About the Interviewee:

Stephen Shriane - Songwriter/Producer/Guitarist/Multi-Instrumentalist

In his own words, "As a producer, I am responsible for the sonic sound quality of song; How the drums are sitting in the mix, how well it works with the guitar, bass, and so on." He mentioned part of his work is to develop the mood of the song as well as its arrangement. The songwriter part works with another artist to develop the lyrics of a song together.

<RQ1 What do people do to collaborate in the songwriting process?>
Stephen creates these things he calls "Skeleton Beats". With those he captures a song and breaks it down into under a minute clips. This way he can feature all parts of the song quickly to an artist he is working with. Also when working with a new artist he will send them about 50 or so beats and tell the artist to come back with about 10 that they really like and work through those tracks with the artist to develop the song together. He will ask why the artist likes the particular beat and work from there. They can take particular parts of the song whether it be the verse, chorus, or what have you and develop those individual sections, discuss lyrics, or change the arrangement.

<RQ2 What do people use to share music files in the songwriting process?>
Music project files are usually very large files. They can take up to many GB of storage space. Songwriter's hold that music on a personal hard drive since it takes up lots of storage space on their computer. Since the files are so large it makes it difficult for people to share music. To combat this they use cloud based storage systems like Dropbox or Mega. The advantage of this for those in the field is that they can access these files from anywhere. But there are many disadvantages exemplified through Stephen's own frustrations. He complains that "taking time to have to export from Ableton, then to upload to the cloud based Dropbox, then finally the artist on the other end has to take the time to download those files to his own computer to listen or interact with those files." He wishes that there was a cloud based system built into the DAW that he was using to share ideas.

<RQ3 What motivates people to use their favorite DAW (Digital Audio Workstation)?>
Stephen's favorite DAW that he uses is Ableton. He likes many in house features of the software that works very well with his workflow. He mentions his workflow is not the same as everyone else's but he finds Ableton the right tool for the job. It is comfortable and he can get things done quickly. Ableton allows for quick exploration of different ideas. It also is easy to use third party sounds/samples to work into a project. He dislikes that he is stuck using Ableton on his computer and can not take it on the go with him. He would love for there to be a mobile version of Ableton. This way he can make music on the go, discuss with others, and not forget ideas when they come to him. His dream mobile DAW would include a piano roll, midi pad for samples/drum machine, an arrangement window, sample library window, a mixer, send and returns for effects, to allow for use with third party plugins, and to be interface compatible to record ideas with real instruments/voices.

<RQ4 What would be the advantages and disadvantages of a digital songwriting process?>

Stephen likes with a digital songwriting process he has the most control with the song or an idea. "The process usually starts more personal because I create the beat myself to begin with" says Stephen. To do it digitally, Stephen communicates with other songwriters via video conference calling. He says this is usually a slow process due to the lag between screens and audio. This creates for a clunky songwriting session. He believes an in-person songwriting session can be more organic but he prefers the digital way of songwriting so he can take control of the idea of the song.

<RQ5 How do songwriters find others to collaborate with>

Using social media is a big part of how people find others to collaborate in the songwriting process. It is like a walking resume for creative types. There Stephen along with many others display the songs/creative ideas that they have been working on. Stephen himself prefers Instagram to be able to display his work and find other artists he may want to work with. From there he is able to direct message artists he thinks he would be able to work well with and enhance their sound. Building a reputation is key for other's finding your work as a songwriter/producer. Once that has been established, more and more artists will reach out to the reputable songwriter than the other way around. Stephen has been getting messages saying similar to "Hey man, I really like the beats you make. How can I buy some?" Songwriters use hashtags to find others with similar interests, styles, and ideas. Also use them to check who is regularly releasing fresh and new content. Fiver was another website Stephen had mentioned that artists/songwriters display their work but has not used it much personally himself.