

Rosewood.

Type of Project:

Berklee offers 4 main typology suggestions for culminating experiences in the GEMB program. My project combines elements of both the business plan and the operational project. I chose to pursue my own musical career as an operational project, releasing multiple singles and attempting to expand my following. I continue to operate in this manner under the artistic pseudonym *Rosewood*. I also chose to treat my operations in the manner that a business would, establishing a holding company for myself under the name *Yucca Tech LLC*. This combination of two approaches allowed me to create a project that would expand my own knowledge of business, set up a sustainable artistic future for myself, and directly experiment with the business model of a DIY artist. This combination of pursuits also operated in coordination with my placement in the Entrepreneurship practicum, which helped to expand my CE. Overall, my objectives with this combined project was to develop my own company and my sense of entrepreneurship through real-life experience that I can sustainably carry through Berklee and beyond.

While my project is a combination of these two aforementioned formats, I have decided to present my summary in the form of a business project, as I believe this reflection paper will give me adequate room to reflect on the outcomes of my operational process.

Summary of Project:

The essence of my project was to build my career as an artist, from both a creative and entrepreneurial standpoint. I had previously operated as a recording artist and learned a lot but was prepared for a fresh start both personally and professionally. I saw this project as an opportunity to restart my artistic career and build the basis of my creative brand into something

that I could take beyond Berklee and into the world. This meant establishing not only the creative resources necessary (songs, graphics, photos, etc.) but also the business know-how and business plan that would help me take the project forward.

My intention with the project was to find a way to release my music in a properly supported manner that still allowed for my autonomy and freedom as an artist. Ideally, this meant a position in which I had some label support but maintained most of my independence. I was more concerned with brand equity than profit and thought that the best thing for me to build was the know-how of both the industry and the operations of a company. I wanted to produce music, ideally a project, and then have that music professionally released in a manner that would let me see the way professionals go about their release patterns, marketing, and creative process. I wanted to also be able to build a business plan that would allow me to repeat these patterns once I was beyond Berklee.

This meant that my project, in summary, was a summation of both an operational artistic project and also a theoretically focused business project. Both would center around the release of my music and anything else built up during the period of the project would be resources that worked in conjunction with the project. For my new artistic career, I chose the pseudonym *rosewood*.

Process:

My project began on the practical side with the recording, mixing and mastering of songs. On the business side it began with the establishment of my own company. These stages also coincided with the accumulation of other resources necessary for the release of music including graphics, social media accounts, etc. I was also focused on setting up a framework through which to funnel all of these activities into a concise operational format.

The first thing I did, besides writing and recording which were both ongoing processes was establish my own holding company. The holding company, *Yucca Tech LLC*, was established to help me provide a professional center for my music career. We had learned in the previous semesters' finance class how groups like Daft Punk had implemented this strategy in order to both protect themselves legally and look after their finances in the most optimal manner. Establishing yourself as a company gives you protection as well as an entity through which to conduct business operations and undergo contractual practices. I chose an LLC as it keeps my personal financial liability separate from my activities as an artist. This allowed me to have a “middle man” of sorts when operating contractually. Establishing the company was relatively cheap and easy. I established in my home country of Canada, where I intend to host the operations of the company post-Berklee, for a fee of \$250.00. The process involved me choosing a business sector, applying for my company name, and declaring shareholders and directors (of which I am the sole proprietor). While my culminating experience is solely focused on the brand and career of *Rosewood*, I chose to establish the holding company under a different name in case I one day wish to expand my creative operations and house more brands under the same creative holding company.

After establishing my company, I began to search for distribution sources for my music. I had previous experience releasing true DIY style but, in this instance, I wanted to find a more advantageous situation with some backing in terms of marketing and operations. With their close geographical proximity and focus on finding student talent, Disrupcion Records seemed to be a perfect fit. They had friendly contracts that would allow for the flexibility I wanted but still allow me the essential experience of working under a professional operation during my time at

Berklee. On top of this, Disrupcion had access to distribution through The Orchard, a reputable distributor with pitching power and prowess.

After showcasing some of my previous music to classmates last semester I gained interest from a couple of A&R's at Disrupcion who eventually took on my project. Eleonora Muraglia served as my core A&R and I soon signed a contract between Disrupcion and *Yucca Tech.* that bound us to deliver 4 songs over the period from March (when the contract was signed) until the end of summer semester (July). This quantity of music was agreed upon between myself and the head of label operations, Nicole Casino. It seemed to be an appropriate amount of music to deliver because it could mean the possibility of putting together a small EP with Disrupcion, but also allowed some flexibility because it would allow me to deliver a full project should I wish, or even a bundle of singles. I was nervous about the quantity of songs to produce but also thought it was a suitable length to be a good mix of doable yet challenging.

My team over the next while consisted of myself, Eleonora, & Nicole Otero (who was in charge of marketing). We put together a plan for the releases that seemed to be constantly changing but was nevertheless helpful in keeping things structure and organized. Being under the label was exceptionally helpful for my development since it meant hitting deadlines and quotas, something of which I had never done when releasing DIY. Initially, we planned on releasing 4 singles, but I found those delivery frames difficult to work with and eventually we agreed that an EP with 1 prior released single made the most sense. We built a marketing strategy around this structure that included both physical marketing such as posters and digital marketing in the forms of videos and social media campaigns. We also planned out a release party for the eventual release of the EP.

For the digital presence behind this project I chose to focus on one silo of activity rather than spread myself across all. I chose to focus predominately on Instagram not only because it is huge amongst artists but also because it allows me to express myself aesthetically and focus on growth through one specialized platform. After establishing an Instagram for myself we began to focus on creative genuine but professional posts to create a narrative and gain followers. We also established a YouTube account for myself, a Spotify profile and a new professional website www.rosewood.world, amongst other forms of digital marketing.

The process of acquiring the creative material for this project consisted of photoshoots, that were largely conducted by our team with my film camera (I have experience in photography). It also consisted of working closely with graphic designer and artist *wierddoods* who helped me come up with a logo and aesthetic for my website.

I also had an opportunity to perform during this process, which meant shows at the Disrupcion anniversary party, local cafes, and even a show in my apartment that we organized.

As far as producing the music itself, I am largely self-produced. I record, mix and master my own music and have access to my own equipment which I invested in before coming to Berklee. Despite this, I did have several collaborations on my project and worked closely with one other engineer, Strider White. This meant facilitating these writing and engineering collaborations through Disrupcion. On a creative level, this project consisted of countless hours of tracking, producing, writing and recording. I learned a ton about the experience and business side of working with a label, and also the planning behind creating my own business entity, but the music making process was still definitely at the heart of the project.

Results:

The process went a lot more efficiently than I thought and, in the end, I was able to release not only a single, but have sent away a 7 song EP to be released through The Orchard on July 5th. The team and I have planned an adjacent release party to be held on the 5th at H2ÖL, a bar in the Ruzafa neighborhood of Valencia. The single, a song entitled *City*, had an adjacent campaign with posters released in countries such as Switzerland, Canada, Spain and Italy. We worked successfully to establish my website and several of my social media platforms for my continue success beyond Berklee. I was able to work with a record label and gain experience that will help me to be more quickly acclimatized in the case of future record deals. The establishment of my company also means that I can continue to perform and release professionally under any infrastructure or system. The single so far has not gained as many streams as we would have liked, but hopefully for the pitch of the project we are able to be placed in a Spotify playlist of somewhere that will gain us more traction. I am looking forward to continuing my CE project even beyond the scale of this paper and carrying through with both the release party and the release of my project.

Next Steps:

The most obvious next steps are the marketing campaign and release of the project, along with the release party. Beyond that, I need to start looking at possible labels to sign with in Canada that will give me similar flexibility and distribution that I am receiving through Disrupcion. I will also be looking at applying to Grants in Canada and Edmonton in order to increase the funding for my future projects. I have a book in the works that I plan to publish and release through *Yucca Tech* as well. I would also love to do something in terms of merchandising in the future.

Contribution to the Discipline & Profession:

I am not entirely sure about this, but I believe according to conversations with certain professors that I am the first student in the GEMB program to attempt to bridge my own artistic career with the culminating experience project in the format of a business plan and operation. I believe that the GEMB program does an excellent job of providing industry knowledge and real-life experience to music industry professionals, but it intrigues me that it is not often the artist themselves who are interested in acquiring or applying this knowledge. With that being said I hope my business plan can be a sort of framework for future artists who wish to undergo this effort and try to apply the essential knowledge in the GEMB program to their own careers. It was very interesting to learn about finance, contract law, A&R work and entrepreneurship first semester and then come into the new year and attempt to apply all that to my own practices. At the end of the day the artist is the heart of the industry and I hope I can inspire future entrants to the GEMB program to attempt to pursue their own artistic careers. I know I have talked to members of CPPD, MPTI and GEMB programs who entered as artists but also with business in their mind frame and were unsure about their choice of program. I want to show that the GEMB program is a perfect place to be for an artist especially since the industry more and more frequently rewards artists who understand their finances and are on top of their business affairs. I hope that moving forward I can have much success with both rosewood and yucca tech and credit much of its inspiration to a proper and full musical education. I think the artist of the future must be educated in these areas and regardless of how successful I become I believe the model that I am attempting to pursue is an important one.

Impact on The Student Completing the Work:

This project taught me that a true artist has to be someone who balances their time wisely, meets deadlines, acts professionally and holds themselves accountable. The romanticized

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image of the artist quickly went out the window for me as I saw myself being held to higher standards by the record label and my own personal team. It taught me about working with a label, working with marketing, working with an A&R person, establishing connections with venues, completing a project, building a marketing plan around a project and planning a release party. I was impacted both professionally and artistically throughout this project and I feel not only like a better and more business savvy entrepreneur but also like I have a new life as a creative person. That is indispensable.