

Elie Bashkow
Arts Award Outcome Statement

Becoming a Record Producer

When I look back on where I was a year ago when I was in the process of applying for my arts award and look at the long road that took me from there to where I am now, I see a story of immense growth and personal development

My original proposal was to record, mix, and release an EP of original music however it did not take long to become clear that I really belonged in the producer's seat, and not the artist's. Not that my own work wasn't good, but as the year progressed, I was repeatedly approached by artists asking for me to produce their music and I began to realize how naturally I fell into that role and how much joy it was bringing me. At first, I felt guilty; was I letting myself and others down by not turning down these jobs to focus on my own EP I had said I would record? But after talking with Ted Coffey, my faculty advisor and Michael Rasbury as well as doing some soul searching on my own, I realized that in reality, I would be letting myself down more by not taking these rare and special opportunities to grow as a producer and set myself up for future success. I'm glad I pivoted because at this point, producing records is what I plan on doing when I graduate from UVA.

For my faculty advisor, I chose to work with Ted Coffey from the music department. I first encountered Ted while taking his songwriting class. I decided to ask Ted to advise me because I felt that he was able to understand where I was creatively often better than I could understand myself and he has an amazing knack for guiding me in ways that I didn't even realize I needed. For example, after listening to a mix that I was hitting a wall with, he sat back and thought for a bit before saying "You could throw out an elbow a bit stronger, when you compete in technicalities you rarely win but you can always win ideas". At first, I didn't really understand what he meant but then after listening back to the song, I realized he had pinpointed the exact thing at the root of my own dissatisfaction: I was focusing on doing things technically properly and forgetting to think about how the mix was enhancing the meaning of the songs. In this case, the song needed more risks, more elbows, to really sit comfortably.

The role of producer is somewhat nebulous, super dynamic, and requires an extremely wide array of skills which shift around depending on the needs of the project and people involved. I have done everything from dealing with studio owners to making beats to writing horn arrangements to budgeting to hiring and paying musicians to writing the songs to helping the artist with their personal issues to mixing to mastering to being a vocal coach to recording to counselling artists to setting up guitars and everything in between. This is exactly what I love about the job, you never know what to expect. With Ted's help, I was able to navigate handling all these complex duties and really learn from each experience.

Once I realized I needed to pivot to focusing on production, I also realized that my original proposal no longer was viable as it was set up for the process of me recording my own project. What I now needed were the tools of a producer, tools much less sexy than time in a fancy studio and a big promo budget. I needed a better computer, industry standard software, and some good

speakers. Up to this point, I had been using a 2014 MacBook Pro I bought used off eBay and stock software that came with my DAW (digital audio workstation). I was beginning to really feel the drag of these subpar tools and so after consulting with the committee, I repurposed my funds towards upgrading to better and more professional instruments of production.

I purchased:

A 2021 MacBook Pro m1 Max - \$2000

Nothing is worse than having your tools interfere with your work and no tool is more important than the computer. This flagship macbook really lets me do what I want creatively without being at all encumbered by my technology. Truly a game changer in my productions.

A pair of Eris E8 studio monitors (off Facebook marketplace) - \$300

To make stuff sound good, you gotta be able to hear it good. These powerful speakers reveal everything that is going on in my music, opening up my mixing and producing abilities.

and a few choice pieces of industry standard software:

Izotope RX 9 Standard audio repair - \$150

Cleans up noisy recordings, guitar hum, mouth clicks, power buzz. Boring but oh so crucial.

G-Force software's M-Tron Pro vintage mellotron virtual instrument - \$100

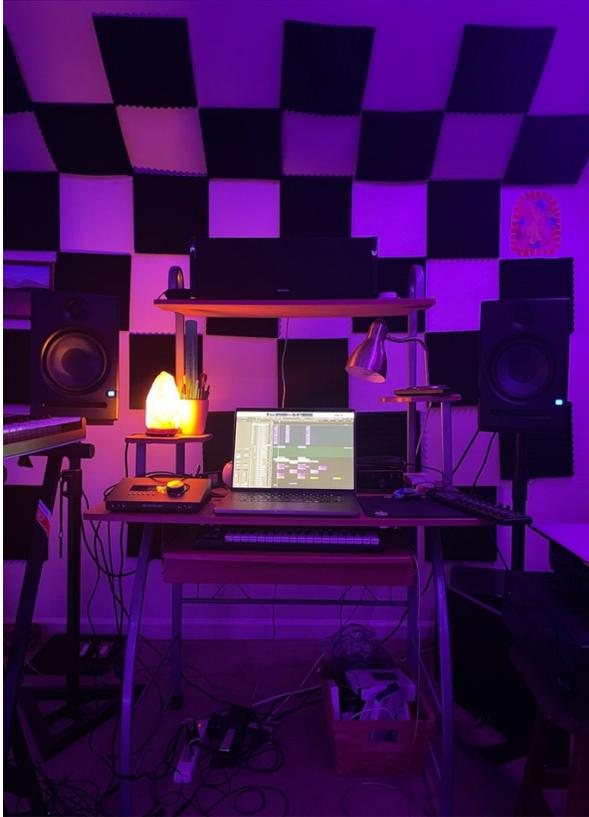
A great software version of the iconic tape sampler used by everyone from The Beatles to Ice Cube to the Red Hot Chili Peppers

Native Instruments Kontakt 6 sampler engine - \$200

The world's most powerful platform for sample-based instruments. A total must have for modern music production.

One year subscription to plugin alliance's essential bundle of production and mixing tools - \$100
Compressors, EQ's, reverbs, synths, etc. The essential tools that I use on every song,

At the time of this writing, seven songs produced and mixed by me have been released within the past year with seven more scheduled over the next few months and I am so proud of every single release. I am full on producing four separate artists and working with an additional five in more casual contexts. I never thought I would be able to reach this point so quickly. One thing is certain, without the support of the Miller Arts Scholarship, I would not be able to have achieved what I have thus far, and I am so grateful for that.



My home studio with speakers and new Macbook Pro



A collage of record covers from some of the songs I produced



Setting up hardware for recording at White Star Sound while producing an EP for the Isabel Bailey Band and the M-Tron Pro Mellotron Plugin

