

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

School of Music

**Arranging and Communication Techniques for the Studio Music Producer: A Curriculum**

A Thesis Submitted to  
the Faculty of the School of Music  
in Candidacy for the Degree of  
M.A. in Music Education

by

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## ABSTRACT

College music students who desire to pursue careers in the commercial music industry would benefit from learning all aspects of music production, including the techniques of rhythm section instruments and the intricacies of various genres. However, courses that provide students with hands-on training in communicating and arranging within a recording studio are lacking in residential collegiate contemporary and commercial music degrees. Students lacking in multi-instrument knowledge and immersion in contemporary genres may find their insufficiency is an impediment when functioning in their desired profession as a music producer post-college. The curriculum project detailed in this study is designed to provide such students with knowledge and skills needed to effectively function in the role of a contemporary music producer for studio recording sessions.

To inform this study, interviews with professional music producers have been conducted, transcribed, and summarized to create a historical descriptive narrative inquiry study. The study culminates in a curriculum project. The curriculum spans twelve weeks and includes lectures, lab times, and praxial exams. Topics such as organization, leadership, and communication are explored and implemented. Students analyze the genres of pop, rock, jazz, country, and worship, and apply techniques of each genre on drums, electric bass guitar, electric guitar, acoustic guitar, and piano/keyboard-based instruments. Assessments include listening and transcription assignments, weekly reflections, praxial exams, a summative quiz, and a final project. The implementation of such a curriculum package may prepare aspiring music producers for their careers by providing clarity regarding their future roles and training in skills fundamental to success in their chosen field.

*Keywords:* music producer, recording session, session players/musicians, arranging, genre, communication, teaching

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# Contents

<b>Chapter One: Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Background.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	5
Statement of the Purpose .....	6
Statement of the Significance .....	6
Research Questions and Hypotheses .....	7
Instructor Expectations .....	7
Definition of Terms .....	8
Conclusion .....	9
<b>Chapter Two: Literature Review .....</b>	<b>10</b>
The Influence of Genre on Recording Sessions.....	10
Understanding Rhythm Section Instruments .....	12
Current Collegiate Music Production Curricula .....	15
Curriculum Development and Pedagogical Considerations .....	18
<b>Chapter Three: Methodology .....</b>	<b>21</b>
Research Design .....	21
Data Collection and Analysis .....	21
Participants.....	22

Instrumentation .....	22
Summary .....	23
<b>Chapter Four: Findings.....</b>	<b>24</b>
Overview of Findings .....	24
How to Communicate – Interpersonal Relationships .....	26
What to Communicate Part I – Genre.....	28
What to Communicate Part II – Instrumentation .....	30
Conclusion .....	32
<b>Chapter Five: Conclusion.....</b>	<b>33</b>
Discussion of Results.....	33
Implications .....	36
Limitations .....	37
Recommendations for Future Research .....	37
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Appendix A: IRB Exemption Letter .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Appendix B: Curriculum Course .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Appendix C: Interview Questions .....</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Appendix D: Transcribed and Edited Interviews.....</b>	<b>75</b>

Interview with Producer A.....	75
Interview with Producer B.....	85
Interview with Producer C.....	97
Interview with Producer D.....	106
Interview with Producer E.....	115

## Chapter One: Introduction

College music production students should participate in courses that provide them with opportunities to work collaboratively with other musicians. Because music making is often collaborative, such environments will better prepare students for future endeavors in the music industry.<sup>1</sup> By understanding arranging and communication methods common among successful music producers and applying these concepts in class, students will be better equipped for their future careers. The curriculum course presented in this study provides students with an understanding of the roles of a music producer including communication skills, foundational knowledge of the main rhythm section instruments, and contemporary genres and arrangements.

### Background

Much diversity abounds when it comes to the term, “music producer.” Some producers utilize virtual instruments to create tracks in a digital audio workstation (DAW), others attend every studio recording session and dictate exactly what is to be performed, and still others spend very little time in the studio.<sup>2</sup> However, the core responsibility of a music producer “should be to enhance an artist’s creative vision through inspiration, and also to remain true to an artist’s artistic identity.”<sup>3</sup> This can be effectively accomplished by steering recording and editing processes so the resulting product is a marketable and high-quality reflection of the artist.

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<sup>1</sup> Brendan Anthony, *Music Production Cultures: Perspectives on Popular Music Pedagogy in Higher Education*, (London: Focal Press, 2022), 187. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003055099>.

<sup>2</sup> Richard James Burgess, *The Art of Music Production: The Theory and Practice*, 4th edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 9-19. ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Zager, *Music Production: For Producers, Composers, Arrangers, and Student*, 2nd edition. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 25. ProQuest Ebook Central.

Effective music producers perform many different roles. They cast the musical vision and clearly communicate to the musicians, artist, and engineers. They understand their own strengths and weaknesses, knowing when to delegate responsibilities and who to hire to fulfill needed roles, and are capable of handling interpersonal relationships through servant leadership. Additionally, they have good organizational skills. Many college music production courses excel in teaching the areas of technology and audio production, “but the studio etiquette and the subtle interpersonal techniques that producers and engineers acquire from experience are more difficult to teach in college.”<sup>4</sup> To fill this knowledge gap in the study of music production, record producer Richard Burgess penned the book, *The Art of Music Production: The Theory and Practice*. Littered with quotes and interviews from renowned producers, Burgess offers insight into the process of music production, including the musical, psychological, theoretical, managerial, and behavioral skills necessary for music producers. He presents a theory of producer typologies,<sup>5</sup> categorizing producers based upon how they function, what their skills are, and which leadership styles they typically exhibit. He goes on to list the numerous responsibilities that often fall upon the shoulders of record producers, including administration, pre-production, and interpersonal conflict mediation.

Learning how to manage conflict is vital to successful collaboration. A variety of essays highlighting the importance of collaboration between musicians, artists, and producers is found in the book, *Coproduction: Collaboration in Music Production*. Producer and educator Dr. Robert Willsmore encourages collaboration because it reduces “the grip on ownership that stifles

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<sup>4</sup> Burgess, *The Art of Music Production*, 31.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-25.



creative acts and creative generosity.”<sup>6</sup> With collaboration comes social dynamics, and each new team of collaborators requires an assessment of personalities and an adjustment of leadership techniques,<sup>7</sup> especially when it comes to working with artists. Because of these dynamics, “producers who want to achieve successful artistic and personal relationships with artists must be amateur psychologists.”<sup>8</sup>

An example of research in the field of music production and artist coaching is presented in the study, “Record Producers’ Best Practices for Artistic Direction – From Light Coaching to Deeper Collaboration With Musicians.”<sup>9</sup> Researchers formed a set of four interview questions based on a preliminary study with six experienced studio producers. The article focuses on the producers’ responses regarding the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary to be an effective producer. With an approach grounded in the Social Sciences and Linguistics, the responses for both studies were analyzed based on *what* was said as well as *how* the answers were delivered. Findings determined that three of the primary roles of a record producer are: artistic direction, interacting with musicians, and communication skills. These roles were further categorized, and their applications were discussed in the article.

A notable record producer who was skilled in the areas of artistry and communication is Paul McCartney. Much of his success was due to his extensive exposure to a variety of music, his mentorship by George Martin, his composing abilities, and his collaborative performance

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<sup>6</sup> Robert Wilsmore and Christopher Johnson, *Coproduction: Collaboration in Music Production* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 12, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351111959>.

<sup>7</sup> Burgess, *The Art of Music Production*, 24-25.

<sup>8</sup> Zager, *Music Production*, 31.

<sup>9</sup> Amandine Pras, Caroline Cance, and Catherine Guastavino, “Record Producers’ Best Practices for Artistic Direction—From Light Coaching to Deeper Collaboration With Musicians,” *Journal of New Music Research* 42, December 16, 2013, 381-395. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09298215.2013.848903>.

experience.<sup>10</sup> McCartney's broad background in music was a constant source of inspiration, and his skills on multiple instruments contributed to his palette of ideas. McCartney was innovative, and although he could be opinionated, he collaborated frequently and often embraced spontaneity, encouraging artists and bands to think creatively. Despite his skills as an engineer and instrumentalist, collaborations with highly skilled musicians and engineers allowed McCartney to focus on shaping the heart of the music.

The research project in this study is aimed at equipping college students with arranging and communication techniques that will enable them to effectively prepare for and lead studio recording sessions as a music producer. The curriculum course presented is intended for residential upper-level college music recording or music technology majors. To grasp the content of the course and successfully complete the assignments, it is necessary for students to understand how to aurally transcribe music, so prerequisites for the course include four semesters of aural skills and music theory and one semester of music notation coursework. The music notation coursework should include both traditional music notation methods as well as the Nashville number system and the respective transcription methods for both. Students also need proficient fluency in the technical aspects of a studio, so at least one semester of an upper-level music recording class or equivalent studio experience and approval by the instructor of the course are additional prerequisites for this course.

Although this course was created with the intention of being included within a music degree, the interdisciplinary nature of the music business overlaps with other schools, such as schools of communication and business. Such schools may consider offering a variant of this

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<sup>10</sup> Phillip McIntyre and Paul Thompson, "Paul McCartney as Record Producer: Complete Immersion in the Creative System," In *Paul McCartney and His Creative Practice: the Beatles and Beyond* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 190. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-79100-1\\_6](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-79100-1_6).

course as an elective in their degree programs. To accommodate for students and programs in these areas, course assignments may be altered and adapted to reduce the music components and emphasize other skills, such as the communication and relational skills of a studio music producer. The prerequisites would thus be adapted as needed. Ultimately, the professor of the course should be able to ascertain whether a prospective student has the knowledge and skills necessary for successful completion of the course.

### Statement of the Problem

College music production classes often train students in technological skills, but courses that focus on the application of arranging and communication within a recording studio environment are lacking, and this leads to students who are unconsciously underprepared. “A common complaint from producers and engineers regarding assistants who recently graduated from a college program is that they are sometimes overconfident, have unrealistic expectations, and can be insensitive in a production environment.”<sup>11</sup> This assertion is further supported in Brendan Anthony’s doctoral study of Popular Music Education (PME) in which he posits a pedagogical approach after investigating “how popular music production can be learned in higher education contexts, and how higher education can design and implement reputable approaches in popular music production pedagogy that bridge to professional practice.”<sup>12</sup> Students studying music production should have a foundational knowledge of how to arrange rhythm section instruments in popular contemporary genres to effectively communicate the vision of a song with session players. Without an understanding of how instruments function

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<sup>11</sup> Burgess, *The Art of Music Production*, 31.

<sup>12</sup> Brendan Anthony, “Perspectives of Learning Popular Music Production in Higher Education From Both Sides of the Glass,” (PhD thesis, Griffith University, 2020), 2, <https://doi.org/10.25904/1912/216>.

both individually and collectively, a music producer may struggle with choosing the correct terminology to convey the desired outcome of a song in a recording session.

#### Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study is to present a college course that will provide students with practical and hands-on training in communication and arranging skills within a studio recording environment. This collegiate curriculum bridges a gap in currently available music curricula and covers skills in arranging popular genres, demonstrating basic instrument-specific tonal, timbral and rhythmic techniques on rhythm section instruments, and effectively communicating the vision of songs to be recorded using musical and technical terms. These skills are invaluable for music producers, and by providing students with the instruction and praxial opportunities to develop in these areas, the students will have greater success in their chosen field.

#### Statement of the Significance

A student who successfully completes the course “Arranging and Communication Techniques for the Studio Music Producer” should be better prepared to enter the role of a music producer. The course will provide the student a foundational understanding of popular genres and rhythm section instruments, as well as interpersonal skills and opportunities to implement their knowledge as a music producer in a recording studio. The hands-on learning experiences and listening exercises will strengthen aural, musicianship, and communication skills. The result will be a student who is equipped with the skills necessary to effectively function in the role of a music producer.

## Research Questions and Hypotheses

RQ1: What skills and concepts are often overlooked in collegiate courses intending to equip aspiring music producers?

H1: A thorough understanding of genre-specific and instrument-specific vernacular is not often emphasized or taught in college music production courses. As a result, students may struggle to effectively communicate arrangement goals with session instrumentalists.

RQ2: What knowledge and terminology of rhythm section instruments do music producers often incorporate into their communication methods with session players to successfully communicate the goal during studio rhythm recording sessions?

H2: Understanding basic tonal, timbral and rhythmic techniques of bass, drums, guitar, piano, and keyboard-based instruments helps a producer better articulate the stylistic vision for each song in a recording session.

RQ3: How does knowledge of various musical genres inform the decisions and communication methods of a music producer during studio rhythm recording sessions?

Sub Question: If a music producer does not have a thorough knowledge of a given genre, what strategies might be implemented to still achieve success during a recording session?

H3: An understanding of the differences in instrumentation, arrangement, rhythm, groove, and mixing balances of each genre helps a producer more specifically communicate how each instrument fits in each song to be recorded. Hiring musicians who are skilled in multiple genres will prove to be an asset to a music producer who may lack knowledge in this area.

## Instructor Expectations

The expectation of this curriculum project is that the instructor has experience recording and producing as well as an extensive knowledge of course-specific genres and rhythm section

instruments. The genres specific to this course are pop, rock, jazz, country, and worship. While the recommendation is to implement guest lectures taught by faculty who teach applied lessons in each rhythm section instrument, the instructor should be capable of teaching piano, keyboard instruments, drums, bass, acoustic, and electric guitar techniques. Other resources, such as books, videos, and articles, may be used as additional preparation materials to supplement one's knowledge in these areas to ensure a successful implementation of this course.

### Definition of Terms

**Reference Track:** A song that has been previously recorded that producers or musicians will reference to demonstrate specific attributes that they would like to implement in the song or album that is being recorded. Attributes may include groove, instrumentation, tone, effects, or mix elements and balances. Also referred to as “sample” or “example.”

**Amateur Psychology:** The instruction and implementation of psychological skills and techniques not based on professional training in the field of psychology. Music producers work with many individuals, and studies have shown that many creatives have psychological disorders,<sup>13</sup> thus, aspiring producers would benefit from an understanding of basic psychological skills. Such techniques include adapting to and catering to unique personalities and individualistic preferences, reading the room, and social “people” skills. Amateur psychology is utilized primarily when producers communicate with musicians and artists.

**Rhythm Section:** The instrument group that establishes the main rhythm and groove of a song or album that is to be tracked. Fundamentally, a rhythm section is comprised of drums, bass, guitar(s), and/or piano/keyboard instruments and can also be referred to as the band.

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<sup>13</sup> Laura N. Young, Ellen Winner, and Sara Cordes, “Heightened Incidence of Depressive Symptoms in Adolescents Involved in the Arts,” *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts* 7, no. 2 (May 2013): 197. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0030468>.

**Session Players/Session Musicians:** The musicians who have been hired to record on a song or track during a tracking session.

### Conclusion

Building foundational understanding in several key areas will equip aspiring producers with the skills necessary to communicate with artists and musicians. The curriculum course presented in this study provides students with instruction in the areas of genre, tonal, timbral and rhythmic techniques of rhythm section instruments, as well as insight into communicating with and responding to individuals of various personalities. This course aims to encourage students to intentionally take action and form knowledge from their experiences. Concepts will be constructed through analysis and hands-on implementation of course content<sup>14</sup> resulting in a real-world application that prepares future music producers for a career in the music industry.

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<sup>14</sup> Thomas A. Regelski, *Teaching General Music in Grades 4-8: a Musicianship Approach*, (NY: Oxford University Press, 2004), 16-17.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

Aspiring music producers will benefit from knowing how to combine a knowledge of genres and instrument techniques to successfully create a recorded music product. Multiple books and articles have been written on the musical genres and how each differs from the others. Also available are instructional books and articles that describe instrument techniques and sounds and how they relate to genres. Additionally, in recent years, educators have taken strides to incorporate popular music into the classroom, resulting in studies that detail the recommendations, practice, and success of this implementation. Ever-growing technological advancements in music production are evidenced in college courses aimed at instructing future music producers, audio engineers and popular musicians, and courses on music history, genres, arranging, and producing are common. Such sources relevant to this study are presented below.

### The Influence of Genre on Recording Sessions

One of the best ways to become a versatile music producer is to have a thorough understanding of different genres, because “different genres and subgenres of recorded music have their own production requirements.”<sup>15</sup> With emphasis on tone and timbre, the book *The Relentless Pursuit of Tone: Timbre in Popular Music*<sup>16</sup> includes numerous examples of how genres often exhibit distinct differences in tone, voice, instrument, and production, and these differences can be seen through the use of instruments, sounds, and musical techniques.<sup>17</sup> The uses of twang, synthesizers, guitars, auto-tune, reverb, and other elements of music are explored and positioned within the framework of genre, culture, and the evolution of music in recent

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<sup>15</sup> Burgess, *The Art of Music Production*, 7.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Fink, Melinda Latour, and Zachary Wallmark, eds, *The Relentless Pursuit of Tone: Timbre in Popular Music*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.



history. Sonic differences set genres apart but other aspects, such as the production process and culture, also vary depending on the genre.

In his book, *Genre in Popular Music*,<sup>18</sup> scholar and professor Dr. Fabian Holt positions music genres considering the culture while directing listeners to an understanding of the genres, rather than attempting to define them. Holt organizes American popular music by using the categories of blues, jazz, country, rock, soul/R&B, salsa, heavy metal, dance, and hip-hop and further sub-categorizes styles within them.<sup>19</sup> He presents case studies which explore these music styles in relation to other genres, as well as within the context of history and culture.

Although history, culture, tone, and timbre all help define genres, genres can also be identified, in part, by their instrumentation. For example, one may say “you don’t have country music without fiddle and banjo.”<sup>20</sup> However, especially when considering sub-genres, traditional “country” instruments like “banjo and the pedal steel guitar tend to fall in and out of favor,”<sup>21</sup> depending on how “country” an artist decides they want to be. Regarding rock music, “the basic template for a rock ‘n’ roll band has remained remarkably stable ever since the seventies: drums, electric bass, and, above all, electric guitar.”<sup>22</sup> Over the years, pop music has undergone substantial instrument developments. “In eighties America, “pop” often meant danceable songs with electronic elements,”<sup>23</sup> and instruments such as keyboards, synthesizers, a drum machine,

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<sup>18</sup> Fabian Holt, *Genre in Popular Music*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007). ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-16.

<sup>20</sup> Dayton Duncan, *Country Music*, (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2019), 13.

<sup>21</sup> Kelefa Sanneh, *Major Labels: A History of Popular Music in Seven Genres*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2022), 163. ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 409.

pitch-corrected vocals, and bass were prevalent.<sup>24</sup> However, more recently, pop charts are “full of moody, atmospheric songs...with hip-hop-inspired beats.”<sup>25</sup> Similarly, Christian worship music has undergone several changes in instrumentation over the past forty years. Currently, songs written by those in mega churches like Passion, Hillsong, and Bethel “fall into a fairly homogenous pop-rock style, while also tending to incorporate certain trends in Top 40 popular music (for instance, inflections from electronic dance music or the nu-folk/indie-folk styles...).”<sup>26</sup> Thus, to continue to create music that is relevant to the ever-changing culture, music producers will want to stay informed regarding such changes to music genres.

### Understanding Rhythm Section Instruments

To grow their arranging skills, producers ought to keep up with changes in music production and recording by listening to the “songs, rhythms, and sounds in contemporary hit recordings.”<sup>27</sup> Although producers will often specialize in one specific genre, students should build a foundation by learning “the basic music techniques that apply to all musical genres”<sup>28</sup> before specializing. A producer should understand the range and tessitura of each instrument, have a grasp on music theory and harmony, and be capable of communicating to each instrumentalist. To aid in this area, the book *Music Production: For Producers, Composers, Arrangers, and Students* includes a chapter on arranging and orchestrating<sup>29</sup> which provides the

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<sup>24</sup> Sanneh, *Major Labels*, 409-410.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 424.

<sup>26</sup> Monique M. Ingalls, “Style Matters: Contemporary Worship Music and the Meaning of Popular Musical Borrowings,” *Liturgy* 32, no. 1 (2017): 13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0458063X.2016.1229435>.

<sup>27</sup> Zager, *Music Production*, 31.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 72-104.

reader with a brief overview of expression terminology and ranges of the instruments, explaining how each instrument and instrument section typically fits within a song arrangement.

Some guitar techniques to note are open-position chords, power chords and barre chords, rhythm techniques, strumming styles, melodies, and double-stops.<sup>30</sup> Polyphony, slurs, vibrato, and string bending are other useful techniques for producers to be aware of and request as needed during recording sessions.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, hammer-ons and harmonics are other techniques to incorporate in recordings. When recording electric guitar, it is common to record in layers. Layers of power chords can create an effective background part, and splitting the electric guitar signal to separate cabinets and panning each hard left and hard right can create a big effect.<sup>32</sup>

Piano is one of the most popular instruments to teach in traditional music education programs. This is partly because it “enables a student to see... harmony and hear harmony.”<sup>33</sup> To learn various genres of piano, *Functional Piano for Music Therapists and Music Educators*<sup>34</sup> provides notated exercise examples and explores how a pianist would play in each style. The book covers arpeggiation and syncopation, jazz reharmonization, score reductions, and improvisation. It is a great resource for producers who record piano demos and for those who create music in multiple genres and want to communicate with their pianists more easily.

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<sup>30</sup> Jon Chappell, Mark Phillips, and Desi Serna, *Guitar All-in-One*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2021).

<sup>31</sup> Seth F. Josel and Ming Tsao, *The Techniques of Guitar Playing*, (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2021). ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>32</sup> Craig Anderton, “5 Tips for Layering Guitars,” *Guitar Player* 46, no. 1 (January 2012): 144, accessed May 1, 2024, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A276352437/BIC?>.

<sup>33</sup> Zager, *Music Production*, 94.

<sup>34</sup> Josh Massicot, *Functional Piano for Music Therapists and Music Educators: An Exploration of Styles*, (Gilsum, NH: Barcelona Publishers, 2012). ProQuest Ebook Central.

Dominic Palmer presents the backgrounds of many genres and explains the role of a bassist in each category in his book, *Discovering Rock Bass: An Introduction To Rock And Pop Styles, Techniques, Sounds And Equipment*.<sup>35</sup> Throughout the book, the techniques of specific bassists are described and notated according to the genre they were most known for playing. Information is given regarding how to achieve the sound and tone of players such as Paul McCartney, James Jamerson, John Paul Jones, Bob Marley, and others. Engineers, bassists, and bass luthiers can all benefit from Palmer's research regarding string replacement, miking techniques, and other modifications.

There are several drum grooves that are common within each genre. In his book, *The Drummer's Toolbox: The Ultimate Guide to Learning 100 Drumming Styles*,<sup>36</sup> Brandon Toews notated these grooves along with their variations within multiple styles. Toews describes specific genres and their sub-genres and provides detailed examples from popular music. Although aimed at instructing drummers, producers adept at reading rhythmic notation will find Toews's book to be a helpful companion during the pre-production stage. The titles of various grooves will help producers develop a vocabulary which they can use to communicate to drummers more effectively during recording sessions.

Although many drummers have preferences for how they set up their kits, drum kits are set up and tuned differently depending on the music style.<sup>37</sup> The materials, size, and tuning of drumheads alter the sound of the drums and how the resulting sonic characteristics lend

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<sup>35</sup> Dominic Palmer, *Discovering Rock Bass: An Introduction To Rock And Pop Styles, Techniques, Sounds And Equipment*, (London: Schott, 2009).

<sup>36</sup> Brandon Toews, *The Drummer's Toolbox: The Ultimate Guide to Learning 100 Drumming Styles*, (Place: Musora Media, 2019).

<sup>37</sup> Rob Toulson, *Drum Sound and Drum Tuning: Bridging Science and Creativity*, (New York: Focal Press, 2021), 76.

themselves to different genres. In his book, *Drum Sound and Drum Tuning: Bridging Science and Creativity*, Rob Toulson includes a diagram that directs drummers to choose common heads and sizes depending on the genre they wish to play.<sup>38</sup> Although tuning the heads tightly will raise the pitch, the diameter and depth of each drum also affects the pitch. Drums with wide diameters and deep bodies will vibrate at lower frequencies than drums that are smaller and shallower. Heavier genres, such as rock and metal, typically use lower tunings for drumheads, jazz and funk heads will be tuned higher, and the tuning of pop and fusion drums lie somewhere in the middle.<sup>39</sup> In addition to the setup of the drum kit, the types of sticks or brushes used to play the drums also play a large role in the sound of the kit and the type of genre the playing style is most suited for. The producer, drummer, and engineer should take each of these nuances into consideration before recording a song.

### Current Collegiate Music Production Curricula

College courses in music production abound. Many courses emphasize DAW-centered music production or the technical aspects of recording and engineering. Some focus on arrangement and genre, such as Full Sail’s “Musical Arrangement,”<sup>40</sup> “Musical Structure and Analysis,”<sup>41</sup> and “Music Genres”<sup>42</sup> courses. The “Art of Music Production I” course offered by the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) instructs students “how to foster and capture

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<sup>38</sup> Toulson, *Drum Sound and Drum Tuning*, 80.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>40</sup> “MPR3311: Musical Arrangement,” Full Sail University, accessed January 19, 2024, <https://catalog.fullsail.edu/courses/mpr3311>.

<sup>41</sup> “APR3570: Musical Structure and Analysis,” Full Sail University, accessed January 19, 2024, <https://catalog.fullsail.edu/courses/apr3570>.

<sup>42</sup> “MPR3113: Music Genres,” Full Sail University, accessed January 19, 2024, <https://catalog.fullsail.edu/courses/mpr3113>.

performance and emotion in music through variety of methods and tools, including artistic direction in studio and choices made in sound, arrangement, and application of technology.”<sup>43</sup> “Art of Music production II” includes a critical listening component.<sup>44</sup> While it is beneficial to have courses dedicated to each individual topic, no college course provides an overview of studio rhythm section instruments in combination with the interpersonal, organizational, and communication roles that a music producer ought to embody.

A few colleges offer undergraduate courses related to the one presented in this paper within the area of rhythm section instruments. Garnish Music Production School offers a course called “Rhythm Section Programming.” The course seeks to instruct students how to master the rhythm section by understanding “how top session musicians approach their instruments,” how to “think like a drummer,” and how to make “guitar and bass parts more musical.”<sup>45</sup> The emphasis of the course is on DAW programming, however, which is clear from the title. Berklee Online offers several courses in contemporary arranging, including “Arranging 1: Rhythm Section,”<sup>46</sup> and “Arranging and Producing Contemporary Music Styles.”<sup>47</sup> These courses are similar to the curriculum presented in this study, but they are offered online, not residentially, and thus lack a hands-on learning approach. Belmont University offers an undergraduate course

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<sup>43</sup> “Art of Music Production I,” UCLA Catalog, accessed January 19, 2024, <https://catalog.registrar.ucla.edu/course/2023/MSIND115A>.

<sup>44</sup> “Art of Music Production II,” UCLA Catalog, accessed January 18, 2024, <https://catalog.registrar.ucla.edu/course/2023/MSIND115B>.

<sup>45</sup> “Rhythm Section Programming,” Garnish Seattle, accessed January 19, 2024, <https://sea.garnishmusicproduction.com/courses/rhythm-section-programming/>.

<sup>46</sup> “Arranging 1: Rhythm Section,” Berklee Online, accessed January 19, 2024, <https://online.berklee.edu/courses/arranging-1-rhythm-section>.

<sup>47</sup> “Arranging and Producing Contemporary Music Styles,” Berklee Online, accessed January 19, 2024, <https://online.berklee.edu/courses/arranging-and-producing-contemporary-music-styles>.

titled “Commercial Instrumental Styles”<sup>48</sup> which provides students with an overview of major commercial music styles and the characteristics that distinguish each style. The course is not contextualized for a recording studio environment and the course description does not mention the integration of communication techniques.

Several colleges and universities offer music courses that emphasize communication and interpersonal skills. Abbey Road Institute in London offers an Advanced Diploma in Music Production and Sound Engineering and includes training on “Session Planning / Procedures” as well as “Session Etiquette.”<sup>49</sup> Montgomery County Community College offers a Music Production course which teaches recording techniques, “interpersonal skills which reflect an understanding of human psychology,”<sup>50</sup> and technical expertise. Berklee Online offers a certificate in Music Production that concludes with a Music Production Capstone project. The completion of the capstone requires the student to provide an emotional and dynamic map of a song arrangement, run an effective recording session, and provide feedback to musicians.<sup>51</sup> While this is similar to the final project of the curriculum presented in this study, Berklee’s certificate program is not offered residentially, and it does not include individual courses on interpersonal studio communications or an overview of individual rhythm section instruments. Berklee offers three residential courses in record production: Record Production Projects 1,<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> “MBI 330 Commercial Instrumental Styles,” Belmont University, accessed April 16, 2024, [https://catalog.belmont.edu/preview\\_course\\_nopop.php?catoid=3&coid=4224](https://catalog.belmont.edu/preview_course_nopop.php?catoid=3&coid=4224).

<sup>49</sup> “Music Production Curriculum,” Abbey Road Institute, accessed April 20, 2024, <https://abbeyroadinstitute.co.uk/courses/diploma-music-production-sound-engineering/curriculum/>.

<sup>50</sup> “Music Production (SRT 259),” Montgomery County Community College, accessed January 19, 2024, <https://www.mc3.edu/courses/srt-259-music-production>.

<sup>51</sup> “Music Production Capstone,” Berklee Online, accessed January 19, 2024, <https://www.coursera.org/learn/music-production-capstone?specialization=music-production>.

<sup>52</sup> “Record Production Projects 1,” Berklee College of Music, accessed January 19, 2024, <https://college.berklee.edu/courses/ir-305>.

Record Production Projects 2,<sup>53</sup> and Music Production for Records.<sup>54</sup> These courses emphasize pre-production, communication and collaboration, budgeting, and coaching, but do not include an overview of genres or rhythm section instruments.

### Curriculum Development and Pedagogical Considerations

The culture of music production is one that can be facilitated by the music producer, but many higher education frameworks lack training in this area. Brendan Anthony compiled interviews, research studies, surveys, and experiences in his book *Music Production Cultures: Perspectives on Popular Music Pedagogy in Higher Education* and presents insight into pedagogical practices that can be implemented to teach music production at a college level. Anthony argues that students ought to be engaged with diverse music production cultures and begins his pedagogical approach by teaching students skills in sound engineering, critical listening, songwriting, and other applicable areas.<sup>55</sup> Then, students put those skills into creative practice through rehearsals, session management, overdubbing, recording, mixing, and other hands-on experiences.<sup>56</sup> Finally, Anthony encourages students to consider more abstract cultural aspects of producing, such as the meaning of the song, environment, people, and the music. Anthony's aim is to encourage educators to create learning environments that mimic real world popular music production scenarios.

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<sup>53</sup> "Record Production Projects 2," Berklee College of Music, accessed January 19, 2024, <https://college.berklee.edu/courses/ir-326>.

<sup>54</sup> "Music Production for Records," Berklee College of Music, accessed January 19, 2024, <https://college.berklee.edu/courses/mp-320>.

<sup>55</sup> Anthony, *Music Production Cultures*.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-30.



Anthony's hands-on approach is an example of the pedagogical perspective of Action Theory, which involves an active agent who intentionally seeks to achieve meaning, value, and purpose.<sup>57</sup> Rooted in action theory is the teaching paradigm of Action Learning, which seeks to encourage students "into action" by mimicking real life applications of concepts. By importing real life scenarios into the classroom, Action Learning can be highly motivating because it demonstrates the usefulness of a concept beyond mere scholastic endeavors.<sup>58</sup>

The book *Music, Technology, and Education: Critical Perspectives*<sup>59</sup> by Andrew King and Evangelos Himonides includes studies revolving around music technology and implications for education in the field. The first chapter is a research study written by Amandine Pras and it focuses on preparation, management, and direction during recording sessions. Pras includes educational examples from a collegiate course she teaches which provide insight into how an instructor might utilize the concepts presented in their own classrooms. Chapter Three, written by Andrew King, presents a study of studio pedagogy. Interviews from three music producers form the basis for this study, and they cover concepts such as environment, decision-making, workflow, knowledge, and skills related to success in a recording studio.

It is important for music instructors to keep up with changes in music technology, and the book *Commercial and Popular Music in Higher Education: Expanding Notions of Musicianship and Pedagogy in Contemporary Education* explores how to integrate student interests and learner-led experiences into curriculum. Chapter 6, "You Want to Play John Mayer?"<sup>60</sup> describes

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<sup>57</sup> Regelski, *Teaching General Music in Grades 4-8*, 16.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>59</sup> Andrew King and Evangelos Himonides, eds, *Music, Technology, and Education: Critical Perspectives*, (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2016).

<sup>60</sup> Jonathan R. Kladder, ed, *Commercial and Popular Music in Higher Education: Expanding Notions of Musicianship and Pedagogy in Contemporary Education*, (New York: Routledge, 2023), 76-89.

the importance of embracing and facilitating student-directed learning spaces. Instructors ought to examine their teaching approaches and determine if they are conducive to the growth of student musical expression. Jonathan Kladder, the author of this chapter, explains his process for facilitating a student-led pop/rock ensemble and encourages music educators to endeavor to facilitate similar environments. Ultimately, open communication, respect, and trust among students and professors will result in a fruitful experience for all parties involved.

### Chapter Three: Methodology

The research methodology, including the study approval process, participant recruitment, interview procedure, data analysis, and data presentation are discussed below.

#### Research Design

This research project implements a historical descriptive narrative inquiry study. The sources listed above formed the historical descriptive portion of the study. Past written documentation was explored, examined, and presented according to relevancy to the research topic. Existing college courses were examined to determine the originality of the curriculum project presented as the culmination of this study. Interviews formed the narrative inquiry portion of the study. “Narratives are accounts of daily life...and other oral and written accounts in past, present, and future time.”<sup>61</sup> The collection of personal accounts of music producers provides support for the research aim and development of the curriculum project.

#### Data Collection and Analysis

After receiving exemption from the Institutional Review Board to conduct research (see Appendix A), data was collected through one-on-one, video and audio recorded Microsoft Teams interviews. One interviewee chose to provide a written and emailed answer to one of the questions and its sub-question. The responses were transcribed and can be found in Appendix D. Although names were known by the interviewer, all personally identifying information has been removed from the transcribed interviews. Each music producer is referenced using a letter (e.g., Producer A). Additionally, all interviews have been edited for clarity by removing false sentence starts, doubled words/phrases, and filler words such as “umm,” “you know,” “does that make

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<sup>61</sup> Colette Daiute, “The Appeal of Narrative in Research,” In *Narrative Inquiry: A Dynamic Approach*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 2, (London: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2014). <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781544365442>.

sense?” “I mean,” “so,” and similar phrases. A few comments and conversations have been removed (such as interviewees asking the interviewer for clarity or to repeat the questions, or conversations and comments that were not relevant to the study). These edits have not altered the meanings or intentions behind the responses.

The information collected has been aggregated and analyzed to determine similarities and differences and thematically categorized. Chapter 4 describes these themes and the roles of a music producer within the setting of a recording studio. Several key attributes of effective music producers are highlighted, specifically those regarding communicating and arranging rhythm section instruments.

### Participants

The researcher recruited participants by sending emails to individuals who had been previously contacted by a professor in Liberty University’s School of Music to gauge interest in the study. Only individuals who consented to having their email address shared with the interviewer were contacted. The participants were required to be citizens of the United States, have 10 or more years of professional involvement in the music industry, have 10 or more years of professional experience as a music producer, and have 5 or more years of professional experience working in recording studios. Five participants were interviewed.

### Instrumentation

The interviewees were asked to respond to eight open-ended questions/statements as well as several sub-questions (see Appendix C). Throughout the interviews, the interviewer provided clarity on the questions as requested and asked a few clarifying and follow-up questions if the respondents answers did not seem to directly address the question(s) being asked. The first question, “In your experience, what are five of the most valuable skills that contribute to the

success of music producers in the context of a recording studio?” was asked at the outset to prevent the responses from being influenced by the rest of the questions asked during the interview. The second two questions were aimed at discovering what topics the interviewees thought should be included in arranging and communication courses for aspiring studio music producers. The following three questions were specifically related to rhythm section instruments, genre, and communication methods. The final two questions provided an opportunity for the producers to share past experiences with students entering the professional music industry as well as provide insight into concepts they deemed essential to teach in a college classroom for increased success in the field.

### Summary

A college-level curriculum has been created which reflects the findings presented. The curriculum places an emphasis on developing a thorough knowledge of multiple genres as well as a fundamental understanding of how to play, arrange, and alter the tones of drums, bass, electric and acoustic guitars, and piano and keyboard-based instruments and how to communicate instrument-specific techniques within a recording studio environment. The curriculum dedicates two weeks to studying each instrument and implements formative, praxial, and summative assignments. Having a broad understanding of music will aid future music producers as they seek to capture and clearly communicate the vision of the artist to the session players and ultimately to the world of music listeners.

## Chapter Four: Findings

### Overview of Findings

The interview responses of participating producers shared many similarities. Several themes emerged, and a theme heavily emphasized was people skills/interpersonal relationships (see Table 1: Top Five Skills of Music Producers). Additionally, the producers highlighted the importance of having clear communication skills, casting a vision, using reference tracks, and developing a thorough knowledge of various instruments and understanding how they differ depending on the genre. Ultimately, the responses indicated that a well-rounded producer knows *how* and *what* to communicate. The *how* relates to understanding social, psychological, and leadership skills, while the *what* requires the producer to know both *how* the song should sound (genre and style) as well as *what* kind of instrumentation is needed (arrangement and technique).

Table 1: Top Five Skills of Music Producers

	<b>Producer A</b>	<b>Producer B</b>	<b>Producer C</b>	<b>Producer D</b>	<b>Producer E</b>
<b>1.</b>	Psychology	People Skills/Psychology	Be a people person	Communication	Communication
<b>2.</b>	Listen	Communicate what you want	Vision and good ear	Be organized	Psychology
<b>3.</b>	Interpersonal Relationships	Know the taste of the people	Know your room/technology	Be prepared	Know the artist's vision and audience
<b>4.</b>	Wide musical vocabulary	Arranging and chordal structures	Knowledge of instruments, what you want	Call the right people	Musical Skills
<b>5.</b>	Know the DAW and gear	Technical understanding of gear	Communicate outside your comfort zone	Know your vision	Buy lunch (value others)

When entering a studio for a recording session, a music producer should be prepared and organized with charts, reference tracks and a plan for the day.<sup>62</sup> Typically, the charts used in

<sup>62</sup> Producer D, interview by author, Microsoft Teams, April 5, 2024, transcript, Appendix D.

recording sessions are Nashville Number charts. Although simple, these charts are easily adaptable, and they communicate a lot of information to the band. Similarly, the producer should know the end goal and purpose, the key, tempo, instrumentation, the artist's skills and audience, and the song form.<sup>63</sup>

Additionally, producers will often come prepared with reference tracks to play that convey the sound they are intending. Many individuals have emotional connections to music, so using a reference track helps the players connect and take ownership in the project.<sup>64</sup> “You can communicate methodology and techniques ... by referring to common musical examples that everybody would know.”<sup>65</sup> So, sometimes, producers will simply reference a song or artist, and that conveys enough meaning to the players.<sup>66</sup> To this end, the producers all stressed the importance of developing a large palette of music by listening, and listening past personal tastes.<sup>67</sup> Producer B used the concept of a “big bag” full of musical ideas acquired throughout a lifetime from which to draw, stating, “producing...is all reactive:” One musical idea will bring to remembrance another musical idea, “and the reason why we’ve heard those things in the past is because those are things that work...musically.”

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<sup>63</sup> Producer E, interview by author, Microsoft Teams, April 10, 2024, transcript, Appendix D.

<sup>64</sup> Producer B, interview by author, Microsoft Teams, April 2, 2024, transcript, Appendix D.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Producer A, interview by author, Microsoft Teams, March 23, 2024, transcript, Appendix D.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

## How to Communicate – Interpersonal Relationships

The producers interviewed emphasized the importance of knowing how to read the room,<sup>68</sup> read people<sup>69</sup> and understand various personalities,<sup>70</sup> treat people well,<sup>71</sup> look people in the eye, smile, and listen well.<sup>72</sup> Because “[relationships] are at the absolute center of everything,”<sup>73</sup> humility, understanding, empathy, and gentleness<sup>74</sup> are characteristics that music producers should take strides to embody. “So much of [being a producer] is about learning how to manage your own emotions so that you can help to manage other people’s emotions.”<sup>75</sup> To this end, producers should understand that perfectionism and one’s personal demeanor can bring the room down.<sup>76</sup> Many opinions may arise during a session, and even if others get impatient, there is wisdom in the statement by Producer A: “How I treat others is not dependent on how I’m being treated. I have a choice as to how I can respond to someone that's not treating me well. I can respond in kind, or I can respond with grace and mercy and try to defuse the tension.” When a producer acts with poise and grace, listening well to the input of others, the hired team becomes motivated to give their best effort. Producer E even mentioned how the small act of buying the musicians lunch can really set the stage for a long-term work relationship.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Producer B.

<sup>69</sup> Producer E.

<sup>70</sup> Producer B.

<sup>71</sup> Producer E.

<sup>72</sup> Producer C, interview by author, Microsoft Teams, April 3, 2024, transcript, Appendix D.

<sup>73</sup> Producer B.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Producer A.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Producer E.



As a leader, a producer ought to clearly communicate the vision and goal, such as how many songs will be tracked and in what amount of time.<sup>78</sup> Decisiveness and direct communication go a long way in ensuring the success of a tracking session. In the end, someone needs to make final decisions, and that responsibility falls on the producer.<sup>79</sup> Thus, a good producer has confidence<sup>80</sup> and is willing to stand up and challenge ideas that compete with the vision of the song.<sup>81</sup> To effectively do this, the producer needs to know what they are doing,<sup>82</sup> understand their role and the environment, and simply be the best that they can without being prideful about it.<sup>83</sup>

Although the producer ultimately makes the final decision, “what a good producer will know is that if you give your musician an opportunity to be creative, it might actually be better than what [the producer] thought of. It might fit more into their overall vision.”<sup>84</sup> “If the hired player’s approach is better than what the producer initially envisioned, the producer should be humble enough to go with that.”<sup>85</sup> When a musician is working out a part, the producer should not silence their ideas<sup>86</sup> or shut them down too fast<sup>87</sup> but provide time for the musician to express

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<sup>78</sup> Producer E.

<sup>79</sup> Producer B.

<sup>80</sup> Producer C.

<sup>81</sup> Producer E.

<sup>82</sup> Producer C.

<sup>83</sup> Producer A.

<sup>84</sup> Producer D.

<sup>85</sup> Producer A, email message to the author, March 24, 2024.

<sup>86</sup> Producer B.

<sup>87</sup> Producer D.

what they are thinking and honor their creative input and requests.<sup>88</sup> If there are differing opinions, a way to ensure everyone wins is by using playlists and recording different versions of a part. This way, the musicians feel valued, and the producer still has a take with their original vision.<sup>89</sup> When communicating, music producers ought to do so in a way that's edifying and that communicates a belief in the abilities of the musician or artist.<sup>90</sup> So, even if some parts are not quite what the producer is looking for, by steering the creativity of the players as opposed to attempting to create their creativity for them, the musicians will start taking ownership. The best scenario for a music producer is to have their musicians fully invested.<sup>91</sup>

### What to Communicate Part I – Genre

Developing a broad musical palette by becoming well-versed in multiple genres provides a producer with a wider vocabulary from which to direct the musicians. As producer D said, “if...you're the producer coming in talking to the musicians, you can direct them a lot better because you have this knowledge of all these different genres and you can pinpoint exactly what you want to go for.” He goes on to say that a producer would not want to be in a scenario where they do not know “how to tell somebody what [they're] going for because [they] didn't take the time to learn the genres that [they're] gonna [sic] have to produce.” Producer B put it this way: “You...have to understand how the instruments fit together for each genre. And that's just a matter of being familiar with it, being immersed in it.” The love of music, doing it, learning from experience, watching professionals do it, and picking out instrument parts are ways the producers

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<sup>88</sup> Producer C.

<sup>89</sup> Producer E.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Producer B.

interviewed developed their knowledge of genres. Producer E researched who played on records and which instruments they used so now he knows specifically how to achieve certain sounds that he hears. The more one listens, the more they will notice patterns in each genre.

Having a deep well of various music genres allows producers to incorporate multiple styles into their songs and create something “that no one’s done before.”<sup>92</sup> Producer B explained how every genre “informs each other, and it becomes a mutilation. We’re basically the sum of everything we’ve been influenced by.” Each genre does have its own niche, however. Producer C said that when preparing for a recording session, “I would learn what makes those genres what they are. And then I’d make sure I was educated enough to know how to get that sound and that feel in the room when I got there.” Producer E says, “there are little things that make [each genre] different, and I think you need to be aware of those things.” Similarly, Producer A stated, “each genre has a different language-specific terminology.” These differences inform the choices that the producer will make, including instrumentation, arrangement, communication style,<sup>93</sup> and selecting the players who will be hired. A pop record will need multiple programmers and synth players while a country record will incorporate steel guitar, flatpicking guitar,<sup>94</sup> and a walking bass line.<sup>95</sup> Despite the subjectivity of music and the fact that many producers will eventually narrow their focus and produce in a singular genre, “the people who have well-informed opinions tend to do well.”<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Producer A.

<sup>93</sup> Producer B.

<sup>94</sup> Producer E.

<sup>95</sup> Producer B.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

## What to Communicate Part II – Instrumentation

When asked what topics he would cover if he was teaching a college class on communication skills for the studio music producer, Producer D’s response mirrors the curriculum course presented in this study: “I’m going to make sure that all my students understand what each instrument can do, what their limits are, and what their strengths are.”

When asked specifically about knowledge and terminology of rhythm section instruments, Producer A said something similar, “it’s mostly just having some understanding of the language of each player,”<sup>97</sup> and Producer E also stressed the importance of knowing “a little bit about everything” to “communicate clearly what you’re trying to achieve.”

When communicating to drummers, the producer should know when each drumhead should be played, such as “hit the toms on beat 1 and 2 and then hit the kick drum on 3 and then hit the snare on beat 4.”<sup>98</sup> Also important is knowing how to talk about the sounds of the kick and snare drums, how to alter the sound of the kit by using mutes or playing with brushes, as well as certain drum-specific terms, such as “four-on-the-floor.”<sup>99</sup>

Specific to bass is a knowledge of bass types, such as fretless, tone, and terms such as bright, “woofy,”<sup>100</sup> and octaves. Waiting to play lower octaves until choruses and big moments can favorably impact a song’s development.<sup>101</sup> Additionally, producers should know how to communicate rhythm to their bass players, such as if the bass line is too busy.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Producer A.

<sup>98</sup> Producer E

<sup>99</sup> Producer D.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Producer E.

<sup>102</sup> Producer B.

Regarding guitars, Producer A mentioned the importance of understanding amps, wattage, and guitar types. Producer B referenced a rock-specific strumming pattern, and Producer C stressed the importance of knowing about riffs, leads, compression, delay, and reverb. Producer E explained how producers can communicate rhythms and layers, and Producer D provided specific terms: crunch, drive, “rake” (diamonds), “jangly” (rhythmic), shimmer, and arpeggio.

Keyboard-specific terminology includes pedaling (sustain and soft pedals),<sup>103</sup> the use of the left and right hands, playing with different voicings (dense or sparse) and octaves, different registers, and sounds such as organ, pad, “airy,” “melodic,” and “swells.”<sup>104</sup> Also important to communicate is rhythm, since “the keyboard is technically a percussion instrument.”<sup>105</sup> Additionally, one should note that piano and guitar share a range of notes. The musicians should be aware of this and avoid playing in the same range, or else the sound may end up “muddy.”<sup>106</sup>

One way several producers effectively communicate the sound, rhythm, or part that they want a musician to play is by using their voice. In his emailed response, Producer A put it this way: “Being able to sing (or at least approximate) sounds or parts for each instrument is helpful when you don’t know exactly what else to tell a given player (i.e. sounding out a guitar part, or singing a drum groove).”

When it comes to hiring players, “it’s important to hire the personnel that understand how you communicate, understand the terms that you’re using to communicate to them”<sup>107</sup> and who

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<sup>103</sup> Producer D.

<sup>104</sup> Producer C.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Producer E.

<sup>107</sup> Producer B.

are invested in the project. To this end, the producers all stated that they hire players who understand instrument-specific techniques. Producer B even cautioned against telling musicians how to play their instrument. He said, “when you're gonna [sic] be sharing techniques or really niche specific things with your players, as a producer, it's important to have a rapport with the people” because “it's hard to communicate that stuff with people who are not open to be communicated it with.” However, he also said, “it does help to be able to understand...how to get to the sound you're looking for.” Being able to communicate well helps a producer and the band reach the goal quicker. And while “doing something fast doesn't mean you did something well,”<sup>108</sup> it will save money.

### Conclusion

Ultimately, the producers interviewed noted that often, formally educated students primarily lack hands-on *experience* in the “real world.”<sup>109</sup> Many students start as an intern or assistant, and they ought to understand what that role entails. Most of it revolves around building and maintaining relationships<sup>110</sup> through an attitude of humility and service. A student who humbly watches, serves, and learns from those with experience<sup>111</sup> will begin to recognize effective ways to lead and communicate as a music producer. The producer must value those around them and, whether they like it or not, serve the song<sup>112</sup> with a positive attitude.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Producer E.

<sup>109</sup> Producer A.

<sup>110</sup> Producer B.

<sup>111</sup> Producer D.

<sup>112</sup> Producer A.

<sup>113</sup> Producer C.

## Chapter Five: Conclusion

The results of the interview findings and their relation to the sources listed in the literature review are discussed below and situated within the framework of the research questions guiding this study. Suggestions for implementing the research findings within collegiate music production programs via the curriculum course developed are proposed. Additionally, several limitations to the study and suggestions for further study are presented.

### Discussion of Results

Regarding RQ1, “What skills and concepts are often overlooked in collegiate courses intending to equip aspiring music producers?” the findings indicate that the skills often overlooked in collegiate courses primarily have to do with communication, which is best learned through experience in a studio environment. In his book, *Music Production Cultures*, Brenden Anthony affirms that pedagogical approaches which “include live recording creative practices...develop transferable skills including communication, psychology and critical listening and reflection.”<sup>114</sup> Others who support the integration of popular music within the classroom will find the responses of the music producers to be in alignment with their perspectives. For example, providing students with classes that mimic real world scenarios grants the students the experience needed to operate in a studio environment and workflow. Anthony attests to this in his statement, “If class activities can bridge to the profession, it helps the educational experience to feel real for students and promotes the learning of advanced concepts.”<sup>115</sup> To some degree, colleges have recognized the importance of communication in recording sessions. As noted earlier, Berklee College of Music offers three courses in music

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<sup>114</sup> Anthony, *Music Production Cultures*, 89.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

production that include training in the areas of communication and collaboration. The producers did not specifically say that instrument-specific vernacular is lacking in students (H1), but they did reinforce the importance of knowing those types of terms.

The responses to RQ2, “What knowledge and terminology of rhythm section instruments do music producers often incorporate into their communication methods with session players to successfully communicate the goal during studio rhythm recording sessions?” varied regarding specifics. However, in general, when communicating with musicians, the producers primarily referenced rhythms, tone, and register. This supports H2, which states, “Understanding basic tonal, timbral and rhythmic techniques of bass, drums, guitar, piano, and keyboard-based instruments helps a producer better articulate the stylistic vision for each song in a recording session.” These findings parallel Michael Zager’s book, *Music Production: For Producers, Composers, Arrangers, and Students*, which educators, students, and producers can reference to learn instrument-specific techniques.

In reference to RQ3, “How does knowledge of various musical genres inform the decisions and communication methods of a music producer during studio rhythm recording sessions?” the findings indicate that a knowledge of various genres aids the producer as they choose reference tracks, instruments, recording setups, and personnel, and it gives them a language by which to communicate to the musicians (H3). As mentioned in Chapter 2, many producers will specialize in one genre of music, but students should learn multiple genres.<sup>116</sup> The combination of elements from multiple genres may result in the development of something unique, as both Producers A and B mentioned.

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<sup>116</sup> Zager, *Music Production*, 31.



Collectively, the producers interviewed emphasized the importance of developing a wide vocabulary of genres and sounds through the practice of listening. By actively listening to music from all genres, producers end up with a large palette from which to draw, and these songs can be utilized as reference tracks to point musicians in the desired direction. Reference tracks can also be used in lieu of terms. To Producer B's point, producers will want to exercise caution when communicating with specific terminology. Sometimes, it may be more suitable for a producer to use abstract terms when communicating with musicians instead of overly technical musical terms.<sup>117</sup>

Ultimately, regardless of whether the producers have a thorough knowledge of the instruments, they rely heavily upon hired musicians to deliver a high-quality product reflective of the genre and vision (RQ3 Sub Question; H3). In reference to this reliance, Richard James Burgess quotes a session player: "few [producers] precisely specified parts for us to play. Even on sessions where parts are written out, rhythm section players are mostly expected to extrapolate and interpolate..."<sup>118</sup> However, further on, Burgess states, "producers who operate [with less musical and technical knowledge] have to develop systems and a vocabulary to communicate their ideas to and through the musicians..."<sup>119</sup> These vocabulary systems can often be learned by experience, but a beginner producer with prior understanding of such terminology is likely to quickly adapt to the recording studio environment and clearly communicate their vision for the music being recorded.

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<sup>117</sup> Zager, *Music Production*, 24.

<sup>118</sup> Burgess, *The Art of Music Production*, 54.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

## Implications

The overwhelming emphasis on people skills, amateur psychology, and interpersonal communication demonstrates the need for collegiate music production programs to include instruction on these topics. Colleges should be encouraged to integrate these topics by requiring production students to take classes on psychology and/or to intentionally include these concepts in the production classes. Additionally, students should be provided with a comprehensive overview of popular music genres. This overview ought to cover the variation that exists between genres regarding instrumentation, as well as key artists and bands representative of each genre. A producer must communicate the vision of a song, and sometimes this requires a specific articulation of instrument-specific parts, such as rhythms, tone, effects, and voicings. Thus, including an overview of the rhythm section instruments in music production courses would prove to be beneficial for students post college.

The collegiate curriculum project presented in Appendix B is titled “Arranging and Communication Techniques for the Studio Music Producer.” The course integrates each of the three emergent themes from the interview responses: communication, genre, and instrumentation. The aim is to equip students to be effective communicators in several ways. First, the course instructs students on basic techniques of each rhythm section instrument through labs, quizzes, and praxial exams. Second, it encourages a study of multiple genres through the integration of lectures and song analyses. Finally, common responsibilities and roles of a music producer, including amateur psychologist, organizer and visionary are discussed throughout the semester. The course concludes with a final summative project that prepares students to effectively communicate to rhythm section players during a recording session. This course could be integrated and adapted as needed to fill the gap in college music production courses.

The course “Arranging and Communication Techniques for the Studio Music Producer” has not been tested or piloted. Thus, the effectiveness of the course is unknown, and it is possible that the course attempts to cover too much in too little time. An option is to split the course into three courses: rhythm section instrument overview, popular music genre overview, and interpersonal communication techniques of the studio music producer.

### Limitations

A limitation to this study is the low number of participants. Similarly, the producers interviewed work primarily in Nashville, Tennessee. The recording process and personnel in Nashville differs from areas such as New York, L. A., Atlanta, and other areas known for music recording and production. Had the study involved more participants and included those from multiple cities, the responses to the questions may have differed.

### Recommendations for Future Research

An option for further research is to conduct a study in which one interviews session players to collect specific techniques used to affect the tone and timbre of each instrument. Many of these techniques are not necessarily written down but are developed in the studio and passed from one player to another. Aggregating all of these techniques into a single location could prove beneficial for engineers, music producers, and aspiring session players alike.

A quantitative study could be conducted in which music producers respond to questions relating to communication and arranging techniques using a scale to convey importance or agreement with various statements.

Finally, it would be beneficial to test the effectiveness of the course, “Arranging and Communication Techniques for the Studio Music Producer.” Additionally, one might consider developing and testing the effectiveness of courses specific to each area thematically represented

by the interview responses: rhythm section instrument overview, popular music genre overview, and interpersonal communication techniques of the studio music producer.

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## Appendix A: IRB Exemption Letter

# LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

March 8, 2024

Elizabeth Rajcok  
Rebecca Watson

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY23-24-1327 Arranging and Communication Techniques of the Studio Music Producer

Dear Elizabeth Rajcok, Rebecca Watson,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application per the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data-safeguarding methods described in your IRB application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(ii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation; or

**For a PDF of your exemption letter**, click on your study number in the My Studies card on your Cayuse dashboard. Next, click the Submissions bar beside the Study Details bar on the Study Details page. Finally, click Initial under Submission Type and choose the Letters tab toward the bottom of the Submission Details page. Your information sheet and final versions of your study documents, **which you must use to conduct your study**, can also be found on the same page under the Attachments tab.

This exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

Sincerely,

**G. Michele Baker, PhD, CIP**  
*Administrative Chair*  
**Research Ethics Office**



## Appendix B: Curriculum Course

### ***COURSE SYLLABUS***

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#### ***ARRANGING AND COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES FOR THE STUDIO MUSIC PRODUCER***

##### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This collegiate course is designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively function in the role of a music producer for studio recording sessions. Topics such as organization, collaboration, leadership, and communication will be studied and applied through the development of a recording project. Students will analyze the genres of pop, rock, jazz, country, and worship, and apply techniques of each genre on piano/keyboard-based instruments, electric and acoustic guitars, drums, and bass.

##### **RATIONALE**

Although many aspiring music producers have experience creating music in isolation, a great deal of creativity occurs when multiple musicians collaborate in a recording studio. An effective music producer uses knowledge of genres and of each of the instruments to communicate the vision of a project and guide the band towards achieving the goal. This course provides students with an understanding of the roles of a music producer including communication skills, foundational knowledge of the main rhythm section instruments, and contemporary genres and arrangements. This course will prepare aspiring music producers for their careers by providing clarity regarding their future roles and training in skills fundamental to success in their chosen field.

##### **I. PREREQUISITES**

- A.** 1 semester of an upper-level music recording class (or equivalent recording studio experience).
- B.** 4 semesters of aural skills and music theory.
- C.** 1 semester of music notation/transcription coursework.
- D.** Approval by instructor.

##### **II. REQUIRED RESOURCE PURCHASES**

- A.** Burgess, Richard James. *The Art of Music Production: The Theory and Practice*. 4th edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- B.** Zager, Michael. *Music Production: For Producers, Composers, Arrangers, and Students*. 2nd edition. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2012.

### III. ADDITIONAL MATERIALS FOR LEARNING

- A. Internet access
- B. Lab instruments to practice on (provided by the school for use during weekly bookable lab times)

### IV. RECOMMENDED ADDITIONAL MATERIALS FOR LEARNING

- A. Laptop
  - 1. Running current version of Windows or macOS
  - 2. Meets or exceeds the minimum requirements for the software listed below
- B. Finale, Sibelius, or other music notation software
- C. Pro Tools, Logic Pro X, or other DAW
- D. Mixerman. *Zen and the Art of Producing*. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Books, 2012.

### V. MEASURABLE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- A. Define the popular genres of pop, rock, jazz, country, and worship according to their fundamental instrumentation.
- B. Describe how individual instruments cohesively and creatively fit together to support a song.
- C. Demonstrate an ability to play basic patterns, styles, and techniques on multiple instruments.
- D. Analyze songs to determine genre, groove, rhythm, melody, and instrumentation.
- E. Prepare for a studio recording session by taking on the role of a music producer in the areas of time management, interpersonal communication, documentation, and musical direction regarding stylistically appropriate sounds, tones, and techniques.
- F. Evaluate the significance of servant leadership within a recording studio context.

### VI. COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

- A. In-Class Labs (10)

Each week, students will practice exercises on each session instrument (piano/keyboard-based instruments, drums, bass, electric guitar, and acoustic guitar), and receive feedback from the instructor. During this time, students will be encouraged to collaborate with their peers and practice communication methods taught in class.

- B. Praxis (5)**  
Throughout the semester, students will perform praxial exercises on each rhythm section instrument (piano/keyboard-based instruments, drums, bass, electric guitar, and acoustic guitar), demonstrating instrument-specific techniques, basic rhythmic patterns, and tone and timbre alterations specific to certain genres. Students will not be tested on musical proficiency but on their ability to implement the aforementioned skills to demonstrate their capability of communicating effectively with a skilled player.
- C. Instrument Quizzes (5)**  
Students will submit quizzes online that demonstrate their understanding of the tone, timbre, and rhythm techniques they will be tested on during praxis exams.
- D. Listening/Transcription Assignments (10)**  
Using the provided handout, students will listen to specified songs from varying genres and describe the role of each instrument and voice. Students will create a Nashville number chart with correct notation, form, tempo, and key. Each assignment will also require a transcription and in-depth analysis of one instrument.
- E. Weekly Reflections (12)**  
Students will write a reflection during class at the end of each week that demonstrates their understanding of the content covered during the week. Students are encouraged to list questions regarding concepts that require further clarification.
- F. Final Project Draft**  
Each student will come up with a written plan for a single song recording session. They will submit all required documentation as a draft, which will receive a pass or fail grade. Required documentation includes a demo, Nashville Number chart, lyric sheet, two or three reference tracks, a schedule for the recording session, a list of desired instrumentation, and thorough notes for every instrumentalist that conveys the vision of the song.
- G. Final Project**  
Based on instructor feedback, students will improve their drafts and submit all documentation.
- H. Summative Quiz**  
A summative quiz will be given at the end of the semester that tests the students' knowledge of all content covered in the course. It will be a timed, open-book quiz

and contain 24 multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, multiple-answer, and true/false questions, as well as 3 long-answer responses.

## VII. COURSE GRADING AND POLICIES

### A. Points

In-Class Labs (10 at 5 pts each)	50
Praxis (5 at 50 pts each)	250
Instrument Quizzes (5 at 18 pts each)	90
Listening/Transcription Assignments (10 at 30 pts each)	300
Weekly Reflections (12 at 5 pts each)	60
Final Project Draft	50
Final Project	150
Summative Quiz	50

**Total: 1000**

### B. Scale

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
940– 1000	920– 939	900– 919	860– 899	840– 859	820– 839	780– 819	760– 779	740– 759	700– 739	680– 699	0– 679

### C. Late Assignment Policy

Late assignments submitted within one week after the due date will receive a 10% deduction. An additional 10% deduction will be applied every successive week.

### D. Resubmission Policy

After receiving feedback, students have one week to apply corrections and resubmit analysis/transcription projects for a higher grade.

### E. Attendance Policy

Students must be present for the praxis presentations. If a student is unable to attend due to extenuating circumstances, they must communicate with the professor as soon as possible. The opportunity to submit a video presentation in lieu of a live performance will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

## CURRICULUM PROJECT: ANALYSIS CHART

<b>Arranging and Communication Techniques for the Studio Music Producer: RES</b>
<p><b>Required Textbooks for Class:</b>          Burgess, Richard James. <i>The Art of Music Production: The Theory and Practice</i>. 4th edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.          Zager, Michael. <i>Music Production: For Producers, Composers, Arrangers, and Students</i>. 2nd edition. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2012.</p>
<b>Identify the problem:</b>
<p>While the student understands basic recording techniques and the workflow of recording sessions, the student needs a foundational knowledge of how to arrange rhythm section instruments in popular contemporary genres to effectively communicate the vision of a song with session players. Without an understanding of how instruments function both individually and collaboratively, a music producer will struggle with choosing the correct terminology to convey the desired outcome.</p>
<b>Who are the learners and what are their characteristics?</b>
<p>Upper-level college (junior and senior) music recording/music technology majors (residential) typically ages 20-23.          Prerequisites include four semesters of aural skills and music theory, at least one semester of an upper-level music recording class or equivalent studio experience, one semester of music notation coursework, and approval by instructor.</p>
<b>What is the new desired behavior?</b>
<p>The student will be able to arrange instruments in popular genres, demonstrate basic instrument-specific tonal, timbral and rhythmic techniques on rhythm section instruments, and effectively communicate the vision of songs to be recorded using musical and technical terms.</p>
<b>What are the delivery options?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The residential course will meet for 50 minutes three times a week (M/W/F) in a recording studio.</li> <li>• The first class of the week will be a lecture, the second class will be a lab, and the nature of the third class will vary depending on the week (lecture or praxis).</li> <li>• There will be several guest lectures from professors who are experts in specific rhythm section instruments.</li> <li>• Students will be given links to songs to listen to and analyze.</li> <li>• Students will have the opportunity to schedule three 1-hour lab times a week in the studio to practice techniques on studio instruments.</li> </ul>
<b>What are the pedagogical considerations?</b>
<p>This course will provide students with a foundational understanding of popular genres and rhythm section instruments, as well as opportunities to implement that knowledge by acting in the role of a music producer in a recording studio.</p> <p>Hands-on learning experiences and listening exercises will employ and strengthen aural, musicianship, and communication skills.</p>

<b>What learning theory applies to your curriculum? Why?</b>
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Utilizing Action Learning in relation with action theory and constructivism, <sup>120</sup> this course will encourage students to intentionally take action and form knowledge from their experiences. Concepts will be constructed through analysis and hands-on implementation of course content. <sup>121</sup>
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<b>Learning Outcomes</b>
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<b>At the end of the course, the student will be able to:</b>
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- |  |
|--|
| 1. Define the popular genres of pop, rock, jazz, country, and worship according to their fundamental instrumentation. <sup>122</sup>   |
| 2. Describe how individual instruments cohesively and creatively fit together to support a song. <sup>123</sup>  |
| 3. Demonstrate an ability to play basic patterns, styles, and techniques on multiple instruments.  |
| 4. Analyze songs to determine genre, groove, rhythm, melody, and instrumentation. <sup>124</sup>   |
| 5. Prepare for a studio recording session by taking on the role of a music producer in the areas of time management, interpersonal communication, documentation, and musical direction. <sup>125</sup> |
| 6. Evaluate the significance of servant leadership within a recording studio context.  |

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<sup>120</sup> Joseph Shively, "Constructivism in Music Education," *Arts Education Policy Review* 116, no. 3 (July 2015): 128–36. doi:10.1080/10632913.2015.1011815.

<sup>121</sup> Thomas A. Regelski, *Teaching General Music in Grades 4-8: a Musicianship Approach*, (NY: Oxford University Press, 2004), 16-17.

<sup>122</sup> Fabian Holt, *Genre in Popular Music*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>123</sup> Robert Fink, Melinda Latour, and Zachary Wallmark, eds, *The Relentless Pursuit of Tone: Timbre in Popular Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>124</sup> Evan S. Tobias, "From Musical Detectives to DJs: Expanding Aural Skills and Analysis Through Engaging Popular Music and Culture," *General Music Today* 28, no. 3 (November 2014): 23-27. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1048371314558293>.

<sup>125</sup> Robert Wilsmore and Christopher Johnson, *Coproduction: Collaboration in Music Production* (New York: Routledge, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351111959>.

## CURRICULUM PROJECT: DESIGN CHART

<b>Arranging and Communication Techniques for the Studio Music Producer: RES</b>	
<b>Concept Statement:</b> This course will train aspiring music producers in popular genres, contemporary arrangement, musicianship, and communication skills in preparation for collaboration during studio recording sessions.	
<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>Content</b>
1. Define the popular genres of pop, rock, jazz, country, and worship according to their fundamental instrumentation.	<b>WEEK 1</b>
	<b>Reading:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zager: pg. 10-14; Chapter 14</li> </ul> <b>Content:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Differentiate between the genres of rock, pop, jazz, worship, and country</li> <li>• Use of reference tracks</li> <li>• Intro to piano</li> </ul>
	<b>Learning/Training Activities:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lectures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Introduction to course</li> <li>○ Genres and refs</li> <li>○ Piano basics</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Lab: piano</li> <li>• In-class activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reference Track search</li> <li>○ Discussion</li> <li>○ One-minute written expectation of course</li> <li>○ Song analysis</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<b>Assessments:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Formative:</b> Multi-song analysis (brief analysis of multiple songs)</li> <li>• <b>Formative:</b> In-class song analysis</li> <li>• <b>Summative:</b> Written expectation of course</li> </ul>
2. Describe how individual instruments cohesively and creatively fit together to support a song.	<b>WEEK 2</b>
	<b>Reading:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zager: Chapter 6</li> <li>• Burgess: Chapter 1</li> </ul> <b>Content:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the unique roles of each instrument in songs</li> <li>• Learn tone and arrangement techniques of the piano</li> </ul>
	<b>Learning/Training Activities:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lectures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Arranging instruments</li> <li>○ Piano guest lecture</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Lab: piano</li> <li>• Praxis 1: piano</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-class activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Discussion of readings</li> <li>○ One-minute written reflection</li> <li>○ Song analysis</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
3. Demonstrate an ability to play basic patterns, styles, and techniques on multiple instruments.	<p><b>Assessments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Formative:</b> In-depth multi-song analysis (of songs from prior week)</li> <li>• <b>Formative:</b> In-class song analysis</li> <li>• <b>Formative:</b> Piano/keyboard instrument quiz</li> <li>• <b>Praxis 1:</b> Demonstrate piano techniques of multiple genres</li> <li>• <b>Summative:</b> Written reflection of lecture and readings</li> </ul>
	<p><b>WEEK 3</b></p>
	<p><b>Reading:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zager: Chapter 15</li> <li>• Burgess: Chapter 2</li> </ul> <p><b>Content:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The role of the music producer as musical visionary</li> <li>• Intro to bass</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Learning/Training Activities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lectures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Music producer role: musical visionary</li> <li>○ Bass basics</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Lab: bass</li> <li>• In-class activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Discussion of readings</li> <li>○ One-minute written reflection</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<p><b>Assessments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Formative:</b> Single song analysis</li> <li>• <b>Summative:</b> Written reflection of lecture and readings</li> </ul>
<p><b>WEEK 4</b></p>	
<p><b>Reading:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zager: Chapter 1</li> <li>• Burgess: Chapter 3</li> </ul> <p><b>Content:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn tone and arrangement techniques of the bass</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Learning/Training Activities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lecture: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Bass guest lecture</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Lab: bass</li> <li>• Praxis 2: bass</li> <li>• In-class activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Discussion of readings</li> <li>○ One-minute written reflection</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	



	<p><b>Assessments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Formative:</b> Single song analysis</li> <li>• <b>Formative:</b> Bass quiz</li> <li>• <b>Praxis 2:</b> Demonstrate bass techniques of multiple genres</li> <li>• <b>Summative:</b> Written reflection of lecture and readings</li> </ul>
	<p><b>WEEK 5</b></p>
	<p><b>Reading:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zager: Chapter 2</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Content:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The role of the music producer as musical visionary (cont.)</li> <li>• Intro to acoustic guitar</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Learning/Training Activities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lectures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Music producer role: musical visionary (cont.)</li> <li>○ Acoustic guitar basics</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Lab: acoustic guitar</li> <li>• In-class activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Discussion of readings</li> <li>○ One-minute written reflection</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<p><b>Assessments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Formative:</b> Single song analysis</li> <li>• <b>Summative:</b> Written reflection of lecture and readings</li> </ul>
	<p><b>WEEK 6</b></p>
	<p><b>Reading:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Burgess: Chapter 4</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Content:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn tone and arrangement techniques of the acoustic guitar</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Learning/Training Activities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lecture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Acoustic guitar guest lecture</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Lab: acoustic guitar</li> <li>• Praxis 3: acoustic guitar</li> <li>• In-class activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Discussion of readings</li> <li>○ One-minute written reflection</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<p><b>Assessments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Formative:</b> Single song analysis</li> <li>• <b>Formative:</b> Acoustic guitar quiz</li> <li>• <b>Praxis 3:</b> Demonstrate acoustic guitar techniques of multiple genres</li> <li>• <b>Summative:</b> Written reflection of lecture and readings</li> </ul>

4. Analyze songs to determine genre, groove, rhythm, melody, and instrumentation.	<b>WEEK 7</b>
	<b>Reading:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zager: Chapter 7</li> <li>• Burgess: Chapter 9</li> </ul>
	<b>Content:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The role of the music producer as communicator</li> <li>• Intro to electric guitar</li> </ul>
	<b>Learning/Training Activities:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lectures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Music producer role: communicator</li> <li>○ Electric guitar basics</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Lab: electric guitar</li> <li>• Final project song submission</li> <li>• In-class activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Discussion of readings</li> <li>○ One-minute written reflection</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<b>Assessments:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Formative:</b> Single song analysis</li> <li>• <b>Summative:</b> Written reflection of lecture and readings</li> </ul>
	<b>WEEK 8</b>
	<b>Reading:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zager: Chapter 10</li> </ul>
	<b>Content:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn tone and arrangement techniques of the electric guitar</li> </ul>
	<b>Learning/Training Activities:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lecture: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Electric guitar guest lecture</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Lab: electric guitar</li> <li>• Praxis 4: electric guitar</li> <li>• In-class activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Discussion of readings</li> <li>○ One-minute written reflection</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<b>Assessments:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Formative:</b> Single song analysis</li> <li>• <b>Formative:</b> Electric guitar quiz</li> <li>• <b>Praxis 4:</b> Demonstrate electric guitar techniques of multiple genres</li> <li>• <b>Summative:</b> Written reflection of lecture and readings</li> </ul>
<b>WEEK 9</b>	
<b>Reading:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Burgess: Chapter 5</li> </ul>	
<b>Content:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The role of the music producer as organizer</li> <li>• Intro to drums</li> </ul>	

	<p><b>Learning/Training Activities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lectures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Music producer role: organizer</li> <li>○ Drum basics</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Lab: drums</li> <li>• Role-play</li> <li>• In-class activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Discussion of readings</li> <li>○ One-minute written reflection</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Assessments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Formative:</b> Single song analysis</li> <li>• <b>Summative:</b> Written reflection</li> </ul>
<p>5. Prepare for a studio recording session by taking on the role of a music producer in the areas of time management, interpersonal communication, documentation, and musical direction.</p>	<p><b>WEEK 10</b></p>
	<p><b>Reading:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Burgess: Chapter 13</li> </ul> <p><b>Content:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn tone and arrangement techniques of the drums</li> <li>• Intro to Final Project</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Learning/Training Activities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lecture: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Drum guest lecture</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Lab: drums</li> <li>• Praxis 5: drums</li> <li>• In-class activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prep for final project</li> <li>○ Discussion of readings</li> <li>○ One-minute written reflection</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<p><b>Assessments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Formative:</b> Single song analysis</li> <li>• <b>Formative:</b> Drums quiz</li> <li>• <b>Praxis 5:</b> Demonstrate drum techniques of multiple genres</li> <li>• <b>Summative:</b> Written reflection of lecture and readings</li> </ul>
	<p><b>WEEK 11</b></p> <p><b>Reading:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zager: Chapter 22</li> <li>• Burgess: Chapter 7</li> </ul> <p><b>Content:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The role of the music producer as “amateur psychologist”</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Learning/Training Activities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lectures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Music producer role: “amateur psychologist”<sup>126</sup></li> <li>○ Final Project demonstration</li> </ul> </li> <li>• In-class activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prep for final project</li> <li>○ Discussion of readings</li> <li>○ One-minute written reflection</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<p><b>Assessments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Formative:</b> Final Project Draft</li> <li>• <b>Summative:</b> Written reflection of lecture and readings</li> </ul>
<p>6. Evaluate the significance of servant leadership within a recording studio context.</p>	<p><b>WEEK 12</b></p> <p><b>Reading:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Burgess: Chapter 14</li> </ul> <p><b>Content:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final Project Presentations (Final Exam)</li> </ul> <p><b>Learning/Training Activities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final Project presentations</li> <li>• Course recap</li> <li>• In-class one-minute written reflection</li> </ul> <p><b>Assessments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Summative:</b> Final Project</li> <li>• <b>Summative:</b> Quiz</li> <li>• <b>Summative:</b> Written reflection of course</li> </ul>

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<sup>126</sup> “Psychology” and “psychologist” are terms used by the producers interviewed and are thus implemented into this project. “Amateur psychology” implies that the instruction and implementation of psychological techniques is not based on professional training in the field of psychology.

<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>Rational for Sequence</b>
1. Define the popular genres of pop, rock, jazz, country, and worship according to their fundamental instrumentation.	A foundational knowledge of several genres provides students with an easy way to classify and differentiate between music styles. This skill will be utilized throughout the rest of the course.
2. Describe how individual instruments cohesively and creatively fit together to support a song.	After defining differences between genres, students dive even deeper into song arrangements to start determining the unique roles of each instrument.
3. Demonstrate an ability to play basic patterns, styles, and techniques on multiple instruments.	Learning basic patterns and melodic ideas on several instruments puts the students “into the shoes” of the session players they will end up coaching as a producer and provides them with a vocabulary common to each instrumentalist.
4. Analyze songs to determine genre, groove, rhythm, melody, and instrumentation.	Once students understand genres, instrument arrangement, and how to play several instruments, they can better identify and interpret the collaboration between instruments as heard in recordings, thus forming even deeper song analyses.
5. Prepare for a studio recording session by taking on the role of a music producer in the areas of time management, interpersonal communication, documentation, and musical direction.	Students will practically assimilate all content of the course into a final project that will demonstrate their ability to function in the role of a music producer.
6. Evaluate the significance of servant leadership within a recording studio context.	After demonstrating a practical comprehension of course content through the development of the final project, students will communicate their understanding of the soft skills that contribute to successful leadership within the context of a recording studio.

## CURRICULUM PROJECT: DEVELOPMENT CHART

<b>Arranging and Communication Techniques for the Studio Music Producer: RES</b>
<b>SAMPLE OUTLINE FOR WEEK 9: THE ROLE OF A MUSIC PRODUCER AS ORGANIZER</b>
<b>Expository</b>
<p>Hello, everyone! We've talked about the role of a music producer as musical visionary and communicator – someone who knows the direction the song should go, who understands the genre, and who effectively communicates the goals with the instrumentalists, artist, and engineers. Another important skill of a music producer is organization. A music producer should be good at time management, as they are responsible for booking studio time and hiring personnel weeks in advance of a session.</p> <p>The producer should create a schedule for the day of the recording session; especially if the goal is to track multiple songs, having a rough estimate of how much time will be spent on each instrument part and each song will help the session flow smoothly and minimize the amount of time wasted. On the day of the session, the producer should come prepared with reference tracks, Nashville number charts, and notes for the musicians regarding any pre-arranged parts to be played.</p>
<b>Narrative</b>
<p>One of my friends hired me to engineer a tracking session for a few original songs. She hired two instrumentalists to play three instruments, and a day or two before the session, she hired a student producer. As I'm sure you can imagine, the planning time was very limited. The producer did all he could to prepare for the session by listening to the demos, gathering reference tracks, and seeking to capture the vision of my friend, the artist. However, the session was still unorganized; the artist sought to retain much of the creative control, song arrangements were altered mid-session, and the charts were not effectively communicating to the instrumentalists how the songs should be played. This lack of vision, communication, and organization meant the tracks were not very usable, and my friend will likely schedule another session to record the same songs.</p>

### Graphical Organizer

This graph is a hierarchy that situates the content of the specified lecture within the context of the entire course.

From left to right, it highlights skills of a **MUSIC PRODUCER**:

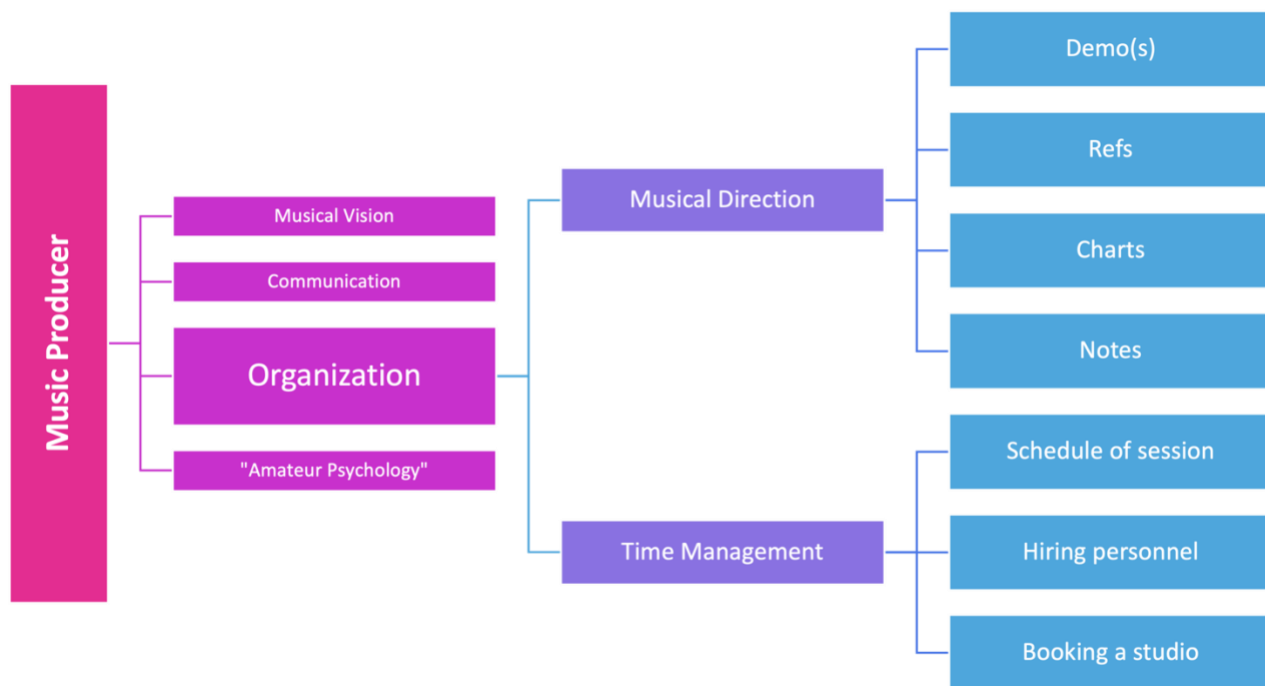
**Vision**

**Communication**

**Organization** demonstrated by *musical direction* through demos, refs, charts, and notes for instrumentalists, and *time management skills*, which involve scheduling the run-down of the session, booking a studio, and hiring personnel.

**“Amateur Psychology”**

This particular lecture covers the **organizational** skills of a music producer.



### Gagne's Nine Events of Instruction

Instruction Event	Describe how each instructional event will be addressed in your instructional unit. Cite a reference from your text as to why this approach will be effective.
1. Gain attention	<p>The instructor will begin class saying, "Let's role-play. You are the producer, and I am a new worship artist who wants to record two songs and sound like Lauren Daigle. I already played the songs live for you and you have agreed to produce for me, but we haven't recorded anything yet.</p> <p>In a moment, I will give you a few minutes to write down as many of the 'next steps' you can think of, particularly those involving organization."<sup>127</sup></p>
2. Inform learners of objectives	<p>The teacher will state that the purpose of the brief exercise listed above is for the students to get in the habit of thinking like a music producer, thus simulating real life.<sup>128</sup> The producer is the individual who sees the project through from its beginning to its end, and it's important to envision and organize the entire project from the outset.</p>
3. Stimulate recall of prior learning	<p>After the students write down the next steps, they read their answers out loud and list the action steps under three categories: Musical Vision, Communication, and Organization. The former two were discussed in prior lectures, and the latter is the topic of the new lecture. Dividing the steps into these categories will demonstrate to the students how past lectures are linked with the current lecture.<sup>129</sup></p>
4. Present the content	<p>Using a story, the instructor will demonstrate what happens when a music producer is not organized and well-prepared for a session.<sup>130</sup> Next, the instructor will use a PowerPoint presentation to present concepts like reference tracks, demos, charts, notes for musicians, booking studio time, hiring personnel, and scheduling the session.<sup>131</sup> The instructor will also incorporate the responses of the students into the lecture.</p>
5. Guide learning	<p>Students will be given templates for Nashville number charts, recording session schedule, and budgeting. They will also be provided with samples of the required documents for the final project. These will serve as a visual and directional guide for the next activity.<sup>132</sup></p>

<sup>127</sup> Linda B. Nilson, *Teaching at Its Best: A Research-Based Resource for College Instructors*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2016), ProQuest Ebook Central, 224-225.

<sup>128</sup> Regelski, *Teaching General Music*, 15.

<sup>129</sup> Nilson, *Teaching at Its Best*, 323.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 192.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 362.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 353.



6. Elicit performance (practice)	Students will spend some time in-class prepping for the final project by editing the schedule and charts, drafting emails/texts to send to potential instrumentalists and engineers, gathering reference tracks, and making notes specific to each instrumentalist. <sup>133</sup>
7. Provide feedback	As students are working on their documents, the instructor is available to help provide direction and clarification. Students will be encouraged to share their ideas with the class to receive feedback from both the instructor as well as fellow students. Students should be able to note their progress and feel inspired to continue learning and growing, and integrating feedback into a guided discussion is a way to bring the class time to a close. <sup>134</sup>
8. Assess performance	Students will have a few days to submit the initial draft of their documents through the online course platform for instructor evaluation. The instructor will provide a pass/fail grade and written feedback for further improvements. <sup>135</sup>
9. Enhance retention and transfer	The class will close with a recap facilitated by the professor but verbalized by students. The instructor will ask leading questions to encourage each student to list an attribute, action step, or characteristic necessary for an effective and organized recording session. <sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Nilson, *Teaching at Its Best*, 314.

<sup>134</sup> Regelski, *Teaching General Music*, 60.

<sup>135</sup> Nilson, *Teaching at Its Best*, 350.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

## CURRICULUM PROJECT: IMPLEMENTATION CHART

<b>Arranging and Communication Techniques for the Studio Music Producer: RES</b>	
<b>Physical Item</b>	<b>Rationale for Use</b>
Lecture Notes	The instructor will reference a brief outline of the lecture to assist with the flow of the class. <sup>137</sup>
High-quality audio examples	Many lectures will incorporate musical examples. Since this course seeks to instruct students to listen critically, high quality audio is recommended when presenting songs and searching for reference tracks. If the songs are not purchased and downloaded, Apple Music and Tidal are high-quality streaming services to consider. Alternatively, YouTube <sup>138</sup> could be used for in-the-moment examples.
Sound System	This course emphasizes contemporary arranging techniques. “Developing your “ear” by listening analytically to the best recordings from your target market, as well as recordings from other genres and eras is imperative.” <sup>139</sup> Using a high-quality sound system along with high-quality reference tracks provides students with the best environment and opportunity to properly analyze the instrumentation and arrangement of the selected pieces.
Textbook	The instructor should be aware of the material students are reading each week and be ready to answer any questions that may arise from the textbook readings. The textbook can also be used as a launchpad to ask students questions about the topic at hand to gauge their understanding of the information. <sup>140</sup>
Printed/uploaded student response sheets	The instructor will provide handouts for students to write responses either on personal laptops or on paper. <sup>141</sup> Including digital handouts also allows students who are absent to make up work missed in class.
Chairs and desks	Students will be seated. <sup>142</sup> This lecture has a written component, so students will need desks (or personal laptops) on which to write responses to question prompts.

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<sup>137</sup> Nilson, *Teaching at Its Best*, 193.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>139</sup> Richard James Burgess, *The Art of Music Production: The Theory and Practice*, 4th edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 30.

<sup>140</sup> Nilson, *Teaching at Its Best*, 308.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 354.

<sup>142</sup> Mindy Damon, “Implementation Challenges in Curriculum Design,” (online lecture, Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA). July 19, 2018, 1:33.

Task	Rationale for Task
Research current advancements and improvements related to the topic	Each semester, it is wise to review teaching resources and examine current trends to provide students with the most up-to-date and applicable content possible. Students model instructor behavior, and when a teacher demonstrates an attitude of constant learning, the students are more apt to be constant learners as well. <sup>143</sup>
Prepare PowerPoint presentation	The instructor will compile simple lists and visuals to demonstrate the teaching material. <sup>144</sup> It is good to cater to various learning types, and “strongly visual learners get the most out of flowcharts, diagrams, mind and concept maps, pictures, diagrams, graphs, time lines, matrices, videos, animations, and demonstrations.” <sup>145</sup> Each successive semester, the instructor will integrate any new material based on current research to ensure accuracy and relevancy.
Prepare discussion questions	Although there may not be time to cover all of them, preparing questions in advance will help the instructor guide and facilitate discussions. <sup>146</sup>
Record a demo and gather reference tracks to demonstrate final project	To demonstrate the first portion of the final project, the instructor will pre-record a simple demo and locate reference tracks that represent the desired direction of the song that will be recorded. Modeling the project will give students a better understanding of the desired assignment outcome. <sup>147</sup>
Set up several keyboards with headphones	Students will be given time during class to begin working on their final projects, and one step is to create a Nashville Number Chart. By having keyboards available, several students will be able work on this phase of the project. <sup>148</sup>
Create Assignment Templates -Nashville Number Chart, Schedule, Budget	To aid with formatting, the instructor will create and upload blank templates for students to use as they begin preparing the draft of their final project. The instructor will fill out the templates during class to “explicitly describe the steps and flow of...thinking.” <sup>149</sup> During class, students will have the opportunity to ask questions about the templates. The instructor will also provide completed examples of the documents needed for the final project and upload them to the online learning platform for students to reference as needed. <sup>150</sup>

<sup>143</sup> Torrey Trust, “Professional Learning Networks Designed for Teacher Learning,” *Journal of Digital Learning in Teacher Education* 28, no. 4 (June 2012): 138. doi:10.1080/21532974.2012.10784693.

<sup>144</sup> Nilson, *Teaching at Its Best*, 79.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 319.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 215.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 188.

<sup>148</sup> Damon, “Implementation Challenges,” 1:41.

<sup>149</sup> Nilson, *Teaching at Its Best*, 276.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 353.

<b>Formative Assessment Type</b>	<b>Assessment Details</b>
<b>Draft of Final Project</b>	The student will submit a draft of the final project. This draft will include a demo of an original song along with a list of reference tracks in the genre of the final project. The student will list the desired instrumentation and start compiling notes for each instrumentalist. Other required documents include a Nashville number chart, a recording session schedule, a recording budget, and drafted messages to potential instrumentalists with information pertaining to the recording date, genre, and hiring budget. This assessment is pass/fail and will demonstrate the student's understanding of the course materials. The instructor will provide feedback for the student to implement before the submission of the final project.

## CURRICULUM PROJECT: EVALUATION CHART

<b>Arranging and Communication Techniques for the Studio Music Producer: RES</b>		
<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>Formative Assessment Plan</b>	<b>Rationale for Formative Assessment Type</b>
1. Define the popular genres of pop, rock, jazz, country, and worship according to their fundamental instrumentation.	Students will briefly analyze multiple songs from various genres and list the instrumentation of each song.	This formative assessment will help students craft an initial understanding of the big picture concepts to be covered in the course, <sup>151</sup> namely, the fact that instrumentation heavily impacts the outcome of a song.
2. Describe how individual instruments cohesively and creatively fit together to support a song.	Students will expand the song analyses listed above by delving deeper into the instrumentation of the songs. They will outline the instrumental “map” of each song and describe the ways each instrument contributes to each section of every song.	After several lectures, students will start to have a better grasp of the course content. This assessment directly builds upon an earlier assessment, so students will be able to easily note their growth, and when a student is aware of their learning, the knowledge developed is more likely to be deep and long-lasting. <sup>152</sup>
3. Demonstrate an ability to play basic patterns, styles, and techniques on multiple instruments.	The class days that are lab times allow students to practice on the required instruments and receive feedback before the praxis demonstrations.	By giving students a chance to demonstrate their skills on instruments during a lab time, they can receive and apply feedback that will help prepare them for graded praxis presentations. <sup>153</sup>
4. Analyze songs to determine genre, groove, rhythm, melody, and instrumentation.	Students will collaboratively listen to, analyze, and discuss songs in class.	Analyzing songs in class will allow students to learn from each other, especially if linking questions are integrated into the discussion. <sup>154</sup> This activity will also demonstrate that the students are capable of successfully completing the summative listening assignments.

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<sup>151</sup> Nilson, *Teaching at Its Best*, 191.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 286-288.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 217.

<p>5. Prepare for a studio recording session by taking on the role of a music producer in the areas of time management, interpersonal communication, documentation, and musical direction.</p>	<p>Students will submit a draft of the final project which will include all aspects of the final project: a demo, a Nashville Number Chart, two or three reference tracks, a recording budget, a schedule for the recording session, and musical notes for each instrumentalist.</p>	<p>The final project has the most points attached to it. Submitting a draft of the assignment allows students to receive and implement feedback before submitting the final project.<sup>155</sup> The time between the draft and final submission also gives students opportunities to ask clarifying questions regarding the final project.</p>
<p><b>Learning Outcomes</b></p>	<p><b>Summative Assessment Plan</b></p>	<p><b>Rationale for Summative Assessment Type</b></p>
<p>6. Evaluate the significance of servant leadership within a recording studio context.</p>	<p>Students will demonstrate their comprehension of the soft skills of an effective leader on the written portion of the summative quiz.</p>	<p>This course does not require students to implement their recording plan. Thus, a written explanation of significant interpersonal skills related to servant leadership is needed to demonstrate student comprehension of this portion of the course content.</p>

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<sup>155</sup> Nilson, *Teaching at Its Best*, 350.

### Evaluation and Reflection

<b>Issue/Strategy</b>	<b>Rationale for Changing</b>
Assign point values to weekly summative written reflective assignments. Point values have been added to syllabus and other assignment point values have been adjusted as necessary.	Assigning graded assessments that are to be completed in-class will encourage students to attend class. It is also important for students to reflect on what they are learning. Writing about the content helps solidify concepts and provides an opportunity to mull over any content that may have been confusing so the instructor can bring further clarity.
Praxis assignments have not been fleshed out. Without these integral pieces, the entire curriculum project loses importance. The curriculum can seem broad since I am hoping to teach fundamentals of 6 instruments in 12 weeks. However, what I am looking to teach is not quite as broad as it may seem, and that deserves clarification.	The essential skills I want students to demonstrate in the praxis assignments are rhythmic patterns, instrument-specific techniques (brushes on snare, palm-muting an acoustic guitar, tremolo effect on electric piano, etc.), how to alter the timbre and tone of the instruments, and how unique instrumental parts fit with other instruments in a song. Students do not necessarily need to know how to play proficiently on each instrument, but they should be able to implement the aforementioned skills in order to demonstrate their capability of communicating effectively with a skilled player.
Include new prerequisites to reflect knowledge needed to succeed in course.	Approval of instructor and one semester of music notation have been added as course prerequisites to ensure students have the skills necessary to be successful in the course.
Lecture titles have been included in the Design Chart.	Lecture titles will clarify what will be specifically covered each week. Although the lecture content is listed under the “content” heading, having a concise title under the “learning/training activity” will bring more cohesiveness to the chart.
The final project draft and two in-class song analyses have been added to applicable charts.	As I have taken the course, I have developed a clearer understanding of assessment types, and I will want to integrate what I have learned into my final project submission. I like the thought of formative assignments that students can take in class, so the charts reflect these updates.
The graphic outline will be refined and simplified. The chart has been simplified and the hierarchy is now left-to-right.	I had a bit of difficulty understanding the graphical organizer assignment and I created a graph for the entire course instead of focusing on a particular lecture. This is partially because the lecture I chose to create it for was one of the last ones. The initial chart has been simplified to situate the specific lecture content within a broad context of the entire course.

<p>The final project draft has been included on all charts as necessary.</p>	<p>Assigning pass/fail formative assessments gives students a way to demonstrate their knowledge and skills and receive feedback without feeling the pressure of a summative project with a high point value attached to it. The final project in this course contains different documentation standards than the rest of the course, so requiring a draft of the project will allow the instructor to clarify student submissions before the final project.</p>
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## ***FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT***

### **MUSC 3\_\_ - ARRANGING AND COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES FOR THE STUDIO MUSIC PRODUCER**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

#### **SONG ANALYSIS**

**SONG BASICS:** On a separate page, create a Nashville Number Chart for the song and include the following information: song title, key, tempo, time signature, form, chord progression. (5pts)

**INSTRUMENTATION:** List each instrument group (including lead and background vocals) heard in the song and describe the role of each in every section.  
(Add rows as needed).

<b>Instrument (1pt)</b>	<b>Appearance in song sections (1pt)</b>	<b>Role of instrument per section (8pts)</b>
<i>Example: Acoustic Guitar</i>	<i>Example: Intro, V1, (out in C1), V2, (out in C2) Bridge, C3</i>	<p><i>Example:</i></p> <p><b>Intro:</b> solo instrument – fingerpicking sets the mood of the song.</p> <p><b>Verse 1:</b> fingerpicking keeps the mood going. Removing the AG from C1 allows the piano to shine.</p> <p><b>V2:</b> fingerpicking harkens back to the mood of V1. Strumming layer increases the rhythmic movement and adds energy to the song.</p> <p>Removing the AG from C2 allows the piano to shine again. The rhythmic strumming is replaced by a percussion shaker.</p> <p><b>Bridge:</b> first half: diamonds with plucks in the vocal spaces puts focus on the lead vocal. Second half: rhythmic movement builds the song into the final chorus.</p> <p><b>C3:</b> As one of the key players throughout the piece, the inclusion of the AG at the conclusion brings cohesiveness to the entire song.</p>

**INSTRUMENT TRANSCRIPTION:** Using notation software, transcribe key portions (12-bar minimum) of this week's instrument of focus (piano/keyboard-based instruments, bass, acoustic guitar, electric guitar, or drums). Melodies, harmonies/voicings, and rhythms should be noted.

Attach a pdf or include screenshots from notation software. (5pts)

**INSTRUMENT ANALYSIS:** Referencing your transcription and either lecture notes or scholarly source(s), write a detailed analysis (150-word minimum) of the instrument's role in this song (technique, tone, timbre, rhythmic patterns, etc.). (10pts)

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## ***SUMMATIVE QUIZ***

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### MUSC 3\_\_ - ARRANGING AND COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES FOR THE STUDIO MUSIC PRODUCER

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Fill-in-the-blank with the correct answer.** (Each *blank* is worth 1 point).

List the functional typology of a music producer next to the correct definition.

1. A producer who elevates the recording and career of the artist by optimizing the artist's identity: \_\_\_\_\_ (*Collaborative*)
2. A producer to supports the self-directed vision of an artist. \_\_\_\_\_ (*Facilitative*)
3. A producer who produces themselves: \_\_\_\_\_ (*Artist*)
4. A producer who acts as a mentor and counsels, advises, and guides the artist without micromanaging. \_\_\_\_\_ (*Consultative*)
5. A producer who finds talent \_\_\_\_\_ (*Enablative*)
6. A producer who infuses music with a personal identity. Often a writer, instrumentalist, vocalist, and engineer. \_\_\_\_\_ (*Auteur*)
7. List two influential producers from the mid-1900's: \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (2pts total)  
(*Two from this list: Brian Wilson, Phil Spector, George Martin, Quincy Jones, Berry Gordy, Tony Visconti*)
8. Traditional values were a common theme in the earlier songs of what genre?  
\_\_\_\_\_ (*country*)
9. According to Burgess, developing your \_\_\_\_\_ (*ear*) by listening analytically to the best recordings from your target market and other genres and eras is imperative.

**Select all relevant answers.** (Each question is worth 1 point)

10. Which of the following are items a producer should bring to a recording session?
  - Demo\*
  - Reference tracks\*
  - Guitar picks
  - Chords over lyrics chart

11. Which of the following skills were covered in-depth in this course?
- Musical Vision\*
  - Communication\*
  - Engineering
  - Organization\*
  - Interpersonal Relationships\*
  - Promoting and Advertising

**Provide the correct answer (true or false).** (Each question is worth 1 point)

12. In the pop genre, vocals take a backseat so the music production can shine. \_\_\_\_\_  
False\*
13. In the country genre, “twang” is only heard in vocal stylizations, not other instrumentation. \_\_\_\_\_ False\*
14. Typically, a producer will have the artist handle budgeting. \_\_\_\_\_ False\*
15. Drummers will often tune certain drumheads to notes in the key of the song. \_\_\_\_\_  
True\*
16. Preproduction describes the producer’s responsibilities after everything is recorded but before the music is mixed. \_\_\_\_\_ False\*
17. There is a specific process that all music producers must adhere to in order to make a great record. \_\_\_\_\_ False\*
18. Assistants and interns who quietly do what is asked are respected more highly than those who seek to give musical and technical input. \_\_\_\_\_ True\*
19. According to Zager, pristine engineering and immaculate production remain a constant in all forms of recorded music except hip-hop. \_\_\_\_\_ False\*
20. Reverb, delay, modulation, and distortion are common effects used on bass guitar. \_\_\_\_\_ False\*
21. Since drummers don’t play chords, they don’t read Nashville number charts. \_\_\_\_\_  
False\*

**Select the correct answer.** (Each question is worth 1 point).

22. The instrument with the most overdubs is typically:
- Acoustic guitar
  - Bass
  - Electric guitar\*
  - Drums

23. This concept is defined as patterns or “grooves”:
- Meter
  - Rhythm\*
  - Harmonies
  - Tempo
  - Dynamics
24. The rhythm section includes all of the following except:
- Drums
  - Bass
  - Vocals\*
  - Electric guitar
  - Acoustic guitar
  - Bass
25. Consider your strongest and weakest skill or technique (as covered in this course). In five sentences or longer, thoroughly explain how your strength is an asset in the studio environment and describe how you can develop in that area of weakness beyond this course. (10 points)
26. In five sentences or longer, thoroughly explain the importance of communication and interpersonal relationships and how each relate to the concept of servant leadership in the role of a music producer. Include a Bible verse. (10 points)
27. In five sentences or longer, thoroughly assess how vision and organization correlate to a successful recording session. (6pts)

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### Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. In your experience, what are five of the most valuable skills that contribute to the success of music producers in the context of a recording studio?
  - a. Could you please elaborate on your answers?
2. If you were going to teach a college class on arranging commercial music in the recording studio during a session, what topics would you cover and why?
3. If you were going to teach a college class on communication skills for the studio music producer, what topics would you cover and why?
4. What knowledge and terminology of the rhythm section instruments (such as playing techniques or ways to achieve specific sounds) do you incorporate into your communication methods with session players during studio rhythm recording sessions?
  - a. How does the incorporation of this knowledge influence the success of your project?
  - b. How much do you depend on your session players to know and implement these techniques?
5. How does your comprehension of various musical genres (jazz, country, etc.) inform your decisions and communication methods during studio rhythm recording sessions?
  - a. How did you develop this knowledge of musical genres?
  - b. How does your aptitude in this area influence the success of your project?
6. Please describe communication methods of music producers, such as musical terms, instrument-specific direction and techniques, song, band, or musical genre references, that you have found to be effective.
  - a. Are there any methods that have been ineffective?

- b. Could you please elaborate?
7. In your experience with students who have received formal training in this area, what skills or knowledge base have you noticed tends to be lacking?
  8. Is there anything else relating to this topic that you would consider an essential concept to teach in a college classroom context?



## Appendix D: Transcribed and Edited Interviews

### Interview with Producer A

#### Elizabeth

In your experience, what are five of the most valuable skills that contribute to the success of music producers in the context of a recording studio?

#### Producer A

Okay, number one is being a little bit of an amateur psychologist and I'm not joking. It can be a really volatile process in the studio.

...

Usually not so much with the musicians because they're there all day, every day; it's what they do. But when you're working, for instance, with a singer-artist who spends most of their time on stage and a little bit of time in the studio. – I've been on that side of the microphone before. I've been the person being produced, and when someone's got you under a microscope for sometimes days at a time...when someone's saying, "this is not good, we have to keep working for it," that can get to your ego a little bit. So, when you're the producer, you're trying to avoid an explosion of emotions. And I've done this for a long time. It's not my strongest gift, but I have learned over the years that there's an extent to which you have to try to nurture people. Be it emotionally and not just from the technical standpoint of being a producer. So that would be the first thing.

Second would be the ability to listen. And really be an audience. Your job as a producer is to be an audience. You're trying to judge performances both from the total professionals in the studio, the recording musicians, again, who are there all the time. Even with them, sometimes you have to say, "that's a great idea; it's not working as well as this idea might work, so let's try this." You're just trying to think... "if I'm sitting in the audience listening to this as a finished product, what would I wanna hear?" You're doing that throughout the entire process of making the record with the hope that what you arrive at the end is something that is going to last. ...So that's number 2.

People skills is huge, but...that might fall in the category of the first thing.

All of us who do this tend to be fairly intense in terms of our perfectionism. It manifests in different ways with different people. But you have to be really careful. I've been guilty in the past of letting that perfectionism sort of affect my demeanor, which then everybody else sees and sometimes can kind of bring the room down. And you have to learn how to manage your own emotions. So, it's like any relationship if [we're having] a heated discussion about something that we disagree about, if I start to get really emotionally charged about it, I lose my ability to think and to argue, and I might start attacking you simply because we disagree, and that's stupid. This is sort of our culture in general right now. This happens in the studio sometimes. This is just all interpersonal relationship is, so much of it is about learning how to manage your own emotions so that you can help to manage other people's emotions. Even without trying.

And I guess the big number four would be having a really wide musical vocabulary, so that whatever you're in the studio working on, you have authority to speak into it. For instance, if somebody called me and asked me to help produce a speed metal record, I would turn that down because it's not really my thing. At all. There are guys that I know who are really into it and are really good at it, and I would say, "you probably want to work with them." I would do that

whether I was being called to produce it, or to play drums on it. I can do probably 75 or 80% of the things that I would typically be asked to do. That's the role of producer or studio musician, but there's some stuff that I probably would say no to. But the way to avoid having to say no is to have the widest possible vocabulary. So, I've got kids...who keep me young in terms of the music that I'm listening to.

...

The fifth thing I would think of is have a working knowledge of the medium within which you're working for. If it's Pro Tools, if it's Logic, whatever DAW you're working on, having an understanding - at least a cursory understanding - of all of the technology and what it does, the outboard gear that you're working with, compressors, EQs, reverbs, all that stuff. I've always been interested in that stuff, but as I've started mixing more over the last 10 years, I've gotten more familiarized with all of it. I was able to speak to an engineer in those terms back in the day. - I've been doing this for most of [number] years now - but the last 10 years, that part of my ... vocabulary...has grown, and it's really helpful as a producer to be able to speak that language with the people you're working with.

...

### **Elizabeth**

Question number two is, "if you were going to teach a college class on arranging commercial music in the recording studio during a session, what topics would you cover and why?"

### **Producer A**

Some of the topics probably overlap with the answers to the previous question. You know, teaching ... a class on amateur psychology and people skills. Again, given where we are culturally and just the way that we attack each other over simple disagreements, we could all use that class. Just learning how to interact with people in a civil way because we're all human beings with intrinsic worth created in God's image, I don't have the right to attack you simply because we have a disagreement about something. We can argue aggressively, but still, at the end of the day, you're a human being. If I was going to set up a college course, one of the required courses would be learning to interact with people in a civil way, and you could probably spend three years teaching that class. ... These are things that are just critical. That would be a huge topic.

Part of what you do as a producer is arrange, and I've always been heavily into vocal arrangement. I've done some orchestration. - I love orchestration. My dad was a brilliant orchestrator and I have a soft spot for orchestrators...everything that I do as a producer and arranger, I learned it through hard knocks. I grew up in the recording studio. My dad was both a music minister and a recording musician and an orchestrator, so I learned a lot of this stuff through actually watching.

...

I can't learn this stuff out of a book; it's not how I learn. I can read the stuff and sort of assimilate it, but until I watch somebody do it and learn visually all of a sudden, when I started doing it, it was like "oh, oh, I get this now."

...

Interpersonal skills. And this is something that I say all the time...: "Whether you're a player or an arranger, a singer, whatever you're doing, you have to serve the song." Don't play the drums, don't arrange the vocals, don't play the guitar. Play the song. Arrange for the song. Even if you don't like this song, your job is to get inside the song and serve it. So that would probably be a good class which would encompass many things like listening and getting past your own tastes and or agenda. When you're in my line of work, sometimes you absolutely love the material you're working on and other times you don't. And it's your job to make it great, regardless of what you're doing.

...

### **Elizabeth**

You kind of touched on this so we can go a little deeper. Question three was "if you were going to teach a college class on communication skills for the studio music producer, what topics would you cover and why?"

### **Producer A**

Yeah, again, this is gonna overlap with the first thing I started saying on the first question. We have to learn to communicate with grace and mercy, even in volatile situations which again, do happen in the recording studio. How I treat others is not dependent on how I'm being treated. I have a choice as to how I can respond to someone that's not treating me well. I can respond in kind, or I can respond with grace and mercy and try to defuse the tension. So that's a really huge thing.

And again, we're gonna keep coming back to this: Having the vocabulary to communicate clearly what it is that you're trying to get out of somebody and do it in a way that's gonna make them want to give you what you're looking for. So, if I say "boy, that guitar track you just played was so fantastic, I'm almost tempted. That's not what I was thinking, but that might be better than my idea. I'm gonna keep that; let's try this - I had this other thought I want you to do." That empowers the person. If I say, "I hate what you just played, let's try something different." They're automatically like, "oh, no, I'm a failure," or "this guy's just a jerk," and, either way, it's not necessarily going to get us ... Now I know of great legendary stories of producers who operate like that and somehow get what they want. That has not been my experience. Yeah, that would be the biggest thing, I think.

### **Elizabeth**

So, kind of following that in terms of vocabulary, question 4 is "what knowledge and terminology of the rhythm section instruments, such as playing techniques or ways to achieve specific sounds, do you incorporate into your communication methods with session players during studio rhythm recording sessions?"

### **Producer A**

Well, it's mostly just having some understanding of the language of each player. All I play is drums and a little bit of keyboards. Drums is my primary instrument and I play enough keyboards to sort of arrange and write songs (if I get into that room, which I do occasionally). Sometimes I program. Those are the only two instruments that I'm really qualified to say much about, the rest of it, I've just had to learn [by] listening to guitarists and bass players and string players. I record a lot of live string sessions and brass sections, and you listen to the way people speak to each other. The way arrangers and orchestrators speak to them. You look at the chart, you learn the language. Some people are very proper in the way they write terminology on music scores. The other people just write very Americanized kind of funny stuff. And you just have to learn to kind of flow through all of these different ecosystems and understand some part of the language that you're speaking to each of these players.

With guitar players, for instance, we talk about amps and wattage. I probably know more about the guitars themselves than the amps. So, I'll say, "I'm not loving the way that Fender Stratocaster sounds on this part. Could we do it with the Les Paul instead or... an SG, or something like that?" I know enough about guitars to have that conversation. Most guitar players are gonna arrive at that conclusion without me even saying anything. But if we're back and forth on something and I'm trying to find it and I don't know what it is and he hasn't found it yet, I'll just say, "hey, pick up that guitar and let's see what it sounds like." 'Cause I generally know what that guitar is gonna do.

Having a (?) understanding of what these different things...being able to [have] that conversation with people in a way that's meaningful to them... I've got one guitar player friend who makes fun of me. He says, "I love the way [Producer A], if he doesn't know exactly what to tell me in terms of what thing I should be playing, he'll just start singing me the part." So I'll start making this funny guitar sound with my [voice] and he'll go, "oh, I know exactly what" pick up a guitar and start doing it. Everybody comes to it a little bit differently.

And again, the guitar is just one example, but you kind of have to generally apply that across the board. And I have better understandings of some instrumentation than others, and when I feel like I'm out of my depth, I let somebody else do the talking. You learn that lesson the hard way too. When I was your age, sometimes I would try to have an answer just to look smart. And the more I would talk, the more I realized I'm...making a fool of myself, so sometimes you learn just to keep your mouth shut.

### **Elizabeth**

Sub question to that is, "how does the incorporation of this knowledge influence the success of your project?"

### **Producer A**

Well, if you can communicate what you want, you're more likely to get it. It's funny because I hire people, and again of course I'm speaking mostly about recording session musicians now, because if you're working with an artist, they brought you in to produce. But even with them, no matter who it is that you're working with, if you're able to communicate to them what you want, as opposed to just saying, "no, that wasn't it, let's try something different." "No, no, no, I I didn't...Here's...you didn't sing that pass...I don't believe you." I say that to singers a lot: "I did not believe you." "I know you're capable of drawing me in." And you remember, I said my job is to be the audience. Well, if I'm sitting here watching you sing this, I

don't believe you yet. Now, don't take that as a discouragement, I'm trying to get you to talk to me with the way that you're singing, so "I don't believe you." That's something that I say.

With session musicians, generally...75% of the time, the people that I'm calling to do these jobs, I'm calling them because I know they're probably gonna arrive at what I want before I ever ask them. I already know their cachet ... I know their vocabulary, and so they're probably gonna start doing what I'm hearing in my head before I ever even ask for it.

But then we'll get to a certain place where I'm like, "Okay, we're not there yet. What is this missing?" And if I have some sense of what it is that I want, I'm much more likely to get that than to just keep saying, "you're playing orange and I want purple." That doesn't help anybody. Does that make sense?

### **Elizabeth**

Yeah, because when you actually know what you want, it helps to direct your musicians. And there's not as much confusion.

### **Producer A**

Yes, these are basic life skills. If I'm trying to tell you I wanna go have ice cream but all I'm saying is, "man, I just, I I what can we do together? I I I want something sweet. You come up with it. What should we do?" And you're gonna keep offering me ideas? And I'm gonna keep saying "no, no, that's not what I want." When I could just say, "I want some ice cream." That's kind of production in a nutshell: tell people what you want.

### **Elizabeth**

So, you kind of mentioned this, "How much do you depend on your session players to know and implement those techniques?"

### **Producer A**

It's incalculable. And you could ask any producer this question. One of the most horrifying things as a producer is to be thrust into a situation where you have to work with people outside of your sphere. Now, there are times where I've become aware of somebody new and I know their work and I'm like, "I wanna try this person." That's different. But if someone wants me to produce a band, they're not really session players. They may be amazing, but I've never worked with these people, I don't know their language.

I've been in this situation three or four times throughout my career and you have to go into it and kind of learn they may or may not speak your language, and you might not speak theirs. And so, trying to figure out "how do we get to where this needs to go" when they're speaking German and I'm speaking Arabic...

So, to answer your question specifically, the people that I hire, I am hiring specifically because I know what they do, what they bring to the table. And, like I said a second ago, 8 times out of 10, they're gonna do what I was thinking before I ever even asked for it. ... It's critical. It's everything.

### **Elizabeth**

Shifting gears a little bit, how does your comprehension of various musical genres like jazz, country, etcetera inform your decisions and communication methods during studio rhythm recording sessions?

**Producer A**

This goes to a couple of things.

First of all is vocabulary - the bigger vocabulary you have. Even if I'm working on a track that's supposed to sound like, I don't know, Katy Perry, pick an artist. There might be some element of the track that there's some interesting jazz influence. So like Jacob Collier's a good example. - Jacob is a fascinating character because ... it's pop music with all of this heady jazz, harmonic influence. I tell people he's maybe... I don't know that he's simply one of the greatest musicians of our time, he may be one of the greatest musicians that has ever existed in the history of mankind.

And that's actually a great example. You could be working on something heavily, heavily pop that doesn't really dabble over here in that highly intellectual realm. And yet, if I have an understanding of that, even on just a cursory level, we can be working on, I don't know, a Colby Caillat track, a Madison Cunningham track, a Lizzie McAlpine track, and I could still say "ah, there's this thing that I heard Brad Mehldau do on a piano record ... is there any way we could incorporate it into this turn around between the first chorus and the second verse?"

Again, I'm just trying to come up with examples off of the top of my head. But if I wasn't listening to all of this other stuff over here, if I'm not listening to Bach and Debussy and Ravel and anybody else... If all I'm listening to is Florida Georgia Line, my vocabulary is so stunted. Now, I might be working on a song that needs to sound like Florida Georgia Line, but if I have other tools in the toolbox, I might be able to make something out of this that no one's done before. Or at least that's different from everything. It's really important to try to have a big palette from which to draw.

...

**Elizabeth**

So, how did you develop this knowledge of musical genres?

**Producer A**

Oh, just by listening. I mean, obviously in my formative years I was studying, but even then, like I said, I don't learn really well in the academic sense, I learn from watching, hearing, doing. And, to answer your question, it's all just about listening.

Well, and I'm [age]. At my age, if you want to stay relevant, and this is true for any age, if you wanna stay relevant in the line of work that I've chosen, you have to continue listening to what's going on right now. Even if I don't love all of it, I have to be at least conversant with it so that when somebody says, "hey, [Producer A]," (I'm playing a drum track), somebody says, "we want this to sound like so and so," I need to have at least some idea of what they're talking about.

...

**Elizabeth**

So how does your aptitude in this area influence the success of your project?

**Producer A**

Again, it's everything. There are some situations where I walk in and it's mostly a day of stuff where - for instance, as a drummer, you listen to pop music and there's basically beats A,

B, C, D, E, and F. That's generally a drummer's palette. There are nuances within that, but most pop songs, you're hearing relatively similar drum beats, right? So, most days if someone throws any general pop song in front of me, I generally know what it is that I need to be playing on this song. Now I'm gonna infuse my own personality into it, my own ideas, but it turns into the baseline foundational layer. All drummers are working from roughly the same concrete foundation.

But in that moment, where all of a sudden somebody comes to me and says "Okay, on this one, we've gotta go digging a little bit deeper. I'm looking for something a little bit different." Well, now I'm sitting up straight because I realized that I've just been told we're not doing the standard fare on this thing. We're going to have to dig for it. And if I don't have any layers underneath the surface from which I can draw to find an idea that's a little bit outside the box, I'm in trouble. And again, the way we get there is by listening and having a fairly broad musical vocabulary.

...

### **Elizabeth**

So, number seven is "in your experience with students who have received formal training in this area, what skills or knowledge base have you noticed tends to be lacking?"

### **Producer A**

Early on in this, ... you said, "Well, I'm more interested in, you know, the hands on." That's the answer to your question. We talk about this, a lot of my friends and I who do this, we'll see kids coming out of recording school or music business class or whatever, and you know pretty quickly which of them are going to survive. Because all, almost all of them come into it with a whole bunch of academic understanding – way more, frankly, than I have – but that academic understanding has to now be channeled into the "real world."

In the studio, we don't generally talk about scale modes. They're understood, again it comes up occasionally, but generally speaking, this is not the language that's being used in the recording studio. The language is "we need to come up with a line at the turn around" [*laughs*]. It's really that banal and everybody knows exactly what everybody means. ...and each genre has a different language-specific terminology. So, if I'm reading from a number chart, we might speak one language. If I'm reading from a normal staff chart, we're speaking a different language. And it depends on the genre, the arranger or the producer, whatever.

A lot of the people that I see coming fresh out of school wanting to be an engineer or producer, a session player, they've got all of this. - I've had people start asking me questions like "hey," as a drummer, for instance, "when you're, you know, digging into a track and you've got the click in your headphones, how are you analyzing it...?" I'm like, no, no, no, no. If I start analyzing the click and where I'm sitting on it, my career's over. I can't think like that. I have to feel the music. Generally speaking, I'm not even really that aware of the click, it's another member of the band. It's my anchor, but that's not what I'm focused on, and I can't analyze it or I'm gonna start getting too inside my own head and the music's gonna go away. Instead of making music, I'm now doing math, and that's not good, for me. Some people, that's how they create, and it works great for them. But for me, that's bad news.

...

What I would say to students and people fresh out of academia and trying to get into this is you have to now back away from some of that. These are all tools that you will use, but now you've gotta start immersing yourself in the culture, specifically of what it is you wanna do. Watch what they're doing, learn their language, and learn how to apply everything you know to the real world. And don't get hung up on the minutiae of well, ... there are theory rules that apply across the board, but rules are made to be broken. So, there's chord nomenclature where you're gonna play a note within a chord that you're not supposed to play, and that's how music gets made. Obviously, there's some things that are just clamped, and you can't do that.

I'll see a lot of kids coming out of a recording engineer school... schooling, whatever it happens to be, and they'll come into the studio as an intern. And, like I said, you know pretty quickly which of them are gonna stay in the business because very quickly they start to assimilate everything they're watching. "Oh okay, this guy needs this." They immediately start to realize "I need to serve this person." Service is huge. Not just being there as a tech head or "I wanna learn what this knob does," but "how can I make everybody in the room feel good?" "Does that guy need a bottle of water? Is he coughing his brains out from an allergy attack?" Whatever, just ... stuff like that. And then ... learning ... okay, we're not gonna get too far into the nerdery of what this compressor does. I'm just gonna start turning knobs and wow, it sounds amazing.

All of this stuff ... If I just had to boil it down, taking everything you know ... distilling it down to, with apologies for the term, lowest common denominator, because we've gotta work fast, how do I apply all of this in the most effective way quickly without ... without getting upset that we're not talking about all the nerdery of it.

...

The baseline answer is know the room, take the room temperature, and know how to apply all of this vast knowledge that you've got to the specific scenario that you're in without acting haughty about your education.

### **Elizabeth**

So, you feel like that's kind of a skill that's lacking with some students that have received formal training, like they don't know how to assimilate that and stay humble?

### **Producer A**

Yes.

...

Well, and staying humble is a hard thing for all of us. We all have our triggers where our pride impulse kicks in. And that doesn't go away the older you get; maybe you just become more aware of it, and you try to suppress it, but yes. Just understanding that in every situation, even the ones where you're really frustrated, you're probably learning something valuable. But yeah, ... real world is different from academia. And you have to sort of get your arms around that as you're coming into it.

### **Elizabeth**

Is there anything else related to this topic that you would consider an essential concept to teach in a college classroom context?



**Producer A**

...

I think simply understanding who you are, what your role is, and making an attempt to be the best at it that you're capable of being. That's maybe one day of a course as opposed to three weeks, but, it is interesting how there are times where you'll go into a situation and the person who is supposed to be leading the situation is maybe the least qualified to be there. And that is always an interesting scenario because my job as someone being paid - if I'm not the producer, if I'm a sideman that day, it doesn't matter if the person there is unqualified - it's still my job to try and make them happy, because they're paying me to be there. So, I need to try to be nice, and to do what I was called to do. But you won't find too many players, for instance, sidemen, who would tell you it's ... tough to respect that person when you quickly realize they're out of their depth and yet they're in charge today. That's a tricky thing. So, if you can avoid that, when you're the person in charge, if you can project experience and a worthiness to be in that position, again, without being arrogant about it.

...

A lot of this is just Biblical. Servant leadership is better than any [other kind]. And I'm a human being. That is not my natural posture. I'm trying to learn to be a little more encouraging, I think, to people as a leader as opposed to just saying "this isn't what I want." You know, like we talked about before, trying to communicate what you're saying in a way that's edifying and that makes people want to do what it is you're trying to get from them rather than make them angry or cower in fear of you. That's just terrible leadership.

I'm probably being redundant now, but those leadership skills are so critical that maybe this is a huge class [*laughs*]. Maybe it's a semester.

Producer A's written/email response:

Question: Please describe communication methods of music producers, such as musical terms, instrument-specific direction and techniques, song, band, or musical genre references, that you have found to be effective.

I mentioned the phrase "I don't believe you" at one point, and this is incredibly useful when trying to coax a great performance from someone. But, it has to be said in a tone that conveys "I believe in you" rather than "you're sucking and I don't think you can do this".

It's always very effective to reference a specific artist and/or song when producing. "We want this to sound a little like (fill in the blank)", and then play an excerpt of that reference. Some would criticize this practice as being derivative, but there's nothing new under the sun. Referencing an existing piece of music doesn't mean it has to be copied. It's simply inspirational.

Being able to sing (or at least approximate) sounds or parts for each instrument is helpful when you don't know exactly what else to tell a given player (i.e. sounding out a guitar part, or singing a drum groove).

Here's something: I've worked with some producers who tell me how amazing my drum part was, and then proceed to change everything I'm doing. It's very frustrating. The producer should always encourage, but also be direct in communicating what they want and don't want. BUT ALSO, the producer needs to listen carefully enough to divorce from his/her own agenda. If the hired player's approach is better than what the producer initially envisioned, the producer should be humble enough to go with that.

Sub-Question: Are there any methods that have been ineffective?

Making a player / artist perform a part so many times that they lose focus, heart, or objectivity. Yes, sometimes the situation requires the tedium of repetition. But, it should always feel like we're working toward something and not simply rehashing old territory for no apparent reason.

Being unkind in the way I communicate an idea.

## Interview with Producer B

**Elizabeth**

In your experience, what are five of the most valuable skills that contribute to the success of music producers in the context of a recording studio?

...

**Producer B**

...

A producer's main job is facilitating. And so, I think number one: they have to have great people skills, I think that's super important. Being able to communicate effectively. Understanding, there's two modes of communication here: one's between the artist and the producer, and then the producer and the musicians, engineers, and all the other people who are trying to make the artist happy.

A lot of people tell you some of the best producers are the best psychologists because they can kind of get inside. ... I think the ability to read a room and be able to – I don't wanna say an empath, cause it's such a popular thing to say right now – but kind of understand and hear inside a person's voice the things that they're not saying while they're saying something else.

So, number one is being able to decipher, communicate well with the artist, and then also be able to communicate with the musicians and engineers that you're trying to create a product with. I've seen that break down before, where a producer really doesn't know the terms or know how to describe what it is that they want. That's *so* crucial for a great producer to be able to describe what it is that they want. Artists don't always have the ability to do that. They're often tongue-tied and all they can say is, "I don't like it" [*laughs*]. Well...What don't you like about it? "I don't know, it just doesn't make me feel good." So, a producer's job is to decipher what *that* means and communicate it to the musicians.

So that's two: communication between the artists and the musicians.

I think having a great understanding of arranging, understanding arrangements. I was just watching an interview with [Producer X]. He had great point: Understanding how to arrange, but also having the taste of the people - he called it the taste of the people. [Which] I thought was a really interesting way of putting it. Successful producers understand what the masses want to hear, and so, when you're doing an arrangement on something, you can get – I've seen producers get so inside and so museo that it makes it no good for the masses of people listening to music.

Obviously, it's all contextual, maybe you *are* working on something pretty museo, but, generally speaking, artists want to *sell* records, and the way you sell records is making it mass appealing. And so, a producer needs to understand kind of like the taste of the people who are gonna be listening to this music...

And I think technical – understanding chords, understanding how to put arrangements together – is a super important understanding. I know a lot of producers that, and they do okay, but they don't have a really firm grasp of what a  $C^7$  chord is. How does that interact with the G chord? ...What is an augmented chord? What does that mean? Why do these chords work together? Or when they'll suggest, "I don't like that chord." Well, what is the chord that you like? Understanding chordal structures and what works, what doesn't work. I think oftentimes the best producers are often songwriters, and you'll see, oftentimes now, particularly as of late – times

have changed because of money. There's not as much money to produce records ... so people have to multitask – so oftentimes you'll find the writer also producing the record.

And then beyond that, maybe the last thing I think would be good is just a technical understanding of the technicalities of recording. How a mic works. How signal flow works. How does compression work? How does mixing work? How does sequencing work? How does programming ...? Just getting a general understanding of how things work makes life a lot easier when you're dealing with people that you've either hired to do it or you are actually having to do it yourself. A lot of producers have to program the record or play parts musically themselves on records now just because the way things are.

...

### **Elizabeth**

... So, question number two “if you were going to teach a college class on arranging commercial music in the recording studio during a session, what topics would you cover and why?”

### **Producer B**

Commercial... Well, I mean that really means a gigantic – That's a small label for a huge amount of territory. There's lots of elements to commercial music. You could be in the movie soundtrack, you could be in pop music, you could be in classical, you could be in church music. I think your answers might change slightly for that.

I think as an overall tip, I think a really good thing as a producer in commercial music is to have a firm understanding of the history of commercial music. And that's a broad statement, but I always tell young musicians who are coming to town who wanna be session players, “You better bring a big bag, or if your bag is small, fill your bag.” And what I mean by that is listen and listen and listen. Not just listen, but listen and *consume* and get it into your soul, because producing, and often session playing, in a way, is all reactive. So, you hear a melody in a lyric, in a chord, and it reminds you of something usually. And it usually reminds us of things we've heard in the past, and the reason why we've heard those things in the past is because those are things that work, they work musically. And that's one of the biggest struggles, when you're producing something, is finding stuff that actually works, that makes sense.

So, what I mean by that is like “you know well, I wanna do like, let's, let's try doing a reggae version of this.” And well, maybe the chords or the tempo of the song doesn't really lend itself to that. But someone might go, “oh my gosh, you know this, this demo you played reminds me of, remember that old song that the Eagles did? And they kind of took this approach.” And they're like, “wait a second, let's plug that in” and see if that template works and then alter the template to kind of help make it their own at that point.

So, when I say bring a big bag, it's so helpful to have a large library in your mind and soul of things to draw from to offer up to make arrangements work, to make to make the recording work smoothly.

### **Elizabeth**

Alright, so question number three would be, “if you were going to teach a college class on communication skills for the studio music producer, what topics would you cover and why?”

**Producer B**

... I'd talk about decisiveness. Decisiveness is a pretty good thing. I often run into producers... I refer to a lot of experiences in the past just because that's where I've learned a lot is just watching other producers do things well or do things poorly. Indecisiveness... [will] murder a session because somebody has to be at the helm of the ship at some point. And if everybody's throwing out ideas and trying this, trying that, trying that, sometimes you don't get anywhere. You kind of start paddling in circles. So, at some point, somebody has to be decisive and say, "you know what, I think this works the best. Let's do this, let's get on it. I know that's a good idea, but we're not gonna do that today."

...

Communicating with people. I think it's really good to have a balance of - everybody has different personalities - and be able to decipher personalities and adjust what's going on in the room accordingly. Let me give you an example: As a producer, sometimes you're running into artists or players or engineers who may have a sense of humor that think joking a lot is - and there's nothing wrong with joking. I always believe in levity and having fun while you're doing this, because it should be fun - but sometimes it gets a little out of hand and it starts to become distracting to the artists. Sometimes players are not as intuitive and not seeing, like maybe what they're saying is distracting or detracting from the creative process.

So, I think a good producer has to be able to be strong enough in their self-esteem to be able to shut that stuff down and do it in a way that doesn't destroy the session. Because I've seen producers go, "hey, man," to the keyboard player, "you know that's funny, but man, that's really messing things up. Will you not talk like that?" And they do it in such a manner that we lose the keyboard guy because he gets insulted and now his emotions have overcome, I mean, he kind of shuts down emotionally, and now we've lost.

So, being a producer requires psychology and understanding personalities. And that's why you find a lot of producers hire the same people over and over again. It's not necessarily because they're the best personnel for every job, although most of them do really well, but they have a rapport with those people that it makes it much easier to deal with situations that are uncomfortable. Such as telling somebody to be quiet or, "I don't like your idea and don't be insulted, ... I don't think your idea is great. Let's move on." Some people cannot handle that, you know? So, communication.

...

But be able to decipher personalities, communicate well, be decisive. I guess those are the things I would suggest.

**Elizabeth**

Alright, so question 4 is "what knowledge and terminology of the rhythm section instruments, such as playing techniques or ways to achieve specific sounds, do you incorporate into your communication methods with session players during studio rhythm recording sessions?"

**Producer B**

Again... This goes right back to what I was talking about before is having a big bag of things to draw from and experience and having a knowledge of recorded music history. So, 9 times out of 10, people communicate in terms of things they've heard. So, it's really a great way to communicate because the producer may say to me as a drummer... "hey man, we're gonna

kinda go for a Stewart Copeland-esque kinda Police drum sound.” And when somebody says it like that, instead of saying “I’m looking for you to have your batter head on your snare a little bit tighter and your toms tuned up maybe a fifth or even higher than you normally would. Could I get some hi-hats that are really small and crispy?” Instead of trying to decipher all of that, they could say “hey, can you sound like Stewart Copeland, like the Police?” ‘Cause he’s very different in the way he plays drums, and that’s a really concise way of communicating the vibe we’re going for. Or you can go, “Hey I’m looking for more of a Don Henley, Mid-70s, Eagles, (name a song).” And you’re like, “Oh!” Immediately, I know exactly what you’re talking about. That is the best way to communicate what you want from people.

Now, performance-wise, that’s a whole other thing. The people you hire have to have a certain level of understanding of music. Although most sessions, it’s a pretty mixed bag. I work in sessions with people who are symphony players who are amazing readers all the way down to people who can’t read music at all. And so, a producer has to be able to communicate effectively with all of those people. “Did you do crescendo on this section at B going off to the C section?” And there’s people like, “what’s a crescendo, man?” [*Laughs*]. Hopefully not at this point in their career, but there’s people who understand musical terms, and there’s other people who don’t. I mean, they don’t even read notes. I know people who are unbelievably successful music[ians], who’ve played on national hits, made tons of thousands of dollars, very successful, who could not read a sheet of music if you put it in front of them.

So, all that being said is that you have to learn ways of communicating musical ideas beyond the printed page or the traditional sense. If you’re with traditional players like symphony players, great, have at it, that’s easy. But oftentimes we communicate in ways ... we’re trying to, like I said, refer to other recordings. That’s probably the best way of communicating, in my experience.

### **Elizabeth**

Okay, so sub question to that is, “how does the incorporation of this knowledge influence the success of your project?”

...

### **Producer B**

... Most people, when you say to them, “hey... we need you to break down verse three and want you to be more aggressive on verse four and then the last chorus I need you to stop.” That’s all good, and people need to communicate that way. But when you refer to an overall style or whatever, in referring to like another recording or something in the past, a reference, 9 times out of 10, it seems like people have an emotional connection to stuff. So, when you give them something emotionally to connect to as a player - this is human, it’s good psychology - they become invested in the project. And that’s ultimately what a producer is *longing* for. That’s what an artist is longing for - is for somebody to be invested, not just phoning in their performance or phoning in whatever it is they’re doing. And any methodology that you can use to try to get people invested...

There was a producer I worked with, a guy named [Producer Y] ...he, to me, was the greatest psychological... I don’t think he manipulated on purpose, but he could tell you things... He could steer a session in a way, like, he might say. “Man, I wonder if, like they talk about the Police or something, but I, what do you think about like the, what if we went in like the direction

of the Police, like, like Stewart Copeland drumming?” And I'm like, “Whoa, well, like what, what if I went like this? Like, like Stewart Copeland?” And he's like, “well, let's try that. You think you could do that?” “Well, yeah, I think I could do it! I totally think I could do it 'cause I love Stewart Copeland!” “Oh alright, well, do it! If that's what you think would be good for the project.”

He ... would tell you exactly what he wanted to do, but he would psychologically work it around like you felt like you came up with the idea at the end, which makes you invested in the project and that idea. So, you start getting a sole attachment to your part now, and you're in it, and you're emotionally contributing the best you possibly can. That, to me, is the brilliance of a good producer, that can do that. Not a lot of producers are good at that.

...

[I] literally saw this producer one time fire a guy because he just was not capable of performing on a track. And by the time he got done explaining it to the guy, the guy left the studio with his instrument feeling great about himself. He's like, “awesome, yeah! Maybe I should never play music again. Man, thank you so much for the pep talk! Awesome!” He walked away actually not defeated. I don't know how [Producer Y] would do it, but I've always joked to [Producer Y] about it... “remember that time where you fired that guy and he felt like it was the greatest moment of his life?” [Laughs]. But, in any rate, a good producer can do those kind of things.

...

### **Elizabeth**

How much do you depend on your session players to know and implement those types of techniques?

### **Producer B**

I have an interesting perspective from being a producer, but also, I have done a lot of session playing, so I have a lot of relationships. So, I feel like, I maybe have a *little bit* of an unfair advantage over a lot of producers because I know all these players very, very well... I'm on the front lines of war with them for years and years and years, so I kind of know them anyways.

But I think ultimately the important key takeaway here is you do not hire people that cannot perform or understand the way you communicate. And, I mean that's a harsh reality, but I hire the people that I wanna hang out with and understand me and are into or invested in the things that I wanna do. So, I think it's important to hire the personnel that understand how you communicate, understand the terms that you're using to communicate to them. And not only that but are invested in the project that you're trying to put out... I mean, this is like friends. It's like, what friends do you wanna hang out with? The friends that really don't care about what you say? Or friends that really care about what was going on in your life? And I feel it kind of comes down to that.

A lot of people [don't] understand that. Young, particularly players [don't] understand that psychology and honestly, it took me years to figure this out. I thought it was more corporate than that... Like, “Oh, let's get [Producer B] to play this because he did this and he's great. He knows a paradiddle, so let's get him in here.”

It is *nothing* like that. It's more about like, “hey man, what drummer have you worked with?” Oh, I[’ve] worked with this guy named [Producer B] and man, he's such a riot, he's so fun

...I think he'd be great, a great hang in here and I think he wouldn't bring the room down and he could perform well." "Really? Okay, I'll give him a chance." And you form a relationship. And now I have a relationship with that person. I never did an interview of my paradiddles or if I understand how to read sheet music. I mean that stuff kind of goes with the territory, but as a producer, I like hiring the people that I wanna be in a room with.

Unfortunately, there's times where there's limited amount of players that can do the actual job that you're looking for. So, for example, ...if there was an instrument called the gigantic oboe, maybe there's only one player in town that plays the gigantic oboe. So, you're kind of stuck. I remember - this has been true for years - there's a couple of players in town through the years in Nashville that people used over and over again. Not because they're great personalities, but because they're one of the limited amount of people that could do what was needed to be done. So, you just kind of suck it up and deal with it and get through it. But ultimately, when I'm spending a lot of time in a studio with somebody, I wanna hang with the people that understand me, care about what I'm doing, and I have some sort of relationship with.

### **Elizabeth**

That's good, thanks. So, question number five is, "how does your comprehension of various musical genres (jazz, country, etc.) inform your decisions and communication methods during studio rhythm recording sessions?"

### **Producer B**

...This week I[ve been] working on a modern country record, Thursday, I'm working on a set of music for [a recording project]. And then Friday, I'm working on some Southern gospel music. So, it's kind of all over the map.

And it's super important, particularly as a producer ... and honestly most producers get pigeonholed, so they end up producing kind of the same stuff. So, if I get pigeonholed as a great modern country music producer, I'll end up probably doing that mostly. Rarely have I seen producers cross the genres so widely. And there's a reason for that, because usually with a specializing of production, say, example, country music. The guys who are producing, I really hope they love country music [*laughs*], and they don't despise it. So, with the love of the country music that they're producing, there's a passion for it, and it goes back to this "bag" thing. They've listened to it. They've saturated their minds with it through the years and they get it. They can draw on history, and they know where it's going, where it's been, and where it probably should be going. So that's super important.

...Reframe your question one more time...I'm trying to get back to where you were at.

### **Elizabeth**

How does your comprehension of various musical genres inform your decisions and communication methods during studio recording sessions?

### **Producer B**

Well, that's interesting. So, number one, for me, if I'm producing a gospel record as opposed to a country record, that's usually a whole set of personnel difference. Most of the guys who play on gospel stuff are really not the guys who are playing on country music. So, first of all, it's a different set of personnel.



And the way I would communicate in a church music session is quite a bit different in terms of vibe and disposition... Just because people communicate differently. When you're dealing with church people, for what it's worth, church people act a certain way, and they expect a certain way of communicating. In country music, it's *very, very* different than a church...session. Very different. Language is different. Now, I would hope you wouldn't be compromising your faith and walk going between different sessions like that...

I have a very good friend who was a producer who produces a wide range of stuff, and I always appreciated that he, although he may be changing personnel in his selections for different sessions, if it's a pop session or a Christian session, he is a Christian number one and he...opens every session with prayer and he asks prayer requests, which is generally you'll never really hear in a country session - people are asking for prayer requests. But, on a Christian session, you may have prayer at the beginning and talk about things, the direction, and testimonies about where'd the song come from. Country music generally, people don't really care, they just wanna get the job done and move.

So, besides selecting the correct musicians for the genre and understanding the genre and the differences between how to communicate is absolutely ... pretty big deal, for country music, I would be dealing with different types of arranging. Understanding how steel guitar fits into something, or how fiddles and mandolins work, and how a piano player and a bass player have to work. That's a very different thing in country music as it is for pop music.

There's this thing called a walking bass line in country swing. [*Audibly demonstrates the bass line*]. That's just one example of where, if the bass player and piano player are not on the same page, it's a complete mess. Well, you're not gonna be doing walking bass lines in Christian music usually. So that's not even a concern. So, stylistically, you kind of have to understand how the instruments fit together for each genre. And that's just a matter of being familiar with it, being immersed in it.

### **Elizabeth**

So how did you develop this knowledge of musical genres?

### **Producer B**

From a very young age, I just loved everything. My parents had a band, they had like a Top 40 band, and we had tons of records laying around the house. But every genre, from country music to Andre Crouch to rock to whatever, gospel, and I would just listen to everything and consumed it.... I just liked it. I just liked listening to music and I would pick out the bass parts and the drum parts. I kinda just had an affinity for it. And so, having listened to so much stuff, you start to see patterns in genres. ... That was probably my biggest education, just starting from age 5 or 6, listening to stuff constantly. Again, that bag of inputting music for later reference.

A really good friend of mine, bass player, he's a great gospel producer and African American gentleman, an amazing..., one of the most talented writers/producers I've ever met. But I never would have thought that he would have known ... like [*laughs*]... (when I was really young, I loved this trumpet player named Chuck Mangione. He was a jazz guy) ... So, I mentioned this to my friend who was a *gospel* player, and I was like, "he would never know what this is" and he had *every* working knowledge about the album and the guy's hits. And he went deep. I'm not just saying he knew the big hit, he knew, he went in and he started pulling a guitar out and playing some of the deep album cuts from this guy. I'm like, oh wow [*laughs*], you know that.

Some of my favorite players ever in the world, when you sit down and talk to them, their knowledge and vastness of knowledge of *all* music informs what they do. And in an interesting way, my knowledge of rock music informs how I play in country music. My knowledge of Latin music informs the way I may approach a gospel song. I know this sounds ridiculous, but it does. It all informs each other, and it becomes a mutilation. We're basically the sum of everything we've been influenced by. ...

**Elizabeth**

So, final sub question for this question is “how does your aptitude in this area influence the success of your project?”

...

**Producer B**

...

I mean... the idea of producing in music in general, if you take a step back and look at it, it's *completely* subjective. Everything's subjective about music, so honestly, nobody's opinion is better than others. People's opinions tend to be a little bit more *informed* than others, and the people who have well informed opinions tend to do well. So, in any way you're trying to find some sort of a concrete or tangible way of determining whether a record's gonna be good, those are the elements that we reach for. But, I gotta be honest with you, some of the things I thought were the worst and not well-produced things have done great. And things that I thought were amazing have just sat there on the shelf and nobody bought. So, that's kind of one of the magical things about music: it's completely subjective, and timing, and planets aligning and everything.

So, we do all these steps to try to inform our opinions and make sure that we provide a good product...a well-crafted product at the end of the day. But, ultimately, beyond that, those steps, it's really...I'm trying to remember what the stat is, I think on Spotify there's 61,000 songs uploaded a day. New songs. Every day. 61,000 songs, I think. That may be an old statistic. So, there's so much new music being put out, but nobody ever hears, nobody does anything with, nobody monetizes. It's a big call to try to make a product that is actually successful and actually generates a livelihood for the artist, so, obviously take it seriously, but everything is so subjective...

**Elizabeth**

Okay, so question number six now is “please describe communication methods of music producers such as musical terms, instrument specific direction and techniques, song band or musical genre references that you have found to be effective.”

**Producer B**

Oh, that's interesting. Now you're getting into the minutiae of producing...

I do play in other instruments besides drums and so, some people may not be as knowledgeable. It depends on the producer...I think it's also helpful when you're talking about genre-specific things. There are certain ways of playing, like, for example in country music, flatpicking guitar, and understanding...usually the people you're hiring are gonna get it, so you don't have to explain technique. But, it does help to be able to understand, if that's not the sound you're looking for, how to get to the sound you're looking for.

One big thing in rock'n'roll music with electric guitars is when you're doing a chunky part on an electric guitar, some guys don't know, maybe they should be using all downstrokes and creating all downstrokes creates a specific sound of immediacy. But, you don't really know that until you've played, and understand, and have listened to a lot of music that do it. Other people may not get that. So being able to describe certain techniques often helps.

But then again, I'm telling you, going back in the psychology of things, when you start as a producer, telling people how to play their instrument, you're headed for trouble, unless you have a relationship with those people that allows for that. I've heard artists, and I mean, I've been on the side of the glass where it's been like artists will, "Hey, [Producer B], yeah, hey, could you try, like..."

...Here's a great example. I was working with an artist... He was an American Idol guy, and his producer came to my studio. I never worked with him before. And he immediately started saying to me, as he walked through the door, says, "Okay, how many bass drum beaters do you have?" I'm like, "Hi, how are you? My name's [Producer B]" *[laughs]*. Like, that's what you lead with? How many bass drums? So, I humored him, "I have, like, with me right here maybe five or six," He says, "Get every one of those things out, because we're gonna try every bass drum beater to get that bass drum sound just right." All right, okay.

Well, if you would approach that a little bit differently *[laughs]*, you know, psychology, understanding the people you're working with, it wouldn't have come across so offensive. So immediately I'm on the defensive like, "oh, he doesn't like my bass drum sound already. Hasn't even heard it yet, but he's gonna be changing it. So, I'm not really sure where you're coming from man..." you get on this ...Everything was fine, but it just becomes more of an adversarial type of relationship from the beginning. He didn't really get the idea of, let's make some rapport and let's understand how [Producer B]'s personality works.

So, I think it's important, when you're gonna be sharing techniques or really niche specific things with your players, as a producer, it's important to have a rapport with the people. There's certain people I would tell them, and I know their ego can take me saying, "no, I need it...don't do that, ...you're playing way too busy on the bass line. That's way too much. Can you dial it back?" There's people I know who would get offended with that. Then there's other people I work with... "Oh absolutely, I'm so sorry. Yeah, absolutely. Let's do it. Let me pull back."

And so again, back to this personality and working with the people that you have a rapport with, super important. Specifically when you're getting into what you're talking about now, is specific techniques or methods that you're trying to communicate to your players that help to get to the goal that you're aiming towards. ... I think the overall concept is it's hard to communicate that stuff with people who are not open to be communicated with.

### **Elizabeth**

Okay. So, are there any methods that you found to be ineffective?

...

### **Producer B**

Again, going back to that thing of referring to other things is probably the most universally accepted way of communicating stuff like that. So, when you say, "yeah, I was thinking, maybe in this guitar part, maybe can you make it more like a Dominic Miller thing, the guitar player from Sting?" Immediately, when you say stuff like that, ...like "alright, I gotta use a strat, and I know I gotta use this type of guitar, and this is the type of strings I should be using,

and this is type of approach I should be approaching. My sound should be a little bit more wet, and I should be working with delays.” Or if I go, “I’m looking for more of a B.B. King approach on this.” “All right.” They’ll pull out a hollow body guitar, and they understand that, ‘cause B. B. King had - Lucille was his famous guitar. It’s a big hollow body, probably had flatwounds on it, but it’s a very specific sound. Again, you can communicate methodology and techniques also by referring to common musical examples that everybody would know.

### **Elizabeth**

So, are there any that have been ineffective?

### **Producer B**

...I mean, you get into a situation where not every suggestion works, and that’s part of the process of creating. You try to limit the ones that don’t work, but ultimately, when you get into a studio, especially if you have time to explore...times have changed a lot - there used to be a time in music where people made a lot of money from selling records, and so what that meant is that you had a lot of money to make records. Now, there’s not so much. There’s so much competition out there and people are not buying as much as a lot of streaming, which is a whole other topic, but there’s not as much monetization of music anymore. So, as a producer, you’re forced to make it happen quick.

I remember there was a band called Fleetwood Mac...and they did a record called *Rumors*. They held out at a studio, Sound City, for months and months and months and months. They would come in like a job every morning and pull up a song that maybe they have been working on for months, and “let’s try another drum part. Let’s try another drum pass. Let’s try a different [sound]. Let’s try different BGV. Let’s try different...” that is such a privilege... it doesn’t happen. That’s pretty awesome. So, as a result, I think a lot of those songs and those albums back then are really kind of cool and unique from album to album, just because they *had* so much time to really explore.

So, nowadays, it’s not unusual to go in and cut the basic rhythm tracks for an entire record in one day. So, it’s more important than ever that you know how to communicate quickly what you’re wanting, and you have players that understand how to receive communications in the way you give it. The idea of exploring and trying ideas that don’t work, or techniques that don’t work, that’s great. But that doesn’t seem to happen as much anymore, because the stakes are higher now because there’s so much less money.

I remember there was times back in the day where I’d work with a producer to get drum sounds and we would spend a whole day just getting a snare drum sound. That’s so *luxurious* to be able to just pull out 50 snare drums and different microphones and...put the drum set in a different part of the room and different... you could do that, but you can’t do that anymore. It’s gotta be quick.

Now, fortunately, technology has come a ways where it’s like you could *do so much more quickly* now with Pro Tools and whatever DAW you’re using. Sound replacer and you can do playlists and check different [arrangements]... Back in the day, you couldn’t do playlists. You had “this is the take” you had to have the take. Now I could go “well, what if we go back to that take we did where I played sidestick in the verse?” So that’s easy, now we’ve got that. So, technology has come a long way which is a huge help. But for people, particularly who are not very decisive, it’s nice to have playlists now [*laughs*].

## Elizabeth

Question number seven is “in your experience with students who have received formal training in this area, what skills or knowledge base have you noticed tends to be lacking?”

## Producer B

Oh, just experience. It's just experience and that's the biggest thing I've noticed is kids coming out of college who, I'm assuming you're talking about producing and communicating techniques and stuff, it's just experience really. And it just takes a matter of time.

I run into a lot of interns in studios around town that come from big recording schools. In fact, ... there was one, I forget the guy's name, he came from your recording school. He's Nathan's student. He went and worked for [Engineer X], and we were all super impressed. Because immediately, I mean, he was second engineering, but he knew what he was doing, and he did it in a method that was hospitable. He didn't act like he knew so much or didn't know too much. There's a fine balance of creating rapport. He was fantastic, everybody loved him at the end of day. Like he was like the hero... because he did so great. So, him coming out of school right from Liberty, there's a great example of it. It was awesome. He did great. But I've seen other people come in - great example where we were *[laughs]* ... I don't know where this guy was from. He[d] just started an internship and I was working on a record - This is actually with [Producer Y] for, I believe it was for a [worship artist] - and this guy was just the second engineer, and so basically means you make coffee, you clean the bathroom, you're an errand runner, at that point, that's the way you work your way up the ladder.

We got done on the take on a song and we came into the control room to listen back. And we're listening back, and I look back in the room and the intern had grabbed an acoustic guitar that was sitting there and started playing and singing along with it like *[demonstrates]* and not well...I had never seen the producer ever get mad, he's so even tempered, but he turned around, like “what are you doing?” He said, “We are trying to listen down to our take. What? What?” That guy was gone by lunch. They had fired him; the engineer had fired him *[laughs]*. That was just a serious lack of information of being experienced. Anybody who's spent a little time in the studio, in that position you don't make any waves. You're there to provide services and ...you try not to make any waves. He didn't know that. ... It's just a matter of experience and I trust that as you do it more, and more opportunities offer themselves, that you just kind of catch up and understand what's appropriate.

Particularly in producing, and young producers, I would hope, if they're getting a degree in it, are messing around with it on their own outside of the classes and working on ... songs and with their friends or getting tracking sessions together. That's all part of it, and that's invaluable. Of course it's not the real world, ... but it does help prepare you for the real world. A lot of people understand that the pace is so much greater when you get into a professional studio and the players are ready, and the clock starts running, and as soon as it's one past 10:00 o'clock, the money's starting to run out, click, click, click and you've got the pressure to create a product out of nothing with these resources...good luck *[laughs]*.

The more experience you have at it, the better you get at it. I think that's the biggest thing. That's the one thing that people lack the most is just simply experience. I think a lot of people come out and they've watched a lot of YouTube videos and they've had a lot of classes, they understand signal flow, they get the mechanics of it. But it's the practicality of applying it. It just takes a little experience, and most people get it.

**Elizabeth**

Okay, thanks. So, last question, “is there anything else related to this topic that you would consider an essential concept to teach in a college classroom context?”

...

**Producer B**

Yeah. I think one of the biggest things for people to take away, and this is such a big picture thing, and again, I did not really get good at this until much later, and I wish somebody had told me this. It took me... 15 years to really come to the realization of *how important* relationships are and it's more important than anything. It's more important than the arrangements. It's more important than the songs. It's more important than the players. It's more important than your next opportunity. Because relationships are at the absolute center of everything. I'm sure this applies to every industry, but the music industry, it is so relationally oriented.

Now down to the nitty gritty, your relationship with an artist. So as a producer and artist, I remember when I first started producing, I did not put a lot of emphasis on *really* having communication skills..., and so I left a lot of things kind of undone and unsaid, which will come back and bite you later. Like ... Instead of just listening and asking them if they liked a certain thing, I would just go ahead and do certain things and then find out they were too scared to ... tell me that they didn't like it a week later. And that's on me. That's not their fault. My role is to communicate, “Hey, does this appeal to you? Does this sound like the road that we need to be going down? What do you think?”

Relationships and being humble and all the things that comes with a good relationship: Humility, understanding, empathy, understanding - I've worked with so many artists that, back in the old days where I just [did] not have as much empathy as I should have had. Particularly, when you're getting to vulnerable situations like recording vocals with an artist, that is the most vulnerable moment ever, right? And if you're just a matter of fact about it and like, “yeah, that's good. That's bad. Horrible. That sucks. Try it again. Try it again.” There's some personalities that can take that, but most personalities cannot take harsh criticism personally as a new artist.

So, you have to “wear kid gloves,” as they say, and be gentle and communicate in ways that are not offensive, and people understand, and you create a rapport of trust with people. It all comes down to the relationship. Not only with the artist, which is super important, which is probably primary, the most important, but also your relationships with the players and the engineers that you use and the people that you're hiring to help complete the project. You need to have great communication skills and great relationships with all those people.

## Interview with Producer C

### Elizabeth

In your experience, what are five of the most valuable skills that contribute to the success of music producers in the context of a recording studio?

### Producer C

Well, in the studio, 1 would be a good people person. Because normally you're recording people. You may want ... a better performance than you're getting, but you've gotta be able to have the people skills, not to discourage them, but to encourage him to give you what you want. So that would be 1.

2 would be, I think in the studio, you have to kind of have a good ear and a good vision for what you're doing, knowing where the end result is supposed to be. So, knowing, in other words, this project is for – I'm pretending – this project is for kids that are 15 to 18. But then you're doing all ballads so it's like you didn't know your end result. As you being, either engineering/producing...

I think 3, you have to know your room. So, when I say know your room, you need to know the console, you need to know the machines you're working with, you need to know how to access verb, access compression. You need to know how to use the machines that the studio has. Therefore, you're not spending all your time trying to get the machines to work because you don't know them real well. If you're doing that, you're frustrating the client. Because I'm assuming you're producing for someone else.

If you're mixing and they're not there, that's a different story... you can take your time and do what you wanna do... But when you're in front of the client, you need to kind of know what you're doing. That would be 3.

I think 4, and this is gonna be just a little bit different, but you need to have the knowledge of what all is in front of you... If you're recording bass guitar, you need to know the track, you need to have spent time studying the track before you lay down the bass.... You can even tell them beforehand, "I noticed this is a really busy track, so you might not wanna be that busy on bass." ... Because if you're in the studio, I mean serving as a producer, you're having to be sharing with him what you want. You have to kind of know what you're recording to be able to communicate what you want.

And then I think probably number five I would be, if you're gonna get outside of your comfort zones ... Try to kinda know a little bit before you get there that you're outside of your comfort zones, but also be able to communicate... let's say a guy's trying to get a vocal and he's got five of his friends in there and his friends are talking the whole time... You gotta be able know that's an awkward situation, you gotta be able to deal with that situation, still respect the person, but know how to ... manage through that difficult situation.

Those would probably be my five.

### Elizabeth

I had a sub question about elaborating on answers, but you elaborated so we'll skip to question 2. "If you were going to teach a college class on arranging commercial music in the recording studio during a session, what topics would you cover and why?"

### **Producer C**

First thing I would cover, especially if I'm doing a commercial music project in the studio in front of a class, first thing I would cover is: you have to know the end [game]. So, what is the purpose of what you're producing? Is it to sell something? Is it to be background for something commercial? Is it a commercial ad and you're just putting the background music to it? Is it a commercial ad where you want that, so to speak, "jingle" or whatever to be what's the focus of the ad?

You have to know where or whatever you're producing lays within the commercial aspect of what you're doing. Because a lot of times - I did a commercial for [a company product] and all they wanted was six seconds of my vocal. Everything else had to lead up to it, so I had to go back and produce - it's a 28 second commercial - I had to go produce all the music building up to my last 6 seconds. So, one would be the end result of where it would be, where it [would] be [used] and what the purpose of it [is] for.

I think the second, I would definitely try to understand the style in which it was going. So, if I was cutting something for a music video channel versus a Nickelodeon Channel or Disney Channel, that's completely different approaches to doing those two things. Or I'm cutting a commercial music thing for something they're gonna use at the Symphony when people are walking in. That's completely different than doing something for a pop channel. So, I would definitely know that...

I would discuss through what kind of instrumentation. What kind of sound would that be? Would it be something I cut live? Would it be something that I programmed? What's the most effective way to deliver that product? I would teach that.

...

I would ask them to get their feedback on how they would handle areas that they're not efficient in. So, would they go hire someone else to cover this one area? (I'm pretending). They're a producer - and let's go back to the original thing, and they're producing something for the Symphony when they walked in - But they're a pop producer; they only produce pop music. How do they still - teach that to the class - How do they overcome that obstacle of "I still have knowledge to make this perfect, I just need somebody that's gonna help me understand that genre." So, I would ask them how they would do that, what they would do, stuff like that.

### **Elizabeth**

Okay, thanks. So, question three is, "if you were going to teach a college class on communication skills for the studio music producer, what topics would you cover and why?"

### **Producer C**

Definitely eye contact, number one, look people in the eye. Smile when you talk to them. Talk to them in the face ... That'd be number one, two, and three...

Second thing... be on time.

God gave you two ears and one mouth because He wants you to listen more than He wants you to talk. ... So, whoever you're communicating with, you need to make sure that - everybody wants to be heard - so you need to make sure you're hearing them, and then you can add to what you hear, craft them where you want them to go, or agree with ... what they're doing, or honor their request and see if you can add to their request. What people help create, they support. What people participate in, they support.



If you are in communication and you're doing all the talking and they're not talking to you, they're not participating, they're listening to you and doing what you tell them. Now, please bear in mind for this class, some clients that come in, that's what they want. They want for somebody just to take control and tell me what to do and [etc.] But after a while, even that person will wanna have something to do... "You know, I think I like the second one better than the first pass. Well, no, I didn't like..." They're gonna have some input in it.

### **Elizabeth**

Okay, thanks. So, question 4 is "what knowledge and terminology of the rhythm section instruments, such as playing techniques or ways to achieve specific sounds, do you incorporate into your communication methods with session players during studio everything recording sessions?"

### **Producer C**

...Let's say I'm producing song for a girl and it's a song she wrote and... the sound that we feel like it needs to be produced sounds like - I'm making up something - a Lady Gaga song. So, I'm actually gonna come in with two or three samples of the way I want the song to sound. I.e., I like the baseline on this - Oh, that's a fretless bass, okay, that's why I like the sound, 'cause it has that. I like how these drums are - Oh, those are triggered drums.

I kind of study the sounds that I want to make sure. And I typically do that in front of the rhythm section that I've chosen to do the song so they can also help participate and understand where I'm heading. Then, I send them in the studio and let them start creating on their own. They'll start messing around - Here's the chart - and I'll let them just kind of find themselves in the song for a minute. Because I'm typically not recording with a A-level artist. I'm recording with a AAA scale...they're top of the line, so you can give them that freedom. If I had a bunch of high school kids in there cutting, I don't know if I'd do that. But with high level, I would bring in examples.

Second, the reason I brought in examples because it means I took the time as a producer to study the way I wanted the song to go down. I'd also bring in the song recorded on my computer so I can push play and they could hear it recorded, i.e., with a guitar and the voice or a piano and the voice. I don't wanna give them too much because I'm paying them for their creativity. I've booked them because they're very creative, so I want to steer their creativity. I don't want to have to create their creativity. I want them to create...

Then ... your keyboard player is gonna come in with a computer with every sound in the world...so you can go anywhere you want. I also like to, when I'm doing recording sessions with rhythm sections, do a straight - I'm pretending, if I was doing a song - I'm gonna do a straight what I want to be a three minute and ten second cut, so it'll play on radio. But then I wanna do some kind of "give [me] some kind of cool intro like this is a concert intro" or "y'all give me a cool kind of ending," or ... "y'all put a little solo thing in the middle of it." I'm gonna cut it out for the radio, but I wanna hear it musically, see how that would feel. So, I get a lot of creativity and pushing different ways I want the song to go.

And normally I will already have figured all that out before I go in, and those questions I asked you, "hey, I think it feels good here. What if we come back and do that and then pick back up in the bridge instead of coming back, or pick it back up into the channel instead of coming back to the chorus?" You really work through those type of things, but I like to work through with them with the rhythm section that's recording and not just walk in and tell them this is what

I want. Although I do have the chart there, and in Nashville, I typically do number charts. In other studios, they'll want letter charts, so I'll give them letters.

**Elizabeth**

Okay, so is there a specific type of terminology of the instruments, like playing techniques or ways to achieve specific sounds that you incorporate? Or is it mainly just the refs that you were mentioning?

**Producer C**

Well, the negative is, you'll probably have to... I'm typically working with AAA guys, so I don't have to use terminology.

But, sometimes it's slide... "Try putting the glass slide on the guitar finger so then you're sliding back and forth." Have like a pick. I like straight rhythms. I'll sometimes dictate to a guitar player or a keyboard player, I'll dictate some rhythm, cause the keyboard is technically a percussion instrument, so I'll dictate rhythm. A lot of times I'll use my mouth to go "hey, I need the drums, I need something like [beat-box drum beat]." I'll use my mouth to say, "hey, what about this kind of rhythm?" And then they'll go, "well, here's what I was thinking." "Oh, I kinda like that better; hey, guitar player, play me that rhythm for a second. Okay, yeah, that's feeling good, let's lock to that." That's kind of how I end up doing it.

With the drums, I typically do, like "give me more toms and then come back and give me snare on 4," that kind of thing.

Guitar players just knowing about riffs, leads, I try to make sure that [I] compress the sound. Too much delay, too much verb. Sometimes I dictate what kind of effects they're using on guitar.

And with keyboard, I typically try to make sure it's just not too airy, that I at least get a good melodic sound; not just pads all the time. So yeah, I use words like that, but as people who are learning this, they'll learn how to communicate with the people they're with because they'll start hearing the words they're saying back to them. [Might hear a] keyboard player go "Oh you want some more pad? Oh, you want me to be in the upper register? Oh, you want more of the lower register? Oh, you want me to hold this out longer? Oh, you want me to swell the note in and out." There's a lot of words like that. But we could go on for another 30 minutes on different wordings, but it's like that.

...

**Elizabeth**

So how does the incorporation of this knowledge (of like the terminology of rhythm section instruments), influence the success of your project?

**Producer C**

Well, in two ways. It depends. As the producer, I have been in many situations where I've seen other people - not me, but I've seen other people - where the producer gets what he wants, but that wasn't really what the client wanted. I've seen that more times than you can think. So, a lot of times, as a producer, if you're working with a client, it's really knowing what that client wants, to get that client to give you some examples before you go in. So, when you go in, the words that you use with the team, you can clearly communicate.

That's why I always bring in samples. Because the samples, everybody's kind of agreed on. So, it tends to work really, really well. "Man, I want to sound like Billy Joel." Well, we're not copying Billy Joel, but let's come up with some ideas. I never come in with one sample. I at least come in with three or four, and there are reasons in each one of them for different things I'm looking at.

**Elizabeth**

And then, how much do you depend on your session players to know and implement these techniques?

**Producer**

100%. I'm not gonna hire somebody that I feel like I have to work them through what I'm thinking. But also, you're asking me from a standpoint of someone who's just getting started. And it's hard for me to remember back when I was in the studio at 17, but I depended on the producers that were in the room to really help me. And I realized super fast, I had to over-communicate what I wanted. And then sometimes they'd go, "yeah, but if your end result is this, that's not going to work for you." And I'd say, "explain that to me." And once they got to explain it to me, I went, "Okay, I need to change what I was thinking." So, you have it both ways. I may have a thought that then they may have a thought that influences my thought. So, I may come in one way, but my direction may change a little bit based on, they had a better idea. Not every idea I have is the best. I wish it was, but it's not.

**Elizabeth**

Okay, thanks. So, number five is, "how does your comprehension of various musical genres (jazz, country, etc.) inform your decisions and communication methods during studio rhythm recording sessions?"

**Producer C**

Well, it's knowing the technique to begin with, so if I'm cutting a country song... I'll ask you... Have you ever recorded a steel guitar?

**Elizabeth**

I have not.

**Producer C**

Right. So, I haven't either, but it's on a lot of country songs. So, what I'm gonna do is I'm gonna look at YouTube. I'm gonna look at things. I'm gonna YouTube "steel guitars" and how they're recorded and what they do and what makes different sounds. I'm gonna try to educate myself before I walk in if I'm doing a country session.

If I'm doing a violin session, you what I wanna know about violins the most, being a producer? How do you get the best sound miking those? Do I put a mic right on their hooks to their fret? Do I put a condenser mic that hangs over them? ... what's the best way to record them? I'm gonna learn the techniques on the best way to record in those genres because they are different. They're extremely different.

I watched a ...recording. I couldn't believe... I've never seen how they recorded this cello ... player. It was... unbelievable. Direct line through... you'd've thought she was going through

a huge guitar thing - I've never seen in my life like that. I've seen a guitar player do it, but I've never seen a cello running through there, which is just incredible.

So, I would learn what makes those genres what they are. And then I'd make sure I was educated enough to know how to get that sound and that feel in the room when I got there. Not go, "That's a cool steel guitar." I'd like to know how it worked. I'd like to know, be able to communicate to him a little bit. "Hey, I'm looking for more of a... I'm not looking for a pick, I'm looking for more of a smoother, where you do it with your finger..." I'd learn how they worked.

### **Elizabeth**

Yeah. So, I feel like that was very specific to how it informs your decisions, can you talk a little bit more about how knowing the genres informs how you communicate?

### **Producer C**

...

Well, to me, you get two major communications in producing any of those genres. It does change a little bit, but the basic fundamentals don't change: I need to know how to talk to my engineer (and my second engineer), and I need to know what the client's end goal is. And that's going to help me understand how I need to communicate to them.

Now, I'm doing the client, not the instrumentation that's in the room, but knowing what the client wants going to make me know... if I'm looking for country, yeah, it's gonna be 2-step, I'm gonna have a little more drums, you're gonna be able to dance to it.

You know the genres are all different. Jazz is straight ahead jazz. That's [open chords, block fives]. You end up having to talk. You need to know diminished and augmented, and you need to know the chordal structure to tell them. So, in a jazz session, for me to communicate clearly to them, I've gotta know that chart backwards and forwards. And jazz charts are the hardest charts to understand. So, there's my big issue there, is learning the chart if I was doing jazz. So, communication wise, it's knowing what you're going into to be able to communicate on their level. So, if I don't know what a 2dim<sup>b11</sup> is, then I can't tell him, "I think that chord's a 2dim<sup>b11</sup>. That's not what you're playing." So, I'll need to know what it sounds like so I can communicate to him. So, everything I keep telling you comes back to: you have to [be] prepared for your session before you go in. You can't just walk in a session - now, by the way, an engineer, he can set up what you're telling him, walk in be unprepared, cause he's just he's capturing the sound that you're having them produce.

### **Elizabeth**

Thanks. So how did you develop this knowledge of musical genres?

### **Producer C**

Doing it. The word "experience" is the biggest word. And not being afraid is a big one - not being afraid to fail... I didn't have to be the smartest, I didn't have to be the most creative. I didn't have to have the best ear. I didn't have to have the best pitch. I didn't have to be the best singer. I just needed to know what I was doing when I got in there. Some people worry about, "hey, I gotta be the smartest guy in the room because I'm the..." Well, no, you don't. You have to end up hitting the goal. And that makes everybody happy, and I got that from experience.

**Elizabeth**

That's really good. ...How does your aptitude in this area influence the success of your project?

**Producer C**

I would say it like this. I keep coming back to experience, I keep coming back to knowing what you're doing going in. It gives you one word that's really important: confidence. And when you don't have to be the smartest guy in the room, you don't have to be the best, but you also have to have the confidence to be able to lead. ...The only thing I haven't mentioned yet at all, which needs to be mentioned, is you have to really have a confidence level to be a leader, to lead these sessions. And a leader is technically a servant that's prepared to serve.

So, when you walk in there, you gotta lead and be prepared to serve, which'll help you lead, which will help you hit all the objectives in the room. Looking people in the eye participating in conversations, ...what people help create, they support. So, get them involved, get them in the game, but don't lose control, either. Lead. Don't let other people lead. If you're leading and you turn around and nobody's following you, you're not leading, you're just on a walk by yourself. Lead. So that's the one piece I left out that's really critical to this whole thing.

**Elizabeth**

So, another question is, "please describe communication methods of music producers such as musical terms, instrument specific direction and techniques, song band or musical genre references that you have found to be effective."

**Producer C**

... I come in with recordings. So, when I come in with recordings, I'm taking those genres that I came in with and saying, "this is where I wanna head." So, I do my homework before I get in there. Because there's so many things that have been cut out there, I'm wanting to cut something that's fresh, but I wanna have some ideas of where I'm heading. So, I'm still gonna have something fresh, I'm not ever bringing one thing in and saying, "I want it to sound like this." I'm bringing different samples in. ...If I'm in the studio with musicians for two hours, the first thirty minutes would just be communication, listening, talking through the chart, and then sending them in to go create some ideas in their head. For the keyboard player to log in some sounds that he's heard. For the bass player to get himself set right. For the guitar player to go, "cool, I want to use this and this and this."

So, a lot of my communication is actually by them listening and understanding the vision of where I wanna be. Which is leadership, is showing them: there's a target, there's the bullseye, there's what we gotta hit, this is how long we have to hit it, and here's what I'm thinking.

I know you're wanting like terms like, "I'm thinking more acoustic guitar. I'm thinking more electric lead guitar. I'm thinking more rhythm guitar..." Those are all different types of genres that I'd be thinking. But at the same time, when I told that guitar player that, more than likely, the four things I mentioned, more than likely on this song, he's gonna do three of them. Because once I cut it, then I'm gonna overdub him on the electric, and then overdub him on some open strings fifths, and maybe even in the center section he goes to an acoustic.

So, it's ... each person I've hired to do, knowing what they're supposed to do. And "hey, I want you to open up here because we got so and so coming in as soon as y'all leave, and he's bringing the banjo. And he's doing a banjo lead right in the middle of that."

So just going back to really having a vision of what you want, explain that vision, get those to participate in that vision, and then lead that process all the way through; always being open to the fact that you've hired people that this is *all* they do. At least in my case, when I hire these guys, this is what they do five days a week. They're in the recording field, making music, so this is what they do.

Would you rather have a pilot that flew once a year or four times a week?

**Elizabeth**

Four times a week.

**Producer C**

Got it. So, same thing.

...

**Elizabeth**

So, are there any methods that have been ineffective?

**Producer C**

Yeah, not having a plan and winging it. That just doesn't work. So, if anyone is [reading] this, that's ... trying to major in all this, the very first thing I say: if you're not prepared for a session, it's probably not gonna go as good as you think. Or, ...you're just going to get what they were thinking and not what you or your client was thinking.

It's hard just to walk in a session not prepared. It's like going to take a test... You don't just show up and go, "Hey, I'm ready to take a test." You actually put in effort before you get there. It's the exact same thing. You just gotta be prepared ... especially if you're producing, you gotta be prepared for it.

**Elizabeth**

So, two more questions. Number seven is, "in your experience with students who have received formal training in this area, what skills or knowledge base have you noticed tends to be lacking?"

**Producer C**

Communication. Sometimes they come in and they're not looking people in the eye, or ...they're a student, they're in a big room, they're doing it for real, and they're missing their confidence, and then they're afraid to be wrong. And if you remember what I said, go in the room knowing you don't have to be the smartest person in the room.

For me, when the student comes in, if they're just sitting back in the corner kind of watching, I'm kind of thinking, "Okay, I would like a student to get up and jump in and "show me how you did that," "Oh, that's a cool verb sound, how did you get that?" But not get in the way of the session, but learn, and participate, and join it. Not a be timid, sit in the back, and feel like "Okay, I'm not the smartest person in the room. I don't even know what I'm doing here..." How do you learn if you come in with that approach?

So, you have to come in with the opposite approaches: "Hey, it's cool, I get to go do this. This is fun. I'm gonna engage the best I can. If they need a mic stand, I'm gonna run out there and give them a mic stand and come back. And I want them to see that I'm serving them, and by

serving them, they'll end up helping me and teaching me.” It’s when you come in and just sit and don't participate, then you don't get any...you're gonna get what you're putting out. Don't expect to get something back if you're not willing to put something in. That's the very first thing I tell the student.

And communicate. Just communicate. I’ll also tell him don't be late. Be on time, and don't be the first person to leave. Help him clean up, help him unpatch, help them move the gear back around, help them set up for the next session they're having tomorrow. That type of thing. Be that type of student in the studio that you can count on for, “Hey, give me that, I will make copies.” “Well, you know, I didn't come here to make copies, I came to learn how to work this board.” “Well, you know what? Go make copies and you'll learn how to do the board a whole lot quicker.” So be willing to serve. It's servant leadership, again.

### **Elizabeth**

I have one more question: “Is there anything else relating to this topic that you would consider an essential concept to teach in a college classroom context?”

### **Producer C**

...If I had one more other thing ... to say..., it would probably be... when you walk out of a studio, or when you walk in the studio, don't walk out of the studio saying... sometimes I've heard people say, “well, I didn't like the song,” or “I didn't like what we did or...” Be real cautious - especially in the front end as you're going when you don't really have “authority” and you're learning as a student - be real cautious *how* you share your opinion, *who* you share your opinion with, and make sure that whatever you say, you can back up. And don't be the guy who goes, “hey you don't wanna work with him, if he doesn't like you, he'll tell the whole world you're not...” Don't be that producer. Be the producer that says, “hey, you know, if it didn't go good that day, hey, you know what? I'm gonna come in and do better tomorrow.” But just take it on your own. Don't try to talk about the other people in the room...

If I was saying one thing to a student, I'd watch what comes out of your mouth after the session or before the next session or whatever. Watch what comes because it's really important. Because it can set up or destroy that whole thing. So, it's trying to make sure you keep a positive attitude on what you're doing.

...

## Interview with Producer D

**Elizabeth**

In your experience, what are five of the most valuable skills that contribute to the success of music producers in the context of a recording studio?

**Producer D**

I think a lot of it has to do with not just the technical things, but I think the first thing is having good personality and being able to gel and communicate with people. So, communication would be 1...Communication, that's gotta be top.

I think number two is be organized.

Be prepared.

Call the right people to do the job for you.

And, let's see, I think, know your vision before you walk in, I guess that's kind of being prepared. But you gotta know what you're shooting for, and then you can leave room for the musicians and the other creative people, the artists to come up with stuff. But I think you gotta be prepared with some kind of a vision for what you want the song or the album to be before you walk in.

...

**Elizabeth**

Can you elaborate on those answers please?

...

**Producer D**

Well, communication, I mean you've gotta be able to walk in and be able to read the room and what's going on in the room as a good producer. You've gotta know how to get what you want from the players and the engineer, and you've got to learn to do it in a way that doesn't offend people and make them not want to do what you want them to do. ...

Like instead of saying something like, "Well, you gotta play it like that or it's not gonna work." It's like, "well, hey, I've got an idea what I want here, but can you show me what you would do? What you think?" Because what a good producer will know is that if you give your musician an opportunity to be creative, it might actually be better than what they thought of. It might fit more into their overall vision.

So, I think just knowing how to ask the right questions in communication and just setting a good tone for the day coming in and almost being a little more on the servant side instead of being the "everybody serve me, I'm the producer." I love producers that come in and like, "hey, I got you guys coffee and I got some snacks" and just simple stuff like that. But anything you can do to set the tone to make it a fun day and a creative day, I think really helps as far as the communication.

And then of course being prepared. I think I talked about that a little bit, just being able to have good charts already there where you can jump right into the music. Being prepared would be maybe having good examples of... whatever song you're going for, have an example of something that the guys can listen to to go, "oh yeah, that's what you're going for. That's



sonically what we're trying to go for.” So, out of the gate, you're already steering everything in a certain direction to do the right thing.

...

Organized - where you definitely ...have the charts printed out and you have at least some kind of a plan for the day, like, “hey, we're gonna work from 10:00 to 1:00, then we're going to take a lunch break, and then we're gonna come back at 2:00 to 5:00.” And just anything that has to do with making the session flow smoothly is what you really want in your organization.

But I think people skills is, that's a big one. Just being able to communicate with people. And musicians. People *and* musicians [*laughs*]. That's huge. Today, we're working on this stuff for [a recording project]. And the producer[']s got everything laid out nicely. He's got all the charts done. ...The Pro Tools session files are all ready. ... And so it just makes it so much easier. And then, even though the music is difficult because you're reading a lot, the way that the producer treats everybody, it makes everybody feel relaxed. And if you mess something up, it's like, “that's great, let's go back and get this.” And being complementary, and like, oh, if something is good, go, “hey, that sounds fantastic. That's great. Perfect.” Because it encourages people to know that they're doing the right thing. And if it's not exactly right, it's like, “hey, ... you're in the right direction. Let's see if we can... tweak this a little bit and make it even better.” If somebody treats me like that, like I was treated today, I'm gonna give him 100%. I'm gonna try my absolute best to give them what they need and what they're trying to accomplish.

...

Call the right people. If you're cutting a rock record, it's not gonna do you any good to call a bluegrass band to come and play. They're not gonna know what to do. I mean, they can be excellent musicians, but they might not understand the feel of what rock should sound like. They've may have never even heard a rock band; they're just bluegrass. Or, you could call, like, say, the best jazz musician in the world that could read everything, he knows harmonically everything that could ever happen. Rhythmically, he could do everything. But, it's a rock record. We don't need to play all these jazz inversions and everything. We need it to rock. So, you call a great, just solid drummer, not a jazz drummer, you call a great bass player that can play solid 8th notes and get a great tone, and a great guitar player that can really deliver...Just call the right people.

If it's a bluegrass session, you don't want to call the rock guy to come in and try and shred over the bluegrass song. So that's so important. Call the right people and call the right engineer. Because you want an engineer that is going to be able to capture the sounds that you're looking for. If they're a bluegrass engineer, they're probably not going to know how to get great drum sounds. So, you're gonna need to definitely call the right engineer to do that.

As far as vision, I think that kind of is the overall picture for everything that we're talking about. I think it's really important that the artist and the producer, before they start thinking about booking studio time...they've gotta ... make sure they have all the songs and that all the songs are in line with what the artist is doing so that when the artist goes out and sings these songs, it correctly represents who they are and what they're doing. And the artist and the producer should agree on the vision.

Once again, if the artist is a, say, a pop artist, and the producer keeps going “well, I have a vision for you to be more of a heavy metal kind of sound.” That's not gonna go well all the way down the line because the vision is not the same. But if they can agree on, “okay, we've got great songs, we're gonna go for a pop-rock kind of sound. Let's just say we're gonna go for, like, a One Republic kind of sound...” So not that they're copying them, but at least they're all in the same kind of thought process...going forward and for every step. So, without a vision, the producers perish [*laughs*]. So, I think that's probably important overall just to make sure that they're having that “oh man, that's what we're shooting for. That's the target and now let's make all of our decisions based on that vision and where we're going.”

...

### **Elizabeth**

So, question number two: “if you were going to teach a college class on arranging commercial music in the recording studio during a session, what topics would you cover and why?”

### **Producer D**

First of all, I would teach the number system in an arranging class because, most of the musicians, especially if you're in Nashville, they don't know how to read music... So, you know, I would go to an arranging class and go, “hey, [*sheet music*] is great. I'm glad you can do this, but not everybody can read that and you're gonna miss out on some *great* musicians if you're only looking for guys that can read regular charts.” So, the first thing I would teach is I would teach them the Nashville number system and make sure that they knew how to write out chords and rhythms and everything else that they would need to ... make a very, very clear chart so that when they go into the studio, they're able to start working right away instead of trying to figure out what ... the chart is doing.

I think being a good arranger means you have to be a good listener. So, you have to study all kinds of different styles so that you're able to adapt to whatever the style is. I would encourage people in a college course to be good listeners. To open up their ears and be more open to all kinds of music because chances are, if they're gonna arrange and produce, they're gonna have to play in and arrange different styles. So be a good listener and always have something in your playlist that you're trying to learn and be better at.

But that's the main thing I would teach. I mean, if you don't know the number system in these days, then you're gonna have a hard time communicating any arrangement that you've done. So that's my answer for rhythm section guys, too.

### **Elizabeth**

Okay, thanks. So, question three: “if you are going to teach a college class on communication skills for the studio music producer, what topics would you cover and why?”

### **Producer D**

... I feel like I talked about that a little bit, but yeah, if I was teaching a class, I would make sure that I was competent on the individual instruments... You should understand what the range of a guitar is. You should understand the limitations...the ability of what a drum kit can do.

I would wanna know how to talk to the drummer about his kick drum sound, his snare sound. All of the elements that maybe we would take for granted in being a good communicator, you have to know the instruments that are in there so that you can talk about them. Because as funny as it sounds sometimes when we have these stories about producers coming in going, “yeah, I think I think the drums need to sound more yellow.” Well, what does that mean, “the drums need to sound more yellow?”

So, you need to learn the different sounds of what a snare drum is and what brushes are so that you can be competent and ask the drummer, “hey, what I'm gonna need you to do on this is I'm gonna need you to put towels on all of the toms and really mute the drum system.” That's being a good communicator.

And to be a good communicator, you've got to know what you're talking about for all the instruments, and that includes brass players, string players, keyboard players, guitar players, bass players. Of course, we picked on the drums already, drums and percussion. So, if I'm teaching a class, I'm going to make sure that all my students understand what each instrument can do, what their limits are, and what their strengths are.

...

### **Elizabeth**

So, question four is kind of similar to what you're saying about question three, “what knowledge and terminology of the rhythm section instruments such as playing techniques, ways to achieve specific sounds, do you incorporate into your communication methods with session players during studio rhythm recording sessions?”

### **Producer D**

Yeah, of course...A simple thing that every producer should know, “Hey I want you to play four on the floor” for a drummer. Oh, well, if you don't know what that is, then how are you gonna communicate that? Four on the floor, it's like kick drum [counts]...every quarter note gets a beat.

You've gotta learn guitar language. There's several ...you need to understand what crunch guitar is. You need to understand what drive guitar is. You need to understand what rake guitar is. You need to understand what arpeggio guitar means. You need to understand what jangly means. You need to understand what shimmer is for a guitar player. So, these are all terms that most people don't know, but they're used every day.

I'll have somebody write on a chart. [Producer Y], he's a good example. If he wants me to do an ambient, spacey thing, he writes on the chart: “Hazy.” Well, if you, how would you even know what that means? But I know what it means because I saw hazy on there and I said, “[Producer Y], you mean like ethereal ambient?” He goes, “exactly, ‘hazy,’ so it kind of is mystic and misty in the track.” So those kind of terms are terms you need to learn.

Keyboards, that can be all kinds of different things where ...if you're piano player, “oh yeah, play with the sustain pedal a little more” or “play with the soft pedal” or “voice your chords in a way that they're dense” or “don't use the left hand, just use the right hands to create certain things.”

The bass player, “your tone's too bright. Can you roll off some high end and make it more woofy sounding?” I mean, there's all kinds of terms that you should be aware of and learn. And sometimes the only place to learn those is actually being in the studio.

...

**Elizabeth**

Thanks. So, sub question to that, “How does the incorporation of this knowledge influence the success of your project?”

**Producer D**

Well, it just helps you get there faster. You're not chasing your tail all day long trying to figure it out. Like if what the guy wanted in the beginning was a big rake tone and they're like, “well, I don't know, I don't know. It sounds like, I don't know. It sounds like water or sounds like a waterfall.” I'm like “oh, well, I don't know what you're hearing is a waterfall.” So, you just start doing this [*draws circles in the air*] where after I've tried to play five different ideas and they go, “oh, that's it.” Well, what I landed on was a simple rake guitar. That's all he needed to know. And we would have saved 15-20 minutes in the studio. And if you start breaking down the studio time per hour, you've just wasted 20 minutes or several \$100 because you didn't know how to ask for a certain sound. So, very important.

**Elizabeth**

So how much do you depend on your session players to know and implement these techniques?

**Producer D**

Well, they should know. The people that I work with, I can say any of these terms and they will know exactly what I'm talking about, and I do depend on that. I depend on them to be competent in the job that they're hired for. And being competent is knowing the terminology in the studio, and it makes the process really fast, and you can get there really fast, like I said, so you don't waste a lot of time.

**Elizabeth**

Okay, so question number five is, “how does your comprehension of various musical genres (jazz, country, etc.) inform your decisions and communication methods during studio rhythm recording sessions?”

**Producer D**

I mean I think your comprehension of all those styles ... for example, kind of tailing on our last question, say I don't know all the terminology, right? I don't know how to communicate that. But, if I can walk in with a sound from a record because I'm listening to all these different styles, then I can go, “Oh, I heard the sound that I want on this Keith Urban record.” So, I can pull it up, and instead of us wasting 20 minutes, I can pull up that sound on the Keith Urban record and go, “here it is, check this out - what he does at the top of the chorus,” and you just roll it ... and the guitar player goes, “I know exactly what you want. Perfect.”

So, I think it's very important for a producer to be well-versed in all of the styles...as far as having them in their bag of tricks that they can call on. That's so important. And if you're coming in and you're doing a jazz record, if you don't know any jazz, it's gonna be really hard for you to direct the musicians. But if you've been listening to jazz and you can go, “oh, I've got a Pat Metheny record that I wanna play for you - this is from 1982 - here's the song, and this is the

vibe we're going for.” Play it, everybody hears it, and instead of trying to communicate that with abstract words, or words that nobody’s ever heard of, or colors, you go...it's that sound, it’s that vibe. And what you've done is you've taken all the players and redirected their focus. And there we are, and now we can start working and getting towards that song.

...

**Elizabeth**

So, sub question to the genre one is, “how did you develop this knowledge of musical genres?”

**Producer D**

Well, I think you have to love music, and then your love of music will draw you into certain things. When I first started playing, I loved the blues. So, I started listening to the blues and I'd find all the artists that I like about blues: Elmore James, B.B. King, Eric Clapton when he was playing blues early on, and I would just take it all in and I would store it inside of my memory banks.

... It's just like reading books and going to the library. You can go through phases where you're like, “... I want sci-fi” so you read all the sci-fi. Well, that becomes part of your knowledge base, and so next time you go to the library, you check out something else. Maybe you just want some light fictional reading or something. Or maybe you want a biography. So, you study the life of somebody.

Well, it’s the same thing with music knowledge. Little by little, because you love it, you just start studying these different musicians, and then you start getting into who they liked, and then it just takes you on this deep dive of music. And then, next thing you know, after a few years, your knowledge base of music has grown exponentially so that you can start to recall all these things when you're producing. You hear something like, “oh, that reminds me of Django Reinhardt. Oh, that reminds me of Sticks when they did this record.” So, you just have all that in your knowledge base.

...

Your love and your passion for music will drive you there. It's like being thirsty. You need water. Well, music has the same kind of thing: if you love it and you want it to be a part of you, you get thirsty for it. And you ... “ah I need more.”

...

I would study each thing and then each thing would lead to a different thing.

**Elizabeth**

Okay, so how does your aptitude in this area influence the success of your project?

**Producer D**

Well, kind of like we were talking before it. Let me just say as a session player, not necessarily the one producing the project, but ... the one that is trying to interpret, if my

knowledge base is wide and deep, then a producer can talk to me and ask me things and I can get there way, way faster than somebody who doesn't have that knowledge base.

So, if you flip it around and you're the producer coming in talking to the musicians, you can direct them a lot better because you have this knowledge of all these different genres and you can pinpoint exactly what you want to go for quicker than if... like I said, you don't wanna be in a studio where you're burning, I don't know, \$1500 an hour for all these people in the studio, maybe more? You don't want to be burning that kind of money and not knowing how to tell somebody what you're going for because you didn't take the time to learn the genres that you're gonna have to produce.

### **Elizabeth**

Please describe communication methods of music producers, such as musical terms, instrument specific direction and techniques, song, band or musical genre, references that you have found to be effective.

### **Producer D**

Well, I feel like that question, I feel like through this conversation, that's kind of been leading through all that. Just being able to communicate effectively means that you've got to know what you want, and if you don't, and you don't know how to explain it, then you're gonna be stuck there looking at each other for a long time going "well, I don't know. What do you wanna do?" You don't want that, like I said, in a studio.

Know the musical terms, like the ones we talked about. For guitars specifically, I gave you a whole list that I think you can draw from. And like I said, I probably got ahead of it with answering that question earlier, but know how to speak to a bass player. How to direct him to get a good tone. And if you if you can't describe it, then ... have an example of it on somebody else's record that you can share so that he can hear something to get him in the right direction.

And as far as keyboard players, I know there's a lot of terminology that they have that they respond to. Especially guys that play synthesizer. You could call out one of a thousand different kinds of sounds that you could describe to them that you want. But if you can play something in just a couple minutes, then you're gonna save so much time. Instead of trying to describe a synth part like, "Well, yeah, it's airy, and it's got octaves, and it's got tremolo on it..." Well that helps, but that's not really getting you where you need to be. You need to be able to go, "Oh, I need you to play this kind of pad. It's on a U2 record from 1998. Here it is..."

I think that communication is gonna come down to you knowing what you want and knowing how to point all those players in the right direction because you've done your homework before you walked in the studio, and you know examples of things that you wanna play for them.

...

### **Elizabeth**

So, are there any methods you found to be ineffective?

### **Producer D**

Yeah, the ineffective methods are trying to describe sounds in parts, but literally people have used colors. Like, "that guitar needs to be more purple sounding." Well, I don't know what

purple means. What I've done before is if somebody goes, "yeah, it seems to be more purple," and I'm like, "well, okay, I'll tell you what, I'll start playing, and when you hear purple, let me know." So, I think that's ineffective.

Ineffective is to be too rigid on somebody. Like if they're trying to get into the flow or something and you keep stopping and saying, "that's not right, that's not right, that's not right." "Well, hold on. Give me a minute to at least feel what's going on before you *completely* shut me down. Let me try and express this, what I'm doing, and let you hear a full picture of it."

So, I think it's important not to shut people down too fast. Let them have a little room to kind of find their way. And then if it's not right, then use terms that will encourage them but yet help point them in the right direction: "That's not quite right, but I love, I love what you're going for." Say something positive about at least *something* they're doing like, "yeah, I like the tone of that, but I think the part needs to be different" or, "I'm hearing this" or "hey, can we try this?" Those are all effective ways. But if you just start shutting people down with like, "nope, that's wrong." "What's wrong about it?" "I don't know, but it's wrong." That's not gonna work.

### **Elizabeth**

So, you elaborated, which was sub-question B. So, we'll move on to question number 7. So, "in your experience with students who have received formal training in this area, what skills or knowledge base have you noticed tends to be lacking?"

### **Producer D**

Well. A lot of times in my long, long career in Nashville, sometimes people have a complete, full education, and they have a lot of knowledge, but they don't really understand how to apply that. So, the way that I would approach it - I don't have a formal training. I've kind of learned just by figuring it out - ... If you have a formal education and you've learned all of the nuts and bolts of what you need to do, I think that's awesome. And I think it's important. If I had the choice and I could have an education, if say I could go to Liberty University as an 18-year-old, I would have done it in a heartbeat. It would have been awesome. I would have loved - There's so many holes in my theory and my musicianship that could have easily been taken care of if I would have had that formal training. But formal training will not make you a great musician. I've seen lots of people come into town that on paper should be able to succeed. But for one reason or another, they don't succeed because they're not willing to listen and learn from the people that have been doing it a long time that have already made tons of mistakes and they could really help them.

I think if you combine education with humility and the willingness to learn and let people that maybe don't have an education but have all kinds of experience help lead the way for you, I think you could be very successful.

### **Elizabeth**

Alright, last question, "is there anything else relating to this topic that you would consider an essential concept to teach in a college classroom context?"

### **Producer D**

Yeah, and this is kind of out outside, away from music a little bit, but I think it's important. I think you need to teach musicians coming up through college, or just coming into town, if they were willing to listen, how to handle their money... With a musician...you're not

going to have a week-to-week salary. ...Especially when you're starting off, you never know if you're going to get a gig or if you're not going to get a gig, or if you're going to get a session or you're not going to get a session. And so [my wife] and I have learned to budget and take care of things in a way that we don't have to rely on a salary every two weeks. We kind of just go, "this is what we're gonna do and we're not gonna live beyond our means." ... The music business is ups and downs ...

I mean this is a big deal. I would really teach people how to be good stewards of their money. And to believers, one other thing I would say, make sure you're a good tither. I believe in that. You cannot out-give God. There's no way. And if you just do what He asks, "Hey, bring in 10% to Me and watch what I can do, watch the doors I can open, watch [the] things I can do because you're being faithful with the little that I've given you."

I think that's an important thing that we miss out on as musicians. We're so focused on just making it, or getting the gig, or whatever. But you've gotta learn to be a good steward with your money... I'm telling you, learn how to budget and be a good steward, and then... that will help you to be successful throughout your career.



## Interview with Producer E

**Elizabeth**

Question number one is, “in your experience, what are five of the most valuable skills that contribute to the success of music producers in the context of a recording studio?”

**Producer E**

Okay, so I would say that number one I think is communication skills. Because ... as a producer, you may have an amazing vision in your brain for what you think the song should be, or whatever you're working on should be. But if you've hired other people, including engineer, all the way down to musicians, whoever else that you're the boss of, if you can't communicate that, it's never gonna happen.

And that varies from job to job. One set of musicians may understand super musical terms. Another set of musicians you may have to just use adjectives like “fluffy” and “airy” and those kind of things. So, communication skills - I guess that's kind of tied in with knowing who you're working with, too.

...

Psychology is also very important... just being able to read people. If you're working with a singer and that singer is getting frustrated, and you keep pushing them towards that frustration, that may not be a good move. So, being able to read their body language and the way that they look and if you feel they're being frustrated, just call a break or talk to them about something that would set them at ease, set their mind at ease. ... I think that people that are going to be producers, even just in the music industry as a whole, should take a psychology class just to learn how to read people. That would be super helpful in what we do.

You would think I would have already said something about musical skill, but I haven't said that yet about ... producers. There are so many varying differences in the different producers I work with. Some are very musical and want to get into the business of how to play your instrument with you, but then there are some that are just trying to capture a feeling, something that they feel. Neither one of them are right or wrong, it's just how they do their job.

I guess you do have to have some kind of knowledge about music just to communicate with the people you're dealing with. But I think a producer should know the artist that they're working for and know what they're trying to achieve. And know that artist's audience too, because you're trying to create something for that artist that people are gonna wanna consume and hear, and do that the best that you can serving that artist.

...

I like [knowing the artist's vision and audience] for number three because again, I work for some producers that are master musicians. [Producer Z], for example. But then I worked for other people that literally couldn't tell you what chord, what key the song is in. They just know “that part should be shorter.” “Play that guitar riff.” “Yeah, that sounds cool.” And it works, they're doing great at their craft.

It grieves me to not say that musical skills should be on that list, but I guess some knowledge of music should be on that list to some extent. So, I guess that would be 4.

And number five would be to buy lunch for everyone, because that *[laughs]*...and this is the truth, if a producer hires me and will buy lunch, I'm not kidding, I will say yes to them

anytime. Because it's like, honestly, they're thinking about us, they're thinking about that. So, maybe put that one on number five: buy lunch for people that are working for you *[laughs]*. Jokingly, but kind of seriously, too.

**Elizabeth**

Yeah, I think because it shows you value the people.

**Producer E**

That's it, you said what I was trying to say right there.

**Elizabeth**

Thanks. So, I had a sub question in case it was just a list, “could you elaborate on your answers, please?” But you elaborated as you want, so we will skip on to question number two: If you were going to teach a college class on arranging commercial music in the recording studio during a session, what topics would you cover and why?

...

**Producer E**

Something I say is “trim the fat” of whatever you're working on. And that has to do with just where we are now, we watch 15 second clips on a reel and that's about all our brain has the time for at this point *[laughs]*. But even before all that was happening, [I'd] think, “does the intro... let's listen to the intro. Is this intro too long? It's 8 measures. Can we cut it in half? Can it just be 4 and let's get to the point?” Some songs, yes. Some songs, no. “And the turn around, are we wasting time there after the first chorus?” I'll try to look for spaces like that or anywhere in there where we can trim it up and get to the point a little more is something that I think is very important.

Another thing, probably before that (that's the first thing I thought of), but before that is just making sure, “are we in the right key here? Like is this where... I know the song's high, and you feel like it feels good to you” (talking to the singer or the artist), “but do we need to go down a whole step so that when you do ad libs you have a little more room to go?”

That and also just making sure the tempo is right. I'll hear musicians say, “feels like you're having to rush to get that lyric out and you're not able to get a breath.” That would usually mean maybe we need to slow it down two clicks. So, then you try...you slow it down two beats and give it a shot.

So those are some of the things I would stress, as far as *arranging* goes, and then you get into things like “is this a piano driven song or is this a guitar driven song or is this a drums and bass driven song, groove driven song, where it's just an organ pad?” “What does this artist do that we're working for? Does this artist play guitar? Does this artist play piano?” Sometimes that will answer those questions for you... You don't wanna go in and record a song that they can't do live because they don't play that instrument, or it doesn't represent them. Those are all things that I would encourage people to think about as they're arranging a song for an artist.

**Elizabeth**

Okay, thanks. Question three: if you were going to teach a college class on communication skills for the studio music producer, what topics would you cover and why?

**Producer E**

See how cool that is? Communication skills was the first thing I said *[laughs]*.

So, for me being someone that works in Nashville, ... writing out a chart is really a communication device as far as just a number chart. I'm not writing that chart to prove how much music theory I know and show off how I can write all this stuff out. It's really a way that I can give the engineer a chart, the band a chart, and all of us can look at it and can say, "in measure three of the bridge, does that need to be a suspended chord because of what the vocal's doing?" and everybody can look down at that quickly and just go, "Oh yeah, maybe. Maybe that's the..." and so they write that and we're gonna try it...It's a very efficient way to communicate in the studio, by having a chart of that nature.

Now, if you have a real proper chart, actual music written out, some of that stuff will already be spelled out, and you won't have to say it. But as far as a pop music kind of thing, [where you're] just writing out a number chart, it's easy to just say those kind of things.

Communication...Also you also kind of have to be careful to not say things like this: "Oh, I like what you're trying to do there." Because when you say that, what sensitive artists and musicians will hear is: "I'm not accomplishing what I'm trying to do." So instead of saying, "I like what you're trying to do there," maybe frame that and say it a different way so that it doesn't tank their mentality. Say, "oh man that's really great, what you got going there. Let's give it a few more tries." Somehow frame it a different way. So, you have to be careful about that in communicating with artists, and most studio musicians hear things the same way as what I just explained. So, you have to pick your phrases carefully.

But I just believe in, if we can all be talking the same language, like looking at the same chart, understanding the vibe. If someone spells, out like today, for example, I did this session at 10 this morning and we had seven people in the band, we were gonna do 4 songs in three hours. If there wasn't a clear goal as to what we were going for, there's no way we we're gonna pull it off. Because we had to do a song every 40 minutes to pull that off. Full. Done. So, we got the charts and the first thing I asked the producer was "how many songs are we doing?" He said "Four. Gotta get four done in three hours." So, we all knew at that point, "alright, this is what we have to do, this is our pace." So, clearly, we knew what we needed to do. So just whoever runs the session should make those kinds of things clear at the start: What you're going for, what the goal is. And then that helps people to know.

**Elizabeth 13:32**

Okay, thanks. Question four is "what knowledge and terminology of the rhythm section instruments, such as playing techniques or ways to achieve specific sounds, do you incorporate into your communication methods with session players during studio rhythm recording sessions?"

**Producer E**

A lot. A lot for me. I grew up playing all the instruments that are basic: drums, bass, guitar and piano. So, I can say stuff like, "second verse, hit the toms on beat one and two and then hit the kick drum on three and then hit the snare on beat 4." I can get down to those kinds of specifics, and that way there's no question. Instead of someone saying "I don't like that drum part. It's not what I'm hearing. Could you give me another option?" Instead of all that, I can literally say "play 16th notes on the hi-hat and play the snare on beat 4." And "oh, okay." And

then it's really clear what's needed there. Or "play 8th notes on the guitar on the bridge and then we'll do another pass where you just do whole note diamonds to fill it out."

I think those kinds of things are so helpful and I encourage even [a church youth band leader], "you gotta be able to tell the drummer... can't get frustrated with him. You gotta be able to tell the drummer exactly what you're wanting. So, you gotta know a little bit [*makes drumming motions*], just know a little bit about everything, and that way you could tell them, you could communicate clearly what you're trying to achieve. And that prevents you from getting frustrated too.

**Elizabeth**

Yeah, could you maybe expand on some of the other instruments?

**Producer E**

Yeah, for instance, if it's a song, (I'm just gonna make up a bunch of scenarios here), if it's a song where it's a guitar driven song and the guitar is pretty heavy, but the piano's playing the exact same thing as the guitar, and as a producer or engineer, you're thinking "it sounds real muddy, it sounds like there's no clarity here." Well, you could say to the piano player, "hey, could you not play piano here and just play either organ or a pad? Maybe the octave up from where the guitar is in the middle of, kind of in the meat section of the piano and the guitar?" That way there's a little more clarity, it carves out some space there. They're not fighting for the same frequency range and notes. And usually that'll clear stuff up, but if you don't know to *tell* the piano player that, and maybe say "just play the 5th on this part, that way you're not messing with what the guitar is doing. And then, once we get to the chorus, then you can play *big* whole notes full, and it'll sound fuller." Well, I just kind of gave them a game plan on what they could do by saying that. And if not, I'll go in there and show them.

I encourage everybody... You don't have to - like I said earlier, this is not a must, there are all different types of producers - *but*, if you wanna get better at what you do, and you're working with people that do this all the time, learn a little bit about the piano and why certain things sound muddy when they're played together. Why is that? Well, it's because you're playing the same exact notes. We need to get rid of this, and just play your right hand for that part.

And same thing for bass. "Oh, would you play the bass an octave up in verse two? That way when you hit the chorus and you hit that super low note, it makes an impact." So, just know a little bit about all those basic instruments, is my advice. If you don't, it's not a deal breaker, the world's not gonna end, you'll still get to a good product [*laughs*], you'll still be able to figure it out. But it might take you a little bit longer being able to communicate that quickly.

**Elizabeth**

Yeah, thanks. So, sub question to that is, "how does the incorporation of this knowledge influence the success of your project?"

**Producer E**

Well, I think ultimately, doing something fast doesn't mean you did something well. But, if you are on a budget, and let's say you're paying for studio time, which is very expensive, and you're paying for musicians that are on the floor with you, if you can communicate stuff quicker, you're gonna save money. You're gonna save... your budget's gonna do better. You have to think about that too. The finances of it. A lot of times the producer's having to think about that, too.

Just think about the thousands of dollars you're spending. Well, if we can get to the point a little bit quicker, maybe we'll save the people that are paying for the record a little bit of money. Or as a producer, you get to keep that and put it towards something else for the record. If you're gonna pay for strings, if you need... move that money around.

That doesn't mean that doing it quicker is better. A lot of the records that I love, who knows how long they... I mean, they may have taken them a full day to just get the drums, back when they were using tape and all that. But, if you do have a budget, you need to be efficient. Being able to communicate this stuff will help you get to your goal quicker.

### **Elizabeth**

My second sub-question is "how much do you depend on your session players to know and implement these techniques?"

### **Producer E**

Yeah, I was just thinking that as I was saying that last answer. If you hire the right people, all this communication stuff is very minimal [*laughs*]. ... I know what kind of record I'm making, I need to hire this person, this person, this person. Because they know what this music is, and we've worked together a billion times and I know I can trust them. If hire this engineer, I know that she's gonna get the sounds that are perfect for this.

We're not going to have to explain where we need to punch, what we need to... very minimal communication. You *might* say stuff like, "hey, let's cut 2 bars out of the turn around." "Okay." ... They write it on their chart and next time they just play. And you don't even have to explicitly explain all that stuff. So, I think casting a band and the crew that you're gonna be with is so important. Because all these little nuances that I'm having to explain right now, ... you don't have to think about it, they're already doing it.

### **Elizabeth**

Okay, thanks. So, question five: how does your comprehension of various musical genres (jazz, country, etc.) inform your decisions and communication methods during studio rhythm recording sessions?

### **Producer E**

Heavily. It does influence it.

First of all, you have to know what kind of record you're producing. If it's a country record, you're going to make different choices, as far as the instrumentation, then you would if it's a worship record, honestly. ...

I feel like... I personally have no business ... playing on a record that has to be, probably jazz for sure, certain types of jazz, or anything that you have to read, they called the wrong person. I should not be there. I should be doing your basic level of music [*laughs*]. But that goes back to casting, again too, like having the wrong people in the room.

But, I know that if we're going to be doing a country record, maybe I'll bring in a steel guitar player. If it's a pop record, probably not gonna do that, I know that we're probably not gonna need to spend the money on that. Maybe bring in a second person that does programming or synth programming in addition to the regular cast of band. So, if I didn't know that, and I hired a steel player to be on that, if I didn't know those genres and the differences, then that would be a

mistake. I think it's important for everybody to get a little bit of whatever's out there. As much as you can handle.

I mean, I love country music. I love pop, I love, love pop music. I love rock music. Gospel, all that, and it's all different. There are little things that make it different, and I think you need to be aware of those things. Because if somebody calls you to produce a rock record, you have to know how to cast that record properly.

### **Elizabeth**

So how did you develop this knowledge of musical genres?

### **Producer E**

The radio. I'm old enough to have listened to the radio a lot, I still do, honestly. There will be times where I just, like the actual radio dial in my vehicle, I'll listen to whatever the stations are around here. And there's something about it I just like. And it used to be - gosh, it sounds like old man talk, but seriously - there's a cutoff point where things started sounding real similar in the 90s due to some things that happened with regulations of radio stations. And only two companies owned (I think it was two companies) owned all radio stations. But before that, they were locally owned, so you could hear a variety of... like pop music would go anywhere from like folksy kind of sound to R&B. It was all heaped into one genre. So, I feel like it had a little more variety at that point. Now, thankfully, technology, we can just hunt that stuff out and listen to it very easily.

But to me it was a growing up in church, growing up in a real country area. So, I had church sound, I had like gospel sound, then I had like country sound. And then on the radio, I had pop music sounds that were coming into my ears. And so, I had a combination of all that stuff happening. And I just really liked it all.

### **Elizabeth**

Okay, so how does your aptitude in this area influence the success of your project?

### **Producer E**

Again, I think it goes back to communication skills. And I personally would investigate and study who played on the records that I liked, and I would also find out what they were playing on those records. Like what kind of bass was this person playing? Well, "oh, that's why it sounds that way. That's why. Okay." So, whenever I hear a song that reminds me of that, I'll reach for *that* bass, 'cause I'll bring lots of different instruments to a session.

So, if it's a song that sounds like this, or reminds me of that, "okay, I know that she played this bass on that. I'm gonna grab that bass." And it'll get me in that zone. Well, had I not studied that and...been familiar with that, I wouldn't have known what to do.

There have been times where I missed something musically along the way - because you just do. There's so much, you can't take it all in - and someone says, "yeah" (on a session), "it needs to sound like this," and I don't know what it is. So, I'll say, "can we hear it? Can you play a little bit of that for us real quick?" And I can kind of tell what they're going for at that point. And then I'll leave there and study it because I feel like I've missed out on something. But I think you just keep learning and just keep studying stuff.

"Why does it sound this way?" And then once you find out - Like, I'll go down to like "What kind of strings did they use? What kind of pedal were they using there? What kind of an

instrument were they using?" Some people go into the microphones and everything, I don't have to do all that, but some people get that deep into it. So just be curious about all that stuff and it will pay off. When you get in a session and someone says, "hey, I need it to be this way" and you go, "oh, I know what that is, okay cool," and you go in there and you can get to that sound pretty quickly, that's impressive. And that'll get you another job, more than likely.

### **Elizabeth**

Hmm, that's good. Thanks. Question six: please describe communication methods of music producers, such as musical terms, instrument specific direction and techniques, song band or musical genre references, that you have found to be effective.

### **Producer E**

A lot of people will do, like I know you guys do this there at Liberty, like, "what's the vibe track? What kind of sound are we going for?" And I know that you guys, and most people do this, will play something that they've heard. A song. And what happens when you hear that, what happens to me is it puts me in a place and it makes me think, "okay, this is the sound I need to go for on *my* instrument, particularly."

... Like the other day when I was working with [some individuals], we were doing a song, and we were having the two bands do two different things. And we weren't telling them anything, but the second band, while the first band was going, they were kind of huddled up in the corner. And I stuck my ear over there and they had a Lizzie McAlpine track playing for what they were going to go for. And they were all kind of listening, and as soon as they went out there, it sounded, it felt like that, because they used that as a reference to communicate, "okay, here's what we're gonna go for." That happens a lot.

Also, I'll hear producers say, well, there's a handful of them, ... there was Coldplay for a long time, and then, when Tom Petty died, it was real cool to have a Tom Petty sound, or it'll be like, today I heard Eric Church. So, they tell you these different artists that'll make your mind go to that spot. And I find that really helpful when they do that. So, I feel like that's a big one. That's maybe *the* biggest one. And then they give you your boundaries within that, like, "okay, this is what I want you to go for, but we're not gonna do it exactly. But let's just play in that playground."

### **Elizabeth**

Okay, are there any methods you found to be ineffective?

### **Producer E**

... I'm not a big fan of not caring [*laughs*]... You know, just like "ah, we'll get it. Yeah, that's good, that's good enough. Yeah, we'll get it. We'll, we'll tune it later. Yeah, we'll fix it. We'll do that later." Let's do it right now. I like to walk away from what we're doing and feel good about it. Like, "wow, we all just cared." And it can't always be that way, but man, I like to walk away from my track feeling like "alright, when they sit back down to mix this thing and they pull it up, they're like 'oh, cool, they cared. I can hear that they cared that their punches aren't all weird' and like I'm sliding up, but it goes to a low note." You know those kind of things. I think about that stuff.

And when leadership isn't caring, then who *is* gonna care? But, I think it's important to not just phone it in. Not a lot of people do that, but I do run into that sometimes, like they're just

trying to get it done. So, not a big fan of that. I think our names are gonna be on that forever... So, put a little heart into it.

...

### **Elizabeth**

In your experience with students who have received formal training in this area, what skills or knowledge base have you noticed tends to be lacking?

### **Producer E**

The first thing that comes to my mind is, it goes back to the casting thing. If you are producer and you hire... in my mind I'm thinking about if someone came here to Nashville and hired an A-team band, like a top tier band, you bring them in and you're trying to make this drummer, who's a world class drummer, feel exactly like your Logic Pro loop demo drums, like, what are we doing here? And you're beating them up over it like, "no, would you listen to my demo one more time? I want to sound just like this." And I'll tell you this, people in this town will do it. They'll sit there and try their hardest to sound like that Apple loop that you built your whole song on. Because they just will do that. There's hardly anybody that would say "I'm not gonna do that. That's garbage." People have a good attitude. They will do it. You're paying them. They're gonna work.

But what I see is *that* a lot: People fall in love with their demo and then they wanna get the feeling of whatever they've already created. When in all reality, if you like what you did on your demo, keep it. Just don't spend thousands of dollars on studio time and musicians. Just use that instead of going in and expecting them... because every musician's heartbeat and fingers are different. It's not gonna sound exactly like that. If you love that, keep it. There's nothing wrong with that. You're gonna save a *lot* of money by doing that.

So that's one thing that could be a little frustrating... for them to not be able to have those communication skills and reading the room and reading people skills to see, "Oh, maybe, maybe I should just let this person that has played on 100 number one hits, I should tell them what I want and then let them play their interpretation of it. If I don't like it, I'll pull in my other thing later." But don't beat him up on the session over that. I *have* seen that and... I think it's just inexperience, usually. They'll figure it out. Hopefully.

### **Elizabeth**

Yeah, okay. So, last question: is there anything else relating to this topic that you would consider an essential concept to teach in a college classroom context?

### **Producer E**

Well, I feel like we've really covered a lot of the main things that I would suggest. Yeah, people skills. People skills has *got* to be number one. Just people skills, treating people well, knowing how to read people.

Sometimes you do need to challenge stuff. Sometimes you do have to stand up for something that you think, if you're the boss, this song has to have this. "I know because the artist told me they need this in the song. We have to do it." And if it doesn't feel right with the room, you can say something like, "hey, let's just do a playlist of this. That way I have it, and then we go back to the other way." You know what? Everybody just won in that scenario, if you do



something like that. That had nothing to do with music. That just had to do with keeping the team happy, keeping everybody in good spirits.

So, to me, people skills is up there. That's gotta be one of the top, if not *the* top, things.