

Culminating Experience:
Disrupción Records - Label Manager

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Outcome Paper

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I. Summary

The selection for my Culminating Experience of my Master's degree in Global Entertainment and Music Business was the undertaking of the role of Label Manager for Disrupción Records. Disrupción Records acts as the student-run independent record label of Berklee College of Music's Valencia Campus. It is primarily used to operate as a record label that serves Berklee artists as they begin to distribute and promote their musical projects as well as give the Global Entertainment and Music Business students hand-on experience in running a record label. Alongside my position are the following: a Product Manager, two A&R Representatives, a Marketing Manager, an Events and Promotions Manager and a Sync Manager. With an increased number of staff and a wider range of goals for the record label in 2018-2019, the opportunities we were accessing eventually aided in the projection of legitimizing the label as not just one that is "student-run" but one that is respected and seen as a real and credible resource for both non-Berklee artists and regular independent artists, alike.

Throughout the year I was tasked with not only managing the label's day-to-day operations, but also the rebranding and re-structure of the label, the team's dynamics and workflow, and the overall success of the projects that were signed to Disrupción Records. A few of the highlighted accomplishments that I was able to lead for the team was the rebirth of a distribution deal with The Orchard (a high-end distributor) for the label, the signing of an international non-Berklee artist, and opening up of a Synchronization department.

Although there existed some trials and errors throughout the year, I am confident in saying that myself and the Team at Disrupción Records completed a successful growth period

for the record label and for the projects a part of it. Please see the following explanations of my term as the Label Manager.

II. Objectives

In starting as the Label Manager for Disrupción Records, there were pre-set objectives by my advisor in which I was to focus on during my term. Among them were:

1. Create a longer and more revenue-generating licensing deal for our projects
2. Build a structure for the label that would foster a smoother in-house staff turn-around from year to year.
3. Involve a non-Berklee artist in the resources of the record label.

To start, perhaps the most important objective was to create not only longevity for the projects, but longevity for the record label. In creating a licensing deal that was for a longer term and existing on a "rolling" basis, the record label would be able to sustain itself with more revenue coming in consistently. The old contract, although very artist friendly, existed on an extremely short term, usually no more than 6 months. This meant that Disrupción Records was only receiving money for 6 months out of the year. This was a strict problem of sustainability. As mentioned before, the new licensing deal that was introduced to our artists was still friendly for the ownership of their rights, but introduced a "rolling" period in that, unless the artist notified Disrupción of their want to terminate the licensing, the licensing will continue. This creates an option for Disrupción to show why it is beneficial for the artist to continue licensing with Disrupción should the track do really well.

The second pre-set objective involved the smooth and efficient transition from team members after the year ended and a new staff took over the roles. In years past, the graduating team would leave in July and the record label would have no staff until the new team was chosen in October. Experiencing this first hand, led to this becoming possibly the most important objective of the year. Not only does this lack of transition create a stunt in growth for the label, it creates confusion and inefficiency for label projects and new label staff. In combating this confusion and “dead time” for the label and its staff, the building of a Google Drive and a “How-To” guide to run the label came from this objective.

The most straight forward objective created involved signing an artist that was not a Berklee student and not previously affiliated with the record label. This would ultimately legitimize Disrupción Records and continue to contribute to the “real-world” experience that I was able to get as a Label Manager.

Aside from the pre-set objectives that I was given by my advisor, I had my own set of objectives that I set out to achieve:

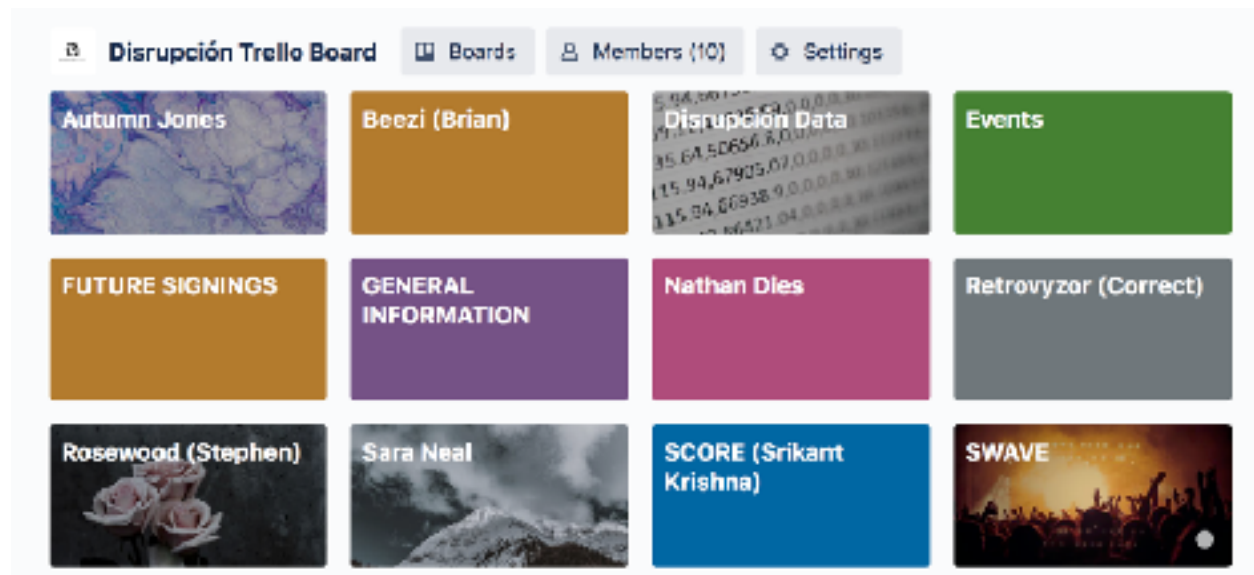
1. Rebrand and Restructure the record for a higher visibility and efficiency rate
2. Learn how to successfully lead a team through several simultaneous projects
3. Create synchronization opportunities through a Sync Department of Disruption Records.

These objectives, later explained in more detail, parallel not only the idea of creating legitimacy for the label but also the opportunity for personal growth . Through rebranding and growing the staff, I am able to see what strategies work on the internal level and the external level. These strategies then lead to the successful implementation of good managerial skills as I

guided the team through our project releases. Finally, the creation of the Sync department is the culmination of identifying a gap in the system and creating a solution to fill it.

III. Resources

The resources of Disrupción Records varied in relation to both the growth of the label over the year and the specific tasks of each department. Perhaps the most important label wide resource was the use of the gmail account and Trello boards. Trello boards allowed us to communicate and funnel information into an easily readable account of tasks that were done or in progress. It simplified our workflow and allowed for referencing who was responsible for different assets.



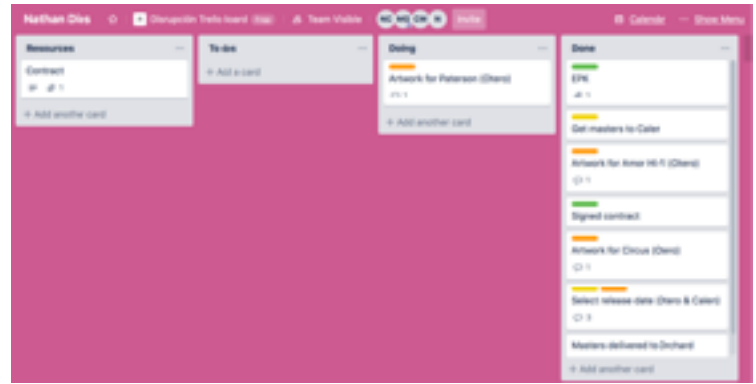


Figure 3.1 Swave and Nathan Dies Trello Board from Disrupción Records

In Figure 3.1, you may observe that the Trello Board shows the cards broken down into Resources, To-Dos, Doing, and Done. Furthermore, the color labeling dictated which department or staff member was in charge of a specific task. Some tasks that you could see put on these cards include album artwork, masters delivered, and release/promotion plan. It became even more helpful with the “Resources” card so that the contract could be referenced from time to time.

From the perspective of the Label Manager, the obvious resource of money played a big part in the success of the record label. From the rebranding of the website which created a need for a new domain to the marketing efforts of each release, money was always the physical resource we needed most. We were given a grant of 1,000 euros for the year in which we could spend however we deemed fit. As Label Manager, I decided to split the allotment 25/75 and give 250 euros to the Events and Promotions Department and 750 euros to the Marketing Department. Since the success of the label depends on how well our releases due and the revenue that they generate from streaming, it only made sense to allocate the majority of that money to Marketing.

Among other departmental resources such recording studios for the A&R Department, and smaller event specific needs for the Events and Promotions Department, was the formal presentation deck about Disrupción, Fusión and its offerings for showcasing to other students and other clients. Having a deck that could break down what Disrupción Records was and what we offered was a simple way to communicate and do more outreach for the label itself.

IV. Tasks

Tasks as a Label Manager ebb and flow with the needs of the record label. Disrupción Records was no different in that I needed to, first and foremost, be managing the day-to-day operations as well as be thinking big picture and continue to grow awareness around the brand. My tasks, directly aligned with the set objectives of my role and for the label, exemplify the many needs of a business manager and a successful entrepreneur.

Growing Disrupción's Brand

1. Divide Disrupción Records into 3 imprints: Common Chord, EVLVE, and Fusión

In order for Disrupción to continue as a serious brand and record label, there needed to be a clear line between the type of project and the message of the project that was being distributed. In turn, Common Chord was created in order to serve the jazz and instrumental works that were to be distributed. EVLVE was created to serve as an emerging artist platform in which artists in need of career foundations like an EPK or set up on socials, DSPs and press related activities could be incubated. Fusión was again, created in order to

serve as the Sync agency that was to be a part of Disrupción and serve not only the Disrupción catalogue, but also the Scoring for Film and TV students on the Berklee Valencia campus. Maintaining a clear distinction between all three of these platforms became a task of mine and ensuring that the Disrupción Records releases were coordinated as such as well.

2. Create a Sync Department and conduct selection process for the individual supervision

In noting that the Disrupción label had an opportunity to work with every other program on campus aside from the Scoring for Film and Television students, it made sense to open a Sync department where film and television composers can submit their work into the database for possible placements or work-for-hire film scores. It was also a way for our current catalogue to be used for sync purposes as well. The objective was to create a space for Disrupción to successfully enter that field with the growing catalogue that we were acquiring.

3. Create a dynamic presentation for the use of promotional and explanatory efforts among other stakeholders of Disrupción Records.

This task involved the consolidation of information surrounding Disrupción Records so that it could be used by any team member or sent to any stakeholder to receive more details about all that we offer. Used as a pitching deck to students, to other artists across the globe and to possible sync agents, the promotional deck allowed for again, a more legitimate approach to pitching Disrupción Records worldwide.

Aside from these tasks, were another set of tasks that involved the daily operations of the record label and the team itself.

Weekly tasks: (Managerial)

1. Weekly Update Email to Disrupción Records Staff

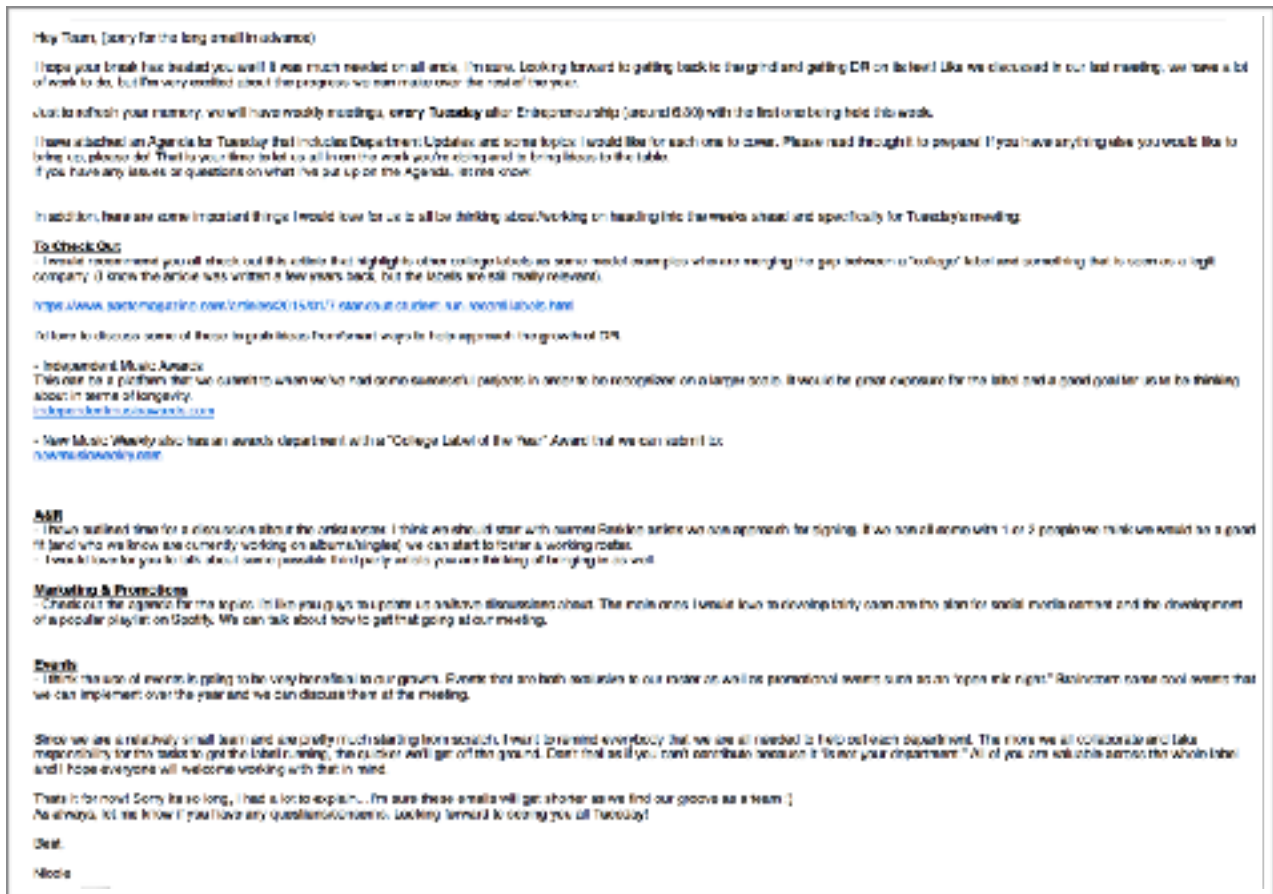


Figure 4.1 Email Update from Nicole sent 2 November 2018

The Weekly Email Updates was a way to communicate all the immediate needs and suggestions that each department was to be focusing on for that week. It also included major topics such as branding direction and potential artists to sign. This was also a way to continue communication even if there was no physical meeting that week.

2. Monitor Trello Boards for potential tasks

This became a weekly task as more artists began to come onto Disrupción Records and checking the Trello boards for progress and resources was a way to access all the management that needed to be done for each project.

3. Communicate with Department Managers to ensure everything is being done

This was a “by need” task that was done sometimes multiple times a day or sometimes once a week depending on the status or need of the department. As a Label Manager, I realized that my line of communication should be open as close to 24 hours a day as possible in order to not have a backup in a project should a department need an answer or approval on something.

4. Construct and administer Licensing Contracts in the on boarding of Artists/Projects

Each time an artist was going through the on boarding process, a contract was in need in order to proceed. I made sure that the contract was inclusive of all the standard licensing features including the licensing rights for the project on all digital and physical platforms, the rights to use and promote the project using the artist’s image, the opportunity of a “rolling” term, a communication clause stating that there would be an agreed upon amount of communication each week between both parties, and a termination clause should the artist or Disrupción feel the need to terminate the contract if there was a breach on either side.

5. Hold regular team meetings to discuss current projects

These team meetings were scheduled and used as an update and progress report for each department and often followed an agenda which I would send out prior to the meeting time/date.

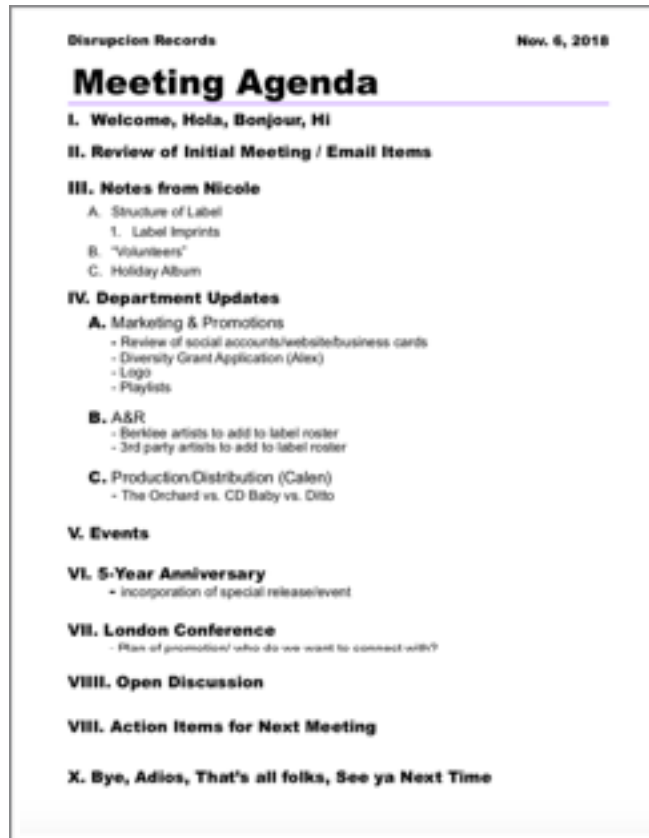
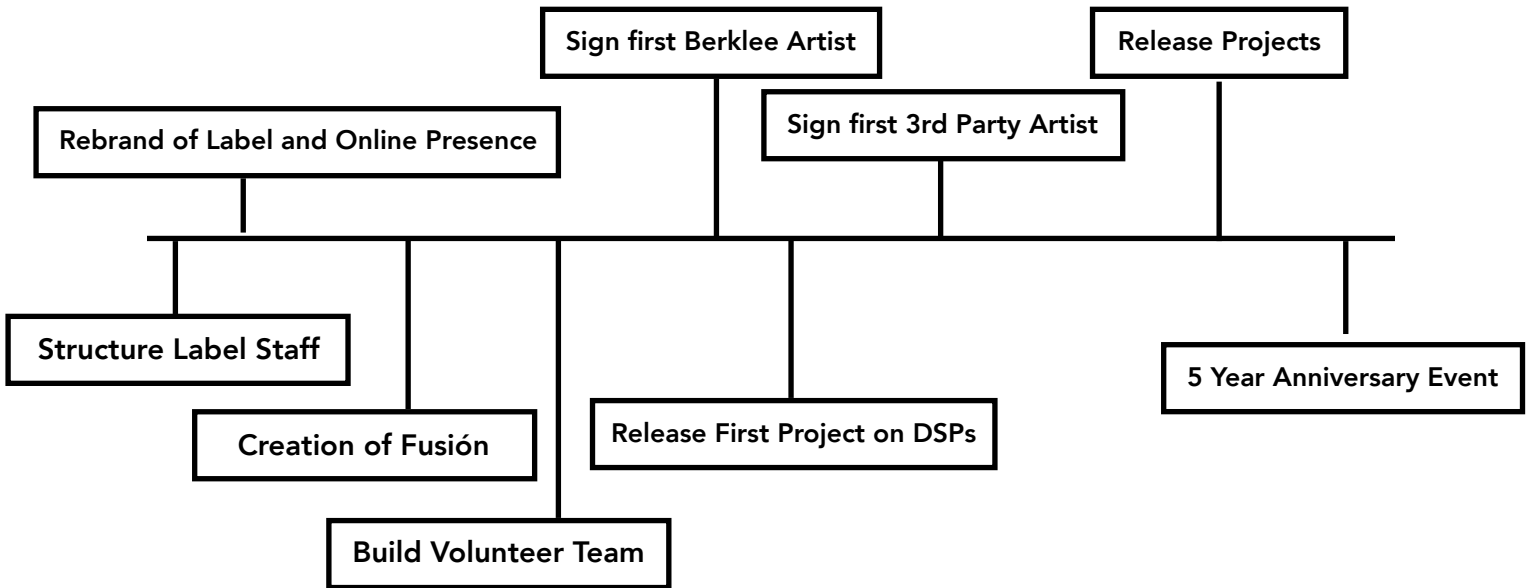


Figure 4.2 Disrupción Records Meeting Agenda from Nicole

V. Chart Metrics & Data

The success of the Disrupción Records can be seen and measured over the success of the rebranding and the success of the Projects that were signed to the label. First starting with the timeline of the year and how Disrupción progressed it is important to structure a proper graphic displaying this.



As noted before, each next step in the process could not come without the existence of the other. In order to accomplish the signing of the third party artist, Disrupción Records needed to be rebranded and prepared in a way that looked like a legitimate independent label. Further, the label could not release projects or collect statistics on our strategies until there were projects being released. And finally, in order to celebrate the label's successes over its five year existence, there needed to, put simply, be something to celebrate.

Looking further at the success of our releases comes from using the program Tableau to identify the data behind the compilation of our project.



Figure 5.1 Total Audio Streams broken down by Subscription and Ad-Supported Streams

In Figure 5.1 you can notice that the total audio streams were broken into the division of streams from subscription audio and ad-supported streams. With this data, Disrupción Records can take note that our listeners are paid subscribers and create strategies around that fact.

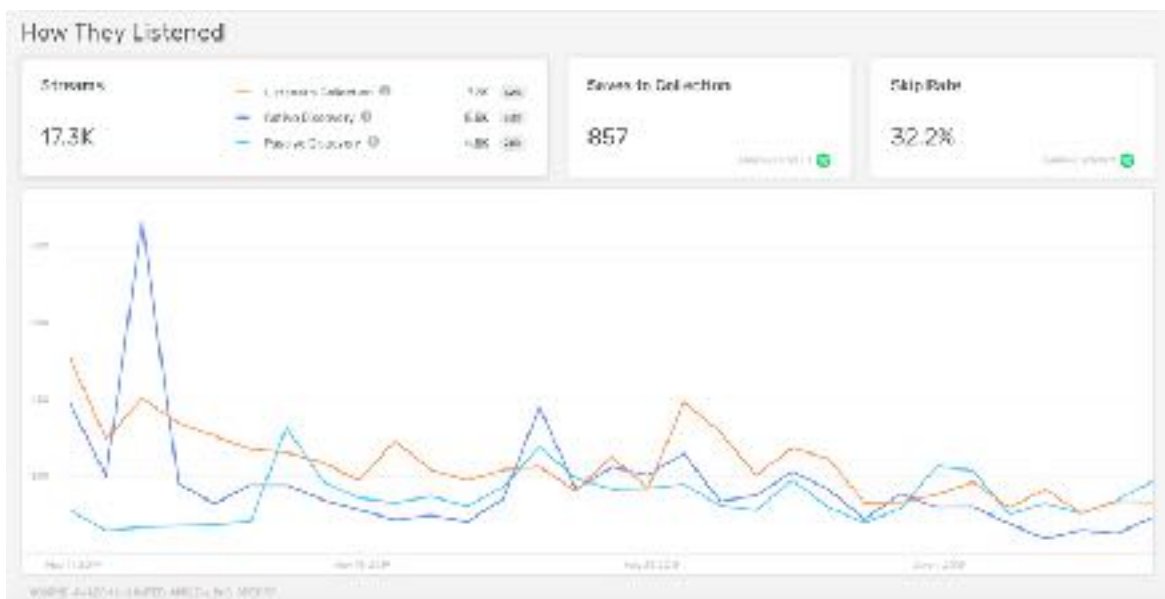


Figure 5.2 Total Project Method of Listening Statistic

Figure 5.2 Shows that our projects were heavily founded by ways of discovery either by active or passive. This means that it is more likely for a genre specific lover or a listener more interested in music discovery is attracted to our projects. It is also important to note that the projects only have a 32.3% skip rate. This number potentially comes from the fact that almost half of our streams come from the addition of the track to a listener’s collection and therefore there is already a want for it to be listened to and less likely to skip. There is a connection between listener and project once they are discovered and that is an important takeaway for the quality of music that Disrupción continues to release.

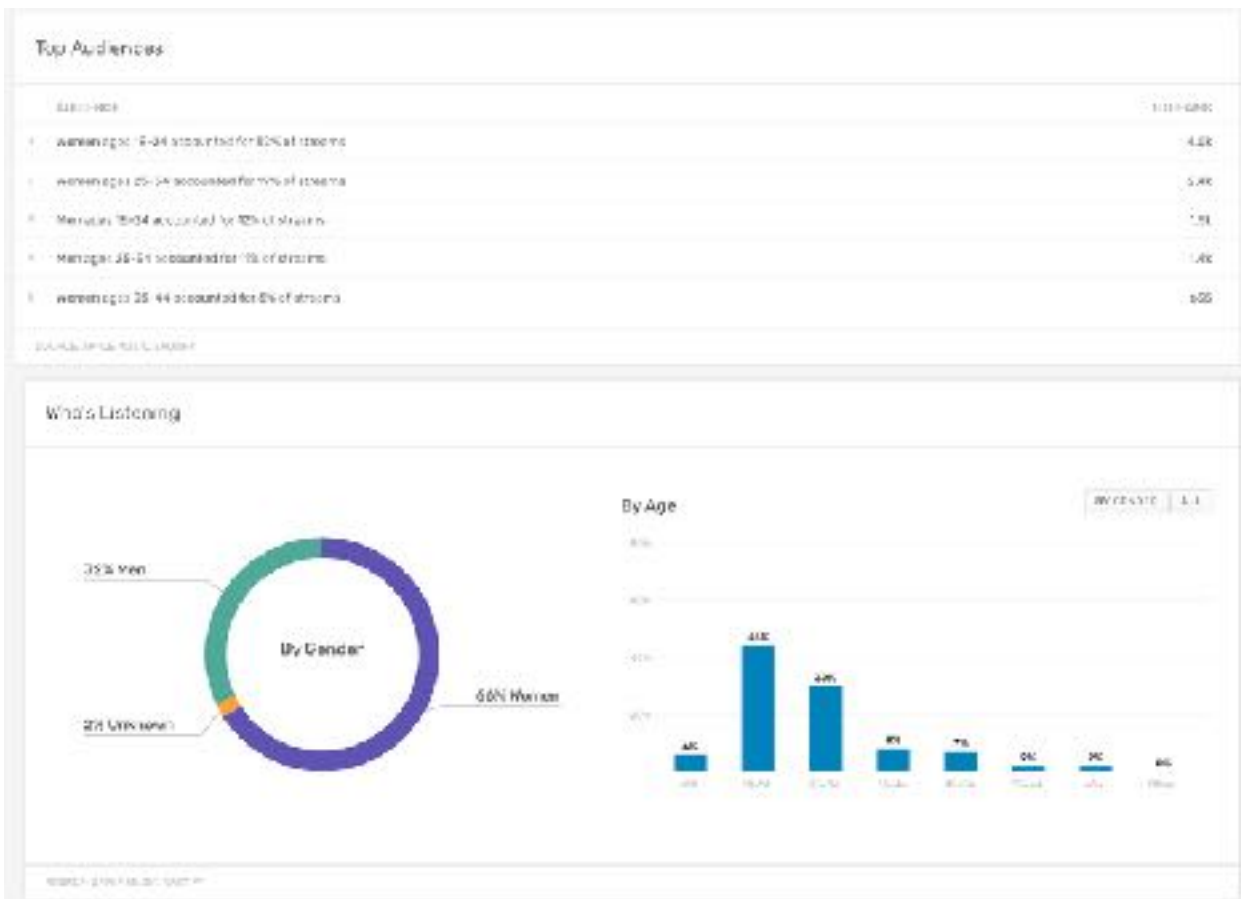


Figure 5.3 Total Project Method of Listening Statistic

Figure 5.3 displays the important marketing information that Disrupción can use to target more listeners as well as the initial fan base. Heavily women, and in the age range of 18-34, both the label marketing side and the project marketing side can use this information to correctly create campaigns. The Label Manager should be knowledgeable of these statistics so that I am aware of what kind strategy the teams should be implementing.



Figure 5.4 Total Project By Geographical Location

Figure 5.4 displays the finding that, although Disrupción Records was based in Valencia, Spain, there were listeners worldwide. This is a pure correlation to the notion that streaming has made music more accessible and reachable across the globe. For small, independent record labels like Disrupción Records, it means that we too now have a piece of the pie.

VI. Risks

Managing Disrupción Records came with risks that were most involved with the success and interaction with artists themselves. Two of the most endangering risks for the Label Manager at Disrupción Records in dealing with the artist was the risk of breaching a contract through a mismanaged project, and a project being released without a clearance of a copyright.

First, there are many ways that the Disrupción Team could potentially be in breach of contract. Some reasons could be the lack of communication for a period of time about the status of a project or the project not being released on time or at all. My job as a Label Manager, trying to reduce these risks is to make sure that everything is flowing smoothly from department to department as the project is underway. Should a certain department be held up with something or not follow through on a task that has a deadline, especially in terms of release dates, it could be not only detrimental to the project but put the record label in breach of the contract itself. The relationship with the artist is something that a record label must prioritize and make sure the needs of the project are being met.

The second major risk comes from the trust from the artist themselves. The contract administered to them must represent that they have full authority to use everything that is embodied in their master recordings. If they use a sample that is not cleared and don't notify us, the track will be released and potentially claimed on our behalf which could put Disrupción in a legal dispute as the licensee of the Master recording. As the Label Manager, there needed

to be complete clarity in the risks of this occurrence towards the artist and taking extra steps to make sure that they know the consequences of not getting potential copyright issues cleared.

A final risk that comes with being the Label Manager of Disrupción Records stems from the ability to manage a team with several personalities and individual goals. The risk of having internal issues of communication can ultimately affect how the projects that the label licenses are successful or not successful. It is important to create strategies of team building and trust among team members so that the internal conflicts remain at a minimum.

VII. Outcomes

The Outcomes of the Culminating Experience of the Label Manager for Disrupción Records were not only successful for the label but successful for my personal growth and real life experience. Looking at where the team began from the initial building phase to how many projects were able to be released in something that shows a large amount of growth and accomplishment.

First, in the restructuring and rebranding of the label, the team was able to create a more efficient way of dividing up the types of projects that are licensed and distributed through Disrupción Records.



Common Chord enabled Disrupción Records to continue to foster the heavily jazz and instrumental projects that were fostered by the fellow Berklee students. Although we only had one project released through Common Chord this year, I foresee there being more in the future as an increasing amount of Berklee students begin to use the record label.

EVLVE, also having one artist a part of its program, was designed to create an in depth learning opportunity for emerging artists to gain a bigger understanding of how they can be successful and what they need to create a solid foundation for their artist careers. Through EVLVE, the team was able to create EPK's, A&R certain master recordings, suggest collaborations, and even gain a chance to talk through contracts and live performance standards. Nathan Dies was our "longest project of the year in terms of working through creating a solid foundation for his career. From his signing in December, to his final release in June, the team encountered a number of different trials and successes including a lyric copyright issue, several versions of the instrumentation on the masters, a successful marketing campaign on WhatsApp in his home country of Brazil and his successful set up of his Artist page and identity across all social media.

Fusión, the Sync Department, was officially opened at the end of 2018 and was staffed with a Head of Sync and a Sync Administrator. One was in charge of the organization of the catalogue and the other was in charge of outreach to potential clientele. From this, the team was able to not only create a catalogue among the SFTV students, but also the projects licensed for more commercial use from the Disrupción catalogue. In addition, the team was able to solidify a film sync with a Chapman University student and her short film. As the catalogue grows, I believe Fusión will set apart the Disrupción Team from all other school label as well as independent labels.

Among the outcomes from the outreach as the Label Manager, I was able to speak to both individual students and groups of students in promoting the services of the Disrupción brand. From these presentations, we gained huge interest in the Fusión opportunity, but not so much interest in the record label. The outreach for the Disrupción record label part of the brand came from one-on-one interactions and a push for outreach from the A&R Department. It is important to note that the outreach to certain artists should continue on a one-to-one basis, but should also be practiced in more of a presentation setting to the general student body, especially to the most immediate "clients" of the students of Berklee.

In terms of completing the original objectives, stated previously, the team was able to accomplish a multitude of them. In creating a new license deal to create longevity for the label, the artists that were a part of those deals, did not seem to mind and were happy to oblige. This resulted in a majority of our contracts reaching a full year with the inclusion of the "rolling" term. It is too early to tell what kind of revenue difference this will make for Disrupción as the

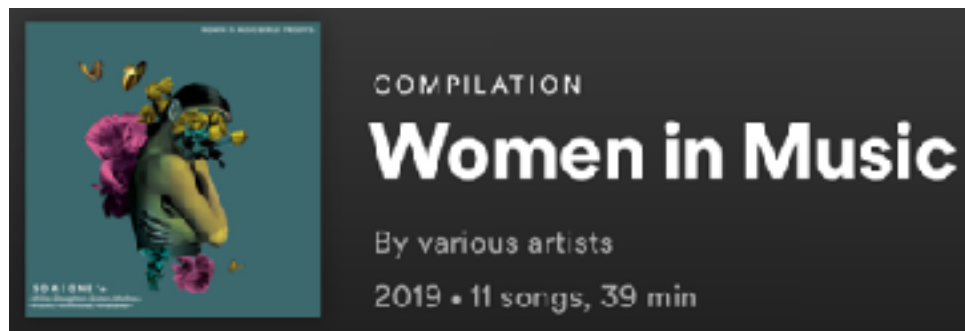
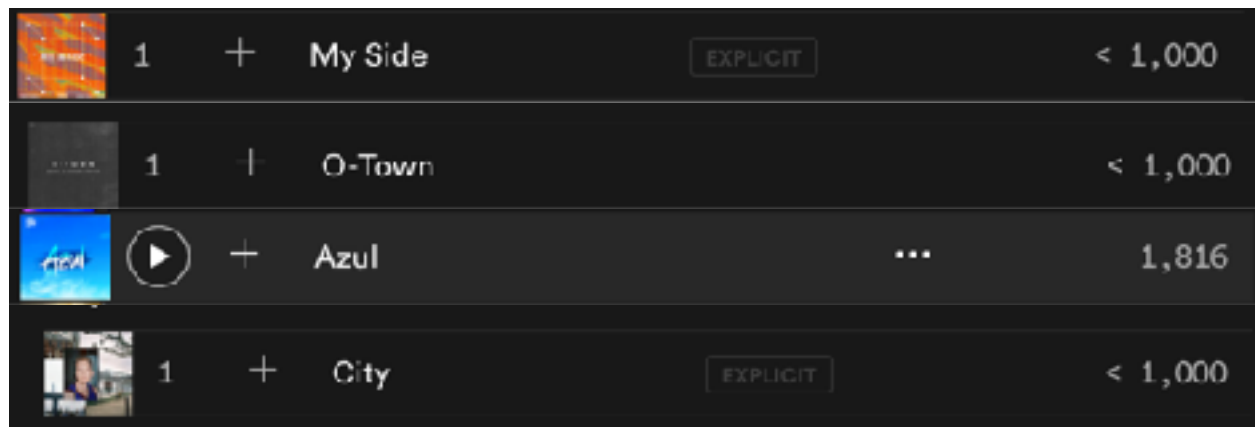
revenue generated is dependent on the projects doing well on the DSPs, but it is an accomplishment for furthering the longevity of the label's existence in the artist's career.

As the Label Manager, I also oversaw the signing of the international artist, Mayani Swave from the Dominican Republic. This was another huge accomplishment for the Disrupción brand as it was the first non-Berklee artist that was incorporated into the label. The process with Swave resulted in the process of remixing and remastering the EP as well as releasing a new single. Throughout his time working with the A&R's and a mixing engineer, the team found it best to simply re-master the project only and re-release the EP on all major platforms. In addition, we were able to create a successful marketing plan and work hand in hand with the artist and artist team. As the Label Manager, I experienced the difficulties in communication with an artist team, understanding the vision of the artist team, and the length of time that is often underestimated to get the project right. Artists are very sensitive to their projects, and the label team should always keep that in mind when working with them.

Disrupción Records was also given a slot for Musaico, the music festival held by Berklee College of Music in which we could have 20 minutes to showcase one of our artists. We thought it best to use this as a spotlight on Swave, our international artist, and continue to promote the legitimacy of the record label. Logistics were created to fly him to Spain, book him a radio interview, and perform at the festival itself. The radio interview was then used for promotional content and reached an audience of over 7,000 people at Musaico.

In the 2018-2019 year for Disrupción Records, the team was able to release an record high of projects. This spanned genres of R&B, Hip Hop, Jazz, Electronic, Alternative, Reggaeton, Indie Pop, and Latin. It proved the skills and the diversity of the team in working

with each project and making sure that it got the attention it needed for the audience it was proposed to. Our projects and their success is shown below.



As the Label Manager for Disrupción Records, the brand's success will attribute to my success, but more importantly, the level of learning and personal growth and a business manager in general was the greatest outcome of the experience. In dealing with team dynamics, I learned how to use interpersonal communication skills to solve problems or conflict. With some teams disagreeing on projects, I was often the final say and had to gauge when to be firm about a decision for the label's benefit and success. The combination of being

both a leader and a follower was something that I tried to implement during my year as thought it created a well-rounded outcome of the team feeling like they always had a say in the success of the projects. I often held meetings in a democratic style and made sure that all the members had time to express thoughts, concerns and ideas. I was able to create an environment where respect was achieved and a common goal was established. The outcome of this Culminating Experience largely relied on each other and therefore the accomplishment of sticking together and achieving all that we set out to do, was a testament to the commitment and hard work of each and every member of the team.

Lastly, from our experience in having to rebuild the label from the ground up and recreate the internal functioning of the record label itself, there is now a place where each new team can access passwords, logins, contracts, catalogue and useful information to help run the Disrupción Records. The first three months of our time at the record label was spent searching for passwords, logins and all the information noted prior. It seriously hindered our ability to sign projects right away and ultimately led us to have to “recreate” Disrupción Records and the infrastructure that should have already been in place. Therefore, with this new, updated folder and “How To” guide, the resource can be used from team to team, revised, edited, and moldable with each new staff. This perhaps, will create the most longevity for the label as the issue of the new teams coming in year to year ultimately stunted its growth. By using this Google Folder, resources will be shared and progress of the label can transition with the projects and staff themselves.

VIII. Conclusion

As the Label Manager for Disrupción Records, I was able to foster growth for the label internally and externally, manage a team successfully through a multitude of projects and releases, and obtain the skills needed to manage a business and know the ins and outs of the label sector of the industry. Among the many outcomes that were achieved, the most notable are the restructuring and rebranding of the record label itself, signing a third party artist and experiencing a full experience of label services around that artist, and bringing in the most revenue to date from streams and releases. These achievements are seen as the fundamental result of a commitment to trial and error and problem solving and a commitment to seeing the art and the vision come to life. Through managing the day-to-day operations to controlling the big picture decisions, the role of Label Manager gives you the full range of skills needed to enter the music industry.

Disrupción Records is now, more than ever positioned in a way to succeed as not only a student-run record label, but as a legitimate independent record label that any artist can feel comfortable and encouraged to license with. I am proud to have been a part of Disrupción Records and look forward to its future success and helping out with the next teams in place.