

Berklee College of Music

Journey

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Master of Music in Music Production, Technology, and Innovation

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Abstract

The nature of the author's culminating experience is a collaborative EP titled "Journey". Journey includes 5 songs that draw inspiration from different musical genres which are sometimes blended seamlessly. Collaborations include peers from Berklee Valencia, and other artists/musicians from the United States. The author will also produce a music video for his song "Euphoria". This project aims to rebrand the author and put everything learned throughout the last 10 years by creating a portfolio as an Artist/Producer/Engineer.

Keywords: Collaborative EP, Different Musical Genres, Journey, Music Video, Producer, Engineer, Artist, Rebrand.

Acknowledgments

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To all my classmates at Berklee, (Jamie Blake, DJ Hepburn, Sparsh Narang, Kartikeya Dixit, Giorgio Schipani, the list is way too long) the way you guys have invested yourselves in my project is more than I could have ever hoped and wished for. To anyone who I bothered with my questions and took their time to answer, Thank you very much. I would like to thank the scholarship committee for their generous award that helped ease my financial burden. I also would like to thank my professors (Dani Castelar, Nacho Marco, Elysha Zaide, Pierce Warnecke, Devon Bryant) for being patient with me, and sharing your knowledge with me. Andrea thank you so much for always being available to us, I know your job is not easy, you rock.

Lastly, I would like to thank my advisor Pablo for all the life teachings, for the honest and direct feedback that you always provided for my songs to make them better.

1. Introduction

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, the word Journey¹ has a simple meaning: “The act of travelling from one place to another, especially in a vehicle”. Yet, to each individual, a Journey could be defined as a set of events that happened throughout one’s life that shaped him/her to where one is currently at in life. “Journey” is all about personal and musical growth.

Journey is a combination of experiences, craftsmanship and an array of distinctive talents stemming years of hard work and dedication. All songs were produced (written, composed, arranged), mixed, and mastered within 12 months. The first goal of this project was to create a portfolio that helps rebrand the author as an artist, producer, and engineer. The second goal is to build long lasting professional relationships with different artists from the 2020 Berklee Valencia graduate class.

As an artist, the author wants to express himself through his song using all the experience learned in the past 10 years. As a producer, the goal is to not only show the ability to self-produce but also produce different artists from different genres. As an engineer, the goal is to record live instruments using different techniques learned from Professor Dani Castelar throughout the year to obtain professional quality recordings; and finally mix and master a fully releasable commercial EP.

2. Review of the State of the Art

As the title suggests, Journey is a sonic and emotional dive into key moments that have shaped the author’s life. Each song is produced in a different genre sometimes blended together to create a cohesive sound that portrays those experiences. Below is a list of

¹ *Cambridge Dictionary*, Meaning of “Journey” in English, accessed November 9, 2019, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/journey>.

inspirations that have shaped the sound of Journey.

2.1 *Timeless* – Sergio Mendes

The album *Timeless*² by Sergio Mendes released in 2006 has heavily influenced the creation of Journey. Mr. Mendes was able to mesh together different artists (Q-Tip, Jill Scott, Erykah Badu, Justin Timberlake) from different genres such as RnB, Hip-Hop, Soul, and fuse them with traditional Brazilian Rhythms (Samba) and Jazz Harmonies. Every song is well performed, written, and sonically coherent. Virtual instruments typically used in Hip-Hop along with live recorded instruments used in Jazz, Bossa Nova and Samba can be heard on different tracks. Typical Hip-Hop synth sounds are found in the song titled “The Frog”³. Like Mr. Mendes pulled from his Brazilian roots, the author is also influenced by his Haitian roots, Bossa Nova, and African rhythms.

2.2. *Geography* - Tom Misch

The album *Geography*⁴ by Tom Misch is another inspiration for Journey. Mr. Misch created a sub-genre based on Jazz, Funk, Hip-Hop, and Soul with a focus on both guitar and voice. As a producer/artist, Mr. Misch has done a wonderful job of conveying his personality and the vibe that he was going for which makes it a joy to listen to. On the engineering side, the album is well balanced and also sonically coherent. The author’s goal with this EP is to not only show his personality through the music, but also have other people relate to his experiences.

² Will.i.am, Sergio Mendes and Printz Board, “Timeless”, Concord Records, Hear Music, 2006, iTunes.

³ Q-Tip, Will.i.am, and Sergio Mendes, “The Frog”, Track 8 on *Timeless*, Concord Records, Hear Music, 2006, iTunes.

⁴ Tom Misch, “*Geography*”, Beyond the Groove, 2018, iTunes.;

2.3. *Japanese Denim*⁵ – Daniel Caesar

Daniel Caesar's "*Japanese Denim*" heavily influenced the song "*Lady*" on Journey. From the arrangement to the mastering, "*Japanese Denim*" can be heard on "*Lady*". The author wanted to make a song with a lot of the same elements used in Japanese Denim. From the rimshot hits, the heavy kick, the reverb in the background being featured at the tail end of the breaks, the pad in the background brought out for the bridge, "*Lady*" borrowed a couple of pages from this book. This is the sound that the author was aiming for this particular song on Journey.

2.4. *Ordinary People*⁶ – John Legend

John Legend is an American artist/producer well known for his unique voice and piano ballads. He has written not only for himself but other artists as well. He has shaped the author's visions, dreams, and goals. "*Million Reasons*" is a piano ballad written by the author based on his relationship with his wife. "*Ordinary People*" is used as one of the reference tracks for composition purposes for the author's song. The vocals are more in your face in this track and brought up just a little bit in some sections. Dynamics are also perfect in this song which is a great example of how "*Million Reasons*" will flow.

2.5. *You give me something*⁷ – Jamiroquai

This song was suggested by Wyatt Cmar as a reference track for "*Soarin*". The groove, and bass line are pretty similar to the ones in *Soarin*. Wyatt suggested it as a means to capture a similar feel with *Soarin*. The author ended up using this track as a mixing reference for his

⁵ Daniel Caesar, "*Japanese Denim*", Track 2 on "*Get You*", Golden Child Recordings, 2016, iTunes.

⁶ John Legend, "*Ordinary People*", Track 8 on "*Get Lifted*", Columbia, December 28, 2004, Spotify streaming audio, 320 kbps.

⁷ Jamiroquai, "*You Give Me Something*", Track 3 on "*A Funk Odyssey*", Sony, December 2001, iTunes.

rhythm section.

2.6. *American Boy*⁸ – Estelle feat Kanye West

American Boy is one of the main inspirations for Soarin. This song also has a similar rhythmic pattern to Soarin. The bass is super present, and the snare hits on every second and 4th beat. It gets taken out during the verses and comes back which adds a really nice feel to the song. The song is super simple and itself and uses a lot of synth effects. The instrumentation is very similar to Soarin minus the horns.

2.7. *Natif Natal*⁹ – BÉLO

This album is a really good technical and musical experience that “*Journey*” is based on. The writing is spot on, the arrangements concise, and the melodies beautiful. In terms of engineering, everything is well recorded, especially the guitars. This is the sound that the author tries to replicate for the guitars in his album. The mastering is also an important aspect of this album. The way every song ends and carries over to the next is done in a very special way. The author would like to do something very similar with “*Journey*”.

3. Description

3.1. Resources

i Facilities and Equipment

Songs will be recorded mostly in the AKSS and the STAD at Berklee Valencia using the mics available on campus. Mixing was done for the most part at home but also in the STAD/AKSS earlier during the Fall and Spring Semester. The author used all his

⁸ Estelle feat Kanye West, “American Boy”. Track 3 on “*Shine*”, Atlantic, March 31, 2008, iTunes.

⁹ Bélyony Murat, Album “*Natif Natal*”, BÉLO Music Inc, April 9, 2014, iTunes.

equipment: Interface: Universal Audio Apollo Twin.

Mics: Audio Technica AT2020, SM57, SM58.

Instruments: Godin Progression Plus, Jammy Midi Controller, Akai MPK Mini.

Monitors: JBL 3MKII

Plugins: FabFilter, Waves, Sound Toys, Plugin Alliance., Izotope, Slate, Valhalla DSP.

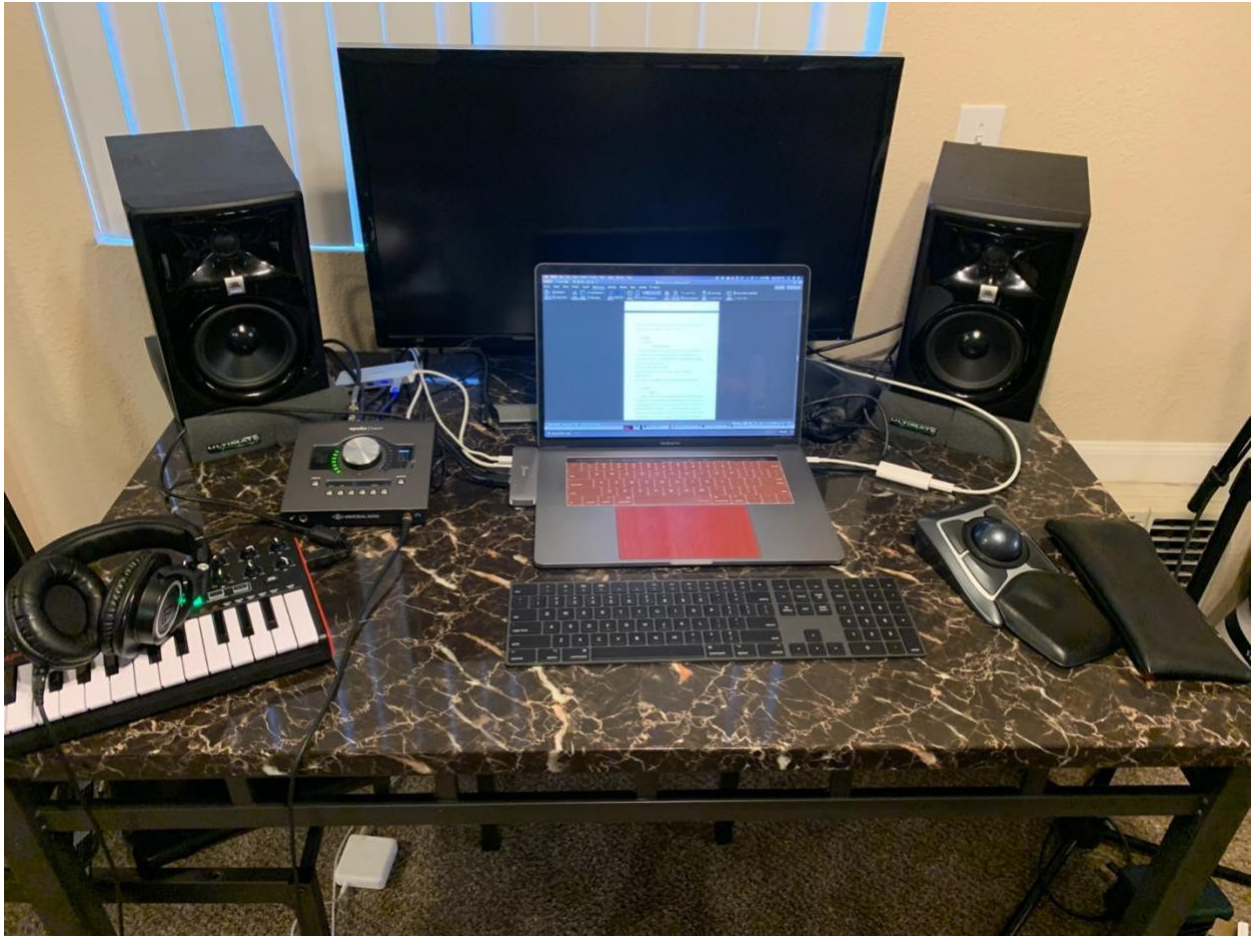


Figure 1. Photo of Author's home studio setup.

3.2. Journey

i Euphoria

Euphoria is a collaboration between Prophete and Z the Vibe Doctor that started during the summer of 2019. The author recorded the vocals and guitars at home at the time

using an AT2020 microphone on both. The author worked on the song until October and presented to Robert Kraft for feedback. After listening to it, Mr. Kraft gave the author some really good feedback like making the guitar rhythms a bit tighter, tuning the vocals, and working a bit more on the arrangement. The author decided to go back to the drawing board and recorded drums (Pedrinho Augusto), bass (Lorenzo Tapia), and guitars (Daniel Prophete) in the AKSS. He re-worked the arrangement with the help of his supervisor Pablo Munguia. Percussions (shaker, congas) and tenor saxophones were recorded remotely by Natalia Lacrete, Carolina Araoz and Jawren Walton respectively. Once the author got everything, he mixed the song and sent it to Jamie Blake for Mastering.



Figure 2. Miking of the Upright Bass for Euphoria in the AKSS. Miked by Kartikeya Dixit.

ii Soarin

Soarin saw the light of day in Elysha Zaide’s electronic production class. The song was composed, produced, written by the author for his final project. The song was originally sung by Daniel Prophete but features Fairin Moon on vocals this time around. The author decided to improve it by recording everything in the studio using live instruments. Basics for the song were recorded in the AKSS with Giorgio Schipani as the lead engineer and both Selina Marisa and Sparsh Narang as assistants. Drums were placed in the main iso booth played by Jamie Blake and the Yamaha Grand Piano in the middle of the room played by David James Hepburn. Horns were recorded at a later date with Kieran Wallace, Aimee Alexander, Destiny Carter, and Tezhuen Watson. The song was edited, mixed, and mastered by Daniel Prophete with the help of Dani Castelar and Liz Teutsch.



Figure 3. Photos of Piano miking for Soarin. Miked by Giorgio Schipani.

iii Lady

Lady is the 3rd production on the EP Journey. Lady also started during the summer of 2019. The author wanted to produce a song based on Daniel Caesar’s “*Japanese Denim*”.

The author wrote, produced, and sang the song. All the instrumentation was programmed using Logic stocks. Using what he learned throughout the semester, the author was able to make use of Ultra Beat in Logic to replace the kick and snare using samples from Soarin. The author recorded new guitar arrangements using his Apollo Twin and Logic stock amplifiers. Vocals were rerecorded and tuned using a combination of Melodyne and Autotune. The author worked on the arrangement at the end of the spring semester and mixed it with the help of Jamie Blake. The song was sent to Jamie for mastering.

iv Lavi Ayiti (Life in Haiti)

Lavi Ayiti is the 4th song on the EP. This project was conceived 3 years ago for the author's songwriting ensemble. The author wasn't satisfied the way the song turned out, so he decided to re-record everything from scratch. The song was recorded in studio C with Giorgio Schipani as the lead engineer, Kaneda Kimani as the co-producer, and Sparsh Narang as the assistant engineer. Drums and Bass were recorded during that session with Jamie Blake and Carlos Sierra respectively. Because of the whole situation with Covid 19, the rest of the song had to be produced remotely. Kaneda Kimani and Nasir Al Bashir both added keyboard parts while Natalia Lacrete performed and recorded shaker and congas. The author recorded his vocals, and guitars at his home studio. One of the feedbacks the author got from different people was that the song was dragging so he decided to speed it up in Ableton by 10 bpm. The song was mastered by Giorgio Schipani and was released on all streaming platforms on May 29th.

v Full Time Dream (FTD)

Full time Dream is the 5th song produced for the EP. It started as an idea in Studio C and morphed into a fully written song by Wyatt Cmar. The song was fully recorded at the author's

home studio using one AT2020. The author communicated back and forth with Wyatt via email and zoom throughout the semester to discuss the direction and progression of the song. Natalia Lacrete collaborated with the author remotely by recording Cajon and Conga. The song was produced, edited by the author then sent to Giorgio Schipani for mastering.

4. Innovative Aspects

4.1. Recording in a studio

One of the innovative aspects was recording in a studio equipped to bring the author's vision to life. Incorporating everything learned throughout the year was an eye opener and provided a whole different experience to the author.

4.2. Collaborating (via zoom)

Prior to Berklee the author had a do "everything yourself" approach but quickly figured out that working with others that are adept at their instruments makes the songs better. Figuring a way to continue with the projects while everything is shut down required quick thinking. The author familiarized himself with Zoom, Google Hangout and Audio Movers in order to share with the music with his collaborators.

4.3. Using mixing techniques intuitively

Based on the author's time with Professor Castelar, he was able to use tools that weren't made for a particular job, like adding Saturn to a filtered bass auxiliary to add high end and harmonics and mix it with the original bass sound.

5. New Skills Acquired

5.1. Soft Skills

One of the most important aspects that the author has improved over a short period of time is the ability to listen attentively to the needs of his collaborators and communicate more effectively in order to ensure a smooth process.

5.2. Organizational Skills

With the pressure of deadlines and deliverables, the author found a way to prepare for his upcoming sessions, organize his time in manner that he can get everything done with some cushion left in case he needs the extra time.

5.3. Software

i Ableton Live

The sound Design class thought by Ms. Elysha Zaide gave the author the tools to be able to compose, remix, and fully produce in Ableton.

ii Pro Tools

The author learned all the essentials and more thanks to the help of Professor Pablo Shuller, Dani Castelar and Pablo Munguia. He is able to record, edit, mix and master using Pro Tools.

iii Adobe

Thanks to Professor Devon Bryant and John Forsyth, the author took interest in photography and videography. He is able to do basic editing, and adding effects using Premiere Pro, After Effects and Photoshop.

iv Analog Synthesizers

The author acquired really good knowledge of synthesizing different sounds using analog gear. He was thought by Professor Nacho Marco and was able to translate that knowledge into the digital world using Serum.

6. Challenges

One of the challenges that came up during the author's time at Berklee was balancing homework with producing a full EP. Another challenge that arose was getting all the people involved in the same room due to scheduling conflicts. After the situation with Covid19, a different set of challenges became apparent.

Because of everything shutting down due to the pandemic, it was difficult to record instruments in a treated space. The difference in time zones made it sometimes difficult to coordinate with collaborators overseas. Lastly balancing work with everyday life by being at home all day was a big challenge. The author would either do too much leaving him burnt or go days without doing any work whatsoever.

On a technical standpoint, the author struggled with some of the edits of Euphoria when he started comping it. He also had some trouble getting the kick to sound right in Euphoria because of the way things were recorded and there was no way to go back and re-record those parts.

7. Future Ramifications

With everything learned throughout the year at Berklee, the author is better equipped to take on any challenges and conquer them. Moreover, the experience with Covid-19 has helped the author become even more flexible and plan for different contingencies. The author plans to promote and release his EP during the summer of 2020.



Figure 4. Artwork for single Lavi Ayiti releasing on May 29th.

8. Conclusions

The author had a vision of bringing the music he heard to life. With the help of all his professors, classmates and support of his family, the author was able to bring that vision to reality. The author wanted to be known as an artist, producer and engineer who had the ability to understand and communicate well with others. The author has made great strides towards achieving that goal and will keep on working hard to get better. This project was also put together to show that one does not have to adhere to a particular role and that one can be whatever and whoever they wish to be.

Appendix

I. Plan of Action and Project Timeline

Project Start	Dates	Tasks
Fall Week 13	12/1 - 12/7	Production of Soarin for Electronic Ensemble class
Spring Week 3	2/2 - 2/8	Recorded Basics for Soarin in the AKSS + wrote “Slow with Wyatt”
Spring Week 4	2/9 – 2/15	Recorded Bass for Soarin
Spring Week 5	2/16 - 2/22	Recorded Horns for Soarin + Recorded Basics for “Lavi Ayiti”
Spring Week 6	2/23 - 2/29	Comping, Editing for Soarin and Prepping other sessions
Spring Week 8	3/8 - 3/14	Recording “Euphoria” basics in the AKSS
Spring Week 12	4/5 - 4/11	Mixing and editing for various projects
Spring Week 13	4/12 - 4/18	Completed production of “Lady”
Spring Week 14	4/19 – 4/25	Completed mix and Master (Giorgio Schipani) for “Lavi Ayiti”
Semester Break	5/11 - 5/17	Completed Mix of “Lady”
Summer Week 1	5/18 - 5/24	Mastering for “Lady” completed by Jamie Blake
Summer Week 2	5/25 - 5/31	Mixing and Mastering for Euphoria and Soarin Completed
Summer Week 3	6/1 - 6/7	Initial CE Presentations & Defense
Summer Week 4	6/8 - 6/14	Revision based on feedback from Panel
Summer Week 6	6/22 - 6/28	Final CE Presentation and Defense Final CE Submission (6/26)
Summer Week 7	6/29 - 7/5	Plans to release EP

II Resources

i. Collaborations

Berklee Valencia	Roles
1) Jamie Blake 2) Pedrinho Augusto	1) Drums, Mastering (Soarin, Lavi Ayiti) 2) Drums (Euphoria)
3) Natalia Lacrete	3) Percussions
4) Carlos Sierra, Joey Angus, Sean Oliver, Anthony Colombo 5) Lorenzo Tapia 6) David-James Hepburn 7) Nasir Al-Bashir 8) Daniel Machado 9) Michael Shanks	4) Bass (Lavi, Slow, Guns Down, Soarin, FTD) 5) Upright Bass (Euphoria) 6) Piano (Soarin, Guns Down) 7) Keys (Lavi Ayiti, Euphoria) 8) Guitar (Guns Down) 9) Guitars (Soarin)
10) Jawren Walton, 11) Carolina Araoz	10) Saxophone (Euphoria) 11) Saxophone, Vocals (Euphoria)
12) Fairin Moon 13) Wyatt Cmar 14) Delia Bowman 15) Kenny Paul 16) Daniel Machado	12) Lyricist, Vocals (Soarin) 13) Lyricist (Full-time Dream) 14) Lyricist, Vocals (Slow) 15) Lyricist, Vocals (Guns Down, Euphoria) 16) Lyricist, Vocals (Guns Down)
17) Kieran Wallace 18) Aimee Alexander 19) Destiny Carter 20) Tezhuen Watson	17) Trumpets (Soarin, Lavi Ayiti) 18) Trumpet (Soarin) 19) Trombone (Soarin) 20) Trombone (Soarin)
21) Giorgio Schipani 22) Selina Marisa 23) Sparsh Narang 24) Kartikeya Dixit 25) Kaneda Kimani	21) Lead Engineer, Mastering (Soarin, Lavi) 22) Engineer (Soarin) 23) Engineer (Soarin, Lavi Ayiti) 24) Recording Engineer, Mixing (Euphoria) 25) Co-Producer (Lavi Ayiti)

ii Budget

ITEM	PROPOSED	REAL	ACTUAL Running		Subtotal	
			Initial	AFTER 1 MONTH		
MATERIALS (disposable)						
Hard drive *2	180	180		180	\$0	
Memory Card	0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
Extension Chord * 2	0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
Sandisk SSD (500 gb) *2	0	180		180	0	
					180	
EQUIPMENT						
HARDWARE						
Interface (Purchase)	1100	1100		1100	\$0	
Computer (Purchase)	2500	2500		2500	\$0	
Akai MPK261 + Akai Mini (Purchase)	\$400	\$400		\$400	\$0	
Sm57 + Sm58	200	200		200	0	
					0	
					4200	
SOFTWARE						
Ableton (purchase)	\$749	0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
Max msp	\$250	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
Plugin Bundles	1000	1000	\$0	\$0	\$0	
Adobe creative cloud (Monthly subscription)	\$16	\$16	\$16	\$16	\$16	
					1016	
PERSONNEL						
Musicians	1000	0				
Mixing Engineer	\$2000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
Mastering engineer (\$70/ track)	1000	0		0	0	
					4000	
OVERHEADS						
Rent	550	550	\$0			
Water	20	20		20	20	
Internet	25	25		25	25	
Phone	20	20		20	20	
					65	
TOTAL	11010	6011		6011	81	261
						9396

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