From my discord friend maude!

1: I sort of always wanted to do music in some capacity ever since I was a little kid, it's just a passion and a goal I've always had. My earliest attempts at production were when I was probably like 14 or so, there was this free app called Allihoopa where you could make like 8 bar loops or something, and it didn't let you play anything out of key so it was pretty easy to make something that sounded decent. A couple years after that I got a more fleshed out free music production app, then I switched free apps a couple more times, and after a couple years of that I ended up using Ableton which I still use to this day.

2: Like I mentioned above, Ableton is my DAW of choice. Frankly I haven't really used any equipment outside of DAWs so I can't really say whether or not it's suited for beginners.

3: Frankly I'm not very well established in any kind of scene at all, in other words I haven't really gotten my name out there much myself. As far as collaborations go, by far my most notable one is with Zombae from Rural Internet, which happened because she was taking any beats sent to her over the course of 3 or so hours for an experimental project she was doing, and I saw that opportunity and took it. I guess that's the best advice I can give, is keep your eyes peeled for opportunities like that, artists you're aware of in the underground asking for beats on social media etc. Any other collaborations of mine are mostly with friends and such, which is also a good avenue to pursue as a beginner, since it helps to build connections in case any of your friends happen to get recognition in their scene. (edited)

4: I'm honestly not the best person to ask about this because I've always had and continue to have a very unconventional approach: I've never watched a single music production tutorial or gotten any other kind of help with it, and anything I know has been figured out through a lot of trial and error, but it's not like I sat

down in front of a DAW for hours at a time like many self-taught artists do either. This approach has pros and cons: on one hand it allows my sound to stand out since I use a lot of unconveniental out of the box techniques, on the other hand it's lead to my sound being pretty unpolished to this day, and I honestly probably still have a lot of room for improvement despite how long I've been at it.

5: I'm a pretty big sampler myself, though I've also made a number of instrumentals with no samples. For me it's just a big component of my sound and style, though I like to challenge myself by restricting my sample usage every now and again. As far as difficulties when starting out go, probably the most relevant answer I can give is that for the first year or so of me releasing music I basically just came up with short ideas and released them as is at a pretty sporadic rate because I didn't have faith that putting more effort in would be worth it, but once I started spending more time thinking about how all the elements of the music interlink and crafting my projects more carefully, the response to my musi c immediately became more positive, and that's the approach I've been taking ever since.

6: I'm honestly not the best with mixing, much like with the actual production itself, I've never watched a mixing tutorial or gotten any help with it from anywhere so I make do with what sounds best to my untrained ear. I do spend a lot of time tweaking the mixing to make sure it sounds right though, it's an important component of the instrumental for sure, even for someone with a more unpolished approach such as myself.

7: My passion for music and making music has not dwindled at all over the years and is as strong as ever. Making music full-time is still my dream as it always has been, but honestly I don't know how attainable of a dream it is, and I don't have any concrete steps laid out to make it happen any time soon.

From my discord friend qwert

For my first question, how did you get started with producing music in general? Where did you find the passion for it?

I first felt the desire to use a DAW as a creative outlet when I graduated high school and stopped playing classical percussion in concert band. I still really enjoyed listening to and creating music, but it wasn't exactly easy (or possible) to lug a marimba to my college dorm. I was racking my brain to figure out ways to still maintain a creative outlet without any physical instruments, and picking up a DAW seemed like the best option. The day I began taking my first classes as a first year college student was the day I began watching DAW tutorials online, and the rest is history.

The second question that I have for you is what is your favorite DAW to use? I use studio one personally but I'm not sure if that is the best one for beginners. Do you recommend only using a daw if you're just starting? Or would it be better to get actual equipment that you can use hands-on like synths mpc and others?

I personally use Reason 12, and I do think it's the most intuitive DAW out there however I of course admit I'm biased in my recommendation. It's the only DAW I have used to any real extent. The way it partitions the UI into instruments in the middle, sequencer on the bottom, and mixer on top felt and still feels very intuitive to me.

I would recommend keeping physical equipment to a minimum, if you're purchasing any at all. I'm a huge proponent of the idea that limitation breeds creativity, and that there's substantial merit in exploring that limited space. If you're looking for equipment, I'd also do research and see if virtual (cheaper) options are available, such as VCVRack in place of a full (expensive) modular synth setup.

I would like to know more about how to get your name out there. Perhaps there were avenues where you could get your music heard? What are some of the steps? Like if I were ever to want someone else to perhaps use a beat of mine what would be the best way, since I know you have gone through that process before?

This is something I struggle with personally, so I fear I'm not the best artist to provide an answer to this question, but I'll share my secret. Mainly, I like to build up genuine and personal relationships with other artists whose work I admire. Once I publish something, or even if I'm just looking for feedback on an early draft, I'll share my work with these artists and see what they have to say. It's hard to get your name out there to the *masses*, and I admit this is kinda circumventing the question a bit, but in this way—namely posting about your work online AND having more one on one discussions about your work with other musicians—helps me feel like I've adequately gotten my music heard. Quality over quantity for sure, and it's the method I'd recommend.

How much practicing and learning did you have to do for producing music in general, is it necessary to put the classic 10,000 hours into it before you decide you're good at it? What's the best way to improve at actually making the instrumental?

100% you do not need to do 10k hours. However, it requires a reframing of perspective which I think I realized too late. Art as a concept is so freeform, that even your very first compositions or tracks or beats will have artistic merit, and are worth sharing with the world. For the longest time I failed to understand this, and I would keep trying to refine stuff until I felt it was "perfectly ready" or that the timing felt "perfectly right"—that, or just scrap it altogether from growing dissatisfied with how it was turning out. Or both of these. But the honest truth is that from day 1 you can simply deem yourself "good at it" and adopt this perspective way early, which, in a way, inspires us to be better producers. It's trite, but the best way to improve is to practice WHILE getting your stuff out into the world! We struggle to improve if we fail to allow ourselves to receive feedback. Feedback from others, even if it's just a "this slaps!" from a friend, is always essential.

What are some of the biggest hardships you went through when you started making music? Like were there any roadblocks that you had to pivot through to get better or any sort of writer's block too? I know with producing it can be hard to make original music so that's why people use samples to help them out, are you much of a sampler or did you make your original sounds?

I have a couple hardships that even to this day I'm still trying to navigate. Firstly I have a hard time trusting myself in general, which manifests itself in a couple ways, namely being unsure if an idea I have is actually a good one (where the real answer is to just try to get it on paper and make a more informed decision from there) or stressing out over when is the right time to drop something (where again the real answer is that there never is going to be a *perfect* time to do anything, and that you just have to accept this reality and be at peace with it I guess). Secondly I also tend to overanalyze and overthink a lot of my work, and spend a ton of time trying to optimize a maybe 15 second passage of a track, to where I won't realize I'm over-tweaking it which ultimately hinders the track as a result. However, being mentally aware of these hardships allows me to mitigate them. These are hardships I've struggled with ever since the beginning, but I do feel I'm getting better at surmounting them with each passing day.

I usually don't use samples, since most samples I have access to usually aren't compatible with my creative process (struggling to tame certain frequency ranges, etc.) and while I get the argument that samples can help inspire a creative direction, and that having a library of sounds to draw from can help one get around writers block, I tend to derive that same inspiration from singular, simpler instruments or tracks that I've designed myself. Over the years I've compiled a library of "samples" or effects I can pull from at any time, and that library is also still growing, albeit at a slower rate now.

I think one of the most important aspects and difficult to understand for producing music is mixing. Making each part of the instrumental like the Hi-Hats and the 808s sound just right can

get a little intense. How do you think you are with that specific topic? I have a ton of learning to do with mixing and was wanting to know how you started with that too and where you ended up.

I'm not really the best person to talk to for mix advice—I'm not very good at it myself. As for my style of composition, I'm mainly working with one or maybe two tracks at a time, as opposed to the 8 or 10 that can comprise a beat, so I don't have the magic secret unfortunately. Honestly, almost all of the mix tutorials you see online pack a lot of punch. They're 100% worth watching if you don't know where to start, or just need some general guidance. I admit this is kinda a non-answer but I've gone down the "YouTube tutorial path" to a small extent myself and would genuinely advise you to check these out if you are look for a sense of direction, whether generally or specifically.

Additionally, practicing your skill set while also getting your stuff out into the world, publishing it no matter what, is a great framework for success and for motivation.

One of the last questions that I'm going to ask is what made you want to produce music in the first place? Were there any other circumstances surrounding it that made you want to pursue that profession, what do you think about it? Do you see yourself producing music full-time in the future? Or maybe putting it on the back burner, how has your passion grown for it or has it kinda flatlined? I'm worried that if I don't spend enough time on making beats or learning how to produce then that will happen.

As I mentioned briefly under Q1, I used DAW production as a means to channel my creative musical energy into something tangible. This alone was the real inspiration, to start, but then as I started listening to more and more music from artists I admire (especially within the genre spheres which I myself also operate in), I grew inspired to try and emulate their sound. And I can never quite 100% do so, but I embrace that process, namely starting out with a specific end goal in mind but then letting the quirks or limitations of the DAW guide my hand and allow me to generate non-identical but still exciting art.

I don't think I could be a full time producer. I'm too poor at it to be honest. I also have a day job which pays the bills, which I'm of course thankful for. I don't have any regrets though, or burning desire so to speak, since I am definitely the kind of person to, if I ever did become a full time producer, let it stress me out too much, and that day job already gives me plenty of stress! I'd much rather have it remain a passion project, as I still have tons of passion for the art form to this day, even if my actual free time is limited from day to day. In my case, working less often on music allows me to appreciate it even more, and cherish each moment I'm cooking up something, so I actually have the opposite effect to what you describe in your question statement.

The last question that I want to ask you is what are some final thoughts and advice you want to give me on producing music? Like I said earlier I'm just starting and am unsure of where to go from here honestly because it's one of the avenues I want to pursue more because I am finding

myself getting better with it day by day. I know it can be hard with music producing to not compare yourself to others and how your beats sound today, is there any way around it? I understand that everyone has to start somewhere though and I am at the beginning level still even after a year of producing beats.

I'll repeat this once more—be not afraid to put your stuff out into the world. Publish it by any means necessary. Share it with the world! Put the bandcamp link everywhere where you won't be perceived as a nuisance. The world deserves to know and to consume your art because your art has had and will always have artistic merit!

As for finding a sense of direction as a producer, this one is tough. Ideally we find a sound or style or genre which inspires us to go down a rabbit hole and explore a niche but that doesn't always happen. My best advice here is to just try and listen to a lot of stuff around you and, rather than let it get you down because a certain producer can produce at a certain level of quality, let it inspire you to see if you can recapitulate that sound or type of sound into something that's uniquely and wholly your own. If that makes sense. All art is but a series of recapitulations, rehashings, retellings, and I just try to lean into that idea as much as I can in my own work, as abstract as it may seem.