

Berklee College of Music

Silla: A Personal Brand Portfolio

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Music Production, Technology, and Innovation

Supervisor: Elysha Zaide

By: Melissa Silla

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Abstract

The Culminating Experience (CE) project will illustrate the creative/innovative abilities of the Master student, Melissa Silla, whose moniker is Silla, as a versatile artist in music and technology. Through the creation of original sound design, graphic design, and computer/mobile application design, this project is in the form of an extended play (EP) and an online sound design portfolio website. To construct the EP, original recordings, varying from vocal sounds to nature/outdoor sounds have been used, utilizing new software and synthesizers. For the online portfolio, a user friendly/simplistic interface design has been constructed that will serve as a virtual portfolio, where users will be able to locate the artist's music/video projects, contact information, and other creative projects. It is with aspiration that this project will aid in cultivating the artist's personal brand and will serve as their music/technology portfolio.

Keywords: music, technology, instrumentation, sound design, personal brand, production.

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1. Introduction

The music Industry can be described as a “global economy powered by human creativity”.¹ This ideology has made the United States of America alone one of the most influential music markets in the world, producing nearly 20 billion dollars in revenue in 2018.² Within this intricate system of art and commerce from a musician/artist standpoint, there are many streams of creative outlets and due to this, artists are faced with the challenge to make a worthwhile presence for themselves while attempting to bridge the disconnect between themselves and their audience. To alleviate this existing issue and to create a sense of connection to fans/supporters, several forms of personal branding is an ideal solution.

Personal branding, demonstrates an artist’s specific talents and perspective enabling them to connect with their target audience.³ Personal branding is an artist’s image, reputation and the key to influence, opportunities, and advancement .⁴ It is a highly valued brand equity in which represents an individual’s most important asset.⁵ Personal branding has allowed musical artists to defy challenges bestowed upon the music community and distinguish their identities amongst many.

¹ Catherine Fitterman Radbill. *Introduction to the Music Industry An Entrepreneurial Approach, Second Edition*. Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2016, 5.

²Amy Watson. “Topic: Music in the U.S.” www.statista.com, 2019.
<https://www.statista.com/topics/1639/music/>

³Eufaula Garrett. *The Importance of Personal Branding in the Music Industry*. Medium. 2018.
<https://medium.com/@EufaulaGarrett/the-importance-of-personal-branding-in-the-music-industry-7d626506e3fd>.

⁴ Alexandra Vitelar. "Like Me: Generation Z and the Use of Social Media for Personal Branding." *Management Dynamics in the Knowledge Economy* 7, no. 2 (2019): 257+. Gale Academic OneFile (accessed November 13, 2019).
https://catalog.berklee.edu:2504/apps/doc/A593354341/GPS?u=mclin_b_berklee&sid=GPS&xid=461cacf2.

⁵ Ibid

In regards of the Culminating Experience project, the Master Student, Melissa Silla, whose moniker is Silla, has incorporated the musical/technical concepts acquired throughout the year from various classes such as Electronic Production, Live Video Music Production, Hybrid Recording, and Djing and Turntablism within the elements that encompassed their Cumulating Experience Project. The artist has developed a creative music portfolio, which is comprised of an Extended Play (EP) and a personal sound design website. The EP is a demonstration of the artist's talent and musical skills while the composition of the artist website is a visual portfolio, showcasing the artist's technical skills, serving as a central hub for users to locate the artist's creative projects.⁶

2. Review State of the Art

2.1 Extended Play

An Extended Play (EP) is a musical recording that is ineligible to be considered a full-length album. In the past, EP's were generally represented as a term for vinyl's that had less than the standard playing record of 78 revolutions per minute (rpm).⁷

⁶ Cleverism. *Top Programming Languages Used in Web Development*. decoadmin, September 20, 2019. <https://www.cleverism.com/programming-languages-web-development/>.

⁷ David Andrew Wiebe. *What Is The Difference Between Lp And Ep In Music?*. Music Industry How To, 2019. <https://www.musicindustryhowto.com/difference-lp-ep-music/>.

In modern day, the purpose behind EP's is utilized as a promotional tactic to engage and increase an audience/fan base. Creating a EP has allowed artists to experiment with new musical styles and/or release music prior to a release of an album.⁸⁹

The artist has several modern-day EP's from diverse artists that emulate the structure/style that they have sourced inspiration from. To illustrate, an independent record label company by the name of Soulection, releases EP's from up and coming producer-artists within their label. These EP's are called White Label, which are composed of two to four tracks that highlight the true craftsmanship and uniqueness of an artist.¹⁰ A few of the artists that are within this label that have a similar style to Silla are: J.Robb, Lakim, J-Louis, and Monte Booker, who have all released a White Label EP through Soulection.¹¹ Although these artists may have the same EP structure and sound/genre style of Lo-fi Hip Hop that Silla is looking to create and release, Silla's EP has a large distinction in the sense that the artist has sampled elements within nature, in which these aforementioned artists have not done within this White Label Series.

2.2 Website creation for musicians

One form of individual branding as an artist is a personal website. A personal website is comprised of many webpages that has been constructed by an individual for education/informative purposes and is often utilized as a marketing tool to engage with fans.

⁸ Heather McDonald. *Why an EP Should Be a Part of Your Music Promotional Tool Kit?* The Balance Careers. 2019. <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/music-marketing-what-is-an-ep-2460346>

⁹ Kevin Cornell. *5 Benefits Associated With Releasing an EP - TuneCore*. United States, 2018. <https://www.tunecore.com/blog/2018/07/5-benefits-associated-with-releasing-an-ep.html>.

¹⁰ Soulection. *White Label Series*, accessed December 02, 2019, <https://soulection.com/white-label>

¹¹ Ibid

A personal music website provides a space where artists can showcase their best work as a creative while providing fans insightful information. The components of a personal music website typically include: a homepage which often displays the main objective to be portrayed, an about section, music/portfolio section, news/tour section, and contact section.

Websites from musicians that truly depict/illustrate the theme that Silla have constructed are: Toro y Moi, ESTA, TylerMajor, and Phony Ppl. The artist admires the vibrancy of colors that each of the websites display and how the contents within the website embody simplicity and this reasoning is what Silla envisioned for their personal website. What differentiated Silla from these listed artists and their websites is that Silla has integrated their personal website to also be a portfolio, that illustrates compositions that contain custom sound design.



Figure 1. Musician Website “Why Musicians and Bands Need Websites?” accessed June 18, 2016. <https://artglider.com/blog/musicians-bands-need-websites>



Figure 2. Musician Website, accessed December 2nd, 2019
<https://toroymoi.com/>

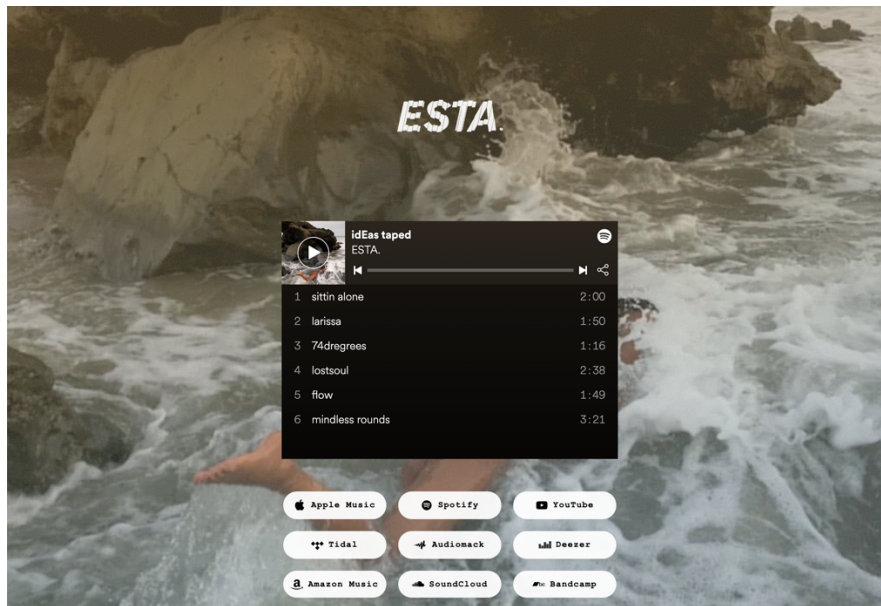


Figure 3. Musician Website, accessed December 2nd, 2019
<https://esta.world/>

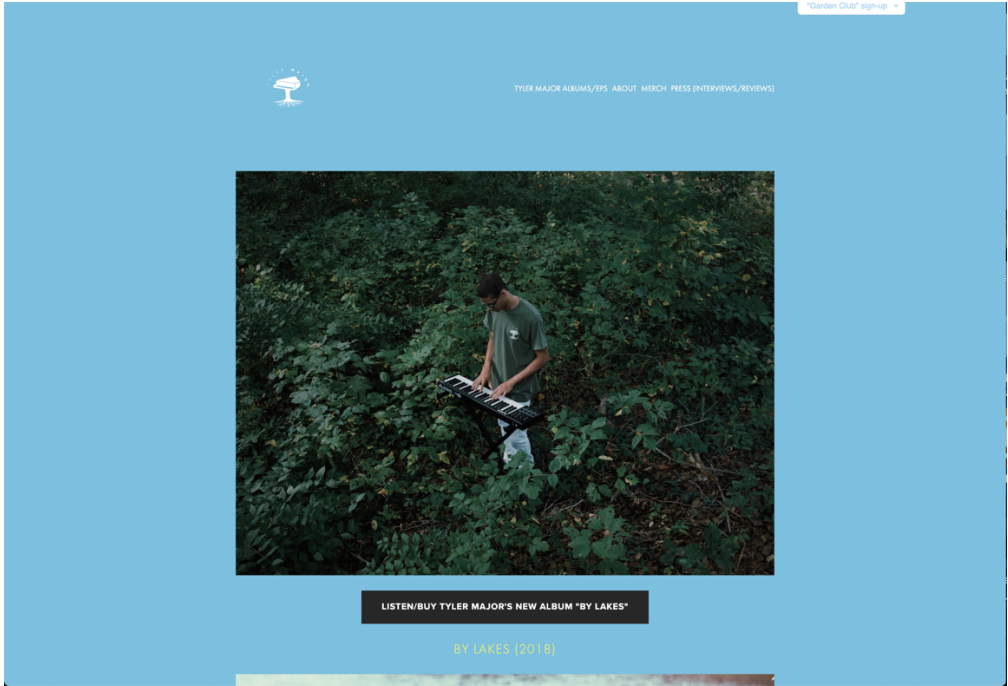


Figure 4. Musician Website, accessed December 2nd, 2019
<http://www.tylermajor.com/>

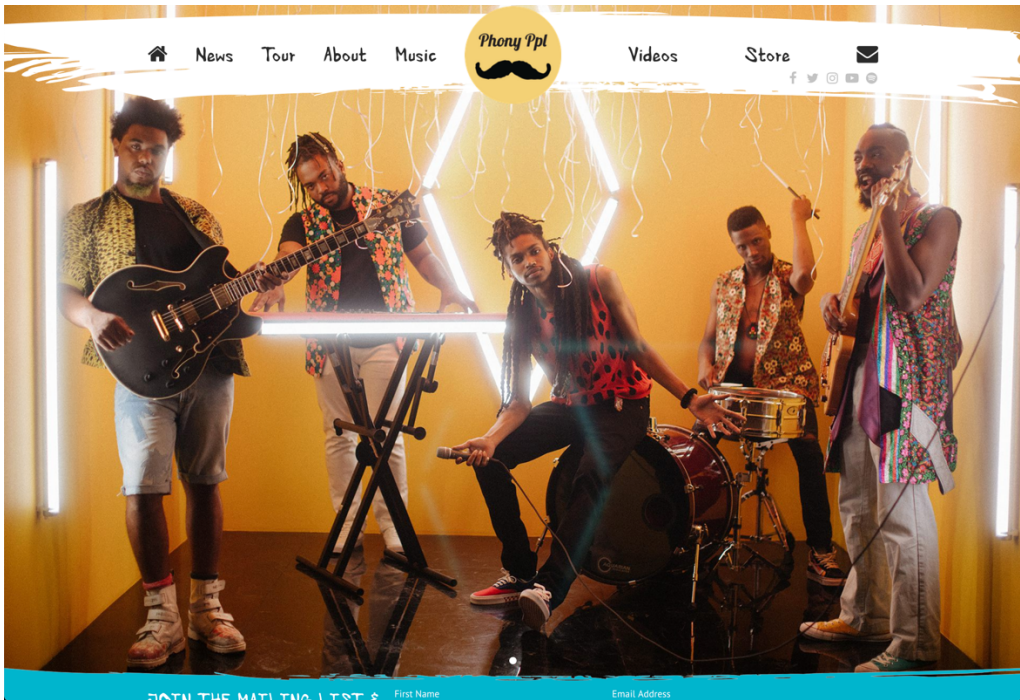


Figure 5. Musician Website, accessed December 2nd, 2019
<https://www.phony-ppl.com/>

3. Description

The essence of Silla's Culminating Experience project consists of a self-produced and mixed EP titled Transcend and an online sound design portfolio, in conjunction with social media platform integration which serves as an additional supplement to the artist's online portfolio.

3.1 Transcend (EP)

Transcend, is a four track EP that depicts various music techniques and sound design methods that the artist has learned over the course of their Master program. Transcend is considered another medium and demonstration of the artist's abilities to create sounds from sampling and/or synthesizers to utilize them cohesively within a composition.

Each track within the EP is a musical representation of the sentiments evoked through the artist's daily interaction with the environment/nature. The artist incorporates elements within nature such as the sounds of: insects/creatures, chirping of birds, water, and wind. These components further contribute to one of the several fragments of the artist's personal brand, nature. These musical arrangements briefly encompass topics such as of the exploration of freedom and individuality, earth pollution, and mourning death.

To integrate movement and texture into the compositions, the artist utilized techniques/methodologies within the digital audio workstation, Ableton Live. These techniques that were implemented include: Mud Pie, Hocket, and re-sampling sounds into the Max for Live

plug-in, Granulator II.¹² These tools and strategies have provided an off-balance feeling to the tracks, which further distinguishes and refines their personal sound.¹³

3.2 Sound Design Portfolio

The artist has created an online sound portfolio through the online service, Adobe Portfolio. Adobe Portfolio is an online service, through the entity of Adobe Creative Cloud, which allow users with an Adobe Creative Cloud subscription to create fully-responsive portfolio websites.¹⁴ The content of the artist's portfolio website demonstrates their experience through various projects that the artist has completed throughout the course of their Master program.

The projects that the artist has listed on their portfolio website include: audio projects, which has two sub-categories: sound design and artist music, visual projects, and artist projects. Under the audio section of the site, Silla has created a catalog of the compositions that exemplifies all custom sound design. Beneath each composition, a brief synopsis regarding the objective of the composition and the software and synthesizers utilized within the composition. The artist has created a visual design section that includes motion/graphic design work that the artist has created over the course of the Master program. Silla additionally included an artist project page, where users of the website can find an archive of live performances and/or visual

¹² Dennis DeSantis. *Making Music Creative Strategies for Electronic Music Producers*. Linear Rhythm in Melodies | Making Music Book by Ableton. 2020. <https://makingmusic.ableton.com/>

¹³ Robert Henke. *Granulator II*. Ableton, accessed May 18th, 2020. <https://www.ableton.com/en/packs/granulator-ii/>; Pyramind. *Mr. Bill's Guide To Sound Design Mud Pies*. Pyramind, accessed May 18th, 2020. <https://pyramind.com/mr-bills-guide-to-sound-design-mud-pies/>

¹⁴ Adobe. *Adobe Portfolio FAQ*, accessed May 18th, 2020. <https://helpx.adobe.com/creative-cloud/kb/adobe-portfolio-faq.html>

projects that incorporate their music. The site subtly incorporates elements of nature, that can be seen through the artist's visual logo and canvases of plants throughout the site.

3.3 Integration of Social Media Platforms

The artist has selected the social media platforms, Instagram and Youtube, to utilize as various mediums of an online portfolio and a marketing tool to self-promote work. Instagram, which is a free photo and video sharing app, has allowed Silla to post short and concise audio/video content.¹⁵ The artist has utilized Youtube to post long and in-depth audio/video projects. The aforementioned strategy will allow the artist to showcase their creative abilities as a sound designer and artist-producer.

4. Innovative Aspects

The artist's Culminating Experience project varies from those who are artist-producers and sound designers by the reason of Silla infusing the element/concept of nature into their music and personal brand. This distinct usage of sound design and branding can be exemplified through compositional/visual work. Silla utilized sound from nature as a subtle symbolism for peace and harmony. In the EP Transcend, each arrangement incorporated sounds heard in the environment and to further the differentiation of their compositions, the artist manipulated the nature sounds through sound design techniques utilizing synthesizers.

¹⁵ Instagram. *What Is Instagram? Instagram Help Center*, 2020. <https://help.instagram.com/424737657584573>

5. New Skills Acquired

During the course of the Master program, the artist has acquired several new skills that advanced their knowledge and proficiency in various software. In relation to audio software, Silla has learned about the digital audio workstation, Ableton Live. The new technical skills obtained through Ableton Live has allowed the artist to further develop cohesive music compositions, conjointly using effect units, synthesizers, and samplers to establish depth and texture/variation within musical arrangements. The artist has also obtained knowledge on visual effects software such as Resolume Arena and Adobe After Effects. The visual programs provided techniques that reinforced the quality of the artist's audio and video projects. With newly-attained skillsets, the artist has technical experience in music creation/production, mixing and mastering, visual and graphic design. The artist also possess soft skills in creativity, time management, self-discipline, and adaptability to adjust in any circumstances/conditions.

6. Challenges

6.1 Expected Challenges

The artist anticipated challenges regarding certain aspects of creating and completing a personal brand portfolio. One issue that the artist faced was mixing and incorporating the newly-acquired techniques into their music. With a significant amount of new information, the artist found it difficult to incorporate numerous methodologies. To overcome this issue, Silla allocated each technique they would like to experiment as a theme within their compositions, whether it was for an arrangement that would be going onto the EP or social media content.

Another anticipated challenge was remaining consistent and accomplishing milestones within the projected timeline. To remain on track, the artist made sure to set small goals to

accomplish each week, leading up to the final version of each portion of the personal brand portfolio. The artist worked on small sections of their musical compositions, content on their online portfolio and social media, allocating the work at various times in a day until the task is completed by the end of a given week.

6.1 Unanticipated Challenges

Due to COVID-19, particular regulations were set into place that drastically effected the intentions and blueprint of the artist's personal brand portfolio. An element of the artist's portfolio was to create an audio-visual EP, where all visual aspects would be filmed outdoors with equipment that Berklee Valencia provided, which would have been a supplement to the nature symbolisms that the artist incorporates within their music. Due to the limited resources and equipment, the artist decided to incorporate visual motion design into their short projects for social media content and replaced the audio-visual EP with an online sound design portfolio.

7. Future Ramifications

To further develop the personal brand portfolio, the artist plans to create a detailed marketing plan for the release of their EP on the social media platform, Instagram. Furthermore, it is the artist's intent to construct a strategy for creating and posting social media content, as well as their sound design portfolio.

8. Conclusions

The creation of Silla's personal brand portfolio illustrates their technical and creative abilities that will aid in their exploration of future careers/collaboration endeavors. The artist has conducted extensive research within the subject matter of branding to create cohesive projects

that properly demonstrates not only musical aspects and capabilities, but imperative skillsets that has contributed to pivotal objectives thus far.

For Silla, attending Berklee Valencia has truly been a remarkable and rewarding life experience. The artist had the opportunity to gain valuable skillsets to enhance their creative talents and combine their academic and life experiences to produce a personal brand. During the course of the Master Program, the artist was able to explore and refine their sound through experimentation and collaborating/gaining inspiration from fellow colleagues and professors. It is with optimism that the artist's Culminating Experience project will effectively exemplify and authenticate the innovative concepts that Silla has brought forth onto their creative journey.

9. Appendix

9.1 Table 1: Plan of Action and Projected Timeline

Timeline	Plan of Action
September 2019	Learning new skills in Master Program
October 2019	Brainstorming CE ideas
November 2019 11/22	Completion of first song on extended play (EP)
11/26	Completion of live video performance
December 2019 12/16	First draft of coding source files for personal website
12/26	Completion of second song on extended play
January 2020	
01/10	Integration of visual component for second song
01/16	Completion of third song on extended play
February 2020 02/01	Completion of fourth song on extended play
02/08	Final version of website completed
March 2020	Prototype Draft
April 2020	Prototype Presentations
May 2020	Final Revisions of CE Project
June 2020	Final CE Presentation and Defense

9.2 Table 2: Budget Proposal

BUDGET PROPOSAL MPTI					
ITEM	PROPOSED	ACTUAL (RUNNING)			SUBTOTALS
		INITIAL	AFTER 1 MONTH	FINAL	
MATERIALS (disposables)					
Hard Drives		€80	€50	€50	€20
SD Memory Cards		€20	€20	€20	€20
					€40
EQUIPMENT					
HARDWARE					
Microphones		€200	€40	€50	€50
Interface		€135	€135	€135	€135
Apple Laptop		€1,823	€0	€0	€0
SOFTWARE					
Ableton		€402	€0	€0	€0
Resolume		€0	€0	€0	€0
Adobe Creative Cloud		€26	€30	€30	€30
Pro-Tools		€322	€0	€0	€0
					€215
PERSONNEL					
Graphic Designer		€100	€50	€50	€20
Engineer		€100	€0	€0	€0
Videographer		€100	€0	€0	€0
Web designer/Programmer		€100	€0	€0	€0
Video Editor		€100	€0	€0	€0
					€20
STUDIO					
BERKLEE daily x # of days		€250	€0	€0 x 1 mo	€0 x 4 mo
HOME daily x # of days		€0	€0	€0 x 1 mo	€0 x 4 mo
					€0
OVERHEAD					
RENT		€850	€1,700	€1,700 x 1 mo	€3400 x 4 mo
POWER		€100	€100	€100	€100
WATER		€50	€50	€50	€50
GAS		€50	€50	€50	€50
INTERNET		€50	€50	€50	€50
PHONE		€114	€228	€228	€228
					€3,878
FEES					
YOUR FEE		€100	€100	€0	€0
TOTALS		€5,072	€2,603	€813	€753
					€4,153

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