

Reflection Paper

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As I first reflect on my culminating experience, and more, my year with Berklee, I first think about the initial time frame where I was applying. My sister was recently diagnosed with cancer and as my interview for the program approached so too did her first major surgery. My time applying to Berklee was very much a vision unto which I forged my own path. I was living at home, physically as connected to family and hometown friends as I could be, but felt very isolated in facing what I might want in my future. I remember my time applying to Berklee being one full of questions—much bigger than those surrounding just my application.

In due time I was accepted and begun to visualize my life at Berklee instead of near it. Michigan sometimes felt like a cold wasteland and all I could think about was returning to the warm embrace of the Valencian sun. I was influenced by my semester abroad here during undergrad. Three years prior I was a different Abby, however, I had some fanciful ideas of the kind social and intellectual life I might return too. At this time, I was bored by monotony of my retail job. I had been working at LOFT for over a year and had been promoted to a supervisor role at the time of my acceptance. Retail was something I excelled in even though I found it emotionally and intellectually lacking. There were moments I found incredibly fulfilling, however, like client interactions, styling techniques, and learning to strategize according to sales data. There were lessons I learned at LOFT that I did not expect to carry with me into my year at Berklee Valencia. My experience working in retail found a home in and inspired my culminating experience in way I did not expect.

My outcome paper titled “Interpretations on functional music and its home with smart speakers” was a research paper I undertook to satisfy a personal and professional curiosity about the meaning of music as utilitarian tool. I wanted to apply this understanding to emerging trends in the music industry. Smart speakers were not initially intended to be discussed. Broadly, my approach was trying to better gauge and understand user interactions on digital streaming platforms. This led to the many remaining questions and implications that circle smart speakers growing popularity. As I begun research, smart speakers became an obvious point of discussion. I was also inspired by the Data Analytics course. Our class was asked to dive into the world of programmatic audio advertising as part of a consulting project in coordination with Sony Music Berlin. We were asked to strategize effective ways audio ads may overlay with future technologies like smart speakers. This got me thinking about the growing connected atmosphere around podcasts. My outcome paper is very much a reflection of my elevated intake music industry news. If Berklee has taught me anything, it is to stay up to date with latest announcements from the industry. Berklee encouraged more entertainment focused reading than any other environment I experienced. This helped foster my inspiration for research and holistically approach questions.

My outcome paper and I have had an emotional battle together. Entering this year my culminating experience lacked specificity. Harder to tackle was my confidence in building a body of work that academically and professionally expressed innovative ideas. I am still unsure if I have accomplished that. My culminating experience was met with many distractions—social and academic. It is with regret that those distractions often derailed my experience interacting with the project. There were many times when even approaching my culminating experience that I felt heavy with unease. Unease of what I wanted to say. Unease of what I wanted it to do for

me. Unease in my ability to use a comma. Old anxieties easily crept into the foreground of my culminating experience. It was after I let go of the some of the personal pressure that my CE started to work for me. Only after discussing my project more openly with peers, industry professionals, and advisors did I become acquainted with the idea that my perspective carried weight.

The outcome paper for my CE is my first attempt at writing anything of this stature. My undergrad did not stress essay writing and research. My masters felt like a deep dive in what it actually meant to write with academic purpose. Part of me felt stunted and somewhat behind in this regard. Eventually I had to trust in my own writing voice and that my research would prove to be quality evidence for my ideas. The research, though tedious, was fun! Sometimes, often, it led me down a rabbit hole. One of the hardest parts of starting the process of my CE was deciphering what threads to needle and what ideas to leave behind. My paper, unfortunately, does not cover all the cool ideas I came across. My CE will continue to grow with me due to the even longer list reading material I acquired. This was the first time I wrote something like this, though, I assumed my writing process would remain the same. I was wrong. My expectations for writing the CE surpassed what the reality was. I was successful given a slew of outside factors but know more time could have been dedicated to the writing.

The process for my writing was as follows. First, I collected a main body of academically sourced reading material. Then, I turned to recent news announcement and reports to evaluate the industry currently. I read and annotated each work. I then organized quotes according to article and used those as well as other notes to outline the shape of my paper. Once my research was complete my research questions took their final form and are as presented in the outcome paper. As my paper progressed I continued to collect more relevant material. The research portion of

this outcome paper was nearly ongoing throughout the entire process. Another reality that did not align with expectation. My process could have been enhanced by better understanding of Chicago style formats and more a proactive approach to formatting.

I believe this work offers professional insight into how smart speakers will grow and integrate into broader markets. This work also offers insight into the proliferation of functional music and DSPs reliance on mood stabilization. This CE has taught me the professional value in creative media insights and being able to creatively and uniquely approaching data, history, current events, and more. I believe my CE will position me as a valuable asset to any music industry company especially those specializing in media insight, B2B music, mood management and more. I believe my work has the capability to leave a lasting mark in the dialogue of functional music. I hope my work inspires more questions and insights.

I feel proud to have cohesively written an academic work that offers new and creative insight. I feel confident offering insight whether in writing or orally in professional settings. I may want to continue researching. I feel that this work is incomplete, in that there is so much yet to be discovered. This work will ultimately be defined by trends in the music industry and whether it accurately depicted any future ones.