

Session Diary

This session diary provides an outline of the relevant events that occurred over the course of this project. Accurate session dates have been provided, however the details of tasks such as editing and writing are more approximate as they were undertaken whenever possible while balancing daily life.

19th June

Met with M-Level Project supervisor and discussed the writing and recording of several surround tracks to be delivered in both stereo and surround formats. This would be carried out by 'drafting' in the musicians and equipment necessary to complete the recordings to a high standard.

The writing process began by auditioning chord sequences and allowing tension notes to denote changes in time signatures as well as the following chords. With the chordal body of the work written, rehearsals were undertaken with the drummer (Darren Jennings) to audition various musical pause lengths and to focus on transitions where momentum could potentially be lost. The lyrics and larger song structures were then composed by referring back to these rehearsals, which undoubtedly proved to be a fundamental part of the projects pre-production.

Adverts were placed on various musician networking websites and a musicians wanted poster was created and posted in London based music shops on June 26th. Given that a musician might not have great back-line equipment fall back plans were investigated and a personally owned electric guitar (Strat) was also then brought in to the repair shop for a professional setup.

Around the start of July bassist Paul Housden was found on a networking site called Bandmix and was contacted. An agreement was then made whereby he would play for recording time with his own project. This time was booked on July 4th and his personal recording session was recorded in EFS1 on July 9th (8 covers with his wedding band - drums, bass, keys, guide vocals).

Between July 1st and July 9th the final structuring/lyric writing was completed on tracks titled 'Harmonic Splinters' and 'Grey Sky', while two potential guitarists were also auditioned and from which Ivan Melo was selected to proceed with overdubbing.

Between July 10th and 22nd studio time and microphones were booked for drum tracking and access to Vestry 1 in the evening before the session was sought in order to gain maximum recording time. Over this period the songs were also charted out, a click then programmed into Pro Tools before a guide guitar was recorded for the drummers convenience. New drum heads were put on a personal kit around July 16th and broken in before bringing the kit up to Vestry a day early on the 23rd. This was set up with mic stands and cables in place for the next days recording on the 24th when the drums for Grey Sky and Harmonic Splinters were recorded.

The surround array used for the kit was a Hamasaki Square (NHK) and Optimised Cardioid Triangle (OCT). The NHK consisted of four AKG C414s in figure of 8 pickup pattern and the OCT consisted of two hyper-cardioid C414s with two [filtered] DPA 4090 omni directional microphones at the side of the array and another C414 with a cardioid response placed in the centre. The NHK was placed at the back of the hall in the diffuse

field and the OCT was placed with the front cardioid bordering the critical distance with flankers positioned 8cm behind it and 40cm either side of centre.

The close mic setup on this session was a pair of Beyerdynamic M160 ribbon microphones as hypercardioid overheads in space omni configuration placed equal distance from the beater. A Beyerdynamic M201 was used on the beater with an EV RE20 inside the drum. The snare top mic was a Beyerdynamic M99 with a *DPA 4011* placed on the side angled to capture a bit of kick drum also. The tom mics were clip on Sennheiser e504s and the hi-hat mic was an AKG SE300B aimed from above the centre pointing to the left most lip of the cymbals.

These drums were recorded in a play list based workflow capturing as many 'good' takes as possible for each section. The playlists were then compiled together (comped) between the night of the 24th and the 27th of July to form a full take. Lacking experience and a developed workflow and oversight was made here as the drums were incorrectly comped to the guide guitar causing setbacks which will be discussed later.

On the 28th and 29th of July preparation on the songs *Robots* and *Primates* took place. They were charted before a click was programmed into Pro Tools after which a guide guitar was subsequently recorded. These songs had already been written and previously recorded with poor results; tackling them again required a deal of restructuring and pre-production that also took place on these dates. In the evening of the 29th the drum kit and mic stands were once again set up in the hall to maximize the time tracking in the next mornings session occurring on the 30th.

The surround array and close mic setup was the same as on the previous recording with minor alterations in mic positioning. The sound however is notably different due to an excellent quality snare drum which was a bronze Black Panther, borrowed for the purpose of the session.

The newly recorded drums went through a stage of comping after the session on July 30th until August 5th. Once again this was compiled to the guide guitars and caused unnecessary problems later on down the line.

On August 6th bass guitar was tracked with Paul Housden on *Grey Sky* and *Harmonic Splinters* in Basement 1. For convenience he was positioned in the control room and connected to an amp in the [small] live room thought the studio tie lines. Several mics were placed on the amplifier for audition purposes all positioned on axis and consisted of a Sennheiser MD421, an EV RE20, a DPA 4090 and a *Beyerdynamic M201*.

Unfortunately it now came to light that comping the drums to the guide guitar was an oversight, proving to be quite an effort to track over and even then they sounded a bit out of time. Regardless acoustic guitar tracking was scheduled for the next day - August 7th - with Ivan Melo and before the drums and bass could be edited on these tracks and so the guitars during this session were recorded with heavy reliance on the click. The tracks covered that day were on *Harmonic Splinters*, *Grey Sky* and the end of *Robots*.

A personally owned Taylor 315CE Jumbo acoustic was freshly strung and brought to the tracking session although Ivans ***CRAFTER*** was used in its place for its preferable sonic quality. This was recorded with modified Chinese ***Royer 121*** imitation mic placed over the right shoulder with a figure of eight response, an ORTF pair of AKG C414s and 3ft in front of the guitar and a ***Hebden Sound CM1090*** placed around the 12th fret.

On August 8th a tracking session took place in Basement 2 to record a Didgeredoo intro for Harmonic Splinters with **Tony**. Unfortunately some problems were encountered here when the studio Mac failed to boot with an external hard drive attached and would not copy between drives so a new session was created on the internal drive as a basic work around. The microphone setup was an EV RE20 at the open end of the instrument a Neumann u87 nearer the mouth piece and a double mid-side as a surround array.

From August 9th editing started to take place on the tracks; in particular on the drums, bass and acoustic guitars played on Grey Sky and Harmonic Splinters which were quite out of sync with each other. Revising the original comping method the drums were edited closer to the click in sections consisting of roughly a few beats, proving more successful than the previous attempt. However with the click disengaged it became apparent that further adjustment would again be necessary and was remedied by editing the drums the the grid soloed without a click while listening intently for timing drift.

With the drums settling into place the bass was then edited to match the exact down beats of the kick drum in order to fake a superhumanly perfect 'in the pocket' performance. Following the same trend the guitars were also edited in small note groupings to match the drums and bass timing exactly. Finally the non-downbeats that coincided between instruments were also edited into place. For the tracks Robots and Primates the drums were edited in an identical manner whereby they were edited to the grid with off sets being applied as the result of auditioning the regions.

On the 20th of August an acoustic guitar tracking session took place in Vestry 2 recording myself with the aid of a peer (Carlos Badosa). The mics were booked out and the studio set-up before he arrived to operate the DAW on request. In this session the acoustics to Primates were double tracked along with a single pass of acoustics on Robots.

24th July Drum tracking of Harmonic Splinters and Grey Sky in Vestry Hall

30th July Drum tracking of Robots and Primates in Vestry Hall

6th August Bass tracking on Grey Sky and Harmonic Splinters with Paul in Basement 1

7th August Acoustic tracking with Ivan on Grey Sky, Harmonic Splinters and the end of Robots in Basement 1

8th August Didgeredoo tracking with Tom? for Harmonic Splinters intro material in Basement 2

20th August Acoustic tracking of myself (Carlito on desk) in Vestry 2 for

21st August Bass tracking with Paul in Vestry 2 (changed to mine) for Primates

3rd September Acoustic tracking of myself in LRC1 (Darren on desk) for

4th September Electric tracking with Ivan in LRC1 for Grey Sky [Rhythm & solo]

7th September Acoustic recording of myself (Darren on desk) in LRC1 for

10th September Electric tracking with Ivan in LRC1. Harmonic splinters solo, Primates rhythm & solo.

3rd October Bass tracking with Paul on Robots in his place

Advertised around Denmark st. and contacted musicians online,
Found Paul Housden and e-mailed about doing the session, made a deal
Booked session for him on the 4th
Wrote structures on the 5th
Orchestral recording with Darren the 6th
Combined ideas on the 7th and did play with lyrics
Met Stefan and Ivan on the 8th of July restructured "harmonic splinters" writing the 2 first
verses and choruses afterwards.
Restructured some more and refined lyrics on the 9th
Symbols meet the surf lyric and near final arrangement, new "heavy" chord progression
Csm Fsm E, D7 on 10th