, and their head A&R person Blake Rayner indicated to me early on that he loved the album. The licensing deal with Create-Control also includes the rest of the world, with the option to opt out of territories outside of Australia with 30 days written notice. This option was an extremely appealing as we are still shopping the album around Europe to some interest.

The strategy at the time of writing this has been mostly set for New Zealand, as the Create-Control deal is only recent. The first single ‘Airborne’ came out on November 13\textsuperscript{th} in New Zealand with a music video and premiered on George FM (one of New Zealand’s highest rating radio stations). The video was produced by local directors and visual effects artists who, without a professional-sized budget, managed to achieve a professional result. This is not unusual as artists in Wellington often collaborate and work outside of conventional commercial agreements. Pictured below (Figure 27) is a still from the 'Airborne' music video.
The artwork for the first single was a collaboration between Berlin-based photographer Danny Pemberton, and Illustrator Matthew Eales. At the time of writing, the album artwork has not been completed and is unlikely to be until close to the album’s release. The collaboration will continue between these two artists for the cover. Below (Figure 28) is the ‘Airborne’ single cover, as it appears on iTunes and other streaming services.

The next phase of the plan is to release the second single ‘Buried by the Burden’ in late February 2016. This song has received a $10,000 ‘Making Tracks’ music video and recording grant from New Zealand on Air.

I have also confirmed that in the two weeks leading up to the album release date, April 2016, there will be a national art gallery tour featuring a collaborative project between illustrator Matthew Eales and my music. The gallery tour will
feature an exhibition of work that was based Eales’ interpretation of my album, and I will accompany Matthew to DJ the album in its entirety to the audience for the first time publicly. This unconventional approach has been devised to attract more press and help build my brand as unique as and more artistically inclined than standard pop acts. The third single ‘Drained’ is planned to come out with a video coinciding with the album release.

Following the album release, I will put together a live act to tour nationally, and internationally. The live act will most likely be a combination of electronic and organic instruments, namely a female singer (Deanne Krieg), who will sing lead vocals on most tracks, keyboardists (including myself), and a live drummer. Benny Tones, who co-mixed the album with me, will be the front of house engineer. The mid-term goal beyond this is to continue writing, producing and recording the next album.

3.2 Conclusions and Critical Reflections
To conclude this exegesis I will reflect on where this creative and academic project has taken me as an artist. The merits of critical reflection adds substantial potency to the academic benefits of practice-based research, as identified by Nelson:

“Critical reflection on process is an integral part of the research inquiry, as it might well be in the making of artwork. But because arts research is subtly different from arts practice and makes small, but significant, additional demands, it is necessary in PaR actively to promote critical reflection.” (Nelson 2013, p.29)

To do this, I will address a series of key questions that have underpinned this project. With each question I will be focusing on, from personal reflection, the critical elements that added to my learning in the areas of creativity, academia and industry, as relating to the project.
How do I approach making records differently as a result of this album project?

When I have made records in the past, the critical reflective aspect of album making was always only relevant in regards to any kind of immediate impact. Making this record, with the purpose not only to make a great record but also to learn how to find areas of improvement, has led me to be much more analytical and critical of songs once they are composed. Specifically it has changed the way I look at everything, such as the history of and reason to use a drum break sample, to why a synth sound has a much more profound effect sonically in my music as opposed to a traditional instrument. From this, I have also become more involved in the lyrics and melodic sensibilities. As a brand and solo artist (even with collaboration), I feel like I have a greater responsibility, and can have greater control over the music's message. In this case, the message is personal. It is my soul, identity, personality, and musical spirit. Before embarking on this album, there were several personal tragedies that culminated together to the extent where it was almost not possible for me to continue with any form of work. These pains added some much needed creative substance, which in time became beneficial to the composition of the album. Looking back, they were the backbone or story of the whole project. As the project progressed, I realised I needed to oversee all aspects of the production to maintain this story. Maintaining the story required several re-workings of collaborators lyrics and content. My collaborators were very accommodating in this regard, which I always welcomed.

This album had a really clear objective in terms of the overall emotion I wanted to communicate. In previous records, the number one priority was that I enjoyed the creative process, this meant that I tended to make music that reflected my current musical tastes, and less of what I would consider my emotional identity. Musically, emotion had always been integrated into to any song that I composed and produced, but it was never part of something that was so deep seeded and intensely anchoring. Emotionally, it was the most challenging album I've made in my career. Quite often it was not the 'fun process' that I had engaged with in the past, but rather a much more stressful and occasionally even hurtful process.
The content of the songs is so personal that revisiting the songs became an untimely reminder. Working on them would cause me to revisit the pain associated with the events that led to the songs. A positive side of creating this album though was that I also viewed it as being a somewhat cathartic process, one I now view as being one of the most important aspects of producing this album.

I feel a sense of luck about this album. I also feel like I have reached a point where my skills have come to a level whereby expressing emotions through electronic music has become automatic and organic. Automatic, in the sense that producing via Logic has become an extension of myself, organic, in the sense that I no longer have to think consciously about the tools that I use. Instead, my focus and creative energy is grounded by my feelings and intuition. This notion has been assessed by some scholars who have undertaken music technology research. Matthew Bannister draws on Heidegger’s notion of *Umsicht*, relating to the ideas of Handlability and Praxical knowledge. Bannister explains “*Umsicht* (circumspetion or practical wisdom) [simply] involves knowing how to do something without necessarily being able to explain it” (Bannister 2009, p.5). Future projects could involve further theorisation of this concept, and explore the relationships between technology and human creativity.

**How do I approach collaboration differently as a result of this album project?**

In the past, I wasn’t attuned to the ways that different individuals make and think about music. Some artists need massaging and affirmation that they are on the right vibe, such was my experience working with Shaan on ‘So Love’. After several initial demo takes on the song, we decided we didn’t have the right melody or lyrical content required. I asked Shaan to have a break from the song and suggested we revisit it in a few weeks. At the start of the next session, I focused on the areas we had right already and realised that the areas that needed improvement were close. That day, we worked together part by part on the song, with constant assurance from myself to him that we would get the song done, and we did. It took me several sessions as I mentioned earlier to figure this
out about Shaan as a collaborator. Upon reflection in regards to working with new people, I’ve learnt that I could spend more time in the first session just getting to know how someone works and deciding from there the best format for achieving greatness with that person. On the other side of that situation was working with Jen. I suspect that Jen found it quite hard to collaborate, as she is an extremely shy performer. As I’ve discussed regarding the song ‘Drained’, I ended up using her original demo take for the song. We had tried to re-record her vocals in a commercial studio and at a friend’s studio in her hometown of Christchurch to no avail. I decided that someone like Jen could achieve outstanding performances on her own, which she had with the song ‘Drained’. I learned pretty quickly that the hands-off approach was best for her and that she would find working in her time and space the most comfortable.

Another area of collaboration that I would like to highlight is working pace. I function at a different pace to everyone I have worked with so far. I first became aware of this with my previous band Shapeshifter, but I became more aware of this with this record. Music for me has usually been very instantaneous. I have no problem creating melodies and lyrics on the spot and can work at almost any time of the day. This ability has become both a blessing and a burden. At times with this project, I struggled with the tempo that others worked at. This wasn’t necessarily in regards to any of the collaborators commitment, but more in that, I had to learn that things that were important to me were less so and understandably so for others. I felt a burning desire to finish most of the songs quickly and hear them in their finished state. The need to fulfil the vision at times was overwhelming, but it had to be managed so as not to affect the positivity for others involved with the project. In the end, I learnt that pace isn’t always crucial to a successful project. As much as pace works for me in achieving and finishing quality projects, I’m not sure that everyone working at my pace would be a good thing for a project. A certain amount of iteration comes from having to pause at points in a project’s timeline. I believe that these pauses created needed time I wouldn’t have allowed for in the past, and looking forward, would welcome again in any future project.
How do I approach commercial recording industry and strategies as a result of this project?

This is an interesting topic to me, for the first time as an artist I have signed a licencing deal with a label. All of my previous deals were P&D and P&D plus deals, which meant that we had more control over the copyrights than I currently have with this album. It would seem initially that my own solo deals reflect an older model. However, this is not the case and is impacted by a number of factors. Firstly, the P&D deals signed through Shapeshifter and previously Pacific Heights at the time reflected our progressive approach to the music business. Our objective, from the early 2000’s onwards was to avoid major label deals that limited our future ownerships, control, and ability to profit from our copyrights.

At the heart of this was the major labels’ misunderstanding of alternative electronic and dance music culture. In my experience, major labels did not understand electronic music until it recently became mainstream. The standard major label models did not speak to electronica audiences. At the time of our early releases (2001-2010), we felt that the electronic music scene represented a counter-culture and a rebellious underground movement. The decision to remain independent wasn’t only financial but also politically motivated. We felt the way majors promoted artists on the radio and through mainstream media outlets would have disenfranchised our fan base and only done more damage than good to us as artists. However with the changes around pop music’s embracing of more electronic music production and general interest from major labels to invest in electronic artists, the stigma around majors has been diminished through collective work.

In the past, underground producers would have viewed major label contracts highly suspiciously, as there was little understanding from either side of how the other worked. Further, marketing was not appropriate for the scene and community-based counter-culture audiences initially drawn to electronic music. The reason why I felt comfortable with finally signing a major label licensing
contract now was mainly that the majors have caught up with my kind of music. They are willing to invest and embrace things that I have strongly stood for in the past and have a much better understanding of how to market electronic music. Industry trends have generally caught up now to what my band Shapeshifter has been doing for almost 17 years, being that electronic music is played live and accepted as an accessible mainstream genre with commercial potential. I personally feel that a partnership with a label such as Warners New Zealand and Create-Control (Universal) offers many possibilities that wouldn’t have been there ten years ago.

**How do I conceptualise the relationship between art and academia as a result of this project?**

This is my first foray into producing music within an academic framework. When I started this project, I was a freelance producer. Shortly after commencing my studies, I was appointed to an academic position at a leading New Zealand University and tasked with helping develop a new ‘art-school’ inspired programme in commercial music. This has further inspired my engagement with academia, not just as a scholarly activity, but also through teaching and administration. Schippers addresses this issue, specifically around the political and funding environment in universities and the academic acceptance of practice-based research; “the [music industry] trends... are hardly reflected in the current academic output of music departments, the topics of presentations at major conferences, journal articles, and music projects [that have received funding]” (Schippers 2007, p.2). Schippers goes on to explain that in universities, traditional Western musicological research dominates, and, as he describes it focuses “almost exclusively on analytical and historical aspects of music, rather than on contemporary practice” (Schippers 2007, p.2). Schipper presents that quite possibly due to this field’s popularity being a rather recent development, we might see more evidence in the future. This project in many ways, aligns with Schippers predictions, especially in regards to how I present a commercially-oriented electronic ‘popular music’ album that essentially is aiming to reach and speak to an audience, as research. Schippers explains:
“In this context, confusion arises on the relationship between artistic or aesthetic value and recognition as research. I would argue that this is quite loose. One can imagine a deeply moving rendition of a work from the classical canon or a brilliant jazz solo in a manner that would not require much research, and a very deeply conceived and well-constructed new work that utterly fails to communicate with any audience. This is not very different from research in other areas.” (Schippers 2007, p.2)

3.3 Conclusion

Having completed this project and reflected on its journey, I feel a deeper sense of achievement than I have with any previous musical endeavour. The emotional content alongside the production skills learnt from past experience have balanced perfectly and place any future creative outings in high anticipation. Looking forward, there is now a new critical and reflective component to my production repertoire. I see this as a positive, as it will add further depth to the thought and intent behind future projects.

I would like to conclude this final chapter by returning to my initial mantra, as summarised by Richard James Burgess (cited in Frith, Zagorski-Thomas 2012, p.95) that emphasises ‘fresh understandings’ of old methodologies and technologies. This exegesis has also contributed to my own ‘fresh understandings’ in the sense that I have engaged in reflection, outlined my methods, and placed my work in a scholarly context, which is something few producers naturally do. This process also underpins my intended contribution to new knowledge as outlined in this exegesis. The ‘understandings’ have been diverse. I approach making records, the industry, and collaboration differently because of this process. I also have a fresh understanding of myself as an artist. Making records is an emotional activity. Processes are based on feelings, not solely on technical conventions. While many of these technical processes have been described in detail in Chapter 2, the musical knowledge, in the form of emotional content expressed through this album can now only be accessed through the experience of listening. It is here that my albums’ principle forms of knowledge are best embodied.
Citations


Appendix:

Appendix 1: Examples of key influences

Harold Budd & Brian Eno ‘A Stream with Bright Fish’ from the album ‘The Pearl’:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qj_rkkFdW7M
Machinedrum’s ‘Infinite Us’ from the album ‘Vapour City’:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5BPgKB58Xs
Caribou’s ‘Back Home’ from the album ‘Our Love’:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7j6DyVcHRM
Simon and Garfunkel’s ‘Scarborough Fair’ from the album ‘Parsley, Sage, Rosemary and Thyme’:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BYQaD2CAi9A
Burial’s ‘Shell of Light’ from the album ‘Untrue’:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0mkLNYaCJns
Hans Zimmer’s ‘Where We’re Going’ from the ‘Interstellar Soundrack’:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q_7wNeA_Rrg
Bill Evans’ ‘Peace Piece’ from the album ‘Everybody Digs Bill Evans’:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nv2GvV34qlg
Joe Hisaishi’s ‘One Summers Day’ from the ‘Spirited Away Soundtrack’:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HaWD_YR0aCo
Vangelis ‘Antartic Echoes’ from the album ‘Antartica’:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Qbvs-Jd9YY
Tangerine Dream’s ‘Love on a Train’ from the album ‘Dream Sequence’:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qYjL4u-molc
Tenebrae’s ‘The Lamb’ from the album ‘Allegri Miserere’:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h-mSmEfLmZc
Appendix 2: Links to some of my existing work:

Shapeshifter's ‘In Colour’ from the album ‘Delta’:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C-Yx8VZyz1M
Shapeshifter's ‘Endless’ from the album ‘Delta’:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwDmP48xrAs
Shapeshifter's ‘The Ride’ from the album ‘Soulstice’:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DK6Lzu_f93k
Shapeshifter's ‘One’ from the album ‘Live with the Symphony’:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wQv98nuWRas
Pacific Heights’ ‘Lavenia’ from the self titled EP:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wYV9r0QfuDQ
Pacific Heights’ ‘The Sorcerer’ from the album ‘Frozen Fears’:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jM6OHELxlng
Pacific Heights’ ‘Peace feat. Joe Dukie’ from the album ‘In a Quiet Storm’:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GP7TFbUD5vY
Appendix 3: Other works

Drax Project: [https://www.facebook.com/DraxProject/](https://www.facebook.com/DraxProject/) (please find attached copy of their EP near final mix state) Credited with Song Writing, Producing, Recording, and Co-mixing this project.


Groeni: [https://soundcloud.com/groeni](https://soundcloud.com/groeni) Wellington based Electronic act that I currently manage.
Appendix 4: My relevant websites

Pacific Heights: www.pacificheights.co.nz
Shapeshifter: www.shapeshifter.co.nz
Appendix 5: Airborne Video

Airborne music video link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B9zyUll7-3k
PACIFIC HEIGHTS RELEASE NEW SINGLE AND VIDEO ‘AIRBORNE’, TAKEN FROM THE UPCOMING ALBUM ‘THE STILLNESS’

Warner Music New Zealand is proud to announce a new partnership with Pacific Heights, the solo project of Wellington-based songwriter and music producer Devin Abrams. Best known for the fifteen years he spent as a founding member in the New Zealand group Shapeshifter, Devin joins Warner Music to release the upcoming Pacific Heights’ album THE STILLNESS in 2016.

“I am extremely excited to be working with such an illustrious company as Warner Music, and to work with them to share the journey of my upcoming album”, says Devin Abrams. “I can’t wait to get this music out there!”

“Having been a fan of Devin’s work over the years I’m very pleased to finally be working with him on this very exciting new project, says Warner Music NZ General Manager Phil Howling. “This new record is yet another step in Devin’s
incredible musical journey, and Warner Music are very happy to be a part of that."

His first album in eight years, THE STILLNESS features guest appearances from a small but perfectly formed collection of New Zealand musicians including Louis Baker, Deanne Krieg, Shaan Singh (Drax Project) and Jen Turner. The result is a work that pays homage to his musical past while also giving Abrams the freedom to present his own vision on progressive electronic music.

'Airborne', the lead single from the album, looks at the themes of purgatory and the time spent in the waiting room between departing this life and moving onto the next. The song depicts purgatory as a dead, still and silent place, where the need to move on comes with a deep depression of lost love and lifelessness. The first chapter in a multi-part visual story that represents THE STILLNESS, the accompanying video reinforces the themes of the song with a haunting visual tale of lost love and memories. It also marks the onscreen debut of the track’s featured vocalist Deanne Krieg.

Watch the video for ‘Airborne’ here: https://youtu.be/B9zvUJJ7-3k
Purchase ‘Airborne’ here:

http://pacificheights.co.nz

For more information, please contact:
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Appendix 7: Organik Muzik Works Studio Photos.