

Project: SongRighter

Team Members: Tia Basak and David Martin

Design Research

Due: 10/28/2018

I. Design Research Summary

Interviews

Interviews conducted by David

Interviewees: John Doe, & Carli Smith

Demographics:

John Doe:

Worked in music production since 12 years old

Single, mid 20's male, living in a large city

Has had a hand in a number of music production projects

Interview was conducted in John's personal music production studio

Carli Smith:

Started musical performance 2 years ago

Single, early 20's female living in a smaller rural city

Often performs or opens with mid tier to local musicians

Interview was conducted over coffee in her favorite place to write music

John's Interview:

During John's interview I learned several things about his struggles with completing music projects and most interestingly he revealed many projects left unfinished were due to a lack of "knowing where it was going to go". In a sense he was saying that he would start a project but it would often fizzle or be left half completed because he couldn't figure out what direction the project should go. In addition to this John also expressed issues with being able to accurately hold onto melodies and information needed to finish the project at later times. This often included losing the recording of a melody in a pile of other voice memos on his phone, to the nuances or emotions within the project that weren't properly recorded to remember later. Regardless of the complaint a common theme began to pop-up. Artists struggle to properly catalog thoughts, feelings, ideas, or melodies at the times of inspiration. And because of the lack of thorough cataloging, projects can come out half-baked as there wasn't enough information as what was needed to fully execute the project at a later time. In closing John also, revealed that it can be difficult to determine how to structure the song in terms of arrangement of verses, pre-choruses, bridges, chorus, breakdowns, etc.. He did express that is often a problem for him

during the production of a record to determine the layout and wished there was a better method to do this in rather than simply trial and error.

Carli Smith's Interview:

Carli's interview was a bit different in that she seemed to have far less knowledge of the technical music production realm yet she was extremely well versed in musical methodologies and techniques. When I asked Carli about her issues with finishing music projects

she cited that often times she would become overwhelmed with the technicalities, numbers, and her understanding of the music production platform. (Shown at left is a common music production software called Ableton which has a pretty intense learning curve for beginners.)



This would often times result in her starting a few measures of recordings and ditching the project when she didn't know how to add instrumentals, backings, dynamic volumes, panning, and more. This is where it seemed that even though Carli and John have different experiences, they seemed to desire some manner of formatting their projects to cut them into more manageable processes. Later in our interview Carli talked with me about her lack of understanding of presets (settings for recording tracks to alter the sound tone, volume, etc.) so that the project could sound how she wanted it to sound. She would often try to read forums or instructions on how to attain her desired presets however it often led to more questions than answers. I believe that both of these artists I have interviewed could benefit from structure, and helpful categorized tips.

Survey

Another design research approach that we used to understand a little bit more about our target market is distributing a survey to some people to understand how an app which targets music writing needs would be accepted and used. This section of the design research was conducted by Tia Basak. The target market for this survey were music students, or students who are interested in music. These people are in the age range between 18-30 years old, so the

younger generation, because we assumed that apps are more used by people in this age range. We also wanted a variety of people, but the common theme be that they are interested in music. We assume for this product that we are targeting people who are wanting to organize their music writing skills, more so then using the app to actually become interested in music writing. We had the opportunity to give this survey to a range of different types of people, and the findings were unique and gave us the chance to revisit our original idea.

From our findings below you will see some quotes that our surveyors gave.

- “Never thought about how music writing could have an organizational impact”
- “Try to use a daily planner, but I tend to forget to update it, then I forgot about it all together”
- “I do use a daily planner, it helps me stay focused”
- “I love music, but I don’t think I am good enough to be song writer.”
- “I have started a couple songs, but I run into ‘Musicians Blocks’ more times than an actual scheduling issue”

From our findings above it is interesting to note that although all of the people who gave this survey are musically talented in some way, it is very rare to find people who are actually interested in creating music themselves. The majority of the people that took this survey did not really envision themselves as music writers. But when told about the concept of the app, it was interesting to note that most people never really thought of music writing as needing a structure and organizational element to it. When asked if having an organizational element to music writing would be helpful, most people replied with “Agree” although it was interesting to note that some people who already attempted to write songs, wrote that staying on schedule was not much of a factor, more so than the creative liberty running out during the process. From this survey we have to recognize that the app needs to have some sort of section that not only keeps the writer on track for their songwriting needs, but also has a platform where they can stay motivated. This survey portion really helped with our design because we got a better idea of how this app could help a variety of different people, and other design elements that we could add that could potentially make this app better.

II. Group Reflection

Date/Time of Meeting: Thursday, October 25, 2018 at the Engineering Center Lobby, All group members were present.

Reflecting:

After a reviewing and comparing our data, Tia and I seem to have been able to spot several unnoticed needs of just about anyone working on music production, or musical projects of any form. That is, our data agrees quite well and highlights vital details for a potential program in the future. Often times we can all benefit from a little structure or a little planning, and the same goes for music projects. This planning doesn't necessarily come in the form of timelines for completion but instead the planning of the shape and form of the project. This kind of planning aids in the breakdown of what at first seems to be a daunting task to write a song. But, citing Tia and I's findings where some experienced writers block, others felt like writing a song was beyond their skill range, some lost the direction of the project, and others were overwhelmed by the technicalities of music production. It seems to be apparent that everyone could benefit from a program that broke down the project into simpler, more detailed tasks where information was less likely to be lost and the steps within the project were smaller to keep in manageable. Essentially, an app that could breakdown a music project like a divide and conquer algorithm.

Tia and I both found our data collection methods were extremely useful and offered information that were able to balance the other out for analysis. In the interviews I was able to get the participants to physically show me their issues and I could utilize the cues of body language, expressions, and movements when they were showing me their musical projects. In contrast, Tia's methods were useful in collecting more direct and numerical data. The surveys helped capture a much needed quantitative data-set for us to reference the more qualitative data found in the interviews. Being able to use these data types at the same time also allowed us to perform "sanity-checks" regarding our data. If one response didn't seem to make sense we could check the other data formats and see if there was a similar anomaly there too.

Overall, we think that there is always a need for more data collection. If Steve Jobs spent 7 Billion dollars and countless years on research before ever beginning to design the iPhone, then there is likely a correlation between extensive research and success. However in the case of this project we feel comfortable with the data we have collected to create a new and potentially revolutionary tool in the world of music production.

III. Appendices

Survey for SongRighter

Age:

Student (Please Circle): Yes No

1) On a scale of 1 - 10 (Highest) how interested are you music? (Please Circle)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2) On a scale of 1 - 10 (Highest) how interested are you writing music? (Please Circle)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3) I've wanted to get into music writing, but I never find the time

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

4) I use a daily planner

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Comments:

5) The reason I do not write music is because I run out of creativity

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Comments:

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6) What are your top three reasons that you either don't finish your songwriting, or have not attempted to write a song?

1.

2.

3.

7) I would use an app that would help me organize the songwriting process

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Comments:

Other Notes and Comments:

Interview Questions:

"What was the most recent project you've been unable to finish."

"Can you show me the project?"

"Why couldn't you finish it?"

"If you can have any skills given to you to help with your projects, what would they be?"

"How often do you get frustrated?"

"What do you find overwhelming when you're working on music projects?"

"How many unfinished projects do you currently have?"

"Were you unable to finish them for the same reasons?"

"Walk me through your most recent unfinished projects."

"What would be your dream tool to finish any project?"