

HYBRID MUSIC PRODUCTION LOG : PART II

Lushon Feare // Level 5 - Term 2- Narrative Productions

This term, I focused on further refining my demos from last term. I selected three demo tracks — *Deep in the Water*, *The Love Has Gone*, and *Black Mack* — to develop into finalized, professional-standard recordings.

Pre-Production: Rhythm Section I began by working on the rhythm section. I notated all the bass lines and piano parts using MuseScore 4 in an effort to streamline the recording process and effectively communicate parts to potential session musicians.

Finding Session Musicians

I looked for a bassist, keyboard player, and drummer. I found drummer *Roman Bytsko* through Vampr, a social network for musicians, and bassist *Toby Soufil* via an advertisement I posted in a local jamming musicians group on WhatsApp.

Rehearsals

I organized a few jam sessions at my rehearsal space over several weeks to tighten the performances. I created backing tracks from the demos by stripping out the bass and drum parts for us to play along to. I also guided the rehearsals on piano and occasionally filled in on bass when Toby was unavailable. I shared copies of the bass tabs via Google Drive so everyone could practice outside of our sessions.

Once the songs were performance-ready, I booked time at the IMW Recording Studio to record the bass and drums.

Recording Sessions

We recorded the drum parts over two sessions. The first session's recordings lacked energy, so we scheduled a second session to get tighter, more expressive takes.

After the drum sessions, I replaced the MIDI piano part for *Deep in the Water* with a live baby grand piano, recorded at the University of East London's recording facilities. I initially planned to record real piano for the other two tracks but couldn't find a pianist in time, and I wasn't skilled enough to perform them myself. Instead, I used Logic Pro's studio piano VST. I adjusted parameters like pedal noise, sympathetic resonance, key release, and string noise to enhance realism.

I added shakers and tambourine recordings at my rehearsal space (Arch 79 Studios), and final guitar parts were performed by my housemate and guitarist, *Simon Nilsson*, at home using my bedroom setup.

(See my Studio Log for a more in-depth view of the recording process.)

Comping

With all the instruments recorded, I compiled the best takes from each performance. I recorded directly into playlists by switching all the tracks in Pro Tools from 'waveform' to 'playlist' mode. I then dragged each take into a new playlist slot, repeating this process for each new take — allowing me to easily compare and select the best parts.

Drum Comping

To comp the drums, I grouped all the drum tracks in Pro Tools. This ensured that any edits applied to one track were reflected across the entire group. I previewed takes using the speaker icon and selected the best segments using the selector tool, copying them to the target playlist.

After choosing the best segments, I used the trim tool to ensure cuts didn't fall on transients (to avoid clipping). I then created quick fades to eliminate any popping or glitches between takes. Finally, I used the "consolidate clip" function to combine edits into a single audio track.

I repeated the same process for single-track instruments like bass, piano, and guitar.

Quantising Drums and Elastic Audio

To create a tighter, more polished sound, I used Pro Tools' **Elastic Audio** feature, which lets you time-stretch audio while preserving quality. I enabled **Tab to Transients**, then switched the waveform view to **Analysis** so Pro Tools could mark each transient.

I then switched each track to **Warp** mode, allowing me to drag transient markers to align with the grid. I applied appropriate Elastic Audio algorithms for each instrument:

- **Guitars & Piano:** *Polyphonic*
 - **Bass:** *Monophonic*
 - **Shaker & Tambourine:** *Rhythmic*
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Mixing

I began by panning the tracks to create a wider stereo image and better separation. I added noise gates to the close-mic drum tracks using the **SSL E-Channel Strip** plugin by Waves, which I also used for compression and EQ on each drum channel.

For guitar tones, I used **Guitar Rig 7** by Native Instruments, dialing in distortion, amp simulation, and reverb to taste.

For the bass, I used the **Reason Rack Plugin** and the **Line 6 Bass Amp**.

As I hadn't mixed a large number of live instruments before, I sought guidance online. I found a mixing blueprint from **JTS Mixing** and a "Mixing Cheatsheet" by **Hardcore Music Studio**. These resources detailed key frequencies to cut or boost for each instrument, as well as recommended compression settings.

I then balanced levels across the mix and added reverb where appropriate.