

Let's Make Hyperpop:

The Internet Can Make Anyone a Star

Creating a practical output inspired by post-internet objects

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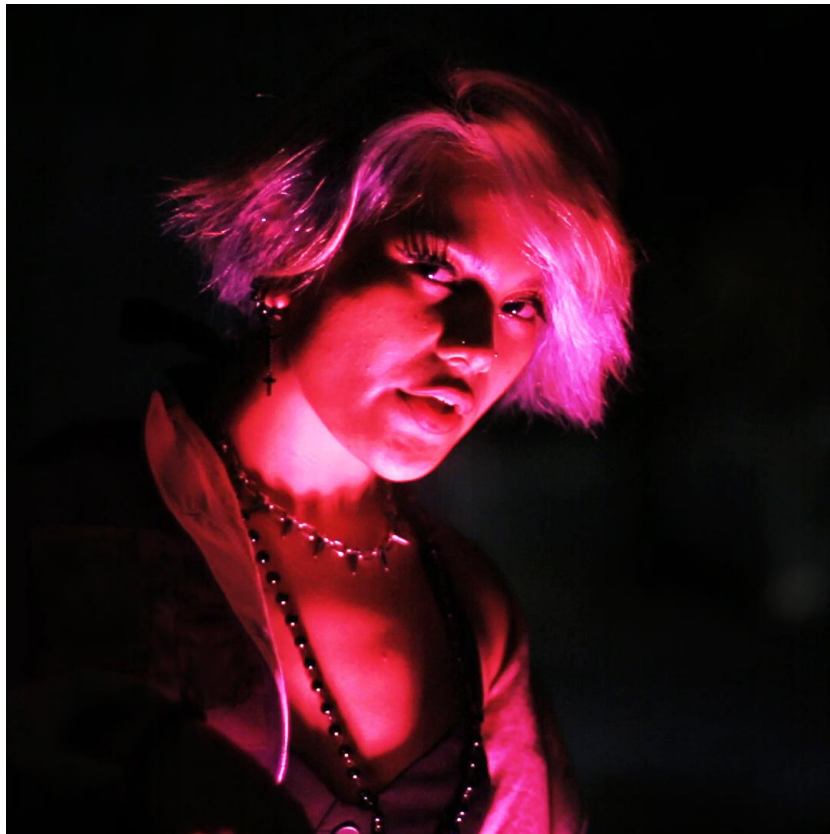
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Access to the Practice-Based Artifacts



Cover Artwork

Music Track	Link to listen here: https://on.soundcloud.com/Rwiw
Music Video	Link to watch here: https://youtu.be/OM9uLi6YJic
Download Links	Link to view and download all components in Google Drive folder here: Google Drive

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgments), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of high learning.

Signed: *William Chea*

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Abstract

The evolution of the internet into Web 2.0, alongside the introduction of high speed internet via broadband forever changed the world as we knew it. With Web 2.0 and its utility allowing for the widespread popularisation of user-generated content and user participation through social media, and mobile apps; the internet became commonplace in our everyday life and paved the way for the disruption of many industries and sectors. One such sector is the world of art, where artists are now creating art with a disposition based on the consciousness of the internet's utility and its effects on culture and society. Art that is created as a result of this internet consciousness is referred to as "post-internet" art and can manifest itself in many ways. One of the more recent manifestations of post-internet art is the music genre known as "hyperpop", a style of music consisting of a combination of aesthetic choices that have culminated as a result of the affordances provided by the internet to give artists the opportunity to disrupt, and satirise the mainstream pop music industry which predates and exists alongside the internet. This exegesis explores the relationship between hyperpop and its background as a post-internet form of art through practice-based research based on the creation of my own hyperpop artifact. It examines the conventions needed for the production of a hyperpop single release and finds that these conventions operating as post-internet components offer the ability for unlimited creative freedom by offering anyone the capability to produce musical content for global distribution and online consumption.

Chapter 1.0: Introduction

The development of trends within art and media coincides with the changes found in the society that makes them. Before the internet, access and exposure to art and media was limited to what was available to someone based on their geographical location and curation by industry gatekeepers. If you sought foreign short films, your only choice would be to catch them at a film festival if your city hosted one. If you wanted to look at historic paintings, you would have to seek photographs of them in books at the library or travel to an art museum which may not have what you are looking for. If you wanted to learn how to make your own art, you could either attend classes, borrow books, or learn through trial and error; all of which would easily consume a large amount of time for the aspiring artist. Showcasing your work as a small-time artist would also have been a tall task; if you did not know the right people to facilitate the display of your work, you would have no outlet to show your work to others.

With the introduction of Web 2.0 internet circa 1999, art was forever changed in the way it was consumed, distributed, created and taught as the utility afforded by search engines and social media gave users instant access to media and knowledge from all over the world, who were also given the ability to share their own content. As a result of this, art was able to change to take advantage of the internet and its possibilities, and art that was deliberate in its awareness and adoption of the internet became known as “post-internet” (Olson, 2008) .

For this practice-based Master’s I will be looking at a post-internet art phenomena known as “hyperpop”; a recently formed genre of music that exists as a byproduct of post-internet art. Hyperpop can be categorised as a genre of music defined by its experimental pop music-based compositions, supported by lo-fi production aesthetics and visuals. The existence of hyperpop was facilitated by the ubiquitous nature of the internet and its ability to allow any artist to overcome creative, financial and social barriers that come with the mainstream music industry. To explore hyperpop and its contextual background in post-internet art, I will be answering the following research question:

“What conventions make the music genre known as ‘Hyperpop’ a post-internet object?”

To achieve this, I have created my own hyperpop artifact mimicking a music single release which will consist of the following:

- Music track
- Music video
- Cover artwork

For context, I am a musical artist with experience in songwriting, production, video direction, and digital art. With a background of 12 years in rock-based music such as emo and punk, I found hyperpop's subversion of music industry standard practices quite fascinating. As an independent artist without any industry backing, I found that hyperpop was in many ways similar in ethos to that of punk-based music in its "do-it-yourself" and grassroots nature. This parallel between the two musical subcultures heavily influenced my decision to study hyperpop; which, although sharing similarities with punk and its counterculture roots, is relatively new and exists as a result of the internet influenced society we live in today.

In completing this practice-based Master's I have written this exegesis to explain and examine the practice of producing a hyperpop artifact and as a method to understand the conventions of the produced hyperpop and its operation as a post-internet object.

A practice-based thesis does not have 'two bodies of work' but instead should be understood as a 'single body of work' and the role of the exegesis in this single body of work is to contextualise the research practices and its outcomes in the creation of the produced artifact.

The following chapters of this exegesis will include: a Literature Review which will be a collation and summary of existing literature on the subject of post-internet art, hyperpop, and music media; the Methodology which will explain the process I will be undertaking and how I will be presenting my research; the Anatomy of a Hyperpop Single which breaks down, explains and provides context for each media component that makes up a hyperpop single release; Results which will be a walkthrough and presentation of the creation of my own hyperpop artifact; and Discussion which will be the discussion of my findings in relation to my research question.

Chapter 2.0: Literature Review

2.1: Introduction

With the emergence of “Web 2.0” around circa 1999, or the internet as we know it today, being prevalent and inescapable for those participating in modern developed society, the formation and progression of media, art, and even culture has changed and continues to develop in ways that are unconventional. This is because of the affordances enabled by the existence of the internet in its current incarnation and the ease-of-use of distributing user-generated content. The phenomenon of “hyperpop”, a genre of music that exists today as a result of the post-internet world we live in, is one such example of how Web 2.0 has allowed these unconventional and non-traditional forms of media, art, and culture to culminate. Hyperpop is unconventional in the way that it could not exist on mainstream media outlets such as television or the radio due to its self-aware use of subverting mainstream pop culture ideas of music arrangement, gender identity, production, and social commentary, and requires the distribution capabilities of the internet to thrive as a niche community and fandom online.

Due to the recent nature of Hyperpop, having only really existed since the mid-2010s, much literature regarding the subject is sparse. By documenting the process of my attempt in creating a hyperpop artifact by way of using the template of a musical single release (song, music video, and cover artwork), I will be able to shed light on how and why the conventions of the genre exist as they do in their current form.

2.2: Post-Internet

The internet in its infancy between the early 1990s up until the introduction of modern social media websites and high-speed broadband in the mid-2000s, consisted mainly of text-based websites and messageboards, and was not ubiquitous in usage and influence in everyday life as it is today; this primitive version of the internet was known as “Web 1.0” (Chakraborty, 2021). Media such as images, and video were rare due to the slow connection speeds offered by dial-up internet connections which discouraged users from uploading and downloading media at risk of their browser slowing down to a halt. Because of this, Web 1.0 was not as heavily in use as the internet is today (referred to as “Web 2.0”) due to it being cumbersome to use and access. The change from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 circa 1999, which saw the introduction of social

media and user-generated content-based websites such as Myspace, and YouTube completely changed the way people used the internet and vastly increased its popularity and usage (Grossman, 2006). Moreover, this newfound advent of user-generated content, fast internet speeds, and hardware innovations such as smartphones (which are key indicators of the current Web 2.0 era) not only facilitated the exponential growth of unique daily internet users, but the disruption of industries that failed to adapt to internet-focused business models, leading to the dominance of app-based businesses such as Airbnb, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, Uber, WhatsApp, and Netflix (Li, 2022). With the conversion to broadband from dial-up as the world transitioned into the era of Web 2.0, users were able to finally share media at a rate multitudes quicker than dial-up. As a result of these changes, the internet found its way into the everyday lives of its users allowing them on demand access to entertainment and communication with friends and strangers via instant chat apps and social media. This newfound possibility of instant access to share and consume digital media, changed the way artists were able to promote their work and paved the way for the idea of a “post-internet” era of art; a reaction to the ubiquitous nature of the internet and the consciousness of its utility whether beneficial or detrimental.

“Post-internet art”, coined by Marisa Olson (2008), refers to an art object created consciously taking into account the context of materials and ideas found or developed on the internet (Christou & Hazas, 2017). The Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (2014) suggests that “post-internet” does not necessarily refer to a time period after the internet but instead a conscious attitude in an artist’s frame of mind in the context of their artistic practice that takes into account the existence of the internet and how this affects the process of the art object from start to finish. Authors and institutions within the post-internet art sphere (Olson, 2014; Vierkant, 2010; Quaranta & Varaglia, 2017; Christou & Hazas, 2017; Artsy, 2022) have oft-cited Gene McHugh’s (2009) definition of the term to be the most influential, referring to art that is “internet aware” in a sense that it is made in response to the existential condition that the internet is commonplace within society.

Art objects such as Hito Steyerl’s (2013) video titled ‘How Not to be Fucking Seen’, is one example of post-internet art. This video parodies online “how-to” tutorials by focusing on the subject matter of avoiding omnipresent surveillance by digital technologies (Tate, 2013; Chatel, 2019). The theme of the video, which is a commentary on the constant non-consensual surveillance of ordinary citizens by entities such as governments, corporations and/or other

malicious parties afforded by the existence of the internet qualifies as post-internet art as this is art that could only exist in a world where the internet is a banality that pervades our daily lives.

Another art object, Zach Blas' (2012) '[Facial Weaponization Suite](#)' is a series of face masks made to represent the protest of biometric facial recognition software utilised by governments and corporations. The masks were modelled from aggregated facial data of participants and resulted in masks that were nebulous in form, making the wearer undetectable by biometric facial recognition technologies (Blas, 2012). One such mask is titled the 'Fag Face Mask', which Blas (2012), generated from an aggregation of biometric facial data of a variety of faces of queer men; this mask was created as a response to scientific studies that aim to be able to determine one's sexual orientation through facial recognition technology. In a world where social media apps such as Instagram and Snapchat, and now smartphones are using facial recognition software for features such as selfies and user identification, it is not difficult to see how the idea of the 'Facial Weaponization Suite' would be conceived as like ongoing non-consensual surveillance through the internet, facial recognition technology is now a normal part of the internet and the digital technologies we use to access it every day.

The case studies of post-internet art mentioned previously show us examples of art that was created within the context of being "internet aware", and is distinctly different from and not to be confused with one of the definitions McHugh (2009) looked at when postulating his own idea of what post-internet art should refer to which is now considered obsolete, which was Olson's original suggestion: "Art made *after* one's use of the Internet." and "The yield of her surfing and computer use", as she describes it. An example of this would be Chris Ashley's (2009) 'Look See' art piece, which were a series of prints of internet browser screenshot images presented offline. This is significant as it differentiates post-internet art from art that is created using the internet solely as a medium rather than a starting point that provides context for the theme and meaning of the work. Additionally, Domenico and Val (2015) elaborate on this by stating that post-internet art can be misconstrued as a visual style making references to the desktop and online environment rather than consciousness of the internet as a context for artistic practice.

With the internet now being irrefutably ubiquitous in the daily lives of those within developed societies, it can be argued that consciousness of the internet is almost inescapable due to its importance to our daily routines and influence on popular culture. According to Christou and Hazas (2017), now that we are living in a world where the internet has become a part of our reality, internet artists can no longer adopt a position outside of it, as internet culture is now just

culture, and most knowledge and information we gain comes from the World Wide Web. If memes and viral videos from the internet can change the way people speak to each other offline, it is not entirely improbable that more art is becoming increasingly post-internet as time passes.

2.3: Music Video

The music video as a medium to promote new music releases, has existed in some form since the early 1960s with artists such as The Beatles having televised pre-recorded performances of songs such as 'Help!' and 'We Can Work It Out' in 1965 on television programmes across the world as a way to circumvent having to appear in person for shows in locations such as the USA (Siqueira, 2020). However, the launch of MTV (Music Television) in 1981 forever changed the way music was promoted and consumed by providing a serialised schedule of music videos, music news, and live performances of popular artists. Music videos were an integral part of a record deal for artists as they played a pivotal role in promoting an artist, with MTV's target audience being impressionable teens and young adults (Jack, 1997; Cook, 2013). Record labels relied on music videos, and they were considered a necessity for an artist to attain commercial success. When signing artists, major labels incorporated music videos into the organisation structure of their companies with video music operations departments due to music videos being perceived as the most effective way to promote artists (Jack, 1997). However, with the introduction of the internet, viewership of MTV began to drop as music fans had easier on-demand access to music news and videos (Cook, 2013).

With the onset of YouTube's popularity in the era of Web 2.0, YouTube has become an important platform for music consumption as music content on YouTube is the most popular category on YouTube; this has allowed artists from independent backgrounds to participate in being able to share their videos to a large audience without having to rely on television syndication (Liikanen, & Salovaara, 2015). The meaning of the term "music video" has become blurred with the onset of YouTube as today "music videos" can now mean any kind of video content based around music. Though the cultural form of the pop music video has been studied and taught for decades, independent artists are creating their own music videos with a DIY aesthetic that does not adhere to such conventions in an effort to make something themselves and reject professional approaches (Vernallis, 2015).

With the introduction of high-speed internet, social media and video sharing platforms such as YouTube, music videos no longer require high budgets to be reliant on reaching an audience as is evident with music artist Ok Go's 'Here It Goes Again'. This is due to the nature of YouTube and online video favouring creativity over expensive production. Advances in digital technology have made it easy for independent artists to produce their own digital video; for example, OK Go's 'Here It Goes Again' boasts a budget of \$5. Because online videos can be monetised, music videos are also now a stream of revenue as opposed to being a purely promotional tool as it was in the era of MTV (Maura, 2014), therefore changing the intent of a music video from not only being an aid to maximise the reach of the music but also to provide an artist with income from their art.

Music videos are becoming more prevalent in the era of internet video as a tool to communicate with fans and generate attention. Artists today are expected to have skills in video production as well as music production in the landscape of social media (Fabian, 2011). This has never been truer than today with the popularity of the social media application Tiktok which has a focus on short form video content, often with accompanying music. Artists such as Nessa Barrett, Olivia Rodrigo, and even New Zealand's own Benee have found success within the mainstream pop music industry due to their popularity on the platform with not only their own music video content, but user-generated content made by fans which have allowed their music to go viral and transcend traditional forms of promotion (Zipper, 2021). With digital video now being more cost-effective to produce and share due to advancements in video production technology and resources available on the internet, music videos created in today's day and age can be argued as being fundamentally post-internet.

Because there are many music videos that are created to promote sales of music produced by the artists featured in them, they can often be interpreted as a form of public image management and expression by an artist toward their fans. With this in context, these kinds of music videos are conceived not to convey explicit ideas or narratives, but to further the careers of music artists by eliciting favourable images of artists within the minds of viewers and by making use of specific kinds of imagery or a certain aesthetic, a director or artist can influence how viewers might feel about the artist (Gow, 1994). Music videos suppress narrative direction for various reasons; the fact that the subjects on screen cannot speak and are animated by the music may work against conveying the narrative of a music video. Moreover, because pop songs are usually sectioned into a formula of a verse, chorus, verse, chorus, bridge, and then

chorus; it can be difficult for a music video to follow a narrative through-line as it is at the mercy of the structural and dynamic flow of the music (Vernallis, 1994). Directors make use of visual shortcuts such as cultural stereotypes or gender roles in order to quickly convey a point in the short time given in a music video (Monique Ward, Hansborough, & Walker, 2005.). That being said, this is not to say that all music videos are created devoid of any meaning, but it is important to be aware of the promotional and impressionistic qualities of the media form (Gow, 1994).

As a result of youth consuming music videos from an age in which they are impressionable, music videos (like many forms of media) can be potentially harmful in the way they portray the subjects on screen; especially those that use visual shorthand such as gender role cues. Imagery that reinforces attitudes towards gender and sexuality directly influence the values of those exposed and can exacerbate negative sexual beliefs among impressionable youth. An example would be the objectification of women in sexually subordinate roles to men and the acceptance of this attitude among young women who view music videos with such imagery (Kalof, 1999). Due to the high amount of media that children and teenagers consume daily, attitudes towards gender roles and sexuality in media can enforce these ideas among young people. Conceptions about gender role norms are acquired early with evidence that children gather a large amount of knowledge regarding gender by the age of five. As children become older, their views and understanding surrounding gender become more detailed as they enter adolescence and begin to engage in sexual relationships, and may even become exacerbated during this time. (Monique Ward, Hansborough, & Walker, 2005.).

2.4: Music Artwork / Album Covers

When music became a tangible product for consumers to own and keep in the form of vinyl records, they were originally packaged in dull brown paper envelopes that made different records almost indistinguishable from each other. This changed in 1938 when Columbia Records commissioned the help of Alex Steinweiss to create artwork for their records, changing the landscape for buying and selling music releases (Jackson, 2021; Cook, 2013).

For musicians, cover artwork can hold a lot of weight in how casual listeners and the general public will perceive their music before even listening to it (Thronzo, 2018). In a store shelf among a wall of other vinyl records and CDs, or on an online platform such as YouTube and Spotify where music must compete with the plethora of new tracks being uploaded every

minute; a strong visual piece can catch the eye of potential consumers who may take a chance on listening to the release based on the artwork alone. The artwork also serves the purpose of being a visual identifier for the musician, similar in function to that of a logo; and as a result of this, fans will wear t-shirts, get tattoos, and show their outward appreciation of the artwork in many ways to let others know that they are fans of that particular musician, and that it is a part of their identity (Jackson, 2021; Thronzo, 2018; Cook, 2013.).

Perhaps the most prominent ongoing example of an album cover becoming iconic and instantly recognisable even for those who have not listened to the album is Joy Division's 'Unknown Pleasures' (1979). Despite the band only being active for a year between the release of Unknown Pleasures in 1979, and the death of lead vocalist Ian Curtis in 1980, the artwork for the album has persevered as a symbol for music aficionados and goth and adjacent alternative music subcultures. Since its release, the artwork for Unknown Pleasures has survived as a ubiquitous print that has been on everything from t-shirts to shower curtains, and a myriad of parodies throughout the decades since its release by other musicians and even corporations such as Disney (Lipez, 2019; Manning, 2016). This case study shows the importance of album artwork and how it can heavily affect the commercial success of an artist beyond their music, as Unknown Pleasures' artwork has allowed Joy Division to generate revenue long after its release despite them not having released any full-length albums since then.

2.5: Hyperpop

Hyperpop is a relatively new genre of music with beginnings in the early 2010s that has found its place as a niche style heavily influenced and mediated by the internet and internet culture. Journalists and writers on the subject have pointed towards artist SOPHIE's release 'Bipp' in 2013 and music producer A. G. Cook's label 'PC Music' founded in 2015 as the catalysts for the foundation of the genre, as their releases had common conventions one would describe as a maximal take on pop music infusing electro-pop, EDM, avant-garde, rock and metal that is ironic, abrasive, and a platform for LGBTQ+ representation (Briseños, 2020; Connolly, 2021; Kornhaber, 2021; Schube, 2022).

The music genre of hyperpop is inherently post-internet in nature due to its roots as a musical movement on online music sharing platform Soundcloud in its infancy in the mid-2010s to today with the virality of artist 100 gecs' release 'money machine' (which as of 2022 has amassed over 16,000,000+ views on YouTube and 76,800,000+ plays on Spotify); the single brought

attention to the genre from Spotify whose curated “hyperpop” playlist now has over 330,974 subscribers as of 2022 and is influential in the dissemination and promotion for up and coming hyperpop releases as it is also sometimes curated by well-known hyperpop artists such as 100 geecs (Dandridge-Lemco, 2020; Briseños, 2020). Moreover the playlist has one of the highest save-rates for songs appearing on the playlist on Spotify as a whole, further supporting the playlist’s unique role as a tastemaker for the hyperpop community (Enis, 2020). Barry (2015) when writing about the topic of post-internet music repeats the idea that post-internet art is art that is made with the awareness that it is going to be inevitably shared online and/or created under the pretense that the internet had influenced its creation in some way; with hyperpop having a strong reliance on internet platforms such as Spotify, Soundcloud, and YouTube to reach its listeners, it is undoubtedly a post-internet form of art.

An important aspect of hyperpop is its irony and self-awareness through the lens of being a parody of mainstream pop music and its trends by pushing pop music conventions to its limits and subverting them (Connolly, 2021; Enis, 2020; Marsh, 2020). Like pop music, hyperpop is made with catchy hooks that the casual listener can recall and remember; however, what truly separates hyperpop from mainstream pop music is its extreme juxtaposition and contrasting elements that may cause discomfort for new listeners (Connolly, 2021; Enis, 2020). For example, 100 geecs’ ‘money machine’ (2019) juxtaposes chipmunk vocal stylings with vocalist Laura Les’ ironic hypermasculine lyrics threatening the listener with ‘manly’ one-liners that are almost nonsensical such as calling the listener a “little piss baby”; the contrast between the childlike sound of the chipmunk vocals and the hypermasculine absurdist lyrics are a combination that would not be found on pop radio and are clearly ironic (Enis, 2020). The use of extremely contrasting juxtaposition also exists in the aspects of the arrangement in hyperpop music; although the chord progressions and melodies in a majority of hyperpop tracks may follow pop music conventions, it is not uncommon for a hyperpop to suddenly transition into sections taking influence from more niche genres such as metal, avant-garde, and EDM which may not make for an easy listening experience for those new to hyperpop (Kornhaber, 2021). Through the use of these juxtapositions, hyperpop satirises and acts as commentary on pop music trends (Marsh, 2020). Like hardcore punk, gangster rap, and grunge before it, hyperpop acts as a youth music movement that challenges mainstream values, conformity and consumerism and does so by being a satire of pop music and culture (Kornhaber, 2021).

Another aspect of hyperpop that defines the genre is its significance in providing a platform for LGBTQ+ music artists and listeners. Artists under the hyperpop umbrella such as SOPHIE, Laura Les, Dorian Electra, and a number of artists associated with PC Music are queer, transgender, and/or non-binary (Marsh, 2020; Schube, 2022). As a result of hyperpop's background as an internet-based genre and movement, hyperpop plays a significant part in providing a safe space for expression and representation for LGBTQ+ youth as opposed to the heteronormative and misogynist culture behind mainstream pop, hip-hop, and rock whose artists are historically conventionally attractive and cisgendered (Marsh, 2020; Schube, 2022; Woodhouse, 2020). By using the internet as an affordance to bypass the gatekeepers within the mainstream music industry, LGBTQ+ artists are able to use hyperpop as a medium to create and share music however they want – without having to conform to the pressures of mainstream marketability, in not only the way they portray themselves, but also the sound of their music (Johnson, 2020; Woodhouse, 2020). In its 'essence' of being a fringe counterculture that deviates from mainstream social norms, hyperpop inherently allows for the celebration of being different and alternative; which is parallel to queer culture and its equal embrace of such values (Woodhouse, 2020).

Due to hyperpop being a relatively new movement led by counterculture values, academic writing on the subject is sparse with most literature on the subject being produced by music journalists and commentators. There is also a lack of literature based on the process of creating the artform which would help inform readers on how and why the conventions of hyperpop have led to the culmination of the genre as we know it today in both its sound and visual representations.

Chapter 3.0: Methodology

Differing from a traditional thesis, this exegesis will be structured based on a practice-based research model. The following is an outline regarding the methods used to achieve the results produced by the process of practice-based research through creative production.

3.1: Practice-based Research through Creative Production

For the purpose of this research, I undertook a practice-based research approach via the creative production framework as outlined by Scrivener and Chapman (2004). Practice-based research is defined by Candy (2006) as a process undertaken in order to acquire newfound understanding through the means of practice, and/or outcomes of that practice. Within the context of an exegesis, this may manifest as an artifact demonstrated through the result of a creative practice in form of fine art mediums such as, but not limited to, music, digital media, and performance, all of which will be media explored in my research in the aim of producing a hyperpop artifact.

Based on the criteria put forward by Scrivener (2000), my work will be a creative production project that will attempt to achieve the following:

1. A creative outcome (artifact) that is not necessarily new in the sense of improving upon the medium or subject at hand, but new in the sense that it is an original piece of work that does not plagiarise the work of others.
2. Created as a response to a set of on-going issues, concerns, and interests to be expressed through an artifact(s) as opposed to providing a “problem” and “solution” to be solved through practise.
3. The on-going issues, concerns and interests at hand should be manifested through the process of creative production.
4. The artifact should most importantly contribute to the human experience, and this attribute should take precedence over any knowledge embodied within it.

To put it succinctly, I will be creating an original post-internet artifact in the form of a hyperpop single release not to provide an improvement to the medium but rather to take on the present on-going issue, concern, and interest of the lack of academic writing on the subcultural zeitgeist taking place in the today's present post-internet world as expressed through hyperpop (a post-internet art medium). By doing so, I will be able to manifest an artifact that addresses the issue as well as create a piece of work that focuses on contributing to the human experience over providing explicit knowledge. Additionally, it is worth noting that because a creative production project is not focused on a problem-and-solution framework (which specifies a static process that relates means to ends), the relationship between issues, concerns, and interests and outcomes is dynamic, and will change and manifest throughout the creative production process (Scrivener, 2000), and thus, throughout the process of my research, I must take this into account.

For this practice-based research, I will be structuring the process based on the creative production project framework as provided by Scrivener and Chapman (2004).

Basic Structure for the Form of a Creative-production Project

1. Identify current issues, concerns and interests to be addressed by the research.
2. Identify and review knowledge and information relevant to the practice and the identified issue, concern, or interest.
3. Produce work reflecting on the process used in the creation of the artifact.
4. Reflect, post-project, on the project as a whole.
5. Reflect critically on the post-project reflection (i.e., critical reflection on one's own reflecting).

This heavy emphasis on reflection is explained by Scrivener (2000) as imperative for a creative production project, citing Schön (1983) who explains that reflection is important for a practitioner to make sense of new information and events that they may interpret as tacit knowledge that they already believed to have known which they may have not consciously registered at the

time. Furthermore, Schön (1983) sees reflection as the principal cognitive tool for making sense of new information and learning, leading Scrivener (2000) to argue the emphasis of reflection as an essential part of practice-based creative production research; to properly document changes in a practitioner's thoughts and newfound knowledge that they may not have consciously registered.

3.2: Design of the Study

Using Scrivener and Chapman's (2004) 'Basic Structure for the Form of a Creative-production Project', I will address how the practice-based research through creative production framework applies to my research.

1. *Introduction:*

To identify current issues, concerns and interests to be addressed by the research. Here I will introduce the research question and briefly identify the topic of post-internet art, the medium of hyperpop, and the limited availability of academic writing regarding the subjects.

2. *Literature Review, Context:*

An overview of knowledge and information relevant to the practice and the identified issue, concern, or interest. In these chapters I will compile the information and research available on the subject of post-internet art, hyperpop music, and the history of music releases to highlight the present change in art and media in a post-internet society.

3. *Process, Results:*

A report on the production of work reflecting on the process used in the creation of the artifact. These chapters will document how the hyperpop artifact was created in each of its steps from music track, music video, and cover artwork and present the final result.

4. *Discussion:*

Post-project reflection on the project as a whole, extrapolating significant findings regarding the artifact and my research. I will be analysing my results through the process of creating the hyperpop artifact and ascertain any new knowledge gained as part of this

research.

5. *Conclusion:*

Critical reflection on the *Discussion* chapter and the entire exegesis as a whole, as well as providing recommendations for future research.

The above outlines each chapter within this exegesis and how it applies Scrivener and Chapman's (2004) 'Basic Structure for the Form of a Creative-production Project' framework to ensure consistency and legitimacy in the method in which my research will be presented as well as providing me with guidelines that assisted me to structure my thoughts and knowledge gained throughout the practice.

Chapter 4.0: Anatomy of a Hyperpop Single

To provide context of the common expectations associated with a hyperpop release, the following chapter will provide an explanation of the three different pieces of media that make up a hyperpop single. These three areas are the music track, the video component and finally the cover artwork.

4.1: Music Track

The format of the pop music track as we know it today has existed since at least the mid-1950s with the introduction of the Billboard Top 40 chart, which heavily dictated what songs would be played on a radio station's playlist for its daily rotation and served as a promotional tool for artists who competed for placement on these playlists (University of Minnesota, 2010). This concept of competing for chart placings is a phenomenon that exists to this day and with streaming platforms such as Spotify having curated genre playlists for a large variety of genres whether mainstream or niche (such as hyperpop), the competition for playlisting has become streamlined even more so than in the pre-online streaming era and incentivises artists to release singles that are structured or sound a certain way in order to appear on these playlists for exposure and promotion (Lauer et al., 2022). As such, we can assume that a collection of statistically popular songs (by measure of metrics such as YouTube views, and Spotify streams / playlist appearances) are a strong indicator for how conventions for tracks should be implemented.

Moreover, when creating a piece of music, it is important to remember that it is a form of art that should be treated as such and that simply mimicking already existing music based on its objective values will not suffice. Historically, music has existed as a form of self-expression by its creator(s), though the literal and emotional interpretation is ultimately up to the listener, it is important that music provides the listener with a subjective experience that is an extension of the artist's intention as music that is unable to achieve this is often reviewed poorly (Campbell, 2019; Zagrotsky, 2013; Scherer, 1995). Because of this, when composing and recording this piece I must take into account artistic intention that in some way serves as a form of self-expression rather than creating a hyperpop track purely based on a list of conventions I have identified while analysing existing works. As a music composer myself, I should aim to create something that encompasses a reflection of my own musical influences and style; this

would also prevent the issue of plagiarising existing works and at the same time achieve the goal of having the track express myself as an artist while conveying this to listeners.

Looking at examples of existing hyperpop releases that are either popular and/or interesting to myself personally on an artistic level, we can extrapolate commonalities between them that form the genre conventions of hyperpop and can serve as a model for the creation of my own hyperpop track.

4.1.1: Track Length

Songs tend to be quite short; between 2 - 3 minutes on average. A quick look on the official Hyperpop Spotify playlist shows that a majority of the songs sit within this length with very few reaching past the 3.5 minute mark.

4.1.2: Hooks

According to Cole (2013) a hook is “a catchy combination of melody, lyrics and rhythm that stays in the listener's head”. In the example songs, they are easily identified as the sections within the music where the lyrics are easy to follow and are repeated often.

In “money machine” by 100 geecs this section is:

“With the big boys coming with the big stuff

I feel so clean like a money machine, oh yeah

Big boys coming with the big trucks

Feel so clean like a money machine, oh yeah”

[‘money machine’](#) - 100 geecs (2019, 0:19)

In “Friday (Remix)” by Rebecca Black this section is:

“It's **Friday, Friday** Gotta get down on **Friday**”

[‘Friday \(Remix\)’](#) - Rebecca Black (2021, 0:35)

In “Ram It Down” by Dorian Electra this section is:

“Hey man, don't **ram it down**

My throat can't take anymore

Hey man, love who you want but just don't

Ram it down my throat

Harder

Farther

Ram it deeper

I can't breathe

Shove it

I love it

You know I want it

Please **ram it down**"

['Ram It Down'](#) - Dorian Electra (2021. 0:38)

The examples shown above highlight the hooks in each song that are sections which repeat more than once and have simple lyrics that are easy to follow in that they are repetitive or not too complicated in terms of diction.

4.1.3: Mundane and/or Silly Lyrics

Another stand-out feature of hyperpop music is its lyrical content which often consists of mundane and/or silly lyrics. This is likely due to hyperpop's stance as a counterculture against pop, resulting in hyperpop having satirical phrasing such as in 'stupid horse' (100 geecs, 2019) where the lyrics of the song tell the story of two vocalists losing their money by betting on horses and committing violent acts on the jockey, a subject told through the lens of nonsensical humour:

Bet my money on a stupid horse, I lost that

So I ran out to the track to get my cash back

I just gotta leave this place with a big bag

So I found the fuckin' jockey and I grabbed that (Pick it up!)

Pushed him down to the ground and I punched him in his face (In his face!)

Yeah, I stole his phone, that put him in his place (In his place!)

Me and the horse, we ran out of the place (Out the place!)

Then we drove my Porsche back to my place

['stupid horse'](#) - 100 geecs (2019, 0:28)

The song 'The Sneaker Dance' by Kero Kero Bonito (2021) has lyrics which are themed similarly to a children's song featuring animal characters partaking in the titular Sneaker Dance. This is humorous in the sense that the audience for Kero Kero Bonito's music is mostly adults and not toddlers; making for an amusing situation where to any outsiders, listeners of the song seem to be listening to children's music.

Do the sneaker dance
Show the whole world your swag
Our shoes like exercise
Even when they look nice
Do the sneaker dance
Dance as hard as you can
A true blue sneaker fan
Ain't scared of no scratch

If you go down to the shops
Then you might bump into
A squirrel, a dog and a croc
It's the famous Benchmates
The dog's called Lakeith
The nervy blue fella with the braced-up teeth
When he sees a nice shoe
There's a routine that he has to do

['The Sneaker Dance'](#) - Kero Kero Bonito (2021, 0:11)

4.1.4: Collaboration

A strong required element found across the genre of hyperpop is the use of collaboration or song features between artists. Perhaps the most obvious examples are Dorian Electra's '[My Agenda](#)' (2020) album where 8 out of the 11 tracks on the album have song features, and Seminal hyperpop artist A.G. Cook whose releases consist mostly of remixes and collaborations with other hyperpop artists. The artists "glaive" and "ericdoa" who released an 8-track collaboration EP with each other named "then i'll be happy"

(2021), and the remix album “1000 geecs and The Tree of Clues” by 100 geecs (2020) where 14 of the 19 tracks on the album consist of collaborations.

4.1.5: Extreme Vocal Effects

The use of extreme vocal effects is also common in hyperpop music. These effects include but are not limited to distortion, pitch correction, reverb, or a combination of these. Because hyperpop is a genre that is not subtle at all in nature, the vocal effects used in hyperpop songs are made obvious and easy to hear. Examples of this include Laura Les’ (2021) song ‘[Haunted](#)’, which features no dry signal of her vocals throughout the whole track and instead heavily relies on vocoding, distortion, pitch shifting and delay to achieve her tone. ElyOtto’s (2020) track ‘[SugarCrash!](#)’ heavily uses pitch shifting to change the formant of their voice to be quite high and thin sounding. The use of extreme vocal effects is a strong contrast to the subtle use of autotune in mainstream pop music where it is used to support the artists’ vocal performance by helping them be in key, as opposed to completely changing their formant and vocal tone as seen in hyperpop.

4.1.6: Distortion / Lo-fi Production

Further, following the theme of being a counterculture towards pop is hyperpop’s leaning towards low fidelity (lo-fi) production techniques as well as using distortion effects to mask, this choice in sound is in stark contrast to the clean and crisp high production values of mainstream pop music. The use of distortion and lo-fi production can be heard in a majority of hyperpop tracks found in the Spotify “hyperpop” playlist and is perhaps one of the most defining features of the genre. Dorian Electra’s ‘My Agenda’ (2020) album makes heavy use of distortion and lo-fi production throughout the album which in certain aspects almost mimics the textures of noise, punk and metal music. The same can be said for 100 geecs’ ‘1000 geecs’ (2019) album with songs such as ‘[800 db cloud](#)’ going to the extreme with harsh distortion and signal clipping.

4.1.7: Genre Blending

Hyperpop releases tend to also make heavy use of borrowing ideas and sounds from many different genres with songs sometimes even changing musical styles abruptly in

the middle of the song. In the song '[astrid](#)' (2020) by artist glaive, glaive makes use of math rock guitar loops, four on the floor EDM kick drums, and emo rap styled vocals. Rico Nasty's track '[IPHONE](#)' (2020) uses a combination of trap percussion, trance synth breaks, and a mixture of rap, pop, and R&B vocals. This combination of different music genres, often from more niche genres help hyperpop songs heavily stand out from pop music which often follow a single theme compositionally.

4.2: Music Video

Music video has long been an important piece of companion media for music single releases since the emergence of MTV (Music Television), a music video-based TV channel which launched in 1981. (Jack, 1997; Cook, 2013). As the name implies, it is a video made for a music track in which the song plays over the duration of the music video. Artists and record labels often rely on music videos to further promote and increase the popularity of a single release; the most obvious example being OK Go's '[Here It Goes Again](#)' and its virality allowing the band to reach mainstream success despite a music video budget of \$5 and being relatively small in terms of popularity before the music video (Maura, 2014).

Though music videos are not confined to any specific genre conventions in the sense that a music video can look and feel however the artist sees fit and it would not change the "genre" of a music track, artists do tend to lean toward similar visual themes as their peers. Artists within the hyperpop umbrella are not exclusive to this and in fact do follow particular visual and aesthetic themes similar to their peers. The two most common style choices used in hyperpop are:

4.2.1: Lo-fi Production

Similar to the approach to music, hyperpop does not place a strong focus on high production quality like that of pop music and encourages the use of lo-fi visuals and aesthetics in its music videos. The most prominent example of this would be Charli XCX's '[claws](#)' (2020), this example is noteworthy because Charli XCX has been a prominent figure in mainstream pop as both an artist and songwriter with backing from a major record label (Warner Music via Asylum Records). For this single release, Charli XCX made the decision to put together and release a

low budget video for '[claws](#)' despite having access to a large budget thanks to being a major label artist (Apple Music, 2020); this is evident in the video's low quality camera quality, and severe grain around the keyed objects on screen. Popular hyperpop artist 100 geecs almost exclusively uses lo-fi video production also, with music videos for '[money machine](#)' (2019) and '[hand crushed by a mallet](#)' (2020) which relied heavily on basic camera shots on what seems to be a low-quality camera in a single location.

4.2.2: Basic Visual Effects

Following in theme with the lo-fi production style, many hyperpop music videos rely heavily on basic visual effects which can exist in the form of blanket filters over the whole video, basic footage transformation such as image size and position manipulation, and overlaying keyed footage and/or stock footage or b-roll. One example of this is shown in ericdoa and glaive's music video '[heather](#)' (2021), where there is heavy use of visual overlays of neon graphics throughout to keep the viewer's attention to make up for the simplistic shots and cuts. On the other hand, the artist 100 geecs uses the concept of basic visual effects for comedic purposes, as is evident in "money machine" where stock green screen footage is used gratuitously in the music video where inappropriate such as explosions when there are clearly no explosives being used on screen.

4.3: Cover Artwork

Since the introduction of artwork for vinyl sleeves in 1938 (Jackson, 2021; Cook, 2013), almost every piece of music released in some form is represented by a 1:1 ratio square sized piece of artwork. This is evident in any place where music is available, such as online platforms like Spotify, Bandcamp, Apple Music, and music stores that sell physical music media such as vinyl and CDs; all of which have a square piece of artwork that serves as the representation for that release whether it be full albums, compilations, EPs or singles.

Unlike the music and music video components of a hyperpop artifact, cover artwork for hyperpop releases follow no particular visual themes or conventions. A quick look through the Spotify hyperpop playlist will show that cover art for each track featured will vary heavily with no throughline other than a visual representation based on the artistic vision of the music artist.

Chapter 5.0: Results

Through this exegesis, I report my findings through the process of creating a hyperpop object to gain a deeper understanding of the subject that is not possible simply as a consumer. As such, I have elected to create my own hyperpop artifact in the form of a music single release, which as its name implies is a short form music release by an artist that consists of a music track, a 1:1 square aspect ratio visual art, and in most cases a music video for the track if the artist can afford to and is willing to do so; for the sake of this study I have created a music video for the opportunity of exploring the practice in a more complete form. It is worth noting that in some cases, a music single release may consist of two or three other music tracks, however, for the sake of this study and its limitations I have chosen to only create one music track as this would be sufficient to create an artifact based on a single piece of work, as well as the common understanding of a music single being based around a single track as opposed to a few.

To summarise, the hyperpop artifact I created will consist of three components: Music Track, Music Video, and Cover Artwork. I worked through the creative process for each component before putting all of these together to produce a complete hyperpop artifact.

The following will be the reporting and documentation of the creative process of each component leading up to its finished state.

5.1: Music Track

5.1.1: Part 1: Composing

After having identified the common genre conventions of hyperpop music composition:

- Track length between 2 - 3 minutes
- Emphasis on catchy hooks
- Use of collaboration
- Obvious utilisation of vocal effects
- Blending many genres into a song

I started work on drafting the composition of the hyperpop track in guitar tablature software Guitar Pro 7 which many guitar-based musicians use as a songwriting tool. The decision to compose the track in Guitar Pro 7 was based on my own experience writing music using it for my own musical projects, as well as its MIDI export capabilities which will allow me to take the musical notes written in the Guitar Pro project files and place them into a Digital Audio Workshop (DAW) where I am able to change the sound of each instrument as I please.

To elaborate on the meaning of composition, it is in reference to the structure of the musical piece itself in terms of structure, melody, harmony, and rhythm; or rather simply the notation of the music in its basic form. This composition step of making the song does not include the production of the track itself regarding recording, performance, and instrumentation.

5.1.1.1: Initial Idea:

Taking into account the hyperpop genre conventions of genre blending and the sub-3-minute runtime, I knew that I wanted to take influence from high energy music genres that would allow me get across the motifs (recognisable melody that repeats) and other musical ideas before hitting the 3-minute mark. The genres I took influence from were J-Pop (Japanese Pop), Emo, and Hip-Hop.

I decided to take elements from these three genres not only because of my own personal connection to them as a fan and music artist myself, but also because there are elements of these genres in already existing hyperpop releases whether intentional or by coincidence.

J-Pop: Hyperpop and J-pop overlap in that they can both be quite maximalist and extreme in nature regarding their musical choices. Take for instance the J-pop idol group Dempagumi Inc.'s song '[Den Den Passion](#)' (2013); in this song the punk-like fast tempo, ear piercing synthesisers and catchy motifs, along with cute vocal stylings (perhaps to an almost unpalatable level for those who are not the familiar with the tropes

of J-pop idol music) share the same levels of extremities as seen in hyperpop. If we take a look at Dorian Electra's ['Ram it Down'](#) (2021), the song's mix of fast tempo sections, hardcore punk screaming, distorted bass and heavy use of vocal effects show parallels in ideologies between both hyperpop and J-pop.

Emo: The elements of emo that I will take from most will be the vocal stylings and drum patterns. I have decided to use emo as it is a music genre that I practise myself as a musician, and there are elements of it, such as the vocal style and drums that share similarities to popular hyperpop tracks. The vocal techniques used in emo that I will be looking at are screamed vocals and belting. Screamed vocals are exactly what they are described to be (vocals that are screamed), and belting can be considered powerful singing using the extent of the vocalist's range. The drum patterns found both in emo and hyperpop are fast and are focused on accentuating the rhythms of the melodic instruments. For example, the emo song ['Caraphernelia'](#) by Pierce the Veil (2010) features fast drums, accented rhythms, screamed vocals; all stylistic choices that are present in hyperpop artist Alice Longyu Gao's ['Believe the Hype'](#) (2022)

Hip-Hop: Lastly, I will take musical ideas from hip-hop to further push the idea of maximalism on my hyperpop track. Because hip-hop is considerably stylistically different from J-pop and emo, the contrast between them will stand out heavily. The ideas I will take from hip-hop will be rapped vocals, and sections focusing heavily on sampled percussion as opposed to melodies. There are many hyperpop artists who use hip-hop as the basis of their sound: Rico Nasty is perhaps the most apparent example with songs such as ['Smack a Bitch'](#) (2018) using minimal melodic content, heavy use of sampled drums and rapped vocals.

5.1.1.2: Intro (Instrumental Hook)

With the intro being the start of the song, I felt it best to introduce a hook as soon as possible through a melodic lead line over the chords. Since a hook is often considered the backbone of a pop or hyperpop song (because pop music and, by extension, hyperpop is manufactured to be catchy), I wanted this to be as prominent as possible. For my track, I created the instrumental hook by keeping the melody simple by using

only a few alternating notes. In doing this, I was able to achieve a motif that is easy for the listener to hum along to and recall, which is the goal for a catchy hook.

This instrumental hook is also brought back in the middle of the song after the first chorus to reinforce its memorability for the listener. The idea of the instrumental hook appearing in the intro and after the chorus is a common trope found in J-pop music. Examples of this structural trope include '[Colors](#)' by Flow (2006) and '[Gurenge](#)' by LiSA (2019) where both songs present a simple instrumental hook at the start of the song, and bring it back again after the first chorus to help the listener recall the motif.

Link to listen to the instrumental hook from a demo version of the song made in Guitar Pro here:

<https://on.soundcloud.com/p6Z8A>

5.1.1.3: Verses

The verses in a song serve as an intermediary section before climactic sections such as a chorus and are generally much less intense dynamically (in terms of loudness and velocity) because they serve as a build up to these more climactic sections. For this hyperpop song, I have structured the verses into two parts. The first part of the verses come after every time the instrumental hook is played, and is deliberately low energy in order to lead the listener into the second part, which serves as build ups that gradually transition into the choruses. If the verses are too intense and high energy, this will take away attention from the choruses and instrumental hooks which are the most important sections in terms of placing the song's motifs and hooks.

Furthermore, the second part uses emo styled screaming vocals that gradually increase in pitch. This increase in intensity helps to highlight that the vocal hook in the chorus is coming next. Moreover, because screaming vocals are not inherently melodic but rather a harsh textural element, they serve as a further indication of when to anticipate the vocal hook which the listener will expect to be sung vocals, established by the sung vocals in the first part of the verse. Screamed vocals are used often in hyperpop songs but are often sparse because the lack of melodic content they present means that they are difficult to work with in order to create catchy parts that the listener can recall.

Link to listen to the verse from a demo version of the song made in Guitar Pro here:

<https://on.soundcloud.com/K9AaX>

5.1.1.4: Choruses (Vocal Hook)

Perhaps the most important part of any hyperpop song is the vocal hook in the chorus. The vocal hook is a sung part that is intended to be a memorable motif that the listener will remember about a song, and the chorus is a climactic part that repeats in a song more than once. For the vocal hook, I made the choice of using vocal belting, a singing technique often associated with emo music in which the singer loudly sings using the high end of their vocal range. In emo music, belting during the vocal hook is mainly done in order to bring the energy of a song to a high and helps the vocal part stand out. With the vocal belt being so loud, it is difficult to ignore over the supporting instruments and sounds, which is crucial in getting a vocal hook's memorability across to a listener. Seminal emo bands such as My Chemical Romance place a strong focus on belted vocal hooks such as in the song '[I'm Not Okay](#)' (2004) where the line "I'm Not Okay" is belted repeatedly over the chorus, making for a very simple and easy-to-follow vocal hook. The instrumentation in the chorus serves to support the vocal hook and is thus rather simple but dynamically loud to match the belted vocals.

Link to listen to the vocal hook / chorus from a demo version of the song here:

<https://on.soundcloud.com/jbC61>

5.1.1.5: Outro

Regardless of music genre, there are no set forms that an outro follows. In the case of hyperpop, however, artists tend to use this part of the song to quickly introduce a new shortform musical idea to end the song which in some cases can be a genre change. An example of this would be 100 geecs' song '[800db cloud](#)' (2019) which changes genres in its outro by introducing a screamed hardcore and metal breakdown at the end of the track, heavily contrasting with the sections that preceded it which were more dance-oriented as opposed to brutally harsh.

For the outro of this track, I have chosen to introduce hip-hop elements by putting a stronger focus on the drums rather than the melody, and using rapped vocals, as well as elements of emo in the form of a breakdown which is a simple section with a heavy focus on percussive rhythm and harsh amelodic sounds achieved by using dissonant notes as evident in '800db cloud' mentioned previously. The abrupt genre change also allowed for the opportunity of collaboration, and I have written the rapping vocals with that in mind.

Link to listen to the outro from a demo version of the song made in Guitar Pro here:

<https://on.soundcloud.com/JUAb6>

5.1.2: Part 2: Lyrics

When putting together the lyrics for the song, most of the words were improvised during the recording process to help with being mundane and almost nonsensical. Lyrically, the focus was put on emphasising rhyming and rhythms that were easy to remember and are catchy. The verses also feature the same lyrics both times to enforce their memorability, a technique common in hyperpop where repetition is used to make lyrical motifs easy to remember and recall. Use of repetition in hyperpop can be observed in cases such as Charli XCX's '[pink diamond](#)' (2020) where the phrase "I just wanna go real hard" is repeated 34 times and "money machine" by 100 geecs (2019) where "Feel so clean like a money machine" is repeated 16 times. For the purpose of this song, I wanted the listener to be able to recall the lyrics to a whole section after only hearing the first repetitions of the verse and chorus as opposed to a singular line such as in the examples listed previously.

Verses

I am not the one
Who's gonna make you
Feel like you are on
Another level
Don't cling on to me
I'm not the one you need

You are a bad one
A freakin sad one
I wouldn't give a damn for you although I had none
So let us go now
Because you know now
You're not the one who's running all these goddamn shows now

Choruses (Hook)

Were you talking to me
I am falling asleep
Were you talking me
I don't care

For the rap section, I have chosen to collaborate with local Auckland rapper Light Travel who wrote and performed the outro section of the track. For his part, I gave him the prompt to “write about anything because the song is about nothing” and as a result, the verse as a whole has themes that are disjointed which again help make the lyrics seem nonsensical.

Outro (Rap written and performed by Light Travel)

Slivers of silver I meant to deliver
I'm licking the quiver, and sippin' sarscoviparilla
A million hills left to die on, crowns to spy on
Tout the scion, mouth a curse and spell for the bygone
Pururun purun! every mind a slate
Famifami faa! don't rewind the tapes
It matters little anyway if they're erased
If many moons ago I cut the brakes it won't be much a chase
With the fervour of a mermaid taking dips in a furnace
I let it rip purging my soul with a purpose, you heard it
Fizzle out, fedora tipping in earnest
But if the axis of my skull slip it could get worthless
Fling thoughts out of orbit on a crash course for cautious
Cause if I ever caught shit for talking, I'm haunted

Word to kubi no kuma-shan, I'm thoughtless
Woah, globe fly off my shoulders, lost it

5.1.3: Part 3: Production and Arrangement

Production and arrangement in this instance refers to the actual creation of the track based on the composition. Specifically, production would be in reference to the choices made in terms of sound, effects, editing, and recording of the track in the DAW, whereas arrangement would be the interpretation of the composition through instrument and style choice.

5.1.3.1: Instrumentation

For this track, I tried to achieve the lo-fi sound of hyperpop by using digital guitar sounds generated by Guitar Pro as opposed to recording a real guitar being played by myself. By doing this, the guitars end up having a distorted sound due to the low bitrate of the Guitar Pro signal much akin to 16-bit music that would appear in retro video games. The same process was also done to achieve the bass guitar sound for the track. Because of the low bitrate of these Guitar Pro instruments, compression was added to add consistency to the loudness of the tracks; compression in an audio sense is an effect that reduces the volume of the track when it is loud and increases the volume when it is quiet. The decision to use guitars as the main instrument(s) for this track is based on the influence taken from the J-Pop and emo genres, which make heavy use of guitars as evident in the examples previously given.

The Artifact

Guitar Pro - Arrangement

William Chea

Distortion Guitar	Distortion Guitar	Electric Bass	Synth 1	Synth 2
Dropped D	Dropped D	④ = D	① = G ③ = A	① = G ③ = A
⑥ = D	⑥ = D	⑤ = A	② = D ④ = E	② = D ④ = E

♩ = 184

Figure 5.1: A screenshot of the instrumental arrangement in Guitar Pro.

The drums on this track are a mixture of distorted digitally synthesised drums and sampled real drums; again, this choice was made to deliberately create a lo-fi sound while also allowing for flexibility in the manipulation of the sound. In hyperpop, percussive sounds such as drums often take precedence in a track's mix where they are the most noticeable instrument(s) for the listener. The track '[Faceshopping](#)' (2018) by hyperpop artist SOPHIE, is a prominent example of this; most of the track is led by powerful booming percussive sounds that overpower the other instruments and sounds causing the listener to pay attention to them as they dictate the rhythm and flow of the song. To achieve the sound of the drums being much more forward and prominent over the rest of the instruments, I used EQ (equalisation) which is a tool that manipulates the frequency content of a sound. In this instance, I used EQ to enhance the bass frequencies in the kick drum (the low-end bass drum) and in the snare (the sharp snap sounding drum) and I enhanced the frequencies that helped bring out the snapping sound to help it cut through better.

5.1.3.2: Vocals

With vocal effects being a strong identifying element of hyperpop, I decided to make maximal use of pitch correction (which the layman may know as autotune) to manipulate the pitch and formant of my voice for a robotic effect. With pitch correction, the DAW is able to increase or lower the pitch of a vocal recording to match the tune of the song if the performance is imperfect, which may result in a robotic voice sound. To make the most of the vocal effect, I recorded the vocals slightly off pitch in some areas in order to make the pitch correction more noticeable, causing artifacts from the vocal effect to be more discernible as opposed to a perfect vocal recording where the pitch correction would take very little to no effect at all. Pitch correction was also used to make the formant of my voice lighter. To elaborate, formant refers to the resonance in one's voice. For example, a male singer may have a deeper formant than a female singer which people may perceive to be lighter, but when performing the same arrangement of a song, they will be singing in the same pitch and key which is not affected by formant. Additionally, distortion was used in the screaming sections of the song to further add grit and harshness to the vocals, similar to the way an electric guitar player would do to their guitar signal. By doing this, the already distorted sound of screamed vocals is further amplified to achieve an extreme maximal sound that hyperpop is known for.

Pitch correction, formant manipulation and distortion are present as a stylistic choice for many hyperpop artists. Artists such as 100 geecs and Dorian Electra as previously mentioned are the most well-known examples of this. The hyperpop tracks mentioned earlier; ['Ram It Down'](#) (2020) by Dorian Electra, and ['800db cloud'](#) by 100 geecs, use the same techniques for vocal effects to achieve the sounds needed to manipulate their vocal takes accordingly.

5.2: Music Video

5.2.1: Initial Idea

Looking at music videos from popular hyperpop artists, I wanted to emulate the lo-fi production style by making a simple music video composed of impromptu shots around the Auckland CBD

area, which would require no costs, very little planning, and minimal crew. The shots would be mostly composed of myself and Light Travel performing our parts of the song around various locations in the Auckland CBD with the b-roll consisting of the both of us travelling to each location, as well as shots of actor Rex Rico posing and gesturing in between.

5.2.2: Planning

As previously mentioned, the video was planned to comprise mostly of impromptu shots to be taken across various locations in the Auckland CBD. This choice was influenced by hyperpop music videos such as [‘heather’](#) (2021) by ericdoa and glaive and Charli XCX’s [‘forever’](#) (2020) which are music videos comprised mostly of candid and impromptu shots across many locations where the artists are miming the song. As a result, the creative decision to not storyboard or make a shot list before shooting was made to achieve a similar style.

For b-roll, I asked non-binary actor Rex Rico to participate in the music video because of their androgynous look and fashion style. The decision to use a queer actor was determined by way of hyperpop being a platform for the LGBTQ+ community through representation by queer hyperpop artists such as Dorian Electra, SOPHIE, and Alice Longyu Gao who often incorporate their sexuality and gender into the visual side of their releases by way of costumes, subject matter, and colour such as is evident in their music videos [‘Man to Man’](#) (2018), [‘It’s Okay to Cry’](#) (2017), and [‘I <3 Harajuku’](#) (2020), respectively. For this music video, I felt it best to let Rex decide on their costume themselves for better authenticity in the expression of themselves. Furthermore, it is worth noting that Rex is a hyperpop music fan themselves and will be familiar with the fashion trends seen in queer hyperpop music videos.

It is worth noting that I decided to have the performers (myself and Light Travel) wear masks for the music video shoot. This decision was made based on a combination of safety due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and also allowing the editing of the music video to be a much simpler process as I will not need to lip sync any of the footage for any of the performances, as well as adding the flexibility of being able to use any performance shot for different parts of the song so long as it matches the body language of the performer.

5.2.3: Shooting

Because the shots were planned to be impromptu and candid, all of the shot sizes and angles were decided on the spot based on the locations we walked past in the Auckland CBD. To further aid in the lo-fi production aesthetic of the music video, all of the shots taken were handheld without the aid of any gimbal devices, which tend to be costly and used in high-end productions. Music videos such as Charli XCX's ['forever'](#) (2020), as mentioned previously, mostly consist of handheld smartphone footage, heavily influencing my decision to shoot solely handheld footage.

The locations chosen for the music video were ones that had sources of artificial lighting such as the video game arcade, streetlights, and tourist landmarks. This was done to mimic the neon aesthetic found in hyperpop music videos such as ['Ponyboy'](#) (2017) by SOPHIE, and to avoid increasing the production value of the music video by sourcing our own lighting.

5.2.4: Editing

The editing for the music video consists heavily of quick cuts that match the rhythm of the music video, as is standard for most music videos across all genres of music, as well as adding basic visual effects that were typical in hyperpop music videos such as the previously mentioned ['heather'](#) (2021) by ericdoa and glaive, and ['money machine'](#) (2019) by 100 geecs, which heavily rely on simple visual overlays such as stock neon effects or stock green screen footage. For this music video, the basic visual effects I decided to use were simple visual overlays of film filters provided for free by the YouTube channel TUTS & REVIEWS found in their video ['38 FREE Video Overlays for Editing | Cinematic Overlays'](#) (2019). By using these free-to-use overlays, I was able to tackle the conventions of lo-fi production and basic visual effects at the same time.

5.3: Cover Artwork

5.3.1: Initial Idea

Initially, coming up with the concept for the cover artwork was difficult, due to the lack of stylistic themes across cover artwork for hyperpop releases. A quick glance at the Hyperpop Spotify playlist, which may have 100 different releases showcased on it at any one time, will reveal very little when it comes to a basic idea of what one could expect from a hyperpop release's cover

artwork. Hyperpop cover artwork in a sense could be anything, but not limited to, candid, studio and landscape photography, illustrations, and composited digital artwork. As a result of this freedom of choice, I decided that an image of actor Rex Rico who was in the music video would best represent the artifact from a cover artwork standpoint due to the consistency of having them appear in the music video also.

5.3.2: Execution

I used an image I took of Rex while shooting the music video after positioning them over a pink floor light on the street. The intense lighting helped provide us with strong imagery without having to procure our own lighting or hiring a studio, which again helped us achieve a lo-fi aesthetic. Because the image was taken in low light, the image had some pixelation in the dark shades of the image which were smoothed out and corrected in Adobe Photoshop. Additional editing was done via the brightness, contrast and curves adjustment layer options in Adobe Photoshop to further increase the intensity of the lighting to contrast against the darkness in the background. Though the image is simple, it is not unlike similar photographic cover artwork made for other hyperpop releases such as the plethora appearing in Spotify's hyperpop playlist.

5.4: The Artifact

5.4.1: Music Track

Link to listen here:

<https://on.soundcloud.com/Rwiw>

The link above is a stream for the track on the music sharing platform Soundcloud. The track is titled "The Artifact" and features the artist Light Travel on vocals in the outro who wrote and performed his own part. The track is 2:36 long and utilises a mixture of music genre styles such as emo, J-rock, and hip hop to provide a hyperpop experience that is in essence, a maximalist satirical take on mainstream pop music. The track also makes use of a lo-fi production style and makes heavy use of vocal effects.

The song has two main motifs which serve as the hooks. The first hook motif is present between 0:00 - 0:10, and 0:52 - 1:02. This is the instrumental hook which utilises a melody line that stands out on top of the instrumental and is simple and easy to recall. The second hook motif is in the track's chorus at 0:31 - 0:51, and 1:23 - 1:43. This hook utilises a simple vocal line that is easy to sing along to and remember as it makes use of simple language with a small number of syllables.

The lyrics for the song were intentionally made simple, repetitive and mundane. The verse and chorus repeat twice and use the same vocal takes which increase their repetitiveness.

5.4.1.1: Lyrics

Verses

I am not the one
Whos gonna make you
Feel like you are on
Another level
Don't cling on to me
I'm not the one you need

You are a bad one
A freakin sad one
I wouldn't give a damn for you although I had none
So let us go now
Because you know now
You're not the one who's running all these goddamn shows now

Choruses (Hook)

Were you talking to me
I am falling asleep
Were you talking me
I don't care

Outro (Rap written and performed by Light Travel)

Slivers of silver I meant to deliver
I'm licking the quiver, and sippin sarscoviparilla
A million hills left to die on, crowns to spy on
Tout the scion, mouth a curse and spell for the bygone
Pururun purun! every mind a slate
Famifami faa! don't rewind the tapes
It matters little anyway if they're erased
If many moons ago I cut the brakes it won't be much a chase
With the fervour of a mermaid taking dips in a furnace
I let it rip purging my soul with a purpose, you heard it
Fizzle out, fedora tipping in earnest
But if the axis of my skull slip it could get worthless
Fling thoughts out of orbit on a crash course for cautious
Cause if I ever caught shit for talking, I'm haunted
Word to kubi no kuma-shan, I'm thoughtless
Woah, globe fly off my shoulders, lost it

5.4.2: Music Video

Link to watch here:

<https://youtu.be/OM9uLi6YJic>

The music video is a lo-fi production featuring performance shots of myself and Light Travel, as well as b-roll of actor Rex Rico. All of the shots were taken at night in locations around the Auckland CBD that had artificial lighting available. There is heavy usage of overlay filters throughout the music video that mimic low cost VFX (See Figures 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4 below).



Figure 5.2: A still of actor Rex Rico.



Figure 5.3: A still of featured artist Light Travel.



Figure 5.4: A still of myself and featured artist Light Travel.

5.4.3: Cover Artwork

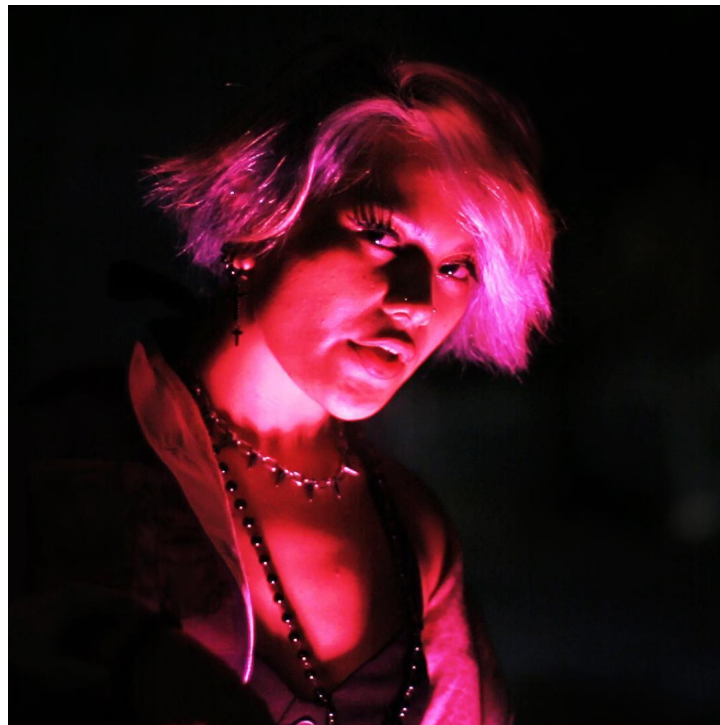


Figure 5.5: Cover artwork for The Artifact.

The cover artwork is a 1:1 square image of the actor featured in the music video Rex Rico standing over a red light. The image was taken from the same shoot as the music video and thus keeps a similar visual theme.

Chapter 6.0: Discussion

For this study, I took on a practice-based research approach in order to document my findings through the creative process of producing a hyperpop artifact. By doing so, I explore why hyperpop exists today in its current form regarding its conventions and how this fits within the context of post-internet art to answer the research question:

“What conventions make the music genre known as ‘Hyperpop’ a post-internet object?”

6.1: A Look at Conventions Recognised Previously

Before undertaking the task of creating the hyperpop artifact, I listed the conventions that were already recognised by writers and artists as making up the basis of hyperpop (see “Chapter 4.0: Anatomy of a Hyperpop Single”). Explored herein is an examination of my findings after producing a hyperpop artifact and an exploration of my experiences working with those conventions, especially how they fit into hyperpop being a product of post-internet art – that is art that is “internet aware” crafted in an environment that offers conditions where the internet is commonplace within society (McHugh, 2009) which provides a conducive substrate for the hyperpop media space.

6.1.1: The Music Track

6.1.1.1: Mundane / Nonsensical Lyrics

The lyrics for hyperpop tracks tend to be nonsensical and/or mundane in a sense that songs can be about anything or nothing, a satirical take on mainstream pop music which more sophisticated music fans may ridicule as being generic. Taking this hyperpop lyrical style into account, I decided to improvise the lyrics to the track as I was recording them, leading to a song that ultimately was about nothing, focusing heavily on the rhythm of the syllables I was singing more than the meaning.

By immersing myself in this writing style, it made sense to me that the lyrics are the way they are because hyperpop, being a derivative of pop music, is not bound to the rules of the mainstream music industry which tends to require meaningful lyrics if not for artistic

merit, then for commercial needs (North, Krause, & Ritchie, 2021). This means for hyperpop lyrics, that they only need to focus on words that sound good to anyone who may stumble across the track online rather than fitting into the confines of what a major label or media entity is looking to manufacture and sell at that time.

In my process of producing the hyperpop artifact and considering the lyrics for the track, I focused solely on words that rhymed, the flow of the syllables, and how easy it was to follow, with the mindset that this track was not destined for radio but rather for platforms such as YouTube, Soundcloud, or TikTok which are the dominant media space for Hyperpop (Kornhaber, 2021) which allow for the convention of lyrical freedom due to operating outside of the restriction of the mainstream music industry and its expectations. Because of this freedom, I was able to very quickly come up with words that I felt were catchy and flowed well. This benefited the song by streamlining the recording process without much planning as well as allowing myself liberties with vocal melodies that were not restricted to words that fit any theme, another advantage of hyperpop. If I had to write the lyrics to focus on mainstream pop topics such as partying or romance, I may have had difficulty coming up with melodies due to the restriction of only having a certain group of words to work with based on those themes. The advantage of the convention offered here by hyperpop is the freedom of writing lyrics that need only to match syllabic rhyme and rhythm, a circumstance of being a post-internet object whereas traditional pop music is not.

Without the pressure of needing to be radio or TV friendly, hyperpop artists are free to make “pop hits” about anything they want (or even about nothing), because the existence of the internet affords them the ability to find their potential audience on the internet whether that be niche online communities or blogs. For example, hyperpop artists such as 100 geecs can sing about a hypothetical situation where they lost money betting on a horse and fighting jockeys (2019), or Kero Kero Bonito can sing about doing a choreographed dance with anthropomorphic exotic animals (2021), song topics that are likely too absurdist for mainstream pop outlets. However, for these artists operating outside the mainstream and working with the conventions of hyperpop, they are able to garner a large cult following online. This proves that in a post-internet world, hyperpop musicians can make music about anything as there will be an audience for them somewhere on the internet happy to consume it so long as the words are catchy but,

importantly, fit with the conventions of hyperpop as they are expected for audiences wishing to consume post-internet art.

6.1.1.2: Short Track Lengths (a Focus on Hooks)

Hyperpop tracks tend to be under three minutes in length with two minute long track lengths being quite common. While taking this into account, I structured the composition and arrangement to result in a hyperpop track that was about 2:36 minutes long.

Structurally, most of the track consists of the vocal and instrumental hooks taking up a majority of the song while forgoing mainstream pop music section staples such as an intro, and bridges (AIMM, 2019), only allowing for verses, hooks and an outro.

I have found that by condensing the track length by not adding in sections that supported the hooks, this actually allowed the track to consist mostly of its “earworm” (catchy and unforgettable) parts in a sense that every time a listener would put the song on, they are treated with mostly only the catchy parts and did not need to familiarise themselves with sections that only served to build up to the hooks. Through the process of composing the track with this frame of mind, I found that the conception of a hyperpop song required fewer ideas in a sense that so long as I had a hook or two in mind, I already had most of the song’s content laid out for me as I did not need to pad out the track with an intro, bridge or break, which are sections in pop songs often used to increase the length near the end of a song (AIMM, 2019). Moreover, through the process of allocating such a heavy emphasis on the listeners’ time with the song’s hooks from start to near finish, the earworm effect I intended to create was easier to achieve.

In a post-internet world where streaming and social media platform algorithms can help make any obscure song into a viral hit (Zipper, 2021), this condensed form of songwriting focusing on the catchy parts of a song works to the benefit of the track to be consumed. This is especially true when the song is part of an algorithmically curated playlist or feed where the listener will expeditiously be treated with the earworm part of a track which should be easy to recall and sing along to. This convention gives the hyperpop song the ability to not meander too long for the supporting sections in an effort to avoid being skipped as it fights for the listener’s attention among a sea of other music content being released daily. If my hyperpop track is being shared on TikTok or appears in a Spotify users Daily Mix playlist, I know that as soon as the track starts that the listener would get

hooked on the hook at the very beginning and be able to make their decision to continue listening to the track as soon as it starts playing as opposed to possibly getting skipped by the unfamiliar listener who is not willing to sit through the build-up of an intro and verse to only be potentially disappointed. The freedom afforded by this hyperpop convention to change the common and established arrangement of the song structure is permissible because hyperpop media inhabits the post-internet object space and, as a result, is able to operate outside of the expected boundaries associated with mainstream media which are non-post-internet objects.

6.1.1.3: Collaboration Between Artists

Hyperpop artists often collaborate with each other on individual tracks with the most common form of collaboration being via production or vocal performance. For my hyperpop track, I collaborated with Light Travel who wrote and performed vocals over the hip hop section over the outro. Light Travel's performance brought an element of smoothness and flow in his rapping that I would not have been able to achieve myself due to the timbre of my voice and musical background which is not hip-hop based, but rock based which is harsher.

Collaborating with Light Travel was a simple task which was made especially easy as we could send each other files such as lyrics and recordings online, making the whole process quite smooth without any issues. With hyperpop mostly being a genre of artists who are independent without being bound to legal restrictions by record labels, artists are able to work together without having to work out legal issues regarding the release of a track between two artists from different labels which could manifest in the form of finances, distribution rights, credits, and etc. Moreover, collaboration between artists is mutually beneficial in that by having two or more artists credited on a track, followers and fans of the artists will listen to the track and expose the audiences to the artist on the track they are not familiar with. In this case, followers of my music will be exposed to Light Travel, and followers of Light Travel will be exposed to me, giving our exclusive audiences an opportunity to find out more about the other artist if they like the track.

As such, collaboration, a process that is made accessible and easy due to the accessibility of the internet, is a result of hyperpop artists being internet-aware and taking advantage of the post-internet environment. With the utilities provided by the

internet, collaborating with other artists is a straightforward process with boundless possibilities as artists from all over the world can work together without having to meet each other in person. The mutual benefit of crossover between the audiences of the artists involved also plays an important role in a post-internet space as this increases the overall reach and potential virality of a hyperpop object as discussion and sharing of the content increases based on the size of all of the artists' audiences combined as opposed to only being of interest to the audience of one artist.

6.1.1.4: Extreme Vocal Effects (Distortion/Lo-fi Production)

Throughout the hyperpop genre, vocal effects are used extensively and often in an extreme manner. For the hyperpop track I created, I used pitch correction software to alter the sound of my voice to be more thin and feminine, as opposed to my regular voice which is generally masculine sounding. Pitch correction was also used to make my voice perfectly in tune with the song, making it so that I did not need to sing perfectly while recording to get a vocal take that is acceptable as pitch correction would amend any takes that are imperfect.

Similarly, the popularity of distorted and/or lo-fi production techniques in hyperpop helps less production savvy producers in the same way pitch correction helps less skilled vocalists get away with less than perfect vocal takes. Because I am not a particularly gifted music producer by any means, I am able to hide the flaws in my music production by leaning into the distortion and lo-fi aesthetic that is popular in hyperpop. This lo-fi convention is liberating in allowing music expression and ideas to be rendered into a hyperpop format so that these types of artifacts can be released rapidly and easily for consumption.

The use of extreme vocal effects in hyperpop, especially pitch correction, as well as the use of distorted and lo-fi production techniques is perhaps a byproduct of a post-internet space allowing for almost anything to go viral with platforms such as Tiktok and YouTube giving way for music from relatively unknown artists to become popular (Zipper, 2021; Liikanen & Salovaara, 2015). Given the idea that in essence 'anyone can become famous' on the internet, with vocal effects such as autotune, a well put-together song, and an eye-catching music video, someone with little singing and/or production skill can create a viral hit even if they do not have the same abilities and means of traditional pop

artists. As a result, the post-internet space allows for an even playing field against mainstream artists as independent artists are given an incentive to create music that would not meet the production quality standard by mainstream gatekeepers such as radio and major record labels which operate outside of the post-internet space.

6.1.1.5: Genre Blending

Although hyperpop is an offshoot of mainstream pop music, releases in the hyperpop realm often take heavy influences from various genres. In my hyperpop track for instance, I deliberately took from emo, J-pop and hip hop to form the basis of the song taking conventions such as emo vocals, J-pop's instrumental style, and hip hop rapping and percussion. The use of genre blending in hyperpop can likely be attributed to the creative freedom of music made for the internet in that an artist is free to make any style of song they see fit because there are no pressures to be radio friendly. Furthermore, similar to the convention of collaboration, the use of multiple genres also helps a release reach a wider audience as it is likely to appeal to fans of the genres it takes from.

The ability to study and take from differing genres is influenced by a post-internet setting, facilitated by the availability of music on the internet via platforms such as YouTube, Bandcamp, Soundcloud, and Spotify where listeners can easily discover artists from niche and avant-garde backgrounds as opposed to the music and media that is curated by the mainstream music industry. Anyone looking to develop their musical palate can find styles of music that would never be commercially friendly on these platforms and artists who are willing to expand their repertoire stylistically would be able to take on influences they would not have been able to come across on radio or pop culture news. As a result of this, independent artists, especially in hyperpop, embrace the influences available to them on the internet, and use them to expand the style of their art and better express themselves based on their tastes and interests.

6.1.2: Music Video

6.1.2.1: Lo-fi Production & Basic Visual Effects

The conventions that make hyperpop music videos what they are, are similar to the musical aspect of hyperpop in a sense that they do not place a focus on high production value but rather make do with whatever the artist is able to achieve within their means. This results in the aesthetic of lo-fi production being embraced by artists. In the music video aspect of my hyperpop artifact, I strove to achieve this by working only with the equipment that I personally owned and working with locations that are freely available to the public. By doing this, I created a piece that was lo-fi in that it did not have crystal clear visual fidelity, had inconsistencies with lighting, consisted of unscripted shots and relied heavily on basic visual effects to keep the attention of the viewer. This look is in stark contrast with the high production found in mainstream pop music videos and instead encompasses a DIY style reminiscent of independent artists who make music videos on a budget. Although the lo-fi style is not as visually impressive from a technical standpoint, it is not necessarily “worse” as it is a stylistic choice that does not affect one’s appreciation of the music video. Because of this distinction, hyperpop artists are able to make do with creating music videos that are lo-fi due to the style being acceptably enjoyed the same as high production music videos.

In parallel to the importance of lo-fi in the musical aspect of hyperpop, the embrace of lo-fi lowers the barrier of entry for artists looking to release their own music and content because the post-internet space allows for the distribution of lo-fi works to find an audience without the need for help from the mainstream music industry. For this music video, I did not need to spend any money to achieve the shots used in the final product, and from this we can infer that the same can be said for independent hyperpop artists who also choose a lo-fi approach to their music videos. If hyperpop artists can make compelling music videos with little to no budget and reach their audience by sharing it online, there is little incentive to try and create a high production music video which could cost an artist thousands of dollars that they may never be able to make an investment return on. Therefore, because of the nature of distribution afforded by the internet and the direct influence this has on the aesthetic and style of hyperpop music video, the look of hyperpop music videos is a circumstance of the post-internet environment.

6.1.3: Cover Artwork

6.1.3.1: Anything Can be a Hyperpop Cover Artwork

With the freedom given in hyperpop pertaining to cover artwork, I decided to be thematically consistent and use an image of the actor Rex Rico who was the main subject in the music video. I did this because, as an artist, I believed that this was the best representation of the music I could use. Before working on my hyperpop artifact, while looking into what common conventions I could find for hyperpop, I felt that I was unable to identify commonality between hyperpop cover artworks. However, while creating the cover artwork for this artifact, I had the realisation that cover artwork by hyperpop artists weren't at all random but rather a reflection of how the artist feels about how they want to portray their song which may or may not be obvious for the listener or viewer. For this artifact, I used the image of Rex Rico because I felt that their androgynous look standing in the intense pink lighting was my interpretation of the hyperpop aesthetics I have researched before creating the artifact.

As a result of a post-internet environment, artists would be fighting to catch the eye of new listeners on streaming services and social media which would heavily influence the choice of their cover artworks. With the freedom of being independent artists, and the possibility of any image becoming a viral meme, artists are given endless possibilities to work with in their pursuit of popularity. Because of this post-internet conscious approach by artists, artwork from an array of different art styles can be found in hyperpop music with nothing to bind their aesthetics under one umbrella.

6.2: A Summary of Conventions Recognised Previously

The collection of these conventions together is what makes hyperpop what it is, as with any genre of art; the grouping of its stylistic conventions is what defines it stylistically. Because of this, these conventions together which make up what we know as hyperpop, could only exist with the precedence of the internet and the art ideology of the post-internet because they are conventions that were developed as a result of the internet and its commonplace in everyday life. To reiterate, McHugh (2009) and The Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (2014), post-internet art is art that is "internet "aware in that it is created with consciousness of the internet and its ubiquity in everyday life. From this, we can affirm that hyperpop's existence is a

product of post-internet art and could only exist in a post-internet world when taking into account all of its conventions that make it unique.

The conventions that make up hyperpop – silly lyrics, short track lengths, hook-focused music, collaboration, genre blending, distortion, and lo-fi production – are all aspects of the medium that are facilitated and encouraged by the existence and awareness of the internet and its utilities. With an environment where artists can become pop stars among certain circles of the internet by making their own brand of pop music without the barrier of high production values and expectations to write music that fit into ongoing trends in mainstream pop culture, artists who are willing and able to take advantage of the post-internet space can overcome barriers such as costs, technical skill, physical appearance, and music industry nepotism to pave their own path to success without the need to conform to traditional mainstream music industry methods which have not and may not ever be available to them. Furthermore, the internet allows hyperpop artists to always find an audience willing to listen to their avant-garde styled music, work with anyone across the world, learn skills through online tutorials, download software that will help them produce their work, and distribute their work for little to no cost. Because of hyperpop's awareness and embrace of these aspects of the internet which encourage the formation of these conventions, it is clear that hyperpop is a byproduct of post-internet art which has allowed for the culmination of its individual conventions to become hyperpop as we know it and something that could not have developed without the internet. I think we need to strengthen this further by saying that hyperpop's conventions and how it operates as a form of post-internet experience allows for the communication of ideas and messages that would not be possible inside the conventions of the established music industry – especially the key expressions of the LGBT+ community. The conventions of silly lyrics, short track lengths, hook focused music, collaboration, genre blending, distortion, and lo-fi production merge to offer a freedom to easily produce a musical experience that would suffer and collapse under the weight of established and conventional music production. Hyperpop, then, thereby offers a liberating space for artists to experiment both with musical experience but also new messaging and ideas.

Lastly, because of hyperpop's background as a post-internet form of art that operates outside of the confines of the mainstream music industry, its conventions allow artists to communicate ideas and messages that would otherwise not be possible through the means of the traditional mainstream music industry. As a result, hyperpop has become a platform for artists of a variety

backgrounds; most notably artists from the LGBTQ+ community such as Laura Les, Dorian Grey and SOPHIE, who take advantage of the freedom associated with the conventions of hyperpop to create and express themselves in such ways that would not be possible under the watch of the gatekeepers that are the mainstream music industry. Subsequently, the post-internet space where hyperpop operates offers a space for artists that is liberating in that they are free to experiment freely without any limits in how they express and portray themselves, giving way for the development of new messaging and ideas not encouraged or found within the confines of the established mainstream music industry (Connolly, 2021; Enis, 2020).

6.3: Findings

6.3.1: The accessibility of the internet has encouraged the development of the conventions that make hyperpop allow artists of all backgrounds to overcome barriers involved with the mainstream music industry.

With the internet giving amateur music artists the ability to learn any skill, download any software, share their content with anyone, and have instant access to music distribution; a genre such as hyperpop can exist without the limitations of an offline only world that would have been the case before the introduction of the internet. Any one person can potentially become a hyperpop artist and find a following due to the accessibility of the internet allowing them to overcome limitations such as financial issues, skill, or difficulty with networking.

Hyperpop artists whose music can be quite niche in style and aesthetic, as well as primitive in execution, now have access to a variety of resources to support their success. YouTube tutorials can teach the layperson how to produce a song from the ground up in any DAW, and even teach video editing skills to people of all skill levels. In the creation of my hyperpop artifact, there were a few times that Google and YouTube helped me achieve aspects of my artifact that I was not able to initially create due to gaps in my skill, for example, the video overlays used in the music video. On that same notion, if any artist had an issue such as not being able to achieve distortion in their production, there are many resources online that would teach them how to make that

happen, as well as software and other resources that would facilitate it such as music VST plugins or samples.

The ubiquitous nature of social media and streaming also allows artists to reach an audience free of cost, foregoing the need to pay for a publicist or traditional advertising. If I wanted to promote my hyperpop artifact without having to spend large sums of money, I would have multiple avenues to do so. These include (but are not limited to) partaking in public forums such as hyperpop related subreddits, Facebook groups and Discord servers, and promoting myself on social media such as Instagram and Tiktok. The same goes for the distribution of music; services such as Distrokid are cheap and easy to use and will distribute your music on most streaming platforms such as Spotify and Apple Music. YouTube, Soundcloud, and Bandcamp are also free to use and provide an easy way for people to listen to an artist with a simple link.

Because of this accessibility, independent artists do not need to rely on large financial backing in order to access education, promotion and distribution to make money and/or have their music heard by a large audience. Hyperpop artists whose music may be considered “odd” or whose image may be “weird” now have a way to develop themselves as artists and have access to find an audience who will enjoy their art. The utility of the internet has allowed for the disruption of the mainstream music industry as we know it, paving the way for hyperpop to exist.

6.3.2: The internet allows for endless creative freedom and hyperpop artists take advantage of this.

In a post-internet world, artists are able to bypass being confined to creative standards set by their industries and find other ways to exhibit their work and find audiences without their help. For example, visual artists who specialise in styles not considered established formats of art (such as manga or comic styles) will unlikely have their work showcased at a gallery exhibition or auction, but can showcase their work and find an audience on platforms such as Twitter, Reddit, and Tumblr. Similarly, music artists are able to distribute and share their music online for little to no cost and avoid having to conform to mainstream music industry standards and because of this, artists are free to

create any kind of music they want without having to conform to making music and looking a certain way that is commercially friendly.

Because of this, artists from all walks of life from LGBTQ+, people of colour, teenagers, working class bedroom musicians, *etc.* have gravitated toward the style of hyperpop where they are able to freely express themselves how they want, creatively. Similarly, this is why I took a personal interest in undertaking research regarding hyperpop. As a musician myself, the creative freedom of expression many hyperpop artists tend to embrace and take advantage of was a breath of fresh air for me as someone coming from a rock music background. Hyperpop artists were free to mix multiple musical styles together, dress however they felt, create despite having limited technical skill, and produce with what little resources they have at their disposal; and despite these factors (or because of them), hyperpop is able to flourish and find an audience on the internet with music industry platforms such as Spotify acknowledging and making a playlist for the genre.

Knowing that hyperpop media can essentially be anything the artist deems it to be so long as it is a relatively short and catchy tune, there are almost no limits to how hyperpop can sound and look as long as it follows these conventions. Hyperpop is an artform that developed with the freedom of the internet where commercial viability was not essential and therefore were freed from industry pressures.

6.3.3: Hyperpop is a form of art that exists as a result of the post-internet environment.

Lastly, the conventions that define hyperpop in all of its parts from music, music video, and cover artwork, exist due to the circumstances afforded by the internet and the implementation of post-internet ideology in modern art. The implementation of stylistic choices that actively challenge standards of mainstream music, such as the use of silly lyrics, lo-fi production, genre blending, and etcetera, are the result of the internet encouraging the development of these conventions and artists being conscious of how they are used. Without the internet, both artists and fans of hyperpop would not be able to find and consume media such as hyperpop. Furthermore, hyperpop artists would not

be able to develop their production skills which have influenced the use of heavy vocal effects, genre blending, and so forth; or easily organise collaboration with artists across the world. Moreover, they would not be able to easily distribute their content and music online and may come across the barrier of funding for physical distribution of CDs or radio and television placement, heavily affecting their ability to be discovered by potential fans.

The post-internet environment is what created hyperpop. It is the result of the internet giving artists of all backgrounds who could not, and/or do not want, to become normal pop artists on an even playing field where technical skill, physical appearance, sexuality, money, and societal pressures are no longer an issue. Any person can partake in hyperpop even if their technical ability in musical performance is undeveloped, for example. If they cannot sing too well, the artist can download software that corrects their singing pitch and make their vocal performance palatable and appropriate for the track. No longer will they need to spend thousands of dollars renting gear and crew for a music video that looks “unprofessional”, even a music video shot on a phone and edited on pirated editing software will be discovered and enjoyed by an audience on the internet. Hyperpop is a genre that exists because of the post-internet world we live in today and allows us to break the restrictions of the “traditional” pathways to becoming a successful musician. Pathways that were created well before the internet was commonplace in everyday life.

6.4: Conclusion

Through this exegesis, I wanted to explore how the influence of the internet through post-internet art ideology has allowed for genres of media such as hyperpop to exist with the research question:

“What conventions make the music genre known as ‘Hyperpop’ a post-internet object?”

The approach to answering this research question was to create my own hyperpop artifact using my skills and knowledge as a musician and digital media creator, by emulating existing hyperpop works and being conscious of its post-internet context. Through the creation of my

own hyperpop artifact, I was able to discover the nuance of how the post-internet tenet of being art that is “internet aware” and crafted in a ubiquitously internet society (McHugh, 2009), has had direct influence on allowing hyperpop to exist as a newly formed genre of music formulated as an internet counterculture against mainstream pop music and culture.

The conventions that define hyperpop are a result of it being a post-internet artform. The music of hyperpop is very short, satirical, collaborative, focuses entirely on being catchy, eclectic in musical style, and embraces low production values. The music videos are low budget, spontaneous, and simple. And the cover artworks for hyperpop seem almost random with no visual theme or styles that are common across the genre. These conventions that make hyperpop are a result of embracing the utilities and services available through the internet where the layperson can essentially learn, create, and share their own music and art to potential audiences from all over the world without having to conform to expectations laid down by the mainstream music industry which predates the internet.

This case study of how post-internet art has led to the creation of hyperpop shows us how the internet can disrupt the industry of mainstream pop and create a counterculture in the same way punk rock did in the late 1900s (Kornhaber, 2021). Hyperpop is evidence that the internet is a powerful tool that can allow artists to ignore music industry gatekeepers and make their own success with no limit to how they express themselves. This freedom afforded by hyperpop is why so many artists associated with the genre are LGBTQ+ and/or very young as, due to the lack of industry gatekeepers choosing to only support artists who are conventionally marketable, artists from all walks of life are able to participate and be successful.

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