

Welcome To The Good Times

A Capstone Project

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Music in Music Technology

Southern Utah University

by

Jennifer Ketrow

November 20, 2022

© 2022

Jennifer Ketrow

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Table of Contents

Abstract

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Chapter 2 - Pre-Production

Chapter 3 - Production

Chapter 4 - Post-Production

Chapter 5 - Conclusion

Sources Cited or Bibliography

Abstract

Welcome To The Good Times is an 8 song EP written, produced, mixed and mastered by Jennifer Ketrow and released under her solo artist name, “Chiba Neko.” The EP offered something for everyone, especially fans of Garage Rock, Americana, and Retro Music. The project was completed using Logic and ProTools and a host of stock and purchased plugins. Additionally, one analog analog device, an original Farfisa Matador keyboard organ was used on *Don't Want To Be Your Baby*. *Welcome To The Good Times* is influenced by acts/ensembles like The Black Keys, The Zombies, MC5, The Kinks, and with a touch of the Cranberries, and some Lucinda Williams.

Chapter 1 Introduction

“Music is an essential aspect of all human civilizations and has the power to emotionally, morally, and culturally affect society. When people from one culture exchange music with each other, they gain valuable insight into another way of life.” (Peralta, 2022). Musical culture, whether it be represented by rock and roll, R&B, rap, jazz, and all sub genres is prevalent throughout society as the advent of technology continues to bring listeners closer to creators and those creators can have a larger lasting impact on those listeners than ever before, so culturally speaking, music in all forms affects society and is a direct reflection of society through the eyes of the individual(s) making the music. Additionally, music is a vehicle for expression and a tool for emotional suggestion and is widely utilized by filmmakers and music supervisors in order to enhance visual media expressions, and to attract and retain audience interest or to convey a central message, so the insight into different lives continues as film is married to sound.

Not every musician sets out to create music specifically for film or TV, preferring instead to create a pure expression of their deepest emotions and favorite influences, which is where *Welcome To The Good Times* derives its core central message as an aural representation of everything and anything that has influenced the creator of this project, and will serve as a testament to the recording, mixing, mastering and all applicable audio production skills learned in this program in order to enhance the chances that the 8 songs featured in this project will not only serve as an authentic method of expression, but will also be appealing to TV, film and production music libraries seeking content for commercial audio licensing opportunities. Radio programs geared toward Garage Rock/Americana sounds will place these songs in regular rotation to further promote the brand and messages of the album. Casual listeners will enjoy finding songs that they enjoy and will want to listen to on repeat, while fans of the Garage

Rock/Americana genre will find something new to share and make part of their lives as they learn about the cultures associated with those genres and how all of those influences assisted the creator in delivering the 8 song EP, *Welcome To The Good Times*.

Chapter 2

Preproduction

Welcome To The Good Times was made with a collection of both analog and digital tools, live instruments, drum loops, and MIDI sounds. Digitally speaking, Logic X will be the main DAW in operation with some excursions into Pro Tools, including all of the plugins for virtual instruments as needed, and plugins for EQ, Compression and all other filtering applications, as needed for mixing and mastering of each song on the EP.

Analog Devices

It is essential that mastery of analog devices be made in order to utilize the unique offerings from each device as it pertains to the tone color and arrangement of each song. It is fairly standard practice for studios to have a blend of both analog and digital instruments for writers and producers to use, and thankfully the creator of this project has access to analog synths like the Farfisa organ.

Logic X and Pro Tools

As for the digital tools used in the making of this project, Logic X is a professional DAW available on Apple devices and is used in this project to record/track, mix, and master each song. Logic X is user friendly, as it looks and feels much like Garageband, the other Apple DAW and Logic additionally has an extensive collection of loops, virtual instruments, and stock plugins for audio design that will reduce the need for the purchase of additional plugins, or hardware. Pro Tools is the secondary DAW of this project. Pro Tools is very much like Logic X, however it is more suitable for recording live sounds rather than using loops or virtual instruments as there are some extra, not so user-friendly steps required to integrate virtual/MIDI instruments and the creator of this project prefers to work with as little resistance as possible as to not impede

creativity. For this very reason, other DAW systems like Ableton, Reaper, FL Studio were not selected for this project.

Influences

The EP is a celebration of songs in the Garage Rock idiom with some flavors from old school Motown/RnB/Soul music, drawing influences from musicians like The Black Keys, The Zombies, MC5, The Kinks, and the STAX rhythm section. *Welcome To The Good Times* merges the raw, guttural stylings of early Garage Rock music with the pop-sensible lyrics with catchy melodies featured in many of the hits from the Brill Building Era of the 1960's. A little more about the Brill Building and its significance in popular music history, "The Brill Building, at 1619 Broadway in New York City, gave its name to a style of pop music that was both innocent and sophisticated. Along with its less-glamorous neighbor at 1650 Broadway, this 11-story office block was the New York home of the music business – you could find a songwriter, a publisher, record a demo, and play it to a radio plugger, all in one building." (McGuinness, 2022).

For example the song, *Dear You* encompasses the pop sensibilities of Brill Building writers, but couples those melodies with a hard-driving, garage-rock style beat and fuzz drenched guitars reminiscent of the Kinks. The opening hook, "Dear you" repeats throughout at the top of each verse, rather than placing it in the center of a chorus, which was a songwriting move made popular by Brill Building writers, Bachrach-David when they composed some of their most popular, chorus-less hits like "This Guy's In Love."

The title track and selected single of the EP, *Welcome To The Good Times* employs the upbeat sensibilities of Brill Building pop styles, like found in the song, "I Can Hear Music" composed by Jeff Barry, Ellie Greenwich and Phil Spector and later covered by The Beach Boys,

yet the instrumentation of electric guitars, Mellotron flute/violin pad will lend it more to sound like a track from the band, The Zombies.

As far as the commercial applications of the songs on *Welcome To The Good Times*, it will be designed to function as a modern interpretation of the golden age of rock and roll with jangly guitars coupled with modern-day phrases, and song subject matter which will create a highly relatable and appealing set of songs for any music supervisor, film director or producer or anyone interested in licensing this selection of niche music.

Listeners may not directly identify the influences associated with *Welcome To The Good Times*, as this is not the centric focus of the project. Just like any new music, roots can be traced directly from the new project but do not overshadow the meaning behind the new work, but instead provide a familiar and beloved framework intended to be a vessel for the artist's creative message, which can be appealing to those who are seeking music containing universal life truths and experiences packaged in the Garage Rock/Vintage Pop style.

Chapter 3 Production

The technical planning and aspects of producing *Welcome To The Good Times* includes not only Logic and Pro Tools for automation and editing, but the plugins found within those programs used to mix and master each song. Some of the main plugins used on each song include EQ and compression as those are essential to maintaining an industry standard optimized sound for each track. Additionally, mastering will take place using Izotope's Ozone 9 Mastering Suite. As for the analog instruments and hardware, those are used on a song-by-song basis as a means of adding color and tone, depending on the arrangement.

Welcome To The Good Times

A quintessential jangly rock party song saturated with rich guitars, pounding drums,

mellow Mellotron, and clever lyrics that depict a time when the worst is finally over and the listener can finally enjoy the fruits of their labor and the end to suffering. Technical tools used on this recording are Logic, EQ plugins, compression plug-ins and a few filters from the Izotope plugin collection on the vocals. The drums are from a loop created by the writer using sounds from an external MIDI sampler (a technique learned as part of this technology program). The bass, guitars, and Mellotron are then layered over this drum track with the vocals as the final addition. A touch of reverb is added to the mix bus from the Fame Studios plugin from IK Multt-media.

Dear You

This song utilized Pro Tools as its primary DAW to gain access to the AIR Vacuum Synth for the added layers in this song which borders on the threshold of pop music, foregoing garage rock associate sounds and instrumentation like the Farfisa organ. The guitars are layered with more of clean 1960's, jangly tonality which also supports the pop music genre classification. The track is directly influenced by previous hits from the 1960's and early 1970's but due to the synth layers, it has a discernible 1980's Huey Lewis and The News vibe that is still fresh and relevant without sounding dated. The drums receive the same production treatment as the previous song and then the remaining instruments (bass, guitar, synths) are tracked with the vocals on top.

“Dear You” is mixed using the stock EQ and Compression plugins in Pro Tools and the vocals are given color with a plugin from Izotope that adds a gritty texture. Izotope Ozone 9 is used for the mastering stage where the industry standard dB is set, and a touch of plate reverb via a plugin from Black Rooster Audio is added for warmth and width.

We Don't Hang Like We Used To

This song follows the same blueprint as the prior listed tracks in terms of obtaining the

drum sound, however the intro was to feature a royalty-free loop from an original Mattel Optigan consumer organ, one of the first affordable samplers other than the Mellotron, but it was omitted from the final version of the song due to it not really adding much to the aesthetic of the song, but whereas the Mellotron used tape loops, the Optigan used optical discs. “The Optigan® was a kind of home organ made by the Optigan® Corporation (a subsidiary of Mattel) in the early 70’s. It was set up like most home organs of the period- a small keyboard with buttons on the left for various chords, accompaniments and rhythms. At the time, all organs produced their sounds electrically or electronically with tubes or transistors. The Optigan® was different in that its sounds were read off of LP sized celluloid discs which contained the graphic waveforms of real instruments. These recordings were encoded in concentric looping rings using the same technology as film soundtracks.” (Hicks , 2022).

The drums were tracked/produced using the sampling technique discussed in the previous song. The guitars, bass, and vocals and miscellaneous synth sounds were added. The stock EQ and compression plugins were then used to mix and balance the elements in the track. The vocals were treated with Ozone Nectar 3 plugin. Additionally, all instrument categories are sent to their own respective bus paths in order to apply EQ, compression, and other time-based elements.

Make It To Summer

The drums were programmed using Logic’s built-in drum designer. The intro uses a groove reminiscent of early Motown hits and then slaps the listener in the face with buzzy fuzz guitar and Farfisa stabs as the verse sets the pace to the pre-chorus and chorus. The chorus contains a shuffle feel driven by the bass line and the overall vibe of the song shifts from the chord stabs of “Tainted Love” by Softcell to the verses in shuffle feel from “Draggin The Line” by Tommy James and the Shondells. The vocals are shaped by the Izotope Nectar 3 plugin for

vocal saturation, EQ and compression, going through a master bus with additional EQ and compression. Additionally, all instrument categories are sent to their own respective bus paths in order to apply EQ, compression, and other time-based elements.

Church Of The Lonely

The drum production is the same as the previous song. This song features a B3 organ plugin which is stock in Logic which gives the tune an old school gospel/church/RnB feel. The guitars are simple, clean and accented to emphasize the groove of the rhythm section. The voice is once again sent through the Izotope Nectar 3 vocal plugin before heading to the vocal bus. All instrument categories are sent to their own respective bus paths in order to apply EQ, compression, and other time-based elements. Time-time based elements include reverb from the Fame Studios plugin from IK Multimedia, stock delay, and tremolo, plus a stereo spreader for the mid-to-high frequencies on the organ.

Don't Want To Be Your Baby

After facing certain peril after a catastrophic computer hard-drive failure on a 10 year old iMac and realizing the original song intended for this project, *Mind Your Own Business* was missing critical elements from the back-up hard drive when opened on a new computer, it was decided that the composition was weak and ineffective and needed to be replaced by something stronger that embodied the bold message intended by this EP, so *Don't Want To Be Your Baby* was tracked, beginning with the guitar licks, then the drum programming in Logic, followed by bass, additional guitar layers, vocals, background vocals, and the Farfisa Matador organ. All instrument categories were sent to respective bus groupings with additional stock EQ and Compression plus time-based effects. The vocals were once again processed with the Izotope Nectar 3 plugin before being sent to their own bus. The song is heavily influenced by the garage

rock music on the Sirius XM station, Little Steven's Underground Garage and will hopefully earn some air time there upon release and promotion.

As Long As I Have You (Porch Song)

The song opens with a grunge rock guitar and bass riff. The drums are programmed using Logic's drum instrument insert. A B3 organ enters at the pre-chorus to add an element of hype. The verses are purposely sparse without the organ as an element of the arrangement. All instruments are sent to their respective bus channels with EQ, compression, and time-based effects on the core tracks and final bus destinations. The vocals are once again processed with the Izotope Nectar 3 plugin before being sent to the bus. The guitar tones selected for this project were purposely kept simple and a guitar amp emulator was used to sound like a Marshall half-stack with tremolo, despite the source being from an Orange CR 120 head with 10 inch custom cab mic'd in stereo XY with a pair of Nady CM 90 cardioid condenser microphones. All electric guitars on this EP were mic'd in this fashion, but not all used amp emulators.

Time Sucker

This is probably the fun song of the bunch as it is a social commentary on those persons, places and things that suck the time out of our lives. After a really brash, lo-fi drum intro derived from a loop built using the techniques mastered in this program, *Time Sucker* then shifts into surf guitar mode with clean jangly guitars, a fuzz bass and stabby vintage organ sounds. A really bizarre synth sound alternates octaves to give the impression of the synth/theremin used in The Beach Boys song, *Wild Honey*. The only vocals here are a repeated instance of the word "SUCK," processed through the Izotope Nectar 3 plugin before being sent to a bus. All sounds are then mixed using the stock plugins in Logic (EQ and compression and time based elements previously used in the other tracks) then sent to respective bus tracks where balance is easily

achieved.

Mastering took place on all tracks on a single Logic file with a user-made “mastering desk” template to ensure the quality of loudness for each of the 8 tracks, which were bounced from their home sessions with the master out at -10dB in order to provide enough headroom for the Ozone 9 software to fully work without digital audio clipping. A reference track, “Charmer” from Aimee Mann was used to provide the loudness example and mastering was completed after each song’s wav file was trimmed and faded to provide professional continuity.

Chapter 4 Post Production

Welcome To The Good Times earned praise from listeners for its “old school” sound coupled with modern sensibilities and lyrics. The primary listeners in the beta inception of the album spanned from fellow music industry partners, musicians, radio DJ’s, and general garage rock/rock and roll fans. Judging from private streaming data via soundcloud obtained after release, the most popular songs were “Dear You” and “Don’t Want To Be Your Baby,” and “As Long As I Have Your (Porch Song).”

The popularity of “Dear You” was based on the captivating hook that listeners cited as highly appealing, but the same listeners also indicated that they deeply enjoyed the hook from “Don’t Want To Be Your Baby.” As for “As Long As I Have Your (Porch Song),” one listener said the lead vocal reminded him of Dolores O’Riordin from the Cranberries.

“Time Sucker” was fun and imaginative and perfect for running errands, or just having a good time. The emotional context of this EP is varied and it was no surprise to find listeners were drawn to the lighter, entertaining songs.

Despite “Dear You, “Don’t Want To Be Your Baby” and “As Long As I Have You” being the most popular songs on the EP, listeners agreed that the song with the best groove and feel

was “Church of The Lonely.” Listeners said it was a nice touch to have a song conveying that indescribable feeling of “meh” that one sometimes gets when life has become disappointing, especially after a period of incredible strife and despair, which was the central focus of “Church Of The Lonely.”

As for “Welcome To The Good Times,” listeners agreed that the song was a great resolution of the themes from “Church Of The Lonely,” considering “Welcome To The Good Times” is about finally arriving where one wants to be and belongs after working so hard in life.

“We Don’t Hang Like We Used To” was cited that they thought the song was about something completely different but were presently surprised by the cleverness of the lyrics describing the ever-relatable factor of “getting older” and all of those idiosyncrasies that come from that experience, especially from the vantage point of an older-millennial.

“Make It To Summer” rounded out the last place for popularity based on streaming data, however listeners agreed that these song played an integral part in the journey of this EP and the project would not be complete without the longing for summer and the decree for others to just stay in their own lane and maintain their course. Teacher listeners that were part of this beta-release study quickly identified with the track since it’s about enduring a horrible school year and longing for the freedom beyond the walls of the school.

The overall feeling from listeners was that this EP had something for everyone. Those who feel more at home with older music would enjoy the vintage sonic quality and songwriting/arrangement while those who enjoy top 40 music would engage with the lyrics and unique sounds and perspectives of the EP.

Chapter 5 - Summary And Conclusions

Welcome To The Good Times was enjoyed by many listeners from all walks of life in

several different age ranges. Even those who normally do not gravitate toward the Garage Rock idiom were enthusiastic about the EP.

In conclusion, the process of making *Welcome To The Good Times* was meaningful to both the artist and fans because acquired skills in the Master's In Music Technology were utilized to enhance the project and give a vehicle to the expression of the creator and as a result, the songs designed for this project reached a broad spectrum of listeners and helped to bring to fruition artistic visions and creativity that would not be so easily brought forth.

This was one of the most challenging albums to write, record, produce due to the technological hardships of having to purchase a new studio computer during the height of post production, and having to re-download and sometimes purchase trusted software and plugins previously used on the album. The author is grateful for having multiple file backup locations on several harddrives and is looking forward to promoting the release of *Welcome To The Good Times* for radio airplay, music licensing, and for sales on Bandcamp.com in addition to the materials being added to curated lists on streaming services.

Bibliography

Hicks , P. (2022). Optigans anonymous. Optigan. Retrieved June 2, 2022, from

<https://optigan.com/about-pea-hicks/optigans-anonymous/>

McGuinness, P. (2022, March 15). The best of the brill building: 30 timeless pop gems.

uDiscover Music. Retrieved May 29, 2022, from

<https://www.udiscovermusic.com/stories/brill-building-pop-history-songwriters-feature/>

Peralta, L. (2022, March 4). Impact of music on society - sociological effects. Save The Music

Foundation. Retrieved May 29, 2022, from

<https://www.savethemusic.org/blog/how-does-music-affect-society/#:~:text=At%20the%20core%20of%20our,take%20steps%20to%20impact%20society.>