

# Extended Project Qualification

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*“Produce a musical EP that is inspired by Electronic Music from the 1980s and updates it for the modern day.”*



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## Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Research Review.....</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1	How did electronic music start in the 1980s?.....	5
2.2	Notes on Journalistic Music Reviews:.....	6
2.3	Notes on Music Production.....	7
2.4	Research Sources Evaluation Table.....	8
2.4.1	Books.....	9
2.4.2	Websites.....	9
<b>3</b>	<b>Development and Analysis.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3.1</b>	<b>Personal Impressions of 1980s and modern artists:.....</b>	<b>11</b>
3.1.1	Electronic Artists from the 1980s.....	11
3.1.2	Electronic Artists from the Modern Day.....	12
<b>3.2</b>	<b>Inspiration for my EP.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>3.3</b>	<b>Personal Reviews of Albums and Songs.....</b>	<b>13</b>
3.3.1	'You Are Someone Else' by Fickle Friends.....	13
3.3.1.1	Review.....	13
3.3.1.2	Inspiration for my EP.....	14
3.3.2	'Rio' by Duran Duran.....	14
3.3.2.1	Review.....	14
3.3.2.2	Inspiration for my EP.....	16
3.3.3	'She's American' by The 1975.....	16
3.3.3.1	Review.....	16
3.3.3.2	Inspiration for my EP.....	17
3.3.4	My Review of 'Sensoria' by Cabaret Voltaire.....	17
3.3.4.1	Inspiration for my EP.....	17
<b>3.4</b>	<b>Overview of my EP.....</b>	<b>17</b>
3.4.1	My Equipment.....	17
3.4.2	The Cover.....	18
3.4.3	The Title.....	18
3.4.4	The Structure.....	18
3.4.5	The Tracks.....	18
3.4.5.1	State of Suspension.....	18
3.4.5.2	Chicago.....	19
3.4.5.3	Spark.....	19
3.4.5.4	Fascination with America.....	20
3.4.5.5	Lightning Bolt.....	20
3.4.5.6	Must be an Angel.....	20
<b>4</b>	<b>Conclusion and Evaluation.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>23</b>
6.1	Project Proposal Form.....	23
6.2	Activity Log.....	26

## Figures

Figure 1 Kraftwerk live 1981 .....	5
Figure 2 The Warehouse Club in Chicago .....	6
Figure 3 - New Order's album Power, Corruption and Lies .....	6
Figure 4 - M83's album HurryUp, We're Dreaming .....	7
Figure 5 Anthony Gonzalez Live with M83 .....	7
Figure 6 The Human League .....	11
Figure 7 Depeche Mode.....	11
Figure 8 The Colourist .....	12
Figure 9 Jack Antonoff live with Bleachers .....	12
Figure 10 Fickle Friends' Debut Album 'You are Someone Else' .....	13
Figure 11 Fickle Friends Live .....	13
Figure 12 Duran Duran's second album Rio.....	15
Figure 13 Duran Duran live .....	15
Figure 14 Matty Healy and Adam Hann live with The 1975 .....	16
Figure 15 The 1975's second album: I like it when you sleep for you are so Beautiful yet so unaware of it .....	16
Figure 16 Sensoria by Cabaret Voltaire.....	17
Figure 17 Cabaret Voltaire .....	17
Figure 18 My equipment.....	18
Figure 19 The cover of my EP.....	18

# 1 Introduction

Music has always been an interest of mine: that I developed into a passion when I went to secondary school. I see it as very important: creating art from sound enables people to express themselves in such an exciting and emotionally moving way. It allows me to make my mark upon the world, to convey who I am and how I work and create, when I am unable to do so through other means. As a result, I enjoy all aspects of music: listening, watching it live, writing about it, playing, producing, and composing. Therefore, when I started Sixth Form, I knew that I'd like nothing better than to carry forward the analytical and creative skills that I'd developed in Music GCSE. The EPQ was an obvious outlet for that, and I knew I'd want to produce an artefact, so I just had to decide upon what my topic was going to be.

I chose electronic music from the 1980s because I have always been interested in music of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I studied it in my Year Nine project and learnt that it was a defining decade in Pop Music, particularly due to the development of synthesizers and music technology. This capitalised on the popularity of 70s Disco and propelled new and unconventional styles into the mainstream.

This already seemed like reason enough to use the decade as inspiration for production. However, my personal music taste was also important. I find myself listening to modern, pop artists who have taken inspiration from the 1980s, using the distinctive style of guitars and synths, and updating it for the modern day. I was interested to examine the roots of the music I like to listen to.

Moreover, I thought that I could integrate, into the project, my interest in language and creative writing. I did this by studying journalistic reviews of 80s music, and writing my own reviews. In this way, I gained lots of inspiration for the music that I would create.

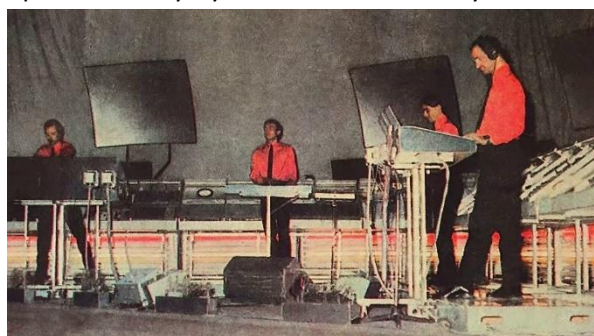
The result was a six track EP, with some of the tracks having close links to the music I have studied, and others being my own interpretations. The composition of these pieces reflects my extensive collection of research and writing, within which I have tried to convey my personal, compositional insights, and observations on how electronic music developed throughout the 1980s.

There have certainly been many challenges to overcome with all aspects of my EPQ: balancing my time management with other schoolwork, thinking of the best way in which I could study electronic music in the 1980s, and dealing with issues within the music production process whilst attempting to use my music programs to their full capacity. However, I am extremely pleased with the result of my project, and I can confidently say that music is still one of my greatest passions. I hope that the project is a great representation of that.

## 2 Research Review

### 2.1 How did electronic music start in the 1980s?

The Electronic styles of the 1980s were preceded by the experimental music of the 1970s. The German electronic group 'Kraftwerk' seemed to exemplify the cultural and musical changes that occurred towards the end of the decade. They were essentially part of the 'Krautrock' generation. This style of music revived German methods of innovation, abhorring the American rock music that had flooded into West Germany and creating a very 'German' identity, but reflecting the subjugation imposed upon Germany by the Berlin Wall. They created music with a very no-nonsense, industrialised tone,



*Figure 1 Kraftwerk live 1981*

incorporating buzzing digital synths, metallic basses, otherworldly sound-effects, and shuddering drums.

In a study of modern electronic music, it is clear that Kraftwerk are central to its development. They served as inspiration for the American electronic duo, 'Suicide'. Following the economic depression of the 1970s in the US, there was a negatively nihilistic atmosphere in Popular culture, seen in punk music, experimental jazz, and minimalistic art. Suicide stripped the

traditional band set up down to vocals and synthesizers, their industrialised music inspired by German artists like Kraftwerk. Suicide's revolutionary methods served as the blueprint for other experimentalists like the new synth-duo 'Yello', whose dreamy, cinematic electronic music in return inspired 'Suicide' during the 1980s.

The experimentalism of Kraftwerk provided scope for evolutions in Punk Music, which had been so popular throughout the 70s. New technology like samplers, sequencers, and synthesizers were becoming available. Synthesizers seemed to reverse the masculinity of guitars, and looked to the future, whereas punk looked to the past. 'Gary Numan' picked up on this idea. He adopted an ethereal, electronic style of rock music, and performed in a robotic on-stage persona, which contrasted with his makeup and flamboyant dress. Numan was mocking the apparent 'depth' of Punk music, through performing like a punk artist, but making emotionless, electronic music, which emanated paranoia and futurist ideas. 'Joy Division' took after Gary Numan and as a post-punk band, moved away from punk music, and questioned themselves in their song writing, rather than questioning society. Their music was electronic, icy, clattering, spiritual, ambient, and made with an array of recording techniques like echo, delay, reverb, and isolating snare drums.

Gary Numan and Joy Division could both be called 'New Wave Artists.' This is a broad term, linked to the post-punk movement in the UK. New Wave was explicitly non-political and introspective; purposefully not a threat to the status quo, and it seemed to be evolving into a movement, in the US as well as the UK. 'Blondie' had their beginnings as a punk band but leaned towards electronics when they took influence from Disco. Other New Wave bands were 'Talking Heads', 'The Cars', 'The Modern Lovers, and 'The Go-Gos.' It was the electronic leanings of New Wave that eventually moved Pop Music back to a rock direction and gave rise to 80s arena rock.

Perhaps one of the most important movements in 1980s electronic music was the 'New Romantic' movement. Artists like David Bowie had portrayed androgynous, glitzy imagery throughout the 1970s, and Gary Numan and Joy Division were inspired by this. Therefore, the New Romantic movement essentially developed from the New-Wave and Post Punk movements in the UK and the US, and the

experimental electronic scenes of Europe. It was made up of glamorously dressed bands, with charismatic deep-voiced frontmen, who sang lyrics which sounded very political but were light-hearted, over the top of bouncy electronic music. Some bands like ABC were orchestral, and leaned towards Disco music, whilst Depeche Mode used metallic, industrialised sounds of metal detritus, to creating rhythms over-layered with bright synths. New Order, reformed from Joy Division's line-up, was a band who took after the sounds of the USA, creating electro-funk synth-pop with dark basslines and solemn vocals.

In the US, electronic music seemed to be evolving differently. Disco seemed to be losing its appeal, and the 'club scene' was struggling. However, in the black and gay scenes of Chicago, DJs like Frankie Knuckles and Ron Hardy were mixing Disco, soul, and funk records over each other. They boosted the rhythm section with drum machines extended the instrumental breaks and intros. They were



Figure 2 The Warehouse Club in Chicago

essentially creating a new style of music. This style eventually became known as 'House Music', named after Frankie Knuckles' club 'The Warehouse'.

Perhaps the other most important style of electronic music in the US clubs was techno music. Techno could be traced back to Detroit, and the 'Belleville Three', made up of three musicians and high school friends, Juan Atkins, Derrick May, and Kevin Sanderson. They were inspired by the House Music from Chicago, but

also by the electronics of Kraftwerk. They began DJing and experimenting forming the minimalist, futuristic style of 'Techno'. The music became linked with the social apathy and economic struggles of Detroit; it was very dark, and not necessarily pleasant to listen to. However, it was meant to be played in a club, and induce dancers into a trance-like state. House and Techno Music were the primary influences for the rave music that appeared in the 1990s, and modern dance music that we hear today.

## 2.2 Notes on Journalistic Music Reviews:

Through my research on the internet and in books, I discovered who the most popular electronic



Figure 3 - New Order's album *Power, Corruption and Lies*

artists were in the 1980s and listened to their music. I decided to take inspiration from the reviews of music journalists, in music publications. In examining the language they used, and their depictions of the musical features, I gained a clearer picture, of how I could produce '80s inspired music'.

In the magazine 'The Quietus' a journalist named Ned Raggett reviewed 'New Order's' second studio album '*Power, Corruption, and Lies*' (1983). The vocabulary he uses to describe it is particularly interesting, he portrays the first part of the album as "moody", "threatening", and "tense". This is noted to be the case in songs like "We all Stand", and "Ultraviolence", where there are "relentless pulses," and "stabbing drums." This served to help

me in producing my EP, as I thought in understanding this, I could use minor keys and fast tempos to create tracks that were "threatening", and "tense." This was seen in tracks like 'Chicago' and 'Buzz'.

He also notes how keyboardist Gillian Gilbert creates an “instrumental voice” through her orchestration of the keyboards. Considering my own lack of singing ability, I thought I could use this method to create melodies, somewhat like singing, through synthesizers. This was evident in the lead synthesizer and guitar in the song ‘Must be an Angel.’

Ragget also perceives a sense of futurism and musical progression in this album, noting how it moves from “stark European futurism” to “English Romanticism”. The album, in his view, is a succinct product of its time, which shows how English New Romantic Synthpop developed from the work of experimentalists like Kraftwerk and Gary Numan. Electronic music in the US was a product of this environment in Europe. I wanted to represent this idea in my EP, to create several tracks that portrayed this cultural progression in electronic music.

Critic Ian Cohen wrote a review of ‘M83’s’ sixth studio album ‘Hurry up We’re Dreaming’ (2011). He



Figure 4 - M83's album *HurryUp, We're Dreaming*

notes the rich musical textures of the album; that it is “ambitious” and “decadent”, whilst the frontman of M83, Anthony Gonzalez, has taken inspiration from bands like Depeche Mode, to ingrain his vocals with “showmanship”, and many tracks are “sumptuously arranged”. This idea of musical extravagance and confident production has helped me in creating my EP, in that I attempted to use rich textures, build-ups, and swelling dynamics in order to emulate the ‘decadent’ nature of ‘Hurry Up We’re Dreaming.’

Cohen also notes ‘Hurry Up We’re Dreaming’ is intended to be an ‘immersive universe’, in which the shorter, instrumental interlude tracks serve to be just as important as the traditionally structured tracks. Songs like ‘Where the Boats Go’, ‘Reunion’, and ‘My Tears are becoming a Sea’

served as inspiration for the track ‘Lightning Bolt’ on my EP. Cohen seems to admire how M83 constructed this album with minute intricacies in mind, like using percussion as “explosives rather than mere elements of timekeeping.” In this I aimed to create unusual drum fills in my EP, making them as distinctive as the melody, and notable moments in the music that will draw people’s attention.

## 2.3 Notes on Music Production

When I started my EPQ, I already had some experience in teaching myself music production, arrangement, and programming. However, I felt that I needed to do some specific research into the best methods and techniques to use when producing. I also was unfamiliar with the processes of



Figure 5 Anthony Gonzalez Live with M83

mixing and mastering, and how to make songs sound ‘full’, and ‘professional’.

One of the most important aspects of production I learnt about in my research was compression. This is an important technique that has been used for a long time in popular music. The function of compression is to ‘level out the dynamic range’ of certain instruments, so the mix sounds louder, fuller, and warmer, and the audio is less harsh. I found out that a producer can use an interesting method called the ‘punch-bag’ analogy: when adjusting compression, they treat it as if they are hitting a punch bag. The ‘threshold’ is how far the punch bag is from them, the ‘ratio’ is how dense or tough

the punch bag is, and the 'gain reduction' is the power behind the punch. Through competent compression, a producer can make an instrument of a more consistent volume, which enables them to turn up the overall level without there being negative effects. The punch-bag analogy proved to be very helpful when I was producing the EP, I used compression mainly in the songs 'Chicago' and 'Must be an Angel'; so that I could change which instruments were the most prominent in the song.

There were also many compositional techniques that I discovered within my research. I found out that producers of repetitive, electronic music 'alter the energy' of their music, through modifying the pitch and the frequency of instruments. This method is known as 'contour', and I used it in 'Chicago', 'Spark', and 'Lighting Bolt'. One 'contour' technique is removing frequencies from the mix, in order to build anticipation. I used this in 'Spark', removing the treble frequencies from the first sixteen counts of the track, to create suspense leading up to the breakdown. I used various effects, automation, and panning to create 'Spark'.

Many of my research sources emphasised sticking to a strict 'multi track recording' plan, when producing a track. There are various stages which a producer must go through: such as arrangement of metronomes, drums, harmonies, and melody, selecting takes of instruments, noise reduction, time editing, and pitch editing. For 'Chicago' I followed these strict guidelines when piecing together these three sections of my track.

I also learnt from my research sources, how to reduce the gain of instruments so that they don't get too loud, clip, and cause distortion. A primary way to do this is to carry out 'gain staging': before I started production, I had to adjust the gain on every instrument, so that the volume meant I could have a conversation with a person beside me, whilst listening to my track through headphones. I also learnt that I could reduce distortion and create a smoother sound, by changing the EQ (EQ being the volume of particular frequencies) of certain instruments. This softens any harsh, bass heavy frequencies. It is important to position each instrument in a certain place on the EQ spectrum, so that they do not clash and conflict with each other.

My research on music genres has led me to research different styles of electronic music. Two of these styles originated in the 1980s 'House Music' and 'Techno Music'. Since these are musical styles which are primarily based upon music technology, I researched the typical features that can be attributed to them.

House Music generally has a 4/4-time signature, and the key will vary depending upon the style. A lot of classic house songs were composed in A minor, so that they could be compatible for mixing in DJ sets. There will be a four-to-the-floor rhythm in house music, with hi hats and claps on the second and fourth beats of the kick. The drums are usually tightly compressed and controlled, and the hi-hats will be delayed. The centrepiece of the music will likely be the bass, played on a pentatonic scale. Along with this, there will be pianos playing triad chords, saw synths, and strings. The primary song on my EP that was influenced by House Music was 'Chicago', in which I used all of the aforementioned methods.

Techno, on the other hand, is based more upon percussion. Often, Techno was produced with multiple sequencers and drum machines running simultaneously, giving the music its 'raw feel'. The snare and clap have lots of reverb. The drum rhythms are syncopated, with call-and-response patterns, whilst many effects are automated through the drums. The bass often stays simple, with a fast decay to make it seem 'bouncy' and may be slightly distorted. Such a bass line is heard on my song 'Chicago'. On most of the EP, it feels that all the instruments are running simultaneously: it is a typical feature of electronic music where most instrumental patterns are quite repetitive.

## 2.4 Research Sources Evaluation Table

I used both books and websites to carry out my research. These sources are shown in the tables below.



## 2.4.1 Books

<p><i>1980s Pop</i></p> <p>Bob Brunning</p>	<p>Brunning obviously wrote this book for a younger readership, for it offers a quick, broad, and easy to understand view of Pop Music in the 1980s, so I can gain a feel for how artists were seen by their listeners.</p> <p>The book only relies upon artists however, and does not subdivide into albums, songs, or genres, so is therefore not particularly comprehensive.</p>
<p><i>Mars by 1980</i></p> <p>David Stubbs</p>	<p>A prestigious Music journalist, who has interviewed and contacted many important Western artists, wrote the book. He is therefore likely to be the voice of authority about electronic music; I can probably trust his judgement.</p> <p>However, the book is more of a narrative account of the history of electronic music. It does not go into so much detail on the features of the music, but rather the history and context of it all, so the book may be lacking insight into how to create the music, which is what is helpful to me.</p>
<p><i>Dance Music Manual</i></p> <p>Rick Snoman</p>	<p>An acclaimed Music Producer, who has worked with many prestigious artists, wrote the book. He of course, would completely understand the techniques, and methods required for producing electronic music.</p> <p>The book also gives me a good insight into the technical aspect of electronic music, and how to produce something which sounds good, as well as enough history for the music genres.</p> <p>The book only focuses upon certain genres however, ones which are more 'club based' such as House music, and Techno Music, rather than genres more orientated towards the 'Pop sphere' which is what I am interested in.</p>
<p><i>Music</i></p> <p>Paul de Noyer</p>	<p>This book was written with contributions by multiple authors, suggesting that a lot of work was put into gathering the information from various sources, sources that are likely of authority.</p> <p>Therefore, the information that the book conveys is likely to be reliable. However, the book was likely written for a general readership, and not for people who produce Music. Therefore, it is more likely to give me information on the history of Music, rather than the composition of it.</p>
<p><i>Wired For Sound</i></p> <p>Tom Bromley</p>	<p>A Music Journalist writes this book, specifically focusing on the musical culture of the 1980s, so it is very useful for gaining a feel into the atmosphere, and trends of the decade.</p> <p>However, the book is written strictly from the writer's point of view, recounting the experiences that he had, and the music that he listened to. Therefore, the book is unlikely to focus upon the specific musical structure of 1980s Music.</p>

## 2.4.2 Websites

<p>Pitchfork.com</p>	<p>Pitchfork is an online American Music Magazine, which has been running since 1995, and it covers a variety of music, from Indie, to Popular, so the 158 different authors are likely to be experienced in writing about multiple genres.</p> <p>Therefore, the website is very helpful in my research.</p>
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The Quietus.com	<p>The Quietus is an online British Music Magazine, and is focused on music, film, and the arts. It is not purely a music-based magazine like Pitchfork, so some of the writers may be inexperienced in writing about music.</p> <p>However, it is perhaps better regarded, and not as criticised for its accuracy as Pitchfork is, for many other news outlets around the world have cited the Quietus.</p>
The Lala.com	<p>TheLala.com is a website aimed towards young adult women. The aim is to a bright and unique website, which is unlike most other Media outlets. Therefore, they would have decided to create an article which was unusual, and unconventional, and would have found artists which are maybe more obscure, for people reading to be interested.</p> <p>Therefore, I think the website is reliable in terms of finding unconventional and unusual artists, who produce 80s inspired music, but maybe does not look at more obvious, and famous artists. The article is also purely focused upon synth-pop, and not any other form of electronic music, so is limited in that sense.</p>

## 3 Development and Analysis

This section sets out the development of my own perceptions and observations on the artists that I had researched. It describes their use of musical conventions, and how some of these conventions would work best for the production of the EP.

It also contains my reviews of specific albums and songs in a journalistic style, which provided me with significant inspiration to produce different styles of tracks, and structure the EP in the most suitable way.

### 3.1 Personal Impressions of 1980s and modern artists:

#### 3.1.1 Electronic Artists from the 1980s

One of the primary bands which I discovered was the group New Order. Their music is very danceable and is often written in a minor key. They used electronic and acoustic textures to compose music with a dark, seductive tone. This was emphasised through their instrumentation: they use synth basses which are low and bubbly and high-pitched melodic patterns. The electric guitars are minimal, and light toned, but the bass guitar is usually very evident. They use more of a treble EQ on the bass, to make it very ominous whilst playing complex lines. The drum rhythms are very heavy and pulsing, layered with unconventional electronic percussion. However, there is mostly a focus upon the lead vocals, which are usually surrounded with vocal samples manipulated with chorus-like effects.

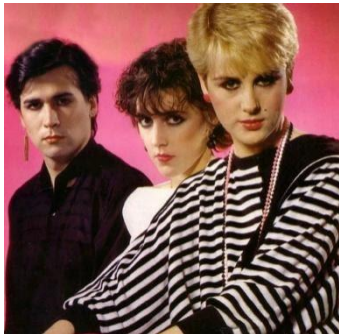


Figure 6 The Human League

The music of The Human League has similarities to that of New Order, but it is less funky and danceable, and more grandiose and dramatic. They use glittery trance-saw-synths, which often emulate the vocals, alongside sub-basses, heavy guitars and unconventional percussion, often writing in major keys, to emphasise their extravagant, jubilant sound. Like New Order, they make frequent use of the bass guitar, to make their music fun and rhythmical. However, there are often chords played on the electric guitar, unlike New Order who preferred to pick guitars, composing melodies. The vocals are very distinctive, the multiple singers using harmony. However, The Human League seems to focus more upon instrumentation, rather than New Order who centre their songs on vocals

Depeche Mode is a band who could easily be compared to the Human League. Similarly, to the latter, their early 80s music is very bouncy and joyful, and they use bright saw synths with a restrained reverb effect on them. The synth patterns are bright, glittery, continuously repeated, and polyphonically layered, sometimes having an eastern tone to them. The guitars have the minimalism, which is seen in New Orders music, but the drums are simpler, composed of simple bass drum and snare rhythms. Yet, similarly to The Human League, they introduce a definite focus on synthesizers.



Figure 7 Depeche Mode

However, the band Eurhythmics is not so focused upon synthesizers. Rather, their music is primarily composed of obtrusive vocals, and acoustic instruments like pianos, harps, and guitars. When they do use

synthesizers, they are very analogue sounding. Some are high pitched and distorted, but are layered with underlying, synth-bass-textures.

### 3.1.2 Electronic Artists from the Modern Day

I examined my own listening habits, and researched album reviews on the internet, to discover which artists from the modern day take inspiration from the 1980s.

A band that I found interesting was The Colourist. Through listening to their EP 'Will you wait for me',



Figure 8 The Colourist

I saw that they take inspiration from synth-pop bands like Depeche Mode, and The Human League. Their major keyed music has the same positive tone, and it is usually fast, with bouncy drum rhythms made up of snares, hi-hats, and bass drums. They use a combination of metallic, synthesizer basses, and anticipatory bass guitars to fill the low-EQ of their songs. However, the melodies are most prominent in their music. There is a recognisable melodic hook, which alternately is played on a synthesizer and a guitar, interacting in a 'call-and-response' structure. A synth-pad usually plays extended chords in the background, and there is sometimes unconventional, Eastern instrumentation. The vocals are also very prominent: the band uses layered harmonies of male and female vocals. This draws the listener's attention and makes the music sound dramatic.

Jack Antonoff of the project 'Bleachers' also layers their vocals up in complex harmonies and enhances them with reverberation. His first album 'Strange Desire' is more of a traditional, 80s-rock album: he combines heavy guitars with light toned synthesizers, synth pads, strings, strutting, suspenseful pianos rhythms, and rocketing drums.



Figure 9 Jack Antonoff live with Bleachers

His second album 'Gone Now' retained his 80s influences, but took on a more experimental stance, using unconventional, complex percussion, saxophones, brass stabs, bells, steady bass guitar, and sparse guitar and synthesizers. To create a retro-1980s, cinematic tone in his music, Antonoff often uses vocal samples, and warped voice-synths.

## 3.2 Inspiration for my EP

From my personal impressions of 1980s and modern artists, the music of New Order and their use of bass guitar was a primary inspiration for the bass guitar in 'Chicago'. In 'Must be an Angel' I was attempting to emulate the grandiose, and dramatic synths heard in The Human League's music, whilst the synth patterns, and simple drums in 'Spark' are inspired by Depeche Mode. 'Must be an Angel's' use of more acoustic instruments, like harps, was an emulation of Eurhythmics' music.

The Colourist proved to be an important inspiration for my EP, in that their use of call and response melodies between synths and guitars was emulated in 'Must be an Angel', whilst Jack Antonoff's use of vocal samples, and suspenseful piano rhythms was an influence on my music: on the pianos in 'Chicago' and 'Must be an Angel', and in the vocal samples in 'State of Suspension', 'Fascination with America', and 'Lighting Bolt'.

## 3.3 Personal Reviews of Albums and Songs

### 3.3.1 'You Are Someone Else' by Fickle Friends

Fickle Friends have been described in many media outlets as a good example of an Indie synthpop band with strong 80s influences. The glitzy synths and catchy melodies make it extremely pleasurable to listen to, evoking the glittery Pop music of Depeche Mode and The Human League.

#### 3.3.1.1 Review

The first two tracks, 'Wake Me Up' and 'Glue' are both at fast, danceable tempos, layered with bouncy, high-pitched synths. In 'Wake Me Up,' the band gives weight to the pulsing drum rhythm with a beautifully warm, fuzzy synth bass, and Natassja Shiner's clear, ringing vocals. Following this, 'Glue' continues the fun, light-hearted tone, but replaces the heavy synths of 'Wake Me up,' with more guitars. The electric guitar and guitar interact in a funky staccato rhythm. I admired the use of instrumental textures, and the refined synthesizers in these two songs. They served as great inspiration for my EP.



Figure 10 Fickle Friends' Debut Album 'You are Someone Else'

Throughout the entire album, I was very impressed at the bass guitar work, and attempted to incorporate distinctive basslines into my EP. The song 'Swim' has a bass line perfectly aligned with the drums. The synths roar in the chorus, and the guitarist, Chris Hall, composes a simple, yet extremely catchy guitar riff, which makes 'Swim' one of the most listenable tracks on the album. The riff served as inspiration for the guitar in my song 'Must be an Angel.' I also really admired the backing vocals in this song: when Nattasja sings the line 'When I was nine and you were ten,' there are male vocals in the background, perhaps those of keyboardist Jack Wilson. Those sorts of ear catching moments served as great inspiration for my own music.

Following Swim, there is 'Bite' in which the drums come to the forefront, Drummer Sam Morris playing an interesting tribal rhythm, amplified with a shuddering bassline, and some fun call and response



Figure 11 Fickle Friends Live

interaction between the vocals and the metallic synths. The vocals themselves seem slightly underwhelming though, compared to what we have previously seen from Nattasja. As a result, the best part of the song turns out to be the instrumental section at the end.

'Hard to Be Myself' appears to be more of return to form: the rhythmic guitar is layered with lovely effects and smooth chopped up vocal samples, bouncy metallic synthesizers interacting with Nattasja's quirky and well-sung vocals, whilst the synth chords are automated through multiple effects, leading up to a gorgeous chorus. On par with 'Hard to be myself' is 'Say no More', which starts with a beautiful introduction, layering the vocals with glittery synthesizers and a smooth bassline. Eventually the song reaches a slick pre-chorus and chorus, before reaching an explosive guitar solo. Along with the vocals, the track is joyful and summery; an admirable piece of synthpop.

In the second half of the album, the urge to skip to the next song grows. For example, 'Heartbroken' sounds like a rehash of 'Hard to be myself', and doesn't have anything particularly new to recommend it, apart from Nattasja alternating to a lower vocal register. 'Brooklyn,' is also slightly too comparable to 'Swim'. Though it is a fun song, the synths have not been switched up much from the rest of the album: the guitar riff is the only particularly notable feature of the song.

When the listener passes the halfway mark, they will hope for some respite from the relentless energy that the album has had so far, and that seems to come at the serene 'In My Head.' However, it becomes obvious that the band are more comfortable composing at a breakneck pace, for 'In My Head' is too minimalistic to be that interesting. Following the song's sparse two minutes, there are the heaviest tracks on the album: 'Midnight,' and 'Rotation'. Synth-bass lines shudder along in these songs, whilst the drums really detonate in Midnight. Unusual effects are placed over the synths and guitars, particularly evident in Rotation, where Nattasja bellows, "You got me on a heavy rotation," and "Why are people so defensive?" The songs are catchy, but you are certainly left desiring something lower- key, that departs from the band's regular formula.

The band tries to offer this in the chilled-out tracks 'Paris,' and 'She,'. However, the two songs sound slightly too similar, and sometimes lack the power which they could have. I imagine 'She' could do with some hard and bright synth chords, to compliment the assertive vocal performance, and the juddering synth bass, (which we have heard multiple times before.). However, amongst the slightly bloated second half of the album, Fickle Friends place the magical 'Hello Hello' in which Nattasja's elfin vocals slide over sunny lead synths, buzzy synth basses, and rolling drum fills. The album concludes however, with the relatively unimpressive 'Useless' which sounds inexorably similar to 'She' 'Paris,' and 'Rotation' with dull synth-work, and a repetitive rhythm, the song only being saved by the distorted guitar riff, and closing out the album on a fairly abrupt and hasty note.

'You Are Someone Else' is certainly an excellent 80s inspired album. The interweaving of bright synthesizers, with funk and disco inspired rhythms evokes the synthpop that was heard in the 80s. However, the album runs to sixteen tracks, and during the second half, begins to seem overstuffed with energy. Fickle Friends perhaps should have restrained their musical exploration and constructed their album with maybe more care. If that had been the case, 'You Are Someone Else' would have been practically perfect.

### **3.3.1.2 Inspiration for my EP**

My primary influences from 'You are Someone Else' come from the songs 'Swim', 'Hard to be Myself', and 'Rotation'. From 'Swim', I derived inspiration from the guitar riff for the song 'Must be an Angel', from 'Hard to be Myself', I emulated the hard, bright synths for the song 'Fascination with America', and from 'Rotation', I emulated the shuddering synth bass for the song 'Chicago'.

## **3.3.2 'Rio' by Duran Duran**

### **3.3.2.1 Review**

There is a relentless energy in Duran Duran's second studio album 'Rio': the harsh power of 70s punk propelling it forward into the future of New Romantic Synth-pop. The result is a train-ride of skilled musicianship which pummels you with decadent instrumentation.



Figure 12 Duran Duran's second album Rio

The album opens with 'Rio', the glitzy Pop earworm which brought Duran Duran into the mainstream with its video. Bassist John Taylor immediately makes his presence known, his frantic bass line underlying bright, fluttering synths. The guitar is minimalistic, but very effective creating an extravagant over-the-top feel to the music, with its slides and long-drawn out notes. The vocals reflect this as well, Simon Le Bon singing in a crazed way. His enthusiasm is very enthralling, especially when he is surrounded by backing vocals in the chorus. The saxophone is also a great addition, for it smoothly imitates the guitar tones. Rio is a feisty introduction to a fun album. The drums could have been steadier, and had more of a pulse to them, for the song is at its most catchy when the bass drum kicks in.

This is soon easy to forget for as 'My Own Way' kicks in the drums are back on form, a bass drum being layered with intricate hi-hat work, creating suspense to the song. The skilled bass work continues in an ascending line whilst a synth pad, stacked with effects, drones on in the background. 'My Own Way' is a darker, sultrier alternative to 'Rio', and this shows in the pulsing instrumental break, whilst the guitars shudder and whirl contrasting to the grandiose riffs of 'Rio.' The two songs do sound slightly similar, but it is forgivable, as their style is so enjoyable.



Figure 13 Duran Duran live

'New Religion' is dark track, and harkens to 'Lonely in your Nightmare' and 'My Own Way.' It begins with an almost otherworldly, alien-like synth pad, before the bass and guitar roll in. 'New Religion' likely has the best bassline on the album, which pulses along, whilst the vocals are at their most dramatic and crazed. It becomes obvious that the bass guitar and the vocals are the most important parts of Duran Duran's sound, but the guitar isn't half bad on this song either. It has a fantastic flanger effect on it and plays these mysterious fills which really add to the darker feel of this song. The synths

aren't as original, sounding similar to 'My Own Way' and 'Hold Back the rain' but 'New Religion' is still a fantastically solid track, as the band begin to create elaborate, vocal harmonies, securing 'New Religion's' place, as one of the standout tracks on Rio.

'Save a prayer' is a mysterious, suitable preface to the unearthly distorted nature of 'The Chauffeur' a dramatic left turn from the relentless optimism that we have heard from the album so far. The pulsing synth bass, the fluttering synths, and the stuttering drum machine clap-rhythm, all give the song a unique rhythmical texture. I thought that it had the stylings of trap music. The Chauffeur is a suitably mysterious, and tension-filled end to an energetic and optimistic album, a good choice from Duran Duran, to dramatically subvert the listeners pre-held expectations.

As The Chauffeur fades out, the listener is left dazzled by the album 'Rio'. It is a technically brilliant pop album, and you can hear the sound of a band willing to try new things: looking to both the past and the future. 'Rio' works better as an album, for you can sometimes hear tedious similarities in its 9 tracks. However, you can forgive this, as throughout the album, the band takes you on a rollercoaster ride of musical energy, pushing you in one direction, before at the very last moment taking you in another.

### 3.3.2.2 Inspiration for my EP

The hi-hats and saxophone in 'Rio', were emulated in the song 'Chicago', whilst the synths in 'Save a Prayer' inspired those in 'Fascination with America'. The general conciseness, and skilful construction of the album was general inspiration for my EP.

### 3.3.3 'She's American' by The 1975

The 1975 intended their first album to evoke a soundtrack to a 1980s film. These influences were even more evident on their second album 'I Like it When You Sleep for you are so Beautiful yet so Unaware of it', from which I chose to review this track 'She's American', as it reminded me of the music of Duran Duran.

#### 3.3.3.1 Review

The 1975 placed their track 'She's American' at the fifth slot on their second studio album. The song was not released as a single, so was and still is a surprise to listeners, as they encounter it. As the subdued, moody electronics of 'Change of Heart' fade out, 'She's American' rockets in with an explosive drum fill, before the guitars, and synths kick in. It is an exciting song, that reaches restrained lows and joyful highs.



Figure 14 Matty Healy and Adam Hann live with The 1975

The drums continue to stand out through this track. They play complex fills, and the snare has an unusual 'bathroom-reverb' placed in it, which gives the drums extra power. The drums are given most of their weight however, by the fantastic, pulsing bass line. In the chorus it is layered with this bubbly, squelch effect, which softens the blow of the jarring snare drums. The bass plays these lovely syncopated descending bass fills as the verses reach the peak of their enthusiasm., creating a floating tone to the song. It is obviously a vital instrument to this song, as I have seen in many 80s style' songs.

In the pre-chorus, the band weave high pitched synths with the bass, emphasising the energetic rhythms. They layer the higher end instruments with a glitzy synth pad, highlighting the happy, floaty tone in the choruses. However, this pad is repetitive, as is the problem with a lot of the instrumentation and could have been automated through effects to switch the song up.



Figure 15 The 1975's second album: *I like it when you sleep for you are so Beautiful yet so unaware of it*

The electric guitars are extremely well placed in this song. They have a retro, metallic tone to them. They play lively riffs which layer perfectly over the synths, and don't hog the spotlight. The guitar breaks in the verses are irresistibly danceable, whilst synth-bells ricochet throughout the song, complimenting the light tone. The vocal performance certainly isn't bad, but sometimes it sounds too harsh for such a fun, bouncy song. However, I love the saxophone melody at the end of the song. It enters halfway through the last chorus, not drawing too much attention to itself, but bolstering Matt Healy's vocals, evoking 80s-sax such as I've seen in Duran Duran's music. The lyrics in this song are some of The 1975's best, evoking typical American stereotypes, and the deceptive allure of an American girl. I imagine this song as written by an 80s New Romantic band, as it sounds like it is extremely deep and psycho-social, when it really isn't.



### 3.3.3.2 Inspiration for my EP

In the track 'Lighting Bolt' the lead synth melody is inspired by the synthesizer which leads this song, and the bass guitar inspired the bass rhythm in 'Must be an Angel'. The use of saxophone in this song, was a contributor to my use of saxophone in 'Chicago', and 'Spark'. This track served as a primary inspiration for the track that preceded 'Lightning Bolt' called Ocean, until I discarded it.

### 3.3.4 My Review of 'Sensoria' by Cabaret Voltaire

'Sensoria' was one of the most successful tracks off Cabaret Voltaire's sixth album. It has roots in their industrial, synth-punk sound, but is also an evolution into a lighter, synth-pop direction.

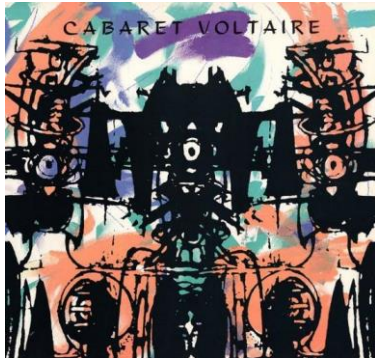


Figure 16 Sensoria by Cabaret Voltaire

It evokes 'The Chauffeur' by Duran Duran, as it begins with clattering clap polyrhythms, punctuated by a shuddering synth bass. The resulting rhythm section is heavily imbued with anticipation and tension. Along with it, the band uses a minimalistic guitar, and sharp synths, signalling the approach of the strange, breathy vocals. Both aspects slightly let the song down. The music might have been better served if the vocals were more confident, and the guitar brighter and harsher. As you listen, you also wonder if the textures would benefit from being less minimalistic.

However, towards the second verse, the music becomes a lot more striking. Synth basses and mysterious vocal samples begin to bubble up across the trembling rhythm. These interesting melodies



Figure 17 Cabaret Voltaire

are aided by the skilful use of panning. Then, at the end of the second verse, the music launches into a suspenseful instrumental break, with a synth pad expanding in the background. Then there is the best section in the song, where a metallic synth plays an ascending melody, preceding a frantic, tribal drum rhythm. This precedes some rhythmic choir vocals, whilst the lead vocals sing 'ah' in the background, forming a fantastic groove. After this, the song reverts to its old melody, and the claps and snares do become excessive.

The song can be monotonous, but I can tell that Cabaret voltaire intended to create a dark, seductive, club track, which could be constantly danced to. No doubt they were successful in doing this.

#### 3.3.4.1 Inspiration for my EP

Cabaret Voltaire's whole style of warped vocal samples, and dark, aggressive synthesizers was a primary inspiration for the track 'State of Suspension', and the aggressive synths of 'Fascination with America'. Their use of panning influenced 'Spark', and the clap polyrhythms and choir vocals influenced the central section in 'Chicago'.

## 3.4 Overview of my EP

### 3.4.1 My Equipment

For the EP, I used my Yamaha bass guitar on the tracks 'Chicago' and 'Fascination with America': my guitar playing is layered with delay on the former; it sounds unlike a typical bass guitar pattern on that track.

Most of the songs were composed through means of the software Ableton Live 9 Lite, but 'Must be an Angel' was totally composed in Logic Pro 9. My Novation Ultranova Synthesizer was important for



Figure 18 My equipment

the creation of most of the tracks, featuring heavily on 'State of Suspension', 'Fascination with America'.

I also used a Yamaha Clavinova, through which I was able to play the grand piano for 'Chicago', and the saxophone for 'Chicago' and 'Spark'.

### 3.4.2 The Cover

I created the cover for the EP with a variety of elements in mind: primarily it is made up of bold,

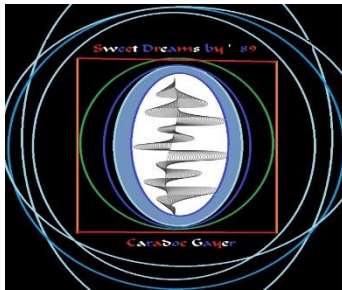


Figure 19 The cover of my EP

powerful looking fonts, and bright, obtrusively coloured lines and letters, which is meant to evoke the extravagance of 1980s album art. The red, white, and blue on the title on the front is a reference to the UK, whilst the sound waves evoke electronic music. The sound wave on the back cover, however, is somewhat of a reference to the album art for 'Unknown Pleasures' by Joy Division, whereas the front cover alludes to the art for 'Blue Monday' by New Order. In this way, the album art shows how 70s Post-Punk progressed into the sound of electronic 80s music.

### 3.4.3 The Title

The EP is called '*Sweet Dreams by '89*'. This is, artistically, a nice-sounding title for a collection of music. It is primarily derived from the eurythmics song 'Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This)'. I also envisioned that music is like 'dreams'; and in my EPQ I have studied how music had changed by the end of the 1980s. The title also implies 'dreams for the future', and how electronic music has progressed from then to now: an important aspect of my research. Finally, the title is also inspired by a book I used for my research 'Mars by 1980.'

### 3.4.4 The Structure

I structured the EP to convey tonal and musical progression, which is what I noticed when listening to albums. It starts out somewhat darker, experimental, and club driven. This reflects the preliminary stages of electronic music: in US clubs and experimental scenes in Europe. Later, the music has more of a modern influence, with brighter synthesizers, major keys, and more complex textures.

### 3.4.5 The Tracks

#### 3.4.5.1 State of Suspension

'State of Suspension' is a short, intro track. Many albums I've listened to use these sorts of tracks. I was inspired by the duo 'Suicide'. Formed in the late 1970s, they had "an unmeasurable influence on the industrial dance, noise, techno, ambient, and electronic scenes of the 1980s and 1990s." according to Rolling Stone. 'State of Suspension' uses features of their music, in terms of the low bass lead with a high attack, and kick drums layered with white noise.

I used my synthesizer to create a swirling, wind-like soundscape, which creates tension. Primarily, the tone of the whole track is derived from the music of Cabaret Voltaire, in that the vocals and breath sounds allow the song to sound mysterious, dark, and contemplative.

'Kraftwerk' also inspired me; their use of vocoders was very influential, and I noticed that they used high-pitched, metallic synths. I was looking for a way in which I could represent the robotic, futurism of bands like 'Kraftwerk' and 'Gary Numan'. I found an erosion effect on Ableton, called 'sine wave mid.' When you apply it to an instrument, it makes the instrument sound like it is coming out of a radio.

In sounding dark and experimental, the track reflects the experimental nature of electronic music in the early 1980s. It conveys anticipation and suspension for what is to come: the closing piano foreshadows the next track 'Chicago.'

### **3.4.5.2 Chicago**

'Chicago' was the track that I spent the most time on, after I discarded the working track 'Oceans'. It is structured to reflect the musical styles of 1980s clubs in Chicago and Detroit, as each section fades into the next one, as if the music is being played by a DJ. A popular style in 1980s Detroit was techno. In 'Chicago' all the instruments evolve together, recalling how techno producers used their whole studio as an instrument: running all their synths together.

The instrumentation in this track is inspired by House Music, a musical style that developed from the post-disco scene in 1980s Chicago. Using a book called 'The Dance Music Manual', I gained an understanding of the musical features of House; delayed hi-hats over a 4/4 beat, strings, pianos, and a distinctive bassline. These features are evident in the first section of the song; the drums and pianos are inspired by the 1986 song 'Move Your Body' by 'Marshall Jefferson'. I learned in my research that the band 'Depeche Mode' used industrial-metallic, ambient-acoustic sounds to compose the drums in their later albums. Therefore, to compose the drum section in 'Chicago', I recorded sounds of me hitting acoustic surfaces, such as windows, glass-tumblers, walls, and tables, and layered them with heavy delay.

Contrarily, the second section of the track takes musical ideas from Pop Music. I tried to emulate the shuddering synth basses, warped vocal loops, and the clattering drums of the band 'Cabaret Voltaire'. Following this section, I played the bass guitar, and applied heavy delay to it, to emulate the bass tone I heard in the music of 'New Order'. Following this, I applied the saxophone and the hi-hats, creating a texture reminiscent of the song 'Rio' by Duran Duran'.

The final section of the track sounds like the first section; this gives the track cohesion. I only switched the piano melodies and the bass, to make a more triumphant, explosive finish. The end of the track focuses on the bass, which I modulate slightly to create a tense conclusion. 'Chicago' is the most euphoric and danceable track on the EP. It is an array of musical styles, linking early club-music to Dance-Pop, and conveying the dramatic influence that electronic music was having in the early 1980s.

### **3.4.5.3 Spark**

'Spark' is a continuation of 'Chicago' for it is in the same key, E minor, though it is shorter in duration, and is more synthesizer-based.

In my research, I learnt that bands such as Joy Division enhanced their music through very minute altering of instruments and effects, which carried over into the rest of 80s Pop Music. Therefore, when composing 'Spark' I used lots of modulation, distortion, and panning.

The drum rhythm is inspired by the song 'Let's Get Married', by the modern artist 'Bleachers'. I composed the synths with inspiration from two songs: 'New Life' by Depeche Mode, and 'Sweet Dreams' by Eurythmics.

The general synth tones sound very retro; like they are classic 80s synthesizers, and combined with the saxophone, I wanted this track to sound as much like 1980s Pop Music as possible.

#### **3.4.5.4 Fascination with America**

When making 'Fascination with America' I was inspired by the aggressive, buzzing synths that I heard in the song 'Hard to Be Myself', by Fickle Friends.

One feature that I noted in 1980s electronic music was the unconventional use of drum fills. Therefore, the fills are very distinctive in this song. I also play the bass guitar on this song, only without surrounding it with effects like in 'Chicago' and allowing it to stand on its own.

The synths also have a very 'buzzing' tone to them, which emulates songs like 'Save a Prayer' by Duran Duran. I also listened to the 'chaotic' drums in songs like 'Atrocity Exhibition' by Joy Division. A primary influence for the track is also the music of ABC and like in their song 'The Night You Murdered Love', I used a synth brass instrument to compose the main melodies, and orchestral strings in the background.

#### **3.4.5.5 Lightning Bolt**

'Lightning Bolt' is the product of making various changes to my project, cutting out certain ideas, and experimenting with music software. I had an idea for a lengthy track, featuring various drum rhythms, and use of harps, and synth bells. This was eventually discarded due to my dissatisfaction with it. Instead I used the main synthesizer melody which I had made for that track, which was inspired by the shimmering pattern which I'd heard in 'She's American' by The 1975.

However, primarily the track is a reference to M83's album 'Hurry up We're Dreaming', within which I took inspiration from the songs 'Intro', 'Wait', and 'Where the Boats Go', as well as reading out some lyrics from the M83 track 'Reunion'. The track is meant to be big, exciting, and joyful: evoking the wonder and nostalgia found within M83's album for youth, and the era of the 1980s, before moving into the modern day, represented by the next track 'Must be an Angel'.

#### **3.4.5.6 Must be an Angel**

'Must be an Angel' has inspiration from various sources, including the title which is derived from a Eurhythmics song. The general song structure is based around 'You' by The 1975. It is the only song on the EP with a guitar riff, which recalls the riff on the song 'Swim' by Fickle Friends. The call and response interaction between the guitar and the synth are based on the music of a band 'The Colourist', whilst the piano rhythm post-breakdown emulates 'Do it, Try it' by M83.

However, the track is not only based around modern-80s-inspired-songs: the harps and brass section at the end, are intended to emulate Eurhythmics and ABC. The synth that appears during the repeat section is inspired by the synth-work in songs by 'The Human League'. I heard a certain 'grandiosity' and 'heaviness' in their music, which I tried to convey through that synth. Must be an Angel is intended to convey optimism as the most 'Pop' of the tracks. Through using 80s styles, but looking to modern music for inspiration, it evokes release and contentment, after most tracks were tense and restrained.

## 4 Conclusion and Evaluation

My original brief was to “Produce a musical EP that is inspired by Electronic Music from the 1980s and updates it for the modern day.” To the most extent, I feel I fulfilled it. I have researched extensively into 1980s music and gained a good cultural understanding and awareness of how music has evolved. I find it fascinating to link together key ideas, figures, and movements in the 80s culture of electronic music, and I now understand how they have influenced each other.

The EP has turned out to be five tracks, produced by me after extensive programming, composing, cutting ideas, and coming up with new ones. Therefore, the process has greatly improved my critical thinking, time management, and perseverance. My writing ability has also been improved, and it was enjoyable to use the language of a music reviewers, in order to provide a framework for making music.

I also found it a unique challenge to express the research in musical terms, for I am used to creating music from my own, spontaneous ideas. Therefore, some of the tracks are linked less firmly to my research rather they are my own interpretations of what I have listened to. However, all the music had electronic music from the 1980s as a basis for its production; whether that was more popular, New Romantic Synthpop, or underground club music and experimental, industrial post-punk, or the modern Indie, guitar driven-synthpop

If I did the project again, I would create a working document of plans, notes, and diagrams, constantly making links between what I have researched, and my plans for the artefact. Through my research, I learned that many modern artists who reflect the music of the 1980s in their music, look to gaining some of the equipment and instruments which were used in Pop Music back then, or at least emulating the sound of these instruments. I could have done something similar, researching what equipment was available to produce electronic music in the 1980s, and using that as inspiration. I also could have created a collection of music that would emulate the context in which electronic music would be played back then, like The 1975 produced their first album to emulate the soundtracks of 80s films.

However, I have dramatically improved my production skills, having learnt about important techniques that might be used in electronic music. I learnt to listen closely to and critically examine my music, paying attention to the individual timbres of instruments, and rhythms, detecting where there were clashes in sound, and moments in the music which detracted from the overall effect. I pushed my ability to make the tracks as polished as possible, and produced a collection of music which emulates the intricacies and features of electronic music throughout the 1980s.

I am proud of the EP, and the research behind it: I feel the EP is a good indicator of my musical ability, and the research a testament to my determination and intrepid thinking.

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# 6 Appendices

## 6.1 Project Proposal Form

Learner Name Caradoc Gayer Learner number \_\_\_\_\_

Centre Name \_\_\_\_\_ Centre Number \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher Assessor Mrs Haig Date 07/11/19

Unit \_\_\_\_\_

Proposed project title 'A Musical EP, inspired by electronic music from the 1980s.'

<b>Section One: Title, objective, responsibilities</b>	
<u>Title or working title of project (in the form of a question, commission or design brief)</u>	
Write and produce a musical EP, which emulates electronic music from the 1980s.	
<u>Project objectives (eg, what is the question you want to answer? What do you want to learn how to do? What do you want to find out?):</u>	
I want to learn in detail about music production, and the cultural history of electronic music. Through this I want to develop my ability to artistically respond to cultural research. I also aim to compare and contrast how music has taken inspiration from the 1980s in the modern day. Therefore, I aim to do what many artists I have listened to have done: translating 1980s sounds and feels into the context of modern music technology.	
<b>Section Two: Reasons for choosing this project</b>	
<u>Reasons for choosing the project (eg, links to other subjects you are studying, personal interest, future plans, knowledge/skills you want to improve, why the topic is important):</u>	
Personally, I am very interested in music itself, in terms of production, playing, performance, and criticism. I became aware that a lot of the music I listen to is comparable to music from the 1980s, so I wanted to delve into what the features of 1980s music is. Through developing my music production skills, I aimed to improve my talent, creativity, and perseverance. I would also hope to be involved in music for my future career, whether that be writing about it or producing it. This project will help me improve my musical awareness and ability to critically listen to it.	
<b>Section Three: Activities and timescales</b>	
<u>Activities to be carried out during the project (eg, research, development and analysis of ideas, writing, data collection, numerical analysis, rehearsal techniques, production meetings, production of final outcome, administration, evaluation, preparing for the presentation, etc):</u>	How long this will take:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial research into artists from the 1980s and the modern day.</li> <li>Collecting data on third party criticism of music.</li> <li>Recording my own criticism of music.</li> <li>The use of resources to record the history of genre.</li> <li>Research into relevant music-production-techniques.</li> <li>Condensing of research into plans for the EP.</li> <li>Production of the tracks.</li> <li>Compilation into a CD.</li> </ul>	2 months. 2 months. 1 month. 2 month. 1 month. ½ month. 4 months ½ month.

Milestone one:

Target date (set by tutor-assessor):

Milestone two:

Target date (set by tutor-assessor):

#### Section Four: Resources

What resources will you need for your research, write up and presentation (eg, libraries, books, journals, equipment, rehearsal space, technology and equipment, venue, physical resources, finance):

- The internet.
- Libraries.
- Books.
- Paper.
- Music Magazines/Publications.
- Computer.
- Music Production Software.
- Microsoft Word.
- Synths.
- Bass guitar.

What your areas of research will cover?

- How genres of electronic music have developed.
- Who are the most influential artists from 1980s?
- Who are the modern artists who have taken inspiration from the 1980s?
- What other people have written about 80s music.
- My own impressions of 80s music.
- How to competently use music production software.

#### Comments and agreement from tutor-assessor

Is the learner taking this project as part of the Diploma?

Yes/No

If yes, which Diploma are they taking? \_\_\_\_\_



Comments (optional):

Is project derived from work which has been/will be submitted for another qualification? Yes/No

Which qualification (title and unit)? \_\_\_\_\_

Comments (optional):

I confirm that the project is not work which has been or will be submitted for another qualification and is appropriate.

Agreed: (name) (date)

**Comments and agreement from project proposal checker**

Comments (optional):

I confirm that the project is appropriate.

Agreed: (name) (date)

## 6.2 Activity Log

### Project Activity Log

Learner Name Caradoc Gayer Learner number 3368

Centre Name \_\_\_\_\_ Centre Number 66631

Unit Name \_\_\_\_\_ Unit number \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher Assessor Mrs Haig

Proposed project title 'Produce a musical EP that is inspired by electronic music from the 1980s and updates it for the modern day.'

This form should be used to record the process of your project and be submitted as evidence with the final piece of work.

You may want to discuss:

- what you have done (EG, from one week to the next)
- if you are working in a group, what discussions you have had
- any changes that you have or will need to make to your plans
  - what resources you have found or hope to find
- what problems you are encountering and how you are solving them
  - what you are going to do next

Date	Comments
17/10/18	I was not at school today, but I was able to email Mrs McArdle with what I was supposed to be doing. I filled in the Project Proposal form with my idea.  I was also able to research five of the most important Synth-pop bands from the 1980s, listen to them, and write up summaries on my first impressions on their music. I tried to spot all the musical features contained within the songs. Next session, I will look towards more modern artists, who are inspired by the 1980s music, and I will write up summaries of their distinctive sound.
7/11/18	Today I was able to research artists of the modern day who may be inspired by the music of the 1980s. Next week, I will listen to their music, and take notes on the features used. Again, I will write up summaries on my first impressions of their music, and soon after that, I will start comparing the musical features of 1980s Music, and Modern Music.
14/11/18	I wrote up summaries, of the artists in the modern day, which I have researched over the internet. Next week I will try to find similarities between modern day artists and the artists of the 1980s.
21/11/18	I finished writing up summaries of artists from the modern day and from the 1980s. For the Modern artists, I have written about M83, The Colourist, The 1975, and Bleachers. For the 1980s artists I wrote about Eurhythmics, New Order, Depeche Mode, and The Human League.

	I also began to find similarities between the two eras of music, and how the music of the modern day has been inspired by the music of the 1980s. From now on, I am going to try to find books and websites, which can give me even more information on Electronic Music inspired by the 1980s, and how I can define the key features of this type of music.
27/11/18	In my free period, I began to find album reviews on the internet for some of the Artists I have researched. I copied the reviews into a word document, and began to highlight how the reviewer has described the music of the album. Soon, I will try to start compiling musical features that I have found through my research.
5/12/18	I was able to finish researching album reviews and highlighting how the reviewer has described the music. I have researched various albums which have fallen in the category of eighties inspired music, including 'Power, Corruption, and Lies,' by New Order, 'Hurry up We're Dreaming,' by M83, and 'Be Yourself Tonight,' by Eurhythmics. I also started to compile a list of all of the musical features, which I have learned about in my research so far.
8/12/18	I found I have a book at home called 'Music' by 'Paul de Noyer.' The book details most musical genres since the Baroque period, of both Western and Eastern parts of the world. I was able to find genres in the book, which were relevant to the 1980s, and take notes upon them. I took notes upon the genres of 'Eighties Pop Music,' 'New Romantic,' and 'House Music,' all of which developed in the 1980s. Soon I need to do a review on this research I have done with this book.
12/12/18	I realised today that it would be a good idea to have a long-term timetable on how I shall organise my project, so I made that today. For every month in 2019, up until September, I have written what I ideally would like to achieve that month. If I can achieve these goals, then I will mark them off on the timetable as done.  I also decided today that it would be useful if I did some research in some different sources, instead of just websites or books. Therefore, I found several '80s music' playlists on Spotify, listened to them, and took notes on what I was listening to, in order to find out how other people define 'electronic music in the 80s.'  I have decided I will use at least five books for my research. I will go to a library soon, in order to find books, which will be relevant.
19/12/18	I thought it would be a good idea to start doing research on the recording process, so at school I found a website, which gave some information upon 'Mixing and Mastering'. I took notes on this website. When I got home, I made more notes whilst listening to a Spotify Playlist, and wrote up an evaluation of the book 'Music' by Paul de Noyer. I have also begun to experiment on Ableton Live Lite at home. I am currently working on an electronic orientated track.
24/12/18 1/1/19	I produced two tracks on both of these days, which I may attempt to rework and make as good as possible in future when I am producing my EP.
5/1/19	I received a book called 'Mars by 1980' for Christmas, which is about the history of electronic music and Synthpop. I started taking notes from that, as well as on another book I have, which is called 'Dance Music manual'. I will try to write up evaluations of these two sources, when I get the chance.
8/1/19	I wrote up source evaluations of 'Dance Music Manual' and 'Mars by 1980.'
11/1/19	I ordered three books at Hungerford library, which will be good supplements to my research on the music.
21/1/19	I have started trying to compile my research into one, typed up document, whilst my research is separated by musical genres. I have realised I'll need to work very hard on this, as there is a lot of research to type up!

29/1/19	Having forgotten I needed to type up my research, I have decided I will have finished it by the end of this week. Today I finished my research on Synthpop Music, and will soon type up my research on House, Techno, and New Wave Music.
1/2/19	I have now finished my research on Music genres, and will begin to collect research on how to professionally record music, whilst perhaps also writing up personal reviews of so which I have researched.
12/2/19	I have written up a review of the debut album of one of my favourite bands, 'Fickle Friends' who are eighties inspired. In the review I wrote about which aspects of their music, I think work, and which aspects I think do not work.
13/2/19	I have also begun to do some more research on how to record music professionally. Soon I will start using the Macs at school to start producing.
15/2/19	I have written up a review of 'Rio' the Second album by the UK New Wave band 'Duran Duran' released in 1982.
20/2/19	At home, I produced my tenth track that I have done in the last seven months, on Ableton Live. I believe it is one of my better ones, and may be one to rework, and improve in order to put on my EP.
1/3/19	By now, I have made large amounts of progress on gathering how to record, mix, and master music. I will do some more source evaluations, and will begin compiling a 'conclusion' of sorts to help me with the recording process, before I hope to start using the Macs at school next week.
7/3/19	I have finished writing my personal reviews of songs and albums. I have reviewed 'You Are Someone Else' by Fickle Friends, 'Rio' by Duran Duran, 'She's American' by The 1975, and 'Sensoria' by Cabaret Voltaire. I have also compiled up a six-page document on how to professionally record music. If I feel that I need to, I will add to my research on this. I need to evaluate my sources which I have used to research the recording process.
12/3/19	I have created a drum loop, and some synth chords, for a song, on the macs at school. I may call the song 'Oceans' but I am unsure yet. Tonight I will try to do some work on it at home, and make some kind of 'verse' section.
27/3/19	'Oceans' is making progress. I have what could be construed as an introduction section to the song, where I have layered a harp melody against a synth, some drums, and a bass guitar rhythm but it is difficult, as the music rooms are not always open for me to use. I certainly want to finish the track by the end of April, perhaps I could do some final arrangement in the Easter Holidays, and spend some time mixing and mastering it on the Macs at school when I come back. I have realised that I should probably listen to some House and Techno Music, whilst taking notes on the genres. I will make sure I have done that by the end of next week.
1/4/19	Now that I am half-way through the project I have felt a bit like I have been losing my way: I am struggling to produce my current track, as I am alternating between using Logic Pro 9 at school and Ableton Live at home. I am also unsure of how I will link my songs to the research I have done. As a result, I have had an insightful conversation with my Dad, and have decided to re-orientate myself: I have used the S.M.A.R.T acronym to define properly my project objective. In order to make my objective achievable, I have decided I will do two songs on my EP, and two fifty second interlude tracks, to take some of the weight off my shoulders. From now on, I will make sure that I will put all my effort into those tracks, and make sure I can link them back to the research that I've done.

23/4/19	Now I have made significant progress on two different tracks. One is the happier, more glittery synth-pop track that has the working title of 'Oceans' and the other I am intending to be a darker song, more inspired by House and Techno Music. I am pleased with the latter track: I have used my research to make it. For example I have put delay on the hi hat rhythms, claps on the 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> beats, and the song is inspired by the House track 'Move Your Body' by Marshall Jefferson and promoted by the famous DJ Frankie Knuckles. I have used a similar 'house piano' melody to that song, as well as using a similar rhythm. Soon I want to create an industrial, Cabaret Voltaire inspired section in the song.
24/4/19	I have decided that I will have finished a basic draft of 'Chicago' by the beginning of June. I will have to work hard, but I can probably do it!
25/4/19	I have adjusted EQ on the House Section. It is more low end as a result I have created a juddering synth bass, which I can hear on songs by Cabaret Voltaire and Fickle Friends, and I have created a drum rhythm emanating Sensoria by Cabaret Voltaire. I have almost finished the industrial, cabaret Voltaire inspired section.
1/5/19	I have had to change the industrial section around, as I don't think it sounded very good. I played the bass guitar to emanate the music of 'New Order', and put delay on it. I have decided in order to fill out the industrial section; I will need to use a synth pad, which I will create soon.
9/5/19	I have finished the instrumentals in the second section of 'Chicago'. The section is inspired by the music of Duran Duran, due to the bass guitar, hi hats, and saxophone. I now need to adjust it, make it fit in with the first section, and give it a 'full' sound. After that, I will try and finish the third section of Chicago, completing the instrumentals, adjusting it, and then putting it together with the other two sections. Then I will have one track done!
13/5/19	I have a basic outline of 'Chicago' with all three sections. By the end of the month I need to have thrown in any other extra instruments and adjust the EQ and sound to make it as good as possible. I am intending to add in metallic sounds for the drums in the final section, inspired by the music of dépêche mode. I have recorded some general background noise of the enterprise suite whilst I have been working on my drums. When I throw some delay on it, it sounds very good, with everybody's voices starting to swirl and warp. That technique might be useful for a thirty-second intro track that I am intending to make.
15/5/19	It is sometimes difficult to make the three sections sound the same as one another in terms of sound. I have used my research to put some compression on the second section and it now sounds fairly similar to the first section.
16/5/19	The drums on the final section are now completed. I went outside with my laptop, and banged on various surfaces to create metallic sounds. I now just need to stitch the entire track together
20/5/19	I now have a finished version of one of the first tracks on my EP: 'Chicago.' I have played it to my parents, and a few friends, and they like it a lot. It could do with a little more work, as sometimes the drums sound a little too harsh. However, for now I will consider that track finished, as I should probably work on my other tracks now.
22/5/19	I have been listening to one of the artists that I discovered during my research: the early eighties electronic duo 'Suicide.' I have noticed that they have a specific style, using drums layered with white noise, low bass lines, and strange vocal samples. I have started work on a track that will emulate this style; I imagine it will be a thirty-second intro track that will lead into 'Chicago.'
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<p>05/06/19</p> <p>07/06/19</p>	<p>The intro track is now finished; I might call it 'State of Suspension.' It contains my own vocals, with me reading out an extract from one of the books I have used to research my EPQ, with my voice put through a vocoder. I now need to work very hard on the other 'main track', for my EPQ: I have decided to discard the other work I have done, as I do not think that much of it sounds very good. Instead, I have worked on a new track over the past two days, which is piano driven and has a guitar riff which is reminiscent of the song 'Swim' by Fickle Friends. I need to decide which other artists I will take inspiration from when I'm making this song.</p> <p>My new track has made progress. I have used a harp, as do the 80s band 'eurhythmics' and there is a synthesizer which interacts with the guitar, somewhat similar to the band 'The Colourist.' The song structure and drum beat are somewhat similar to the song 'You' by the 1975 too. I am intending to build up a section in the song, where I use some light, floaty synthesizers, which I have often heard on 80s songs. I am fairly pleased with the bassline as well, I have tried to make it floaty and bouncy as I often hear in 80s songs.</p>
<p>26/6/19</p>	<p>I had my mock exams recently, so I didn't have time to work on my EPQ. I have returned to it over the past couple of days though, and have almost finished my third track for the EP. I will have three sections to the track, and I have almost finished the second section: in this section the first section is repeated with more synths and instruments added in: my Mum had the idea</p>

<p>1/7/19</p> <p>2/7/19</p> <p>17/07/19</p>	<p>that I could add in some brass instruments inspired by the orchestral music of ABC. I thought that was a great idea, and added it in.</p> <p>There are only a few problems with the section, the bass is too loud and the guitar too quiet on the section of music I am using now, which I will try to sort out maybe tomorrow on the school macs. It is difficult, as I have two versions of the first section, and the first version does not have the aforementioned problems. I can't use it however, as it does not have the extra part which the second version does. It is a very complicated situation, but I'm sure I can figure it out.</p> <p>I tried to fix the guitar today, but it went a bit wrong, as it kept pitch shifting probably due to a computer fault. I ended up deleting the whole guitar section out of annoyance. I will try to re-record the guitar tomorrow, and sort out the volume problems, which I have previously had. However, I also created a new section today, which will finish off the track, and end it with a big crescendo. I will pull everything together at home, perhaps adding more brass instruments over this section.</p> <p>I'm hoping to have finished this track by the end of July; I'm considering calling it 'Must be an Angel' simply because I think that's a nice sounding title. I also think I might use the track that I discarded earlier in June, and make it into another 'interlude track'.</p> <p>This business with the guitar is really frustrating me! I thought I'd re-recorded the guitar perfectly, but I later realised that it had pitch shifted again, and the bass is still too loud. However, I do now have a first draft of 'Must be an Angel', so if I don't manage to sort everything out, I know I have that.</p> <p>I haven't worked on 'Must be an Angel' for a while, so today I used a synthesizer melody which I had previously created for my EPQ, layered it with a bass sound, and added drums to start what I might call 'Ocean' I.E: Another 1 minute interlude track. I am thinking of reworking one of the tracks I have done in my spare time over Year 12, and making it very eighties. It might be the one I made at Christmas called 'If You Will.'</p>
<p>11/08/19</p>	<p>I have been worried recently that my EPQ does not relate to my research as well as it could. I am therefore in the process of tying it all up, and making any other music that I might need to do. I have almost finished an extra track, which is called 'Buzz' and is perhaps the most 80s sounding track that I've made. I will also possibly need to rework the track 'If You Will' as well, so I can say that my other projects have contributed to the EPQ. I might need to finish my presentation and stuff in the first few weeks of next year.</p>
<p>13/08/19</p>	<p>'Buzz' is now done. It is a fast song, with a drum beat reminiscent of Depeche Mode and Bleachers, along with a fuzzy synth like Eurhythmics. I played around with a variety of pans, effects, and modulation. I doubt I'll be able to rework one of my previous tracks, as I need to work on my school coursework. I'm wondering if I will rename it 'Spark'.</p>
<p>03/09/19</p>	<p>Today I almost finished my presentation, and read through the EPQ booklet to make sure that I know what to do next. By the end of next week, once I go back to school, I'm hoping will have finished my EPQ</p>
<p>06/09/19</p>	<p>My presentation is finished. I will need to write up some notes on what I will say in it, and double check what structure my write-up needs to be.</p>



