THE ROLE OF THE ALBUM IN POPULAR MUSIC PRODUCTION

by Dylan Crawfoot

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CONTENTS

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

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Dylan Crawfoot
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Albums as collections of music have played a significant part in the production and marketing of popular music in the last 50 years. From the 1970s through to the early 2000s in the United States, music was predominantly sold in album form, but the rise of digital download and streaming platforms such as iTunes has seen album sales decline in favour of single songs (Covach & Flory, 2013, p. 546). Despite the drop in sales and change in audience behaviour, albums continue to retain a cultural significance in the music industry. Their sales continue to be tracked through album charts, they receive awards, have books and documentaries made about them and are even performed live in concert (Fonarow, 2012). Most importantly, they continue to be made by artists. With the recent increase of long play vinyl record sales (albeit which still make up only a small proportion of the overall industry) (Passman, 2017), albums are re-emerging as a niche product, and provide artists with a platform to make more adventurous musical works that can be appreciated by their more dedicated followers. Albums enable artists to demonstrate what Charles Fairchild terms “a logic of practice and progression of ideas” (Fairchild, 2014, p. 5) that can be extended through multiple songs. The challenge for artists and producers therefore is how to make collections of music that still offer the listener a sense of overall thematic unity, even when consumed in a fragmented, digital, commercial environment.

1.2 Research Question and Overview

This research will examine the role of the producer in making albums in the digital era, and will seek to answer the following question:

> ***What approaches to music production can be used to combine multiple, individual songs into albums that provide coherent, long-formlistening experiences?***

I will begin with a literature review in which I will examine existing, relevant research in this field. I will examine academic sources relevant to music production and to the evolution of the medium of recorded music, as well as analysing notable albums of the last 50-60 years to identify the key characteristics of the form. This review will discuss the history and development of the album since the introduction of the long play (LP) record format in 1948, and will consider the various commercial, artistic and technical motivations that have driven album creation. In the methodology chapter I will discuss my complementary approaches of ethnography and practice led research, from which will emerge a research plan that has guided my practice. Following the discussion of methodology I will discuss my creative project in some detail, which has involved the recording of an album with a local Brisbane band. This discussion will address all stages of production from pre-production through to recording, mixing and mastering.

I believe this study is relevant in artistic, commercial and academic contexts. Albums have played a significant role in the production, marketing, and consumption of music for several decades. For many years collections of songs in album form were the dominant format for popular music sales (Covert, 2015), while also providing artists the versatility to explore greater musical possibilities than were afforded by a 3-minute single song. Beyond sales figures, albums have also come to be viewed as important artistic and cultural works in their own right. As with songs, books and films they are analysed, reviewed, debated and ranked in a variety of media. Albums as musical works retain currency with creators and listeners. In 2013, BBC Radio presented a documentary on the way songs are sequenced on albums (BBC, 2013), while books and documentaries are produced about specific albums, such as the 33 ⅓ book series, and the Classic Albums documentary series. In Australia, APRA-AMCOS has hosted “Anatomy of an Album” sessions, where local producers and artists discuss the making of their own albums (APRA-AMCOS, 2017). Albums are performed live in concert as complete musical works, either by tribute bands or original artists. Narrative driven 1970s albums such as *Quadrophenia* and *The Wall* have been recently revived as large scale live productions by The Who and Roger Waters respectively, while several albums by the Beatles have been performed in full by tribute bands (thebeatleslive.com.au, 2015). More recent albums have also been presented in similar ways. You Am I performed their *Hi Fi Way* and *Hourly Daily* albums in full during a 2013 tour (Abc.net.au, 2013), while Regurgitator will be marking the 20th anniversary of their album *Unit* by performing it live in October 2017 (Jolly, 2017). While the motivations for live performances such as these may be a varying mix of artistic and commercial factors, it is

evident that these albums are seen to have continued value in the eyes of their creators and audiences.

Examination of the role of the album is also a topic worth pursuing from an academic perspective. Popular music analysis has tended to be more focussed on songs, with less attention paid to albums as a whole. And even when albums are discussed, it is common for the component songs of a particular album to be analysed individually with little consideration as to how they can be interpreted in the context of the others. There is also a lack of consistent approach to existing analyses. This project will make a contribution to knowledge through the examination of the album as a form, and the development of methods for consistent album analysis.

My own interest in this topic comes from my background as an audio engineer and as a music lover. Albums, and the ways they have been created by producers and artists, have always fascinated me. It was this fascination that led me to a career in audio, which in turn led to my current role as a lecturer in audio production at SAE Institute, a position I have held for nearly fifteen years. Working as an educator has been my primary role over this time, and as a result my production work has mostly consisted of smaller projects, with little opportunity to work on anything larger than demo recordings or extended play (EP) projects of three to five songs. I have also primarily worked as an engineer on these projects (in which I facilitated the ideas of the artists), and so my aim for this project is to extend my role beyond engineering into production, where I can apply my own ideas in the service of a project that I shape myself. Through this research I aim to engage with a longer form project of approximately ten songs, and to provide greater insight into the album as a musical form.

1.3 Aims of the Study

It is the process involved in producing an album that is the subject of my research. Whether this process is undertaken by a distinct producer or an artist self-producing their own work, my aim is to provide insight that can be useful to anyone who undertakes this role. This study is intended to have outcomes that provide benefit both academically and creatively. Through the research plan outlined above I intend to accomplish a number of aims. Firstly, I intend to identify

some key characteristics of the album form, and how these are used to establish a sense of unity or cohesiveness for the music contained within. Secondly, to identify approaches to production that can be used to establish these characteristics in an album, and then to apply these methods in the production of an album with a band. As a researcher based in Brisbane, Australia, I have enlisted a Brisbane rock band to work with for this project. I will consider how best to present the finished works in ways that make most effective use of modern and recognised mediums of delivery, and take into account the way modern audiences engage with music. I intend the production process and resulting collections to demonstrate how an effective logic of practice can be applied to a collection of songs, allowing them to stand as a cohesive album. Through successful achievement of these aims, I hope to offer an academic perspective on the analysis of albums, and to provide producers with a framework to approach the production of coherent and effective albums.

One of the producers I interviewed for this study, Nick DiDia, offered a quote by Bruce Springsteen that I believe offers a useful summation of the aims of album production (Appendix D, p. 178). Springsteen said, that in music, one plus one always has to equal three (Springsteen, 2016, p. 236). This means that any musical experience has to offer the listener more than simply what they see on stage, or hear in one particular song. Through the research plan described above I aim to demonstrate that albums as musical works offer artist and audience a coherent experience that is more than simply the sum of the collected songs. Furthermore, I will demonstrate that it is possible for producers and artists to imbue albums with this kind of cohesiveness at the production stage, with the resulting albums being more than the sum of their parts.

2.0 LITERATURE AND CONTEXTUAL REVIEW

2.1 Negotiating Internal and External Forces

Since the 1950s, albums as collections of music have played a significant role in the production and marketing of popular music. For record companies, the ability to package and sell multiple songs has offered economic benefits (Byrne, 2012, p. 133), but artists have also come to see the creative advantages of the longer format compared with what could be achieved with a single song. No longer restricted to expressing themselves through a single 3-minute song (and associated B-side), the advent of the album gave artists a larger medium of musical and lyrical expression. The album has enabled artists to demonstrate what Charles Fairchild terms “a logic of practice and progression of ideas” (Fairchild, 2012, p. 5) that could be extended through multiple songs. Fairchild (2014, p.5) uses the term in his analysis of *The Grey Album* (2004) by Danger Mouse to describe the consistent methodology used throughout the production of that album. He argues that this logic of practice is why *The Grey Album* - a collection of mashups of songs from Jay-Z’s *Black Album* and The Beatles’ *White Album* - can be considered an album in its own right and not just a series of disconnected remixes. For the purposes of this study, I will use the term “logic of practice” to refer to the methods of work that I develop for a given production, that take into account the conditions imposed by artist intent, technological limitation, and commercial and audience expectations.

From the late 1960s through to the early 2000s in the United States of America, music was predominantly sold in album form, but the rise of digital distribution platforms such as iTunes has seen album sales decline in favour of single songs in recent years (Covach & Flory, 2013, p. 546). Not only are audiences able to pick and choose the songs they buy, this unbundling extends to the listening experience, with consumers now much more active in arranging their music collections according to their own choices, regardless of the intentions of record company or artist (Kirby, 2009, p. 211).

Album production is nearly always a collaborative process involving a number of actors (Mueller, 2015, p. 11), with an artist’s vision often required to accommodate competing commercial and technical considerations. The album form, as we know it today, took shape in the medium of the

LP record, a mass-produced commercial format developed by the Columbia record company in 1948 (Burgess, 2014, p. 55). Ever since then, commercial imperatives have been common in album production, particularly when an album is being produced with the support of a record company for whom financial return may rank a higher priority than artistic intent. The LP also had technical limitations which were instrumental in shaping the album form. They had limited dynamic and frequency range and had a capacity which restricted albums to a maximum of 45 minutes duration. The two-sided nature of the format meant LP albums were always presented in two parts. Different but equally influential constraints were aspects of the compact disc (CD) format released by Philips and Sony in 1982, with a single disc now able to accommodate up to 80 minutes of music[1]. In the modern download age time limits are less pressing, however, the ability of audiences to unbundle albums has provided a new challenge to album producers. At the heart of the album production are the composers whose songs are recorded, and which form the basis for any overarching album theme. In a band format, there are sometimes multiple composers. These composers may share a common vision for the album, but there may be differing viewpoints that need to be accommodated. It may be as simple as a disagreement over who gets the most songs on an album, a decision that can have financial as well as artistic benefits to the artist.

The person often tasked with accommodating these commercial and artistic interests is the producer (Howlett, 2009, p. 1). It is the producer's role to help an artist realise their ambition and to turn their compositions into a coherent whole, whilst also acting in the record company's interests to ensure that the end product can satisfy their needs, as well as those of the intended audience. In the early years of pop music, producers were responsible for all aspects of record production; including finding and signing talent, choosing songs by professional writers, and organising studio resources and personnel (Tobler and Grundy, 1982, p.7). As rock music evolved and studio technology became more advanced, record producers became specialists in charge of shaping the sound of records, with responsibility for sourcing talent falling to a separate artist and repertoire role (Covach and Flory, 2012, p.126). By the 1970s, rock musicians had an increasingly strong voice in the production process, often still in conjunction with a producer (Covach and Flory, 2012, p.367). Mike Howlett defines the producer's role as a

[1] It has been rumoured that as with the LP record, the capacity of compact disc was in part driven by the developers' wish to fit an uninterrupted classical piece on the format, in this case possibly Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (Byrne, 2012, p.123).

nexus between the often competing demands of artists, technology, and commercial interests (Howlett, 2009, p.1) . Hepworth and Golding suggest that a producer is responsible for the “emotional architecture” of a music production (Hepworth and Golding, 2011, p.43). In addition to the producer being able to focus on the music at instrument and song level, they also suggest the need for the producer to develop holistic listening skills, in order to shape the overall sound and sonic aims of an album (Hepworth and Golding, 2011, p.43). Similarly, Hennion suggests the producer is an intermediary between artist and public, with the producer guiding the artist through multiple iterations of performance, editing and mixing (Hennion, 1989, p.402). They also act on behalf of the audience in assessing the various stages of production, until it is deemed complete and ready for release (p.43).

Pras et. al. (2013, p.385) take Hennion's concept of producer as intermediary further, and identify three categories for assessing a record producer's artistic involvement; Mission or Artistic Direction, Interaction with Musicians and Communication Skills. Within each of these categories, a further series of concepts are identified (p.386).

Mission or Artistic Direction

- Aesthetic Context
- Extra Set Of Ears
- Guidance
- Feedback
- Best Possible Artistic Result

Interaction with Musicians

- Observing
- Adapting To Situations
- Intermediating Between Artists And Audience
- Adapting Language, Managing
- Coping With Artists’ Sensitivities

Communication Skills

- Create a Good Atmosphere
- Allow Trust and Honesty

(Pras, 2013, p.386)

These concepts largely relate to the artist focus suggested by Howlett, with some, in particular Best Possible Artistic Result, and Intermediating Between Artists and Audience, also relating to the audience and commercial interests. Pras also identifies areas of overlap between the first and second categories. Together, these three categories will provide a useful framework for assessing my interaction with the artists during production.

In many instances of course, the writer and/or performer makes the final decision on the final form of the album, acting without the aid of a producer. As a self-produced work, the resulting album may be the truest version of the artist's vision, but the same challenge remains - to guide the voices of the various songs into a coherent, logical whole in such a way so as to engage and challenge the intended audience. These artistic, commercial, and technical factors can all potentially impose constraints on the production process, but these constraints can in turn be beneficial to the creative process. Igor Stravinsky remarked that his own artistic freedom was greater when constraints were imposed upon it (Stravinsky, 1948/1970, p. 65). Linda Candy writes that constraints can be externally imposed, from beyond the control of the artist, or internally imposed by an artist's deliberate decision. Creativity, she says, is the exercise of artistic freedom within these constraints (Candy, 2007, p. 366). Chris Cutler identified the need to identify these constraints as crucial in analysing any music:

> Thus, to understand a music at any stage is to identify the innate and external forces at work, and to determine how these are related and therefore how it is possible for them to develop. (Cutler, 1993, p. 38)

Whether analysing existing albums, or working with an artist on a new album project, it is crucial that the internal and external forces that shape these musical works are identified and understood. This principle will form the basis of my textual analysis, as well as my creative practice.

2.2 Sixty Years of the Album Format

The history of recorded music spans a relatively small part of human history. Less than 150 years have elapsed since Thomas Edison invented the first device capable of recording and playing back sound. Edison's phonograph and later inventions such as the gramophone record opened up a new era of music, one that allowed music to exist not just as a live performance or musical notation but as an audible reproduction of the original sound. This new ability to record and replay sound was revolutionary, although this new technology came with constraints, such as limited frequency and dynamic range and the limited capacity of these new formats which only allowed them to contain a few minutes of uninterrupted music. This was fine for individual songs, but for longer, classical works this posed a problem. Music needed to be broken up into numerous smaller pieces of a few minutes in length, meaning a single symphony might be stored across several gramophone discs (Elborough, 2009, p. 20). Such collections of discs were packaged and sold in binders known as *albums*, with each disc only capable of containing a maximum of eight minutes per side (Millard, 1995, p. 195), which was insufficient duration for a full classical symphony. The next revolution came in 1948 with the development of the long-playing record by Columbia Records in the United States that for the first time allowed uninterrupted playback of over twenty minutes (Elborough, 2009, p. 19). It was now possible to contain a multi-record album worth of material on a single disc, and soon the term "album" came to be applied to these single disc collections.

The LP was first and foremost a commercial invention, developed by the CBS company as a way of gaining market advantage in the recorded music industry (Elborough, 2009, p. 9), and was initially used exclusively for classical music (Burgess, 2014, p. 55). As a mass-produced, consumer product it offered classical music lovers the ability to listen to high quality music in the convenience of their own homes, with minimal interruption, something that had not been possible with long form classical music in the past. Before long, record companies turned their attention to popular music as content for this new format, but were faced with a different challenge – how to make the most of this new long playing time when individual songs were only a few minutes long? In many cases the answer was simply one of quantity – the new LP album could be used to sell more songs in a single package at a higher price. Due to the higher costs of production, however, singles remained the primary format for pop groups, with albums

reserved only for those acts who had had at least one successful single (Gillett, 2011, p. 276). With the development of free-form radio programming in the United States in the 1960s, and with changes to regulations surrounding FM radio broadcasting which prevented broadcasters duplicating content between co-owned AM and FM stations, disc jockeys in San Francisco soon found albums to be a rich source of unique content (Gillett, 2011, p. 276). In conjunction with this new approach to broadcasting, acts from the emerging counterculture movement soon embraced the album format, and before long record companies shifted their emphasis as well, establishing the album as the dominant commercial format over the 45 rpm single (Gillett, 2011, p. 27).

Although albums contained works of musical art, they were heavily influenced by commercial and technical considerations. Albums were often reconfigured by record companies in different countries, as a result of differing copyright royalty regimes, or to suit perceived differences in market need (Marsh, 2007, p. 106). This practice was particularly common in the 1960s, with many British albums appearing in different guises in the United States. Albums had songs reordered, with some songs taken away altogether and others substituted in their place. British albums in the 1960s commonly contained 14 songs, which would be reduced to 11 songs for the US release (Marsh, 2007, p. 106). The leftover songs could be held over to add to future albums, or even stockpiled to form completely new albums for the American market, often without any input from the original artists. Many albums by the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, the Who and the Jimi Hendrix Experience were released in different configurations on either side of the Atlantic. For the Beatles at least, this practice came to an end with their 1967 album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, which they insisted be released the same in US as it was in Britain. Such an insistence shows the emerging importance of artistic considerations in album creation, alongside commercial and technical interests. Another example of the artist's authority on the album can be seen in the Jimi Hendrix Experience's 1968 album *Electric Ladyland*, which bears the credit, "Produced and directed by Jimi Hendrix" (The Jimi Hendrix Experience, 1968).

Albums continued to dominate the music market for over thirty years. While the modern album was enabled and defined by the LP record, other formats were soon developed on which albums were sold, each with its own characteristics that affected the way albums were presented. The compact cassette, introduced by the Philips company in the early 1960s, was a magnetic tape based format (Daniel, Mee and Clark, 1999, p. 102). The length of the tape was

divided into four audio channels, or tracks, of which two tracks played at any one time, providing the left and right sides of a stereo audio image. When the cassette was physically turned over, the tape would play in the other direction and the other two tracks would be heard. As with the LP, the cassette was a two-sided format, but unlike records, the cassette required the music on both sides to be approximately the same duration. This was to avoid having an excess of blank tape at the end of one side, a constraint that didn't apply to records where the runout groove could bring the needle to the centre within a few seconds at the end of the last song, regardless of how much space was left on the surface. As a result, some albums needed to be reordered on cassette to meet this requirement. Although the Beatles' post-*Sgt. Pepper's* albums were released unchanged on LP in Britain and the United States, *The White Album, Abbey Road* and *Let It Be* were all, nonetheless, reordered for cassette on their original British releases ("The Beatles Cassettes - Rearranged Track Listings", 2017). Cassettes sometimes offered bonus material as well, as they were not restricted to 23 minutes per side in the same way as LPs. The Kinks' 1983 album *State of Confusion* features two additional songs on its cassette release (The Kinks, 1983).

The 8-track cartridge, another tape based format introduced in the 1960s, also exhibited particular technical constraints. Pioneered by William Lear for use in his Lear Jets, this format consisted of a long strip of tape that was housed in the cartridge in such a way that it could play continuously, arriving back at the same point without the need to remove it and turn it over (Daniel et. al., 1999, p. 98). The tape was divided into 8 tracks which housed four stereo "programs". As with cassette, the ideal was for each program to be of similar length. Song orders were sometimes different again from the cassette versions and, on occasion, even contained content unique to this particular format. On the LP version of Pink Floyd's 1977 album *Animals*, the song "Pigs On The Wing" is split into two parts, each of which open and close the album respectively. On the 8-track version however, the two parts are joined together at the beginning of the album with a guitar solo that doesn't appear in any other format (Schaffner, 1991, p. 199).

By the mid-1980s, cassettes had overtaken both LP records and the 8-track cartridges in popularity in the United States, and by the 1990s these had, in turn, been overtaken by the compact disc (Covach & Flory, 2013, p. 546). The compact disc, or CD, was a digital format that offered much higher sound fidelity compared with record and tape based formats. Musical

information was stored on a reflective disc as binary data, which was read by a laser during playback. Despite being smaller than an LP record, CDs also offered a much longer playing time - at over 70 minutes they were about 30 minutes longer than a full length LP. This had an effect on the way albums were made for release on this new format; songs that might have been edited or even removed from an LP were able to be accommodated on CD. Paul McCartney's *Give My Regards to Broad Street* (McCartney, 1984) and Dire Straits' *Brothers in Arms* (Dire Straits, 1985) both feature extended versions on CD compared to their LP counterparts. Older albums that were rereleased on CD sometimes had bonus content added to make use of the additional space. When Fleetwood Mac's *Rumours* was rereleased on CD in 2004, the original album was augmented by an additional song "Silver Springs" (Fleetwood Mac, 2004); it had originally been recorded for the album in 1976, but omitted from the album for space reasons (Caillat & Stiefel, 2012, p. 310). By the late 1980s, the higher capacity of CD had led to a growing trend towards longer albums, and encouraged improvements to the LP format which allowed for playing times of more than an hour (Pareles, 1988). Soon, albums were making full use of the CD's capacity, for example, *Blood Sugar Sex Magik* by the Red Hot Chilli Peppers which is nearly 74 minutes long (Red Hot Chilli Peppers, 1991). Dai Griffiths identified the CD format as being an important factor shaping Radiohead's *OK Computer*, arguing that the technology affected the form of the music (Griffiths, 2004, p. 45).

Another feature offered by compact disc was the ability to program CD players to play the album tracks in a different order. It now became possible for listeners to easily rearrange the order of songs on an album, or even skip over some songs entirely. This functionality was actively suggested in the liner notes to the original CD release of the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* in 1987, which invited listeners to resequence the album to follow a different order that had been considered before the original release of the album in 1967[2] (Lewisohn, 1987). This additional user-based functionality was to expand with the advent in the 2000s of digital download systems such as iTunes, when consumers were able to purchase individual songs off an album without having to buy the entire collection. In the 1990s however, the focus of record companies was primarily on album sales rather than single sales (Fairchild, 2012, p.

[2] The original rejected running order for side one was: Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band; With A Little Help From My Friends; Being for the Benefit of Mr Kite; Fixing a Hole; Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds; Getting Better; She's Leaving Home. Side two was the same as the released version (Lewisohn, 1987).

25), and by the end of that decade album sales were the strongest they had ever been (Covach & Flory, 2013, p. 546).

2.3 The Music of Albums

Many early albums were simply collections of songs without any obvious link between them. Some artists however soon saw the potential of the long-player format and began to tailor music production to suit the longer form. Jazz musicians were able to experiment with longer and more adventurous instrumental arrangements and performances (Pells, 2011, p. 150). Songwriters were able to tell longer stories than were possible in a single song, and producers and artists could explore a greater variety of instruments and sounds. The idea of establishing a running theme across all songs on an album emerged relatively early, initially in Frank Sinatra's 1955 album *In The Wee Small Hours.* The songs were related in subject matter and fit within the unifying theme of a man lamenting a broken relationship (Fulford-Jones, 2013, p. 22). Folk rock acts in the 1960s found the album provided a useful way of presenting ideas and moods in ways other than the conventional pop song format (Gillett, 2011, p. 275).

Pop acts in the 1960s soon began to explore the possibilities of albums as unified works, which soon became known as *concept albums,* meaning albums that are arranged around a central story or common theme (Covach & Flory, 2012, p. 261). As Frank Sinatra's *In The Wee Small Hours* had done in the 1950s, more albums emerged that were constructed around a unifying theme or idea, such as *Pet Sounds* by the Beach Boys (Covach & Flory, 2012, p. 258) , and *The Who Sell Out* by the Who, which was presented as a fictional radio broadcast complete with advertisements (Dougan, 2006, p. 19). Pink Floyd produced numerous concept albums in the 1970s and 80s, which all exhibited a sense of what Rose describes as prolonged thought (Rose, 1998. p.9). Although less common than in the 1970s, concept albums have continued to be produced in recent decades, such as Dream Theater's *Metropolis – Part II: Scenes From A Memory* (1999), Green Day's *American Idiot* (2004), and Jay-Z's *American Gangster (2007)*.

In David Montgomery's thesis, *The Rock Concept Album: Context and Analysis*, he interviews successful record producer Bob Ezrin about what he understands by the term "concept album".

Ezrin replies that he doesn't see a distinction between concept albums with explicit narratives and any other kind of album:

> All albums have concepts, they have to have them, even So and So's Greatest Hits is a package. Maybe there is something which you or someone else might call a concept album, but as far as I see it's really no different than any other album. Maybe it tells a story, maybe it's supposed to be about something, I don't know, but every album has to be a concept one way or another, even if the concept is nothing more than a collection of an artist's latest songs. […] All albums are an experience of sorts. It may seem a random set of songs, but there is still a kind of experiential order, which may have emotional highs and lows and so forth. Whether or not an album has an explicit narrative or story or theme doesn't really matter. All albums are conceived as packages. (Ezrin, quoted in Montgomery, 2002, p. 246)

In Ezrin's view, every album has an underlying rationale, whether a narrative driven concept album such as Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, or a simple intention to present the biggest selling songs from throughout an artist's career in a single compilation album. Such decisions about what to include and what to leave off an album are examples of the "logic of practice" described by Fairchild (2012, p. 5). Taking this idea further, it is useful to identify the logic of practice that informed the production of existing albums. When analysing albums, it is important not just to consider the individual songs on the album, but also to consider how to identify an album's underlying theme, concept, or rationale, and the reasons for deciding what to include or exclude from the finished product.

2.4 Identifying the Logic of Practice

Although *In The Wee Small Hours* was one of the first concept albums, the album that really established the form in the public consciousness was *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* by the Beatles (Covach, 2012, p. 261). Borne by the Beatles' desire to reframe themselves as a different band now that they were no longer touring, they created an album that could provide a show for audiences around the world while the Beatles remained at home (Martin & Pearson, 1994, p. 63). Because the Beatles were no longer obliged to perform any of the songs on the album in concert, there was no need to restrict themselves to the standard instrumental configuration, and allowed them to make more use of the expanding resources of the recording studio. They sought to find a new voice for themselves now that they were no longer a live performing band, so they constructed the persona of a fictional "Sgt. Pepper's" band, which

freed them up to make new kinds of music they might not otherwise have made (Covach, 2012, p. 261). These "ground rules" informed a particular logic of practice that they adopted throughout the recording process, which gave them the freedom to explore any number of musical and technical ideas. While the resulting collection of all original music showed a great deal of variety, it still had a sense of coherence that stemmed from the parameters laid down early in the production.

The contrast in sound with their debut album, *Please Please Me,* recorded four years earlier, could not be more pronounced. This first album was primarily a collection of the band's live repertoire of the time (Martin & Pearson, 1994, p. 77), including a mix of original and cover songs, with no thought of an overarching linking theme. The logic of practice on this album was to record themselves performing much the same way they did on stage, mostly live, with minimal overdubbing. Unlike the six month recording process for *Sgt Pepper's*, the majority of songs on *Please Please Me* were recorded in a single day. There was little room for experimentation, and the only instrumentation used was their standard live configuration of drums, bass, and two electric guitars. Despite this lack of investment in a concept for the album, a sense of thematic unity nonetheless exists. The consistent way of working provides the sense of unity to the collection. Despite their sonic and conceptual differences, both *Please Please Me* and *Sgt Pepper's* mark specific points in the Beatles' careers. Songs from either one of these albums would be out of place on the other. Both albums define who the band were at the time. Each presented a particular image of the band to the public, firstly as a young, regularly performing rock and roll band, and the second as more experienced and adventurous studio craftsmen.

The idea of an album as crafting and presenting an image to the public was not unique to *Sgt. Pepper's*. *Hunky Dory* by David Bowie is an album that finds him reflecting on who he is as an artist. After three unsuccessful albums and singles (with the singular exception of "Space Oddity" two years earlier), the album sees Bowie searching for a way to present himself as an artist. Image is a recurring theme on the album; for example, in the pop art imagery of "Andy Warhol", or the movie images watched by the bored girl in the cinema in “Life On Mars”. In "Song for Bob Dylan", Bowie alludes to Dylan's stage name as an image, calling him by his real name in the verses: "Here's to Robert Zimmerman" (Bowie, 1971). In the opening song, "Changes", Bowie sets the scene for the album and muses on his own image, "But I never

caught a glimpse of how the others must see the faker" (Bowie, 1971). The idea of the "faker", or of deceiving an audience, returns in the final song on the album, "The Bewlay Brothers": "You were so turned on, you thought we were fakers" (Bowie, 1971). This recurring reference provides a bookend to the album's themes. The idea of changing an image is woven throughout the album with another idea of change; the evolution of man and the emergence of the Nietzchean "Superman" (Pegg, 2011, p. 179). These ideas of identity and image are explored further in Bowie's next album, *The Return of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars*, where he finally achieves commercial success. In both thematic content, and in marking a key point in Bowie's career, *Hunky Dory* demonstrates significant, unifying themes.

As with *Sgt. Pepper's* and *Hunky Dory*, U2's 1991 album *Achtung Baby* also found the artists at a turning point in their careers, and facing the need to reinvent themselves. Having explored the American roots of rock and roll in 1988's *Rattle and Hum*, they began recording a new album in Berlin, in search of a different sound and a new public image. Guitarist The Edge was drawing inspiration from European industrial bands such as KMFDM (Flanagan, 1995, p. 7), and in a later interview with the New York Times said that the band were "quite thrilled at the prospect of smashing U2 and starting all over again" (Rohter, 1992). A sense of shared purpose was missing from the early parts of the sessions, however, as not all band members agreed with The Edge's suggested new direction (Flanagan, 1995, p. 7). It was only when the band wrote the song "One" in a jam session, that a common sense of theme and purpose began to emerge (Flanagan, 1995, p. 11). The resulting album sees the band trying new musical and lyrical ways to present themselves. With the use of heavy electronic processing on instruments and vocals, the resulting sound is notably different from the previous album. None of the songs on *Achtung Baby* would fit easily on *Rattle and Hum*, and vice versa, leaving both albums as distinct musical entities and snapshots of U2 at particular points in their career.

Writer Bill Flanagan spent time with U2 during the recording of *Achtung Baby*, and observed that lead singer Bono wrote most of his lyrics toward the end of the recording sessions, and that this provided a narrative coherence to the album (Flanagan, 1995, p. 20). The sequencing of *Achtung Baby*, whose primary initial format was CD, also offers a kind of structural coherence. The twelve songs are ordered in repeating patterns of three songs, with each group consisting of two up-tempo songs followed by one slow song. The opening song, "Zoo Station" with its heavily processed, stuttering introduction and distorted vocal, sets the tone of the rest of the

album, signalling to the audience that this is no longer the band they once were familiar with. The slow, final song, “Love is Blindness”, offers a melancholy ending, reiterating the darker tone of the rest of the album, and deliberately denying the listener the uplifting feeling they may have been expecting based on U2’s previous work. For U2’s next album, 1993’s *Zooropa*, recording went more quickly and smoothly, but the band was, nonetheless, unsure about the overall direction of the album until quite late in the recording process. Different potential album styles were considered; a “song” album (like *The Joshua Tree)*, or a “vibes” album (like *The Unforgettable Fire)*, with alternate song listings developed for each option (Flanagan, 1995, p. 174). It wasn’t even decided until late in the piece that *Zooropa* would be an album at all. Co-producer Flood observed to Flanagan that the key to making it an album rather than a collection of demos or an EP was to find a definite point to focus on (Flanagan, 1995, p. 201).

Achtung Baby and *Zooropa* demonstrate that concepts or themes don't necessarily have to be in place at the beginning of a production, sometimes they emerge during the process. It is important that they emerge at some point though, to give an album a sense of unity. When attempting to record a follow up to *The Dark Side of the Moon* in 1975, Pink Floyd began by recording three new, long songs that they had developed over the previous year but soon found themselves facing a lack of motivation that prevented them from completing the album. This was noticed by chief lyricist Roger Waters who was inspired to write new songs that dealt with that sense of withdrawal, which in turn yielded the underlying theme of the *Wish You Were Here* album (Schaffner, 1991, p. 185). Two of the original songs were set aside and another three songs, including the title track, were introduced in their place. The two rejected songs, "You've Got To Be Crazy" and "Raving and Drooling", then became the basis for their next album but, once again, it was only with the writing of an additional song, "Pigs (Three Different Ones)" that a unifying theme for that collection was established (Schaffner, 1991, p. 200). The two early songs were rewritten late in the piece as "Dogs" and "Sheep" and the *Animals* album emerged in its final form, that of an allegorical critique of the capitalist system in the style of George Orwell (Rose, 1998, p. 60).

A logic of practice can be established with a technical approach to album production, with some albums clearly defined by the production techniques that were used during their making. Martin Hannett’s early use of digital delay is a significant part of the sound of Joy Division’s debut album *Unknown Pleasures* (Ott, 2004, p. 63). The Beastie Boys, along with co-producers the

Dust Brothers, heavily employed sampling on their second album *Paul's Boutique* before incorporating more conventional instrumentation of live guitar, bass and drums into the sound of the next album *Check Your Head* (Sorcinelli, 2016). The sound of Nirvana's *In Utero* album, produced by Steve Albini, owes a lot to its raw, predominantly live in the studio production method, which contrasts with its more tightly produced predecessor *Nevermind* (Kennedy, 2013, p. 711). Following the success of Radiohead's *OK Computer* which was predominantly guitar based, the band changed their musical approach and began exploring the use of electronic instruments on their next album, *Kid A* (MacQueen, 2013, p. 860).

The Beatles' *Let It Be* provides a different perspective, one where the logic of practice remained uncertain throughout the album's troubled production and never really gelled. The original idea was for the band to return to live performance and perform a concert somewhere, and for the concert and the rehearsals leading up to it to be filmed for a TV special (Matteo, 2004, p. 10). Tensions ran high during rehearsals, prompting George Harrison to quit the band temporarily (Lewisohn, 1992, p. 307). When he returned, it was decided to shift focus to making an album, rather than perform live, although filming continued as before (Lewisohn, 1992, p. 307). The next few weeks in the studio were hampered by a confused sense of purpose. Paul McCartney had to ask at one point late in the sessions whether they were recording an album or rehearsing numbers to be able to play in a live performance. The response from the others was that it was a mixture of both (Sulpy & Schweighardt, 1998, p. 219). Paul later remarked that he was too much in the mindset of rehearsing and needed to adjust to the fact that they were also recording an album (The Beatles, 1969a). Although the band finally gave a spirited performance on the roof of the Apple Records building in London, the first mix of the album by Glyn Johns a few months later mostly comprised of rehearsal performances from earlier in the sessions (Lewisohn, 1992, p. 323). Numerous songs on this version are rough performances; "I've Got a Feeling" breaks down prematurely, John and Paul mix up their lyrics when duetting on "Two Of Us", and "Save the Last Dance for Me" is a brief but sluggish jam with lyrics mumbled and slurred throughout (The Beatles, 1969b). The nature of their process meant that nearly all the music recorded for the album was done live in the studio, with the one exception of a guitar solo on the song "Let It Be" recorded several months later by George Harrison (Lewisohn, 1992, p. 321). This initial configuration of the album by Glyn Johns, was deemed unsatisfactory so American producer Phil Spector was enlisted several months later to remix it. Spector's own approach was far removed from the original live premise, applying as it did his "Wall of Sound"

technique of multilayered orchestral overdubs to the original recordings, without the approval of Paul McCartney. The resulting album is a mix of two different approaches that don't sit easily together. The elaborate orchestral production of "The Long and Winding Road" seems out of place alongside spontaneous jams like "Dig It" and "Maggie Mae". Critical response to the album was more muted than the Beatles were used to, with the album receiving some lukewarm reviews (Matteo, 2004, p. 116). It is perhaps telling that *Let It Be* is the only Beatles album to be significantly remixed; an alternate version entitled *Let It Be… Naked* was released in 2003, without any of Phil Spector's overdubs.

The albums I have discussed all exhibit, to varying degrees of success, a particular logic of practice. In some cases this has been clearly defined and well executed, while in other cases it is confused, resulting in difficulties with the finished product. Establishing an underlying premise of an album in turn leads to a specific approach to production. This approach may be determined by the artist and the material they are writing, it could be a particular sound, a specific technical method, a lyrical theme, or even just a sense of mood. Whatever this element, as a producer it is important to identify it and use it to guide the production process, and it is this defined approach that helps provide a sense of coherence to an album.

While some artists saw the album form as an opportunity for greater creative expression, there were others for whom it was a restriction. In attempting to follow up the Beach Boys' 1966 album *Pet Sounds*, songwriter Brian Wilson began work on an ambitious project with the intended title of *Smile*. Themes of Americana were present in much of the music that was written for the album with lyricist Van Dyke Parks, and there was a particular method of production applied as well, with music written in a modular fashion, with the intention of different musical and lyrical elements being able to recur throughout the album. In the face of resistance from others in the band, Wilson struggled to complete the album and the project was largely abandoned.[3] Despite never being released, a mythology grew up around *Smile*, with numerous articles being written about it in the music press (Sanchez, 2014, p. 103). As bootleg recordings from the *Smile* sessions made their way into the public arena, fans even began trying to assemble and complete their own version of the unfinished album (Sanchez, 2014, p. 104).

[3] Some of the songs were rerecorded and released on *Smiley Smile* later in 1967, although Wilson's original vision for the album was abandoned. Other songs from the *Smile* sessions appeared on other albums in subsequent years.

John Lennon blamed the album format for placing unwanted creative barriers to the four members of the Beatles, and identified it as one reason the band split up. He also suggested listeners could still put together a new Beatles album of their own if they wanted to, using songs from the respective members' solo albums:

> If people need the Beatles so much, all they have to do is to buy each album and make a track out of it. Put it on tape, track by track, one of me, one of Paul, one of George, one of Ringo, if they really need it that much. Because otherwise the music is just the same only on separate albums. Instead of having the White Album or Abbey Road where I sing a song, George sings a song, Paul sings a song, Ringo sings a song… we make an album each, that's the only difference. And it's far better music because we're not suppressed. By the time the Beatles were at their peak we were cutting each other down to size, we were limiting our capacity to write and perform by having to fit it into some kind of format. And that's why it caused trouble. (Lennon, 1971)

This is an early example, prior to the digital age, of an artist deliberately considering the possibility (however unenthusiastically) that their work was no longer "finished" when presented to the audience. It suggests that, to Lennon at least, "The Beatles" could be a construct of someone other than John, Paul, George and Ringo; that the simple act of sequencing an album (or mixtape) could be enough to make them exist. Furthermore, this action could be taken by audiences themselves, rather than the artists, producers or record companies. It is not known how widely this suggestion was taken up among Beatles fans in the 1970s (although according to Doggett (2010, p. 175), George Harrison is said to have played such a mixtape of his own to friends in the early 1970s), but it was around this time that the cassette format began to increase in popularity, along with the culture of home taping and mixtape making that it enabled (Byrne, 2012, p. 109). More recently Dylan Jones, writing about the impact of the iPod, proposed his own fantasy 1970 Beatles album (Jones, 2005, pp.152-156), and a variety of other attempts have been posted by people online.[4] Jones's ideas for resequencing these songs formed part of a larger consideration of the effect of the iPod and iTunes on listener behaviour in the 21st century, and their consequent effect on the role of the album in the music industry. He

[4] It was just such an exercise that first sparked my interest in the way albums were constructed. Since the mid 1990s I have made my own versions of a hypothetical 1970 Beatles album, initially on cassette, then on CD-R and more recently as an iTunes album. I have provided more information on this in Appendix F.

suggests that these mediums offer the listener significant agency in how music is sequenced, and that the idea of a fixed linear sequence for an album is less important today.

2.5 The Influence of Open Works

These ideas raise interesting possibilities when considering albums in the 21st century, however, the idea of audience agency is not a new one. Umberto Eco in 1962 proposed the idea of the *Opera Aperta*, or "Open Work". An open work is one that is left in a deliberately unfinished state by the author, with the intention that it be completed by the performer, or even the audience (Eco, 1962/1989, p. 3). It is through the act of performance or even consumption that the work is finally rendered in a finished state. Shifting this act of completion away from the author also means that a work can be completed in more than one way, and that there is consequently no single, definitive final version. Eco observes the approach of deliberate openness emerged in the mid-20th century, and offers a number of different examples of how it manifested itself (Eco, 1962/1989. p.1). In both *Klavierstück XI* by Stockhausen and *Third Sonata for Piano* by Boulez, the works are presented as a collection of component sequences that the performer is invited to perform in an order of their own choosing. In Berio's *Symphony for Flute*, the sequence and intensity of the notes is fixed but the performer is given discretion as to how long to hold each note. In these examples, the performer is ultimately responsible for completing the work through their decisions in the act of performance, but as they do so in accordance with instructions set out by the composer, the composer still exerts their influence over these final forms (Eco, 1962/1989, p. 19).

Another example offered by Eco provides an interesting possibility. As with the examples of Stockhausen and Boulez, Henri Pousseur's *Scambi* is presented as a series of sections that can be sequenced in different ways by the performer, and can even have two sections played simultaneously without betraying the author's intention. Eco quotes Pousseur who goes one step further, looking beyond the performer to consider the agency of the audience, suggesting that even they could potentially have control over how the sections are sequenced:

> If they were tape recorded and the purchaser had a sufficiently sophisticated reception apparatus, then the general public would be in a position to develop a private musical construct of its own and a new collective sensibility in matters of

> musical presentation and duration could emerge. (Pousseur, quoted in Eco, 1962/1989, p. 2)

Pousser's suggestion of a "sophisticated reception appartus" is an excellent description of modern download and streaming services such as iTunes and Spotify. With these, it is now easy for listeners to customise their own playlists, to rearrange albums in ways different to what the artist or producer originally intended, and even to cherry pick songs from an album without having to buy or listen to a whole album. Just as Pousseur intended with *Scambi*, audiences can now unbundle otherwise finished albums and rearrange them in ways of their choosing. While this approach to listening represents a challenge to the traditional, linear view of albums, it also opens up new possibilities for albums to be structured as open works that seek new forms of engagement from audiences.

2.6 Transmutable Albums in the Digital Age

Today, albums continue to be produced and sold in physical and digital forms. Their sales are tracked and awards for "best album" continue to be presented each year by music industry associations in various countries. In recent years, it has become common for artists to perform their most popular albums live in concert (Fonarow, 2012). Despite the ongoing cultural currency of the album, however, sales to the general public have declined sharply in recent years, both in absolute number and as a percentage of overall music sales in comparison with single songs (Covert, 2013). Kirby argues that since the advent of the download era in the late 1990s, the album has been rendered obsolete as the ability of consumers to download individual songs has grown, firstly through illegal downloading and later through legal services such as iTunes (Kirby, 2009, p. 211). Bolter and Grusin observe that the enabling of audience agency by modern digital mediums represents a shift in the balance of power between artist and audience (Bolter and Grusin, 1999, p. 73). Kirby still identifies a purpose for the album in presenting popular music in a more substantial form than is afforded by single songs, but says that creatively the art-album is dead (Kirby, 2009, p. 211).

Kirby's analysis is part of a larger examination of a phenomenon he terms *digimoderinism*, which he sees as a successor to the postmodernism of the late 20th century. He makes the distinction that where a postmodernist audience will create their own meanings of an otherwise

fixed text, a digimodernist audience, empowered with increasingly easy-to-use digital technology, becomes directly involved in the creation, manipulation and further distribution of the text itself. Kirby describes digimodernist texts as having the following characteristics:

- **Onwardness** - The text as produced by the author is incomplete. It is created with the expectation that it will continue to evolve in the hands of its audience. The creation of the text is ongoing.
- **Haphazardness** - No one person has power over the text, it becomes unpredictable.
- **Evanescence** - It is difficult to capture the full text.
- **Reformulation and intermediation of textual roles** - The various creative roles blur and shift. (Author, director, editor, audience, etc…)
- **Anonymous, multiple and social authorship** - It has multiple authors, including members of the audience.
- **The fluid-bounded text** - The start and end of the text are less well defined than in a traditional text.
- **Electronic-digitality** - Digimodern texts primarily exist and are enabled by electronic digital media, as opposed to physical form.

(Kirby, 2009, p. 52)

Digimodernism is thus the ability of modern audiences to become collaborative agents in the creation of texts. From this perspective, an album is a traditional, “finished” text but a listener-curated playlist represents a new, digimodernist form of this text. This is a direct development of Eco’s open work concept. The nature of this digital creation and distribution of texts affords greater agency to audiences in the creative process, but also means that artists’ ability to have their work presented to audiences in a way they intend is reduced. However, it does raise the possibility that artists could embrace this new relationship with their audience and create open works that deliberately grant their audiences this agency.

Jerald Hughes refers to this concept as *transmutability*, which he defines as “the characteristic of digital information goods such that they are easily modified and re-used, as a consequence of the digital media in which they are embodied, and the power of information technology” (Hughes, 2006). For popular music, this new paradigm is most apparent in one of the main challenges facing the album today: the ability of customers to unbundle albums, that is to

purchase and rearrange the component audio files for individual songs. A listener can rearrange the running order of an album, arrange their own compilations of a particular artist or collect the work of multiple artists together using whatever rationale they please. They can also choose to purchase only a fraction of the songs on an album, leaving out the ones that don't appeal to them. This ability of consumers is not completely new; the growth in popularity of the cassette format in the 1970s enabled consumers to make their own mixtapes (Byrne, 2012, p. 109), but this process generally required people to have access to a full copy of an album to begin with, thus reducing its impact on album sales. With the advent of digital retail platforms such as iTunes, unbundling can happen at the point of sale. The nature of these platforms makes curation of playlists a much quicker and easier task than compiling an analog mixtape in real time, and it means consumers are no longer obliged to listen to the music of an album in the way intended by record company, producer or artist.

In considering Kirby's suggestion that digimodernism has succeeded postmodernism, examples of modernism and postmodernism in music should be considered. Jameson suggests 1970s punk and new wave as examples of postmodernism, contrasting them with the Beatles and the Rolling Stones of the previous decade, suggesting that they, in turn, stand as high-modernist in relation to punk (Jameson, 1991, p. xxii). Gloag, however, suggests that postmodernist elements may be present in early rock and roll music of the 1950s, citing Chuck Berry's "Roll Over Beethoven", with its ironic commentary on the death of classical music (Gloag, 2012, p. 46). By the 1970s, Gloag observes, there were two trends in popular music, the first (which could be described as modernist), saw progressive rock artists such as Yes and Emerson, Lake & Palmer seeking to create music far more elaborate than possible in a three minute pop song, and with much greater performance virtuosity than had been exhibited by pop acts previously. Simultaneously, however, there was a move towards escapism and nostalgia in songs such as Elton John's "Crocodile Rock" (Gloag, 2012, p. 47).

The progressive rock movement made good use of the LP album in the 1970s. As well as musical complexity, albums afforded a deeper exploration of lyrical themes, as well as the progression of ideas identified by Fairchild (2012, p. 5). The anxieties provoked by modern life became popular fodder for writers in the 1970s (Letts, 2010, p. 1), as evidenced by albums such as *Dark Side of the Moon* and *The Wall* by Pink Floyd, and *Quadrophenia* by The Who. These albums in particular call to mind Jacques Attali's description of the role of music in society:

> The game of music thus resembles the game of power: monopolize the right to violence; provoke anxiety, and then provide a feeling of security; provoke disorder and then propose order; create a problem in order to solve it. (Attali & Massumi, 1985, p. 28)

For Attali music is an expression of a society's power, and is concerned with the creation, legitimation, and maintenance of order in society (Attali, 1985, p. 30), going back to early history and the ceremonial role of music in sacrificial ritual. He argues that this sacrificial function was lost when music became a commodity, particularly in the mass-production age. It is interesting, however, to note how some of the imagery of sacrifice makes its way into some successful albums in the LP era. Both *Quadrophenia* and *The Wall* feature characters who, if not explicitly sacrificed, are nonetheless transformed in profound ways at the climax of their respective stories. In David Bowie's *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars*, the title character is an alien who came to Earth in the form of a rock and roll singer to save humanity, but is ultimately killed by his fans, sacrificed on stage. Albums such as these offered listeners an emotional release from the anxieties of modern life, with the LP format affording a platform for deeper exploration of these themes than was possible with the 7-inch single.

Throughout the 1960s and the early to mid-1970s, the album remained a multifaceted construction. As a mass-produced commodity it was modern, in the sense of being the latest technology, offering convenience and sound fidelity hitherto not experienced by listeners. The economics of mass-production dictated that most LPs were produced with a commercial audience in mind and, as such, the music was familiar and easily accessible by audiences. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, the modernist tendencies of progressive rock were giving way to more postmodern approaches such as punk and hip-hop. This is evident in albums such as The Clash's *London Calling* from 1979, which was hailed by music critics for the way it synthesised a wide variety of musical influences (Gelbart, 2011, p. 237), while hip-hop overtly reused music from the past through the use of sampling, a technique that was further facilitated by the arrival of digital technology. In the midst of all this, artists still sought to present their message, but often still found themselves in conflict with the commercial and technical processes to which they were bound. Artists, record labels, and listeners balanced the competing merits of grand artistic statements made possible by albums, and the shorter form exemplified by the single.

By the 1990s the dominance of the album, by now in compact disc form, was established (Covach & Flory, 2013, p. 546), but this was soon to change. With the emergence of the digital music economy in the 2000s, artists now find themselves in a different musical and commercial environment. They now live in a time when their work is no longer fixed and finalised upon release, rather it is transmutable, and able to be unbundled and reconfigured in ways beyond the imagination of the original creator. And while listeners have always been able to engage with music in their own way and to create their own interpretation of the work, they now have the tools, ability and motivation to unpack and rework an artist's output in a number of different ways. One notable example of this was *The Grey Album*, which was produced by Danger Mouse in 2004. It was a mash-up album comprising of music samples from the Beatles' *White Album*, and vocal stems (individual vocal recordings that have been isolated from the rest of the music) from Jay-Z's *Black Album.* As none of the samples were cleared with the copyright holders, Danger Mouse was unable to officially release the album, but after he shared it with a small number of friends and colleagues, it soon leaked on to the internet where it grew rapidly in popularity. Charles Fairchild argues that despite its murky legal origins, this transmuted work stands as an album in its own right, as it demonstrates a coherent, thematic unity (Fairchild, 2012, p. 5).

A number of authors have suggested further ways to embrace this new model of music engagement rather than push against it. Mark Mulligan (2009) suggests rethinking the idea of an album as a fixed, linear collection of songs. He proposes instead that artists produce a more consistent stream of new content; not just music, but multiple forms of media that can help keep an audience engaged with the artist over a longer period of time. Tracy Redhead in the *Journal of the Art of Record Production* discusses options for audiences to become interactive with the music itself (Redhead, 2015). Björk's 2011 album *Biophilia* is an example of this approach. As well as being released in the conventional CD format, it was also released as an interactive app, enabling the listener rearrange not just songs, but the component musical elements themselves in an audio-visual interface. Fernanda Sa Dias refers to this active engagement with musical apps as *creative listening* (Sa Dias, 2014, p. 25). Other writers, however, have suggested that music apps will have limited appeal. Bobby Owsinski, writing in 2013, suggested the music app market was already becoming saturated, and that the high costs of development and lack of convenience for users were barriers to further growth of this type of format and market

(Owsinski, 2013). He also questioned the general viability of the the multi-song album market, which has shrunk in comparison to single songs in recent years (Covert, 2013).

While the commercial imperatives for album production may no longer exist, there still remains the question of whether the album can still offer artists a useful platform for expression. Is the logic of practice and progression of ideas identified by Fairchild still a viable exercise when applied to a larger collection of songs? The other important question is whether audiences in an age of digital transmutation will engage with longer-form musical statements such as these. What benefit to audiences is there in hearing a collection of artists' songs together in a particular way? The challenge facing artists and producers is not just how to produce a coherent, multi-song album, but also to do it in such a way that a modern audience, versed in the practices of digital transmutability, can still engage with the ideas and themes it contains.

In 2011 The Kaiser Chiefs used an open artwork approach for their new album *The Future Is Medieval*. For the price of a standard album release, people could preview 20 songs from which they could choose and download 10, meaning they would potentially own a unique version of the album. They could then customise their own version of the album artwork by putting together various pre-made elements. People who bought the album this way could then share their tracklisting online with a link for others to purchase the tracks in that particular configuration. The tracklisting was then fixed to a 13 song sequence for the physical CD release which followed later. All songs were subsequently released as part of the deluxe edition of the album (Gibbon, 2011).

Another potential model may be seen in a series of releases by Radiohead in between 2009 and 2011. In August 2009, the Wall Street Journal reported that Radiohead were "done with making albums" and quoted lead singer Thom Yorke saying "None of us want to go into that creative hoo-ha of a long-play record again. Not straight off" (Taylor, 2009). A few days after this interview, a new Radiohead song, "These Are My Twisted Words", was leaked online via torrent sites before being officially released a few days later on the band's website. The artwork was a series of stylised images of dead tree branches that users were encouraged to print on translucent tracing paper and layer in a way of their own choosing, a simple example of an open artwork.

The next release from Radiohead was in fact another album, *The King of Limbs*, released in February 2011. As with “These Are My Twisted Words”, the artwork for the album also featured images of dead trees, establishing a visual link between the two releases. Similar imagery was used again on another release in April 2011, a 12-inch vinyl single containing two new songs, “Supercollider” and “The Butcher”, that weren’t part of the album. Then followed a series of remixes of the songs from *The King of Limbs* that were compiled on another album released in September 2011. The last *King of Limbs* related release was a CD featuring a live performance of all the songs on the album, with a different running order and two new songs, “The Daily Mail” and “Staircase”. The artwork for this release echoed the other releases under the *King of Limbs* umbrella. The ongoing nature of releases in the months after the album’s release may even be acknowledged in the last lines of the album’s final song “Separator” - *“If you think this is over then you’re wrong”* (Radiohead, 2011).

At 37 minutes, 30 seconds and 8 tracks, *The King of Limbs* is Radiohead’s shortest album to date. Yet the larger collection of releases in the months before and after its release stretches to 13 unique songs in addition to the remixes and live versions. The unique songs could have formed a single CD release of just over an hour in length, which would have been unremarkable for a modern album, but the band instead spread the releases over a two year period, with the bulk of them released during 2011. The shared musical and graphical elements across all of the releases over this period suggest a connection between them all, creating the impression of a larger, single body of work that was more than just the album itself. This rethink of the traditional album form may even be one of the themes that stretch across these various releases. Deluxe editions of the album ordered by fans were delivered to their doors wrapped in a fake newspaper (colloquially known as a “dead tree” format, in a further allusion to the cover art). The newspaper motif occurs again in the one of the last songs released in this collection, “The Daily Mail”. Another old format is alluded to with the tape startup noise at the beginning of “These Are My Twisted Words”, while yet another old medium is referenced in the name of the song, “Codex”. Lastly, all of this music was released on a record label created especially for the project called Ticker Tape - yet another redundant format. Like the tracing paper download art of the “These Are My Twisted Words”, the overall impression is one of a larger, open work, stretched across multiple releases, that doesn’t require the listener to engage in a linear fashion, but rather enables and encourages them to configure the music in their own preferred way. The idea of releasing multiple songs as a series of separate, but related songs, has been done by

other artists, although not necessarily as elaborate as the Radiohead example. Metallica's 2008 album *Death Magnetic*, was augmented by a companion release in 2011, *Beyond Magnetic*, an EP containing four additional songs from the original album sessions. David Bowie's 2016 album *Blackstar* was similarly expanded with a four song EP called *No Plan*, which included three new songs as well as "Lazarus" from the original album. This EP was taken from the soundtrack to the stage play *Lazarus*, but featured a large black star on the cover, linking it to Bowie's final studio album. In 2017, eight songs from John Mayer's new album *The Search for Everything* were released in advance of the album on two EPs titled *Wave One* and *Wave Two* (Eliscu, 2017).

The recent advent of streaming services such as Spotify has added another dimension to digital music consumption. Now it is not even necessary for listeners to purchase and download even individual songs, they can simply stream them on demand via the internet from a virtually unlimited database. One way to take advantage of this new digital landscape was suggested in 2016 by Kanye West with the release of his *Life of Pablo* album. As it was originally released exclusively to the streaming-only service Tidal, West took advantage of the fact that listeners didn't own a fixed copy of the album and continued to modify it, even after it was released to the public. A number of songs were remixed after the release of *Life of Pablo.* When one such song, "Wolves", was remixed, West tweeted the following:

> Fixing Wolves 2day... Worked on it for 3 weeks. Life Of Pablo is a living breathing changing creative expression. #contemporaryart (West, 2016)

With an album existing in a cloud-based streamed format, there is no inherent reason why it needs to stay unchanged after it is released. This means that people returning to the streaming service to hear the album again might hear it differently to the previous time. Making changes to an album in this way could be a means of getting listeners to return to the music and re-engage with it.

2.7 The Rise of Streaming and the Return of the LP Record

The decline of physical formats in the 2000s coincided with a significant increase in digital downloads as services like iTunes established themselves in the market. Within this booming

download market, and with consumers now able to unbundle albums at the point of sale, the bulk of transactions were for single song downloads, with consumers able to pay significantly less for a single song than they would for a whole album. The big trend in 2017, however, seems to be away from downloads and towards streaming services such as Spotify, Apple Music, and Tidal. This shift has been evident in the US (RIAA, 2017) and Australia (theMusic, 2017), and may actually suggest a positive outlook for the album as a commercial format. While the ability of listeners to unbundle albums is continued by streaming formats, there is now no longer a financial barrier to listening to a whole album compared with a single song. Whether people subscribe to streaming services, or simply listen on an advertising-supported model, people pay the same whether listening to one song or a hundred songs, to a random playlist or the entire collected album works of a single artist. With this financial barrier removed, it is possible that this could encourage people to engage with the album format more on streaming services. The other trend in recent years has been the re-emergence of the LP as a popular format. Revenue from vinyl sales nearly doubled in Australia in 2016 (theMusic, 2017), and while vinyl sales in the United States only increased by 3.5 percent in 2016, this came on the back of significant annual increases of around 38 percent over the four years from 2012 to 2015. While vinyl is still outsold by CD in both these countries, it remains the only physical format to exhibit positive growth in recent years.

The strength of these two formats in 2017 point to two different but growing markets for music. One is a streaming based digital market, where listeners can pick and choose music as they see fit, either as full albums or combinations of songs of their own design. Albums in this medium are transmutable products, and the consumer is under no obligation to listen to them in the order intended by the artist or producer, but there is no longer a financial barrier to doing so. There also remains a market for physical music products, with LP records growing in popularity. Because of the higher cost of a new LP compared with online purchases, it is more likely that physical purchases such as these will be made by more devoted fans of an artist, rather than a casual listener. Artists and producers therefore, are presented, with a choice of how to present their music. The growth of these two mediums represents an important factor to be considered in modern album production.

Since the emergence of the LP format in 1948, the album has evolved in the face of a combination of artistic, commercial, and technical imperatives. For many years, albums have

been fixed artistic entities, although commercial and technical considerations have sometimes seen them reconfigured, and not always with the agreement of the artists. Starting with mixtape culture in the 1970s and with the emergence of the digital music economy in the 2000s, audiences have had growing control over how the music they listen to is configured. While physical formats still play a part in the recorded music industry, the emergence of download and streaming platforms has meant that an album need no longer be considered a finished and complete artistic statement. Audiences now have the power to take these works and reconfigure them in ways of their own choosing, a model of audience engagement referred to by Kirby as *digimodernist.* This modern approach suggests the possibility of albums as transmutable open works, where artists and producers set out not just to provide audiences with music that can be further manipulated, but also to set the parameters by which this can be done. The challenge remains for artists and producers to consider the various mediums for music distribution in use today, and to create music that can still provide audiences with an extended listening experience in this increasingly complex landscape.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

In my literature review I have presented a textual analysis of different albums that have been released over the last 60 years, as well as an analysis of the various mediums by which they have been presented to the public. In this chapter I will provide details of additional, complementary methodologies that I have employed as part of this research. The first of these will be an ethnographic study of experienced music industry practitioners to seek their perspectives on album production. The second will be a practice led component involving the production of an album with a Brisbane-based rock band. Through this I have sought to develop my own perspectives on album production through application of the insights gained in the other parts of my research.

3.1 Ethnography

For this part of the study I have conducted a number of interviews with professional producers and engineers in order to gain an insight into their approaches to album making, and what they consider important to the process. Victor Jupp describes ethnography as a process of personal engagement with a particular community and suggests that its effectiveness as a research tool is dependent upon the active engagement of the researcher with the community being investigated (Jupp, 2006, p. 101), in this case through interviewing four practitioners, Guy Cooper, Nick DiDia, Guy Gray and Magoo. These people were suitably located for this study, being located in south-east Queensland and northern New South Wales. They also had considerable experience as producers and engineers in the production of albums over the past thirty years. With these interviews I sought to identify approaches to production that could facilitate the production of coherent albums. Their responses helped me identify perspectives that were common to all, but also other distinctive practices or views that were not universal, allowing me to consider which approaches were best suited to my own practice. These interviews informed the practice led research which took the form of an album recording project.

3.2 Practice Led Research

Haseman and Mafe (2009, p.214) define practice as the knowledge of how something is done within cultural and professional frameworks. In the context of this research, the relevant knowledge is that of a music producer making an album with an artist. Howlett's description of the producer as a nexus between artistic, technical and commercial considerations provides the professional context for this knowledge. For this stage of my research, I took on the role of a producer as described by Howlett, that of mediating between the ambitions of artists, and the limitations (and opportunities) of technology (Howlett, 2009, p. 1). I worked with a local Brisbane rock band called Alastyn, who are relatively new but who play live regularly and who have a number of original songs in their repertoire. This project involved the production of an album of mostly original music at QUT Kelvin Grove studios. Having previously recorded a demo with them at SAE Institute, pre-production on this album took place at the start of 2017, and formal recording took place from the end of March to the start of June. This project did not receive support from a commercial record label, but I still sought to fulfil the third function identified by Howlett, by ensuring that the final form of the work produced took into consideration the modern recorded music landscape, and had potential as a commercial product. It was important to keep in mind that people may use any number of platforms for listening to music, and that music needs to be accessible through a variety of mediums, including those that are yet to be developed.

Of relevance was the staggered EP releases of John Mayer's *In Search of Everything* album, and the bonus material approach of Radiohead's *The King of Limbs*. For this project, multiple songs were recorded in the normal manner for an album, but as well as compiling these into a linear sequence for a traditional type of release, consideration was given to packaging them in a variety of other ways, while still trying to convey the larger themes and ideas. The intention was for the songs and the creative expression of the band to form the heart of the finished work, but with a sense of coherence that would still be present even when the songs were configured in a variety of different ways. In order for a group of songs to form a meaningful collection in any number of formats, it was important to maintain a consistent logic of practice and progression of ideas, as identified by Fairchild.

3.3 Research Plan and Principles

The focus of this study has been on the role of a producer and their work with an artist. Whilst audience response has to be considered in the course of the practice, no direct engagement with audiences or potential audiences has been conducted as part of this research. I have presented a number of examples of recent album production where artists have sought to break out of the strictly linear structure of traditional albums, but my practice will be a straightforward, multi-song album production. As my focus is specifically on music production, I have not undertaken a transmedia project in the vein of Björk's *Biophilia* album. Whilst it may offer an interesting area to explore on future projects, it is beyond the scope of this production.

Each of these approaches will contribute in different ways to the overall research question. While the practice, ethnographic and analytical approaches will yield insights throughout the process, I have identified a number of potential areas of interest that have informed the analysis and ethnographic stages of my research, in particular:

- Song selection
- Consistency of production
- Dynamics and contrast
- Song sequencing
- Links between songs
- Finding and representing the artist's voice
- Effectiveness within a particular format
- Number of songs / duration
- Who is responsible for the creating the album?

My first aim has been to identify the underlying internal and external forces at play with Alastyn and their music at this point in their career, and having done so, to identify a particular logic of practice that has guided my production of their music. This logic has governed all decisions

made throughout the process. With a logic of practice in place, my expectation is that this will result in a sense of consistency and coherence for the resulting songs and album.

4.0 INTERVIEW SUMMARIES

For the ethnographic stage of my research, I conducted four interviews with producers and engineers with album production experience. The interviewees are currently active in the recording industry, and together have many years of experience in the local and international music production.

Guy Gray is an Australian engineer who was recorded albums with many Australian and international artists over the past 30 years, including Midnight Oil, David Bowie, Cyndi Lauper and The Church.

Lachlan Goold, known professionally as Magoo, is an award winning producer and engineer who has worked with Regurgitator, Midnight Oil, Custard, Spiderbait and Kate Miller-Heidke.

Guy Cooper is a Gold Coast based producer. In addition to his 15 years of experience in production, his is founder and owner of Serotonin Productions, and as such offers an additional perspective on album production.

Nick DiDia is an American producer and engineer. He has produced albums for Bernard Fanning, Powderfinger, Kasey Chambers and the Waifs, and engineered albums by Pearl Jam, Rage Against the Machine and Bruce Springsteen.

Most of the interviews were done before recording of my album project commenced in March 2017, although the last was done toward the end of recording and at the start of the mixing stage. Details of the interview times and locations are as follows:

1. Guy Gray, interviewed at SAE Brisbane campus on the 17th of August 2016 (see Appendix A for a full transcript of this interview).
2. Magoo, interviewed at QUT Kelvin Grove campus on the 2nd of February 2017 (see Appendix B for a full transcript).
3. Guy Cooper, interviewed at SAE Brisbane campus on the 2nd of March 2017 (see Appendix C for a full transcript).
4. Nick DiDia, interviewed at La Cueva studios, Byron Bay, on the 2nd of June 2017. (see Appendix D for a full transcript)

For these interviews, I used the following lists of questions:

1. What is an album?
2. What thought goes into the overall structure/shape/sound of an album as opposed to for individual songs?
3. At what point in the production process does the structure of an album come together?
4. Does the idea of an album structure ever inform the songwriting? Does it inform the production?
5. Who is responsible for creating the album? The producer, songwriter or performer?
6. Does your approach to album production differ from that of your colleagues? What sort of differences are there amongst other producers?
7. Does each album have its own rationale/story/concept? Is this devised at the start of the production process or does it reveal itself as the songs take shape?
8. How important is the sequence of songs? What sort of songs are good for opening and closing the album? What about the end of side 1 and the start of side 2 on an LP?
9. How is the impact of one song on an album affected by the songs that come before and after it?
10. How much does the release format (LP, CD, download) inform the structuring of the album?
11. To what extent is album artwork considered during the production process? Do you think it plays an important role in how an album is received by the audience?
12. To what extent is the relevance/importance of the album dependent on genre?
13. How does your approach to producing an album differ from your approach to producing a single song?
14. Do writers and artists need to approach albums differently to single songs?
15. Do writers and artists have difficulty making this transition?
16. To what extent do commercial considerations affect the artistic process of album production?
17. Are albums still important? To the listener? To artists? To record companies?

This was generally the order I asked the questions in, although this sometimes varied as conversation moved in different directions. Some of these questions are concerned with the holistic listening concept articulated by Hepworth-Sawyer and Golding (2011, p.43), and whether albums gradually emerge as the individual songs are produced, or whether an idea for an album shape the songs from the top down. Several questions deal with the intentions of the artist and the constraints of release formats, which draws on Howlett's model of the producer as a mediator between these forces, as well as commercial and audience considerations (Howlett, 2009, p.1). Ultimately I was interested in insights from practitioners that could guide my own practice as a producer of this project, asking about their own practices, as will as how they are similar or different to their contemporaries.

These questions was designed to elicit responses to as many aspects of album production as possible. They commenced with a general question which asked the interviewees to define what they believed an album was, to be sure that we weren't talking at cross purposes. Questions then addressed planning, songwriting, the recording process, album artwork, and different recording and distribution mediums. The questions could potentially offer me some reference points for decisions I made during my own recording project. Finally, I asked the interviewees what they believed the future of the album would be. I have summarised the participants' responses to the questions below.

1. What is an album?

This question elicited similar answers from all four respondents, namely, that an album is a collection of songs that represents a snapshot of an artist at a particular point in time. Guy Gray referred to it as "their work in motion". Magoo referred to an album as a marker of time at a particular point in an artist's career. Guy Cooper also used the term "marker", and defined it as capturing what is happening to the artist at that point in their lives. He describes it as "a feeling or a vibe" that it all emerges from an artist's perspective. Nick DiDia describes an album as a concise piece of work that marks a moment in time for that artist. Both Nick DiDia and Guy Cooper also defined the album in terms of the number of songs it contains, ten for Cooper and eight to twelve (typically ten) for DiDia. DiDia also defined in terms of the physical format, specifically the LP record. Guy Gray observed that album production has sometimes been driven by the interests of record companies, but the broader view from all respondents is that albums are statements by artists that mark a particular moment in their careers.

2. What thought goes into the overall structure/shape/sound of an album as opposed to for individual songs?

For Guy Cooper, consistency is key but it does depend on the artist, who sometimes are after a more eclectic mix of songs. From a technical perspective, it is about finding a certain sound, one that, hopefully, the artist will respond to. Magoo describes himself as being totally song-based, and produces in service of individual songs. Once these songs have been recorded, only then does he turn his attention to the overall structure of the album. But even though this can lead to very eclectic collections of songs, such as those he has recorded with Brisbane band Regurgitator, the fact that the songs are all coming from the same artists and are being shaped by him as producer, ensures that a sense of coherence will still emerge.

Guy Cooper also treats the songs first, but looks for an emotion that emerges from the artist throughout the process. As producer he looks for consistent themes that emerge, even though the artist may not even be conscious of them. Nick DiDia said he comes from an era where the album is primary form, but it still starts with individual songs. As the sessions progress, a core of six or so songs will often emerge as certainties for inclusion, and then other songs are judged on how well they fit in with those. He also quoted Bruce Springsteen, that “in music, one plus one always has to equal three,” suggesting an album has to be more than simply the sum of its individual songs. He also said consideration of structure can depend on the band; sometimes a band will come in with a structure, theme or concept in mind.

3. At what point in the production process does the structure of an album come together?

For Guy Gray, the album starts to emerge at pre-production, and gave the example of Midnight Oil’s *Diesel and Dust*, which he engineered. He attended a rehearsal with the band before the start of the sessions where they ran through all the songs, although the order of the songs had not been decided at that point. On the other hand, he has worked with artists where the album begins to form much later in the process, with the idea being to start recording and to see what emerges. He gave the example of working with David Bowie on the second Tin Machine album where many of the songs emerged as a result of the musicians jamming during the sessions.

Guy Cooper says the structure is in a continuous state of flux throughout the production process, and can even change at the mastering stage. As a label owner as well as a producer, Cooper pushes for the “hit” song to go up front, and says that once an artist is a number of albums into their career they are better accustomed to the album structure, and are better able to write with this structure in mind.

4. Does the idea of an album structure ever inform the songwriting? Does it inform the Production?

In Nick DiDia’s experience, the songwriting generally comes first and the album structure emerges from that, although he has occasionally worked with artists who will come up with a theme for the album first and then write to suit. DiDia cited a progressive rock band he has worked with who does this. Similarly, Magoo mentioned an “arty” band he worked with who would write to fit a predetermined theme, but that wasn’t his preferred way of working, and generally it would happen the other way round. Guy Cooper suggests this can happen but it will generally be a few albums into an artist’s career before they can do this effectively.

5. Who is responsible for creating the album? The producer, songwriter or performer?

Guy Gray sees artists as key drivers of music and hence album creation, suggesting that for some writers the need to write is an almost compulsive one, and that the act of writing can be an act of therapy. On the other hand, he says that he’s worked on many albums that were driven by record companies, and that in his experience this is the biggest source of conflict in the album production process. Magoo suggests that it is primarily the songwriter, but that performers and producers also play a role. Guy Cooper echoes this, suggesting that in a band situation, it is the songwriter who plays the biggest role. In Nick DiDia’s experience, as a producer he most often finds himself the prime driver toward combining an artist’s songs into album form, something he attributes to his being from an era where albums were the prime musical product.

6. Does your approach to album production differ from your colleagues? What sorts of differences are there amongst other producers’ methods?

Magoo is very song focused in his production, and lets albums emerge organically from that process. He contrasts this with other producers who seek to define a specific and consistent sound for a whole album. Nick DiDia suggested that there are some producers who aren’t

album focussed these days and that, once again, his own focus on that format is due to the era in which he entered the business.

7. Does each album have its own rationale/story/concept? Is this devised at the start of the production process or does it reveal itself as the songs take shape?

Guy Gray doesn't think all albums have a rationale, and that often there are multiple writers in a band all with different agendas that are sometimes at odds with each other. He says the audience does benefit if there is an overall theme though. He sees the pre-production stage as important in establishing the concept of an album, and cites Midnight Oil's *Beds Are Burning* as an example of this. He said all the songs were worked out in advance and played during rehearsals, so it was clear what the album was about before they went into the studio. On the other hand, he says some artists do go in with no plan and see what emerges. He witnessed this during his work with David Bowie on the *Tin Machine II* album. He says that all albums end up having a "common denominator".

Guy Cooper says it's different with different artists, but that a concept or theme often reveals itself as the album develops. Magoo is song focused, but also observes that album structure often reveals itself as recording goes on. In Nick DiDia's experience, artists don't generally go into an album project with a concept in mind, but that there is often something in the artists' lives that informs their writing at that point in time, and that this ends up underpinning the whole record. For him sometimes it is a sound that he and the artist hit upon with one song that informs how the others are to be recorded. This sometimes necessitates songs from earlier in the sessions being redone to better suit the identified sound.

8. How important is the sequence of songs? What types of songs are good for opening and closing an album? Can songs "belong" together, even if they are rearranged by the listener?

Guy Gray believes the sequence is hugely important as the songs should tell a story. Sometimes he takes control of sequencing as he can see the themes emerging better than the artist can. Guy Gray discussed situations where he's worked with bands who have great songs, but can't agree amongst the band members as to how the songs should go together:

> They can't agree on whose song should go where or whatever, and they just put it right at my feet. And I know the album well 'cause I've done the whole record. And

> I'll say, "I think it should work like this," so we'll cut a rough one together and they usually go with it" (Appendix A, p. 97).

Gray likes to create a satisfying listening experience for the audience, and will try to structure an album as a journey, with variations in feel throughout. But he also cites sequencing as being the cause of the biggest conflicts he has witnessed between artists and record companies. In short, artists want to pace the songs out to best express the story or themes, whereas the record companies want the "hit" songs at the start. Magoo describes something similar, and also cites increased commercial pressures in the 90s as a negative factor in how albums were sequenced. He talks of the impact of the CD listening post at music stores, where customers could preview a CD before deciding whether to purchase. The pressure to put the most commercial tracks at the start of the CD had a negative effect on tracklistings in that era.

Nick DiDia starts doing mock sequences early in the production process, to get a feel for the direction of the album. He says that establishing the flow of an album is important, and consequently he doesn't believe a sequence should be disrupted to suit a different release format. He echoes Magoo's observation about the trend to put the hit singles up the front of an album, but says that earlier approach of spacing the hit songs throughout the album encouraged listeners to make a kind of personal investment in the album they were listening to. For Guy Cooper, however, sequencing is largely irrelevant in the streaming age as audiences are not compelled to listen in a particular order and will seek out the songs they like.

9. How is the impact of one song on album affected by the songs that come before and after it?

For Guy Gray and Nick DiDia an important factor isn't so much individual songs but that the transitions from one song to the next aren't jarring, and that the album flows well. Magoo also stressed the importance of flow, and the need to space out the musical peaks and troughs of an album. He cited the 90s trend of putting all the up-tempo, radio friendly tracks up front as being damaging to album sequencing at this time.

10. How much does the release format (LP, CD, download) inform the structuring of the album?

Nick DiDia likes to keep albums the same structure across different formats, so the technological constraints of all must be taken into account, in particular the limits of vinyl. Magoo also thinks artists will structure an album with vinyl in mind, even if it is not confirmed that a vinyl release of the album will take place. He feels the album as we know it was defined by the LP format, and that this structure still works best for albums, even if not being released on vinyl. He also felt that the advent of the CD in the 90s radically changed albums, with longer running times. The fact that consumers could more easily skip over songs that didn't interest them led to record companies putting more of the big singles from an album up front, rather than spreading them throughout. Magoo feels this had a negative effect on the sequencing of albums in this era. The biggest issue for Guy Gray was the technical constraints of formats such as the LP. The time restriction, and the need for quieter songs to be cut on the inner groove at the end of a side. He said this gave albums a certain aesthetic quality, with the quiet song often marking a nice "end of part 1" moment, but in reality it was due to a technical reason.

As a label owner (of Serotonin Productions) as well as a producer, Guy Cooper feels that it is important to get the big singles early on an album, due to the ease of being able to skip songs on digital formats. He is happy for the artist to structure the remainder as they see fit. He sees this as less of a problem on vinyl. He has also observed that when albums on his label are made available to purchase via download, the first few songs on the album sell well, but then interest drops for the later ones. He tried to address this with a recent album by Reichelt. The album was made available as normal on CD, but instead of releasing the whole album for download at once, he decided to release each song one at a time, at one month intervals, so that each song can receive similar exposure.

11. To what extent is album artwork considered during the production process? Do you think it plays an important role in how an album is received by the audience?

Guy Gray likes to consider artwork and seeks input from the band. He says ideas for art can help inform his mix process. Nick DiDia, on the other hand, doesn't have much to do with that side of things and leaves that to others, although he is often interested to see what ideas artists are coming up with on this front. For Magoo, this is more important to the listener experience and he feels this is most effective with vinyl.

12. To what extent is the relevance/importance of the album dependent on genre?

Nick DiDia doesn't feel that albums are genre specific, he feels it is more a question of the approach to production. Magoo sees the album as being important in the genres he works in, particularly prog rock, but not so much in pop music. Guy Gray agrees that pop music is less concerned with the album but suggests that it remains relevant in country music. Gray also gave the example of N.W.A. as a rap group that made good use of the album form.

13. How does your approach to producing an album differ from your approach to producing a single song?

Guy Cooper made an interesting distinction between single song and album approaches. He said single production is largely about finding something within the song, whether it's a synth line or hook of some kind. With albums, he says, it is more about finding an emotion, something that establishes a personal connection between artist and listener. He says this is sometimes not apparent to the artist, but is something he observes during the production process.

Nick DiDia also says that with an album project, work on a single song can be informed by more than just the song itself. He says that they are on the lookout for a sound that can inform all the songs. Sometimes this doesn't emerge until well into the sessions, and sometimes necessitates going back and redoing some of the songs from early on. Magoo also says that albums are more about an overall sound, but suggests that artists in the early part of their careers are more focused on singles. Guy Gray, speaking more from an engineering perspective, believes a consistency of sound is needed across multiple songs of an album. He suggests it is important for a producer to find an overall sound that the artist can fall in love with.

14. Do writers and artists have difficulty making the transition from single songs to albums?

Magoo says that it is difficult for artists to make the transition from short term to long term production, but also that the album offers an opportunity to try different things with different songs without the pressure of making each one a radio friendly single. Guy Cooper suggests that artists don't start thinking in terms of overall album structure and sound until a few albums into their career. Nick DiDia says he doesn't encounter artist who have this problem, as by the time they get to a point in their career when they would record with him they have made that adjustment already.

15. To what extent do commercial considerations affect the artistic process of album production?

For Guy Gray, the biggest source of conflict he has seen between artists and record labels has been over song sequencing. In Nick DiDia's experience, he sees less conflict and says that record company input can be valued, because it comes from people who know the industry, even if they are not producers or musicians themselves. He gives an example of an artist who was told by their label to go and write a new song because they couldn't hear a single on the album. The artist did so and it became a huge hit. This might be dismissed as commercialism, or selling out, but it can also be seen as helping engagement with an audience.

Magoo suggests that commercial considerations are still important as the economic margins are smaller. There is a reliance on single songs to get a band noticed, and he feels music has become more conservative as a result. He says the biggest commercial opportunities come from syncing and licensing, rather than through direct sales. For Guy Cooper, a key role of the producer is finding the balance between the artist's vision and commercialism.

16. Are albums still important? To the listener? To artists? To record companies?

Guy Gray feels that albums remain hugely important to artists, and that it is the ideal platform for them to express their creativity. Magoo feels that albums are still important in the genres he works in. Guy Cooper also believes they are important, but more to artists than to audiences. (This sets up an interesting conundrum for a producer trying to balance these two interests). Nick DiDia says that they are important to him and the artists he works with, but that they are also finding a renewed audience with the resurgence of vinyl.

17. What is the future of the album?

Magoo feels the album is coming back. He also sees the approach by artists such as Beyonce and Beck, where videos are made to accompany each song on an album, are a potential way forward. Moreover, he suggests the streaming platform as being the standard model for the music industry today. Nick DiDia sees a potential resurgence of the album form going hand in hand with a resurgence in rock music, which he feels offers a more compelling live experience. This is a similar view to that offered by Guy Cooper who sees the need for music to be tied to human interaction, and not generated by algorithms or artificial intelligence. He would like to see albums as expressions of human experience. Guy Gray feels they are still important, particularly

to artists to whom they offer such a rich platform for music, and also to record companies for the potential economic return albums can offer over the single song format.

Other Observations

Guy Cooper suggests that producing music for an audience is about creating a human experience. He also suggests that he, as a producer, is often the unifying element of an album. He echoes Howlett's assessment of the producer as nexus, suggesting that the producer has to find a balance between art and commerce, if an artist wants their music to reach an audience. He also observed, "An album is a weird thing. It's a collection of ten individual products. You don't get that in any other art form" (Appendix C, p. 164). He also stated that a producer isn't just selling WAV files to an audience, they're selling experiences. This relates to the Bruce Springsteen quote offered by Nick DiDia; that in music, one plus one has to equal three. The quote is from Springsteen's memoir, *Born to Run* (Springsteen, 2016, p. 236), and makes the point that the various elements of a musical production or performance have to add up to an experience for the audience that is more than just the content of the music itself. DiDia himself says, "The great records might be eight songs, but that record means so much more than those eight songs, because of the way it was put together, because of the way it marked a space and time" (Appendix D, p. 178).

From my textual analysis and ethnography, a number of principles have emerged that can inform my creative practice. All my interviewers provided a similar, and useful definition of an album, that of a snapshot of an artist at a particular point in their career. In the definition of Bob Ezrin, this is enough to establish an underlying rationale to an album (quoted in Montgomery, 2002, p. 246). It is possible to have a collection of songs that are stylistically varied, and yet still exhibit a sense of common purpose in defining who the artist is at this point in time. The production of any music will be subject to the internal and external constraints that will be present due to the artist's motivations at that time, and the circumstances in which the music is made. The emotional position of the artist, the technology available during production, methods of working, can all imprint themselves on the music being made, and in turn offer further points of connection between multiple songs. It is sometimes difficult for the artist to see these points of connection, and they therefore rely on the producer to help them do so. It is the role of the producer therefore to identify these internal and external forces and use them to develop a logic of practice that informs the production process. This can be established specifically at the

beginning of the process, or identified as it emerges organically during the production. Once established, it can inform the production of all songs and define the sound and theme of the overall album.

5.0 CREATIVE PROJECT

Having identified the key aspects of album form and production, the final stage of the project involved putting these aspects into practice in the form of an album recording project. This project was undertaken at the QUT studios at Kelvin Grove in Brisbane, and involved working with a band to produce a number of original songs, and to imbue the collective work with a sense of overall coherence. Fairchild's description of an album as being based on a logic of practice is instructive. I interpret this term as laying the "ground rules" of the project, and establishing the criteria by which songs, arrangements, and performances are chosen to make up the finished product, and also the methods that will be used in their production. This logic of practice forms the basis of all decisions made during the production process. The point of view of album concepts offered by American producer Bob Ezrin is also relevant here, that all albums have a concept or rationale of some kind, whether a narrative driven song cycle or compilation album (Ezrin, quoted in Montgomery, 2002, p. 246). This sentiment was echoed by Guy Cooper who spoke of the importance of finding an emotion that threads throughout all the songs on an album (Appendix C, p. 139), and Nick DiDia, who described how the particular sound of an album can be decided at the beginning of a project, or sometimes emerge during production and inform the production of all the songs (Appendix D, p. 191). Whatever form it takes, the logic of practice helps shape the album's concept and provides it with a sense of coherence.

I elected to work with the band Alastyn, a four-piece rock band from Brisbane. They have been together since early 2016 and perform mostly original material. They have performed regularly around Brisbane during the past twelve months, but had not undertaken any formal recording prior to this project. The band consists of Travis Gray (guitar), Jarrod Gray (drums), Gene Rogerson (bass) and Chris Fleming (guitar). Since I met them in September 2016, they have had two successive lead singers, neither of whom are with the band any more. Consequently, lead vocals are now shared among the remaining members. This combination of factors - their relative inexperience, and the uncertainty over their lead vocal duties - helped define the main aims of the project. Firstly, to capture this new, energetic, regularly performing band and their live sound, and to do it justice in a recording. Secondly, to help them find their voice, not just their lead singer, but the character of the band and how it is to be presented to the public, and

finally, to present the recorded work as an album that a contemporary audience can engage with, and that is a good representation of the band at this particular stage of their career.

Recording took place approximately once a week over a two month period, with sessions usually running on Friday or weekend evenings from 6pm until after midnight. Following completion of recording, mixing took place over a period of around three weeks. I elected to edit and mix the songs in Pro Tools rather than through the mixing console. This allowed me the flexibility to mix in studios depending on availability, or on a laptop at home. Basic mastering was done by me at the end of the process. The post production process was done largely on my own without having the band members alongside me, but I did make progress mixes available to them for feedback.

5.1 Pre-production

The intention of this project was to capture Alastyn's live sound but also to help develop and define that sound. A key theme that emerged in all my interviews with producers was the idea that albums represent a snapshot of an artist at a particular point in time. This album, therefore, would capture Alastyn at the start of their career; perhaps a little rough around the edges, but still with the energy and excitement of a young, live band. With this in mind the songs were largely recorded as they were, without too much change to arrangements in pre-production, although some modifications were made during the recording and mixing processes. This rationale established a further rule for the production. Musical arrangements had to be faithful to their live performance and be easily replicated on stage.

Soon after meeting the band I invited the band to a demo recording session at SAE Institute in Brisbane, where we fully recorded one song and partially completed another. This session was attended by their original lead singer, but he left the band soon after and took no part in our main recording project. I later went along to a few of the band's rehearsals and also saw a couple of live gigs at venues in Fortitude Valley, in inner-city Brisbane. The first of these was at the Woolly Mammoth a few days after the demo recording, and the second at the Zoo in March 2017, just before recording commenced. On stage they demonstrated an energetic presence, with Travis leaping into the air and striking numerous stage poses. At one point in a song called

“On The Run”, both Travis and Chris played a dual, harmonised guitar solo, that culminated in them running and high fiving each other in the centre of the stage. All four members showed that they were competent musicians, with Gene and Jarrod providing a steady rhythm section, and both Chris and Travis able to switch between lead and rhythm guitar duties. Noticeably taller than the others, and wearing a kind of flared jump suit, Travis stood out as the main focus on stage. He handled all the song introductions and banter between songs. As their original lead singer had left by the time of the first show at the Woolly Mammoth, they ended up playing a fully instrumental set for this show, with extra effort being put into their stage antics by way of compensation. In the months that followed, I observed them at rehearsal on a couple of occasions. On these occasions they were joined by another singer, but he also left the band soon after. By the time of the second show, Travis had taken over most of the live vocal duties, with Jarrod singing one song in the set. These stage performances also showed me the band had a sense of fun, and that they were there to enjoy themselves, even while taking their musicianship seriously. This would be something I kept in mind during the recording process. Above all, I wanted this album to serve as a snapshot of these musicians at this point in their career. The core songs in the band’s repertoire at this point were as follows:

- Lean Machine (the song recorded for the original demo)
- The Giver (recorded but not completed during the original demo session)
- Don’t Call Us, We’ll Call You (A cover of a 1974 song by American band Sugarloaf)
- Heart Attack
- Black Cats (sung by Jarrod)
- On The Run
- Forever

At one early meeting we discussed who their influences were and what they wanted to sound like. We listened to and discussed the music of a number of bands; The Darkness, Tame Impala, Radio Moscow, Aerosmith, Guns N’ Roses, and Deep Purple to name a few. “Hard rock” and “psychedelic” were two terms that emerged in our discussions as indicators of the intended sound. We also identified some sounds that they wanted to avoid. They were less enthusiastic about the current British indie rock sounds such as Maccabees and Foals, in particular the bass and drum sounds of these bands which they found a little thin. Their preference was for the more “traditional” American rock sound.

At the commencement of recording, there was still some uncertainty over how lead vocals would be handled. Travis had been handling the bulk of the vocals on stage when they played shows without a lead singer, but he was inexperienced when it came to singing and would require some coaching. Early attempts at capturing a vocal recording on some songs were unsuccessful, but the nature of the recording process meant that they were able to be held back until later in the sessions, giving Travis more time to practice and develop his technique.

The band was keen to release the songs we recorded. I discussed with them the possible ways their music could be released, drawing on my consideration of different mediums during my research. As a new band without an established following, releasing a full album might be too ambitious initially. Without such a following, there may not be many people prepared to pay the higher price of a CD or LP record. Most likely people would be engaging with online mediums such as Bandcamp or Spotify. Even there they might be unlikely to engage with a full album's worth of songs in one go, so we agreed that a series of shorter releases was the most appropriate course of action. This recalled Guy Cooper's approach with Reichelt's *Glass Bottom Boat* album, that of releasing an album online at the rate of one song every fortnight (Appendix C, p. 154), and also John Mayer's recent series of *In Search of Everything: Wave* EP releases leading up to the full release of his album (Eliscu, 2017). For Alastyn, we agreed that a series of three song EPs would be released first, with the option of packaging the songs together in a traditional album at a later date.

5.2 Recording

The first full recording session commenced on the evening of the 31st of March 2017, in the Neve studio at QUT Kelvin Grove using Pro Tools HD as the main Digital Audio Workstation (DAW). The first session on the 31st of March was the longest one, finishing at 6am the following morning. All band members were present and were enthusiastic to record. Three songs were tracked; "Lean Machine", "Don't Call Us", and "Heart Attack". These were chosen by the band as songs they would like to release on their first EP. We were also familiar with "Lean Machine" having recorded it for the demo several months earlier. The direction identified during the pre-production stage informed the decisions made during recording. I wanted to capture the

band as a live unit, so rhythm tracks were recorded with all four members playing. Separation was achieved by D.I.-ing[5] the bass and two guitars. Additionally, Travis's guitar was patched through to his amplifier which was housed in a separate, soundproof room. This amp was miked up during the performance, providing an isolated recording of Travis's guitar part. Chris's guitar was fed into Sansamp, a software plugin in Pro Tools, which provided a distorted amp sound digitally without the need to mic up an amplifier. This meant that the drums were the only sounds heard in the main recording room, and were able to be miked up in such a way that the full sound of this space was captured without having to isolate it from the other instruments. All sounds were fed back to the musicians' headphones, meaning they were able to hear each other clearly, all while arranged in close proximity to each other in the studio. No vocals were recorded during this session. This recording configuration would be used for most of the songs recorded throughout this project and allowed them to perform in the collective way they were used to in rehearsals and on stage.

Although the primary aim was to capture the band as they naturally performed, I did require them to play to a metronome, or click track, to ensure their tempos remained consistent throughout. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, while some variations in tempo may occur naturally during a live performance, they can become distracting during repeated listening to a recording. Secondly, having a consistent time reference in the DAW session enabled me as the producer to more easily correct any timing errors, and also gave me flexibility when editing parts of different takes, ensuring that tempo would remain consistent throughout. This first session was largely successful. By the end we had at least two takes of each song's rhythm guitar, bass and drum parts, with lead guitar parts saved for the following week in the QUT Audient studio. Chris also double tracked his rhythm parts, this time through a Marshall JCM-800 amplifier. Most of the songs were recorded in this pattern, with rhythm parts recorded live in one session, and overdubs handled in a later one. Three more songs would be tracked this way in a later session, "Black Cats", "On The Run", and "The Giver".

The start of this second session also saw a demo recording of a new song, "Chemical Stratospheric Crumble" and was tracked at the beginning of the session. The only new song to

[5] D.I. is short for *Direct Input*, a means of recording the electrical output of an instrument directly into the DAW without it being amplified in the room with the performers. This allows it to be recorded "clean" and isolated from the sound of the other instruments.

emerge after recording commenced, it came together in a rehearsal after the first studio session where the band had variously played or quoted a selection of elements from Pink Floyd's first album, *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn*. The main riff of the song initially showed similarities with Pink Floyd's "Lucifer Sam" but it soon took on a life of its own. A good first performance was recorded, but we recorded a better version a few weeks later once lyrics had been written[6]. The emergence of "Chemical Stratospheric Crumble" meant that we now had eight complete songs to work on. I was mindful that this may not have been enough for a full album, and so toward the end of one session I got the band to record live in the studio demos of some new songs, to see if there was anything that could be developed further. I had already one of the songs, "Prison Jungle", at an earlier rehearsal session when it had lyrics written by a previous lead singer, but the band were now playing it as an instrumental. Even so, I thought it could be a useful addition to the album, and we decided to return to the song at a later date. Of the other three songs demoed, all had potential but none were ready to be recorded, and it was agreed that we would set those aside from this project. Travis also shared with me a recording he had made of a solo acoustic guitar instrumental. While it also had potential, I didn't think it could fit in with the live band ethos of this project, so we did not pursue it further.

Throughout the production process I was keen to look for points of variety. Having four musicians playing the same instruments in songs of the same genre could be hard to sustain across a full album without becoming repetitive. I was also interested in Magoo's observation that it is possible to have a collection of songs very different from each other, and that they still often come together to form a cohesive whole at the end (Appendix B, p. 124). While this album wasn't going to be as diverse as some of Regurgitator's albums, I thought it would be a good idea to have at least one song that was arranged differently to the others. I was also keen to record multiple versions of one of the songs. The idea was that for people listening to these songs online they could have a choice of which version of the song to listen to, and arrange this Alastyn album in ways of their own choosing. This is an example of the onwardness of digimodernist texts described by Kirby (2009, p. 52). I discussed this with Travis and we agreed "Forever" would be a good candidate for this approach. Like their other songs, it was part of

[6] The Pink Floyd influence made its way into the final version of the song in another way. When recording Jarrod's backing vocals for the song, we tried a few different approaches until he did a take where he whispered the lyrics into the microphone. This technique was used by Roger Waters on some early Pink Floyd songs such as "Let There Be More Light" (Pink Floyd, 1968), and it worked very well for "Chemical Stratospheric Crumble"..

their live set and I had heard them play it at rehearsal using their standard, electric guitar oriented configuration. It reminded me of power ballads by some 1980s American hard rock bands. These bands would often include songs featuring acoustic guitar alongside their heavier, electric guitar based songs, for example “Wanted Dead or Alive” by Bon Jovi and “Every Rose Has Its Thorn” by Poison. Given that this 80s American rock sound had been identified as an influence on Alastyn, we felt that “Forever” would be well suited to an acoustic arrangement for its alternative version.

With this in mind, we took a different approach for the third recording session which was held in a different studio at QUT. Instead of recording “Forever” with a full band arrangement as we had done with previous songs, we began with Travis’s acoustic guitar part, which he played along to a click track. I made some minor timing corrections in editing, but apart from that it was a good performance which provided the basis for subsequent overdubs in later sessions. As the other members each recorded their parts separately, for this song I was able to spend more one-on-one time with each of them to help guide their performance. With Jarrod’s drum part, I asked him to play more quietly than he usually did, including playing rim shots on the snare drum during the verses. I sent Gene’s bass to an amplifier as well as a DI, both of which were recorded simultaneously. I spent some time with Gene getting him to work on his phrasing, getting him to play shorter notes rather than letting them all ring out. This gave the rhythm part a tighter feel.

In live performances of “Forever” both Travis and Chris play a solo each, but with this new arrangement it was decided to cut this solo from the arrangement and shorten the song. This meant that Chris wouldn’t have a part in the song, but I was keen to have him feature in the song in some way. I recalled some of the guitar feedback done by Peter Buck on some R.E.M. songs such as “Country Feedback” and “Sweetness Follows”. Guitar feedback occurs when the sound of an amplifier causes the strings on the guitar to vibrate, which in turn sends a signal back to the amplifier. The process repeats and the result is a collection of notes that continue to ring out, potentially ad infinitum. We set up Chris in the large room of the Neve studio with his amplifier at a loud volume. He plugged his guitar in and stood in front of the amp, letting the sounds ring out while he manipulated the strings to keep the resulting feedback in the same key as the rest of the song. I set up close and distant mics on the amp to capture the reverberation of the large space. This feedback was added to the choruses of “Forever”. For Travis’s lead

guitar parts, these were done as a conventional electric guitar solo, and as with Chris's these parts were done in the room with the amplifier. Travis was going for a very melodic solo, in the vein of David Gilmour or Joe Satriani. He didn't get a satisfactory take on the first evening, but after rehearsing and developing the solo at home for a couple of weeks, he eventually played the version as heard in the finished recording.

"Forever" provides an interesting example of the logic of practice of this album. This arrangement was a departure from the other songs on the album, as well as deviating from the intention to capture Alastyn's live sound. Despite this, I believe the electric guitar parts provide enough of a connection to the other songs, and are still representative of their overall sound. What this arrangement represents is an exploration of the possibilities of Alastyn's sound, and how they could be extended beyond what they already do. The band were pleased enough with the result that they have since attempted to incorporate some of the feedback parts into their live performances. We still recorded another version of "Forever" using their conventional stage arrangement, but having the acoustic version provided me with a point of variety in the overall collection. Other more subtle deviations in their sound can be found in other songs; the guitar solo in "Lean Machine" features a phasing effect not heard in other songs, and "Heart Attack" featured some harmonica and Hammond organ parts as well. The drum sound varied throughout the album, as I didn't use the same drum miking techniques on every song. In this I was inspired by another comment of Magoo's, that he prefers to record each song on its merits and with any variations in sound that may lead to, rather than trying to impose a consistent sound across the entire album. (Appendix B, p. 124). He said it was the performances of the band members that would provide the consistency to an album, regardless of how they were captured. For the last songs to be recorded we returned to the process used on the initial songs. For this last rhythm tracking session, we did full band performances of "Forever" and the instrumental "Prison Jungle", as well as a remake of "Chemical Stratospheric Crumble" that featured a faster tempo, and a tighter introduction and finish. "Forever" and "Chemical" would both be overdubbed as before, but this take of "Prison Jungle" was deemed sufficient. When mixing this last song, I retained the false start before the song, to help maintain a sense of authenticity of their performance.

With the departure of two lead singers before commencement of recording, lead vocals provided the biggest challenge for this project, but this also offered an opportunity to define the

band's sound. Travis decided that he should try and handle vocal duties himself. It was already intended that Jarrod sing vocals on one song, "Black Cats", but Travis would effectively become the primary singer in addition to his guitar duties. On stage as lead guitarist he was already the main focus, so he was the obvious candidate out of all the members, but neither he nor any of the others were experienced singers. A lot of work was done on developing his singing throughout the sessions to help him find his own voice. Initial attempts were unsuccessful as he was trying to emulate styles of other singers that were beyond his range. To help with this, I got him to sit down with me in the studio to practice singing along with an acoustic guitar and no other instrumentation. Over the next few weeks his confidence and performances improved, to the point where we could get some good takes that only required a small amount of digital pitch correction in Melodyne. One song, "Heart Attack" didn't ultimately require any pitch correction at all. Along with experimenting with equalisation, delay, and distortion effects, I believe we found a good sound for Travis's voice and one that suited the band as a whole.

I didn't intend to have every aspect of the production process planned to the letter prior to commencement. Throughout the sessions I was on the lookout for new ideas, and even when mistakes occurred I tried not to dismiss anything out of hand without considering whether it might make a positive addition to the overall project. When we turned our attention to recording vocals for "On The Run" we intended that Travis should sing it, but as Gene had written the lyrics, he offered to record a guide vocal to show Travis how it went. While Gene's take was very rough and needed a good deal of pitch correction, there was clearly something about his voice that suited this song and was worth keeping in the mix. After some discussion, I convinced the others that Gene should be the main vocalist for the song instead of Travis. And although he redid most of his vocal later on, some of this first take remained in the final mix. Toward the end of the session we were trying to record vocals for the acoustic and electric versions of "Forever". Travis's handled the heavier version quite well, but while his forceful, "power ballad" delivery suited this version, it was a little too over the top for the acoustic version. I played some Lou Reed and Joy Division as examples of a more low-key vocal approach, but he still couldn't get it quite right. By this point in the session, everyone was quite comfortable suggesting new ideas and so Gene suggested that he trying singing it. From the first take he managed to hit the right tone, and everyone recognised that this was the right voice for the song. It also gave us another point of difference between the two versions of "Forever" and for the album as a whole.

Here again was an example of pushing the boundaries of what was possible for Alastyn's sound whilst remaining representative of who they are. With Gene singing these two songs and Jarrod now handling lead vocals on "Chemical Stratospheric Crumble", we were in a position where we had gone from having no singer in the band to having three, each with quite distinct voices. Travis's vocals are in a lower register and are quite forceful. Gene is deeper still and a little more understated, while Jarrod has a higher pitched, more manic delivery. What is more, each singer sang the songs that were best suited to each of their voices. This was a benefit for the individual songs, and rather than resulting in a disjointed collection of music, the multiple voices became part of the central story of the album, that of this new band finding its sound and its voice. While no one was a strong enough vocalist to be the designated lead singer, together they provide a more authentic and interesting collective voice for the band. This willingness on the part of the band members to try different things helped bring this collection of songs to life. It allows the album to offer a showcase of a variety of different sounds, and yet these are all clearly still by the same band.

5.3 Mixing

At the completion of recording at the end of May, we had recordings of nine songs, with one of these done in two different versions. A logic of practice had been established at the beginning of production, namely that we aimed to capture the band as close as possible to a live performing unit, but with some concession to the need to present a tight studio product with minimal pitch and timing problems. This rationale gave me clear grounds to reject music that didn't fit this brief, and but also helped me identify other ideas that did. Some songs pushed the boundaries of this approach, (for example the acoustic guitar and feedback of "Forever" and the additional instrumentation of "Heart Attack"), but ultimately this provided us with a good balance of variety and consistency. Even with the different singers, and songs as disparate as "Forever" and "Chemical Stratospheric Crumble", the songs all feel like they represent the same band at a common point in time.

I had been making rough mixes of the work in progress throughout the recording stage, and now attention was fully turned to mixing. Working at home and at QUT, I adopted a consistent workflow for all the songs. Many of the songs required some subtle time correction for the

rhythm section, and this was done soon after initial tracking before overdubbing commenced. General EQ and dynamic processing was applied as needed to bring out the best of each of the instruments and to remove or diminish any unwanted sounds. Pitch correction was applied to most of the lead and backing vocals. As problems were identified and corrections made I then turned my attention to how to enhance the recordings. With a sense of coherence already established during the recording process, I was free to explore different ideas that would suit individual songs. One of the first priorities was to identify vocal sounds that would suit the various singers and their songs. A range of different sounds was developed. The simplest was the acoustic version of “Forever”, for which I kept Gene’s voice largely unprocessed to fit with the sparse musical arrangement. For “On The Run”, more delay and reverb was used to provide a “bigger” sound to the voice in what was a more dramatic song. Jarrod’s style of singing on his two songs were quite distinctive, and I wanted his vocals to sit forward in the mix. His voice was kept fairly bright, with not much reverb but some slap back delay. Travis’s voice received the most attention in terms of signal processing, with distortion and filtering applied on all his songs, as well as some slap back delay. This is most evident on “Heart Attack”, and used most subtly on “The Giver”.

In pre-production, terms had been suggested for the type of sound we would be going for, namely “hard rock” and “psychedelic”. With their heavily distorted guitars and strong drums their hard rock sound was easily achieved. In “On The Run”, for example, I added a delay to the opening guitar riff in the style of Guns N’ Roses’ “Welcome to the Jungle”. As the sessions progressed, however, not many psychedelic sounds emerged. Psychedelic music suggests a kind of expanded reality, one that involves artists becoming more experimental with the writing and production of their music (Covach & Flory, 2013, p. 546), but the primary aim of this project was to present a realistic impression of Alastyn’s sound. This meant that we were less adventurous in seeking "weird" sounds, but were focussed on an authentic live sound that suggested being in the same room as the band. We retained some small elements that that could suggest psychedelia though, such as some whispered backing vocals in “Chemical Stratospheric Crumble”, and some phasing effects on some of the guitar parts. Another decision I made to emphasise realism was to keep Travis and Chris’s guitars panned consistently in all songs. At the live performances I had seen Chris was on the left of stage and Travis was toward the right, and I panned them accordingly to represent this. As they both shared lead guitar duties, it was also a way of identifying them in the mixes - a solo on the left of the mix will

always be Chris, and a solo on the right will be Travis. Overall I avoided adding anything to the mix that was too much of a departure from their live sound.

5.4 Sequencing the Album

Throughout the recording and mixing, I gave thought to how all the songs would ultimately fit together. With a consistent logic of practice having been established throughout the production process, there was already a connection between the songs, although nothing in them suggested any strict sequence. In considering sequences, it was important to give thought to the different mediums through which these songs would be experienced, both physical in the form of CD or LP, and online download or streaming services such as Bandcamp, iTunes and Spotify. Each format provides its own opportunities and constraints, and are generally targeted to different types of consumers. Online music services are by far the most popular format for consumers of music currently (theMusic, 2017). They are less expensive than physical formats and as such provide less of a barrier to newer and casual listeners, who can also choose to purchase single songs rather than the full album[7]. With streaming services, people even have the option to listen to the music without specifically paying for it. These services are consequently a good place for people to discover the music for the first time.

For a band such as Alastyn, this is an important consideration. While there are no technical limitations to the length of an album in streamed form, there are limits as to what such an audience will engage with. It may be difficult to get a listener to engage with all 10 songs of a new artist in one sitting; the first two or three may get some attention but the later ones will potentially be missed, meaning their release as part of a full album is wasted. A more effective method for streaming may be to release them in spaced releases of smaller numbers of songs. Download and streaming formats also enable listeners to engage in the more active way described by Kirby (2009, p. 52), through being able to reorder the songs in a manner of their own choosing, so thought was given to how to provide value to these listeners.

[7] For example, the LP version of Tame Impala's most recent album *Currents* currently retails for AU$40 on their website (Tame Impala AU, 2017), while to download it from iTunes only costs AU$9.99. Individual songs from the album can be purchased for AU$2.19 each (iTunes Store, 2017).

LPs provide a different situation. With their higher cost, they are more likely to be purchased by people who are already familiar with an artist. Furthermore, given their nature as physical commodities, someone purchasing an LP of ten songs is committing to all songs simultaneously. From a financial perspective, it is irrelevant how much someone listens to each song after purchase, or indeed doesn't listen to some of them at all. If the listeners are already fans of the artist, there is less need to grab their attention at the beginning. It is possible to spread the peaks and troughs of the music and moods throughout the duration of the album. The album can be constructed with a beginning, middle and end, and in some cases a sense of narrative constructed. Unlike streaming, the physical limitations of vinyl do impose some limits on the album. Most obviously, there is the need to break the album into two sides. Each side also needs to be limited to 20-23 minutes in order to reserve optimum sound fidelity.

Having considered the characteristics of these various formats, I decided to structure Alastyn's album in two different ways to make the best use of both physical and online mediums. A version was created for physical release, one that would be compatible with release on LP record. Then I created a version for online distribution, primarily designed to be heard via streaming, which would see the songs released in a staggered schedule of three songs at a time, effectively as a series of EPs. The first step was to take stock of all the songs that had been recorded. There were ten finished tracks altogether, including the two versions of "Forever", most of which which were heavy rock songs. The songs in order of commencement of recording (with lead singer in parentheses) were:

- Lean Machine (Travis vocal)
- Don't Call Us (Travis)
- Heart Attack (Travis)
- Forever (acoustic version - Gene)
- Black Cats (Jarrod)
- On The Run (Gene)
- The Giver (Travis)
- Chemical Stratospheric Crumble (Jarrod)
- Prison Jungle (instrumental)
- Forever (electric version - Travis)

As suggested by Nick DiDia (Appendix D, p. 184), I made some test sequences from early on in the production process, going back to the demos the band provided at the start. Through multiple listens I arranged and rearranged the songs in different orders. I tried to identify the songs that stood out the most, and best defined the album and the band. Creating these sequences involved making some initial decisions based on the parameters dictated by the format. So for instance choosing an “accessible” song to start each of the three EPs, or a quiet song to close a side of the LP. Through this process I experimented with mini-sequences of three songs for the EPs, and long sequences for the physical release. I listened for songs that stood out enough to open or close a sequence, either an EP or side of an LP. I also listened for effective transitions between songs. It might be that two similar songs sounded effective together, or alternatively two songs with a strong contrast between them.

I chose the sequence for the physical release version first. The total running time of all the songs was over 50 minutes in duration, so obviously not all of them would fit on a single LP. Having two versions of “Forever” meant that one of them could be left out of the LP sequence, which reduced the duration. The other economy was found in “Prison Jungle”. Without lyrics, it didn’t really sustain its full seven and a half minutes, and so I considered ways to edit it in length. There were two main sections to the song; a series of verses and choruses for the first three minutes followed by an extended jam session. These two sections suggested splitting the track into two halves, and spreading these to near the beginning and end of the album[8]. I faded out the first part after the first chorus, as the track would have been repeating itself beyond that. For the second half, I faded in the song just before the end of the main riff, to establish the connection between the earlier part. I then edited the jam session down by about half, keeping what I thought were the most interesting musical passages. Returning to a previously established musical idea later in the album, it provided a sense of unity, and helped define the album as a single musical entity.

I considered bookending the album with the two parts of “Prison Jungle”, however I didn’t consider them strong enough on their own to open and close the album. For an opening track I

[8] This was also inspired by an instrumental on Fleetwood Mac’s *Then Play On* album, which was similarly split into two sections; the first part, “Fighting for Madge” was the third song on side one of the album, and the second, “Searching for Madge” appeared halfway through side two (Fleetwood Mac, 1969).

wanted something representative of their core sound, that would capture the listener's attention. While there were now three vocalists in the band, Travis still sang the most songs and was a strong focus point on stage, so I opened with one of his songs, "Lean Machine". This was also the song we had originally demoed in our first session, and also happened to be the song the band wanted for their first standalone release. As a quiet song, the acoustic version of "Forever" would work well at the end of side one, something Guy Gray suggested was a common technique in the vinyl era (Appendix A, p. 106). As this was the only quiet song in the collection, it wasn't possible to have a similar ending to side two, and in any case I thought a stronger finish to the overall album was required. With its lyrical themes of escape and riding into the sunset, "On The Run" seemed a suitable candidate, and i also offered a satisfying musical conclusion, with a strong ending from the band which included an extended high note from Jarrod as backing vocalist. The natural decay of the instruments and the reverberation in the studio were allowed to decay in full. I felt this song offered the best summary of the sound of this new band, and therefore the ethos of the album overall. I chose "Chemical Stratospheric Crumble" as a strong opener on side two, but it also serves as an effective contrast following "Forever", particularly on digital formats where there is no interruption between the two sides.

With the start and end songs of the two sides chosen, it then remained to allocate the remaining six tracks. Gene's two songs were now shared across the two sides of the LP, and it seemed logical to do the same with Jarrod's, to ensure the different vocalists were spread as evenly as possible throughout the album. With "Chemical Stratospheric Crumble" already opening side two, this meant his other vocal, "Black Cats", went on side one. Of the remaining three songs featuring Travis's lead vocal, I initially thought to place "Don't Call Us" on side one, but this caused an imbalance in running times between the two sides, so I swapped it with "The Giver" from side two. From there, the five tracks for each side were chosen, as well as the opening and closing songs, it was simply a matter of finding the best way of ordering the middle three on each side. I wanted to spread out everyone's vocals, so the listener wasn't hearing the same singer for more than one song at a time.

The final LP sequence is as follows:

SIDE ONE
Lean Machine
Prison Jungle (part 1)
Black Cats
The Giver
Forever (acoustic version)

SIDE TWO
Chemical Stratospheric Crumble
Don't Call Us
Heart Attack
Prison Jungle (part 2)
On The Run

(see Appendix E for Soundcloud link)

I played this sequence to Travis, Gene, and Chris on the 12th of August (Jarrod was unable to attend), and the songs and running order were very well received by everyone present.

5.5 Sequencing the Digital EPs

Arranging the songs for online presentation on the three EPs required some different considerations. There were no physical limitations or time constraints as with an LP, but it was still important to consider how best to engage the audience, particularly when online services make it easy for people to skip to different songs and artists if they choose. I chose songs that I thought were most accessible to a new audience to be the first tracks on each of the EPs, but was more flexible with the second and third tracks. Once again, "Lean Machine" was chosen as the opening song for the digital releases, but the order was distinctly different after that. The band had initially wanted to complete the first EP with "Don't Call Us" and "Heart Attack", but I felt this didn't work for two reasons. Firstly, I thought it was important that their first releases emphasise their own songwriting, which meant "Don't Call Us" as a cover version needed to be

held back. Secondly, now that we had established a practice of multiple vocalists in the band, I wanted to showcase some of this variety in all the EPs. As a result I put “Black Cats” as the second song, and left “Heart Attack” in the third position on the debut EP. Each EP therefore has multiple vocalists. For the lead songs on the remaining EPs I chose the electric version of “Forever” (which offers a point of difference from the album), and “On The Run”. The sequence of the three EPs is as follows:

EP 1
Lean Machine
Black Cats
Heart Attack

EP 2
Forever (electric version)
Don’t Call Us
Chemical Stratospheric Crumble

EP 3
On The Run
The Giver
Forever (acoustic version)

(see Appendix E for Soundcloud links)

These EPs would be well suited to being released in one or two month intervals. I have left “Prison Jungle” out of these sequences, and intend it to be presented in a different way online. While it is an effective instrumental track, its lack of lyrics or vocals at time of writing means it is still an unfinished piece. As such I have chosen to treat it that way in the sense of it being an open work, and make it available online as a series of stems, or constituent instrument parts, for listeners to download and mix on their own.

PRISON JUNGLE STEMS

1. Jarrod's Drums (stereo)
2. Gene's Bass (mono)
3. Chris's Guitar (mono)
4. Travis's Guitar (mono)

(see Appendix E for Soundcloud link)

The full seven and a half minute version will be provided in this manner, rather than breaking it into two parts and editing it as on the LP version. This could be offered as a free download from the band's website, or perhaps as bonus material when purchasing the album or one or more EPs. Along with the two digital versions of "Forever", listeners have options as to how they engage with the music of this album. It may be that they just listen to the first couple of songs in each release (in which case they will still listen to over half the music), or they may get more deeply engaged with it and seek to listen to all the music provided. At this point it is hoped they take the opportunity to configure the music in a playlist of their own design that will give them a stronger sense of engagement with the music and the band.

This approach would align with several of the characteristics of digimodernism put forward by Kirby, namely Electronic Digitality, Onwardness and the Fluid Bounded Text (Kirby, 2009, p.52). Electronic digitally is evidenced by the streaming mediums by which people would most likely engage with the music. The fluid bounded text, in that the digital listener isn't presented with a full album in finished form, rather they are encouraged to sequence it themselves, something that is facilitated by the streaming platform. The instrumental stems provide the listener with the opportunity to complete one of the songs by mixing it themselves, which gives an example of Onwardness, that the work presented is incomplete, and the audience is invited to complete it.

Returning to the list of album elements I identified in my literature review offers a useful perspective on this project.

Song selection
Consistency of production
Dynamics and contrast

Choosing songs for this album was fairly straightforward. The aim was to represent the band in the style of their live act, and so the songs we recorded represented their total live repertoire at the time, with only one new song emerging during the sessions. There were other, incomplete, musical ideas presented but we elected not to pursue these. One such idea was a soft, fingerpicked acoustic guitar instrumental, another was a sound collage that Travis had put together at home. While they could be worth exploring in a future project, they were rejected for this album as they didn't fit in with the live band sound that was the focus of the project. Having a greater selection of songs to choose from would have provided more options for shaping the album, as Guy Cooper suggested (Appendix C, p. 145). Magoo also remarked that he likes to record more songs than are needed, and that the decision about which songs to include plays a big part in establishing the cohesiveness of the album (Appendix C, p.122) Although my options in this regard were limited, the end result was still an effective snapshot of the band at this point in their career.

The newness of the band, and their primary existence as a live performing band imposed a consistency from the beginning. The main effect this had was set limits for experimentation in the studio; for instance there was little variation in instrumentation beyond the two guitars, bass and drums, which provided a measure of consistency to the sound. Balanced with the idea of production consistency is the need to consider dynamics and contrast, and how much variation exists between the songs on the album. Magoo remarked that when recording an album, he feels it is important to give every song have its own character, and that it is the people working on the album (artist and producer) that give it the sense of cohesion (Appendix C, p. 124). He gave an example of using different drum mixing setups for each song on the album, rather than using one for the entire project. I adopted this approach, with different different songs having different microphone setups, and being recorded in different studios. The loss of a designated lead singer earlier in the project was a challenge, but it also offered an opportunity to provide some variety through use of the different voices of the remaining members. None of these voices were strong enough to carry a full album on their own, but matching them to particular songs proved more effective, and provided the sense of contrast. Another example of contrast was in the choice of an acoustic arrangement of "Forever" for the long-form sequence. This was the furthest we strayed from the "live performance" intention, but it did provide some variety for the album, while the "electric" version was still made available as part of the online sequences.

Song sequencing

Links between songs

In choosing sequences for the long-form and digital versions, I sought to use this variety between songs to guide the order. The main way I achieved this was by spacing out the different vocalists, so the listener wouldn't hear the same vocalist for more than a couple of songs in a row. On the long-form sequence, this meant alternating as best as possible throughout the album, while for the EPs, songs were chosen so that each EP would have at least two singers presented. While there was no specific intention to establish links between the songs on the finished album, a number of instances still emerged. The main example of an overall structure was in the two parts of "Prison Jungle" which sit toward the beginning and end of the long-form sequence. The two versions of "Forever" represent a link that connects two of the shorter sequences together, although they don't appear on the long-form album version. Jarrod's falsetto backing vocals bookend the long sequence, appearing in the first and last songs on the album, as well as in the two songs he takes lead. The primary element that links all the songs remains their common origins in the current live repertoire of the band.

Effectiveness within a particular format

Number of songs/duration

My approach was to come up with different configurations to suit particular mediums, namely modern streaming platforms, and the more traditional, physical LP record. Each format has particular characteristics which shape the listener's experience, so I sought to make use of these with the sequencing. The long-form format offers the listener the opportunity to hear the various facets of the band's sound, arranged in a sequence that seeks to sustain interest over an extended time. The shorter EPs and digital downloads offer the same music in smaller packages, and also offers the listener the opportunity to shape the listening experience, through customising their own song sequence, choosing between different versions of one of the songs, and remixing one of the songs. The two versions represent an attempt to present an album in the two ways that are favoured by listeners today.

Who is responsible for the creating the album?

The core of the Alastyn album was their music, but it was my role to guide it. Hepworth-Sawyer and Golding's description of "holistic" listening (2011, p.43) is relevant here. In addition to the micro and macro roles of instrument and song level production, the holistic role necessitated that I consider how each of these elements would ultimately fit into the album's final form. Once again, Magoo's observation is instructive, that it is the artist and producer who establish cohesiveness in an album, regardless of how disparate the songwriting or production may be (Appendix C, p. 124).

6.0 REFLECTION

The aim of my research has been to identify the factors involved in the production of coherent, unified albums, and from this develop a set of aesthetic and organising principles to implement in an album production of my own. Methodologies employed in this research included an historic analysis of the album, paying particular attention to the effect of different mediums on the form; ethnography in the form of interviews with experienced industry practitioners; and practice led research in the form of a recording project with Brisbane band Alastyn. I believe the resulting album provides a good demonstration of effective album production techniques.

Through my interviews and my research into the album as a musical form, I developed a set of principles that guided my production. The first was to identify that an album of an artist's music serves as a snapshot of an album at a point in their career. In the case of Alastyn, this meant a relatively new and youthful rock band, who regularly play shows at venues in and around Brisbane. The aim, therefore, was to produce an album that showcased their music, and to give audiences a taste of what they are like live, with the ultimate intention of getting people to come to their shows. With this premise established, a logic of practice, or methodology, was able to be established for the album itself. This methodology underpinned the process and guided all decisions that were made. By adhering to this methodology consistently, the resulting album exhibited a coherence and sense of unity across all the songs, even with the different vocalists.

The two key principles informing the logic of practice of this album were to present an authentic representation of their real live sound, and to explore the multiple possible aspects of this sound. These two principles had the potential to be contradictory. Too much exploration and experimentation with their sound could have resulted in recordings that were no longer authentic representations of their music, while sticking too close to the basic sound as I had encountered it at the start of the project could have resulted in a series of recordings that were too one-dimensional and unable to sustain a full album. The emergence of Travis, Jarrod, and Gene as vocalists was an important part of the final outcome. This coincided with a growing willingness among the band to come up with and try new ideas, and offers a basis for potential further exploration and development of their sound on future projects. The final collection of

songs has struck a good balance between these two principles. Above all, I believe it has also captured the energy and sense of fun that I witnessed in their live performances.

The three categories provided by Pras et. al. offer a useful means for evaluating my process with Alastyn. Considering Communication Skills first, I believe I effectively demonstrated the two concepts outlined by Pras for this category, namely creating a good atmosphere and allowing trust and honesty. Our recording sessions went smoothly, with producer and musicians open to ideas from each other. Establishing trust was particularly important given the challenge posed by the lack of a designated vocalist. This required working with the band members, Travis in particular, on improving their performances to the point where they could be captured.

This trust formed the basis of my interaction with the band in the studio. This interaction can be further assessed against the other two categories identified by Pras; Mission of Artistic Direction, and Interaction With Musicians. Pras identifies links between these two categories, and so it is appropriate to assess them concurrently (Pras, p.386). Their first of categories is further broken down into five concepts; Aesthetic Context, Extra Set of Ears, Guidance, Feedback, and Best Possible Artistic Result. Setting the aesthetic context - heavy rock music, recorded by a young band for their first album - provided a standard by which we could judge the work that we did throughout the production. I believe that this helped provide a strong focus for all our activity. The good communication established with the band meant that the next three criteria (extra set of ears, guidance, feedback) were all effectively met too.

While most of these criteria are specifically artist focused, the outcome of two others - Best Possible Artistic Result and Intermediating Between Artist and Audience - are more concerned with the connection between artist and audience (Pras, 2013, p.386), which aligns with Howlett's producer as nexus model (Howlett, 2009, p.3). Alastyn's relative inexperience posed a challenge in this regard. Whilst they are all competent musicians, their inexperience meant they didn't have a wide selection of material to choose from. The songs we recorded represented their full repertoire at the time, so I didn't have as much opportunity to shape the album through song choice. That said, the use of their full repertoire at the time reinforced the idea of this album as an authentic snapshot of the band at this early point in their career. Similarly, while I believe we got the best possible vocal performances from Travis, Jarrod and Gene, the vocals nonetheless still represent the weakest elements of the finished product. It may have been

beneficial to seek out an experienced singer to provide vocals, and this may have helped provide a stronger finished product. Again, however, keeping the personnel to just the four band members was more closely aligned with the aim of providing an authentic snapshot of the band.

I also considered the effect of different mediums and how they shape an album's development. This album has been produced at a time when both online and physical formats are still in favour among the general public; the former offers a convenient means for reaching a wide, and possibly new and casual audience, while the physical formats such as the LP record are best suited for more devoted fans of the artist. This has resulted in two different ways of presenting this album, one as a set of EPs for consumption on online services, and one as a linear set of songs for release on a physical format such as LP or CD.

One thing I would like to have had was more songs to choose from. While I think the songs are all very good, and most of them are key parts of their live set (which goes back to the idea of the authentic voice) it would have been good to work with the band more on songwriting, and encouraging that multi-faceted voice at the creation stage. The one song that did emerge from the session ended up being a little different to the others; not so different that it didn't fit in, but enough to give us that additional point of variety. It also pointed to a possible direction that their future music could take. There were a number of other songs that were being worked out, but none had any lyrics, and none have as yet been developed past demo stage. This could have made for a richer, more varied experience for the digital audience.

Fortunately, the nature of a project such as this is that it can be open ended. If in the next few months a new song emerges, it would be very easy to record that and feature it in a new release. And while I have defined a physical form for this album as an outcome for my research, such a release might just as easily be held back until such time as the band has developed more of an audience.

7.0 CONCLUSION

This study had two related aims. The first was to identify some key characteristics of the album as a musical form and how these establish a sense of coherence across a collection of songs or musical pieces. Bob Ezrin observed that all albums have a unifying element of some kind even those that are seemingly random collections of songs (Ezrin, quoted in Montgomery, 2002, p. 246). A common response from my interviews was that albums are snapshots of an artist at a particular point in their career. Charles Fairchild, in describing Danger Mouse's *Grey Album*, says that a defining characteristic of an album is that it has a logic of practice and a progression of ideas that informs every track on the album (Fairchild, 2012, p. 5). It is important to identify the innate and external forces that will drive an album's creation (Cutler, 1993, p. 38), and also to understand the constraints that shape the process of production and the outcome (Candy, 2007, p. 366). In analysing various albums I have therefore sought not just to analyse the music they contain, but to identify the motivations that have informed their production (Eco, 1962/1989, p. 4).

The second aim was to identify approaches to production that could be used by producers to help artists to create albums that stand as coherent musical statements, and documents of the artists' art at a given point in time. Through the various methodologies of my research, a number of steps to achieving this were identified. The first is to identify the innate and external forces and constraints that will shape the creative process. These factors will be significant in shaping the album, not just in its final form but in the methods used in it production. These forces and constraints can be a mix of artistic, commercial, and technical considerations, as observed by Howlett (Howlett, 2009, p. 1). Once these factors have been identified, the next step is to use them to develop a logic of practice that will govern the production of the album, and to help ensure that any decision made throughout the production process is informed by these principles.

A logic of practice can take a variety of forms. It can be a choice to maintain a consistent sound throughout, ensuring that all instruments are recorded in the same way, regardless of the song. It can mean an approach to songwriting, such as to write lyrics based on a common theme, or to explore a particular musical style. It may be a particular way of recording, such as the decision

to record live with no overdubs that was made at the start of production for the Beatles' *Let It Be* album. An approach to an album may even be based on a decision to make every song as different as possible from the others. Such an album may vary hugely stylistically, but can still have a sense of coherence based on the fact that this is a deliberate decision executed in multiple ways by the same performers throughout the album. Establishing a sound logic of practice for an album, either deliberately at the beginning of the production process, or identifying it as it emerges during the process, is key to establishing a sense of coherence in the finished product.

Once the music has emerged from this process, attention then turns to how to present it to the public. In presenting recorded music, producers rely heavily on the existing mediums and technology for transmission, whether through physical formats such as LP and CD, or data based systems such as download and streaming services Music apps may also offer some more flexibility beyond these established systems. Each of these mediums has their own strengths and weaknesses which should be considered when configuring the final album. Indeed, there is no explicit reason why an album has to be presented in the same way across all mediums. Indeed, with listeners easily able to take advantage of the transmutability of music through modern digital services, producers and artists should be encouraged to make use of the opportunities afforded by these newer mediums. The listener's actions in organising a collection of music to suit their own tastes can be just as much a part of the listening experience as the music itself. The ideas inspiring the music can be extended in a variety of transmedia forms, through album art, videos, and other interactive elements. While such variations may have been done by record companies for commercial or technical reasons in the past, it is possible to make such variations based on artistic intention as well. As digital transmutability is a key characteristic of modern online mediums, the model of open works offers great potential for artists and producers today.

These principles of album production have been relevant to my recording project, but I believe can be applied to the production of any album by any producer. They establish the importance of the strategic role of a producer, not just in identifying and managing the disparate, and potentially conflicting forces and constraints that shape an album, but using them to create a logic of practice that can govern the entire process. I believe that my study also offers potential benefit to other researchers. The balance of textual analysis, ethnography, and practice-led

research has been a successful one. It has allowed me not only to draw on and compare multiple historical and contemporary perspectives on album production, but it has also allowed me to test them through practice. The application of Fairchild's concept of a logic of practice, to guide album production has been a key outcome of my research. I believe it is of significance not just in modern album production, but as a framework for analysis of any album in the modern era. As Cutler observed, "Thus, to understand a music at any stage is to identify the innate and external forces at work, and to determine how these are related and therefore how it is *possible* for them to develop." (Cutler, 1993, p. 38) To understand any album, therefore - whether an album released fifty years ago, or one being produced today - it is important not just to analyse the music contained within it, but also the various artistic, commercial, and technical forces that lead to its creation.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Guy Gray Interview Transcript

Dylan Crawfoot: Guy Gray, thank you for sitting down with me to talk about albums.

Guy Gray: You're very welcome.

DC: Going to start with my first question, what is an album?

GG: Oh right, OK, definition of an album. For me, it's a collection of songs that an artist could have been writing for twenty years or for two weeks. I guess for me it would be a snapshot of an artist's creativity at that point of time. And it's a collection of songs of course... it's their work in motion. And I've worked with a lot of artists that you know, create an album, and I think I said this to you in an earlier talk that we've had… you can work with an artist that you're doing an album for and they've already written the next album.

I guess it's one of those things where I guess as opposed to just writing singles and so on, where albums are all their work to date. You know I've worked on records where they've had ten songs on the album, I've said, "oh these are great these ten songs" and they've gone, "I've got twenty of these I've already written, but these are the ten that are going on this one." You know I think it just documents them in time. Bowie is a good example of that, look how he changed through his career, sound wise, production wise.

DC: You mention that in terms of the artist, are they artist-driven creations do you think?

GG: Oh that's a great question. That's a "how long's a piece of string". Absolutely. I've also been involved with record companies [where] it's driven by a record company. Audioslave's a good example of that, I'm pulling names out of the air here, but you know that was basically Rage Against the Machine and Chris Cornell from Soundgarden, that were put together by Rick Rubin. And they made a lot of money out of the first record, the second one didn't do too well, the third one didn't do very well at all and then the band broke up.

I guess in that sense, a thing like Rage Against the Machine [sic] being put together, it's a put together band. The one thing we've always got to understand is they're very prolific. These guys are really prolific music makers, and I think I said to you when we had a conversation earlier that all the really creative people that I've been around - musicians - it's like their oxygen in a way.

They can't help but breathe it in and breathe it out all the time so it's just coming out of them all the time. I mean I've been in so many situations where I've been mixing in the studio and I'll look out and one of the guys is out playing the piano. So you wander out, you say, "how's it going? You like the piano", and he goes, "Man, I've just written this great song." They're already in the studio making one record, but it just comes out of them.

I think a lot of artists have as we've seen though the time of popular music being accessible through mediums of basically vinyl, and then CD and now online media. I think every artist whether you're Elton John, or you're Van Gogh, or you're Picasso has an apex in their career where they create you know their "greatest creations". You know they're always known for their greatest albums. Pink Floyd was as well. You know the before and after ones were kind of like {meh} and it captures the attention of the public. And albums are a collection of what they were basically thinking at the time. I think that's a good way of putting it. Especially when it comes to the songwriter part of it. You know albums are obviously a collaboration between a whole bunch of people, including people like you and me. But when it comes to the guys who are the actual songwriters, you know I've been really lucky, I've been around some amazing songwriters in my time. And it just comes out of them, it just pours out. You think, "wow they've really got… they're in tune with something" and it's just coming out and out and out.

Just like people that paint. You know you go to someone's house, they're a painter, they're an artist and they'll open up part of the house and there's 60 paintings they've done, and they've already got another one on the easel going. And you go, "why are you doing it?" And they say, "I have to". I've got a friend who does that, he's an audio guy, he's a little bit younger than me, I think he's 50 or something, and he's now painting. I said, "why are you doing this stuff" and he said "it's good for me. It's basically like a therapy." And I guess that for musicians, songwriting and getting that message, whatever that message is, out there is kind of a form of therapy for

them in a way. They have to share it, they can't keep it inside. I'm pretty sure probably some of the best songs ever written have never been heard because people haven't got them out there.

So the album was a vehicle for songwriters to get their message out there and it also became obviously a commercial venture too, and that's really important to remember that as well. So when you ask me before whether it's driven from an artist side or a record company side and so on… the answer is yes, it was hugely today I think that the guys that we work with without going too fast through the explanation, or the answer to your question is that I think today that that vehicle's change radically because of the way that we deliver that music to the public. But yeah basically back to your question, it's I'd say a snapshot of where people were artistically, creatively, emotionally, at a particular time.

DC: Picking up on that then, how are albums today different to 5, 10, 30 years ago?

GG: Well I don't think they are. In essence they're not. Look I'll just refer to a couple of things I guess. I'm going to use Adele as a really good benchmark. People say "oh the album's dead". No it's not. You know the world was waiting for her *25* album, the one she called *25* and it's a fine piece of work. I've still got it in my car, still playing it in my car. It's no different. She's been very prolific for four years since the *21* album I guess. She's a writer. She's obviously highly creative and highly prolific. And she's delivered, I don't know how many tracks on the album, 10? 12 great songs? And it's just her pouring her heart out again and that's what she's done it for. I think at one point she said that if she wasn't miserable she couldn't write anything. Because they said "hang on Adele, you're in love you got a little baby, you've got a relationship," she said, "I've got writer's block, I've got nothing that's making me feel like I have to get a message out there." It really is, it's like a therapy for a lot of them.

You know, it's really interesting when you come from a background of doing a lot of records like I have, you'll start an album as a producer an engineer, for me mostly engineering stuff and mixing things like the project I just spoke to you about a second ago and you when you enter into those you think is this a special project for the artist or are they writing to appease their audience? And I think that's a really big question a lot of people would ask. You know like the project I'm about to do, the next project, is that just to create a body of work that the artist... that his audience will love, buy, so he gets capital gain from it? Or is it that he is having to get these

songs out because they came to him like “Yesterday” came to you know Paul McCartney in a dream? So there's a huge polarity for me when I work with people. Do you really believe all the stuff that you're singing and writing about on this record or is it just a commercial venture? And that’s for me the true meaning of pop music, it’s just *popular* music that you getting out to the audiences. I love when I work with artists that you just know it's coming from inside them because you can see it. You can it see when you're talking to them they take great care, and everything. They finesse everything really well. At the same time it’s their baby. They’ve got to kind of let go and that’s always a real challenge for people, for artists.

So yeah, the album’s still the same concept right? A bunch of songs delivered.

DC: What thought goes into the overall structure, shape or sound of an album compared with that process for recording individual songs. Do you approach an album project differently to an individual, like a single project?

GG: If you’re talking from an engineering and production point of view, you know the technical approach for an album is you know you want a thing called consistency. If that's what they want. I’ve worked on people’s projects they want 12 songs to sound 12 completely different songs, and that’s always really challenging. Especially when it comes to evaluating studio time and resources. And then other albums they want great continuity through it like a U2 record that all sounds pretty much the same. When I say the same, you know it comes from the same snapshot in time, that it doesn't sound like a compilation album. So the process for making an album is most of the time from a technical point of view you want to get that sound. And the challenge for people like us, the technical side of people, whether you’re a producer, not just a musical producer but sort of like a technical producer on projects, which we always end up wearing that hat. Is to find that sound for the artist. And for them to fall in love with that sound.

Because when you’re making the record, and you’re getting that result that they really like whether they’ve used a reference of U2, there they are again, or whether they’ve used the reference of something that Eno’s done, or Bowie's done or something, or want it to be like Adele, you know another reference point. So a lot of people use references. “I wanted to sound like Pink Floyd.” “I want to sound like *Dark Side of the Moon*”, “I love Linkin Park”, you know Black Sabbath, it goes on and on and on back through all the great, great songs. They were

innovators. Look Adele's done a great job with her record. I was just talking to, as I said, one of the managers yesterday, that album's actually very lo-fi. They've done a really clever job, somebody's really looked at that record. You know part of what we all do, we obviously want success in our industries, and success for the artists of course because successful artists make the world go round in so many different ways. But certainly... someone... I tried to think what were they thinking when they made that Adele record? And I'm pretty I think I'm pretty close to working out about what they did, what their overview of that record was. Outside the... I'm talking the technical aspect of the record outside the... the actual *sentiment* of the record which is Adele's department. It's really interesting because if you look at the liner notes on that she got one vocal producer to do all the vocals and they travelled all around the world doing them, because all the producers were in different parts of the world. So there's a consistency there. There's a contextual... basically everything's in context throughout the album. We're talking about the process, the creative process now I guess. There's flow in the record. The record is a story. So it's a storytelling book, I think an album becomes that. As opposed to, you know back to your question, a single... I think that was the question... a single's kind of different because a single is one little chapter of a story. I guess that's how you can look at an album, isn't it? And they're not always concept albums.

And when I say concept albums, it's not always about… sometimes they're singing about boy-meet-girl and the next song can be about Jack the Ripper. Sometimes there'll be a concept album of, you know, love lost. And that's definitely an Adele - I'm using Adele as a benchmark during this discussion of ours - but Adele is known for her sad, love-lost, or everything's under the bridge, I've lost my love again. And the whole album is "Hello, where are you you are out there somewhere but you've dumped me, I'm so sorry for everything, all the mistakes I've made." And that's her conscience doing that. She can't' write a song about a flower. She can't write a song about an AFL football team. That's not inside her, and that's why… sorry back to the question of singles are a story, but they're just one chapter of a story. And I guess for artists they like to get the whole book out there. The beginning and the end. You know? Most records I've worked on are like that. You know? They definitely have a common denominator through the record. In Asia and Indonesia, Malaysia it's all "*cinta-ku" [my love]*, you know it's lost love, and "where's my love gone?" Always trying to harness someone's love. And that appeals to the audiences, It's better than singing about politics. Which you can do, Midnight Oil did that very successfully, and they were a voice in a way. So it's interesting, I hope this makes sense, it's

their message. And there's a message in all of it. You know if you read a book, you read a popular book, a Dan Brown book, it's got a message in it too, there's a message in everything, and either you get that message or you don't.

Singles are of course a message. The idea or the concept of a single is basically was a precursor for an album back in the day. I'm sure "Hello" got released before the album did. It's an interesting one though isn't it just on that note, because of digital downloading of things today they can't control it like they used to control it. Back in the old days of vinyl, you could release a single, send it to radio and get a lot of people talking about so-and-so's new record, and then everyone would wait for the album, and then everyone would run out and buy the album. So that was the process of the commercial side of the record industry, it's very different today. You know I think we spoke about this before, Beyonce, big record, huge record with *Lemonade*. Adele, though the roof, pre-sales two million something before that even hit the market you know just on pre sales. Another guy who who's done really well bringing an album out - a new artist what a risky thing to do - Sam Smith. Why? It's a great record. I bought it, trundle off down to K-Mart and buy it. It's an interesting one, again he had spent four years writing that record. I heard an interview with him and he's just absolutely… you know he said in his liner notes "if you're reading this, thank you, 'Cause then my story got out there basically, and that you bought it, so thank you very much. Hopefully it means I can make some more music." And he's just a great singer, and he's got a story to tell.

So the single's a precursor for albums, singles still play a great role. You know, if you're a record company today, let's talk about the marketing side of stuff, so say for example I sign to Universal Music, we sign a band called SAE to Universal Music, and they're going to take a huge risk on us by producing a record, which costs money and studios, and people, time, resources and so on, or just put a single out there and see if anyone's interested. It's like hanging a piece of cheese over a hook to a fish, is anybody nibbling? And if they nibble then they'll probably move forward, and that's the option thing they give you now in contracts.

DC: Is the ultimate goal of that process still an album, or do singles become the ends now?

GG: It's a good question, singles are still very much a relevant part of people's message… I don't think I could answer that, I really don't know. Let's put it to us, if you've got ten songs, you want to get them all out there so do you do ten singles? Is that what they're doing? Is that an album? Does that constitute an album or have they just stopped using that word? You know is an album too much heavy weather for the young kids today that are downloading stuff? "I bought an album," or "do I buy ten singles"?

DC: So perhaps a generational thing?

GG: It's a generational thing. Yeah you know the disposable thing today with the kids today, all the guys we teach, they don't want to own it. My kids, they don't own any music, they don't own any CDs they've got it all on Spotify, they're streaming stuff, they've downloaded mp3s but they don't really want to know. It's disposable. That digital medium's allowed you to do that. And now as you well know there's been a huge emphasis going back to vinyl, where it's more tactile, people want to own things, read liner notes, feel the paper, look at the disc, what does it feel like, actually touch something. Isn't that interesting, we're getting so disconnected from everything around us that we're becoming almost disenfranchised from tactile things. You know, we don't have to open a book any more, do we? We can just look at it on an iPad, we don't have to search for information we just turn on a computer. We don't have to really think about what music's available for us to hear we just stream it. I mean look at Spotify's free service random streaming. It plays a great role in introducing people like me to new music. I used to get a train in Sydney and always put Spotify on when I was on my computer and always listen to stuff and it was a free service, and that put me on to a whole bunch of great artists, you know? I didn't know about a whole bunch of people until I started listening to Spotify. So that mechanism works really well too, but do I own it? No, I bought one record only that I ever heard on Spotify because I wanted to hear the production value of that record, and how it was made, and who made it and, where was it made, who mastered it and so on. And so I went and bought the album.

So the vehicle - and that's what an album is - has changed. The ideology of it - this sounds intelligent now, doesn't it? - the ideology of it is still there because it goes back to the essence of an artist wanting to get his message out there. But it's fragmented now, very fragmented. You know people bring out singles and if that one does OK they release, apparently another single,

and another single, doesn't that constitute an EP? <*laughs*> But it's not in the same plastic jewel case, so it's fragmented online. It's become dissected. But it's still the same thing, it's still the artist getting their message out there, it's just in all different ways.

But the continuity thing, sorry, back to what you were saying about the album, continuity was really important when I made records, big records back in the 80s and the 90s and even recently this record I've just been asked to be involved with, they want a sound right across it. They want it to sound like it was… I guess if you were dreaming of listening to something you would want it all to be part of the same landscape, does that make sense? Kind of like a concert. You know if you went to a concert and saw somebody play in a concert and the sound kept changing radically, it would throw your thought process a little. It would pull you away from what the message was, as opposed to what the audio was doing. Do you know what I mean? So the continuity of records when I was making records was pretty big. Like if you listen to a lot of the records I made they're all done at the same time, they all sound… all the songs have a continuity to them. But they're not all the same of course, because of different variables, what key they're in for a start, key and tempo basically.

DC: But there are still some consistent elements throughout?

GG: Oh yeah, well the drums all get cut at the same time don't they. But different snare drums, so the variables are there… different cymbals, different kick drum, but you've got the same guy playing it. And usually about the same microphones on the drum kit, but you know the variables are there in sound and tone and things like that, but that's the technical side of stuff isn't it? But that's not a message, that us human beings pushing ourselves to a new level of learning as well. You know that's the one thing about creating music with these guys and girls is the learning that comes from it all the time, about trying things and being experimental. And I think that process (sorry possibly jumping ahead of your questions), that process has been lost because of everybody doing stuff in the box. And the amount of electronic music that's being made now is, I won't say sad but, it's a shame. Because I think that the learning between collaborators has... it dissipates because you're becoming a one man band in a box, and not really having to deal with anything. That's why I still love audio today, thirty-five years after starting it is that you've just got to move a microphone just ever so slightly and it can make a huge difference on the result. And it's a love affair, that's a great way of putting it to I guess. You

know when you work with someone, say we were starting your record today, you have a bit of a love affair with the people you work with because it's such a great thing to do. You to get together and make their music. Fortunately if you're working with the right people, and fortunately if they've picked the right people and fortunately if they've picked the right person to work with, it's a really great collaboration, synergy between people's creative process. And there's so much to talk about that about being in control rooms with people and how you deal with those things.

DC: So at what point in the production process does the structure of an album come together? So you start with obviously a bunch of songs, wherever they're coming from, the artist is now getting their message out. At what point during that process does the album start to take shape? Do you plan it early before you get into the studio?

GG: Oh absolutely, yeah pre-production for sure, yeah totally. And you know a good producer - and I've worked with some great producers in my life - will go into a good pre-production studio, rehearsal room. In Sydney there used to be some good ones around - Sound Level is one that comes to mind immediately, did a lot of work in there in my day - and they'd have an eight-track running, and they'd just bash all the songs out and they'd go through and start pulling them to bits and saying "play it this way, no change the key, you know piss that off, get rid of that". So they start putting the structure of the songs together. The band obviously if they're ready to record an album have got pretty much an idea. Linkin Park are a good example, if you listen to all the Linkin Park stuff… I'm listening to the album that's got "I Become So Numb" on it, you know their really big hit - it's again a concept record.

Diesel and Dust by Midnight Oil, that's a good example. When I got first asked to be involved with that project, they said there was a lead time of about six weeks before we started doing the rehearsals for it, and they said oh come down to the rehearsal rooms and meet the guys - I knew Peter Garrett anyway, I'd already met Peter Garrett before - and I went down there and they ran through the album. They played the album.

DC: In order? So the tracklisting...

GG: No not in tracklisting, but they ran through the songs…

DC: But the songs were all…

GG: All there, yeah. Warne Livesey who was the producer on that album, a very good English producer, had done The The, Matt Johnson and a whole bunch of stuff, was running through the songs with them. But they were an amazing rhythm section, I think what it really was was tightening bits and pieces up, because the band had already basically said "we've got a bunch of songs we're going to record and put on this record called *Diesel and Dust"*, and you know the producer's role for that was, before we get into the studio and start spending big dough, let's just 200 bucks a day in a rehearsal studio and keep running through things, sort stuff out. We want to have a clear… not precise… but clear plan of how we will execute the recording in a studio, which we ended up doing at Albert Studios. I'd done it with plenty of bands, The Chosen Few and a whole bunch of other bands that I'd worked with, but it was very interesting to see such a well established band enter that process. Cause these guys were Midnight Oil. They weren't a bunch of schmucks... they were a hell of a band. And it was interesting to see them go through that process. And I use to live in New York as well and working with bands in New York and I'd do the same thing… it's a dress rehearsal basically for going into the studio, so you don't get in there and everyone goes, "What are we doing?" When you get into the studio of course things change, and thank goodness they do because that's when the creative thing really puts its cap on and comes out, but the basic architecture of the record is there. And that record was very much a concept album, it was about the plight of outback Australia basically, from one end of the record to the other, and caught everyone's imagination too, you know the Indigenous part of it and so on. So yeah, pre-production really important.

On the flip side of that… go into a studio with very well known artists and they're going to get in there and work it out. You know it's the old one isn't it, jump off the cliff and start building the wings on the way down. And I've seen bands do that too. Lot of inspiration happens when that occurs. You were talking about U2 earlier today, U2's a good example of that too. They've got a pretty good idea of where it's going to go, but they've got to get the band together to whack it out. I think one of the things that's good about that process, is it's spontaneous and it's great when that happens in the studio and some great shit goes down in the studio that they didn't plan, because planning can make stuff pretty boring. It's like going on a holiday. You plan everything on a holiday, it's a pretty boring holiday. If you just get on a plane and arrive

somewhere without anything organised, it's usually a lot more adventurous. So when you're working with artists in the studio that are adventurous, that's when some really magical stuff happens. It's not just a process of plodding through and executing those particular areas of the production, it's basically make it up as you go along.

And I've seen some fantastic shit happen. Bowie was a great example of that. Just jamming three chords, and the next thing you know the band's rocking, next thing you know lyrics are coming out, next thing you know… boom! There's a song! And you're just going, wow OK, that's how you guys do it. They were a good example of that. I'd seen it done before as well, but they were a really good example of that.

DC: That was the Tin Machine album?

GG: Tin Machine album[9]. So, ten songs on that album… I don't know how many songs are on that album, ten songs maybe? Maybe twelve? About half of them had been thought about, and the other ones were sort of like, "we'll work it out when we get to the studio". We're rock stars, we don't have to sit around in a room and sweat it out for hours.

You know someone like Warne when he was working with Midnight Oil, it was about the arrangements. And working with Jim Moginie the guitarist, who's an amazingly talented guy, they all are but Jim's, you know, the driving force with that band as far as the musical side of it goes. That's a wide statement, but there's always key members in a band and Jim's definitely one of them. And working the arrangements out. When to play and when not to play. And that was really difficult for Midnight Oil because they like to overplay. Tell Rob Hirst to try to hold back. Nah, that ain't gonna happen, so you know they're like machines. And Peter Gifford on bass in those days. It was about a little less is more, and they hadn't come from that side before. And that's why that record caught a lot of people's attention, because it was a very musical record because it was made by a very musical guy.

Rupert Hines is the same, the producer Rupert Hines. Really clever musician, and everything he's produced sounds beautiful because it's so musical. As opposed to it being a technical producer, who's great at getting sounds and great the band in time and in pitch, but musically

[9] *Tin Machine II* (1991)

there's a whole bunch of stuff that, the fabric of it's not quite there. That's deep isn't it, but it's really true. Cause I've worked with the polarity of both those producers, really musical guys that really aren't that technical, and guys that are really technical but not that musical. And they both work but I kind of like that guy a little more because he's the one that really pushes the artist a bit more too. Musically. You know, "try singing this". "I can't sing like that." "Well have you tried?" Spector was a good example of that too, he pushed people musically. Really pushed people, and came out with stuff that no one had heard before. That's why he's famous.

DC: Talking about how, to use the Midnight Oil example Diesel and Dust, the songs were already there, ready to go…

GG: Pretty much, yeah

DC: … not necessarily the sequence though, how important is the sequence of the songs on an album, the order that they go in?

GG: Oh hugely, hugely. Because in somebody's head, it's like a thread threading fabric together. It tells a story from front to end. Very important. And the only time I've seen record companies and artists really have a go at each other, is on what order is the album going to be in. And it's the one where the artists hate the record companies if they want to try and change something. Key's really important too. Absolutely.

DC: As in the sequence of key changes?

GG: Absolutely, you know if you go from minor to major or something it can sound really weird and be quite disconcerting to the audience when they suddenly hear something that's <*sings an example of a key change*>... they go, "er, what happened?" So key's important. As far as a concept record like *Diesel and Dust* goes, it's important that it tells a story in which it was, right from front to end. Hugely important, very important.

But I've been in situations where a band has got a bunch of great rock songs together and they have no concept... they can't agree on whose song should go where or whatever, and they just put it right at my feet. And I know the album well 'cause I've done the whole record. And I'll say,

“I think it should work like this,” so we’ll cut a rough one together and they usually go with it. They might make one change to it. And I’ll do it though feel, I’ll do it through key and a good feeling too you know about whether... an album should be a journey and an experience for the audience like a film is, and you want to take the audience up and then you might want to bring them down a little bit, then up again, that keeps people's interest up. Classic example is you put two big slamming tracks for the first couple of songs, and the third one’s a ballad. Bring everyone back down to earth again and get them thinking about what the album is actually… instead of being assaulted by a whole bunch of rock and roll. That was an old trick where they put the third or fourth one as the big, soppy ballad, just to sort of mix it up a little bit instead of it being back to back.

Yeah, it’s the biggest… what’s the word?... problem I’ve seen between record companies and a band is the album order. Back in the day. Maybe the record guy just doesn’t get it, he just thinks “it’s a great song, the radio’s gonna love it”, and it doesn’t make any difference because it should really be at the end of the album. “Well no one’s gonna get that far into the record!” So you’ve got a record company that’s very concerned about the viability of it, commercially. Sales, sales, sales. It means he keeps a job. The artists don’t really give a root, because the record company guy’s probably not going to be there next time around, because of the way they were a bunch of revolving doors. For the artist it’s their baby. It’s like dressing their baby up in a different hat and strange clothes, and they go, “it doesn’t work.” That’s a nice little analogy isn’t it? It’s got to look right and feel right to the band. And it’s a really important thing.

Tempo’s really important too, if you watch mastering guys, you’ll see him doing his mastering thing and the track’ll finish and you’ll see him with his foot going like this… *<taps a rhythm with his foot>* and he’ll drop the next one right in time to make the audience’s heart rhythm stay with the album. Because if you come in on an off note, people feel like it’s a bit of a jolt. They don’t know it is, but it is.

DC: So the tempo of the first song forms the starting time of the next song.

GG: Totally. You don’t go on an off beat, you wouldn’t go on a syncopated part of it... Stuff like that’s really important. There’s a whole lot of subliminal stuff that’s a physical thing. And records are the same. Look at the difference with the tempo when you make an album with somebody,

or a song, and they go “It’s 80 bpm” and you do it, and they go, “Shall we try 79?” And you think, “one beat per minute”. Difference, and we’ll do it, drop it to 79 and everyone says it’s better. It feels better. And that’s the human thing we’ve got, that’s why we’re not machines. We can feel that. It’s part of our… rhythm of life. (Good album that one).

So that stuff’s really important. All this subliminal stuff that a record company might miss, or the mastering engineer might miss, but the band won’t. Especially if you have a key person in the band, they usually know. And then politics get involved when “you're putting your songs before my songs” and all that bullshit that goes on on the record. It’s like “come on guys, kindergarten’s over, you’re all adults and this is your careers, stop acting like kids.” But I’ve seen that happen, you see all that stuff go on.

But to answer your question, straight up. Album order is crucial, not important, but crucial. As a flow. *Dark Side of the Moon* was great, right? I’ll tell you when you know a good album order, for me. I know what song’s coming next, because one will lead my mind into the next song. David Gray’s *White Ladder* album’s a perfect example of that. That’s a great record, it’s a fabulous record. And I know the next song that’s coming, I’ve listened to it enough. And I don’t put random in my car, I don’t play random, I don’t like random it confuses me a little bit. I love that I know the next guitar note is coming after a song, and I know what that song’s going to be about. So random choice can throw...

DC: Which of course is now a big part of the way people listen to music anyway.

GG: Absolutely, it’s fragmented again. Everything’s random. I mean I’ve got a thing in my car where I can random the CDs. It’s not just on that CD, so I’ll get a bit of Adele, then I’ll get a bit of Linkin Park, and nah I don’t like it. Lost my groove in the car, it’s like listening to radio, which I don’t. Commercial radio, nope.

DC: So do artists now have to factor that in? If they’re trying to tell their story, and if the song order which used to be crucial, they no longer have control over... is it possible for artists to still tell a story even though it’s being rearranged? There’s another dimension that’s out of their hands now...

GG: I don't know, I can't answer that question. I think the song has to stand alone on it's own merit. I'm working on a track of my own at the moment that I've written, and the track stands alone by itself. I've got a whole bunch of other songs I'm working on as well, my own stuff. So from an artist's point of view, I can't be worried about that. The message is important, whether it flows properly from someone's random play order into another one, I don't really care. That's out of my control. So I'll just make the song stand alone, and I'm not worried about the next key, or the next voicing of the next track is, I'm doing it on its creative merit.

DC: So that means you have to think about it in terms of song, and not in terms of album.

GG: Yeah, so that means that if I made ten of those, and someone said to me, "are you putting an album out?", then I'd think really hard about which order they would be in, so the song flowed… there's that word again, so it *flows* well. I think that's really important for our kind of human feeling. Our own internal rhythm, it's really important. Not so much just tempo, but the way it makes you feel about the record as well.

DC: All right, a more nuts and bolts question, what's a good type of song to open an album? Are you always looking for the same thing, or does it vary?

GG: It's a great question.

DC: Or close an album?

GG: Here's the one that opens, it's the one that depicts and defines the artist at that point in time. "Beds are Burning", great example. Hit 'em right between the eyes, hit 'em as hard as you can. There's an old one, where you give them a pretty good song and the third one would be the hit. Record companies would do that. They would say, put the big one at number three. That moved up to the front because people couldn't be bothered getting to the third track on an album before they'd go to the next CD. So hit 'em hard. The most commercial one, the one with the hooks. This is a record company guy talking here…

DC: I was about to ask…

GG: Yeah, I've just put my record company hat on at the moment. So it's the one with the hooks, the one that radio will love, it's the one that Triple-J's gonna give you attention on, if you're starting out like a lot of these guys. It's the one that makes people sit up and go "wow". You don't want to put something that's mediocre, you want to hit them right between the eyes. That's what we used to say. Hit 'em hard, because then they'll pay attention.

DC: And what if you've got your artist hat on?

GG: Artist hat on, that's when you have a fight with the record company. That's when you take your hat off and say, that's not what the album's about….

DC: So it becomes about the story?

GG: And they go "Breach of contract. Page 99 which says, 'we have the final say on all shit, because we're paying for all shit." And unless you've got a really good record company that you don't want to fight with, then they'll get their own way. It's a commercial venture for them. They want to make money. So they're going to do whatever it takes to make that money.

Within reason. So can get guys like Peter Dawkins, who was probably the Australia's greatest producer ever. He was a really musical guy who had golden ears for songs. Dragon. Australian Crawl. You name it, he nailed them all. "April Sun In Cuba" was a great example, of a rock band from New Zealand singing about sun in Cuba, but made it a massive hit because it was such a catchy song. He was a Mr. Hooks if you know what I mean. So he would do it in a musical way, as opposed to just an A & R guy just saying, "this is the single, and this is what it's going to be, because this is the one my kids can remember." This is what they used to say. Meanwhile the person who's made the album who's the creative genius, says "that's not what the album's about". And they go, "we don't care." and that's when you get that clash.

And that used to happen a lot man. Let me tell you, j ust on a personal note, I'd always be up in the studios, I spent the better part of my youth in studios, and you'd always be working with people constantly through 301, EMI studios in those days, constantly coming upstairs and just absolutely going ballistic in the studio after being downstairs talking to the record company. They never came up and said it was great. Everything from album artwork, to the typeface being

used, to the release date, to who they were touring with, to the song orders, to the first single… and it just went on and on. It's the business end of the entertainment industry. And it's the one they didn't want to know about. But they had to.

DC: Did the business end usually win out? Are the track orders on so many albums are mostly record company decided?

GG: Mostly. They had the final say. Not always, but a lot of times. I'm not sure about *Diesel and Dust,* I can't remember what happened there, what happened with Warne and with Sony or CBS in those days, I'm not sure how that came about. But I'm pretty sure Midnight Oil had enough credibility, and weight, and record sales to say we're doing it the way we want to do it. And they'd go, "Sure".

DC: I do recall "Beds are Burning" was the first single off that album, and it was the first song, it was track 1. But I think it's a really effective track 1 so it's hard to say whether it was a record company or an artistic decision.

GG: "Beds are Burning" was number 5 in the UK, and something like number 8 in the US, and it sold millions of copies, I mean it really sold a lot of copies, and it's the song they're remembered for. If you go to America tomorrow and talk about the big bald guy, they'll say, "oh the 'Beds are Burning' song." I mean it was massive for them. And they were smart enough to put "Beds are Burning" right up front and hit the American audience between the eyes.

DC: But it still worked artistically as the start of the album.

GG: It did! It set the premise for the rest of the album, that's a good way of looking at it, it set the premise for the rest of the album. "How can we dance while our beds are burning?". And everyone goes, "what does that really mean?" Oh hang on, here's the story. Here we go...

DC: And here's the next nine songs.

GG: Yeah, concept's not the right word, it's a thematic… it's a theme that went through the album. Concept's not right, concept to me is like Twisted Sister doing some rubbishy LA record

or something that's all about chewing gum and chicks on skateboards or something. So, concept's the wrong thing, it's a thematic album. *Dark Side of the Moon*, another great example of it.

DC: Does every album have it's own theme, concept, or story?

GG: No. I can say point blank say nope. I've worked on many albums that are written by three members of the band. And they're all on different planets. Why are you guys in the same band? I don't even know… And then the band breaks up of course after the record stiffs.

I've done a few artists that have not had a key songwriter in it, they've had three key songwriters. And they're all trying to put their message across. Their voice across, their message, and there's no continuity in the record. One guy's writing about suicide. One guy's writing about a girl that's left him, and the other guy's writing about some other deep and meaningless stuff. So no, not always. And there's usually a lot of conflict in those bands.

DC: Do albums benefit if there is a theme?

GG: I think the audience does. You tell me, are your favourite records the ones that carry a sentiment through the record? That makes you feel and reflect about stuff later on as a whole as opposed to a whole bunch of fragmented songs?

DC: I find albums rewarding when I feel that all the songs have informed each other, that they've somehow spoken to each other or there's been a consistency throughout. I find that more rewarding.

GG: Yeah, so do I. Instead of a whole bunch of songs that don't make any sense. It's like a badly edited film. It's the same feeling, you watch a film and you go, "I get it, I understand the story, and I kinda get some of the scenes and the chapters in the film, but I just didn't quite get... what was the message?" Same deal, right? I think that's a really valid point, like a badly edited film. You know if you watch a well edited film, the continuity, the feeling it leaves you at the end of the film, you go... "wow", instead of "what?" There's no question mark at the end of it.

And I think the other thing about a thematically based record too is that because it's come from an ideological position, is that it gets you thinking a little bit more. Because you can, as the audience, join the dots. And that's really important about a record that has a storyline to it. You join the dots, and that engages you in the album. And I think that's really important, man.

DC: So when the listeners become a bit more active in their listening?

GG: Yeah, yeah. I love the fact… Adele… Really great version of this. Opens with "Hello". Huge sounding track. Massive, great production on it. My goodness me, 10 out of 10. What a reference point for everybody at the moment. Great snapshot for her too. There it is again, snapshot. What will her record *29* or *30* be? We'll never know because she reckons she's not going to make another record.

But all the way through the songs, it's kind of like a therapy session for her. So it's kind of like, "I know Adele a little better now. Because I'm inside her head." And I think that's a really important thing. You know we're talking about music here. What was music? Music before someone played an instrument was poetry. Then someone said, I'll play a little music in the background, next thing you know I've got a little melody, and hey it's a pop song. It's voicing your inner being. Like poetry. Like if I write a poem about you I'm writing about how I feel about you. That's what love songs are, they're poetry, and someone's put a little groove behind it, and some chord changes. Melody. We get melody from birds. Somebody went that's a nice little bird that chirped, and ah it's a flute. And early mandolins and so on. Stringed instruments. It's really interesting, that's a whole conversation about how that came about, and African rhythms and how the tribes had to communicate to other tribes that way. So it's always been a form of communication.

So Adele's a good example. When I hear that record and I listen to that record all the way through, I kind of feel for her. So that makes me like her a bit more I guess, because I feel a little pity for her. Because, she's had a tough time.

DC: So you become emotionally engaged?

GG: Emotionally engaged. She's engaged me. Wow. Just like a film. Did I get engaged in *Revenant*? Yeah, I really engaged in that film. Because I really felt sorry for Leonardo Di Caprio. He engaged me and the film engaged me. And it finished I went, "wow, what a great ending, he killed a guy!"

DC: Spoiler alert.

GG: <laughs> Yeah, spoiler alert. Oh sorry, I mean, they became friends and wrote a song together. They did an album actually. So, again it's that engagement thing. Albums do that. Music does that for everybody.

DC: Can you get engaged in a single song?

GG: Oh absolutely, totally. Good example, one that really engaged me, song from a film, didn't now about the dude until I saw the film, a guy called Duncan Sheik. Rupert Hine produced the album, did a song called "Wishful Thinking" and it was in the movie called *Great Expectations*. It was a rework of Charles Dickens. And Robert De Niro was in it, Gwyneth Paltrow was in it and Ethan Hawke. And it was a fabulous film, and one of the tracks was in it. I remember seeing the film, 20 years ago, and I remember the song, I think I recorded it somehow, and I recorded it off the DVD, or I think I was it on TV. And I found out it was a guy called Duncan Sheik. And that song… one song, before I bought the album a year later, got me thinking about shit. So yeah, singles can definitely engage you… stand alone. There doesn't need to be that thread between them all, they're a story within themselves, they can be. Singles can be. Unless they're pop songs about inane crap. But that's why we have choice and taste in music. Some artists we don't like, some artists we do. Why do people like Adele so much? Think about it, be could do a whole thing on Adele, but why? She's… no offence to Adele, I love Adele, I'd love to meet her… slightly overweight. She was. Is not what you call, when she was younger, of a great looking pop star, but she sang and everybody... Susan Boyle's another one… unexpected singer that blew everyone away. Not hugely well educated. She drinks and she smokes. She's had some really shitty relationships. We all relate to her. Everyone relates to her. Comes from kinda the wrong side of the tracks if you know what I mean (she probably doesn't, but). And she's a riot of a girl, character beyond belief. She is Adele. Doesn't take herself seriously. So there's these great qualities as an artist that they put out there, that's just her. She wears her heart on her

sleeve, and it's in all the songs. So we all relate to her, I relate to her. Everyone does, and I bought the record. So that's why, and other things come along and I don't relate to it because I probably don't like the artist that much, and that's a personal choice.

DC: How much does the release format inform the structuring of an album. Do you structure an album differently when it's going on LP or CD?

GG: Highly, yeah. That's a physical constraint. Let's talk about CD, when CD came out you could put it on any way you wanted to, A to Z anything on it, because of its non-physical limitation as far as replay went. The laser doesn't care if the audio's on the outside or the inside of a disc, it doesn't make any difference. LP definitely through a restriction called diameter loss. That meant the closer the needle got to the inside of the record moving at 33 1/3 RPM you would get a loss of high frequencies, because it had less distance to travel. So therefore the stylus wasn't traveling as quickly over the surface to create that audio playback. So back in the vinyl days, when I was a kid they'd always put the ballad last, and you'd think "Oh isn't that sweet, they're saying goodbye to us". And they weren't really, what they were basically doing was because it was so lo-fi they didn't care, they had to stick the ballad on the inside near the infinity groove. And the rockers were on the outside with all the hi-fi, and the cymbals and the really top end stuff. All the sibilance was on the outside, and there was no top end on the inside.

Interestingly enough just on that note technically, the cutting guys used to be cutting to a lathe, and as it would get through they'd be putting the space between the next tracks, watching the next track and they'd add a bit more top end. Isn't that brilliant? They'd do it on the fly. They'd turn up the high frequencies to try to compensate for that high frequency loss. So the inside of the records, a lot of them were cut super bright, but by the time the stylus played it back through its pre-emphasis it sounded normal. Isn't that great, they'd compensate, they'd see the white leader go by and they'd add another 2dB in. And then the next song would start. Isn't that great? They were the real cutting engineers those guys, they were the killers.

So yes, to answer your question, physical restrictions. So in those days, LP was a combination of artist and record companies, and physical restriction onto a piece of vinyl, a piece of nylon plastic. CD, none whatsoever. You can do whatever you wanted with it.

DC: Do you think the side change, the two sided nature of vinyl, what did that do to the structure?

GG: Good question. Jekyll and Hyde. <laughs>

DC: You had one start at the beginning, and then there's an enforced pause, how do you start again? Do you consider that in the sequencing?

GG: No, not that I can ever remember doing. They'd always try to fit about 8 or 10 tracks on. Don't forget too, that on an LP the the physical flipping of it was engaging the audience as well, they have to get off their arse and do something. You know somebody said that to me the other week, when you put an LP on it's almost like a respectful thing. You know there's something mechanical going on in your home, so you've actually got to sit and pay attention. Whereas when you put a CD on, it's just a laser burning in the background, no one really gives a...

DC: You can't see it…

GG: You can't see it, but you can actually see this thing turning around. I've got the one with the strobes and unless it's doing 33 ⅓ the strobes don't line up. So you're always checking to make sure it's running at the right speed. And of course you'd have to pay attention, because it would get to the centre, the infinity groove, go round and round, and you'd have to stop and very carefully, gingerly flip the thing up. So that engaged you as well. Those days are kind of lost in a way, but LPs are making a big comeback. But not like we knew it. CD changed that overnight. Whack it in, you can put 20 tracks on, put it on random and no one would know.

So to answer your question, the A and B side of an LP would be decided on basically one linear running form that you would assume people would play the A side first… did you? I did, I'd always played the A-side first.

DC: I did. That's why it was called the A-side. That says "Play this first please."

GG: Totally. It would be great to not put one on there, A or B side. Why did they call it an A and a B side? Because they wanted you to be part of the theme, if there was a theme at all. So they had to name an A and a B side.

DC: They could have a "7" side and a "Q" side.

GG: Yeah. So your story would still be told except it would just get split in the centre because you couldn't put too many songs on one side, because again the physical restriction was, the loudness, the depth of the cut itself would take too much real estate, so you'd have a shorter running time. The killer for me was, bands would make great records, and you'd spend a considerable amount of your life making these guys' album, and they'd come upstairs and they'd say they're going to drop two of the tracks off the album. Usually my favourite songs, because they weren't singles but they were great songs, or they were just beautiful in some way. And we'd finished them, they were done, mixed and everything, all finished. And they'd say they're dropping off the album, there's not enough room on the record for them, and they don't think we need them. And you're looking through the floor, because EMI used to be underneath us, and you're like, "man, you've got to be kidding". And those song used to get lost, they'd put them out later on as a lost single, or lost tracks from the band. Like a director's cut, all the footage you ever saw. And they would get lost in the works completely. And that used to happen, that really used to happen. It was never guaranteed that you'd record ten songs and get ten songs on the record. They might put nine on, you know four on one side and five on the other.

DC: And presumably that's another factor interfering with the artistic intent, isn't it?

GG: And just as a part of this conversation too, it should be noted, are we suffering from, now, too much content? Let's talk about that just really briefly, just while it's on my mind. You know to be asked to be made a record in those days, when I grew up, the only way people would hear my message was for me to make a record. There wasn't Youtube, there wasn't the Internet. There were telephones, but there was no form of communication that was online, instantaneous and disposable. So I would have to go through the process as an artist of proving my worth, to make a record. I could do it myself, I made plenty of independent records for people who paid for it themselves. We used to have custom records, a lot of bands made their own, paid for it

themselves from gigs they were doing. They still do that today, most people self-funded today. It was an early form of crowdfunding I guess, you know put your own singles out and so on.

But the interesting thing is, today, have we lost faith, and have we lost our way because now every Tom, Dick and Harry can produce some form of audio and get millions of people to watch it on these different forms of media; online streaming such as Youtube and so on. I mean Youtube's revolutionised everything in a way, and have we lost faith as a general public in the fact that there's so much content being made now that should really not be making that content, but who are we to say that? Who's the judge? Who says I can't go and play spoons on the top of a laptop and not put it on Youtube. I can do that if I want to, and if nobody wants to watch it, that's fine. But what that's done, is it's turned off a greater audience in the expectation that something great's going to happen. Because it's just rubbish. It's rubbish to me anyway, I'll say that I'll take that on personally. So does that now elevate artists like Beyonce and the Sam Smiths and everybody into this little chalice of gold at the top for all the people who really want quality. And it positions them at the top now, much more than it ever did before. Right? Because there's so much stuff out there that people don't want to know about. You couldn't in a lifetime watch everything that's out there. And most of it's rubbish. So it's an interesting one, and that relates back to television shows, you know, The Voice, all the Pop Idol stuff as well, trying to manufacture artists. It's a really interesting one isn't? I mean you go and ask Bob Dylan what he thinks of The Voice? Can you imagine what his answer is.

DC: I'd be fascinated to hear that.

GG: And even with these TV shows, what's our future for finding the new music makers? The hit makers of tomorrow. Do they have to come out of a TV show, for us to recognise it anymore? is that how we've been trained? Or do we search around the Internet and find somebody like Justin Beiber.

DC: It's interesting isn't it, with those shows the event is the show itself. And the journey, you mentioned the journey of an album before, well here's the journey an artist takes through the contest...

GG: And we're all personally invested in it

DC: ...and that's where we're most invested. Sure they release an album afterwards, but that's a bit of marketing, it's marketing for the show.

GG: It Is.

DC: It shows the event and the album's an afterthought.

GG: And egg's there at the end, the golden egg, but the golden egg's no good. Because everyone's proved that, they don't sell any records.

Have we lost our way? Have we lost finding artists? I don't think we have, I think there's some incredibly great artists out there that are yet to be found. And those shows are good in a lot of ways, you know Dami M, she's a great singer, brilliant star. Wow, ten out of ten, awesome. So you know if the show's a vehicle for people like her that can go on and do stuff, they hold their weight, they're worthy. To me, as someone who's pretty critical of all that stuff. And then the other stuff you just go, "it's just making someone a whole lotta cash." A reality show like The Voice is those shows are the new record companies. That's what they are. And there's no common thread between any of it. But the audience, we've invested into it. Mums and dads sitting in their armchairs, we're emotionally engaged in their plight, their story. And it's the same with artists I guess.

DC: So people get emotionally engaged in those shows and the journey in those shows and less so in the album?

GG: And then we pay for it because we have to vote for them. It's classic stuff, it's brilliant.

You know, just back to Bob Dylan, talking about people's messages, look at when the wars happen and the all artists get up, like the Vietnam War, and sing all those amazing songs. I mean, "Knockin' on Heaven's Door" is probably one of my favourite songs of all time, written by Dylan, unbelieveable. "All Along the Watchtower" and all that stuff. He wrote those because he was passionate, activist, about engagement of the US in the Vietnam War. Things like that are great, because he wanted to get that message out there. He couldn't get airtime to do it. And if

you went on radio they'd probably cut you off, because that's all there was in those days. If you went on TV, they wouldn't have you on TV because you were anti-government, so the only other vehicle they had to get that message out was through music, because it's the common denominator between everybody.

And it's a good example, it wasn't just pop song stuff for him it was "I'm writing about this shit because I care about it." So those periods in modern music as we know it… I don't know the history of music enough into the classical days, when you had all the great composers writing about world events, but because of the Internet now we're much more aware of instantaneous world events. I'm sure a lot of people wrote about the plague when it hit London or Europe that we don't know about it. Sonatas, or concertos that they wrote about the sadness of the death and destruction the plague gave. Another world event. It's interesting isn't it? We connect to those things because they mean something. "Knockin' on Heaven's Door" is fantastic, great. The lyrics in that song are just… they're really good. Tells a great story.

DC: How important is genre when it comes to albums. Does the album format, does it suit some genres better than others, is the album more important to some genres than others?

GG: I think so, I reckon, yeah. Yes. I think pop music probably not that important. Country music is, definitely. And of course hip-hop, the African-American story, which is hip-hop, their style of music. (And now they've got glitch-hop, but I don't think that's a message behind there, it's just a style of writing).

"Out Of Compton". Say no more. What does that mean? "I'm out of Compton man, and this is my story." So yeah, I think so. Black American music, huge message always has been. N.W.A., what a message for the world they were. Wow. And got a lot of people's attention too, for good things and bad things. That's their plight, that's their message.

DC: And the album was important in that, as opposed to individual songs?

GG: Totally, of course. The album was really getting shit of their chest. One song wasn't enough to get all that stuff out. Country too, in a lot of ways, that thematic thing carrying a story right though. But definitely, to answer your question, very important. Wouldn't you say?

Heavy metal, not that much, I'm talking about old heavy rock stuff. Who was the band from Canada with Neal Peart?

DC: Rush

GG: Rush. There you go. But yes I agree, definitely genre, themes carrying a message, more important in some, to answer your question. Albums are more important, yes, very much so. I would imagine a lot of the really big artists in the States - I appreciate that style of music but I don't listen to it - are bringing out albums because they have to. It's kind of like: here it all is <bleurgh> all in one go. And then we're going to do another one <bleurgh>, here's another 10 songs, about their plight and their message.

DC: I think the example I think of is, albums have been very much associated with the rock genre, and the development of rock and the development of the album I think went hand in hand, in the 60s and 70s, but I think electronic music is probably less dependent on albums these days.

GG: Absolutely, yeah. The story's not quite there. And just on that note, OK, so [let's say] we're a couple of black American guys and we spend a lot of time cruising in our cars, because we're busy guys. You want an artist that you can play in your car that's more than one song. You know, 50 Cent comes out with one song, it's like, "where's the album man, where's the rest of this stuff?" I want you to tell me your message. I don't want it just in one song. We're cruising all the time, I want to play your album. And it's got 12 slamming tracks or whatever, and I'm gonna play it shit loud. And I've lived in the States a couple of times, I don't think one track's enough for those guys, I'm saying that very respectfully. I think that their story would be such a big story to always tell, that has to be done across a lot of stuff. As opposed to one country track or one pop or rock track from somebody. Would you agree? So to answer you question, I concur, genre specific for albums.

DC: You mentioned something earlier, talking about how songs take on a life after the album.

GG: Yeah, that's been an interesting one to see that unfold, about a band touring after they've recorded the album. And they kind of work it out a little bit more, while they're touring.

DC: Does it change the meaning or theme of the album.

GG: It does. How hard they play it, how hard they hit stuff. How angry they are when they play particular tracks, it might be a bit more subdued in the studio.

DC: As it evolves on the road, do people then look at the album in a different light? Does the artist look at it in a different light?

GG: They do because they see audience reaction to the songs. They might have 12 songs on an album they work on for a short time, go in and record, knock it all out as they say. Go on tour for six months across all different parts of the universe, and the reactions to the songs are always really different. I've had a lot of people say to me - I'll see the band a year later - and they'll say, "oh you know the track we were going to drop off the album? That's the one, the crowds just love that song. Wow, we really misread that one. They love that song, they yell it out, and that was the one we were going to drop from the record. So something in that song strikes a nerve with a group of people.

DC: So the production process you have to do without the audience, obviously, but then the audience brings their...

GG: They're always our masters. If they don't like our songs they're not going to come to our gigs. The way they play it… it's a buzz to go and see a band after they've toured for three months with a song, and they come back to Australia from being overseas and they'll do a show and I'll go to it, and I've done the album and I'll go… " Oh my god I wish we'd recorded that". They're slamming now, they are rocking the house down, instead of being laid back in the studio. And then the knock-on effect from that - "let's do a live album", they're usually a lot better

than anything they ever did in the studio. Especially if they're a kick-ass band. And most of the bands I've worked with at some point have done live albums that have pretty spectacular.

So road testing we used to call it, road test the songs. The flip side to that is I've been in a position where the band has gone and toured with a potential album and then they've come in and done it, and it's a really good record.

DC: So they play it live first and then they record it?

GG: Oh absolutely, they've been out on the road for two months, three months, playing all the songs to a crowd - they don't know what they are, they don't know the new songs. And when get in the studio they know them well, they just bang 'em down. A whole rhythm section; guide guitars, keeper bass, keeper drums and guide vocals. A whole album, two or three days in the studio. And it's just about there, you know just about right. And then they go away and do little bits and pieces but it's just about there, because the band's so well rehearsed. Especially in places like Indonesia where the bands tour back and forth across Java for quite some time… from one end of Indonesia to the other, and then they come to a studio and it's just… record, BOOM. There's no "what are we going to do?" Especially the dynamics of it. Tempos change. They're usually a bit faster and they really rock them out. So yeah it does make a difference, big difference. So I don't care how much pre-production you do with a band, most of the time after they've played them for a while the songs are quite different. Performance wise, dynamic wise, tempo wise, and so on and they're usually better.

You know, studios have a stigma attached to them of a very cold environment for a lot of artists. They're overwhelmed by them, they don't really like being in a box trying to make music. And they're being scrutinised all the time don't forget. You've got people like me and you sitting there, "that's out of time, that's out of tune. Do it again, do it again, do it again." It's not a conducive… especially if they're live performers it's not really conducive to their creative process in a lot of ways. I know that's a big statement, but a lot of people don't feel comfortable in the studio. They just don't. I've seen drummers come in that I've seen play and I'll go, "man this is one of the best drummers I've seen" and they get in the studio and be absolutely horrible. They just don't like it. Headphones on their heads and that sort of stuff. You know, "Can I have a

set of wedges?" How does that work out with my miking? They want it really loud, they want a separate PA and all this stuff. So yeah, it can change.

DC: I'll ask you one last question. What is the future of the album?

GG: Oh, it's here to stay. I think.

DC: Yeah?

GG: It's a good question, it's a big question. I think as long as artists stay prolific over shorter periods of time. You know Adele's album, going back to that again. It took her four years or three years to write that record, she's probably already writing the next album now, and will probably wait four years until this one's done its dash. And she'll pop up again with a whole bunch of other great songs. I think the album is very important. I think it's important for our generation. Probably the generation underneath us, I'm not sure. But the generation - what do they call them now? Z's? - the really young generation, maybe not that important. Maybe they don't understand that, and there's that disconnect again.

DC: Is it important for artists still?

GG: Hugely, to answer your question. Absolutely. I think you can ask anybody that you or I have worked with, anybody. And it's very important to them. I'd be very surprised if they said no. And the only reason they'd say "no I'm only going to do singles now" is going to be an economic decision. It wouldn't be because they don't want to tie that common thread through that fabric of creativity and concepts. I think they would be. Even for me, I'd like to release more than one song. I'd like to put a whole bunch of them out. Whether it comes out in a package as an album, I'm not sure. I don't know.

It's an economic thing too, it's got to be. Instead of dribs and drabs of stuff, bring it all out at once and get it over with. Don't' forget too - and I hope this ends the interview in a good thoughtful way - don't forget that if you were to bring out a single out every three months - and you had ten songs - that's a really long period of time to drag stuff out. You've already moved on. So these artists like Adele - she's just been asked to do the Superbowl - she doesn't want to

be asked to do the Superbowl in a year and a half. The album's done its thing and it's all old to her.

I've worked with a lot of guys that I go , "These are great songs". They go, "Yeah I wrote that four years ago, finally get into the studio to do it and I'm kind of over the song." "What do you mean you're over the song?" "Well I'm kind of sick of the whole thing really. But it's a good song!" So they want to put it on the record. And you're going, "Oh right, so you've kind of lost your investment in it as well. So when they do an album, they can get it all out. That's what I said to you, it's like <bleurgh> , it's like a projectile to them.

DC: The snapshot.

GG: Yeah the snapshot. It's just like one big technicolour yawn of all their creative thing and then they can put that to one side and move on. Because that's what they're always doing, they're always writing. Look how prolific some of these guys are. Unbelieveable. Album after album after album after album. Wow. You're talking LPs like this? And all the stuff's good. We fall in love with all the stuff. You know Elton John's a great example of that. Did he ever make a bad record? Did he? I don't think I've heard a bad track from guys like Elton. How many songs has he actually released? 150 songs? 200 songs?

DC: At least.

GG: At least. Billy Joel, same thing. Especially someone like Elton, right back in the early days of "Crocodile Rock" and all that stuff. Look at the Beatles, how prolific the Beatles were. They released singles of course, but they were always followed by an album. Commercially again, because they thought they was big value in albums. Sell a bunch of records and make a bunch of money.

So to answer you question, I hope so. I hope that the album stays alive. I don't want to start buying bloody singles, I'll lose interest, and I don't think that's a good idea. But to answer your question, I guess more specifically, unknown artists mightn't be bringing albums out. If they do it's a huge financial risk, right? It's like Sam Smith, if Sam had stiffed completely, if everyone had said "Don't like his haircut, don't like the music." The only way that that he could make that

so successful is through the medium of Youtube again. Getting them out there, getting them across all marketing. Very important, we haven't discussed marketing, about the marketing machine and mechanism of a record company, that's the role they play today. More than the physical distribution of anything, they're much more of a marketing mechanism now.

Someone asked me the other day, one of the students, he said to me, "Do you think I need to have a...?" Because I said, "Your stuff's really good", really encouraging this young guy, one of my students at the moment. And I said, "Yeah. To answer your question, the answer's 'yes'". A record company...

DC: What was his question?

GG: His question was, "Do you think it would be a good idea to sign to a label?" And I said, "Yes and no. You're already making the music, so you don't really need too much help with that. But getting it out there, record companies still play a huge role in the marketing of that. And that's where… you know, audience participation happens when they know about you." And that's where this connection's made. So a record company's role in the music industry now, as we knew it has changed radically. It's now about marketing stuff, it's not about producing things any more. You can give them the masters. They're done. They don't need to put you in a studio.

DC: So they're not in the studio arguing over tracklisting any more? They just say, give us product...

GG: They're not, no. It's given much greater autonomy back to the artists now. Much greater autonomy. Because what's the record deal, what is it? That they will market you. They're not going to start telling you what songs you should put on there. Because those things I think have all been removed from contracts. But I think the album, I hope, stays alive. I mean let's go to JB Hi-Fi now, and go to the top 20 albums on Billboard or in Australia or whatever, and they're all sitting there. And still a lot of them in CD form. So it's interesting to see how much longer CD will keep going. I hope they still come up with much better… a tactile, physical format to get away from CD completely. You know I want to buy a record on a thumb drive that's at 96k/24 bit. Start giving me some HD stuff. 44.1/16 is just not happening man. It's 1980 stuff. So make it tactile,

but put it in a format… Thumb drives are great. Have a whole bunch of thumb drives on your wall with all your albums on it.

DC: I look forward to finding some lost thumb drives on the train though.

GG: Picked up someone's album, you beauty! But you think about it, it's a great format, right? Open it up and you've got everything. Everything you want, all the lyrics. And it's files, it's file format. It's portable... I'm just pointing at this, portable because of your computer, just being able to stick stuff in your USB drive.

So, I think that's going to happen. Someone's going to come out with a format, and I hope we steer away from the MP3 thing. And we get away from that, because I think it's destroyed the way people listen to stuff, and I hope we get - this is me getting philosophical here - back to how this generation of music makers should really be listening to audio, which is basically High-D. It should all be High-Def. Everything they should be listening to. And realise the pitfalls of this absolutely monstrous 128 kilobits that's been uploaded to places like Soundcloud. And the reason they do that again, is economy because of their servers. So we're being dumbed down into believing that that is audio, and it's actually a big pile of lossless (sic) rubbish. It's an interesting one. So hopefully as bandwidth and technology grows and formats come out we'll get closer back to a better listening environment. Hope so. I'm philosophical about it, and optimistic about it. Yeah I hope so. So these guys can really know what good sound is. It's important for the consumers as well, not just for us audiophile people.

DC: Audio nerds.

GG: Audio nerds. I hope that happens. So much more accessible for them as well. But one can only hope that they move away from the MP3. MP3 was just a transitional thing that stuck. Really stuck.

DC: Guy, thank you very much.

GG: You're very welcome, Dylan.

APPENDIX B: Magoo Interview Transcript

Dylan Crawfoot: Magoo, thank you for coming along. First question, how would you define an album? What is an album?

Magoo: An album is a collection of songs, relating to an artist at that point in time. So it's creatively where they are at that point in their career. So it should be a bit of a marker of time.

DC: A marker of time?

M: Yeah.

DC: Who is responsible for creating an album then? Is it the producer, is it a songwriter, a performer? Who takes the parts and makes it into the whole?

M: Well I think it's all of the above, but the core of it is the songwriter. Always the core of any album is the songs. And the songwriter but then everyone else comes into play to add to that and let the album grow. Because I've often seen it where albums don't really have a lot of shape when they're coming in from the raw song stage but then as you start recording them it sort of builds and develops into what feels like an album.

DC: What are some of those aspects that make it start to become cohesive? What takes it from being a collection of songs to being a single entity?

M: Well what that actually is is hard to pinpoint really. Because… you know like, I'm most known for Regurgitator where sonically they all sound different and that was our intention.

DC: Each album does?

M: No, each song on the album we were trying to make sound like a different band almost. You know, one's hip-hop, one's rock, one's punk, one's this and that. But they still feel like an album. So… what question was it again?

DC: What are the aspects of… what elements need to be developed that turn a collection of single songs into something cohesive? At what point does it move from being a playlist to being an album?

M: Yeah, that is a hard one to pinpoint. Because I don't think it's necessarily style and genre, particularly now. Lyrically… I think lyrics are a key element that tie things together, and I also think it's sort of tonally the vocalist is always going to tie something together. Because you can make things sound quite disparate, but then the vocalist will always kind of come in and make it sound like that band or that artist. So hopefully there's a bit of a theme through the lyrics. But it doesn't need to be like a prog rock concept album. But often themes emerge, particularly when songs are written in a similar space and time.

DC: Do all albums have some sort of theme to them do you think?

M: No. I think it's good when they do, and I like to try and tie a narrative through it. Whether that's just in my head. Albums particularly come together in mastering, in that final stage. Sometimes it does feel like a collection of songs, but then when you look at it you kind of go, "Oh no, if we put this song next to that one, and that one next to that one", you can create a journey. And if you can create a nice sort of ebb and flow to it, you can make it feel like a journey. I know I'm probably going to be skipping questions here.

DC: No, that's all right.

M: Because I definitely think mastering is key, is very, very key. Maybe even particularly now when recording can be done in lots of different environments. It's not like the days of old where you hole up in a studio for a month and track your album and mix it and that'd be it. It's now recorded here, there, a little bit at home, you know. Which can sort of sonically change things, but I think mastering it can come together. And mixing.

DC: I'll go to question 8 then. How important is the sequence then? What songs are good for opening, what songs are good for closing?

M: Well I think it's really important. And I'm a big… all through my career I'm still a fan of the vinyl record. And CD changed things a little bit, and specifically the CD listening post. So the way the album is consumed does change how it can be ordered. But I've always preferred the vinyl format of there being a side A and a side B, there being a nice energetic opening track, or a statement track. Doesn't have to be energetic, it could be really chilled and relaxed, but just a statement of what's about to come. And yeah, you'd often have the energetic track, a key track next, maybe another single-y, key sort of type track, and then you'd hit them with a slower ballad, and then you might have the weird song. End of side A, repeat for side B. And that's how I've liked it. But it was interesting with the CD listening post through the late 90s, early 2000s…

DC: Are you talking about in CD stores, in music stores?

M: Yeah, when vinyl was gone and you would order it as singles. And it would be all singles… I remember doing the Custard record. And I had this great order that was like a vinyl record where it sort of ebbed and flowed and there was that definite start, then another start in the middle, and it had the journey. But then the record company were like, "No. We want single, single, single, single, and then you can get weirder after that." And it created this really… if it was a vinyl record it would be all the energy would be side A, and side B would be really chilled and relaxed, and it almost sounded like a different record. A bit more sort of country. And I thought that was really interesting, and I didn't really like that time.

Where we're at now, because vinyl's coming back a lot of people have that goalpost of like "Oh, we hope we can press vinyl". It's quite expensive to press vinyl, but people still want to. So then because there's so many different formats now I feel like the vinyl format is coming back in respect to the CD, and I guess even your iTunes ordering. Which I think is good because people are thinking "we may want to", whether they do or not and it still creates that element of you want something to open side A and side B.

DC: I see a lot of new albums that are 40 to 45 minutes long.

M: Yeah.

DC: There's no real reason for it anymore...

M: No.

DC: There was for LP.

M: And that was another thing of the CD era when CDs first came out and people were putting 73 minutes of music and it was horrible. Because it's just too long. It's amazing how the format of vinyl just worked for human attention.

DC: What thought goes into the overall structure of an album as opposed to for individual songs? How much of your work as a producer is song-focussed and how much is album-focussed when you're working with an artist?

M: I'm totally song-based. I like to serve the song. And for an album it comes down to, maybe that song isn't going to fit in this collection of songs. So I still prefer, if I'm taking a project on from the beginning, and say perchance there's even a budget, which is very rare these days, but if that happens, I'll try and record more songs than necessary because there's often a couple that just may not come up to scratch or just don't feel like they belong. So they'll get cast aside. But when I'm actually recording I'm very much involved in the song, and I actually don't really care about it fitting next to another. I'll think about that later when it comes to the song ordering.

Sometimes I'll think about it in… I like there to be pairs of types of songs, so if there's an energetic, up-tempo song it it'd be good if there's two. They're always good openers. If there's a ballad-y, sort of slow, emotional song, it's good if there's two because then they're good in the middle of each side. So it is good to think like that, but generally I don't pay too much attention to that.

DC: So would the structure come together once the songs are done?

M: Yeah, once the songs are recorded. And then when you're at that stage, it's more maybe I'll leave that one aside.

DC: And you were talking about it in terms of the album being a snapshot of the artist at a point in time. So I guess you're working on the basis that these songs will have something in common and you'll find it once they're recorded, is that right?

M: Yes

DC: That'll emerge once it's…?

M: Yes, yes, very much so. I rarely look for it, but it's amazing once you've finished it's usually there. The cohesion that will tie an album together. And it is a great way to work to have more than you need. Record 15 songs, you only need 12, and those three that you leave off can really help make the album. It's incredible, what you leave out is usually what makes it.

DC: Does the album structure ever inform the songwriting? So, does an artist have an idea… maybe it comes later in the project like you've just described, but do they see this theme emerging and go, "I've got a song that'll fit into this"?

M: It happens, yeah. It happens. It's not the way that I like to work, but if the artist comes to me, yeah sometimes… I did a record last year with a band called Silver Circus and they were quite sort of arty, and even at the demo stage they knew the order of the songs, they knew the name of the album. Some of the songs weren't even finished but they had names and a spot on the album. And it developed over the course of recording. But that's rarer. Generally it's a bunch of songs, and just through the process of recording them, a sense of cohesion usually appears. It's often like a title. I love the whiteboard or something in the studio, and stupid names will always get put up and then there's eventually just that one name that's like, " Oh, that's it. That feels like this collection of songs." So I think the title also can tie things together.

DC: Does your approach to album production differ from other producers, from your colleagues? Are there differences that other people have in how they approach albums?

M: Oh yeah there are differences. There was definitely that sort of... throughout the 70s, 80s and even 90s in America particularly, there was that style of more factory-like recording. Where, OK, Green Day are going to do an album. They would spend two weeks setting up the studio,

tuning the drums, moving the drums here, trying different kits. Eventually going, “Yep, that’s the drum sound. OK, press record, let’s record the drums for the album.” And then repeat for each instrument, and put them all on. So that’s how they would look for their cohesion, in making sure everything sounded the same. I was very much more of the English aesthetic of serving the song and trying to do what’s right for the song. And I would go out of my way to not repeat a technique, an engineering technique that I’ve used. To make every song have its own character. I think that’s really important. And it’s the people that give it the cohesion. It’s the lyrics, it’s the tone, the timbre of the singer. The way the guitar player plays, the way the keyboardist thinks, they’re the things that kind of bring it together. I really like it when the playing comes through the sounds and the songs come through the sounds and gives it that cohesion that makes an album.

I think that when I first started in the 90s, I guess I was in that same aesthetic of keeping everything kind of the same. But then as I started working more with artists, I found it better when I would treat every song differently and of its own merits. And my favourite way of working is recording a song at a time. You’d set up the drums and the bass, and you’d get some sort of live bed down, and then you’d overdub on top of it. And you’d pull mics off the drum kit to put on the guitar amp or something. And you’d eventually dismantle the setup that you had, and you’d finish the song after two days and go, “yeah great, let’s do another song”, and you’d look at the drum kit and it would be a mess. And you’d be like, “Oh well OK, let’s just move it over here and I’ll put three mics on it for this song”. And you’d just totally change it, and the song would have a completely different character. And then when you do that as well, what I really liked was you’d just keep doing that going through the songs. You’d get to the end of two weeks, three weeks, and then you listened back to the first song you recorded, and it would almost feel like it was years ago. You’d have this new sort of distance from it and you could see it for what it was, and you’d either go, “Wow, that was great,” or “Gee, we didn’t really know what we were doing then, let’s do it again.”

DC: And even with that you still find that some sort of cohesion emerges, even through that different approach? Through the playing?

M: Yeah, definitely. And I think as much as I said cohesion appearing through the players and the timbre of the singer’s voice, it also comes through me, the producer. Because it’s a

collection of ideas and everyone's ideas will hopefully connect. Looking at it from a purely artistic point of view that's sort of where cohesion can sort of happen. Because as I've said I've tried to go out of my way to make things sound different, and yet they'll still come together and make sense. If they truly sounded completely different, maybe that wouldn't happen. But that's just my philosophy I guess.

DC: How is the impact of one song on an album affected by the songs that come before and after it? Does the impression someone gets of one song, is it affected by what they've just heard or what they hear afterwards?

M: Oh definitely. I really like there to be a journey on an album... which you can experiment with changing the tempo, changing the feel of the songs. Sometimes you might have two that are similar together, but then you might have a mid-tempo one and then you'll hit them with the ballad, the really slow one. And then you'll pick it up with a mid-tempo one. So yeah, very much, the songs before and after… the order of an album is kind of crucial, and as I've said that's sometimes where an album comes together is in mastering and the order. And I really enjoy having a big part of that. And it actually makes me think, there's a band I've been working with and I haven't sat down and done the order yet, and I need to put some time into that and I haven't. Maybe I'll do that after this.

DC: To what extent is album artwork considered during the production process? Do you think it plays an important role in how an album is received by the audience?

M: Yes I do. I do think it plays an important role. And I think that's another thing that's been part of the vinyl revival, is the artwork linking into the music. Because with CDs you've got your little booklet but… I said it there straight away "your little". Everything was small. And the booklet aspect was nice, you rarely got a booklet with an [LP] album, you might get a gatefold or something. Usually it would be just the album and an inner sleeve, but the CD, with that came a booklet which was nice, but the size was not great and also aesthetically getting in and out of the cover was always not great. But now with Soundcloud, iTunes there's nothing. I don't know if there's a question about credits but gee. It's in a horrible state, credits on an album. I used to buy albums, working in the industry, based purely on who produced, who engineered, where it was mixed etcetera, because there'd be something… a sound that I liked that I want to follow. I

still do. But it's harder to find out who mixed or who engineered or produced something now. Not that that's part of the artwork, but it's part of the album for me. It's part of the story of an album, how it was captured and created.

DC: So does the consideration of visuals enter the recording process? Presumably the artist is thinking about it?

M: It does. I've had artists do the artwork while mixing is happening, and I really like that when that happens. It doesn't happen that often, but it's happened before. And yeah I think that's great. It's even good to be mixing and turn around and have a look on someone's computer and...

DC: And do you get something from that? Does that...

M: Inform the music? Yeah it does. But it doesn't happen that often. It is usually quite separate from what I'm doing.

DC: To what extent is the relevance or importance of an album dependent on genre? Are some genres more album-friendly than others do you think?

M: Yeah. Definitely. Pop music's never… well "never" is not a good word 'cause the Beatles were pop and they were such an album oriented band. Well, in the second half of their career, the first half not so much. Current pop music is less, it's more single based. It's interesting what Beyonce has just done with *Lemonade*, although I haven't listened to that album. I should do. But she's thinking about an album again which is great. And obviously prog rock, the album is everything. They don't want you to single out a song. In the genres I normally work in, I think the album is very much still important. As I said the vinyl revival is becoming part of that. People are always still thinking about the single, because the single still sells the album. But I guess less so now because you've got that option of just buying the one song, where it was a little bit more prohibitive before. Even the whole act of having a vinyl single. One song, and then you've got to get up and flip it over and put on the B-side or put something else on. It's a little bit prohibitive, where an album was a bit more… you can put it on, relax, you can start doing something or you can sit down and listen to it. Where now you can buy one song and put it in a collection with

others, or you can stream a playlist. So, it's important to me but whether it's important to the greater public, I think that question could only be answered by a survey or something like that, really. I still think about recording an album and how it's all going to come together when a band comes to me with an album of songs, but there is always that single that you're going to concentrate on and shine up.

DC: Do artists still think in terms of albums then? Has that changed? The public perception may be changing, do artists want to write albums or do they just want to write songs?

M: Where it's really changed is with the emerging artists. Because I think that they know it's hard to get a career happening unless you've got that song. And when you get that song, that can open a lot of doors, touring nationally, radio play.

DC: So you're saying emerging artists are more focussed on the song than the album?

M: On the song, yeah. Once you're more established, the album becomes more of a thing. But I've found early on… so this one act I've been doing for my PhD, as I said we've been doing it over two years, but that has more been a process of: record two songs, three songs to try and get a single. To then they put on Spotify, get on Triple J Unearthed to try and get airplay. "Oh that didn't work let's go again. Oh that didn't work, let's go again." And through that process it's like, "Oh, we've got an album now". Which is such a different… and I find recording is happening a lot more like that, in little bunches rather than recording all together in one stretch in one studio. Which I think that's definitely changing things in how they're presented in the end. But thankfully the album is making a little bit of a comeback.

DC: So the songs you're doing for this album, some of them have already been released?

M: Yeah, yeah. And some of them we did at Applewood. The funny thing is, as part of my PhD, every studio we've recorded in, except for QUT, is closing down after we've recorded there. So we recorded at Applewood, I closed it down. Then next bunch of recording they wanted to do, "Oh we can't do it at Applewood, where do we go? Let's go to 301 Byron Bay." It's closing down. The next bunch of recording, where do we go? Oh, let's go to Sing Sing, which in May this year

is closing down. So then it's like, oh well they want to do more recording, and I'm like I'm only doing it if you want to be part of my PhD. And I don't think this is closing down, it's brand new but, yeah that was an interesting part of that one.

And it was definitely a collection of songs. But with that last session we were thinking about… their style changed a little bit over that time, and we were thinking "hey those songs that we recorded early on aren't really going to fit on here." And there was one song at 301 that we did that never got finished that I actually thought would fit in this collection of songs. So they haven't sent it to me yet, they were going to redo the vocal and I was going to… I think I never mixed the track so I've got to mix the track. But it's more... keyboards became very much more part of that album, and there was that keyboard song that never got finished, so we're trying to finish that song so that then we can drop another one of their other songs that won't really fit. So that's been an interesting little journey. Very disparate but it's coming together.

DC: How do you maintain the snapshot approach when the project lasts for two years? As it drags out, can the artist stay on the same page?

M: Ah well, the page definitely changed. But I think for the better. Initially as artists they were very... I can't think of a better way to put it, but "sounds like". They sounded very much like Vampire Weekend, and it was kind of a bit, sort of 2009. And I think Triple J are over that. And they were talking a lot about Triple J and radio play, which I think is less important now, with Spotify. But still that came up a lot in conversations. And pretty much as things have evolved, they've bought some keyboards, and started working that into their sound, and it's been much better I thought, they've got much more of an individual sound. They've got more chance of being heard, rather than being lost in the wash. I can't remember what the question was about... The snapshot has definitely changed over those recordings. And with that last lot of recording we have been looking back to the others and going, "which ones will fit on the album and which ones won't?" And there definitely have been quite a few that won't. And I think through it all we have recorded more than what is necessary for an album.

DC: I think we might have touched on this, do writers and artists need to approach albums differently to single songs? Do they need to approach an album project differently to a single song project?

M: Again, as I was saying, it depends on where they are in their career. So if I compare that band that I'm talking about, they're called Chase City from Tasmania. They're just right at the beginning, they're from Tasmania so they have to tour a lot. And it's just sort of growing. They're just on the cusp of getting that one song. And hopefully - there's a couple that I liked in the last session - hopefully one of those will work. But if I then go back to compare that to the Jungle Giants which I've done two albums with, and an EP, initially with the EP one song worked and it got in the Hot 100. And that enabled them to start touring. And then the first album, it was a collection of songs. Maybe a little bit naive, but once they'd done that and they'd toured that, the second album... there's definitely that cycle. And I think that informs the album. So OK, the album cycle is over, we've got to start thinking about the next album. So there's kind of just one songwriter in that band. So he holes himself away somewhere, and writes for usually twelve months. Hopefully he's got that long, maybe not.

And I think through that process he starts... there's certain artists he's getting into, the style sort of slightly changes a bit, and that informs how the album is going to sound. Of course there's always going to be single songs that are singled out, and perhaps even concentrated on a bit more, but the whole cycle informs how the album is going to sound. Whereas the band that are just starting out, they… it's hard to work on a whole album. One to afford it, to go into a studio and record ten to twelve songs is expensive, particularly when you don't have an audience. So I guess that's where the EP thing came in, but now it's more the single song. So once you can get over that first hurdle of having people listen to you and get heard, then people can start thinking about an album. Where thirty, forty years ago, there was the EP but albums were definitely where you started. And if an act was signed… even Powderfinger were kind of signed on, "Yep. Album three will be great." I guess they almost got dropped after their first album but they did their second album on a limited budget and that had success, and that opened the doors to album number three. And the rest is history. But that doesn't happen now, it's more about the song establishing your career, and then you can start thinking about the album.

DC: That transition from writing that single song to writing for a bigger project, is that a difficult one for writers to make do you think?

M: Definitely. I think part of the old model of writing an album, and putting it out there and seeing, part of it is, "I'm going to have twelve shots at having a good song. And maybe one of them will work." No one knows the magic formula. If somebody worked it out, you know, it'd be on the Internet and you'd have to subscribe to it each month to work it out. But, I think it's a shame that that's lost, and it puts so much pressure on one song and people, like Chase City that I was talking about, when they're writing the song, they are starting to specifically think about Triple J, and what will people want, and it's becoming less about actual artistic expression. Which I think is the core of any good song or album. It's what being a human is, being creative and expressing yourself artistically. So that side of things I don't think is so great. But some people still are managing to get through the new paradigm of where we're at and make it work. Which I guess is how things always work, but I prefer the album model, yeah.

DC: To what extent do commercial considerations affect the artistic process of album production?

M: Yeah that leads definitely on from what I was just talking about. Very much so now. It's interesting now that selling an album or songs isn't really part of the economics of being in a band anymore. It's about trying to get your song heard, so syncing's way more important. Radio play, Spotify playlists, and then touring and merchandise is where the band will actually live the brand of the band. Is where money and economics can come into it. So it's interesting that the recording's no longer making any money really. Very few.

DC: Does that give the album more room to just be an artistic work now, and there's less pressure to be a commercial product?

M: No, I think less so. Particularly now, I think music's become a lot more conservative because of where music's at. You find a lot less people having careers anyway, that are making artistic music. There's that band King Gizard and the Lizard Wizard, whatever their name is, and they pump out a record that's been recorded in their garage every year, and they're doing all right, but I doubt anyone's left their day jobs. So yeah, commercialisation is definitely informing how people write. Which I don't particularly like and try to avoid, but it still happens.

DC: The nature of the download era, the streaming era, how has that affected… how hard is it to get across a whole body of work now? You talk about the right sequence for an album but now you know the audience is just going to chop it up and listen to it any way. Is there anything you can do to take that into account?

M: Well I think now an album's very much for the fans. Once you've converted someone, they've come to the show, they've bought the T-shirt, then they're more likely to consume the album. And before that perhaps you're just a song on a playlist, and you know, "Oh I've got a gig at the Tivoli, I'm on tour, come from the States," or whatever. And someone's blown away by the performance, by seeing a collection of songs in front of them, then I think they're more likely to go to Spotify and actually listen to an album beginning to end. Also at the gig they may buy a vinyl record because they're blown away. So there's goods and bads in everything, and I see that part of things is kind of good in a way. You know I can remember in the 90s... you know buying an album was still a big thing, cos it was expensive. I used to hang out in second hand record shops a lot. But if you liked one or two singles, you'd buy the album. And then you'd consume the whole album, and sometimes one or two singles was all you liked, but sometimes it would open the door to a career. And you'd be like, "Oh this is great, I love this, I'll buy another album." Yeah I guess in some ways there are similarities, but also in other ways it's very different. I think it's definitely harder to get the consumer to listen to, to consume a whole album.

DC: You talked about how in the CD era the commercial pressure was to put all the singles up front, is that still the case with the likes of Spotify when you've got people listening from the beginning, from track one and skipping through?

M: I don't think so now, because Spotify have that top five. And they're not always the most played, but they're usually the most played. And the order won't necessarily be that the first song is the one with 23 million plays. Yeah it's interesting, I don't know how they create that little group of five to ten, but that is probably more important. And then often, cos you know it comes up a lot working in the university, it's a good way to hear new music, and people when they're writing about something might say "I like this artist," and I'll go to Spotify and have a look. And first thing you do is just hit play, and I'll often notice "Oh, that's actually playing track three on that album, not track one." So I think the CD listening post and retail, that's dead now, and I think that's good, and that's possibly why the album is starting to come back a bit. But I do do

think it is mainly due to vinyl, although vinyl's still not selling that much. It's selling enough for people to have interest.

DC: It's growing, but it's still small.

M: Yeah, there's a lot of hype I think over how big it is, it's not really that big compared to when I was a tot. Or when I first started wanting to buy albums. And it will probably never be that big. But still if you're Adele, she's going to put out an album, a vinyl album at some stage. And I'm sure… I guess I've never checked but I'm sure that the vinyl album track order is the same as the Spotify playlist. So they've thought about that track order in the context of a vinyl album. I assume. Or maybe playing the vinyl album is a total dud, you put on side B and it starts with all the soppy ballads, and you're like, "Oh, I don't feel like that," and you hit reject and put something else on. I don't really know I can't really say without investigating it.

But I think it's back and I think the CD listening post had a big impact, and that's gone, and that's good. So I think the album is making a bit of a recurrence, but really against a pretty big hit that it took. I do think the CD listening post started to ruin the album. And then downloading. And then even things like Soundcloud seems to be more single tracks rather than an album. So streaming and iTunes, being in that format where you can see an album together. At least you'll see the artwork and name and the year. And there's a collection and then it moves down to the next one. That's interesting. But when it's all said and done, the song is still what makes a person's career. And still what makes the brand name of an artist, you know. I don't want to get off track, well I am getting off track, so…

DC: That's all right.

M: But it's interesting, U2 are about to tour *The Joshua Tree*. And just that kind of thing. Even Regurgitator they toured *Tu-Plang* and *Unit* together on a tour. And I noticed my royalty cheques… well they started coming in. They'd totally stopped and then all of a sudden, you know, a significant increase comparatively, because they toured two albums and played them back to back which was really interesting.

DC: I'd noticed that a lot in the last few years...

M: But it's almost retrospective though, you don't see a Jay-Z playing an album from five years ago from beginning to end, if he's going to tour it's going to be a greatest hits collection.

DC: But there is that nostalgia thing for a lot of acts, they come out and play the album and make the album the feature of the show.

M: Yeah. And U2 are going to make a motza by doing *The Joshua Tree* 30 year anniversary. So I'm interested to see what Regurgitator do because *Unit's* twenty years old this year, but it's probably too soon to do that kind of thing again. But I feel like it's definitely lifted their career with the extra boosts of those kind of things, of specific album tours. I guess they did that specific album tour after *Unit* got in that Triple J poll for Australian albums of all time. So it's sort of opened the door to do that.

DC: I think that shows that the album obviously still has importance for audiences, if not new albums but certainly albums of old are still valued.

M: Yeah. It's interesting though, like, is music moving forward? Or has it just had a golden era and are we just going to constantly look back? Are classic albums still being made? It's an interesting… you can't tell until time passes.

D: Yeah, that's true. Which takes us to the last question what's the future of the album? What do you see the future of the album being, if there is one?

M: Well it's, as I've been saying, it's coming back which is good. Perhaps it's what Beyonce's doing where she's sort of made a little film to her album. I've thought that for a long time that that was possibly a way to go, I think Beck did an album where he did a video clip for every song, maybe 2014 or something. I must admit though I didn't watch it. But I think that's people trying to get their Youtube… yeah you know, artists like that must feel disappointed when they see their album up there with just a picture of the cover and the whole album's there and their earning diddly squat from it. Perhaps it's a way to try and generate some more interest there.

I don't know, I see the future is streaming. It makes total sense and the way an album has been consumed has always taken precedence over technology, over what's best for sound. The mp3 is proof of that. But yeah, constantly technology moves forward, I feel like it doesn't sound as good but it becomes more easy to digest. So I think streaming's here to stay. And I actually like streaming. And as I said I see royalty cheques now, which… they'd totally stopped because of the old model of the CD. Once people bought it, that was it. Your chance of earning more royalties from that person are gone. Unless they changed the format, which... the format changed to something that was free really. So now with the constant playing on Spotify etcetera I see royalty cheques, which is good. But whether… what the ramifications are for the album… I'd like to think that it's still there. It's really hard to say. It's in the hands of the kids.

D: Do you think the album was defined by the format, it was defined by the LP record?

M: Yeah, definitely, definitely yes. But then it was amazing how it was a good format. 45 minutes, a break in the middle. It was a good format. You know I did a Spiderbait record that was 73 minutes long. It had 16 songs on it. And I remember when we were doing the mastering I dropped 8 songs and made a 40 minute album, and I'm like, "This is it. This is great." "No, no, no, let's put them all on." "You guys are crazy," and it was… anyway. I don't want to bag on Spiderbait. But I feel like that affected the album that we made. I could have made a more cohesive album by dropping a lot of songs. I'm digressing.

DC: No, it's interesting, that's relevant.

M: Well, the CD changed things and it seems to have come back, which is good. The amount of songs that people will record. I think for an established artist, it is the best way to let it naturally happen. Let that good song just hide in amongst ten other songs and it just appears. And for me that's always been the best way. Singles have popped out when you haven't focussed too much on one song. And that's the things with record companies, the A&R person always knew the song would make the band, and when there's that one good song they would focus on it. And inevitably, usually overcook and ruin it, I've seen that happen heaps of times. So I think that that's gone. I think that's opening the door to things being more creative, and hopefully the song just kind of randomly popping up rather than being premeditated.

But it's really… yeah, everything's changing so quick, I don't think I could pin the future down. It's so cheap to record yourself now. So that's removing that barrier of recording an album, "Oh, that's going to cost us twenty grand." Well no, it's only going to cost you two grand now, and that's mastering. Or you can do it for nothing. So perhaps that's going to change things more. There's more questions than answers, that's what you've got at the end of your masters, Dylan. [laughs]

DC: Fantastic. Magoo, thank you very much.

M: No worries, I hope it's informative.

DC: It was, thank you.

APPENDIX C: Guy Cooper Interview Transcript

Dylan Crawfoot: Guy Cooper, thank you for agreeing to participate, and for taking part in this interview.

Guy Cooper: Thank you.

DC: My first question is a very broad one, what is an album?

GC: Ten songs or more. [laughs] A logical answer in me. It's more of a time marker for the artist more than anything else. When you look back at an artist's career, and artists that are 40 or 50 and they have seven albums or twelve albums, that album isn't… even those ten songs, it's "they were those two years I divorced from my wife, and went through this and my dog died," and that's what that album's about to them. And that's what kind of makes up an album more than anything else, it's a feeling or a vibe, and that album name, and title and artwork from the artist's perspective, because that's where it comes back from production for me. We're trying to make an album for this artist, we're not trying to make just a product necessarily. So it's a marker in time, it's like a photograph of that year that person lived, and that's the main difference I find.

DC: Just picking up on what you said there, is it more for the artist then, the product? Does the artist come first?

GC: Yeah, the artist comes first. You can make a product as a product, and I used to do that for Sony. And that's fine, and it makes money, but it's not art anymore, it's just a commercial product. And those situations, we're hiring the best looking dancer, the best singer, the best songwriter, the best producer, and you're putting this thing together as a package. And that worked well in '06, but with the money gone largely in the industry that package doesn't work anymore. You can't throw 300 grand at something and make a million. It still costs 300 grand to make that monstrosity, but now you're making 50 grand and so it's not viable. And for an artist it's more focussed around their experience.

And that's what people buy. No one actually buys WAV files. *We* might, we might buy a CD because "Oh, that snare sounds awesome," but no one really knows what a snare is in the general public. They buy an album because they attach to that artist's emotion, it might be their hair, or they associate with Björk or Bono, or whatever it is. And it's an age group thing, it's why kids like Beiber, and we don't because we're not 15. But that timeline, that marking for the artist is what they actually don't realise at the time when they're writing it, because they can't see that bigger picture. And I think as a producer when you work on hundreds of albums, and then you get to fifth and sixth and seventh album with a client that's happy, and that keeps coming back, you look at that and you go "Oh, I remember that album, that's when you were living at this house and we tracked that in the basement," and there's so much of that location in that album, and there's so much of that vibe. And all the songs and the content and the content are where you were emotionally at that point in your life. That's what the essence of the album is, and I think at the end of the day you can make a product and it might sell or it might not sell. But if you change it to be a product and it doesn't sell you're going to be really pissed and upset with yourself, and have no one to blame. So for me it's focussing on something for the artist for that time, and that way whether it's successful or not they're at least happy with it, and achieve something for themselves.

And I find those albums actually are the ones that sell, you know when we're not thinking about making a product and it just clicks and then 200 thousand copies go out, and we're good. But if you try and push something, if you try and push something… I had a band with Universal about a year ago, it's like a 60 grand job, it's a huge, massive thing. It's finished, but I don't know if it's ever going to go out. It's just another monstrosity, the tracking sounds great and everything, the session players, but no-one's invested in it, and it doesn't really speak of any one person, and that's my point to them. Their press photos don't really line up with anything, you know there's not an essence of… it's just commercial songwriting. There's a song here or there we got into a Disney film, there's 20 grand. We got in a Toyota ad, there's 15 grand, that pretty much paid for half of it. But I doubt that band will ever play a gig or have a following in that regard.

DC: Have they released stuff before? Is this a first album for them?

GC: There were other bands before, they're Transport, they're Kate Miller-Heidke's backing band. So they're industry people, but not under this new band name.

DC: You mentioned photos lining up, do you take the visuals into account?

GC: Yeah, definitely. Before that, so pre-pro is me meeting the people... first job is going to the live show. Cos there's something about every band that's magical, or that is the lead instrument, and you can't tell that from sitting with people or tracking. So I need to go to the show and find out who's leading this band. Someone's written this song, is that guitarist, or that drummer? Someone's in charge of that situation, you can tell who's leading. Is the bass player watching the guitarist and following? So he's not in charge. And that lead instrument is usually the one that I'll track first as well, not drums. So we get the vibe and the feel down because he's written the song. And everything flows off that rather than tracking drums first. And seeing them live and then seeing the shirts they wear, "Oh, he's wearing a Pantera shirt so he must like Pantera. Or is that a joke?" I'll ask that. I actually like going to their houses and having a look in their bedrooms. Looking at their posters on the wall, is that Ronnie James Dio on the back wall? It's like "Ah, I wouldn't have picked that for this country band." or something, you get weird things. I had a punk band last week, and Bryan Adams, just all Bryan Adams. It's like, "Really?" This is like a Rancid punk band. I don't know if I can use that sound, but knowing that helps a lot I think. I generally prefer to have the artwork when I'm mixing. Because I don't have the artwork at the start but I want to see the press photos. For me as a label owner as well as a producer, the product needs to line up with the imagery. You should be able to look at the artwork and know what that sounds like. You don't want a metal album that's bright pink and you listen to it and it's all deathcore. It just doesn't line up.

So then I have that start and a title for the first album. Most bands with their first album don't have a sound or an image, so I'm creating that for them. But it's a lot of questions are about songs. So if I'm working on a pop act, I'd like… Delta Goodrem, yes or no? Ed Sheeran, yes or no? And just trying to get a bit of a feel. Rhianna? Are you prepared to strip half naked and sprinkle glitter on yourself, or does that sound disgusting? And everyone's got their own level of where that's comfortable and that's totally fine.

A party at my house, at a label party is tense. You got the hip-hop… Kanye comes on and a riot's about to break out, half the house is vibing and the other half is ready to leave. But they're

very locked into their own thing and that's cool. That's good for them. But as a producer you see the whole picture. So that's a long answer, sorry.

DC: What thought goes into the overall structure, shape, sound of an album, as opposed to if you're doing individual songs.

GC: Yeah. I guess individual songs, we just base the production off what's present in the song. So again, I'm finding that lead instrument or that hook that's the song, and I'm making sure that's actually too loud. And I used to mix everything fairly professionally, because I was trying to make it radio ready, and I think a lot of students try and get acceptable mixes, they don't want anything sticking out. And you learn eventually that that's boring, and six months you hear it on the radio and you're like, "Cool, it's on Triple J," but it's just flat, and that one thing that is the lead instrument, whether it's the cool vocal or the guitar riff, you actually want that too loud in the mix. So I actually push that up intentionally "too loud" in inverted commas, as though it's… you have to force the listener to concentrate on that. Don't leave it up to people to make a decision on what's good about this band. I'll tell you what's good about this band, it's this thing that's 3 dB louder than everything else.

But with a single it's a bit of a free-for-all, cos it might be that synth line that's banging in the chorus that was kind of cool, or the rap line. Whereas an album you're not really looking at any individual sound element, I'm actually more going for an emotion, and an emotion that this album is about. Is this a depressing album? Is this a happy album? Is this an angry album? You might have songs on it that deal with much deeper issues. Yeah, the colour tones on that album cover, the name of that album. And that artist doesn't even realise, but they've written a collection of songs on it that are where they are right now. And it's really hard to analyse yourself unless you're a yogi and you're going to psych every day. But I can see that. And I can see all of these songs are about renewing a broken heart or something like that. And they don't even realise... "Oh that's about my boyfriend but these aren't." Yeah, they are. This one's about getting more hopeful, and there's keys and the scale and those lyrics. And just the look in their face, and knowing them as people too. I think you're producing a person, you're not producing a WAV file. And that's the big difference I run across. Because that is actually why people buy records, because of an emotion. They don't buy in because of the snare or a guitar, they buy it because "That song's about me and my girlfriend and we just broke up!" And whether it's about

that, or a dog or whatever. I always like that “Closing Time” song. I don’t remember who it is, Semisonic or something like that or one of those bands. That’s about abortion. But the lead singer he didn’t want to have that in there and didn’t tell the other band members. He made it about the bar and stuff, but you listen to the lyrics it’s definitely about abortion, and that’s that <sings> *“Da-da-dum”*, and that’s why it’s stepping down, it’s why it’s got that feeling. I think that’s why people buy a track. They might not get the right one but they associate with an emotion.

Emotion makes people buy things, actually hand over $10. I listen to a lot of music, but there’s only a few things that I’d actually buy. Because everything’s on Spotify, so I guess I’m paying for that. But there’s an album I’d actually pay $40 for the vinyl. Very few of them though. So what makes me buy that? It’s not the guitar sound or the snare, it’s an emotion. And it’s something probably I’m going through at the time and I’ve connected with.

DC: I guess that emotion is the last piece of the puzzle of the product isn’t it? It’s not finished until someone hears it and adds their emotion to it.

GC: Yeah, their perception of it. You always go for an emotion I think but you might not transfer that to the audience, or they might not get it and that’s OK. Maybe not OK for the artist, they’re like, “No! The song’s not about that!” I think every sound has a tone. You know if you’re in a love song, you’re not going to have high tempo, high piercing sounds, it’s generally a bit lower toned and slower. If you’re writing an angry song it’s not going to be smooth cello, let’s distort thing and amp it up, as a real obvious example. You’re trying to capture that emotion, which means also putting the performer back into that emotion. And I find that’s the difference with an album. With a single we are thinking more product based. We are thinking about how it’s going out into the market, because you’re putting it out next month. Where with an album it’s a much bigger process. Six months to two years, three years, depending on the band. A month would be nice but it’s not reality. And that time you can’t create a product because the industry’s going to move and things are going to change, and like I said before if you create a product and it doesn’t work you’ve got no one to blame except yourself. Whereas if you make something that’s true to you and it doesn’t work, you’re OK with that. You know, it’s something that I’m happy with. But trying to get that overall emotion of the songs mixed into the tones and the sound so the whole album has a vibe which may not be any individual song. But it’s definitely once you stand back… I

think the artist can see it after it's made and it's printed. But they have trouble seeing it… we all have trouble seeing it in ourselves when it's happening. But your friends around will tell you, "No, you should break up with this person," and in six months, "I should have listened to my friends."

DC: So it's more about the emotion than the technical sound of it, is it less important to have a consistent sound to knit an album together?

GC: I'd be more inclined to have a consistent sound. So for me sonics are emotions, and maybe it's just how I perceive things. I don't really follow lyrics too much, even when I'm tracking a band, or playing in a band for two years I'm like, "What is that lyric again?" [laughs] "I've been singing something else. I've got a better lyric right here on my Weird Al version." Yeah, it's definitely sonics and sounds and mix emotions. So you can have someone strumming acoustic guitar about a love song, but they have to be happy and in love emotionally, and so put them in that space. But then also the tone, I definitely think there's EQ shapes and mics and compressors that'll enhance a happy comfortable time. So we're talking about love, it's comfortable, it's scary but also safe, so it's not edgy. We'd take out the mids so I'd equate that to dropping that 1k. We'd probably pull out that 8k so we get it nice and smooth, nice warm low end so it feels like a hug. That's my perspective on love. [laughs]

DC: A cut around 8k. [laughs]

GC: Yeah, no more 8k. [laughs] But that's why they've hired me to put that imprint. But I'm trying to get theirs as much as possible. So for me trying to connect with a 16 year old girl is as important as me connecting with that 50 year old blues musician, which requires a different mindset. Different clothes to some extent, different environment, different times of day, different places of tracking. So I'm trying to make the artist feel safe and comfortable, but it's a lot of communication, pre-production. Just talking. More so than, we can sit down and play the part 50 times and work the structure out, but that stuff's fairly easy. You just feel that out once the emotion's there.

DC: So things like drum sound, do you keep the same drum sound throughout?

GC: Yes, I'd prefer to. But I find most albums, there's not ten songs that are the same. Metal bands are, I think and punk, they are just thrashing out ten songs and that's their sound, and possibly because there's not a lot of variance… I'm not going to say there's not a lot of variance in guitar tones, but in that band, he's got his heavy sound sorted and his clean sound, and it's one or the other.

DC: I guess when it's an album where it's at that point in their career where you're just capturing their live sound, then the live sound becomes the sound of the album?

GC: Totally, and that's a good point. And I also want it to flow through. But I find most artists these days, because of this single market that's not as applicable. So they've often got… usually I'll start with 20 songs, I might say go write another 10 songs. I want 25 songs as demos. And we'll track all those as demos, and then we'll pick 10 or 12 to go on it so we're not just throwing extra songs on there. And then out of that, most times I find they either break in halves or quarters, where there's like three songs that are very soft, and then there's three songs that up-tempo and happy, and three songs that are kind of ballady. Something like that. So I would track those three together, and they all have the same drum sound and they all have that same kit. All the soft songs they would be better with this nice Ludwig kit, and this particular drummer because he plays nice brush parts. And then this angry song we need that punk guy with that Tama kit. So it's my job as a producer afterwards to try and make that blend together.

But I really believe that comes down to more of the subtle things I'm not even thinking about. So every time I EQ a kick drum, there's things that I like. And I noticed that when people started mentioning it on my website actually. 15 or 20 years in, if I go down my website and look at all the hundreds of songs, and there's a sound there. And I wasn't even aware there was a sound there until people pointed it out. And it's like... yeah, that's what I like actually. And it's '97 Prodigy/Offspring [laughs]. Because that's when I was like 17, 18, and yeah, that's my jam… Beastie Boys and I'm getting into that as I go through that.

So I think that encapsulates the sound. I find we have an album that's scattered when I get different producers on things. So when I produce two tracks and someone else produces two tracks. But I find if I'm EQing, mixing and tracking the whole thing, we can use five different drummers, and different kits and different rooms. But mix-wise, sonically, it ends up

about the same place because I push the kick to the same amount of compression. It's all been mixed through my Neve and it's all got the same 1176 compression on the kicks, even though this one might be punchier or this one might be a more a reggae feel. Artists always worry about songs sounding heaps different. "Oh, I can't put this on this album, because this one's heaps different." But I always tell them, in the scheme of things, all your songs sound like you. Even a slow song versus this metal song, it's your voice, and if you play that song: "Oh that's Mickey," that's this artist that I'm producing. When I compare you to the other bands I'm tracking, that sounds different. But you can't not sound like yourself.

DC: So you as the producer become the unifying element?

GC: Yes. That's always been my main job, that's what my honours thesis was about. You are the connection between art and commercialism, and every artist sits somewhere in that timeline, or somewhere in that scope. But you don't need a producer for a song to exist. The song exists in your bedroom. It's quite tiring knocking door to door playing your song to everyone, so we're going to make one copy and send it around to everyone. But that's when you bring a producer in.

But you don't need to record a song for it to be valid, or to be music. And it's what I always talk to artists about. First question is, "Why are you making an album?" or "Why are you recording?" And most bands don't have an answer for that because they've never been asked that question. And it's like, "Oh, because we're supposed to, like that's what you do next?" And it's like… no, you could just go and play a thousand shows. You could just sit on your couch and play guitar. Your music's just as valid. No one's going to hear it, but is that important to you? "Yeah, I want to get my music out." Thank you, there's an answer. "We want to go tour Europe." Cool. So if they want to tour and play at festivals, I'd much more likely track that album live. So we need a live sound with reverb and no click. Whereas if they want to make money, because this is the only skill I have in life, and if I don't make money with this I'm going to die, and can't pay my rent. OK, well let's ditch the band. Let's program this kick, put a big synth in there. Get a haircut, lose some weight, and yeah, strip you half naked. If that's what you want, to make money, this is your skill. That's obviously an extreme example.

But that process is working for the client and trying to understand what they're after. And then trying to put my tastes on as well, but definitely the connection between that commercial world and the art. Because they're pure art in a lot of ways, most artists, even the commercial ones. But they've come to me to create something that they can't put together themselves. And you have to have a perspective of not only the production obviously, and all the EQ's and compression, that's just engineering, the stuff you learn when you're in first year… hopefully - for me it was something I learned when I was 8 years old, when I was just looking through manuals and pulling things apart, reprogramming a Commodore 64 - the other stuff is all the industry, the promotion, the marketing, understanding people, and the psychology of what is art and why they buy art. You look at audio recording, we've only have it for 130 years. Such a short period of time in human history. Compare that to fine arts or another recorded art form like painting… that's been through many different periods and many different parts. There was a part when the neatest painting was the most valuable one. You wouldn't go to a gallery and say, oh he's going outside the lines, throw it in the bin. "It's Picasso!"

Realism was that point. I think we had that in 2006 with audio. What is that thing you're trying to achieve, Is always changing. But the one thing that stays constant for me is that emotion. And that's what makes a painting worth a lot of money, or valuable I guess, whatever money or popularity in a gallery is, the one that draws the most emotion. And it could be different emotions for different people. I think if it's painted with emotion and you get something down that is real, someone else has a different view of it, it still sells and is valuable. The same thing comes across with music and art. Hendrix is great. He's a good guitarist. Steve Vai's a better guitarist, but Hendrix is more popular because… not to offend Steve Vai, but Hendrix would put more of his heart and soul into that lick and that riff than Vai. Vai's very technical. We musos love that stuff, bit it doesn't connect with everyday people nearly as much.

DC: I think Hendrix achieved a more emotional connection with the audience than Steve Vai did, brilliant though both are.

GC: Yeah, totally. Might have been drugs.[laughs]

DC: Well there was that too.

GC: You give the whole audience LSD and everyone's getting into it. [laughs}

DC: Are there some artists who are better suited to doing an album, and some are just single artists?

GC: Yeah definitely. And I think it's songwriting ability. And not necessarily writing a good song, but quantity. You can't write 10 songs and make an album. You need 20 songs to make a 10 song album. Because you just end up with garbage for two or three tracks. Not garbage, that's a bit harsh. You need to be constantly writing songs. If it's taking you three years to write ten songs, because that's normal when you're starting out particularly, it's not going to be an album because it's three years of your life that you're trying to compile into one emotion and that's too long a part, and you've grown during that period. Whereas I find artists that are gigging and touring and putting out albums will spend three months writing an album. Because they've just gotten some inspiration, they've just headed off to Europe, they've just broken up with someone, whatever that thing is. They've just got cancer, and that's just poured all these extra emotions into them, and the ones that are in tune with themselves and able to channel that into a song, can create a coherent collection of art, whether it's paintings or music.

And the good artists I have actually do the artwork along with it. You know I have a couple of artists that are painters as well as musicians, and they're painting that emotion as well as writing songs about it, and they're vibing off each other. And I want those paintings too. I want that open on my desktop while I'm mixing this. I want them on my wall, on the side so I'm looking at that. If the font in the album is edgy and sharp then I'm going to make the snare edgy and sharp. And little things, subtle things. And also the hair, the hair's edgy and sharp.. [laughs] It's subtle things like that. You're trying to combine everything about this person into an EQ and a compression setting to some degree. I should start setting presets for love and hate and empathy, rather than "Luke's vocal" or "John's guitar". [laughs] Some artists, they are better off with singles. And it's not that their scattered with their emotions, it's just that they're very strong with right now and they're right in the moment. So like, "I have feelings today, and I'm writing this today". And they'll call me up at 1am. "Dude, I've just spent the last 9 hours writing this song. I broke up with my girlfriend last night. Long story, I was in the lockup, and then hospital this morning. But I went home and wrote this song, and I've just finished it, can we come track it now?" And it's like 1am. "Yeah. I guess so." [laughs] And they do it and they put it out on

Friday. And that works well for them and they need that. Because if I hang on to it… I've learned if I hang on to that for a month and mix the way I'd like to, they've lost motivation and they're not pushing it and they're in a different place. And artists all do that, I think. By the time I've actually printed it and had the release party, that song is two years old, because you wrote that in your bedroom two years ago. Even the ones that are quick. Imagine having a hit song and having to play that every gig for the rest of your life? Be the B-52's and be "Love Shack"-ing it up every single time. But they're going to have to and that's the reality of it.

I think some artists are more able to more cohesively get that emotion out into a collection of songs quicker. Or possibly they're not moving as much, they don't need to change as people, they've grown and are kind of comfortable with who they are. And I find they're the more relaxed artists that live out away from people. This is where location comes into play, I think if they're living in the city and they're involved with a lot of people they tend to scatter a lot more. And I think it's probably down to empathy, of getting adjusted by other people's emotions, and constantly meeting people. Whereas I've got a couple of artist friends that live out, way out Byron, one or two have no electricity, no phone. So if I want to see them I have to drive out there and wait an hour, if they've gone for a bushwalk or something. But they're the same as they were seven years ago. And in a good way. They're comfortable, happy and smiling. They could write ten songs over ten years and it would fit into an album. And they have their vibe and their style. But some people are still... and that's an age thing too. Twenty year olds are not as in tune with who they are. Early thirty artists I find are a bit more aware and so they tend to be able to create a more cohesive package. Whereas a twenty-one year old is more likely to have two songs like this, two songs that are heavy, two songs that are like that. One song that's just written off a hit they heard on the radio and they wanted to kind of emulate some of that. As they get older they get a bit more cohesive and are easier to put together in an album.

It's difficult to tell whether that timeline suits the money and the process, or actually what I'm just talking about, the emotion. Because you always start with singles and an EP, you don't want to launch into an album first up. Because it's a lot of money and a lot of effort. And even if you have an amazing album… if you make a Sgt. Pepper's first up, no one's going to listen to it because you've got no fans. So it's irrelevant. You're better off putting out a couple of singles - "Please Please Me" - for a bit, and then get into that later on when people are actually watching.

DC: So it helps when there's an existing fan base with albums do you think?

GC: Yeah this is interesting too with that vibe of the album. It helps to some extent to get the album sold and push us to get it finished, but we start getting into that discussion of… if we change it too much, are we going to have those fans or what are they expecting to hear? And we sometimes survey a couple and talk to them at gigs. And I particularly as a producer… because that's kind of on my head when this band comes in and tracks their fourth album. It's like, "What do I want to do with it?" I know where they're at, and I know they've changed a bit and are more mature, but it's all like the same guitar sounds. But I would get bored making the same album, so I want to make something a little bit different, but I don't want to extend it too far from the target audience that they already have built in. And that again comes down to that connection between the art they're creating and the commercialism. I like George Martin, he always worked like that as well. He was more in charge at the beginning but then he became more of a facilitator of their art , trying to transpose their craziness and art into something that's a coherent pop song I guess. And that was pop they were making, but whatever it happens to be, metal or folk-reggae. They've all got slightly different vibes.

And I find I get better at that if I change my clothes for different things. I wouldn't wear this three piece suit to a metal thing. You get more respect too from the artist, but it's also getting myself back into that mindset. I'm a metalhead and I don't dress like that these days, I've taken a few piercings out. But I'll happy go on tour with that metal band and get into that scene and get into that emotion. Because from the outside that's angry, but it's not actually angry. Most metal stuff is actually motivational. It's about taking power for yourself, heaps motivational lyrics. If you can understand them through the gore and violence. [laughs]

DC: Did we talk about the structure of the album? At what point does the structure come together? Do you start out with a track order in mind?

GC: I do. And I'll listen to their demos, and I'll take 20 demos if I can. 25, good bands will write 35, 37. And I will track all them, live in one day. Mix the crap out of that with every Slate plugin and Melodyne that I have, and that I process the hell out of. Because then I know if that song's going to have strings I can leave some space in the high ends in the guitars. But where it comes down to the song structure I would pick the best 10 and I'll put them in the order that I would like

to hear them. That always, always changes by the time I get the mixes back. And halfway through tracking it's like, "this is the order I want. And even mastering sometimes changes that order. Because they want to hear it in a certain way, or which song comes first. I think early on artists try and create a bit more of a flow for the album, and try and create this experience, like we would like people to sit down and listen to our album. But the reality of the situation is two or three albums in they're a bit more sensible about the realities of the world we live in, and so the single's going on first. The catchiest song. And I'll push that because I've made thousands of albums so I'm not hung up on "Oh this one's first because it leads you into this one a little bit. No. Hit with the banger. Because that's what people want to hear, and if they like that then they're more intended to listen to the rest of the album, because they're like, "Oh, I like this band." Whereas if they have to skip through four songs to get to one they like, they'll skip through the others too. So I want hit, hit, hit, single, single, single. And then you can do what you want.

But it changes, and I find… I'm just finishing an album for Reichelt at the moment, and I think he changed the order again this morning. And that's totally fine, it's his album. And he almost changed the album name, but I convinced him against that. Because *Seduced By the Light Side* is the one he's got at the moment. I like that. Plus Star Wars is coming out, Kylo Ren's probably going to get seduced by the light side… [laughs] Get in there early.

DC: Trends. [laughs]

GC: He had *Point or No*, and I'm like what the hell is that? If I have to ask, a lot of people would have to ask too. It was some weird word. *Seduced By the Light Side*'s better. And same with the track order. The tracks "Seduced By the Light Side" *has* to be first on the album. It's the hit, man. It's that fine line… it's compromise is the best way to explain it. Yeah, let me have that single first and then you can create some flow with the rest of the album and end with like a nice… the way you wanted to let them down or whatever. But no one really listens to the whole album all the way through anyway. People are skipping on iTunes and Spotify. Someone will. That's why we print vinyl.

DC: If you are just the album on vinyl, could you get away with not having the single first?

GC: Yeah, definitely. Or cassette, or any of those formats that are unskippable.

DC: Cassettes are coming back.

GC: Yeah. [laughs] You do whatever you want I think, and different artists land in different reasons. It comes back to that first question I ask the band, why are you recording? Why did you come to me? Is it to make money, is it to be popular, do you want to share your art with lots of people? If that was the answer, then we don't even need to sell it. Let's make a free album and put it out. That comes back and plays into the flow of, do we have singles first, or are we trying to create art? And it also comes into the artwork and how they fit in. Some bands are, for lack of a better term, more hipster, I guess and they're trying to be cool. Particularly the prog metal bands I find. So they would have not the single first. Because the songs are seven minutes long and it's led in with this 12 minute intro that's just E-bow, and it's a different perspective on the album. But their fans like it because normal people don't like it. A normal person can't get into that, a normal person wouldn't get into Meshuggah or Tool necessarily. But that's what those fans kind of want, then that band actually ends up becoming "weirder" for lack of a better term.

DC: Does the idea of album structure inform the songwriting? So do people start to write songs to fit somewhere on an album?

GC: They do a few in, but not at the start.

DC: A few albums in?

GC: Yeah, a few albums in I find. So at the start they're just writing songs, because they're just reaching for stuff. Fourth album is key. And that's what I've noticed is that that is key. FIrst album usually comes after an EP or a couple of singles, and it's the first huge product they've put together and it's a little bit of a jumble but we've pulled it together with the artwork and everything. Second one is, all right I'm going to do it this time, and they'll tend to track everything very similarly. Because they listened to the first album and it's too scattered for them. So we do do the whole drum sound, and the whole bass. "I want to track everything this week,

and we'll mix it all next week." And third is, "Oh, actually we can have a bit more depth in a couple of tracks." And by the time we've hit the fourth, that's the defining moment I find. And it's so easy, because I know them, they know me, I don't need to ask any questions. We don't have to do pre-pro. We just walk into the album, everyone knows, I know what this guy likes, I know what I like. We know what we did wrong, we know what we did right. We don't overthink the process of the songwriting. But they're already thinking about… I hear them come in and say, "I've got a great song for the end of the album, I've got a great second track." And they start thinking a little bit more about that.

But I think musos have a much different perspective to music than normal people. And I say normal people I mean school teachers, plumbers. Particularly in Australia, it's entertainment country. So people go to work, they go home Friday night, they watch the footy and get drunk, they watch Channel 10. That's like 90% of the population on the street. Whereas musos, we don't have TVs. We have Playstations, Netflix but we tend to actually want some culture on Friday night, or value culture. Whereas I think a typical Australian would rather just be entertained. So they don't care if it's an Australian or Pink singing at the grand final. It's not Australian, but it's irrelevant to them. It's entertaining, they'll get on with it. So they're not really listening to the album as a piece of art, and the flow. Whereas the artist is trying to create art. But again, that's the producer's job to try and tailor that art into some sort of commercial product, and try to get the public, who don't care, interested in this artist's art. I always say to the artist, "Why should I give a fuck about your art?" I get a blunt question to them, and that kind of puts a bit of perspective to them. And again I always equate it back to that other artform of painting, and I'm sure there's a student studying fine arts at the Con, or wherever, busting their arse to learn about all the different periods and painting styles, and yet at home I have a printed painting of Homer Simpson. And that's as insulting as someone paying $40 for that Katy Perry CD and not wanting to buy my epic folk local band original artist's masterpiece for $3.

So yeah, you can't force people to like stuff. But the internet's opened up that a lot more than it was in the 90s, So we're able to not change the songwriting, and the structure, and the album to suit the market - which is a stupid thing to do in Australia because the country's not big enough. Don't do a Triple-J album, which is what we would have done when we were 17 or 18. Make

what you want to make, and then find who loves that. So everyone in Ecuador loves my album. I don't know why, but great. [laughs] Buenas noches, let's do this.

DC: Is it the producer, or the songwriter, or the performers responsible most for creating the album?

CG: Key songwriter, usually. It's not usually the whole band. When it's a band situation, it's the guitarist, usually the melody person. They may even write some lyrics, but the vocalist will come in later and write lyrics. But the vocalist is keying off... they don't realise it, but they're already keying off the emotions of that guitarist. If the guitarist has written something in minor and slow and draggy, it's a more depressing song maybe? And the vocalist will feel that and start singing that, whether they're even aware of that, art-wise. But yeah, definitely the songwriter is the key, and that's really the person you want to talk to and track first as well. Because I find they have the feel of the song. Whereas a lot of bands… a lot of producers seem to start with drums, regardless, because that's what they told us to do at uni or something? If it's a percussive band, then great. Or hip-hop that's drum-driven, or kick-driven. But most times I much prefer… with a click, to start with the electric or the acoustic, and let that person flow a bit. Let them drag, let them lead, and create a feel. Because the drummer's going to follow that with the hats, the bass player's going to follow that with the bass. And it doesn't necessarily need to land on that thing, if it has the right feel then that's more important. There's no plugin for feel. There's plugins that tighten things, plugins that tune things, plugins that clean things, gate things. But there's no plugin to add more vibe. Apart from Sansamp. But it only adds that one vibe - angry. [laughs]

Songwriters though. I would communicate with that key songwriter first, so I prefer to do the first month with me and the key songwriter. If it's a solo act and we're getting bands in, it's just me and them and we'll hire drummers. But if it's the band I'll go listen to the live show and I'll go check out the jam. I'll go to the party with them as well, because it helps to get into their world and see how they're talking. Are they acting differently around me because they think I'm well dressed and the producer and I'm going to be stuffy? Are they hiding their drug use from me because they think I'd care? All those sort of those things, I want to get the real story.

Because that is what you are selling, is these people. And if we get to the point where computers and robots are actually making music, would that sell? I think it would the first time,

because it's like a gimmick and it's like, "Wow, this robot wrote a song." But then, even if they wrote "Bohemian Rhapsody" would we care? Because there's no human connection, would anyone pay money for that? I don't know. Digital prints are worthless, but an artwork that's painted with a human hand of the same exact thing is worth money. You know when they first came out with that Google A.I. thing, and it's doing all those pictures, that was cool. But now it's like, "meh". It's kind of old news, and no one's really interested, it's just a program doing a thing. If anything you're probably more interested in the programmer that wrote that than the actual thing itself. So I think that human connection is essential with art. Because you were talking about, "What is art?", and this is art. Is a tree art? I don't think a tree's art. But if someone made a tree. Even if they grew it themselves and tended it every day, it becomes art. So it's a human connection that is important, so you've got to get to know them. And where is the song coming from? Because it's someone's key energy, but everyone's vibing off it differently. Bass player may never understand what that song's about because he never asked. And he might be like, "It's a party song!" and, "Dude, this is about my dad dying." [laughs] "Oh, I thought it was kind of happy." Never heard the lyrics, and was just bopping along.

DC: Does every album have it's own rationale, or story, or concept? Is that devised at the start of the process or does it reveal itself?

GC: Yeah. Little bit different with different artists. I would say more of the reveal itself as it comes through. I have a general vibe of what these songs are about, and I will ask for a synopsis from the artist, verbally, or paper, or drawing. You know I don't care what form you put it in. A dance move? You know, what is this song about? Reichelt's great with that, he's one of my good mates, and we're on his fifth album now, so there's no discussion, we just mix the thing. But he'll come back with, it's like… "Riding backwards on a camel through the desert with a bag of snakes". Something like that for one of the songs, and I'm like, "Cool". That actually gives me a vivid image of why this song is a little awkward, but twisted but actually now makes sense. The slide, and the bass dropping, and the fretless. Regardless, no one's going to get that, no one's going to be like, "You know this song reminds me, of someone riding backwards..."

So he's got an image in mind, but he's very artistic I guess. It's easier as a solo artist because you don't have to ask anyone, and I'm just trying to find out what this person loves. Whereas a

band of four people, everyone's kind of putting their own flavour in. And that's what's good about a band too, we have more flavours I guess. But the story can certainly get twisted. And if you're having a compromise in the band... "write two of your songs, and two of my songs," that can be problematic. Because it's diplomatic to do that so everyone feels vented and validated, but it lacks coherence then. And in those situations I tend to separate those songs, track order-wise, I prefer to. Or release those as singles before the album or bonus tracks, things like that.

I always push to make that Smashing Pumpkins double album situation, "These are all dark and light." and that's what I was pushing with Reichelt and *Seduced by the Light Side*. "How about we have five angry songs, the dark side and then you get seduced by the light side and you all get happy at the end." I'm big on concept things. But that might be to keep us motivated so we're not just pumping out another EQ and a WAV file again. But yeah I think it reveals itself but you have to have a vision at the start. But I won't have a vision at all before the demo. And so for me the demo, I don't do anything. I just sit back and go, "Play. What do you do?" Because if I overproduce it too early and I miss the mark, then we end up with a monstrosity. So I tend to just let them, "do what you normally do, what you feel when you're writing that," and then I'll dig deeper into that and try to come up with some sort of conclusion. But that comes from listening to the demos 40 times, on the drive to work or wherever I happen to be. And so it's a lot of listening. What do I feel with this? And then I actually go ask them. Is this song about this person? Or I think I know who this is about. Get the truth of them. And again, even if that doesn't translate to the audience, at least I know what that truth is, and it helps me produce it. But the artist has to be comfortable to tell that to me. And if they're not, it's very difficult to produce the album. Or if they're not even aware, they're just kind of writing… "Oh I kind of like that note." OK, it's not ideal.

DC: How important is the sequence of songs?

GC: I think it's irrelevant today. 2017? Irrelevant. Very few people are listening to the whole album. And I find that we lose some of the tracks if we drop an album, you know put a lot of effort into all ten songs, cut down from thirty. And track 8? No one ever hears that. Because we put ten out at once. And the audience, kids you can skip… and it's not just "kids today, blah, blah, blah…" it's the Internet. And it's been a great thing because it's opened up a lot more

exposure and globalisation in a positive way. You can't get away with much shit, which is great, like governments and stuff, I think that's a positive thing. But you can skip from one thing to another like nothing else, and so if something's not a hit song with that great hook in the first ten seconds they tend to skip through it, or just not listen to track 7 on Bandcamp. And you notice, you look on Spotify and it's got that popularity thing. Man, up to track four, once you hit track four it's game over.

DC: And it just drops off and the last one is the least.

GC: Yeah. Some people get into it and listen the whole way through, but they tend to be maybe people who were born pre-1985, because by that time they had pocket money, they were buying an album or a CD or vinyl. I'd say by 97-ish we're kind of in downloads and Grokster and Napster and single songs and skipping and iTunes and Winamp, things like that. So if you're born 1985 or longer, that's probably your first experience. You might have bought a CD or cassette. For me I bought Michael Jackson *Bad* on cassette and you listened to that all the way through. So whenever I hear that song, I know what song's coming next. I feel like that was Michael Jackson's idea, it was probably Quincy. You know that order of putting that song next. Whereas today it's so irrelevant.

If we had this argument five years ago it may have been valid then. But not any more. I noticed it with song sales with the label, the first four sell really well and then people lose interest. So we've actually started dropping albums as singles… I had a solution to this. With Reichelt's last album[10], we tracked the whole album over the Christmas period so it's a marker of those songs and that vibe. The last album was a little bit more depressing I guess more than anything, where he was at the time. Trying to get out of that. And I was hugely depressed at the time as well, and that added to the impression of the album. And we tracked that and got it all mixed and done, and as a marketing thing I was recommending that if we drop this, people are going to love those first two songs, but they're not going to hear track 7 which kicks arse. "I Hate Trees", this TISM-style song that no one's going to listen to. So we decided to drop a song a month. So all we have to so is artwork for every song, which is easy. So we just dropped a song digitally every month, but we made the full album available from day one. So if you want to hear the whole thing, you have to buy the physical $20 album.

[10] *Glass Bottom Boat* (2016)

DC: On CD?

GC: CD order, printed. Otherwise you can pay a dollar for this one's available this month on digital. And so, every month we released a new song and everyone fully listened to every song, because it was once a month and I found that was a good time for people to kind of get over the last one and then listen to the new one. Two weeks is too short, because they're like, "another song". It's like we do it on the first of every month... or that was the plan... and put it out. And then at the end obviously the whole album's up on digital, and available as well. But if that fan really wants the new album they can pay $20. And it actually creates more money for the artist, which enables them to do things. More encouragement for someone to pay $20 as opposed to the $8 we'd get for the whole album if they bought it digitally. That was a good compromise, and I think we're going to stick with that for the next album. So we've finished the album, we're just mastering it now and I expect we'll release a single next month. The thing about that is you keep that consistency going. Because it does take time to put an album together and write songs. The biggest marketing issue from a label point of view or an artist point of view is dropping off the radar. Bands that go hard for six months or two months and then they do nothing for six months. And that's where you lose out because everyone's like, "Well this band's disappeared."

DC: But this keeps drip feeding, keeps it going just enough?

GC: Yeah. You can have three months where he's in a complete breakdown and not functioning as a human being but publically… a song out this month and he just has take a breath for ten seconds to write that post and push the button and then he can crawl back into his hole. But at least we're consistently putting out material and doing the shows. The real benefit though is more about everyone listening to each song and getting the vibe. You get to make a comment in that post about what this song's about. With everything going on today or this week, this is what this song's about.

DC: So you get the audience engagement as well? Not just listening to it but giving you feedback?

GC: Yeah, the explanation. And the artwork. People are very visual, click on the Internet. People won't listen to a song unless the artwork interests them? Maybe they're dragging down so many images on the Internet, so if Facebook pops up this cool piece of… thing, and that's engaging enough… someone's going, "Oh, I'm playing that, what the hell's that? It looks like a turtle wearing a top hat." It's interesting, as opposed to someone sitting there with an acoustic guitar, and the sunset. Scroll. Next. [laughs]

DC: So is there now a bigger job for the art department where they've got to come up with the album cover, and also a cover for every single song?

GC: Yeah. I get the artist to do it, and I think that's way better. And same with film clips.

DC: The performers?

GC: Yeah, the artists themselves. Certainly there's a scale of image quality. You know, if you know what dpi means. I take care of that for them, it's not a big deal. As long as you use Photoshop, I don't really want them making the artwork in MS Paint. But that can work, getting the vibe. But yeah it's just an image. I said to them, it doesn't need to be a full painting. It could be a photo with your phone you took of a grasshopper or something. It's irrelevant, as long as it means something to you, and it's a captivating image and it aligns with the song. It helps explain the vibe of the song from the artist's perspective that way. I'm not trying necessarily to create an image that would attract someone. That would be obvious things like red and yellow, McDonald's way, or half-naked people, that thing that's going to attract people.

We're trying to get the vibe of the song. We're trying to attract the right people I guess, and the right person would actually understand what that is or be attracted to that vibe of that goth band. There's no point trying make a goth band poppy. Because they don't want those fans, and it would be too gothy for the pop fans and too poppy for the goth bands, and it's just a bad scene So I'll tend to make a rock album rock. I think that's a problem today. Genres, there's too many cross-genres. I noticed that in 2008, you get a punk CD, and a metal CD, and a pop CD and they all had the same snare. And it's sampling, triggering, all those things. Green Day, they're not a punk band, that's a pop band. But they were a punk band at some point. So yeah, I tend to

make a reggae band sound like a reggae band. And make it reggae artwork, let's put those tricolour Jamaican flags on it. Let's grow some dreads, let's do this.

DC: One thing that albums traditionally were able to do was they could offer a lot of variety, so you could have lots of different kinds of songs. Does that become a restriction now if you're releasing one at a time? It's a single release, does it actually have to be a "a single"?

GC: No, I don't think so. It's still part of that album. So it's very clear that this is my new album, and this is track 2 off the album. I think when you're doing that single release thing, and even as a marketing plan if I am actually just dropping singles we usually in that press release talking about an upcoming album or EP. Unless it's their first product, and the artist is ripe, starting out. But if it's just an album touring and we're dropping a new single… we're talking about, "Oh this is the first single off our new album which'll be available later in the year". And maybe that'll be on the album or it won't. People aren't going to remember, it's irrelevant. But we're already talking or thinking about an album

But I think when the artist says "album", what I've got down to is they're actually talking about a moment in time as well. They're talking about that year of their lives, and that's how most artists will associate an album. Whereas if you've got songs that are five years apart, they always say, "Oh it doesn't fit on that album." That's actually what it is, it's not necessarily a drum sound or an instrumentation thing even. Like we can have an electric guitar, or an accordion song, or an acoustic song. It's more about where they wrote it and where they're at with that, and the emotion that comes across. And it's that subtle emotion, not love or hate but just that mindset they're in. And if you track that too late, you miss that mindset, and you miss that emotion. So I need the performer, particularly the vocalist more than anyone to be in that mood when they're singing it.

Holly Terrens, we did a single last year. It was a song about a breakup, clearly I could tell. But I still asked her, "This is about a breakup, isn't it?" It was about someone she broke up with three years ago. She's fine now, she's happy and normal. It was serious back then when she wrote it. But I needed her to remember that to sing it properly. She's all happy and singing a sad song. It's like, "Do you remember… here's a photo of him." I found his Facebook, put his photo up on

the screen, tried to get her to remember what he did. “He’s still with that girl?!” She was a bit upset. She knew what I was doing. She cried a bit and then delivered the most amazing performance for that song. And that is the take on the CD.

And I’ve done that before with a punk band last year. Where on stage he’s tearing it up, and this guy’s maybe seven and a half foot tall. 140 kilos. Big angry guy, bald head. Yeah, live he’s spitting at the crowd, and throwing things around, getting his way. In the studio he comes in he’s got the cans on, in front of the condenser mic, <mimics singing weakly> trying to scream into this thing, not working. So I went to make him angry to piss him off, and we got into a fight and he punched me few times. And I punched him back and just told him to fucking grow up or go home. Do this fucking vocal. And a few other F’s in there. And yep, nailed it. One take. Just throttled it out, cos he was throbbing, his veins in his head and he was pissed. When he came out he realised what was going on because the band was laughing at him, because I told them what I was going to do. Because it was dangerous, he was huge. [laughs] But the point is you’ve got to get the emotion right, I think. You can’t fake emotion. You could try, but in the end you’re making pop music and I think a lot of that’s very fake. I think I notice that more, a perception for people and emotions, so that works well for me as a producer. I can easily tell when people are lying, or people are not true, or talking about things that they’re not going… not saying what they’re actually thinking. So that helps a lot being able to have that perception of humans and emotions and stuff, and I’ve always had that with partners and friends, and that works well for me as a producer.

DC: The track order is less important compared with the emotion that’s all the way through?

GC: Yes.

DC: So does that mean in the hands of an audience who can rearrange it, and listen to it in whatever order, it will still sound coherent.

GC: Totally. And they always change it. You can’t force an artist to keep a track order. I can push them to not put that ukelele on the chorus, or whatever it happens to be but at the end of

the day when it comes to track order, apart from having the single first which is more directed at marketing, and if they don't want that then I say you probably won't make as much money or be as popular, and that's OK, that's fine. But they rearrange the track order all the time, often right before the print job. We've agreed on this and I've listened to it 100 times and I'm driving to the print shop, and he's like, "Can we just put that track 2 as track 7?" Alright. Reburn it.

DC: On the original release of Pink Floyd's *The Wall,* the track order's wrong, because there's two songs changed at the last minute.

GC: I don't know if anyone's even looking at the back cover, so it's fairly irrelevant these days because it comes up in iTunes. But I think you're right, people make their own track order. And I do that too. I listen to the new Paul Simon album I love and I'll be like, "I love track 1, because it's the single and it sounds good, and I love track 2 and 5 and then 9. And over time those things get rearranged in my Spotify playlist because I'm sick of skipping, so I'm just like, I'll just drag those four up the top in iTunes or Spotify, and when it gets to those four done I might skip onto another album. So I've actually just selectively rearranged his album.

DC: You've done an EP.

GC: Yeah, I've skipped track 4… it's not that it was a bad song, it just didn't resonate with me. I might hear it later and go, wow I wonder why I never listened to that song? Yeah, I think it's irrelevant these days when you can skip forward and people are creating their own vibe. I don't necessarily know if it's the first ten seconds of a song that's that important. I do see people skipping through, and I actively watch that human behaviour. But they often skip through and then drag the timeline to the middle. They're not just listening to the first ten seconds, that's only recently I've noticed. With CDs we used to just listen to the first ten seconds, that was really important to bang in. But now because you have the timeline slider which you didn't have with CDs...

DC: You can go to 30 seconds, one minute…

GC: You know with CDs you'd have to hold the button down to get to a minute and a half in, and that's tedious. I think you could have a longer intro and people could still vibe out in the song.

And in Soundcloud, you see the waveform kind of, the volume. So they jump to that drop or that big bang where the chorus kicks in. So it's less relevant. You could have a forty second quiet intro. They might skip that, but they can see where the bang starts. And that's an interesting thing that's probably made songs a bit longer. I think that three minute pop song thing is probably a little bit on the way out. That's becoming old news to me. Do we need to have chorus-verse-chorus-chorus-verse-bridge? I think we can be a bit more avant-garde, we can be a bit different now because people... they skip, but they listen to the middle when they're skipping. They want the bulk of the song. Which is interesting.

DC: Do you think release format informs the structuring, how much do you take that into account?

GC: Yeah definitely. If it's digital only I think those decisions are more based on money than anything else these days. It does cost money to print CDs. That was just the norm when I was in a band 10 or 15 years ago. We needed two grand, or a grand to print a box of those CDs. Whereas now you don't. We need like $40 for CD Baby listing to iTunes. And so you can have 30 tracks or 5 tracks, and I think the format of the digital thing makes you less worried about the order and the situation. Whereas once we're printing that on a CD, you're concerned about the track order. Definitely on vinyl where like it's all about that order because you're creating a product for those kind of people I think. Vinyl just physically takes effort to get off your arse to skip the track to find out where it is, and that's generally why I'll listen to a vinyl all the way through, even if I know that song's not my favourite. I'm just lazy.

DC: It's too hard to skip through.

GC: "It's all the way over there." If I had a machine that could read the tracks on the vinyl, and I had a remote for my deck, and I could hit track 2 and the arm would lift up and drop, I definitely would. And I don't want that.

DC: Because then you might as well have a CD player.

GC: Yeah. I'd get the unmastered version at least, the un-brick wall limited one. So yeah I think the format does affect it a little bit. But the market is kids, and kids don't buy CDs, they've grown

up listening to all digital and they don't care about the back artwork or the cover, they just want to listen to that. And they actually want visuals with it. And this is an interesting thing I've noticed... Youtube is the biggest music platform. Youtube is the shit as far as the music industry is concerned. So if you don't have visuals for your song now, you're not part of the game. And also putting it on Youtube means it's free. And that's actually our biggest issue. It's not iTunes, it's not piracy, it's not even Spotify, which aren't great. But it's Youtube that's actually the biggest enemy to independent musicians and original music. Because they don't pay anywhere near anything official. You thought Spotify was bad, with their .0003 of a cent, Youtube is a tenth of that, or a hundredth of that. And you have to have visuals. And are people even listening to music any more? Or are they just watching this shit twerk on screen. It's that whole adage of "Oh I'm going to *see* this band this weekend". And that's been going on for ten, twenty years maybe? Whereas I feel earlier it was, "Have you *heard* that new album? Whereas who's going to *see* this band, did you see the Pixies on the weekend?" No, but I *heard* them and they sounded great. [laughs] That's what a muso would say. It's coming back to that thing about entertainment.

For me… I've had this discussion, about ten years ago it started with DVD players. A lot of people had CD players and that was great, you put the music on CD. But then when the DVD players came out there was an option to have video on almost everything. If you go to find a CD player at a store, there isn't any. There's DVD players, and Playstations which you can put CDs in if you want to play them. Very little actual CD players in JB Hi-Fi. So if the option's there to have a little yellow video out, HDMI out, why would you not put something on screen? And this is something I noticed when that transition was happening in the late 90s, if you have the option to have a video, well let's start with a still of the artwork. Oh, it would be cool if that was moving a bit so we might have some video. It got to the point where you really need to create a film clip for every song. And that's a big expense, because you can't sell the film clip. So most of our albums... last album we dropped was *Youth* for Lane and Ike and that had nine film clips for the 10 or 11 songs. We ran out of budget and energy at the end to do all 10 or 11. And it got way more noticed for every song. Even though we dropped a whole bunch of them at once, those film clips got watched and played because they had a character and a story. It was mostly about the song, and it could help people transpose what *we* meant about the song. But I said at those meetings, sometimes with the network people, Channel V, or Triple J with Kingsmill... Channel V was interesting, before they closed down. The meetings that we had with them were about three

or four bands on my label and the clips. It was a board meeting and everyone's at the table watching the clip with the clip on mute. "Oh it looks nice, it looks great, yeah we should put it on." And they just turned to me and asked, "Does it sound appropriate?" Um, you could unmute it and have a listen to it? And I said, "Yeah it sounds great." Cool, move on, it's approved. And no one even listened to the hours of EQ I did on that kick drum or any of that stuff, but the clip looks good. And I know it's video TV, but that attitude I find quite a lot.

And I don't blame normal people for that, like a school teacher or a plumber. I like paintings and fine art, but I'm not overly interested in having this giant Monet or Picasso on my wall. Again I'd put that stormtrooper or Mr T. up on the wall, whatever it is. So I can appreciate people, if it's not their desired artform or their interest. Some people are into poetry, some are into books, some people are into movies. Each of them as valid. Some people are into memes. That's totally fine, that's art to them and that's cool. I appreciate that, because I have a lot of different clients that are into different things. So I have no problem with Katy Perry or Justin Beiber doing their thing. They're perfectly happy doing that. But I would certainly have friends that fucking hate that stuff, and they get real angry. I don't understand the hate and the anger, it's an unnecessary emotion for yourself. They're a bit caught up in their own world or maybe they… I actually think Katy Perry or Beiber have a better view on the world. I think they're more comfortable being commercial. That's probably more intelligent and a little bit more based. You know that arty friend of mine who's too arty for his own good, so he won't pose for a photo for ten years, and there's like one that's like a black and white contrast when he wasn't looking kind of photo and that's what he uses for everything. And he's like, "Oh no, the music industry's shit, no one listens to music anymore, no one listens to good music." You mean no one's listening to your music, is that what you're trying to say? That's because you didn't look at the camera when they took the photo. You're not interested in the audience, why would they be interested in you? You don't dress up for a show, you look like a bum. Oh, that's your vibe, you don't want to wear clean clothes, because you don't want to look like you're putting too much effort in. Because heaven forbid you fail when you put effort in, and then it's all on you. And it's that insecurity of those higher, arty people. And I get that a lot from the Con students. Not the MuTech but playing ones, the honours students. They know every fucking note ever invented, and every scale, and poly-rhythms but they're too arty for their own good. They will not dress up in a clown suit and dance around in that clip.

It's that pretentious vibe I think that damages a lot of artists. And it's very difficult in Australia because we are this entertainment country and you're caught between that confusion of playing the game to get on *The Project* or Triple J or whatever crap thing is on TV, versus "I don't care about any of that, I'm just going to do my own thing." But there's not enough underground market to make that work. Whereas in Europe, some cities, the underground market is as big as our country, so you can do that. Not in this country. We've only been around... a couple of generations ago it was not good, there was slavery and all sorts of painful things. It's difficult in this country.

I find artists write better albums and have a better coherency of the whole picture once they travel overseas. And that's an Australian thing I find because we are very isolated. But once they go to Japan or Europe or they see that people actually like good music in other countries. Not in America, but in Japan they love great music. They don't listen to J-pop over there. That's what TV tells us they listen to. But everyone fucking hates J-pop in Japan. Like general public, person on the street. But they do love John Butler, they do love Radiohead and Bob Dylan. They're the shirts people are wearing, they're the covers people are doing in the cafes. That's reassuring, that it's not Jet every five seconds or Katy Perry's album. They're like, "This is garbage," and someone will walk past and punch the Katy Perry photo in the face and it's like, "Shit… awesome!" It's because they're so populated they actually appreciate individualism. They're not trying to be the same because everyone is the same and they're trying to fight for a little bit of breath in amongst this chaos of people everywhere.

Whereas we're the opposite. It's so sparse in Australia, there's so much space. And so most people in high school before they evolve, or grow up they're trying to fit in and trying to be the same as everyone else a lot more in this country than I notice overseas. People value individualism, which means they value culture and art. Whereas in this country we value fitting in. "Oh that fits in, that can go on *Neighbours*. Oh that's good because it's on *Neighbours* and on *The Project*." You can make an album for Triple J. Definitely. That's the prerogative of the band and I would do that if that's what the 17-year old band came in and they answered that why are you recording question. "We want to get on Triple J." Well before you do that, let's make this little indie, breakbeat thing. Put this thin guitar on the top. You want to sing with this indie, hipster, Arctic Monkeys style thing. Put a little synth in the background and bribe Richard Kingsmill, and next thing it's on the radio. It's a simple thing. Have a 30-year old player playing

it, but make sure the marketing is 14-year olds. Don't tell anyone that 30-old is in the band. So those bands that I play in, I'm like "I'm not being in the press photo." Because we need to get on Triple J, and I'm 36. Much that me sitting in a three piece suit, DJing with a hip-hop band is fun, I'm not going to be in these press photos, don't take a photo of me. I'm fine, because I want to get on Triple J so we can get this thing sold to some kids. And that's all just about making money so the band can make actually more art, from my perspective. I think if you get into music for money, you're an idiot. It's like the worst idea for 23, 20 year olds, to make money. You're better investing in a Zarraffa's coffee shop.

DC: A couple of last questions, are albums still important, and who are they important to?

GC: Yes, and the artist. More so than the public I think. An album is a weird thing. It's a collection of ten individual products. You don't get that in any other art form. I mean I get it a little bit in art galleries, when they have an exhibition and it's a series of paintings, versus I've painted this new painting and it's in the art gallery. But you don't release ten films at once. Marvel's challenging that I guess. [laughs]

DC: Marvel's releasing a concept album.

GC: Yeah [laughs] they're releasing a concept album of thirty-odd films for the next twelve years or so. To some extent, I don't know. I don't think it's relevant to the public. Partly because you're not physically buying stuff. I still see CDs in JB Hi-Fi obviously, but it's getting a bit thin.

DC: It's getting smaller.

GC: Yeah. And they've actually got more vinyl these days which I love. But people who are buying are enthusiasts I think, a little bit more. That's what that is. People that aren't buying a physical product are just downloading. So if you are going in, you probably already are an enthusiast.

DC: So it's the enthusiasts, the fans who appreciate the album of that particular artist?

GC: Yeah. And they're probably more likely to buy the vinyl than the CD. CD still feels as cheap as it did in the 80s. It's still 16/44, I don't think anyone cares at all about that 24/96-16/44 bullshit. I'm sure Apple will at some point once the Internet's fast enough. And they'll sell that for $2.69 fo the "high quality". Same quality that we had in 1982, [laughs] that you could have bought if you got off your arse and went to K-Mart or downloaded it off Bandcamp. But I don't think the public cares at all. And I talk about that with marketing and this is stuff that I would talk with publicists, more probably industry side. But that is producing to me. I know some producers just work on the audio, I think that's a mistake. I think you need to produce the artist, not the WAV file. You could produce the WAV file 20 years ago. But that was when the industry was based on A&R, and a pub gig, and getting notoriety, and then A&R coming to your show and then signing you and that's how it was done, with posters. But now you have a kid on the Internet could make something in a cracked version of something and suddenly you've got Our City.

DC: So you've got to do the whole thing now?

GS: Yeah, I think you have to put the whole package together, and be a little more coherent with it because people are very visual. And it's easy to take a digital photo and make a film clip. Whereas that was quite difficult in the 90s; working out DV cameras, and how do I capture this with FireWire? What is this format? Whereas now you've got iMovie or your mobile phone which that's making the film clip. Concept is more important than quality I would say, and even with the tracking. I think concept and vibe is more important than quality. White Stripes or Jack White - not well compressed or EQ'd. Irrelevant. Because the vibe is amazing, the energy and the emotion. You play that kick drum off "Seven Nation Army" and it's god awful by itself as a sample. And then you play a U2 kick drum and it's beautiful. And then you play the two songs - oh yeah, "Seven Nation Army" is way better than this, "Beautiful Day" or whatever. Depending on what you're into.

Yeah I don't think the public really care about the product as a whole. And the more you call it a product and make it a product, the less they're attached to it these days. The difference is that that was really strong in 06/08, and that wasn't that long ago. And I've found with that change of the century and into that digital stuff, people wanted the future, we wanted like, future future...

DC: So in 06/08 it was...

GC: Very poppy, but it came from that change over the millennium, I think. We got very digital with Pro Tools in the early 2000s, and the whole market shifted over to that Pharrell *[Williams]*, Timbaland, pop R&B, which is all computer based stuff. The mouse was the most used instrument of the 2000s, more than guitar and drums, the mouse as an instrument. No less or more technology than a tom drum. A lot of machinery that goes into that tom drum, and mathematics. By the time you hit 06/08, it was so commercial and product-y. And that's those Ga-Ga albums, and Britney albums. And you could make a lot of money by getting a good looking person, guy or girl, half naked, great song from this 40 year old Swedish songwriter. Top notch producer who could make anything sound good. Put this product together where the singer comes in for ten minutes to does the vocal, and the rest is put together by serious session players. We pay a film clip director. Dropped a bag of cash on Rolling Stone to give us the cover, pay for these billboards, and we spent 2 million dollars and we make 12 million dollars off that single. But I think once that selling stopped happening… it wasn't actually a lack of art that caused the problem, it was a lack of money that actually scared the commercial people away. That was not from piracy, but more from Spotify and iTunes cutting the cost of the album, the price of the album. The return isn't there. And even… you look at Taylor Swift, and she's making 200 grand off that single from having the number one thing on Spotify. 200 grand? I know that's a lot of money to a kid, but that's a joke for her to have that sort of money on a single, versus the 12 million they would have got before. So making a product doesn't work anymore. It's not that people don't want a product, it's just that there's no money in it. And as soon as you take the money out of something it's good for the art people, but that product, that thing disappears. And we've seen that throughout history. How many people invest in horses these days? Because we have cars. It's great for us, because everyone who was in the industry to make money is leaving by the droves. In fact that was their goal, to make money. And that's fantastic. So the people that are left are people who actually like music. And the money's not there at the moment, but it is coming back, we're just finding new ways to make it work. Live shows and touring, publishing and various other methods.

DC: Which leads to my last question, what is the future of the album?

GC: I personally would like to see it a bit more connected to the human. And I think that's what I was getting across. I think we've only had digital stuff for not very long. We've had digital since the 80s, but really… and you would know like I do, the modems were shit in the early 90s. You know, 14k, and bulletin boards, and 3 kilobytes a second.

DC: Three hours to download a song.

GC: Even with Grokster going we still got them out there. [laughs] But by '05 or something, it had really kicked off with internet speeds and everyone's getting smart phones and all those things. And it's not Apple or anyone, it's just technology increasing and becoming more available to users. But that has also created a bigger disconnect between communication with people. And a lot of people say these days… some people don't even have phones at all because there's communication loss, and people having trouble defining emotions and all sorts of things. Inter-relationship problems, there's more arguing because they're just sitting on a computer, typing stuff. You wouldn't say that if you were standing in front of someone's face, but you don't know this person so you just blurt that shit out on a comment. Where this is leading with music and the art album - it's killing the album but we need a new format for that. Because I think as I said before, the money is more focussed around the live performance now. And that's where artists are making the money. We're now using the CD and the recording to sell the live act, because that's where we're going to make an income. Even if you look at a huge act making as much music as possible, they're not making enough money. So they're going on tour, and selling $80-100 tickets, and there's more concerts popping up, more venues and more festivals, and that's where it's coming from. I guess I would like to say... I think the album will tend to be more evolved. I think we've been living in this cardboarded, vinyl, flat, audio-only album world for… 100 years maybe? We didn't have albums, wax cylinders.

DC: Depends if you count from... if you go from the LP then we're talking 60-70 years.

GC: Yeah. But even then they had EPs in the 40s and things, I don't think they called them albums; but Les Paul would drop ten or twelve tracks. The new sound or something like that. That was a product, that was a new sound album. But that concept of that format I think is out the window. It's scattered a bit at the moment, people are kind of hanging onto it because that's how you do it, that's how put out a film, that's how you put out a thing. But I think we need some

sort of new way of selling this band. And it's more along the lines of that whole package that I've been talking about, the emotion. So it's the hair, the press photo, the film clip, the font on the website, the colour on the website, the sound of the guitar, the order of the songs sometimes, the release timing of it, what countries they're playing and touring, what vibe and what target audience they're going for. Or maybe just being who they are and maybe it matches to a Mexican audience or a Norwegian audience. But I think that display of the album is… we need some new way of delivering it. It's like *Sgt. Pepper's*, you had a concept album and there was a vibe, and it really changed the way you looked at albums.

DC: It was a new way of putting music out.

GC: Yeah. And I don't know if we've hit a new way. Maybe we have but we haven't really noticed it yet. Perhaps Radiohead, perhaps Jack White, perhaps Gorillaz. You know, I think the Gorillaz thing, it's not quite right but it's… there may be something there. Having the characters, having them to kind of hide behind, so it's incorporating visual and digital art, and different media art forms involved in those things. Film is obviously film but it's heavily involved sound and music as we know. You need that sound and music for the film otherwise it's just a bit of stuff on screen. Whereas audio hasn't really fully embraced that yet. I mean we have film clips obviously and I was talking about how Youtube is that new market, but it still feels like an add-on. Whereas sound in a film doesn't feel like an add-on, for most films it feels like an integral part of that film. Is that our perspective or is that reality, because we're audio people?

DC: We are audio people. I think film clips are…

GC: They've gotten worse.

DC: I don't think in the studio there's much consideration given to the film clip. It's like let's get the song right and then we'll hand it over and see what the film clip is. And it's an afterthought.

GC: Yeah. I think the artwork's crept in a little bit, and has always been there a little bit to some extent. And I actively push that because I want that. But yeah, I've never sat down and gone, "Hm, we'll do the guitars… what's the clip going to be for this song?" I don't care. The clip will be

whatever the clip is. Partly because we can't sell the clip. One of the reasons is that, because you're… "We'll be on a building with a helicopter flying around, and a rocket shoots up to the moon." That's not really practical! We have 20 bucks! Can we get a rocket for 20 bucks? It's partly a financial thing? I don't know if that's going to help. I actually think it's more about live and that visual of live. Because that's where the market is going towards live performance. And it is digital, but I believe that it's going to be live streaming, that's actually what we have missed, the key with that tracking. It's difficult to know whether you are still going to still be able to have… eventually in fifty or sixty years… pre-recorded stuff is going to kick into, production existing but on the fly. Like a live sound gig but I'll Neve it in the studio, compress it, EQ it, everything. And that's great, I like that because it relies more on your skills to pull it quick and pull it smart. There's also no cheating then. There's no fifty takes of that solo, there's no sound replacing… well you could do that I guess, but there's no editing those drums. And that's actually not only a good thing for artists but I think that's what people want. I think people are getting away from the Autotuned completely thing that was 2008 like I was saying.

DC: It's very much of that era.

GC: Because it feels like a product. And it's like, I don't want to pay money for that. Whereas I'll pay money for a Jack White CD that's out of time and possibly out of key, because I know it's real and it's an emotion. It's a little bit difficult to tell, if I'm a musician and doing that, and so I try and use that painting, of that different artform example to kind of like process in my head, am I just too close to music to appreciate that? But it is important to have that perspective, and I often ask kids that. And it's great being a lecturer. I've just started first years again. And they were born in 1996. And it's like, "oh, shit." [laughs] I was playing Ric's in 1996. Oh shit.

But I think live streaming is the new film clip and album artwork, but I don't know exactly how to integrate that, apart from streaming it on Facebook. But that's more interesting. A video on Facebook may be a clip, but a live stream? People are still always watching at least three seconds of that. All the What's Live streaming. And it's because it's new, but it's also because it's a real, now connection with a human. Whereas if you're watching a pre-recorded clip, you're watching digitised fakeness, and you could CGI anything these days.

DC: You don't know what's coming next when it's live.

GC: Yeah.

DC: Something could happen and we don't know.

GC: And we kind of know it's real. You've got that new Adobe Voice thing, did you see that? That sort of shit, there's so much fakeness you could create. And that fakeness was there in audio with Melodyne, Autotune, sound replacing. So I think real human. And again it comes back to that emotion, and I would totally compare that to the painting, and the fine arts. Because that is what puts value in a painting, the ability to draw emotion from the artist to the viewer. And I think that's the same with art films or sculpture, or anything you do. I do sculpting as well, and it's the same thing I try to do, to get that emotion across from this whatever I'm making, metal or piece of wood, to the viewer. They don't have to get what I'm getting, but as long as they feel something. Even if I've put tons of effort into it, that works. I don't know what my emotion is, I'm scattered or whatever, but they can tell that someone's put their heart and soul into this.

And that is the key with a good album I think. You can make a tight one that's in key and in tune, but if you make an album or a song that someone can listen to and go, "Man, someone has poured their heart and soul into this." Done. Doesn't matter if it's in key or out of key or in time. Doesn't matter if it's mastered or loud, or quiet, or bright, or Audacity and Garageband. If it's emotion you pour into that shit, then it's going to work well. You know, Elliot Smith, any of those great albums. Even "Bohemian Rhapsody" doesn't *sound* great to be honest. The drum sound's… not good. But obviously at the time it's what they could do. But it's irrelevant, totally irrelevant. Because you've got Freddie up the front there. Same with Hendrix, the guitar sound's not great to be honest, even for the 60s. Some of the Beatles records sound horrible, if you start engineeringly picking them apart, into kick sounds and snare sounds. It's like, geez man, Sam Phillips did a better job in the 50s than some of those George Martin things. But it's irrelevant because you've got the emotion there.

So I think humans and emotions is where you want to go. How do we then mass-reproduce that emotion energy to a wide audience so we don't have to knock on doors to play our song, and hug people. And that's live streaming, is making it easier. But we've been running live shows on Ustream for ten years and that's quite effective for German audiences or Japanese audiences.

It's so easy now. The system's changed. But I think the money's gone and the labels have fucked up. And everyone blames the labels, very quickly. But it's not the labels, it's business in general. It's greed, it's capitalism. It's not the labels… Sony's fault or Universal's fault. They're just making money like Bono is. It's Bono's fault as much as anyone else's. He doesn't pay any tax. You feed the world. [laughs] You've got plenty of money. But I think we need stronger independent artists that are able to make these new things happen. And I always praise bigger artists that are standing up or introducing new things. Like Jay-Z and Tidal. Didn't quite work, but it's still there. But brilliant, you know, that's what we need. An artist that paying artists properly and bringing out a platform that actually delivers proper money to artists. And he was just copying another model which is why it didn't work. But if that was the first thing to come out, and it was set like that, it worked well.

So we just need the bigger artists... because I can't do it because nobody cares about my bands [laughs], but if you have a bigger band, we need those people to bite the bullet, step up and make something new in a new deliverable format. Like the Beatles did, when they were the biggest band, and they did make that different leap into a new album. And they did it because they wanted to make something new and different, because they were sick of the old. And same with Les Paul, and that new sound. He did it because he was being copied and he wanted to make something new and different. So we need someone that's got a semi-established audience that wants to actually make something new and different. And Kanye… he's close. But he doesn't really have anything new and different that he's doing but that's OK. I like that that's different, he's standing up and shaking things up a bit. He seems like a bit of a dick in interviews, but I take it he's just insecure. And that's why he acts like that. He's not actually a dick I think, he just gets attacked a lot and that's how he survives.

But yeah, there's got to be something. It might be coming down to the listening I think a little bit as well, it's not necessarily the delivering technology for producing. It's not necessarily the mics at this end. I think it's the other end, the consumer listening end. Because that hasn't changed in a long time. Stereo, flat. That's it. But when I see a band live and I get a better connection with a human, like someone sitting next to me playing acoustic, it's not coming from there, it's coming from all directions, because it's 3-D sound for lack of a better term. And I think we're still projecting sound 2-D into the microphone and then 2-D out of a speaker. Whereas, as a concept, a drum kit has… you hit that kick and it's coming out all directions, it's not just shooting

out the front. It's coming off the back wall, off the shell out to the sides. What if you stuck six mics around a kick drum? Like a dice, on each side. And then you had a speaker that had a speaker on each side. And then you play each of those mics out of a central surround system so it actually sounds like the kick drum is there, not just the air out the front but the side of the wood, the sound of the speaker off the top. So a new delivery system that's like 3-D sound, and they've kind of got Atmos the other way to deal with a large audience. But I think they've gone the wrong direction. I would like to invent a speaker that has a speaker on each side and so when you put that speaker in the room it sounds like the drummer is there. And you walk around but you're getting the side of the tone off the sides. Because there's more that comes of a band than what you point the mic at. We direct the mic at what I want to pick up from that amp. But if you're standing next to that amp, and you play in a band, man, that shit comes off the back, there's stuff coming of the side wall. Feel it through the floor. None of that's being picked up. I'm picking up a slight, off-axis 57 on the front of the cone, which is not actually the sound of a live, real instrument. And I go back to the 1910s, 1920s, the point of recording was one mic source, or the sound on one source. And you were supposed to capture the live sound, because why would you do anything else? That's what music was to people, a live room sound. So when I play that back I want to be transported to that concert hall, or that room. Why would you produce the music? We only started producing stuff when Les Paul wanted to make something different. Because he was being copied. He didn't do it to ruin music, he did it because he wanted to make something different. I think we're actually, probably going to head full circle back into that live recording, for lack of a better term. But the the term "live recording" is probably more associated with a shit concert sound that's put onto DVD. Whereas I'm talking more about how can we capture the amazing vibration and energy that's happening on stage or in a jam room and better transpose that to the listener, to get the emotion across. You know when we're at a gig it's the vibration, but it's the atmosphere. And it is their haircut, and it is the clothes they're wearing, and we don't get any of that on an iTunes playlist, or a little line running across on Spotify. We get an album artwork, a static 2-D thing, and that's come from physically having a product. But why is it square? Why does it need to be not moving? Why can't it be an animated GIF? Why can't that be a film clip? Why can't that be a large stream of something? And then also as we're perceiving it as this 2-D flat sound…. we do have two ears I appreciate that. But they are localised front and the back. We're not picking up enough stuff from the studio. I'd like to do it but we also need a bigger artist to introduce this new way of delivering an

album. Whereas you're not recording… this just 2-D flat sound, you're picking up mics all around the band and having a new speaker system playing out.

That's problematic obviously, with technology and getting people to accept technology. It needs to incorporate money and capitalism, otherwise it'll never get spread across. We've got surround sound already, under-utilised, or used. And I don't know anyone besides me that has a surround sound setup. Like none of my friends do, you probably do, maybe?

DC: No, I don't either.

GC: Yeah, exactly.

DC: Would love one, but it's down the list.

GC: Yeah. And if I finally do find someone who has one, they're stacked up on top of the TV. [laughs] All seven of them. OK. Defeated the point. So yeah, long answer to that question but I think the album's gone and I think the new thing is going to be an album feel. But I think when album's were made, they were made with the current technology of the 60s in mind, or the 50s in mind, which was a physical print shop and we could print this flat thing, it was impractical to digitally deliver, because it didn't really exist. And it was impractical to deliver anything in 3-D, or more than that one mono speaker, and then oh, let's make two, because we've got two ears. And it stopped. You can open a studio in the seventies, close the door, open it today and apart from a computer, everything is good to go. All the 1176's, the console, everything. The whole deal. So I don't feel like a lot has changed in the last forty years from a deliverable point of the technology. To some extent, some days I feel like I'm just doing the same shit that Sam did, or Rick Rubin did, or George Martin did. Oh, let's mic up this kick drum, better use the kick drum mic. Stick it in the middle. What are we capturing? We're just capturing these vibrations that I could easily almost program now. You guys just go home, I'll make the song, I've got what I need. Just give me one of each note. [laughs]

But how far down that production road are you losing that human connection? Because that is actually what makes people buy stuff. And that is so important today. Because everyone's listening to shit, we've got more people loving music and that's great about Spotify and Youtube.

There's more people listening to new music and searching out for good independent artists instead of just taking "Australia's greatest new rock" on the TV ad, they'll actually go and hunt down Soundcloud. But they're not paying for it. So that is a big key. Because we need to survive, and if that money's never there, then it makes it very difficult for us to fund creating this new thing, or to deliver that or to take that band to Germany or wherever it happens to be. So really trying to find some way to get people to hand over $10. And I always I ask that, "what makes you hand over $10 or $20 for a thing?" Versus 90% of music you listen to, like me, is just Spotify. Not stealing it, but not really paying for it effectively. But they'll buy that Jack White album, or I'll buy that new Weezer album. It's like a connection I have with that hair, and the clothes. What do you reckon, what makes you buy a $20 CD?

DC: I'm thinking the same, I don't buy a lot of albums these days.

GC: It's almost like you're donating $20 to this guy because I want him to keep making music.

DC: Yeah, that's it. I've found bands though... I'll come across a band every now and again where I'll go, "Oh, I love that…" something grabs me. And I need to have more than just have it in a playlist. I need to have the CD, I need to know more about this band.

GC: Yeah, this person. And it's the hair and the clothes and everything. If it wasn't, Bowie wouldn't be… [laughs] Ziggy Stardust. Imagine if you just heard that music, never saw him. I don't think it would work, I'm not sure about that. But yeah, that is the question as a producer. And when you're talking about the whole album, whether it's consistent, or it's valid. What is actually going to make someone buy it? Because I think the point of the album before was to make more money, to some extent, and make people buy it, so it was a cohesive product. Whereas a single felt like a cheap thing, because it was small, it only had one emotion. Whereas an album has possibly ten emotions in a more cohesive product, and it feels like you're paying for more. We're now in that mode where no one's buying or listening to the whole album, how do you make someone pay $10 for one song? And it's not about making more money for that song, but how do we get back to a sustainable… or will we never actually get back? And then I look at painting and fine arts and you know... we're fucked. Because artists, painters, don't really earn a living. Like, five do. [laughs] Five make a million dollars. 99% of the other ones are shoeless. Painting on the sidewalk for pennies at the markets. And maybe that is

actually a reality we should be aware of. Art's always are going to be around, and when times are hard, people want art more. War times, we actually sell more, because people are like, "Oh, shit, what's the point of war if we don't have these things to actually like?"

And it's a way of expressing ourselves, but I think there's a lot of ways to express yourself these days. Through the Internet, through texting, through talking, through memes. It's easier for a "normal person" to make a bit of artwork on an app, or play a game and express themselves in that way. Whereas it was more of a needed outlet as an instrument probably 20 or 30 years ago. You can get just as much outlet out of playing a computer game, in their own creative way. Because they're playing the game they want to play it, moving around. To us, "That's not art. You playing Minecraft." But man, those Minecraft games are art, it's just your perspective on it. Look at my mate's 10 year old son, and that thing he made in Minecraft and that is a fucking masterpiece. He's taken months to make that, countless hours. Yes it's not real and it's in a box. But look at the craftsmanship on those squares that he's built, this giant, ridiculous passage, castle thing. I think that's him expressing himself in that new format. So yeah, maybe our old "vibrating some metal over another magnet." That kind of feels like rolling a wheel with a stick down the road, if you start thinking about it that way. That actually makes me feel old now. [laughs]

At the moment I'm just trying to sort the artist out. I have a lot of artist friends, and they're still pouring their heart and soul into these things, and pumping them out. You've got to move with the times. And I like tracking younger artists, because I have a 20 year old hip-hop artist that I work with. Completely different perspective to the 30 year old folk rock artist. They think they know better, but they don't, but they'll learn. Also they know better about how their people buy music, and what to put out and what's cool. "Oh, we don't need to play 50 shows in Brisbane." And I'm like, "No we do!" like you can't sell stuff on the Internet. It's like, "Well you kind of can."

DC: Guy Cooper, on that note, thank you very much for that, that was great.

GC: Hope I didn't give you too much to listen to. [laughs]

APPENDIX D: Nick DiDia Interview Transcript

Dylan Crawfoot: Nick DiDia, thank you so much for agreeing to take part in this interview. I'll start with my first question, what is an album? How would you define an album?

Nick DiDia: Well an album would be to me just a long play disc by an artist. Usually, typically anywhere from 8 to 12 songs. When I talk about a record I typically think ten songs. That's a concise piece of work that basically is marking a moment in time for that artist, his recording work, session. I think probably the actual definition would be an LP, which was a long play compared to an EP or a single.

DC: Is the format part of that definition do you think, when you say an LP record?

ND: I think so, yes. And it's defined also by the medium which was the phonograph at the time. That's why typically albums were a certain length and a certain amount of songs because of the restrictions of making an album. You know you could make a five hour long tape, but if you wanted to get it onto one LP on two sides you were basically limited to I think it's about 22 minutes. You could squeeze more on there but the sound quality really disintegrated as you got more and more into it, as you know. So I think it's probably because of that more than anything the restrictions of the album made that what we all and I consider an album.

DC: So the restrictions of the format, the technological restrictions actually defined the format?

ND: The technological restrictions, and because that became the way people digested music, other than listening to the radio, it just became the way that it was referred to. It typically lasted 45 minutes. I think if I remember right, when CDs came around the reason a CD was 72 or 74 minutes was because a piece of work...

DC: It was a classical piece wasn't it?

NC: Yeah, somebody asked what was the longest piece of music from start to finish and that's why it's 74 minutes. I'm sure there might have been other technical restrictions about why it's a certain length but that's what they chose.

DC: Were albums then as you moved into the CD era, did the nature of albums change?

ND: Yes. For the worse. In my opinion.

DC: How so?

ND: Just because people, because they had the time, they felt they wanted to put more on there. And I don't know if it was a consumer driven thing, I think it was artists saying… well in some respects maybe it was a holdover from, "Why aren't these other ten songs on there?" And it used to be you can't fit them unless you want to make a double record. Now you can fit them. But the restriction actually, part of it's in the attention span and again this might be because, what came first, is it the format that made the attention span of 45 minutes a reasonable time? Or even 22 minutes? This might be another question later, but a big part of the listening process with albums when I was a kid is that you'd listen to 22 minutes and then you'd have to get up and do something to listen to the other 22 minutes. And often I'd listen to the same side. If it was a favourite record of mine I'd listen to side 1 for a month, and then get into side 2. When you first get it you try and digest the whole thing.

It became part of the listening process, and I think with CDs unfortunately, and now with Spotify and streaming, that whole idea of listening to music as an event has changed, dramatically I think. It's now a thing that plays in the background. And again I don't know what comes first, the lack of attention span, or maybe not enough quality to pay attention to. But I definitely think that CDs suffered because of what some people considered almost the obligation to fill it up. And I still fight to this day and some people that I work with that are younger just are like, "You're coming from a spot that none of us understand," when I say it's gotta be ten songs. Doesn't have to be ten songs, it could be eight. But it shouldn't be eleven unless it *has* to be eleven. A lot of people say, "Well we recorded it so that justifies it being on the record." And I say in my opinion, an album should be not only a collection of songs, but it should make sense as a whole. As opposed to just a collection of ten things that act on their own. They do act on their

own as individual songs. And it doesn't have to be a prog record where they all mean one thing at the end. In my opinion a perfect record is one that, each song is there by its own merits but it also feeds the whole and makes the whole better. It ends up being better than ten songs.

There's a great Bruce Springsteen quote, "In music, one plus one always has to equal three." If it doesn't, then it's math, and it's making whatever. If you don't have that extra thing in there, it's not enough. I think that the great records do that. The great records might be eight songs, but that record means so much more than those eight songs, because of the way it was put together, because of the way it marked a space and time. Not only in the band's life, especially when you talk about the Beatles and stuff, that's the history of America, as an American, and everywhere else you were listening to those records. It's the history of the world at that point.

DC: So what thought goes into the overall structure or shape or sound of an album as opposed to for individual songs?

ND: Well typically, again I'm not sure which comes first. I was taught to do it that way and I came up in an era of the record. Which I'll call it a record, meaning an album. Because that was the format that was the way you went into the project, or you went into the session. Typically for me if you have a band of individuals, and as a producer, let's say you've got fifteen songs. That's a normal amount for a band to have coming into a record. They've got fifteen songs coming, we're coming in to make a record. It might end up being ten, that's what the producer wants, we'll see about that. Typically if you get to the end of that recording and you've recorded fifteen songs and you've put everything you can into each song, typically there's six that everyone agrees on. And they usually stand out for one reason or another. Maybe just better writing. To me, out of the nine left if you started with fifteen, picking four out of that to make the record depends on what you want the record to be. How do those four songs fit in with those other six? And what does it do to make that record bigger than the ten songs?

DC: So the songs are coming first and then out of that you start to piece them together?

ND: Yeah, depending on the band. That's if you're working with a band that has no overall theme for the record. You're coming into make a record because it's Pearl Jam, and it's about time they made a record. They have songs, and it's in their cycle to make a record. So those

songs are coming from really different places. There typically isn't a… "We're going to make this about the U.S. political climate at this moment." Even though that might be informing all the guys in the band, rarely for a band like that does that overarching theme of the record get involved. Until the end. Sometimes those songs will come in, and they'll go, "You know what this is starting to look like a statement about the political system in America at the moment. So let's add songs in there that contribute to that." Other bands like Sleep Makes Waves that I work with here, which is an instrumental prog band, they come in with… "This album's about Antarctica." And every song has to do with that. It's more of a progressive rock kind of thing.

DC: And would they have that theme in mind and does that even inform the writing?

ND: Oh absolutely, with those guys it does. So those are two completely different things. I think most bands there's a little of both. Like most bands wouldn't come in with an overall theme of the record but whatever they're living in, whatever's percolating at the moment is going to inform what the writing is. Maybe not so much with a first time band because, like the old saying you have your whole life to write your first record, and you've usually got about six months to write your second. So typically with a first time band those songs are picked based on not necessarily what's happened most recently, but what's the best representation of what this band is going to be. And that's another thing, especially with a first time band, what are you presenting? There's usually… unfortunately a lot of artists get, like everything else in media you get pigeonholed. People want to know what are you like? So they'll know if they'll like you. And most artists are absolutely not one thing, they're many things. That's why they're artists. So sometimes it's difficult for a band to decide. I'm sure you know albums where the album is completely scattered. And you might like two of the songs on it but the other eight you don't care about at all. And sometimes that's a difficult thing to get across to bands. Maybe that's the *White Album* idea. If the *White Album* was the first record the Beatles made they may never have become the Beatles. The idea that they made that record… for most bands, most double albums, another Springsteen quote is that you get one shot at that.

DC: At a double album?

ND: At a double album. And it's typically one that is further along in your career when it's time for either a change, or you think your audience is willing to give you the time. Because it's rare

that a double album is a concise thing. Unless you're Yes and you're writing *Tales From Topographic Oceans* which is about God. And it's four sides but it's one album, or one theme. Few bands come in with a really overarching theme for the record, most don't. Usually it's a little bit of both, in both camps.

DC: Who's responsible for creating the album then? Is it the producer, the songwriter, is it the performers?

ND: Again, it depends. When I'm involved with a record I'm probably the number one guy shouting "album". This needs to be ten songs and I'm the guy fighting for that. Partially because of how old I am and what I grew up with. But also because I think that ten songs on a record, if it's done right is more than ten songs. It becomes something else.

DC: It's the one plus one is three.

ND: Yes, absolutely. And that takes work. And it takes commitment from the band to go OK. Because, again bands don't come in with that theory, and typically they have more than ten songs, and they all want their songs to be on the record. And they should. They should fight for it. It should be the overarching theme when you're working on that song that this song's going to be on the record. But in my opinion, at the end of that journey, you have to have the guts to say, this one's really good. And especially in today's climate, it's going to see the light of day somewhere. But it doesn't make this collection of songs better as a whole, putting it on there. It's better to leave that one off. That's a hard sell sometimes. Especially… there's lots of things that people get involved in, if you're four writers in a band, and that's partially how you make your money, it's granted that you want your two and a half songs on there.

DC: "Silver Springs" on Rumours, Fleetwood Mac, I think that was one like that. It was Stevie Nicks' song and for space reasons they had to leave it off, and she fought hard for it to be on there. It ended up being a B-side.

ND: Well that's what they used to do with B-sides. I think some of the Beatles' early stuff... they called it a double A-side. I'm trying to think of what song it was. It might have been one of Harrison's songs with a Lennon song on the back?

DC: Might have been. And it might have been different in the States as well.

ND: Yeah. But they did that for that reason. The B-sides, that what they were. They were B-sides that didn't make the record. Now whether in those days, it may have been simply because of the physical constraints of making the record. Or in part because George Martin is going, "These eight or nine songs, that's your record."

DC: So does your approach to album production differ from your colleagues?

ND: I think so. I think partially because of my age. I think a lot of people today, rightfully so and I'm a bit of a dinosaur in this respect, they don't care much about albums because it's not what most people buy. Most people will buy the single. If they like the single they'll buy another single. Or nowadays they'll stream it and they don't really care. I guess in a way it's harkening back to the 50s where...

DC: Where you bought 45s?

ND: Yeah you bought 45s. You heard what was on the radio and that's what you wanted to hear. And I realise that I'm a total dinosaur in that respect but I hold out belief in there's some young people, bands that I convince that it is actually that thing of it's bigger than the sum of the parts. If you get it right.

DC: Are other approaches more towards just knocking out the number of songs and putting them together?

ND: Yeah, absolutely. I don't know many producers nowadays that make albums. Especially if they're in R&B or what would be considered pop. If you look at the back of a Taylor Swift album there's 46 people listed. Like Adele's record, it looked like half the stage got up when she won those Grammys. I mean I like her a lot, I saw her live, she was amazing.

DC: Adele?

ND: Adele. She's just a talent. But there's something about me when I see all those people get on stage, I'm like, couldn't you have done that with just two people? You're talented enough. You and a band and a producer, couldn't you have just figured out how to make that great record? In my opinion, it may not be a chock full of singles record but it might be a more interesting record. And she can do whatever she wants obviously at this point. Maybe that's an approach she takes on one of her records, or maybe she doesn't care about that at all, I don't know.

DC: Does that mean albums are better suited to certain genres?

ND: No, I think it's an approach, I mean look at *Thriller*. That was three guys. That was Michael Jackson, Quincy Jones and Bruce Swedien the engineer made that record. I mean there's arguably no better pop record in the world, ever. And again, Michael Jackson at that point in time, with his talent and know-how and desires, if he could have made a CD with 60 producers that might have been what he did, but it was the norm for him to do what he did. I think maybe a guy like him works within those constraints and makes magic.

DC: What then do you think is the motivation for an artist like Adele or Taylor Swift to make an album these days as opposed to just releasing a series of songs?

ND: Probably because they want to, and it's fun, I would think. And it might simply be a holdover. I mean Taylor Swift is a product of the 80s. So most of the things that were made in the 80s, even though they were CDs they were still that album mentality.

DC: Yeah. It was the early days of CD, wasn't it?

ND: Yeah. But still, when CDs came out they were basically to put albums on to. The idea of it being that length had nothing to do with popular culture or albums, it was a symphonic work. So that's what CDs were. I imagine the amount of CD sales in the first five or ten years were all albums, transferred to CD and resold to people.

DC: And then they remastered them and sold them again.

ND: Yeah, exactly. <laughs> That's what they did. Good on them.

DC: Does each album have its own rationale, or story, or concept to it?

ND: Again, that earlier thing about some bands come in with that, I typically try to find that thing...

DC: Even if it's later in the process?

ND: I try to find that thing, because of the way I look at it. I think it's also… it's a thing to me that makes the process that much bigger and more valuable. So even if all it does is make the individual songs better, it does that. Even if you may not achieve the album being three instead of two. To me, my opinion, the way you go about doing it makes each song that much better.

DC: Do you mean in terms of the way you produce the song, or just the fact that they're presented in a different way?

ND: Partially how it's produced, but it's also the feeling in the room, that you're doing something bigger than the song. And maybe it's also a matter of, this is part one of ten, so I'm not going to worry too much about it, and sometimes not worrying about it is what makes it great. You can overthink things. And then sometimes too, there's been many times where you're cutting a song and you think this sounds like the last song on the record. It just has a feeling. And a lot of times that ends up meaning that you have a big long outro that if the song was third on the record, or a single you wouldn't do because it wouldn't make sense. But as number ten on the record that's going to end it, or number one that's going to start it, there's usually a thing with the introduction or the outro of those two songs that become a little bit more elaborate because this is number one, or this is number ten.

DC: That leads neatly into my next question, what makes a good opening track, what makes a good closing track?

ND: Well opening track obviously you want a sound to come on and people go, "Woah, what's that?" I mean, that's the best thing you can hope for. Whether, that's a one-two-three-four count

in, and the band bashes away. And again, I think with the first song, you either want to shove it in people's faces, and say this is what this band is, or you go "here's a nice slow introduction to what's about to come. Here's a taste of what's about to happen." And it just depends on the record, and the band.

I mean, Bernard Fanning's stuff, the two records that we just did, it's actually got so much to do with the album concept. Because we're both of that school that we knew, that whatever we did in here for the record, we were only making one record at the time. His new record, it was going to be ten songs, regardless. So at some point during that process, if you go in and the artist is with you on that, you still cut fourteen songs, just because he had 'em and we kept doing different stuff, we had the freedom to keep going. At the end of the process, I remember him saying, "OK, we've got to start thinking about what's not going to be on the record." So we started talking about it, and figuring it out, and I usually do mock sequences and stuff and I do that pretty early on, just to kind of get a feel for how the album is going. And we were struggling with it, and we involved his manager Paul Piticco who's been with him since the Powderfinger days. And it was Paul who said, well why don't you just make two records. And we were just like, oh that is incredible. And we just jumped.. we heard you say it, we don't have it on tape, we've got witnesses.

DC: We're going to hold you to it.

ND: We're going to hold you to it. And that's what we ended up doing. And we still had some songs left over. Part of that too, that maybe I didn't mention before, instead of saying OK these are the fourteen songs we're going to record and we're going to put them on the record in whatever state they're in. It does make you sometimes go, "You know what, that song's just not good enough yet. And sometimes you gotta say, it's not going get good enough now. It might in a year from now, it might in two years from now, it might next week. But right now it's not going to get any better than that. Because it's just human nature, you work to a certain point and then you've got to get away from it. Sometimes you do, you keep getting away from it, you keep coming back to it, and you make it as good as you can and then you've got to be honest and say it's just not good enough. That's another reason why a song should fall by the wayside, and that's something that albums, that restriction does for you. It lets you make that hard decision. It makes that decision easier.

DC: And it gives that song space and time to change.

ND: Yeah. The single that ended up on *Brutal Dawn*, the second record, was not a throwaway from the first record, but it was presented as part of the first record, but it just didn't fit the feeling of the first record. And it did fit the feeling of the second record. And then we redid it to make it fit even more, and then it became everyone's favourite. So songs have a way of… it's like anything else, if it has value and truth to it, it'll find its way somewhere. You hope.

DC: So when you made that decision then, you said you had fourteen songs to begin with, you make a decision, right we're going to do two albums, so does that mean you have to go and write more songs now?

ND: Yeah, so that initial conversation, all that did is make the idea of cutting those four songs easier. And then it opened up a whole process. And then we were like, OK we're going to finish this, and then, we'll get onto the next thing. So of these four songs leftover, maybe two made it to the record. So it wasn't like we're taking these four and going to do another six. He just started writing some more. It became a challenge… it was more of a challenge for him than it was for me. I can easily make another record. I'm not sure it's easy to write another record, it's obviously not as easy to do that. But he had it in him, and he was excited about it and it was a couple of things. One, again, because Paul was on board, he's also kind of the head of the label, because it's all part of one thing. It was the opportunity and we jumped on it. And it was also for me, it was a really interesting challenge to know that you're putting a record out of a guy who's got a certain amount of popularity, that people are going to listen to the record and listen to the promo about the record. And in that promotion for that record you're talking about the next one that's coming, that's not done yet. So while we're making a record, it's a record that's already being promoted, which was a unique thing and we were really excited about doing that. And the reaction to the first record somewhat informed the second record. It wasn't like, "oh they don't like that single as much as we thought, so we're not going to do that."

BREAK

DC: You were talking about the two albums you did with Bernard Fanning.

ND: So again, I wouldn't necessarily call it pressure, but it did inform some of how the next record was made. Just knowing that we basically had kind of a deadline for it and it was expected and anticipated. And the reaction to the first record was going to depend on how the second record did. It was just a fun thing to do, really interesting thing to do. And so far, the second record's just come out this week and everyone seems pretty excited about it. And oddly enough, the idea that we had going into the first record sonically, we had kind of a sonic idea of what it was going to turn out to be. Partially because of the space. There was a particular Bob Dylan record that we both really liked, called *Desire*. Bernie's younger than me, but for both of us that was our first Bob Dylan record that we owned, that was our record. I knew who Bob Dylan was but I was a little kid when he was making the real classic early stuff. The Dylan record that came out in the 70s was the one that I went and bought, and that was my Dylan record. As opposed to my older brother's Dylan record. And for him that was the same thing, where that was the first one he was really introduced to. So there's a certain sound in that particular record, that because of a whole bunch of stuff in Bob Dylan's life, that's where he was at the moment, and you know 50 years later and it's informing what we're doing in here. But anyway that was kind of the overall idea for the first record. And then we went on this completely odd tangent that had nothing to do with that sound. And that's what the first record ended up becoming. We forgot about that Bob Dylan *Desire* thing. Starting making the second record and suddenly it started sounding like that.

DC: So Bob Dylan came back?

ND: Bob Dylan came back in the room. The first song on the record called "Shed My Skin" is just… I mean it sounds like that record to me. It was intentional. I mean all that kind of stuff, all that sort of influence stuff, it's not a question of, "OK I'm going to listen to the record and that's the snare drum sound we're going to get." It's more just about a feeling, an overall vibe that's happening on the record that you try to catch. In my case, because my style of engineering and producing is very musician oriented, it really depends on them if they're going to make that sound like that.

DC: So they set the direction?

ND: Yeah I try to point it where I think it should be going, and obviously I'm in charge somewhat of the sonic part of it, but they're playing it so you know. But they all fell in. It's also, typically, Bernie's not going to come to his band... they're all really talented players who could play just about anything but they have styles that fit within that, and if he said OK I want to make a Depeche Mode record, they might be able to pull it off but it's not their natural instinct to do that kind of thing. Where a Dylan kind of thing is, it's just within I guess what I'd call their wheelhouse. It's easy for them to do that, because it's something they do naturally.

DC: What makes a good end track to an album?

ND: Usually the outro in a solo. <laughs> Or something, just something that takes you out. The idea to me of a perfect record is one that sucks you in at the beginning and then just throws you out at the end. Maybe not throws you out, maybe puts you to bed at the end. And you've taken a journey from the beginning to the end of it.

DC: The White Album "Good Night" is the last song.

ND: Yeah. I mean, Abbey Road.

DC: "The End".

ND: That record in particular to me is one of their greatest, and one of George Martin's greatest achievements. Just because they knew, even though chronologically… I don't know if it happened here, in the States *Let It Be* came out last.

DC: Yeah, Let It Be came after Abbey Road

ND: But it wasn't the last record. Those guys went in knowing, first of all that they were the Beatles. Which was an amazing thing to go in and do any record, if you know that's who you are. And then knowing that that was the last record they were going to make, and that's what they came out with, it's a pretty amazing accomplishment. And that's part of that thing that I was saying, there's lots of little things that kind of inform how a record comes out, that was obviously something that something that helped inform *Abbey Road.*

DC: Can the impact of one song on an album on the listener, can that be affected by the songs around it? Does someone's perception of a song change based on what they've just heard, or what they hear afterwards?

ND: I think it can. Once you're in the middle of the record, sequencing becomes not about keeping you involved, it's less about making you turn it off, if that makes sense? You just want it to flow in a way that is easy for people to get excited about listening to the next and the next and the next. You don't want something jarring that they go, at track 4, "Oh I don't want to listen to this any more." So that's a big part of sequencing for me. And it's also… typically there's a couple of rules in sequencing about keys or things like that, if you put two songs that in the same key next to each other, or three, it ends up sounding the same for obvious reasons. Tempos too, you don't necessarily want the same tempo, but you don't want slow-fast-slow-fast. And everyone's got their own ideas about how that works, and I think it varies from record to record. Sometimes that works putting a really fast one after a slow one, and then another slow one. It just depends on the songs and depends on the feel of the record. I do think that when you… sequencing is such a big part of whether a record works as a record. I don't think it matters as much to the next song.

More to that point of your question, one song can get someone involved in a record, that's why there's singles. That's the idea, you hear the single and then you go on. A big problem with… this started happening with CDs. And I don't know if it's because of CD or because of the mentality of the music industry. It used to be if you listened to just about anybody's record… maybe not Revolver, because "Taxman" may have been the first single from that record in the States, I can't remember. Anyway, most records were... the singles were not the first song. They never were. The singles were three, maybe two. The power ballad was five, at the end of side one, and the big long closer was at the end of side two. There became this thing of putting the single first, I guess because of lack of attention span that started happening over the 80s and 90s, people aren't going to listen to three unless you kill 'em with number one. And I think that threw a big wrench into the idea of sequencing a record, where you don't get the candy first, you get a little bit of the meat and potatoes and what it's about before you get the payoff. You had to make a little bit of an investment into the record.

DC: I spoke to Magoo and he said that. The CD listening post he said, in stores where you'd put on a CD and just listen to it to decide whether you wanted to buy it. That's what what encouraged them just to put all the big songs up front.

ND: Yeah, put the big ones up front. And then you buy the record and then you're disappointed because you've put all your money up front. It's like, any band, if you put the three singles up front, people at some point are going to be listening and go, "that's not as good as the beginning of the record."

DC: "Why should I keep listening to this?"

ND: Yeah, "Why should I?" And then you just end up buying the single. Or just saying… you know the biggest thing to me, and I try and impress this upon people. You'd much rather have someone say, there's not enough songs on this thing that I bought, then say this isn't a good record. If there's only eight songs and someone goes, "man that's an awesome record, I wish there were more songs," that's what you want. Because those are the people that are gonna... not only does that little thing become than however many songs are on there, but they want to know what you're next one's going to be. Those are people that put out quality. And I think sometimes you don't necessarily ruin the individual songs that become singles, but you ruin the record by putting 17 songs on there. Again, this is my opinion. *Blood Sugar Sex Magik* was an awesome record by the Chilli Peppers, it's like 17 songs on it. Half of them I don't listen to, I just skip over them.

DC: It's a full 74 minutes, I think.

ND: Yeah. And I think they did it because that's who they were and that's what they wanted to do. If that record was 45 minutes - and again I'm talking about a record that a lot of people consider a classic record - it could have been better. <laughs> But that could also be the *White Album* argument where I don't know what I'm talking about. People who are big Chilli Peppers fans go, "You know what? I love those songs that you would skip over."

DC: How important is sequencing in the Spotify and download era?

ND: I think it is in Spotify, just because you can just click on a record and it's going to play, and how it hits you... Look, people always made mixtapes, even when I was a kid. That's what you did, you took the songs that you liked and you put them together on the one thing so you didn't have to listen to the whole record. And that was a certain artform in itself where they weren't necessarily the singles. I mean if anyone gave you a mixtape and it was all singles, you'd say this is bullshit. <laughs> You obviously didn't put enough time into this. The idea of making a mixtape or being a DJ in those days, was to play stuff… like that's what FM radio was. You're playing stuff that wasn't single, single, single. That's what AM radio was. If you wanted to listen to that you'd turn the AM radio on. If you went to FM, you listened for the stuff and you trusted those people, you knew who they were, because they would turn you onto the stuff that wasn't promoted from the record. This is track number seven, and it's an awesome song. I just sent a Spotify link to people in the States to listen to Bernie's new record, because it's just easy to do.

And this is a whole other subject, which is a sore point for me, if you want to buy Bernie's record in the States it's probably $50. Even on iTunes it's going to be more than it would cost here. That thing was always ridiculous to me. And it's not about him being some big success in the States, it's just literally like, knowing people in the States who'd like the music, or it might as well be Italy it doesn't matter. Saying, "You'd dig this, check it out." They're happy to pay $10, but not $40. It becomes… "This record's $40, that one's $10, I'll buy the $10 one". Anyway. With the advent of Spotify, and most of the people I know over there like myself do the subscription thing. Even though it's not perfect for musicians, but I think it'll hopefully at some point even out to the point where everyone's getting their fair share. It seems like the answer to me. That's another subject but, it does seem like the subscription thing will be the answer.

One of the great things about albums was the artwork, and the format of the LP was a great delivery vehicle for that. CDs crushed that because of the size, and digital crushed it even more. Even though most people look at either, you know your computer. It's not as big as an album but it's bigger than a CD, so artwork could come back, especially with the resolution and everything else that you can get with a computer. People still worry about artwork, it's still a big part of making a record. But I don't know if it's appreciated as much. It's like credits. I mean we always used to know who people who made the records were. Not only because I was interested in it but everybody would. You put on a record it was natural to have the thing in your hand, and you read it while you're listening to the music. And that's completely gone with digital.

And it's unfortunate. Because you could, if you want to, you can find out what size pants the engineer wore if you need to, you can find out anything. Where you couldn't on a record, it was still a little bit mysterious, there was a guy's name and you're like, "Well what does he do exactly?" But it just seems like people aren't quite as interested in it.

DC: Leads to actually the next question I had, how much is artwork considered during the production process? Is that something you as a producer would think about, or is that for the artist or someone else to worry about?

ND: It depends on the band, I'm not consulted on it at all. They might go, "Check this out, this is what we're going to do." And it's like "Oh that's cool." kind of thing. But it's not part of my… If you're a producer, if you're an R&B or pop producer, and you're bringing in an 18 year old girl and you're writing all the music, and she's just singing it, and she's part of your production company, then yes you'd probably get involved in what it all looks like as well as what it sounds like. I typically work with people… they put up with the idea that they have to have an image. It's not the first thing. Artwork, not their own image, but artwork is a really important thing to them. Images are important, but their own image is usually… If they could get away with it, no one would know what they look like. Most of them. It's a different kind of thing for me.

DC: We might have touched on this, but I'll ask it in this way, how does the approach to producing an album differ from the approach to producing a single song?

ND: It's just that thing that we were talking about earlier, you're informed by more than the individual song, and sometimes what you do on song 5 might inform how you record song 6, or where it ends up going. Because a lot of times with me, and Bernie's a good example, we didn't have all the songs when we started. When I worked with Powderfinger, I'd show up, they'd have, with those guys it was pretty funny with them, they would write ten songs for a ten song record. They rarely would have fifteen or sixteen. We'd get in, we'd do pre-production pretty quickly, which was more about structures and things like that. And then, coming in to make the record - you know any record, or any single - you try to capture a sound at the beginning. Sometimes it takes four or five songs in before you catch it. You want to catch it on the first one, and it's going to inform what the rest of it sounds like. But sometimes you catch it on song four. And you go, "OK song one through three now…" Maybe that's not how they're sequenced on

the record, but if you record in that order. Sometimes you go, “OK, we’ve got to go back and do song one and two over again because we’ve caught it now. This is what’s going to inform. So in that way, it definitely would inform. If you don’t catch it on the first one, and you catch it later, and you go back to the first one and that informs what the first one’s going to sound like.

Not so much maybe in terms of arrangement, unless... There’s a guy that we brought in on the record named Ian Perez who’s a keyboard player. He does everything, but he plays keyboards for us. We had a particular song that we were like, “well Ian’s going to play on this and it’s going to be great.” And we left it open for him and when he came and played on it, it was great. And then we’re like “OK, let’s put him on that song, let’s put him on this song, let’s see what happens on this one, we were going to do this other thing, let’s have him try it on that.” In that way, with a single that might not have happened. Just because you wouldn’t have had the guy in here because you didn’t think about him for that particular song. So in that way I guess, you end up seeing a bigger picture, and you also have more time, typically. You might cut a single in a day and be done with it, or an album might take a couple of weeks, and you have the ability to go back and reassess things and just see if they’re working.

And sometimes, you might have a song that works really well as a single on its own, but doesn’t fit the record. So you’ve got two choices, you either just say screw it, we’re going to put that song on there. And that happens a lot. Sometimes there’s a song that people... unfortunately if it becomes the first single, it’s sometimes a problem, because people listen to that song and then put the record on and go, this doesn’t sound anything like that song I like. Other times you’ll have an idea of what that song sounds like; it doesn’t fit the record but you really like the song, so you sometimes massage that song, hopefully not to its detriment, to make it fit into the record. And again, hopefully it’s as good, or maybe better than it was. So there’s a couple of ways where an album could definitely influence the sound of a single, as opposed to just doing the single.

DC: Do artists have trouble adapting from a single song project to making an album, particularly beginning artists who might be starting off doing one song at a time?

ND: Yeah, I don’t think so, by the time they get to me, they’re usually making a record, or an EP at the very least. I don’t typically do singles for people. Just because, it’s not that I don’t want to,

it's just I don't think I'm thought of as that kind of guy. Pop things that I get involved with are typically because of a… there's a thing that I'm doing, there's a producer in Spain who's producing this girl who happens to live in Lennox Head. She's really great. I never knew her, they needed a studio, the head of Warner Brothers called me and said, "Hey can we get in?" So we did this whole link up, and now I might end up mixing it. But it's not something that I would typically be approached to do. They approached me because they know my engineering credentials and they said, well it'll get done right. You know, recording a vocal is recording a vocal. If you know how to do it right it doesn't matter if it's a pop song or a rock song. So anyway. I guess In my career, I've not been approached typically to make singles.

DC: We talked about the technological limitations and constraints of making an album in whichever format, how much conflict is there between commercial pressures, artistic pressures or technological pressures in how that album comes about?

ND: Well part of the thing that's happened recently is the album is back. I mean I think they're buying way more albums than CDs.

DC: You're talking about vinyl albums?

ND: Yeah, vinyl compared to CDs. Streaming is still probably the number one thing, or iTunes, or whatever you consider downloading. But because of that, if you put 16 songs on your CD or your download, you're going to be pressed… there's certain bands I've worked with, it seems odd to me but they end up putting an album and a half out. Like it's a double album but one side's not used because of the time constraint. And they have to resequence it and all kinds of stuff. And I typically would not, because my approach is album oriented, whatever I'm going to do that's going to be a download is also going to work on an album, is also going to work on a CD. Just like the guy that I use for mastering, and he's as old as I am, and his way of mastering is mastering for LP, that's how he did it for 20 years. So when he masters for CD it doesn't really change that much. And if you want the LP master it's not really that different from the CD master. Which suits the kind of music that I do anyway. As far as the technological constraints, there's not as many because I still approach records as records. Commercially, if you're doing ten songs or you're doing fourteen songs, it doesn't matter. If it's a difference between doing five

and ten, but it seems like as soon as you get into, we're going to making a record and there's a budget, if you add two or three songs it doesn't make any difference.

DC: Does the record label still exercise a veto over what form that album's taking? If the artist wants to do it one way but the record label says, "no these songs aren't going to work or we need more of..."

ND: Typically If I'm doing a record for a major label, typically somewhere in the contract it'll say, "It's going to be at least ten songs, these are the titles." And a lot of times it's a mutual understanding that those might change, they just do it so they can have a contract. It's never been a thing where we turn it in and the guy goes, "Well what happened to that song?" And usually if that song is going to fall by the wayside, it's a conversation we've been having along the way, and it's hopefully a mutual understanding. And I've worked on records where the record's been turned in and the guy at the label says the Tom Petty line, "I don't hear the single." There was a record that ended up being, the guy suggested - I was the engineer on this, I wasn't the producer - he said, "I don't hear the single," and the guy went home and wrote the single. And it became the single and it was a massive song. And the record wouldn't have been as good without it. So I'm not an anti-label guy, it just depends on the person. Some guys you go there and you want their opinion because they're really smart. And they may not be musical but they know music, and they know songs, and they know that's what their business is, is knowing what's really good. They may not know how to get it, but they know what's really good. And you're foolish not to respect their opinion, in my opinion. Now that's not everyone. Some people are just complete fools and you just say yes and disregard them. But that's any business.

DC: Just going back to something you said before about mastering for LP, CD and download, is it important to keep the shape of the album consistent across those formats?

ND: I think it is. I think if you put a lot of work into the flow of the record… you wouldn't do that if it just didn't matter, I guess that's my point. You wouldn't spend the time making a sequence and then just go, "well put whatever where you want on the album." Some people might. Some

people might not care at all about it and just say, these are the ten songs, I don't care what order. As long is this one's first, for radio, I don't care what you do. That's not the approach I take just because of those other things we talked about.

DC: Are albums still important, and who are they important to?

ND: They're really important to myself, certain bands and musicians. I think, not only older musicians who remember the format and were raised on it, but newer guys that just think it's cool. I don't know if it's just a cyclical thing where things become cool again. I told Bernie, if we hang around long enough sooner or later we're going to be cool. <laughs> And it's evident that records are cool again. The hipsters like records because… I mean, look in my opinion you can't get any better than tape machine when we made records on tape. If you had a half-inch machine at home, that was audiophile as you can get, you can't get any better than that. Getting an LP, no matter how nice that stereo is, it's a degradation of what was given to the mastering guy. He does his best to transfer what you did on tape onto that piece of vinyl, and they're great at it, but it's still a notch down.

I'm reading this book just about recorded music, It's an interesting look at where it started and all the different things that happened. But he talks about Thomas Edison, apparently Thomas Edison's argument was at one point, he made a thing that was a physical process that moved the needle and cut the wax, or the diamond disc, whatever they called them. And then that thing in turn moved the stylus that moved the diaphragm that came out of the horn. There was no electronics involved.

DC: It just was direct, it was purely mechanical.

ND: Yeah, it was purely mechanical. So his argument was, once you make it electronic, it's no longer analog. It's no longer an analog of the thing. And it sounds remarkably like the analog-digital debate of today. You're taking sound waves and converting them into electricity and running through a whole bunch of shit. And then you're vibrating a piece of paper and that's what you're hearing. You're not hearing… when I'm talking to you, your ears catching the air as it moves. If I talk through a microphone it goes through a whole bunch of stuff before it moves the air again to get to your ear. So what's pure? What's analog and what's digital?

DC: Maybe that's the next thing that's going to come back, wax cylinders, Edison cylinders?

ND: It might. You know what, I think that might be a thing why people, even though there's a whole bunch of electronics involved, obviously there's a visual quotient to it, but why live music is such a big thing again. Part of it's they want the excitement.

BREAK

DC: We were talking about whether albums are still important, and you were talking about resurgence the vinyl record.

ND: Oh yeah, and the Edison thing of analog to digital. Yeah, I think that people, I don't know if it was just nostalgia. Some of it is. It's cool to like stuff that happened. It's like the 80s. Taylor Swift, that was her whole thing. Granted, it cycles around. The 60s were big, the 70s were big. It all comes back. I love the fact that people, regardless of whether or not the quality is that much different, I love the idea that, just like tape to me, the idea of albums, it's almost less about the sound of the album…

DC: Of vinyl albums you mean?

ND: Of vinyl... than it is about the process that you go through, you hold this thing in your hand, you put it on, you have to get up to change it. It all makes it more important, which I think makes you appreciate the music more, which makes the music better if it's appreciated more. So I think that all those things are really positive, really new positive things that are happening. My thing about tape, occasionally bands come in and they want to use tape, because they have this romantic notion of what tape was. And I totally get it, and there's definitely a thing that tape does. Most guys like myself who worked on tape for I don't know how many years - probably over 20 years - we've learned how to get along without it, the sonic part of it. I still do a lot of the same things I did on tape, as far as production style. Like making the band play it again. Or doing edits that are not microscopic edits but chunk edits, I'm going to take the first verse from this take and the second verse from that take. Comping is the same, you do ten tracks and you

put pieces together, we did that. All that stuff is the same as tape, the only difference is you're not using a piece of tape. Part of the reason I stopped using tape was, one, the expense became unreasonable in the budget. But even when there was a budget, at some point when tape started diminishing, just like album production, or vinyl production now, the quality went down the toilet. The quality of tape, I mean it'd be so rare to find a bad piece of tape, when we were running through ten boxes a day in the 90s, and it was really rare to listen to a piece of tape and go, "Oh shit, something's wrong with this." It went from that to two out of five were bad. And then it was just like, well I'm not going to do it any more. We stopped doing it because the quality was so bad. I think it's gotten better. Basically the big places that made tape never made money on tape. They made money on selling video cassettes and stuff. So the tape divisions, they did it because they were in the tape business. Then with all that sort of going away they just sold that stuff off, it was taken over by people who frankly didn't know how to do it as well. Good on them for trying. And they eventually got around.

Like pressing plants. Both records of Bernie's we've had amazing amounts of problems. And we did all the right stuff we went to Leon Zervos, he's an old school guy, I use him for mastering all the time. Does an amazing job, knows how to master for an LP. We sent that to Sterling where he used to work in New York, and a guy Ray there has been making mothers for thirty years, he made the mother, sent it to some plant in Prague, and it came back completely messed up. And everyone's saying, "It's not our fault." And the pressing plants are not what they used to be. I mean, it's like any other factory, if you're turning out a thousand cars a day, there's a level of efficiency that happens because that's what you're doing. So if you're making one car a year… it hasn't transformed into that handmade thing where it's now a special thing. They're trying to run a factory, but they don't have the business coming in to make the quality control as good as it should be. I don't subscribe to the "records sound better" theory, but I'm glad the fact that there's a bunch of people that do.

DC: I had a student once, we were having this discussion about which is better, record or CD, and somebody said, "Record's better because it smells better." And I thought that's one of the best out of all the arguments I've read.

ND: Yeah, you know what… I think Mitchell Froom said it in the big debate about tape, he was saying tape's about 1% of it, of a record. He said you get the other 99% right, it doesn't matter.

Or if you don't have the other 99% it really doesn't matter. If you haven't done your arrangements and the songs aren't good and the players aren't good, it doesn't matter if you're recording to tape or not.

DC: Tape's not going to save it.

ND: Yeah, it's not going to save it. And it's not going to kill it if it's great. Again, I've edited on tape, I know how to run tape, I love the records that I've made on tape. But I think a lot of what tape is heralded for is simply not valid anymore. Again, the things that were really important about tape, you can do with Pro Tools. And it's not a sonic thing, it's a conscious decision not to put stuff into Beat Detective. That's the biggest thing for me. Get a good drummer and have him play. Let him play to a click, but don't worry about the click once he plays.

DC: Beyond the vinyl format, are albums still important? Are they important in the Spotify era?

ND: They are to artists that I work with. This woman Sara Tindley I just worked with who's a local, I just really liked her songs, and she made an album. She's going to play probably fifteen shows, and unless the songs get picked up by some movie or something, it's not a big… there's no press. There's a little bit of press. And she wanted to make a record. And a lot of young bands too, part of it for the younger bands, some of it's nostalgia. And for the older people it's just how we've always done it. There's something about that format. And maybe if the original format was 20 songs, that's what we'd all be doing right now. I don't know why the 10 song number is magic. And if I think about it most of the albums I really love are probably 8 songs. I think *Born To Run* is 8 songs. Tons of prog records. I mean Yes' *Close to the Edge* was 3 songs, but it was roughly 45 minutes of music. I think for whatever reason… that became the standard for a couple of reasons, but it does seem like it's the right number.

DC: My last question then, what is the future of the multi-song format, the multi-song album?

ND: Oh I think there's still a future. I think rock's going to have a resurgence. Just because people are more and more into live music and the difference between seeing some guy behind

a turntable and seeing a bunch of people with guitars, it's a massive difference. And I don't care who you are. If you're 15 or 55, it's pretty obvious when you see it. It almost looks silly to me, the DJ movement. I get everyone getting into it because of the music, but the actual visual part of it, and the power of that, there's just no comparison. And rock records are always going to be records I think. They're going to be albums. Because that's all they ever were. That's how it started.

And I also think - I'm holding out as an old prog fan, that music's going to take a turn. There's a lot of prog music that I listen to that sounds absolutely pompous now, and sort of overblown. But the idea that records should be serious, and there should be a seriousness about them, it's not all fun and games. Even though you're having fun when you're making them, and there's a sense of humour involved. I hope that comes back. I mean the world needs it. The world is certainly as messed up as it was in the 60s. And we need artists to tell us what's happening. And we need artists to help us escape. We need that stuff. Everybody needs it. There's certainly not less of a need for important music out there. Maybe more need than there ever was. I'm holding out, man.

DC: Nick, thank you very much for taking part.

ND: Pleasure.

APPENDIX E: Links to Recordings

Alastyn - Album

https://soundcloud.com/user-501214979/sets/alastyn-album/s-Tza1z

Alastyn - EP 1

https://soundcloud.com/user-501214979/sets/alastyn-ep1/s-EuA5o

Alastyn - EP 2

https://soundcloud.com/user-501214979/sets/alastyn-ep2/s-UZmF6

Alastyn - EP 3

https://soundcloud.com/user-501214979/sets/alastyn-ep3/s-3yxF0

Alastyn - Prison Jungle Stems

https://soundcloud.com/user-501214979/sets/alastyn-prison-jungle-stems/s-OnKBq

APPENDIX F: What if the Beatles didn't break up? A Digitally Transmuted Playlist

The Beatles - Let It Down (1970)

1. Instant Karma! (We All Shine On) (Lennon)
2. My Sweet Lord (Harrison)
3. Every Night (McCartney)
4. Come and Get It (McCartney Demo Version from *Anthology 3*)
5. It Don't Come Easy (Starr)
6. Isolation (Lennon)
7. Let It Down (Harrison)
8. Mother (Lennon)
9. The Lovely Linda (McCartney)
10. Junk (McCartney)
11. I Me Mine (Harrison)
12. Cold Turkey (Lennon)
13. Maybe I'm Amazed (McCartney)
14. All Things Must Pass (Harrison)

This playlist is a collection of music recorded by the four Beatles soon after their breakup in 1969. It has been arranged as a playlist in iTunes, although earlier incarnations of the sequence were done as a cassette mixtape, and a CD-R. Although Beatles had effectively broken up as a band by the time most of these songs were recorded, the four members continued to collaborate to a certain degree on each other's solo works, and I wanted to bring these together as a hypothetical album. George Harrison played guitar on John Lennon's "Instant Karma!", and also Ringo Starr's "It Don't Come Easy". Ringo in turn played drums on John's "Isolation", "Mother", and "Cold Turkey", as well as several of George's songs. "I Me Mine" is included as the only actual Beatles song in the sequence, as it was the only new song to be recorded after the *Abbey Road* album (even though John didn't take part in its recording). I have titled the sequence *Let It Down* after one of George Harrison's songs, and also as a play on the title of their actual last released album, *Let It Be*.

I included songs that were commercially successful on their original release (including Paul's "Come and Get It" which was a hit for British group Badfinger in 1969), and balanced these out with other songs that provided a sense of contrast and flow. In sequencing these songs, I sought to impose the constraints that would have been present in 1970, in particular the technical limitations of the LP format. Each side contains seven songs and is just over 23 minutes in length. In *Summer of Love: The Making of Sgt. Pepper*, George Martin discusses his approach to album sequencing. I have used some of these principles with this playlist, for example having a strong opening to side one, followed by a change of mood (Martin & Pearson, 1994, p. 148) (which is evident in the first three tracks of this playlist), and in featuring at least one lead vocal from each band member. I included four George Harrison songs, which was more than he usually had on a Beatles LP, but I felt given the huge success of his solo work at this time, it warranted him being given equal weight to John and Paul. I tried to arrange the sequence so that each member's songs were spread evenly throughout, and no singer had more than two songs in a row. I sequenced the songs to provide a sense of contrast between them, such as the progression from "Isolation" to "Let It Down, and "Mother" to "The Lovely Linda". The confessional "Maybe I'm Amazed" by Paul McCartney as second last song provides an emotional climax to the sequence, before the collection is brought to a close by George's "All Things Must Pass", which declares the album at an end, and also serves as a statement on the reality of the Beatles' breakup.

Their occasional instrumental contributions aside, the four ex-Beatles largely worked independently on their songs. Despite this, they were each coming from a similar position in writing, namely reacting to the breakup of their band, and trying to forge new individual musical identities. Paradoxically, this establishes a recurring theme throughout the songs and provides this sequence with a sense of coherence. The approach to production on Paul's "The Lovely Linda" (recorded spontaneously in his lounge room), is vastly different to Phil Spector's elaborate production on George's "Let It Down", yet both songs spring from similar motivations; namely a desire by their respective authors to establish themselves as solo artists, and to put the Beatles behind them. This collection therefore works as an album. There is a consistency of purpose to all the songs which helps them sit together, and the sequencing of the songs follows a logic of practice established by George Martin on their other albums.