

Culminating Experience

EP: Finding Colors

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ABSTRACT

The proposed project includes eight tracks in genres of Pop/R&B/Electro. As a producer and a songwriter, I collaborated with nine musicians to create these tracks.

I. Introduction

For this project, I have written, produced, mixed, and mastered eight tracks. By using the techniques learned at Berklee Valencia, I collaborated with nine musicians to create an EP. The eight tracks will be used as a portfolio to promote myself as a musician and a producer. The EP is in style of R&B, Hip-Hop, Pop, Jazz and Electronic Dance.

II. The Work

List of Tracks:

Bodywalk

Bodywalk is an R&B track with house rhythm. For the kick drum, I used simple 808-kick sound. The instrumentation and arrangement are very simple in this track. In order to make more interesting track, lots of vocal harmonies are added.

Collaborator(s):

Guitar: Juancristobal Aliaga

Vocal: Daniel Omphroy

Lover

This is a jazz tune arranged into Neo-Soul/R&B. The original tune, written by Djudju Hartono, was recorded in December 2013. Using the recorded track, I rearranged the song and designed drum loops. Then the melody was written to fit into the song. The inspiration comes from Nujabes and Musiq Soulchild.

Collaborator(s):

Vocal - Daniel Omphroy

Bass - Max Ridley

Guitar - Peter Conolly

Piano - Djudju Hartono

The First

This is a Jazz/Hip-Hop tune with an electronic twist. I used John Blackwell's drum loops recorded in Fall 2013, and manipulated different samples to create interesting textures to the music. The track contains glitch sounds that serve as percussions and effects. In the track, a lot of the glitch sounds are created by time stretching the clicks or drums by four times, and then I chopped transients and arranged those transients into a rhythm. For more information on time-stretching and chopping sample, please refer to the Innovation Aspects section.

This track is called 'The First,' because this is the first track collaborated with Djudju Hartono.

Collaborator(s):

Co-Producer – Djudju Hartono

Drum – John Blackwell

Soundscape

This is a one-minute soundscape, which conveys the emotion of being happy in one-minute. I used 80's synth sound to create the excitement. I placed the synth on the fourth beat, thus creating a continuous excitement. I used different samples to control the dynamics of the whole song.

Collaborator(s):

String Arrangements – Anze Rozman

Singer/Songwriter – Daniel Omphroy

One Step

This track was inspired by Prince, which we created Prince-like groove, then we developed into a new piece. This song contains more harmonic variations and sound

changes. Since a lot of commercial electronic music contains repeated same chord progression, I wanted to create a track that is more interesting harmonically. The song form is A-B-C-A-B-C-C. A-section contains funky groove and chord progression, which is followed by 80's pop-music sounds in B-section. Then, the C-section contains more modern electronic music groove and sounds. This track was tied together by the bass sound and the same drum loop. Despite a lot of changes, the drum pattern stays the same throughout the song.

Collaborator(s):

Co-Producer – Djudju Hartono

I Just Want To

This track is the most commercial track in this EP. Using Michael Jackson's tracks as a reference, we created funk-pop songs. By working with multiple musicians, we were able to create a catchy hook as well as catchy instrumentation. Varying rhythms make the keeps the song interesting throughout the song. Also, the Daft Punk-like rhythm guitar adds extra groove to the song.

Collaborator(s):

Singer/Songwriter – Daniel Omprhoy

Guitar – Jad El Alam

Co-Producer/Songwriter – Djudju Hartono

I'm Not Tired

This track uses alternative rock groove with electro-house sounds. The track contains one main bass line and one guitar chord. Despite the simplicity of the song, I used different sounds and effects to keep the song interesting. I wanted to create a piece that I am not familiar with. This is my interpretation of alternative rock.

Collaborator(s):

Guitar – Tyler Sasso

Bass – Haojun Qi

Gotta Get Up

This is a vocal version of the song The First.

Collaborator(s):

Sniger/Songwriter – Daniel Omphroy

III. Innovative Aspects

I used different techniques to create and mix tracks. For the track ‘The First,’ I designed Sidechain EQ¹, which the EQ frequency is triggered by the drum track. In order to do this I used Envelope Follower effect in Max For Live, which is placed on the drum track.



Figure 1 Envelope Follower in Ableton Live

¹ http://www.bluecataudio.com/Tutorials/Tutorial_Dynamics_EQ/

Then the Envelope follower is linked to the frequency of low pass filter on the EQ.

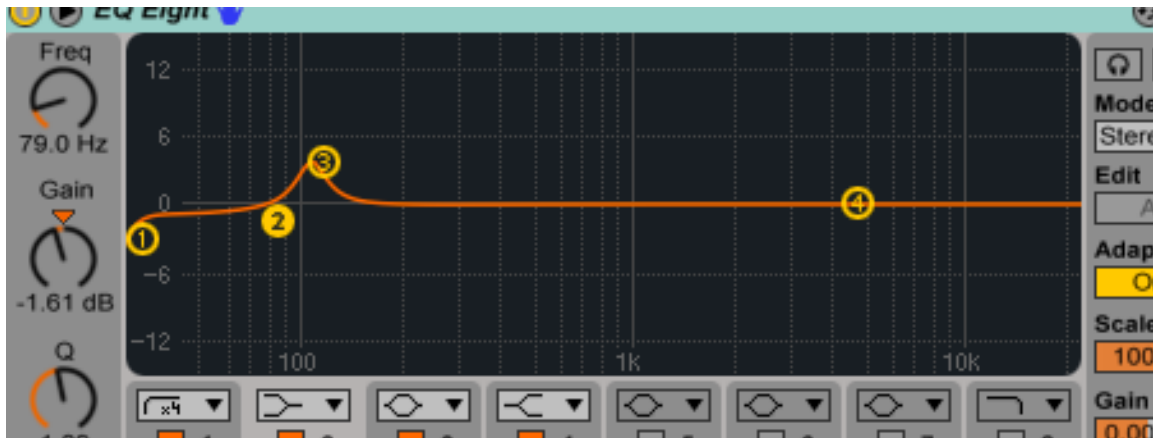


Figure 2 EQ in Ableton Live

By using this technique, I was able to keep the mid and high frequency information. This idea is same as sidechain compression, however, with this sidechain EQ, I can be more specific with which frequency information I want to remove at specific time points.

In tracks 'I Just Want To', 'One Step', and 'The First,' manipulated short (less than 2 seconds), to create glitch percussive sounds.

Instead of using Hi-Hats, cymbals or other percussion samples, I used a simple click sounds. Once I selected click samples, using Ableton's warp feature, I stretched the samples. By choosing different warp modes, the sounds can vary.

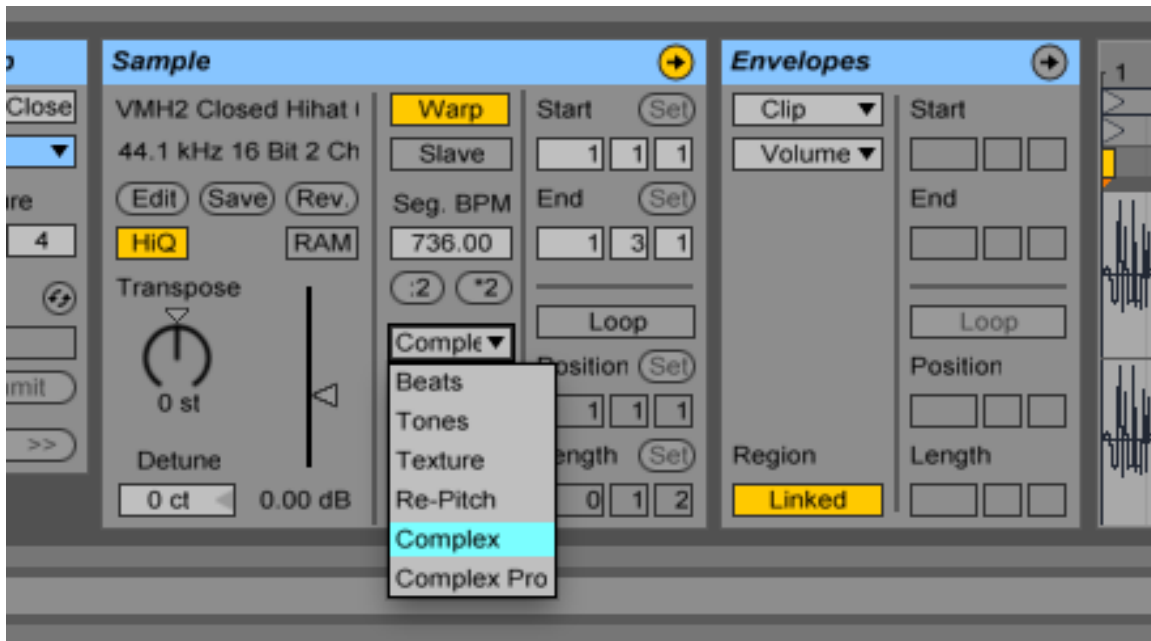


Figure 3 Warp Mode in Samples

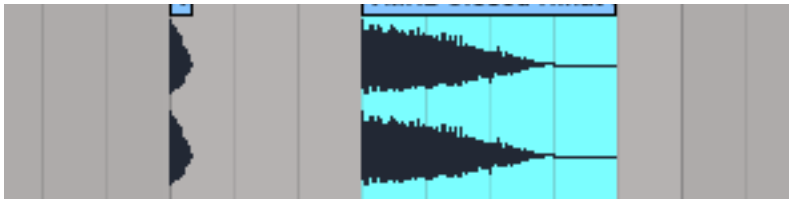


Figure 4 Original Sample and Warped Sample

These stretched samples are then cut into sizes that I need and then arranged into a loop.

IV. New Skills Acquired

The production of the EP gave me an opportunity to improve as a musician and a producer. As a producer and arranger, I designed numerous sounds for the songs, in which about 30% of the sounds are designed by me. Also, all of the tracks are arranged and written by me along with the help of others.

As a result of this project, I have become a better producer and an arranger. Also, I learned various music theories through other performance students, which I now have deeper understanding of my music.

V. Challenges

There were many challenges faced during this project. The source of the problem came from collaboration. The tracks 'Gotta Get Up', 'I Just Want To', 'Bodywalk', and 'Lover' served as a promotion track for Daniel Omphroy. In order to meet the needs of the singer and the business partner, I had to adjust these tracks multiple times. Through collaboration, we wanted to create commercial tracks with memorable hooks. In the end we were able to create tracks that captures Daniel Omphroy's strength as a singer.

I wanted all of the tracks to be interesting to listen to throughout the whole song. In order to maintain the interest following actions were taking:

- Melodies were changed/Solos were added
- Rhythms and arrangements were changed in the second verse and the second chorus
- Extra layers of sounds were added in the later parts of the songs

VI. Future Ramification

This EP will be used as a portfolio to promote myself as a producer and a songwriter.

How will this be promoted?

Understanding the Current Market and Promoting the Tracks

According to The Recording Industry Association of America²³, U.S. music industry has been getting smaller every year. In 1999, the revenue of U.S.

² Joshua P. Friedlander, "News and Notes on 2013 RIAA Music Industry Shipment and Revenue Statistics," The Recording Industry Association of America, <http://76.74.24.142/2463566A-FF96-E0CA-2766-72779A364D01.pdf>, May 1, 2014

³ Anonymous, "2008 Consumer Profiles," The Recording Industry Association of America, <http://76.74.24.142/CA052A55-9910-2DAC-925F-27663DCFFFF3.pdf>, April 30, 2014

music industry was \$14.5 billion, and in 2013, it was \$7 billion. There have been decreasing trends in physical sales (i.e. CD) and digital downloads, and an increasing trend in streaming and performance rights.

The trend indicates that the access to music is getting cheaper, and the recorded music is used to promote other products, which artists use their songs to promote their live shows.

Based on the above information, I have come up with following options for promotions:

- i. Contacting record labels
 - a. The tracks worked with Daniel Omphroy will serve as the main promotion as a producer. As these tracks contain lyrics and hooks, I believe that these tracks can serve as a portfolio for record labels and publishers.
 - b. This is the most traditional way. The problem is that most U.S. record labels do not accept demos anymore, since most unsigned artists can promote themselves without the help of the record labels. Despite the losing trend, I will collaborate with Jane Kim to distribute my songs to people in record labels and publishing companies.
 - c. In Asian market, the record labels are heavily involved in artist development. For example, in Korea, record labels manage the artists since they are young, where the artists are trained since young age. They are looking for cheaper ways to produce music, where they hire in-house producers. Again, I will collaborate with Jane Kim to distribute my songs to Asian companies
 - ii. Direct Promotions
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- a. The other tracks will be promoted under the name of Pom3lo.
(soundcloud.com/pom3lo)
- b. In order to create more online presence, I have been working on remixes. I believe that people are more likely to listen to the songs that already have some presence. These remixes are released on soundcloud, and beatport.
- c. These tracks will be released free in order to create more presence online.
- d. There are Youtube users who make short films and movies. In order to help them promote their movies. I will contact the youtube users so that they can use my tracks in their movies.
- e. I will be arranging live performance with Djudju Hartono for future performances;

VII. Conclusion

The collaborative endeavor to create an EP was a valuable experience for both collaborators and myself. In the end I wanted to create an experience that involves the Berklee Valencia community. As a producer on budget, I do not have that many opportunities to work with other musicians. Based on the musicians' style, I created eight tracks, which shows their own colors.

VIII. Works Cited

Andrews, Ian, "Post-digital Aesthetics and the return to Modernism" <http://ian-andrews.org/texts/postdig.html>, April 13, 2014

VIII. Resources Used

Berklee Valencia Studios

Ableton Live 9

Native Instrument Komplete 9

Izotope Trash 2

Izotope Ozone

Pro Tools 10/11

IX. List of Collaborators

Daniel Omphroy

Jane Kim

Djudju Hartono

Juancristobal Aliaga

Max Ridley

Peter Conolly

Anze Rozman

Jad El Alam

Tyler Sasso

Haojun Qi