University of Salford MANCHESTER

School of Arts & Media
Practice as Research Centre of Excellence

Context and Research Timeline

RESEARCHER: Dr Brendan Williams
UOA: D 33
OUTPUT: Acoustic Electronica – Engineering and Producing a New Jazz Aesthetic

Whilst the document below illustrates periods of time specifically dedicated to the outputs in question it cannot adequately describe the amount of research time dedicated to the process of bringing the albums into existence in totality: The records were not made sequentially; techniques explored both before and in-between whilst working on unrelated projects have (tangentially) had a marked impact on the creative and technical direction of the practice.

Bands or record labels approach a producer / engineer as a result of their demonstrable creative and technical abilities; their 'credits'. The subsequent recordings which we make embody knowledge, arrived at through iterative methodologies which synthesise techniques spanning decades of technical and creative practice. My own practice is broad (in terms of both genre and breadth of engagement) and as a result I am able to draw from practices which often remain distinct, in order to best enable creative success and contribute original knowledge.

This Figshare collection contains conference abstracts and presentations / papers which detail and contextualise my contributions to the outputs. These papers are listed below in the timeline of research activity specifically relating to the practice-based outputs:

Between Isolation and Integration - Creating the Jazz Aesthetic in Acoustic – Electronica Recordings – Art of Record Production conference (Aalborg) 2016

Mechanical, Algorithmic, Binaural: Aesthetic considerations surrounding reverberation and spatialisation techniques explored in GoGo Penguin's *A Humdrum Star* – Crosstown Traffic / Art of Record Production conference (Huddersfield) 2018

Aesthetic Manifestos and Binaural Integration: An investigation of pre, in session and post-production techniques employed in GoGo Penguin's self-titled 2020 album release – MuPACT (Music Production and Creative Technology). Alongside Simon Zagorski-Thomas, Rupert Till, Paul Thompson, Helen Reddington, Andrew Bourbon, Mark Thorley and Justin Patterson I co-founded the MuPACT seminar programme which served as a vital tool to continue academic debate through the first lockdown.

Date	***Research activities, points of dissemination and rationale for decisions***
March 2013	Pre-production writing and rehearsal sessions, Adelphi Building, Salford.
31st March – 3rd April 2013	Recording **V2.0** material in Giant Wafer Studio, Llanbadarn Fynydd, mid Wales.

May – July 2013	Editing and rough mixing of Giant Wafer materials, at this stage it was decided that additional material, along-side alternative versions of existing tracks would be recorded. Due to a lack of availability / practicality in reconvening in Wales, we decided to record at 80Hz Studio. I had previously worked here with the contemporary classical ensemble Psappha and made two albums with Matthew Halsall for Gondwana Records. Whilst the studio was acoustically distinct from Giant Wafer it did offer similar levels of isolation and good line of sight, as discussed above in 'context'.
7-8th August 2013	Recording **V2.0** material in 80Hz Studio, Manchester.
August – Jan 2014	Mixing the completed **V2.0** tracks in my own project facility, Salford.
Jan 2014	Mastering **V.20**, 80Hz Studio Manchester
14th March 2014	**V2.0 Released – The record receives positive reviews in both broadsheet and specialist music press, the band tour the UK and Europe.**
September 2014	**V2.0** announced at a shortlisted album for the 2014 Mercury Music Prize. Significant press follows, along-side BBC radio and television appearances.
29th Oct 2014	GoGo Penguin perform at the Mercury Music Prize ceremony, broadcast live on the BBC
	GoGo Penguin sign a three-album contract with Blue Note Records, the label agree that the band should continue to work with the established production team.
	Man Made Object pre-production sessions, Manchester
30th May – 6th June 2015	Recording begins on **Man Made Object**, Giant Wafer Studio, Llanbadarn Fynydd, mid Wales. We follow broadly similar recording practice to that of V2.0 but make notable improvements in isolation and capture.
June 2015	Most of this month was taken up with overdubs, additional tracking sessions and mixing at my own facility and 80hz Manchester. During the latter stages of this process we began to experiment with the use of the 80Hz live room as a reverberation chamber, utilising a multi-speaker array to spatialise the core elements of the band.
5th Feb 2016	**Man Made Object Released**
1st – 4th Dec 2016	***Between Isolation and Integration*** *- Creating the Jazz Aesthetic in Acoustic – Electronica Recordings* is presented at the 11th Art of Record Production conference in Aalborg Denmark. This paper (contained in the collection) discussed my work with GoGo Penguin to date with, exploring notions of 'traditional' aesthetic treatments with respect to jazz.
	GGP perform tracks from V2.0 and Man Made Object live at my new recording facility Low Four. The performance is streamed live and archived on the Low Four website. This gives us an opportunity to consider the studio as a potential location for future recording sessions. To date the performance has been viewed 1,481,928 times.
10th – 23rd June 2017	Recording sessions for **A Humdrum Star** take place in Low Four Studio Manchester.
28th June – 26th July 2017	Overdubs, editing and mixing **A Humdrum Star**, Low Four and 80Hz studios

15th - 16th July 2017	I presented and contributed as a panellist to ***Continental Drift*** *– A Century of Jazz on Record*, Edinburgh.
9th Feb 2018	**A Humdrum Star released.**
21 April 2018	**V2.0 'Deluxe edition' released.** A remastered double vinyl version of the 2014 album is released including all 'bonus' material (initially Japan only).
3-5 Sept 2018	**Mechanical, Algorithmic, Binaural**: Aesthetic considerations surrounding reverberation and spatialisation techniques explored in GoGo Penguin's *A Humdrum Star".* Conference presentation: This paper is currently in consideration for the peer reviewed Journal for the Art of Record Production. (note, 2nd Feb 2021; there is no word on when, or if, conference proceedings from Huddersfield ARP will be produced, it's extremely frustrating).
25-27 Jan 2019	Recording **Music For Film** EP in 80Hz Studio.
7 Feb 2019	Recording bow boss parts for **Music For Film** EP, University of Salford.
15 March 2019	Finalising **Music For Film** mixes, 80Hz
2nd – 13th September 2019	Pre-production begins on **GoGo Penguin** (self-titled album release)**,** Ancoats Manchester
16th – 27th September 2019	Recording **GoGo Penguin,** Chairworks Studio Castelford. The studio was chosen as we wanted work residentially again, but in a new location closer to Manchester. The large live room was notable in its acoustic characteristic; We felt that here (in contrast to the acoustically 'dead' Low Four) we would be able to explore binaural capture techniques more effectively due to the prominence of near reflections in the initial capture. In total three Neumann KU100 dummy heads were used in the recording sessions, each used prominently in the capture of bass, drums and piano. The heads were hired through funding made available from an internal UOS fund to support Impact Case Study leads and through our relationship with Sennheiser, who distribute the units.
4th-8th / 18th – 22nd November 2019	Mixing **GoGo Penguin**, 80Hz.
Feb / March 2020	Discussions underway regarding the release of a binaural 'headphone only' version of **GoGo Penguin** between Blue Note and Sennheiser. Despite optimism on both sides ultimately this did not go ahead due to administrative complexities around the onset of the first Europe wide Covid 19 lockdown. A 'proof of concept' exists and has attracted significant interest in academic circles.
20th May 2020	**Aesthetic Manifestos and Binaural Integration: An investigation of pre, in session and post-production techniques employed in GoGo Penguin's self-titled 2020 album release** – MuPACT seminar presentation. A demonstration of the binaural mix environment created for the project described above.

Jan 2021	Discussions underway with Dear VR, the German virtual reality audio company who produce the software used to mix the binaural project described above. Dear VR would like to include the research seminar footage in their blog to exemplify innovative uses of their software in a creative context.