

So you've cleared your schedule, opened a new project, and the timer is ticking away.

Now what?

Dealing with an empty canvas (or a new project file, or a blank page) can be one of the most difficult challenges as an artist.

Some days are easy. You have an idea in mind, or a general vibe to move towards.

Some days are hard. Nothing sounds interesting or inspiring. Chords have all been done before and no amount of samples or melodies get you moving.

Punching through this barrier feels impossible. You are working against so much creative friction you can't move at all.

In the countless¹ Two Hour Track Challenges I've done, I've *always* ended up with a song. Overcoming this is not only possible, but repeatable.

Later chapters get into specific tactics, but right now, I want to talk about the problem itself.

How can you choose a direction to go if there is a near-infinite number of choices?

Analysis Paralysis is a common phrase for being presented a choice with an overwhelming amount of information. Some people are unable to choose.

There are so many tools and creative methods at your disposal, how do you narrow it down to just one thing to start with? That would mean missing out on so many other parts of music production that you love.

At the end of the book, I've included some additional challenge worksheets that offer small (and large) ways to start the process of breaking through the empty canvas, but I want to analyze this problem from a different angle.

There is a term in quantum physics called a "waveform collapse".

¹ Well, I can count them, it's about 445 at the time of writing

Within quantum systems, exact knowledge is ambiguous. It exists in one of many possible states called a superposition. Through the interaction with that system, these many states collapse into a single observable state.

Breaking out of the empty canvas is similar. An empty project contains the possibility of all music in superposition. Doing *literally anything* will start to collapse those possibilities down into the song you're making today.

Adding a single note helps define your project's key and tonality. Choosing a single instrument helps define the project's mood. Every choice you make, even if it's small, removes countless other choices.

And once you have less choices, you can start to understand where the song wants to take you. The possibilities continue to collapse and suddenly the way forward is obvious.

More often than not, this methodology is a jump-start. Once things get moving, you might not need those tiny choices that catalyzed the rest of the song. That's OK; they did their job.