

Berklee College of Music

R. Glade Music:

A Digital Portfolio of Professional Studio Services

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Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
1. Introduction	1
2. State of the Art	
3. Description	
4. Innovation	
5. New Skills	
6. Challenges	
7. Future Plans	
8. Conclusion	
Bibliography	

Abstract

A digital portfolio website will be launched and continuously updated, featuring content produced by R. Glade Music, either in part or exclusively, including video, audio, and images, centered around professional studio services. The intended audience of this digital portfolio is primarily future employers, including: music performance solutions teams, recording studio managers, festival bookers, and university faculty. Peripheral audiences for the digital portfolio include artistic collaborators, like-minded researchers, and fans of R. Glade Music's productions.

Keywords: audio, engineering, digital, portfolio, videography, recording, studio, production

1. Introduction

The initial vision for this Culminating Experience (CE) was quite different than the current proposal; a live experience was envisioned which would combine technologies learned during a year of study at Berklee into a thematic song cycle of original music and lyrics. Motivating this idea was the desire to create a cohesive experience that could encapsulate a year at Berklee Valencia, collaboratively utilizing the broad spectrum of technologies explored while presenting a unified narrative. However, the author soon realized the logistical and scheduling difficulties presented by other students' schedules and the lack of a student performance venue on campus. It simply did not seem that the vision of the project was appropriately congruent to the resources readily available. Further, it did not hold true to the concept that an innovative idea is usually low friction and easy to adopted; it did not seem that the authors peers would be available to put in the time and effort required for a full-scale theatrical production.

The author of this CE considered what was at the core of the desire to create a song cycle; presenting many disciplines, artistic mediums, and collaborative interactions into a cohesive experience. Not only did it seem logistically difficult to gather the performers for a staged production, but it would also be difficult to market the show and find an audience. It became increasingly apparent that a digital medium would be a more feasible means of presentation and distribution; this could retain the core mission to create a cohesive experience, but potentially remove the pressures of a real-time production in a physical space. But as this line of thinking developed, the idea grew that a singular production was necessary, and instead a structure to organize and present the digital art produced over eight months at Berklee Valencia could itself

be seen as the cohesive experience. Central to the narrative would be the author's personal reflections on experiences, successes, and failures, all presented in a non-linear structure that invited a viewer to jump around from one topic to another freely, just as is required from Berklee students.

Ultimately, a digital portfolio triumphed as the preferred medium for a cohesive experience to encapsulate a year of progress at Berklee, and a framework for continued presentation of artistic endeavors. A digital portfolio allows flexibility in what projects are presented, and allows the author to work freely with other classmates on their projects without the need to later modify the project to incorporate it into a broader experience. Following a collaboration, all that is required is a written reflection of the author's personal involvement and experience within the project, and organization of resulting materials, and the project is integrated into the broader framework of a personal portfolio. This creates an invaluable opportunity for the author to freely collaborate with peers on their own passion projects, without the fear that such ventures will detract from time available to complete this culminating experience.

2. State of the Art

The electronic portfolio is an increasingly necessary tool for demonstrating ability and professional development, defined as a "goal-driven, organized, collection of materials (often referred to as artifacts) that demonstrates a person's expansion of knowledge and skills over time."¹ Key components to this definition are the demonstration of growth, requiring the portfolio to reflect a passage of time, and the goal-driven intentionality behind the collection of

¹ Milman, Natalie B. "Developing a Digital Portfolio." *Distance Learning* 4, no. 4 (2007). 93-96.

artifacts, meaning that the ultimate audience should be considered while developing and presenting the collection of materials. However, an electronic portfolio has an additional dimension of utilizing multiple digital media, in contrast to traditional printed portfolios. As a result the best practices for electronic portfolio development should draw from two bodies of literature: portfolio development and multimedia development.²

In understanding best practices of portfolio development, the creation process can be regarded in four categories: collection, selection, reflection, and projection. One first collects materials that show abilities and performance, then selects which of these collected artifacts best meet the qualities and standards intended to display. Following is a process of reflection upon the work and insights gained during the process, and ultimately projection, or consideration of what steps can be taken to improve.³

An electronic portfolio is also in part a multimedia presentation, thus best practices for multimedia development should also be considered alongside the framework for portfolio development. The multimedia development process generally follows four stages: decide, design, develop, and evaluate. In the first stage, decisions are made on the relevant standards or benchmarks, appropriate media, desired learning outcomes, and appropriate measures. Next, the procedure for the project is designed, considering available inventory of hardware and software, establishing the length and duration of the activity, and determining delegation, or grouping

² Barrett, Hellen. "Electronic Portfolios = Multimedia Development + Portfolio Development." "ElectronicPortfolios.com" <http://www.electronicportfolios.com/portfolios/EPDevProcess.html> (accessed November 28, 2018).

³ Danielson, Charlotte, Leslye Abrutyn. *An Introduction to Using Portfolios in the Classroom*. Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1997.

strategy and roles. Finally, the project is developed, during which media is generated and close attention is paid to project management, and ultimately the project is evaluated, referencing checklists established during design to reflect upon the results and carry out any necessary revisions.⁴

As Barrett describes, “Both processes are complimentary and essential for effective electronic portfolio development. Understanding how these two processes fit together, along with understanding the role of standards in electronic portfolio development, will provide teachers and students with a powerful tool for demonstrating growth over time which is the primary value of a portfolio.”⁵ In other words, combining both the established frameworks of portfolio development and multimedia presentations will grant this project powerful tools for demonstrating growth over time.

Demonstrating growth is essential as “digital portfolios are not merely a number of artifacts or lists of experiences put onto the Web without a specific goal and ability to demonstrate reflection. A digital portfolio is not an electronic résumé. What distinguishes it from one is that it contains thoughtful, professional, reflective comments about its contents.”⁶ Or, in the words of Barrett, “A portfolio without reflections is just a multimedia presentation, or a fancy electronic

⁴ Ivers, K.S., A.E. Barron. *Designing, Producing, and Assessing Multimedia Projects in Education*. Englewood: Libraries Unlimited, 1998.

⁵ Barrett, Hellen. “Electronic Portfolios = Multimedia Development + Portfolio Development.” “ElectronicPortfolios.com” <http://www.electronicportfolios.com/portfolios/EPDevProcess.html> (accessed November 28, 2018).

⁶ Milman, Natalie B. “Developing a Digital Portfolio.” *Distance Learning* 4, no. 4 (2007). 93-96.

résumé, or a digital scrapbook.”⁷ Thus, considering the intended goals of the completed work and documenting growth and change over time is essential to developing a body of work regarded as an electronic portfolio, moving beyond the bounds of an electronic resume. Reflection upon the artifacts is a crucial means to demonstrating this growth over time.

3. Description

The digital portfolio produced by R. Glade Music is compiled in the form of a website designed and hosted by Wix. This platform was selected for ease of use and updating, as well as elegant layouts and design options. Initially, the website was developed by a web designer contracted through the website Fiver, but ultimately the author finalized the design and layout. The website consists of nine pages: a home page, an audio-visual reel, a selector for types of work, an about page, a contact form, three portfolio pages for tracking engineering, mix engineering, and videography, and a credits page. All of these pages are laid out in a click-through design which invites the user to navigate through the content in a continuous flow, although the site also includes a navigational pane. Further, the site was developed for both desktop and mobile users, with slight design modifications for the separate layouts.

The navigation pane remains consistent throughout the site. It begins with a simplified all-white version of the R. Glade Music logo, which always returns the user to the home page. The navigation pane then lists buttons for the major sections of the site: Reel, Work, About, Credits, and Contact. The Work button displays displays a submenu to link the portfolio pages for

⁷ Barrett, Hellen. “Electronic Portfolios = Multimedia Development + Portfolio Development.” “ElectronicPortfolios.com” <http://www.electronicportfolios.com/portfolios/EPDevProcess.html> (accessed November 28, 2018).

recording engineering, mix engineering, and studio videography. Finally, the navigation pane displays social links on the desktop version, although these are omitted in the mobile version of the site. However every page also includes a standardized footer which features social links in both the desktop and mobile versions of the site.

The site's home page features a banner video of the author working in the studio, showing the process of gain staging a signal flow, labeling faders and gear, and critically listening to a tracking session. The homepage also features two buttons with calls to action, inviting the user to see the reel or get in touch. The R. Glade Music logo is prominently displayed over the video in the center of the page so it is the first thing that users see.

The site's credits page lists sessions which R. Glade Music has worked on, tagging each session with the role served by the author: recording engineer, mixing engineer, studio videographer, or producer. Here, the site lists hyperlinks to artists' websites or social accounts so users can find more information on the artists. Below, the site lists sessions on which the author worked as a studio technician, or provided additional engineering on larger projects. This section again lists and links the artists of these tracks, as well as the producer or engineer which the author was assisting. Together, this page provides nice documentation of collaboration and allows viewers to learn more about the type of artists working with R. Glade Music.

The site's work is distributed between a reel and individual portfolio pages. The audio-visual reel is a compilation of short excerpts of songs and videos, all less than twenty seconds in length, listing the author's specific roles in the projects, as well as associated artists and month of completion. Additionally, there are three portfolio pages which provide longer examples of

work. The audio portfolio pages feature a soundcloud playlist with sixty-second excerpts of recordings, which can be accessed by mobile or desktop devices. The video portfolio page includes an embedded Vimeo playlist which both selects and plays videos on both desktop and mobile sites. All of these portfolio pages included professional photography of the author at work in each of these categories.

Further, the site has an additional “About” page with a short biography of the author, additional studio photography, and a vision statement video. This vision statement lays out a general philosophy in R. Glade Music’s approach to a production. The short two-minute video asks abstract questions that must be grappled with in approaching recorded media, and proposes that the questions must be answered collaboratively. The video also briefly describes the author’s services, experience, and hopes to bring the artist’s message to the world. Further, the about page is intended to clarify the identity of the author in relation to this professional studio services company.

Finally, this digital portfolio includes a contact page, allowing users to get in touch with R. Glade Media. It was decided to use a form rather than listing a contact email as web forms are more professional and can organize all responses into a single spreadsheet as well as forwarding responses to a dedicated email account. The gmail account of rglademusic@gmail.com was created specifically for correspondence from this website. This form also organizes all email addresses into a combined email list for future communications and distribution. Although this contact page is quite simple, it is a necessary component that can gather information on visitors to the digital portfolio.

4. Innovation

The R.Glade Music digital portfolio is innovative in its careful consideration of available resources, seeking to lower friction for adoption, and allowing for a larger body of work. The initially proposed Culminating Experience was a live performance drawing together many artists and technologies into a single unified vision. However, it was soon apparent that time and availability were scarce resources amongst the Berklee community; potential collaborators already had their own projects and passions, with only a year to accomplish high goals. Moreover, performance venues and production equipment were scarce resources, with no dedicated Berklee stages and a production department that was largely inaccessible to students. The solution came in considering the most available resources and most requested needs; incredibly talented composers and musicians with ample access to recording studios and camera equipment, looking for engineers and videographers to produce professional digital media. Thus, the innovation came in applying as much willpower into this least-friction environment, allowing for the completion of a combined eighteen audio and video recordings which constitute this digital portfolio.

Further, this digital portfolio is innovative in its use of high quality photography and videography to accompany audio engineering work, giving visual representation of the artists' performance as well as R.Glade Music's engineering and mixing presence. The engineer was filmed working in the studio during a large session to create content for the portfolio's home page banner video. Also, professional photographer shot the engineer with studio strobe lighting during a staged studio session, allowing the engineer to change wardrobe and pose with different

collaborators to produce photography used throughout the portfolio. Additionally, a montage reel of artists performing in studios was compiled for the vision statement video on the portfolio's About page. This visual component is easily overlooked in a portfolio representing studio audio services, and pairing the two resulted an innovative product.

5. New Skills Acquired

The creation of the R. Glade Music digital portfolio resulted in many entirely new skills, as well as further development of existing skills. The process of recording in Berklee's studios allowed for extensive working experience with over fifty different microphone models and deep understanding of their unique attributes such as frequency response, polar patterns, pad and rolloff settings, and more. This microphone knowledge was augmented by experience with a dozen microphone pre-amplifiers, some analog and others modeled with universal unison pre-amplifiers, providing an understanding of how to further color an audio signal with . These skills have resulted in a proficient workflow as a recording engineer, a mostly new skill to the author of the portfolio.

Further, new skills were developed in understanding audio gear including compressors, equalizers, and effects processors. Throughout the creation of this portfolio, the author utilized all of the analog outboard gear available in Berklee Valencia's studios, as well as reading all associated manuals. When recording, the engineer would often split signals to record them both dry and processed to develop further experience with this audio equipment, allowing for later analysis of the effects of these modules and comparing them to digital plugins. Additionally, the author developed extensive knowledge of over sixty Universal Audio emulations of additional

outboard gear, used frequently in mixing the audio contained in this portfolio. This knowledge furthered the author's abilities as a mix engineer and allow easy navigation of almost any professional recording studio.

Finally, this portfolio developed the author's abilities in multi-camera filming and editing. Due to availability of many DSLR cameras from Berklee's equipment room, sessions were often filmed with eight or more cameras simultaneously. Thus skills were developed in managing many cameras simultaneously, and creating lighting setups that would effectively light many different camera angles. Abilities in multi-camera editing were also developed, including professional workflows of video synchronization and proxy media. Overall the author further developed abilities as a videographer, editor, and colorist.

6. Challenges

Many challenges were overcome in the process of the developing this portfolio: both expected and others unexpected. The largest challenge, which was fairly expected, was managing many simultaneous projects which demanded extraordinarily long working hours. Over the year, the author became overcommitted due to a general philosophy of never turning down opportunities to collaborate. However, in working so many sessions in addition to rigorous coursework, there was very little time left to edit and mix the resulting media. The author had to maximize available time by eliminating personal projects and focusing on collaborations, withdrawing from a particularly time-intensive class, and personal lifestyle changes including a regimented sleep schedule and intermittent fasting. These strategies allowed

the author to overcome the challenge of taking on too much and deliver the promised media to fellow collaborators.

Further, the author overcame an unexpected external challenge of an incredibly driven student body at Berklee Valencia, all of whom had their own passions, projects, and goals for the year. As previously mentioned, the initial vision for this Culminating Experience (CE) was a cohesive live production which incorporated many technologies and collaborators. However, this idea faced the hurdle of organizing many individuals without much availability for development workshops. While ultimately reframed as a strength or opportunity, the author found that most potential collaborators already had fully developed project ideas which made a full-scale production seem daunting. This challenge was overcome by reframing this CE into a digital portfolio, allowing the author to continue to collaborate with artists on their projects without needing to later incorporate the work into a later production.

Finally, another unexpected challenge in producing this CE was correspondence with graphic and web designers while developing the R. Glade Music logo and website. The author began with a fairly specific vision for the design and aesthetics of this portfolio, but it was decided that working with professional designers would create a more polished end product and free up valuable time for mixing and editing. However, the process of reviewing revisions and communicating modifications was often more time consuming than expected, and yielded diminishing returns in incremental improvements upon the work. Ultimately, the author asked for delivery of all files and made the final adjustments to the website and logo. Similarly, the author asked for all raw files from the photographer to allow a specific editing workflow

previously learned while apprenticing studio photographer Wesley Channel. In taking on the final details of polishing the portfolio's aesthetic, the author overcame these challenges of collaborating with contracted designers.

7. Future Plans

Further development to this digital portfolio will happen continuously to incorporate future completions of recorded media into the site. While eighteen pieces were completed for the launch of this portfolio, additional work was recorded in Berklee's studios which R. Glade Music will complete over the coming year. These additional pieces include ten songs to be mixed and seven videos to be edited and colored. Additionally, the portfolio will be updated to include new videos of live performances shot on location, and mixes of audio recorded in London's Air studios.

These updates to the digital portfolio will allow the author to maintain momentum by releasing new content and keep the portfolio current and relevant. This will be especially useful as the author searches for studio work in the United States, providing examples of professional studio services. This portfolio will be provided to future employers; both studio owners looking for assistants or technicians, as well as bands or producers looking for audio engineers and videographers. Additionally, the portfolio will be officially released, utilizing the author's existing social media and email contact lists to promote the website and associated social media accounts.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, this digital portfolio comprehensively demonstrates professional studio services offered by R. Glade Music and the massive progress made in the avenues of audio engineering and videography. Over the course of a year at Berklee Valencia, the author has developed abilities as a recording engineer and mixing engineer, as well as a studio photographer, multi-camera editor, and colorist. Although these were all interests of the author previously, access to studio recording resources and DSLR cameras, combined with an active and talented student body allowed for accelerated progress and the development of this digital portfolio. The work compiled serves as an excellent audio-visual representation of R. Glade Music's abilities and expertise, providing potential employers and collaborators with a sense of what to expect in working together. Moving forward the portfolio will serve as a platform to share future work and further market R. Glade Music's services.

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