Smarter Travel Write-Up

Audio Production

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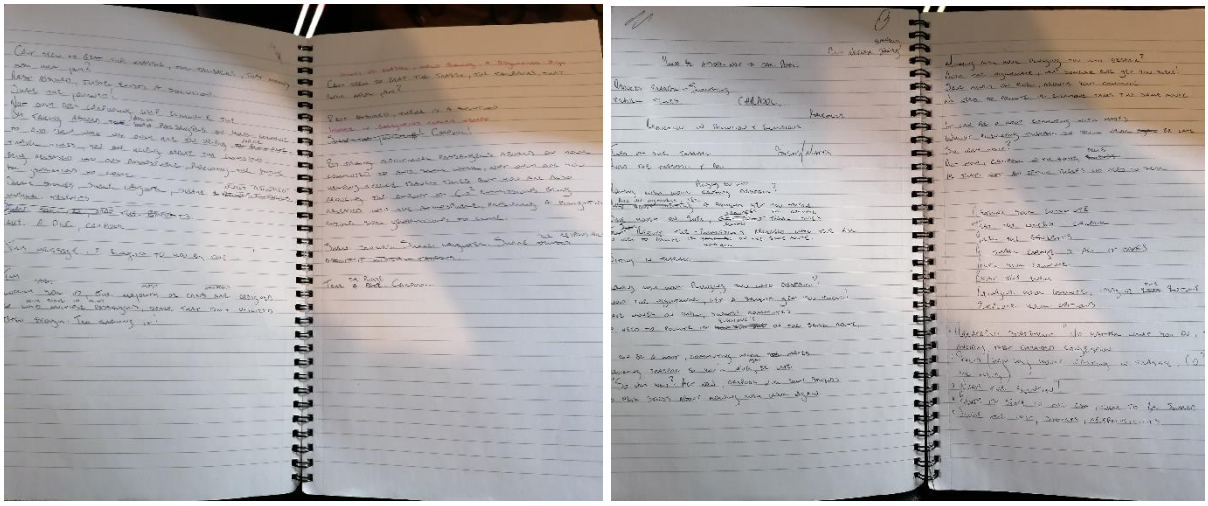
Contents

Initial Script

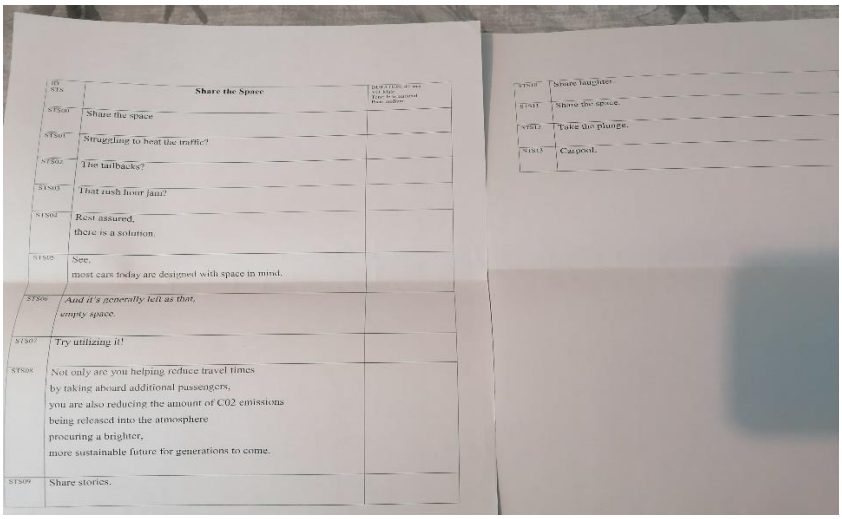
Before even beginning to write a script, I jotted down some ideas on a mind map, continuously adding more to it as I began writing. I ran through various ideas for the script such as using a rhyming scheme or comedy but ultimately settled on an information-packed script due to the nature and sensitivity of climate change (which was used as a motivator). I chose my subject matter, the solution and a slice of information to go with it and sculpted the script around that. It took a good four or five attempts to get the wording right as I was constantly referencing a thesaurus to see if I could find a word more relatable to the subject matter or that flowed better in the sentence.



1 Brainstorm, First Ideas & Drafts

VO Script Formatting

While I was happy with the content of the script, the format could do with some refinement. As we had went over in class, I tried to get each sentence down below seven words whilst maintaining the flow of the script. I managed to get all but one segment, the block of information, down but felt that if I were to break it up with full stops it would jeopardize the message I was trying to get across. Instead, I broke it down into segments creating a new line where I felt a pause would be natural.



2 Final Draft

Recording

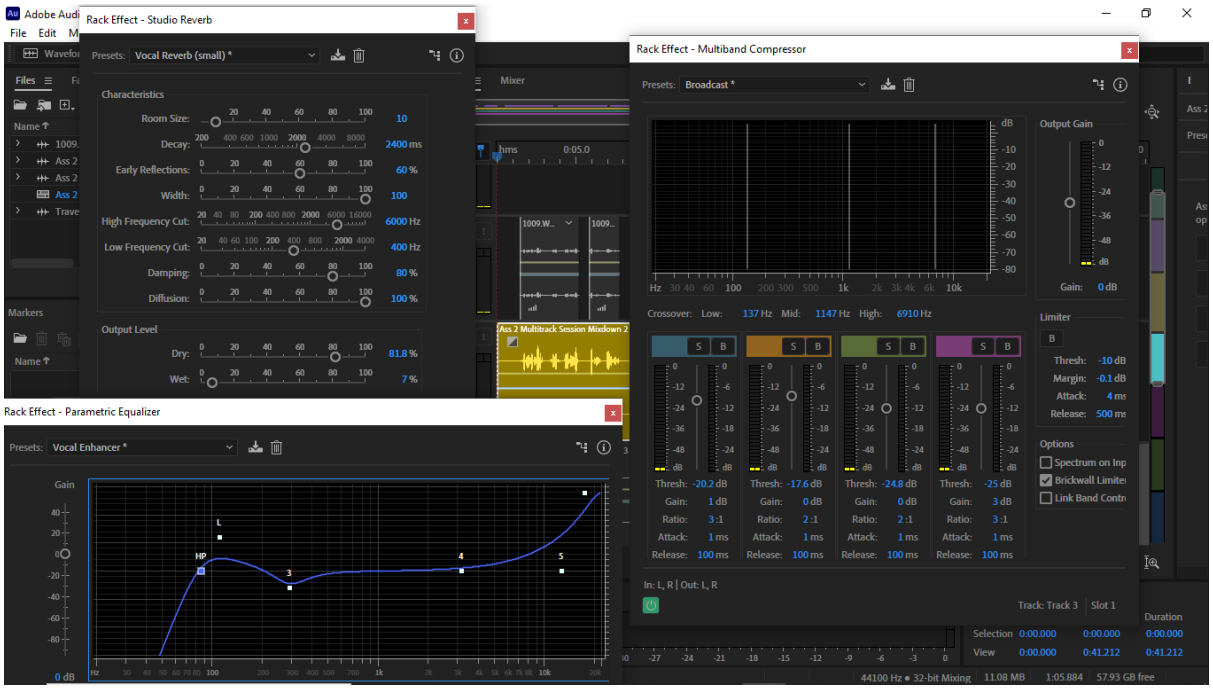
The first few recordings I had done alongside the class but later discovered they came out too quiet. I went down to the studio by myself a couple of days later and made another few which came out at the volume I was expecting. My assumption is that I was too far from the microphone the first time round so I made sure that I was in an optimal position by doing a few test-runs and watching how the gauge moved until it was settled pointing straight up.

Editing

I took the recording I was most satisfied with and pulled it into Adobe Audition, however I thought it was still a bit on the quiet side so the first thing I done was increase the volume to +4dB. I then went about splitting the track into its different segments, cutting out the in-betweens as to eliminate any unnecessary noises.

I have always had a deep, bassy sort of voice and tend to speak in low tones so I knew a parametric equalizer would be necessary. I decided the vocal enhancer would be a great starting point and altered it slightly to bring a bit more clarity (1000-5000Hz range) and sparkle (8000-15000Hz range) to my voice. I then mix-downed the session to a new file and added a multi-band compressor. I was looking to minimize the muddiness and slightly increase the boom and the broadcast preset achieved just that.

The icing on top was the reverb, for which I used the Vocal Reverb (small) preset. I altered it slightly, decreasing the wetness down to 7% and barely increasing the dryness to 82%. This gave my voice a more natural sound as opposed to the lack of acoustics you'd find in a studio.

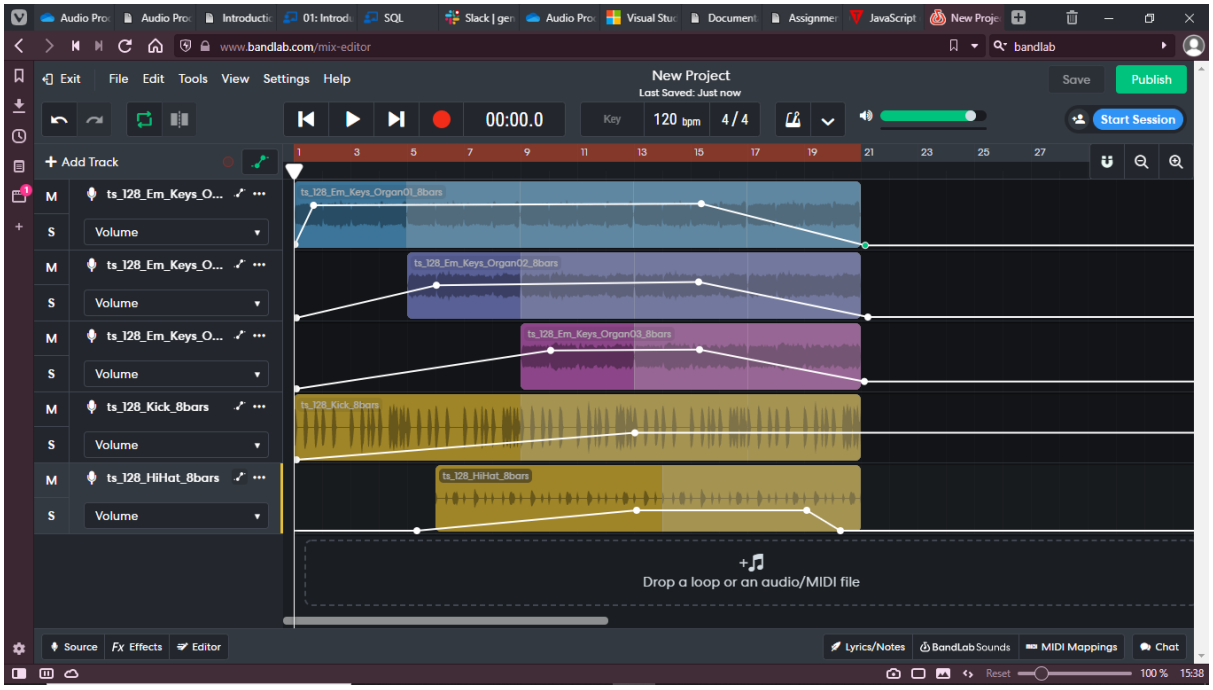


3 Parametric Equalizer, Multiband Compressor & Reverb

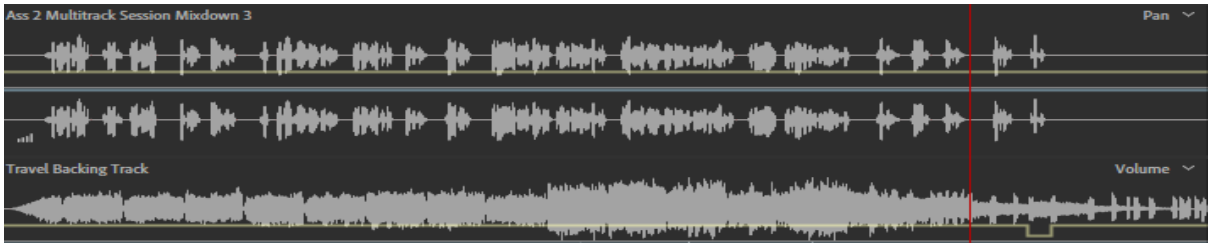
Creating the Backing Track

I created the backing track using Bandlab. While sampling vast amounts of loops and sound effects, I realised that the likes of guitars and high tempo beats were out of the question as they muddled with my voice and took the listeners attention away from what was being said. I decided to stick with a steady tempo of 128bpm across the board and used a combination of organ loops, kicks and high hats. The organ, I thought, was great as it remained at a somewhat steady pace and tone throughout. However, these loops by themselves I felt would fail to catch the attention of the listener and would more than likely put them to sleep. Hence why I added the drums – to give the melody a simple, modern sound without sounding too convoluted when combined with my voice. Each loop was positioned in a way that a new one kicked in at the start of each major VO segment, giving the commentary a bit more 'umph'.

Next up was the automation. For the organ loops I added a short but sharp increase in volume at the beginning of each as to blend in seamlessly with the introduction of each loop and a slow, steady decrease at the end as to leave my hook and the drums centre stage. I handled the drums in a different fashion, having the kick steadily increase in volume from the start but not drop at the end and the hi hat steadily increase from about ¼ into the track and quickly drop off at the end. The only other time I altered the automation was when I brought the backing track over to Audition where I dropped the volume at the mention of 'carpool'. This was to divert the listener's attention to the key concept of the advertisement and to leave an impression.



4 Backing Track Automation – Bandlab



5 Slight Automation Adjustment - Audition

Mixing VO & Backing Track

After completing the backing track, I brought it over to Audition where I placed the VO at the place in which I had it when creating the backing track on Bandlab. I then carried out the automation as mentioned in the above paragraph and altered the volume so that my voice could be heard clearly over the melody. To finish, I combined the VO and backing track into its own file and altered its loudness settings to -14 lufs so that it could be adopted to online audio services.

Exporting

The final step was to export the file in different formats; mp3(lossy), m4a(lossless), flac(lossless), ape(lossless) & ogg(lossy). This was done through file > export > file. While running through different formats in class I found that the key objective when exporting audio is to find the sweet spot between size and quality, and that some formats do this better than others, eg. AAC at 96kbps' audio is comparable to MP3 at 256kbps while taking up a similar amount of space.

Workflow Improvements

In comparison to the Waterford Venue VO project, I found that I got through this with much less hassle. While doing the Waterford Venue VO I didn't know too much about how equalizers and the likes affected the sound of my voice but being more knowledgeable about how it works now, what to change, how to keep the sound from getting too loud etc. really helped. The script also flowed much smoother thanks to the correct formatting at the beginning which reflects in the finished track.