

Berklee College of Music

Veo Valencia:

An Experimental Approach to Capturing Sights and Sounds for Music Videos

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Degree of
Music in Music Production, Technology, and Innovation

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Abstract

This culminating experience project is an experimental approach to producing two music videos, each of a different style, that contain elements of field recordings, sound design, and original music with scenes from the city of Valencia, Spain that create interesting and compelling results. Both are titled *Veo Valencia*, and have *Part I* or *Part II* added to their title, respectively. Part I is a colorful and abstract look of Valencia that contains an original musical track produced in Ableton Live, titled, *Mister Synther*. With a visible difference in color, effects, and music, Part II is a more natural and clear way of viewing the city. It contains an original piano and strings music piece titled *Endless Journey*. The music videos do not contain professional actors or dancers, dialogue, or narration. Upon viewing them, the viewer will be brought into an artistic and creative world of hearing and seeing Valencia in an exciting and innovative way.

1. Introduction

There is no denying that the city of Valencia, Spain has a unique magic in the air that can be felt deep within those who have experienced it. From the people and the music, to the food and the architecture, Valencia is indeed a special city. This culminating experience project serves as an engaging media format that contains field recordings, sound design, video, and original music which allows viewers to feel that “unique magic” of the city. Since this project consists of two different music videos, *Vejo Valencia: Part I* contains field recordings that have been recorded throughout the city, as well as video content that has been processed with effects. Using different video editing software such as Premiere Pro, After Effects, Vizzie, and Resolume, vibrant color and texture has been added to the videos. With *Vejo Valencia: Part II* being a more natural, organic, and clear-view way of presenting the beauty of Valencia, not as much editing occurred, in regard to color filtering. The goal was to only enhance the video shots with slight color grading. Smooth transitions from one scene to the next were also applied, as well as a slow-motion frame rate which gave the video an overall cinematic and pleasing look.

In regard to capturing different sounds in Valencia, field recorder Aaron Marks explains the purpose of field recording in music production when he states that “Music production is a little known venue for field recordist but one where they can play a major role in a performance. For in-studio productions, ambience or sounds which help support the ‘story’ are often used, especially in the ambient genre, and non-musical sounds can be used as musical

elements in beats or as percussion.”¹ In the introduction of Part I, the recorded audio samples of ambience support the video clips of Valencia as the “story” is being told. The ultimate intent of these videos is to capture and share the feeling of Valencia in two unique ways that are rich with vibrant color, sound, and music. Coming from a musician and producer background and stepping into the world of video and sound design has indeed been a challenge, but one that is necessary in order to create a project that is experimental and innovative. Ultimately, the goal of this project has been to incorporate the various topics learned at Berklee College of Music in Valencia, Spain, and to simultaneously use skills developed as a musician and producer to add music to two distinctly different videos.

2. Review of the State of the Art

The research that inspired this video idea began with a search for videos about Valencia through *YouTube* and other video streaming services. Because producing this type of project came as a new task, music videos were also examined on these streaming services. There are many videos about Valencia available on the internet today, and most of them share the same idea of tourism. However, no videos seemed to catch the eye in a different and innovative way. One video that was found through research is called *Valencia*, directed by Dario L. Jaramillo, and is featured on *Amazon Prime Video*. Although this video shows many parts of Valencia, such as The City of Arts and Sciences and the markets and restaurants across the city, there is no musical content contained in the video. Although the idea of having no music in the video could have valid reasons behind it, there is a bit of an emotional disconnect with the video as the

¹ “*Aaron Marks Special: A Practical Guide to Field Recording [Part 1]*,” *Designing Sound*, published October 22, 2010, <http://designingsound.org/2010/10/22/aaron-marks-special-a-practical-guide-to-field-recording-part-1/>

viewer only hears the distant talking and car traffic.

Research about sound field recordings from companies such as Ableton and Splice was conducted as well. Ableton published an article on their website titled, *Sounds Outside: The Art of Field Recording*. This particular article explains the history of field recording, which dates back to the 1940's when *musique concrète*, the French term for “concrete music,” was born. According to *Britannica.com*, *musique concrète* is the “Experimental technique of musical composition using recorded sounds as raw material. The technique was developed around 1948 by the French composer Pierre Schaeffer and his associates at the Studio d'Essai (‘Experimental Studio’) of the French radio system. The fundamental principle of *musique concrète* lies in the assemblage of various natural sounds recorded on tape (or, originally, on disks) to produce a montage of sound. During the preparation of such a composition, the sounds selected and recorded may be modified in any way desired—played backward, cut short or extended, subjected to echo-chamber effects, varied in pitch and intensity, and so on. The finished composition thus represents the combination of varied auditory experiences into an artistic unity.”² Although the idea of concrete music is nearly eighty years old, the idea and concepts are implemented in a new and innovative way with the use of today's recording, sampling, and editing technology.

3. Description

Because Valencia is constantly thriving and full of energy, capturing sounds and video throughout the city was exciting and adventurous. These characteristics of Valencia helped create engaging musical experiences in two videos. The physical equipment needed to capture

² Encyclopaedia Britannica, s.v. “*Musique Concrete*,” last modified April 27, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/art/musique-concrete>

sound and video of Valencia was an audio recorder and a video camera. The camera used was the Canon 800D DSLR, as well as a gimbal stabilizer to obtain the smoothest shot possible. The audio recorder that was used for this particular project was the *Zoom H6 Portable Recorder*. This recorder is one that has three proprietary mics; a stereo X/Y, a mid-side, and a shotgun that are all interchangeable with the same input that is on the device.

Depending on the environment and the sound that needed to be recorded, a decision was made as to which microphone was the best choice to be used. Some examples of sounds recorded were the ocean, rain, thunder, laughing, background talking, footsteps, traffic, car horns, police sirens, and animals. Once these sounds were captured, they were used in the introduction of the abstract video. During this particular section, there are scenes of various landmarks and other buildings in Valencia. Some of the sounds were inserted as they were recorded, raw and natural, while others were warped and manipulated in Sound Hack and Ableton Live, taking full advantage of the time-stretching and sample layering capabilities to create incredible ambiances. SoundHack is a fairly older software that is still widely used by sound designers and is free to download. Ableton Live is a digital audio workstation that is widely used with electronic dance music producers, as well as live music performers because of its seamless and intuitive way to control effects, samples, beats, and music in a live situation.

A simple method was first used in the making of the color effects for the abstract video in this project. In order to create colors that became more vivid on the screen, different adjustments were made to the RGB curves in Premiere Pro, as well as other color refinement tools such as contrast, exposure, and brightness, to name a few. Once the colors were adjusted in the various scenes of the video, the effects were then layered. To achieve this, there was a

painstaking process of using different editing software such as Adobe's Premiere Pro and After Effects, Max's Vizzie, and Resolume, that gave an even more abstract look and feel to the particular scenes. This is part of the reason why this project was experimental, as there was only a conception of an idea for the overall look that was wanted for the videos. However, the final results were unforeseen. Having this sort of work method allowed the project to be free and creative, which gave the final product an interesting and artistic look. Another reason why this project was experimental was because of how Resolume was used. Resolume is a video software that is used to project video images with effects in a live environment. So, to process effects for videos used in Part I, it was a bit out of the ordinary and unconventional. But the results created were indeed captivating, along with the other effects that were layered.

As there are many fast-moving shots happening in one video, and slow-motion shots happening in the other, songs were needed to match what was being viewed on screen. There were many songs to choose from for these two music videos. The ones that were chosen have a connection to their respective video in some way or another. For *Veo Valencia Part I*, the song, *Mister Synther* was chosen. This is a song that was produced out of an assignment in a sound design class. The idea of the assignment was to create a song which allowed the student to create all original sounds using the various types of wavetable synth software plugins, such as Serum, which is a software plugin created by Xfer Records. Because the assignment focused on creating original sounds and adding and layering effects, the marriage between the music and video was inevitable since much of the video incorporated layered effects for color and texture. For *Veo Valencia Part II*, the song *Endless Journey* was chosen. This particular song is an original piece of music that was recorded in 2015 at California State University Monterey Bay. With the theme of Part II being about a journey through life, the song made the

video complete. Software strings using Kontakt were added to the song while studying in Valencia, which gave warmth and fullness to the overall track.

4. Innovative Aspects

There are a few innovative aspects that this project possesses. One innovative aspect is the way in which the contrast view of Valencia is presented. This contrast view presents an interesting and artistic way of looking at the city. Second, an innovative aspect implemented is the way that sound design and layered video effects were brought together to create intensifying sights and sounds. Another innovative aspect is the way video effects were layered in Part I. Different software was used to create a fresh, colorful, and abstract look in the video's scenes. The experimental journey of this process really shines through and portrays what can happen when things are approached in an experimental and challenging way.

5. New Skills Acquired

This project ultimately consists of music production, sound design, and video recording and editing. Because it was a challenge stepping into an unfamiliar task, music production, sound design, and video technology skills were greatly enhanced throughout the process. As a musician and producer, learning these new skills will allow career opportunities to flourish. One job or project might call for only one skill, but the next one might allow all of them to be used, ultimately allowing the multi-skilled individual to stand out from the rest. Being able to adapt to any environment is critical, especially in today's music production and technology world that is always advancing and transforming.

6. Challenges

The vision of this project changed throughout the process of creating it, mostly because it was new territory being touched, in terms of sound design and video technology. Because of the changes involved, challenges in decision-making for music, field recordings, sound design, and video editing arose. Originally, this project was going to be one music video that contained both an abstract and natural view of Valencia with sound design, but it was ultimately decided that it would be two music videos, respectively.

An obvious challenge was that there was going to be more work involved, as more video content needed to be captured, and more editing needed to be done. There was also the challenge of deciding which field recordings were to remain natural, and which ones were to be processed with effects. The same goes for the video footage and deciding what video scenes were to be used in each separate video, since each video has their own video footage. Also, deciding which music to add was a challenge in more ways than one. Connecting the music with the video so that the viewer can connect with what they are seeing is imperative so the interest is not lost. Another challenge was in determining the use of effects for Part I. Being new to certain video editing software can be like a kid in a candy store, so to speak. One can go wild with the availability of video effects contained within the software at their fingertips. So, another challenge was knowing when “too much” was too much and being able to adjust accordingly. But again, being that it was a new and experimental process allowed artistic and creative scenes to be produced.

7. Future Ramifications

Stepping into something new has definitely sparked a greater interest of video technology as the work of combining music and film will definitely continue after Berklee. Although this

project has been completed, the process has inspired new ideas for creating music videos.

Working on this project has also inspired business ideas that incorporate music production, video technology, and sound design. This business idea is a digital media company that provides tailored videography for personal and business profiles, artist and band profiles, real estate, and more. All videos produced through this business will have original music, with touches of sound design and video effects, making them unique and personal so that they stand out on clients' websites and social media.

8. Conclusion

The use of technology in music and video production is an incredible and amazing approach that should be taken advantage of. Applying this type of technology can project one's career further and help them adapt to various music and video environments. The use of technology also aids in the creative process of using and mixing different elements of music and video software and hardware which brings to light new and interesting ways of producing projects. Every process is different, which adds excitement to a project, especially when an unconventional method that brings stunning and innovative results is used. These results will further inspire work on future projects and might allow others to be inspired in their creative processes. This particular project will continue to be a reminder of the importance of confidently experimenting and trying new things within future music and video work. This project is also a testament to the importance of technology and the creative mind to work conjointly with one another to continue to produce artistic and innovative works now and for the future. Learning new skills in music and video production will continue after Berklee College of Music as new projects will be produced with knowledge and creativity so that a profound impact will be made within the captivating world of music and technology.

Appendix A. Plan of Action and Projected Timeline

| CE PROJECT TIMELINE | | | | |
|---------------------|--------|---------|---|--|
| MONTH | WEEK # | WEEK OF | TASK(S) | |
| <i>JANUARY</i> | 3 | 20-Jan | Capture video scenes of Valencia | |
| | 4 | 27-Jan | Capture video scenes of Valencia | |
| <i>FEBRUARY</i> | 1 | 3-Feb | Beginning stages of musical idea for video | |
| | 2 | 10-Feb | Capture field recordings of Valencia | |
| | 3 | 17-Feb | Capture video scenes of Valencia | |
| | 4 | 24-Feb | Begin music production of original music for video | |
| <i>MARCH</i> | 1 | 3-Mar | Capture field recordings of Valencia | |
| | 2 | 10-Mar | Capture video scenes of Valencia | |
| | 3 | 17-Mar | Capture video and audio recordings from las Fallas | |
| | 4 | 24-Mar | Set up midi keyboard and mic for anyone to play and sing Continue music production of original music for video | |
| <i>APRIL</i> | 1 | 7-Apr | Work with animator | |
| | 2 | 14-Apr | Edit audio samples | |
| | 3 | 21-Apr | Place audio samples in music track | |
| | 4 | 28-Apr | Prepare original music for mixing | |
| <i>MAY</i> | 1 | 5-May | Begin editing video footage | |
| | 2 | 12-May | Finalize a polished mixed of original music for video | |
| | 3 | 19-May | Create a final product of video and music | |
| | 4 | 26-May | Finalize and prepare for Initial CE Presentations | |
| <i>JUNE</i> | 1 | 2-Jun | Initial CE Presentations | |
| | 2 | 9-Jun | Make corrections/additons to CE per student and staff feedback | |
| | 3 | 17-Jun | Prepare for Final CE Presentations | |
| | 4 | 24-Jun | FINAL CE PRESENTATIONS | |

Appendix B. Budget and Cost

| CE BUDGET | | |
|---|---|--------------|
| *This budget is for producing a music video that contains shots of Valencia, field recordings, and animation. | | |
| ITEM | PROPOSED | REAL |
| MATERIALS (disposables) | | |
| HARD DRIVES | \$150 | \$0 |
| MEMORY STICKS | \$25 | \$0 |
| MEMORY CARDS | \$25 | \$0 |
| DROPBOX (INDIVIDUAL PLAN) | \$99 | \$99 |
| EQUIPMENT | | |
| HARDWARE | | |
| ZOOM H6 PORTABLE RECORDER | \$350 | \$0 |
| CANON EOS 700D | \$600 | \$0 |
| CAMERA STAND | \$50 | \$0 |
| LAPTOP | \$1,500 | \$0 |
| MIDI KEYBOARD | \$150 | \$0 |
| MICROPHONE | \$100 | \$0 |
| SOFTWARE | | |
| ABLETON | \$449.00 | \$449.00 |
| ADOBE CREATIVE CLOUD | \$19.99/MONTH SUBSCRIPTION (EST. 7 MONTHS = \$140) | \$140 |
| CONTRACT FOR HIRE | | |
| ANIMATOR | \$25/HOUR (EST. 10 HOURS = \$250) | \$0 |
| TOTAL AMOUNT \$ | \$3,888 | \$688 |

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