

Reflective Paper – Berklee & European DIY Musicians Conference

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When I got chosen among the 2019 class of the Global Entertainment and Music Business class, I was ecstatic. I had been waiting for years to gather the courage to apply. After hurricane Maria destroyed my home, and Puerto Ricans lived in near apocalyptic conditions for months the thing I thought about the most was not having lived this dream that I had in my mind for close to 5 years. After I went for it, I got my email to schedule my interview which, to this day, I believe went terribly. I think it went that way because first, I used to get way more nervous in interviews before coming to Berklee, and second, because I felt this interview would define the rest of my life, being selected for Berklee would change my life, for better or worse. I remember clearly a question Emilien Moyon asked me during my interview that I didn't know how to answer then, but that after this year, I can: "what do you bring to the class?". During this year, the expectations I had of Berklee as an educational institution weren't exactly met, but the class that was selected for this year truly exceeded any expectations I ever had. It was because of them, more than any other thing, that I was inspired to get better, to grow, to become a better version of who I am and own my place in the world. Hopefully, in a few years, I'll be able to stand before a future GEMB class and tell them how this institution and how the class of 2019 helped shaped who I have become.

With getting accepted into this program, you agree to do a Culminating Experience in order to graduate. For my culminating experience, I was selected to work as Talent & Partnership Manager for the European DIY Musicians Conference. This conference took place in the Berklee campus and the Palau de las Arts Reina Sofia in Valencia from April 5th until the 7th. The DIY

Musician Conference provides independent artists with the knowledge, encouragement, and guidance needed to set themselves apart in the international music market. It consists of workshops, general sessions and one-on-one mentoring from the CD Baby and Berklee staff. The team consisted of Stephanie Piedrahita as Marketing & Communication Manager, James Connor as Project & Operational Manager and Alexandre Perrin as our supervisor.

As a Talent & Partnership Manager it was my job to coordinate the content of the conference with CD Baby and produce the concerts that took place during the conference, get partners on board to decrease the cost of the event and identify potential speakers for the conference as well as implement a selection process for the speakers. I had to identify venues to organize the different concerts during the conference, coordinate concerts and artists with the venues and the production team at Berklee Valencia, take care of the logistic process of the concerts and ensure that the process ran smoothly & keep track of the financials regarding the concerts. All of these tasks were done during the course of my work. I did not get partners on board to decrease the cost of the event in the form of sponsorships, but I was able to get reduced cost for venues which is another form of partnership.

PRE-PRODUCTION

Venue Selection

This year we decided to make a third official event for the conference. This event took place on Friday, April 5th which was the first day of check-in. A total of three events were produced for this conference. I started working on venue selection in January. First, I looked at the closest venues

near the school and started contacting them. Several were already booked, and others didn't have the production, ambience or space capacity we needed for the events so I extended the search to the city center and other places somewhat close to campus; this way we could get a better venue and this would also allow people a chance to explore Valencia during the break between the conference and the beginning of the event.

I prepared my budget based on what was spent the year before and strived to make all three events (one additional from last year) under that same budget. The way I went about it was that I would contact the venue and they would direct me to the person in charge of the events. I then asked if there was a possibility of doing our event there and include food and drinks for the amount of people that would be CD Baby staff and Berklee staff.

The venue selected for the first night was Gastro 48 for several reasons. First, it's close to the campus, second, I was able to negotiate a good price for food and drinks for staff and for a drink ticket for 80 conference attendees. By purchasing the drink tickets and food, Gastro 48 didn't charge for the use of the venue. Another reason is that we were able to bring a DJ to play during the event. I selected a fellow GEMB student, DJ and founder of DJ para Todos, Alejandro Sabillon and Nicole Otero, one of Alejandro's pupils, to play at this event due to their link to Berklee and to Alejandro's organization which encourages women to become more involved in DJing, a male dominated part of the music industry. There was no need to provide any production for this event, the staff was informed of the event and everything went incredibly well. I'd estimate around 90-100 people attended the first event at Gastro 48. I got in contact with Jose, the person in charge of events in Gastro 48 by personally visiting the venue and leaving my information, he

later contacted me with prices, and we negotiated everything over messages. I was able to reduce the cost of food and drinks for staff and it all cost 330 euros.

The venue selected for the second night was Radio City in the city center. The way I reached Radio City was by going on their website and writing an email with the necessary information. That resulted in further emails and calls to set everything up and negotiate the price. The benefit of using Radio City that they were willing to change one of their events in order to have us rent their space, they already have a relationship with Berklee through the students that have performed there, and the space is nice and big and has good production quality. Radio City has a fee for the venue which includes the production, all for 300 euros. Additionally, 20 drink tickets were purchased for the DIY staff, including the CD Baby staff. The total cost for the Radio City event was 300 euros. I was in constant contact with Radio City, including me sending them our artists' many riders, and they were very accommodating and nice to us. The staff at Radio City was nice enough to have water out for all our performers as well. For the event at Radio City I chose 17 performers. I was incredibly ambitious with this number of artists for 4 hours, but it ended up working out even though we went over by an hour. This was a challenge not only in terms of rider collection and time distribution, but also during sound-check which ran over by almost an hour and delayed our start time for the event. Although it really wasn't much of an issue for the attendees, I would have liked to begin on time. I'd definitely limit it to 12 to 13 people for a future occasion.

For the third event, we chose Matisse Club. I had personally been to Matisse Club several times because Berklee students performed there quite often this year. This was a very interesting and pleasant experience. We went back and forth in terms of the time because they had an event until

6 in the afternoon that day so we decided to open doors at 8PM which was perfect. We had time for sound check which ran over by around 10 minutes and the rest of the event ran incredibly smooth.

The negotiation for price was a bit vague, because of Sala Matisse's relationship with Berklee students and because of the amount of people I said we needed the venue for, Jose wouldn't give me a definite price for the venue and instead told me that if we brought enough people he would let us use the venue free of charge and would even gift us and the artists some refreshments. We did negotiate a price of 1.50 euros per drink tickets for 60 tickets and that he would spend less than 60 euros on food for the staff. I promised him an amount of 100 people for this event, in order to achieve this, we made sure to promote it before and during the conference as well as in the Saturday event and we also kept the event open to the public. In the end, way more than 100 people showed up, they had a wonderful time, Jose didn't charge us for the venue OR the drink tickets and only sent us the bill for the food which cost 60,00 euros. Therefore, the whole event cost 60,00 euros.

With these costs, a total of 750,00 euros, we ended up spending about the same the same amount for three events this year versus the Contrapunto event from the previous year. I'd say that in comparison to last year, which had no event planned for Check-in on Friday versus this year, we managed to offer three well planned events for all three days including an event with a drink ticket for all attendees, offering even further value to DIY attendees. The importance of having good judgement whilst selecting venues and negotiating prices was key to their success and why they were kept under budget.

Artist Selection

The artists for the showcases held on the Saturday and Sunday of the event were selected from a google form that was edited by me from the previous year's form. This form was sent to every person who purchased a ticket for the conference. I received 80 responses to this form, went one by one listening to each person's music and selecting the artists by genre, quality of music, type of music and general vibe and feel. I had quite a hard time selecting the artists because of how many good ones I had to choose from and unfortunately, left out a couple of artists I would have liked to be in the showcase. On the other hand, there were some artists that submitted their work that were not good at all in my opinion. The process was quite simple, sit down everyday and examine the new submissions and pick the ones I liked, I added them to a google spreadsheet which changed quite often during this process. I ended up curating showcases that included singer-songwriters, folk music, pop music, R&B, Rap and music in Spanish.

During the selection process, there were so many good artists, that I decided to accommodate as many artists as possible. This resulted in 10-minute slots for each artist, with a 2-minute changeover during the Radio City event. For the Matisse Club event, I went with 7 artists, at 20-minute time slots. Since Berklee gave student discounts for the event, a lot of Berklee students bought these tickets and were able to send their music as well. Which is why I decided to make the Sunday event a Berklee student night in terms of performances and picked an array of wonderful Berklee students to perform that night. Having this third event allowed me to choose even more artists; having two nights instead of one to feature artists, opened up the amount of artists I could choose and made the process even more worthwhile for me.

Something very cool we were able to do this year was feature two Disrupción Records artists as “headliners” for both events. Nicole Otero from Disrupción approached me with the idea and I accepted after a discussion on who the artists would be and what involvement she wanted them to have in the showcases. She offered two artists and asked for 20 minute slots which I accommodated. This seemed like such a great idea to me because of the DIY’s mission and Berklee’s involvement in the conference. We were able to help out two Berklee DIY students by doing so and their performances were incredible. For Saturday, we had Autumn Jones as the headliner and for Sunday we had Retrovzozor as the headliner.

TAKE-AWAYS

First of all, I don’t believe that the “guide” that I was provided by the former person who held my position was useful or helped me prepare for what was ahead of me. He concentrated on explaining exactly what he did for his year and added many things that were not useful to me at all, such as the artists he chose, their riders and the artists’ information including their social media following as well as the venue maps. This is why I went ahead sort of “blindly” and started everything from scratch, which worked incredibly well and I didn’t spend time dwelling on what he did last year.

I was quite excited when Alexandre chose me for this role because it sounded like something I’d thoroughly enjoy, and I truly did. The good thing about this opportunity is that you have to start fresh each year, with things learned from past years, but still, it’s a clean slate to work on.

This year, Alexandre Perrin’s organizational skills were key in keeping the team cohesive and accountable at all times. We had weekly meetings since we were picked for our positions and he

was always available through email or WhatsApp. During our weekly meetings we also video chatted with CD Baby team members: Danielle, Cristina and Kevin.

My personal experience with the DIY Conference was basically non-existent except for the three events I produced. I had no chance to go to talks or network with attendees or speakers; the only person who had the chance to was James who got to mingle with speakers and see the talks. Which leads me to believe that a fourth person is necessary for overall conference production, including day to day operations during the Conference, flights & hotels, check-ins, snacks for speakers and staff, satisfaction survey & work schedules. The person who handles the night events shouldn't have to be there first thing in the morning to help with the check-in because they left last the night before and they end up not sleeping. This 4th person suggestion was made last year and after going through the experience, I believe it best to add a 4th person to the team. Alexandre had way too much to do & that fourth person would cover what he did. There were things that I handled, such as getting the coffee and snacks for the attendees and the speakers, which this person would have been able to do earlier and as part of their jobs with a budget in mind as well.

A videographer is desperately needed for this conference, for both day and night events. We relied heavily on Stephanie for this content and it would have been improved by having an additional person there taking even more videos that could be used in the future for marketing or educational purposes.

Personally, CD Baby's staff's presence wasn't really felt by me and they weren't present for all night events. It felt sort of like they dropped in, did only what they were tasked to do and left.

Another observation I have is that an event for speakers should have happened. Even though we bought them snacks and had refreshments for them, they weren't consumed because there wasn't an event had exclusively for them. I believe they would have felt even further appreciated if that had happened.

Attendees NEED to be informed about the fact that this event is created and ran by an incredibly small number of STUDENTS. Most of us have never done a conference before, and attendees come expecting a SXSW experience for little to no money on a college campus and it's just not realistic. They ask for a three day conference with amazing speakers and many networking opportunities and that just wasn't a possibility for us.

All in all, it was a great experience for me and I'd do it many more times. During the night events and during the conference, people approached me with positive reactions and feedback for my work and for the conference in general which was incredibly pleasing since we had all worked so hard.