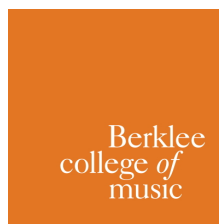


Marcus Martínez
Reflection Paper
Global Entertainment and Music Business
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Valencia Campus

Reflection Paper

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Summary

When I arrived in Valencia on September 1st, 2013, I immediately knew what project I would commit to for the rest of my time here. Now, at the end of times here in Valencia, Spain, I am happy to declare that I have gone above & beyond. My accomplishments have not gone without problems, however. All in all, I have released two original EP's, all produced and engineered by me and have built a small social media presence online. I also have established a valid business concept and devised a business plan that I will use to take out a loan to start the business. A majority of the time spent in Valencia was used to thoroughly consider all facets of the music business that align with my interests. From the creative process to the business strategies involved, I have taken a considerable amount of time to dissect each aspect of the music industry to understand how I can leverage what I've learned to my success.

In total, it took me approximately 81 days to complete my first EP, *Long Was The Night*. The project consisted of five original tracks. I collaborated with many fellow students in order to accomplish this project. Students involved in the project were: Sammy Pisano, Vanessa Barabad, Aditya Srinivasan Maruthuvakudi Thiagarajan, Timothy Shull, and Ryan Renteria. Other collaborators included an anonymous individual from Chile and Precious Molokwu. The tracklist was as follows:

1. Dawn by The Seaside
2. I, The Legend
3. Don Juan's Lament
4. Until Forever
5. The Night, She is Young

In order to produce the EP, I used the resources made available to me by Berklee Valencia. Software and Hardware I used were as follows:

- Logic Pro
- Pro Tools
- Native Instruments VST's
- Izotope VST's
- Neve 1079
- AKG 4040

With little to no marketing plan, I released the EP on January 17th 2014. Unfortunately, my first project did not receive so much attention and I decided to remove most of it off the Internet in order to rework my "sound". What I learned from the first project was that I have to build buzz around the project. Borrowing from the old adage, "If a tree falls and no one is around to hear it..." I began to understand that I was going to adapt my release strategy to today's most cacophonous method of publicity: Social Media. Thus, I embarked on my second project with a completely

different focus both stylistically and commercially. Creative-wise, I recharged the second EP's focus from dwelling on things that have happened, to things that are happening. I decided to challenge myself and aim for a April 15th, 2014 release. My next EP, "Ides of April" had me rapping about the life and times of an individual who was currently spending his time abroad. Other themes centered on the reality of being financially bankrupt and the freedom that comes with acquiring financial independence, a typical Summer day in my hometown of Sussex, and letting go of things in the past and forgiving those who have wronged you. This time around, I focused on working with individuals who I believed were much more interested in my genre.

I took this EP as an oppourtunity to bridge gaps between potential business partners and me as well. For instance, I was able to convince a California based clothing company, Money Motivated Clothing (www.moneymotivatedclothing.com) to provide me with some apparel as part of a sponsorship. This bode well for my credibility online as it translated to more likes and retweets. Additionally, I started to promote the release of my 2nd EP on social media by tweeting quotes and releasing video content. I also was able to connect with some additional talent back home. I collaborated with the following individuals:

- Zachary Troost
- Lequan Eaton
- Ganavya Doraiswamy
- Ryan Renteria

Additionally, I was also able to produce my very first music video to my single “Still So Young” with the help of one of my close friends and the GEMB’s class of 14’ very own, Aalap Deboor. There was a very positive reception to the release of my second EP and perhaps has solidified me as an actual rap artist and not just a wannabe. The 2nd EP was much, much more successful than my first, which even led to a repost on a popular online blog. I consider my 2nd EP to be my first “successful” release. Although I have not yet released any of my material for sale, I do understand that there has been some shift on how the market consumes music and whether or not the same revenue models are available to artists like me anymore. This was perhaps the reason why I did not go through the hassle of attempting to sale my music via iTunes or has it placed on Spotify’s database. For an individual like myself, it just is not worth going through the trouble especially if the ROI is pennies for an effort that took a considerable amount of time (~69 days).

The skills required to correctly produce and market these two EP’s qualify me for a variety of positions, some are as followed:

- Studio manager
- Management
- Artist Development
- Music Production
- Publishing Administration

After the release of my 2nd project, I quickly began work on my third EP, *Skies*.

Although I began production for this next EP in May of 2014, it is with lament that I must say that it will not be released before the end of my time in Valencia. I have been able to finish all the instrumental production on this project and I have managed to be able to release the single from the EP. Although the EP will not be release before my times end here, it is not without its rational alibi. During the May break, I began to reposition myself as more of a business minded individual and drew from my reflections on the past two projects to switch my focus to developing a business plan for an innovative record label. My rationale behind this decision was that based upon my ability to take on several roles in the creative and business process of producing and marketing original content, I derived a new ambition to develop an innovative record label.

As a result my focus shifted from developing a third EP to writing a business plan for my record label, Creative Cake.

Process

I focused most of my efforts throughout the year on acquiring skills that would lead me to become a creative entrepreneur. One of the key characteristics of this modern day Renaissance man is a proclivity to be proactive. Thus, I will center the entire process of my culminating experience on Stephen R. Covey's "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People".

1. Be Proactive

"Take initiative in life by realizing that your decisions (and how they align with life's principles) are the primary determining factor for effectiveness in your life. Take responsibility for your choices and the consequences that follow."

Part of becoming a music industry professional is understanding that, given the unpredictable nature of the business, one's position is solely a factor of one's decision making process. I came to Valencia in order to flex my creative and business muscles and to begin a lengthy, arduous process of becoming a force within this industry. As a result, I had decided to take it upon myself to invest my time into as many activities as I could hear that were of interest. Aside from the mandatory academic responsibilities, I would often spend time reading about future industry trends, attending music business workshops, connecting with industry professionals, and building my own repertoire as both an artist and creative businessperson. There was hardly a moment wasted. I had

decided to gather my collective energies and focus them onto creating a number of projects that would increase my technical skills and business aptitudes.

2. Begin With The End in Mind

“Self-discover and clarify your deeply important character values and life goals. Envision the ideal characteristics for each of your various roles and relationships in life.”

From the onset, I had envisioned what I would have as my finished products by the end of my time in Valencia. I envisioned having released two, maybe three quality projects, building my understanding of business and creating a business plan, developing my network and professional aptitude, and having at least performed once live. I based every one of my decisions on these goals and as a result I am happy to declare that I have fulfilled what I have set out to do. Though the process was not easy, as it was emotionally difficult, I did everything within my own power to continue on my path.

3. Put First Things First

“A manager must manage his own person. Personally. And managers should implement activities that aim to reach the second habit.”

Time management and organizational skills were crucial throughout. We had one entire year to use as we wish. Although we had four, three-hour classes per week and a plethora of work outside the class as well, we still were left with an enormous amount of free time to do as we wished. There were many social events that went on during the week that I often was absent from because I had set my priorities straight. My number one priority was to create an original business plan as well as original EP's. Often times, it was difficult to defer from participating in all the social events that occurred throughout the year. But I knew that if I had not acted upon what was important first, then I would not be where I am at now and be feeling so accomplished with what I did this year. I easily spent over 1000 hours altogether on forging different talents and skills. Whether I was in the library, reading about the latest music industry deal, learning about appropriate methods of conducting business and effective strategies, or in the studio creating quality music, I have no doubt in my mind that I have spent more than 80% of my time in Valencia attempting to become a better version of myself in order to one day fulfill myself as a professional in the music industry.

4. Think Win-Win

"Genuine feelings for mutually beneficial solutions or agreements in your relationships. Value and respect people by understanding a "win" for all is ultimately a better long-term resolution than if only one person in the situation had got his way."

It's important to move away from the paradigm of the music industry as being a zero sum game. That is why I took it upon myself to reach out to as many people as I saw fit to work and collaborate on my projects. As mentioned before, I worked with a variety of people from all the different programs here on campus. Each time we worked together, I always understood that there was a mutual exchange of value in process. These artists made my projects sound much better and in turn they were given an opportunity to explore a genre that they were not very familiar with, Hip Hop. Additionally, when speaking to different professors and colleagues about what the best way to go about writing a business plan would be, I knew that the time we spent together and the laughter shared was also an invaluable added benefit to both of our lives. Many times within this industry, people are consumed by vanity and are drunken with the power that money and fame brings which often leads to extremely shallow and inauthentic behavior that leaves behind it in its wake a trail of sorrow. There are plenty of individuals who do not see how giving others intrinsic value forms is much more fulfilling than oft clichéd forms of value such as financial benefits. I am happy and fulfilled. I know I am because I have added value to the lives of others and as such I

have received and accepted value in turn. I have built my life around adding value to others' lives and in the end a great business led by a great businessperson understands this to be their number one priority in business.

5. Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood

“Use empathic listening to be genuinely influenced by a person, which compels them to reciprocate the listening and take an open mind to being influenced by you. This creates an atmosphere of caring, and positive problem solving.”

As part of being part of international body of students who often worked together on several different projects, there was bound to be some misunderstanding and tension as a result. This was also true when it came to organizing my live event as well as organizing times for individuals to come in to record and collaborate with. I believe that there were more times than not where my intentions and my self were misconstrued to be something it was not. However, I never let these misunderstandings deter me from any goal that I have set out in all my endeavors.

6. Synergize

“Combine the strengths of people through positive teamwork, so as to achieve goals no one person could have done alone.”

As mentioned before, I collaborated with a number of people in order to deliver quality projects that I could not have possibly done without the help of these individuals. Had I stayed in my hometown in New Jersey and not gone outside of my comfort zone to explore career opportunities in Valencia, I would not have met people who were much more skilled at what I do and thus I would not have learned much. As a result of my efforts, I have learned from some of the most intelligent individuals that I have met in a long while on how to compose and produce quality pieces of music as well as how to best conduct online businesses and how to draw from effective strategies to conduct business well.

7. Sharpen the Saw

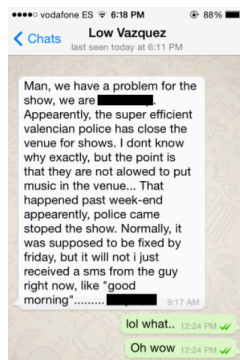
“Balance and renew your resources, energy, and health to create a sustainable, long-term, effective lifestyle. It primarily emphasizes exercise for physical renewal, prayer (meditation, yoga, etc.) and good reading for mental renewal. It also mentions service to society for spiritual renewal.”

Near the end of my time here in Valencia, I decided to take it one step further than expected. Originally, my culminating experience was only expected to be an operational plan, which consisted of a couple of EP's and a live event. However, I decided to take what I learned from the process of producing these EP's and the live event and convert it into a full on business plan. I take the business plan as my transition process into becoming an actual music professional. The business plan was an exercise in taking what I learned throughout the year and concentrating it into one cohesive structure that could be later used to potentially draw some funds from investors or creditors. I started the business plan at the end of the second semester and finished it today on the day our thesis was due. In it lies the accumulation of the wealth of knowledge I have absorbed while here in Valencia. I plan to use this knowledge to my benefit to create a functioning business model that will leave me in a position to mandate my own destiny and to add value to our society as well.

Results

I was able to accomplish everything that I set out to do during my year here in Valencia except for one goal. It is quite unfortunate as it was set to be the climax of my culmination experience. I had spoken with an alumni of last year's Global Entertainment and Music Business class, Loic Vazquez, and had asked him if we could organize an event together. I trusted Loic to be capable of finding the venue and guiding me in organizing the event along with promotion. We had done so. I was to perform on June 27th, 2014 at 6:30 in the evening with other artists within the program.

These artists were, Trevy Kiy, Samuel Pisano, and Kareem Clarke. We were set to perform with a very diverse set of local hip hop talent from the Valencian area, it was sure to be a great time. I was set to debut my new song off my next EP "Skies" at that concert and I was looking forward to showing the locals a good time. On Thursday morning, the day before the concert, I received a text from Loic...



I see a few discrepancies here that I can easily argue but I choose not to for the sake of my own peace of mind. Regardless, I learned that it is important to work with an individual who is much more professional in what he does and that can ensure me some sort of remuneration in the unlikely circumstance that a show is cancelled. A lot of individuals within the program were looking forward to the show and I saw plenty of long faces when I had to break the news that the show was not going to happen.

As for the rest of the project, all my expectations were met. There was not one aspect of this project, aside from the misfortunate that befell upon me, that was not aligned to my original expectations. However, I am fortunate to have such good friends. I will be

performing along side the same individuals at another venue on June 28th, 2014.

Although I did not organize this event, I still understand what it takes to do so because of the experience that I had with Loic. So I am very grateful of that.

Next Step

Taking all that I have learned here, I will be sure to apply it to my future endeavors. For instance, I am seeking some debt financing in order to start my innovative record label as soon as I feel prepared that my business plan is up to par with what a banker would expect. I will make sure to use the presentation skills that I have exercised in both of Emilien's entrepreneurship classes in order to prepare my pitch to potential creditors and investors. I will also make use of my financial literacy in order to explain the revenue model and how I plan to make a sustainable business.

I have also been hired as a social media strategist at a local studio in my hometown. I will be using the tactics that I have been taught by my social media professor, Gwen, in order to develop a good social media marketing campaign in order to bring more clientele. I will also be using the space in order to engineer local talent and will be using the technical skills I have developed in Berklee's studios to produce quality records. I will also take this opportunity to do a bit of A&R work to recruit talent for my start up record label.

Finally, I am also going to organize a live event for charity called Indie Aid. This live event will take place in my hometown as part of the marketing campaign I am developing for the local studio I am working at. I plan on finding a popular venue site where I can invite some of the most popular and talented local talent in support of a charity and the local independent music scene. My goal is to create an Indie Aid tradition and legacy where it becomes a yearly circuit for up and coming talent to showcase their best efforts. At its peak, Indie Aid should also become a recruiting camp for A&R's from major labels to seek the hottest up and coming talent as well as work as a fundraiser for a charity.

Contribution to The Discipline and Profession

I cannot definitely say that I have concretely contributed anything to the industry as of yet. I can say, however, that I took most of my time this year as training for my future contributions to the industry. This year, I have developed skills as a social media strategist, artist development and management, music producer and engineer, live events organizer and promoter, artist and repertoire, and overall business lead. My true contribution to the industry begins this summer with my position as a social media strategist and campaigns manager for Whirlybird Studios in Franklin, NJ. I plan to spend most of this summer building their brand equity and revamping their social media presence as well as bringing new clients in myself to produce quality records. The climax of Whirlybird's social media campaign this summer will be the Indie Aid live event for charity. I will be in charge of contacting the artists and all individuals

within the value chain in order to successfully promote and run a live event. Although this will definitely be one of the greatest challenges of my young professional career, I feel prepared to handle this task after all I have learned here in Berklee Valencia. I will also be using the skills I have developed here in order to bring in new clients into the studio and produce quality records. I feel completely confident in my ability to do this.

Impact on Student Completing Work

This year has been difficult, yet rewarding. I can now say with confidence that I am levels beyond the average music business entrepreneur skill and knowledge set and I feel that I am prepared to enter into a highly responsible working position in the near future. More than anything else, I feel more secure in my ability communicate business and working matters on a personal basis and I feel more in control over my own reactions to certain events. As we all know, in life, things never go as expected and these are usually outside of one's circle of influence. However, It is within one's power to retain dominion over one's attitude and reactions to events that occur to the individual. I feel as if though that throughout all the struggles I have experienced throughout this year that I have grown to become a much more disciplined and grounded individual. The result of what I have learned here has given me the opportunity to become courted by a couple of well-known and reputable industry names. For instance, I have received contact by music publishing giant BMG as well as one of the four majors Sony Music. If things go well, I will be interning with one of these companies in the fall, if not then I always have Cyber PR.

Conclusion

Overall, my experience here in Berklee Valencia has been one of the most arduous and emotionally difficult one's that I have faced in all my years. I feel completely depleted, burnt out, and out of fuel to continue anymore of this without some major reward or break. However, I feel as if though I have graduated from one of the most intensive programs available to aspiring music businessmen like myself. I have completely redefined my way of thought and have an entirely new perspective on life. All in all, I can say that my time here in Berklee Valencia was well. I would like to thank the administrative staff and faculty on their support of the Global Entertainment and Music Business Program and would like to extend my appreciation to all the individuals that I have met along my path here in Berklee Valencia. I will truly miss all of the friends and advisors I have met here and I plan on continuing Berklee's legacy outside of school and within my professional career. Thank you.

Appendices

“Long Was The Night,” available at: <https://soundcloud.com/realavrelivs/sets/long-was-the-night/s-sStes>

“Ides of April,” available at:

<https://soundcloud.com/realavrelivs/sets/ides-of-april-1/s-2Ch0d>