

Berklee College of Music

Portfolio of a Female Artist, Producer and Engineer

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Abstract

Masculine pre-eminence is an observable reality in various working environments. One of these is the music industry. This project is created to take over the role as a woman working as an engineer, electronic music producer and music video maker.

A portfolio of various projects with acoustic and electronic elements will be presented to show the skills as an artist, engineer and producer. Eleven songs were recorded, mixed and produced to develop skills in a wide area.

Throughout the process, knowledge such as mixing and producing were broadened. Hopefully this project will be an exemplar for women in the music industry to be encouraged to be able to accomplish many different tasks in a male dominated field.

Introduction:

The CE consist of a portfolio with eleven projects. Various songs have been recorded and mixed, which was the main focus. A remix to one of those recorded songs was made and a couple of other electronic tracks have been produced. The third part was to make music videos to some of those songs.

The aim of that project is to leave Berklee with various projects to show all the skills earned as an artist, producer, engineer and video maker. Throughout those months different microphone choices and placement techniques were experimented with, as well as new production skills.

Feminism is a topic that has been the subject of discussions for years and which remains strongly discussed today. It is a problem that can be found in many areas and different jobs and one of these is the music industry, which, is part of those sectors dominated by men. In general, there is a male majority in the music industry, both in terms of engineering and music production.

All the projects were recorded, produced and engineered over the last 8 months. The budget was mainly made for the music video as there was a need of extra lighting effects. The goal as an artist, producer and engineer is to be able to show the ability of producing and engineering different music styles and combine them with remixes and music videos.

Review of the State of the Art:

The aim was to record and produce well mixed and mastered music combined with acoustic and electronic elements. Women are underrepresented in many sectors of the music industry like being a DJane and working in the music studio. Entering the music business is having to face a “boys club”, which might scare off many girls and women wanting to get into music production and engineering. With that portfolio I want to take over the role of everything from recording musicians, mixing and producing.

According to a statistic on the website of the Women's Audio Mission (WAM) only 5% of recognised music producers are women. This figure is an estimate made by the Women in the Audio Committee of the Audio Engineering Society (AES) back in 2000. Today, the Women's Audio Mission believes that number could be even smaller, based on attendance at Audio Engineering Society conventions.¹

Other organisations are Discwoman, Girlschool, SoundGirls and Women In Music. Discwoman is a platform and booking agency that showcases and represents women in electronic music. Starting off as a festival, it strives towards inclusivity and is composed of cis women, trans women, and genderqueer artists.² Girlschool started off as a festival as well and is now a community for women in the music industry.³ SoundGirls is an organisation who provide support, career development and expand resources for women in the field.⁴ Women In Music is an organization that seeks to "advance the awareness,

¹ Serena Kutchinsky, (2017). *Where Are All The Female DJs?* [online] Refinery29.uk. Available at: <http://www.refinery29.uk/2017/04/149671/female-djs-annie-mac-nightwave> [Accessed 12 Nov. 2019].

² <http://www.discwoman.com/> [Accessed 10 Dec. 2019].

³ <http://girlschoolla.com/about> [Accessed 10 Dec. 2019].

⁴ <https://soundgirls.org/> [Accessed 10 Dec. 2019].

equality, diversity, heritage, opportunities, and cultural aspects of women in the musical arts through education, support, empowerment, and recognition." ⁵

Producers like George Martin or Pharrell Williams are known names. Only three women have ever been nominated for best producer at the Brits or the Grammys. None of them went home with the prize.⁶

Many researches show that there is a lack of interest of women being isolated in a studio and producing for hours.⁷ In an article Susan Rogers, engineer on Prince's biggest album, states that the bottom line of the lack of women working in music studios is really basic - women are not interested in working in that field. She teaches engineering and production and says that the number of girls in her classes are pretty low. Being in the studio is very competitive, intensive and time consuming. ⁸

Nowadays many artists openly declare that they are feminists and send clear messages on the subject through their works. Many of them want to demonstrate the emancipation and strength that characterises women, but there are also artists who demonstrate a great lack of respect for this issue. One female artist who applied the principles of feminism in her works is surely Beyoncé, who is one of the most powerful women in the music industry and is also

⁵ <https://www.womeninmusic.org/> [Accessed 10 Dec. 2019].

⁶ Mark Savage, (2012). *Why are female record producers so rare?* [online] BBC News. Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-19284058> [Accessed 12 Nov. 2019].

⁷ Ruth Saxelby, (2014). *13 Women On How To Change Male-Dominated Studio Culture*. [online] The FADER. Available at: <https://www.thefader.com/2014/10/30/why-arent-more-women-becoming-music-producers> [Accessed 12 Nov. 2019].

⁷ Mark Savage, (2012). *Why are female record producers so rare?* [online] BBC News. Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-19284058> [Accessed 10 Dec. 2019].

⁸ Mark Savage, (2012). *Why are female record producers so rare?* [online] BBC News. Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-19284058> [Accessed 10 Dec. 2019].

known for being a feminist. It must be said, however, that initially Beyoncé had not given a particular voice to this feminist thought. In April 2013 she defined herself as a "modern" feminist on the pages of the famous Vogue magazine, simply declaring herself a woman who loves being a woman. However, recently his feminist signals in her works are increasingly clear and decisive.

"Flawless" is a song from the album "Beyoncé" of the year 2013. *"Before she woke up flawless, Beyoncé woke up mad."* As she explained later, one day she entered the studio angry: *"... Imagine the person who hates you. Imagine a person who doesn't believe in you. And look in the mirror and say, 'Bow down, bitch' and I guarantee you feel gangsta."*

The song was initially called "Bow down" and only later the name was changed to "**** Flawless", because the meaning of the song is, for the note, that *"Nobody wakes up flawless. It's an oxymoron. But the meaning behind it, to say "I just woke up feeling good" is what it's about."* Very important for her was the idea of striving and fighting to become a champion. "Bow down, bitch" represented for her a look at her life before the big success. *"I've been through all this. I've worked harder. I had suffered more. I have seen the bad part of the industry and the good part of the industry."*⁹

"Flawless" contains the words of the author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie of a "TED talk" called "We Should All Be Feminists". When Beyoncé found that clip, she knew that was exactly what she was trying to say. It seemed perfect, because the discussion was

⁹ Spencer Kornhaber, (2014). *Beyoncé's creative director talks "Flawless" and the self-titled album.* [online] The Atlantic. Available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2014/06/the-full-story-of-beyonces-flawless/373480/> [Accessed 12 Dec. 2019].

aggressive and powerful, as if it were a call to action. An extract of the words of Adichie (2013) in the song are: ¹⁰

“We teach girls to shrink themselves, to make themselves smaller.

We say to girls, you can have ambition, but not too much.

You should aim to be successful, but not too successful otherwise, you will threaten the man.

Because I am female, I am expected to aspire to marriage. [...]

We teach girls that they cannot be sexual beings in the way that boys are.

Feminist: the person who believes in the social political, and economic equality of the sexes.”

Beyoncé also includes the theme of feminism in other works, such as in "Lemonade", the sixth album that was published in 2016 and which contains the song "Formation", in which it deals especially with the theme of black feminism. She always showed her music with a sense of feminine power. In addition, she celebrates the victories of black women at a time when white feminism and traditional media often distance or dismiss them. Her videos present strong women of colour who dance with self-awareness and energy.

¹⁰ Alex Abad-Santos, (2015). *Is Beyoncé a feminist?* [online] Vox. Available at: <https://www.vox.com/cards/beyonce-career-explained/beyonce-feminist-flawless> [Accessed 12 Dec. 2019].

The music industry has always been a complex world and feminism is a topic that started at an early stage. In recent years there are still many artists who defend their opinion on feminism because women are not yet treated equally in this area. Of course there will always be people who think differently, but many artists bring this discussion to their workplace and support the emancipation of women. Feminism is not the only topic of relevance addressed in the context of the music industry; racism is also the subject of discussion.

Description:

The CE is a portfolio of eleven songs including a music video, acoustic and electronic songs. The projects included are assignments executed in different courses and other songs are made outside of academic programs.

The acoustically engineered tracks all have different genres, ranging from eastern to pop, funk music. Those projects were specifically used for engineering purposes and working together with different artists and producers. During those sessions different and newly gained recording techniques and microphone choices and placements were applied for live recordings and overdubs. After the recordings the author was executing tasks such as editing, comping and mixing.

The electronic songs don't involve any other producers, engineers or artists, except for "Black Sea" which includes recorded vocals and an electric violin. Those songs contain dark and self designed sounds. Throughout the last months the focus of productions was to create dark sounds and textures, improve use of compression, having more punchy sounds and to form a unique edgy style in electronic dance music.

Innovative Aspects:

Different portfolios were performed and yet this is a portfolio mostly carried out by one female engineer and producer. The presented portfolio covers different genres and project types. It ranges from a music video, remix and self produced electronic songs to different genres of acoustic songs.

Besides the music video there are two focuses for the presented portfolio. One of them showing the skills as a female engineer. The author has worked with different musicians and producers on songs of different genres. Being present through all the different stages from recording, editing and comping to mixing, improved the author's ability in undertaking different tasks as an engineer.

The other focus was on the production of electronic dance songs. A self made style was developed throughout the presented projects. Additionally the electronic songs contain a lot of self designed sounds specifically focusing on establishing unique dark sounds and textures with an own identity.

New Skills Acquired:

During the process many different skills were broadened. Having some prior skills in mixing, recording and producing, those were improved throughout the months of working on the portfolio. Being able to have worked in different studios and with different musicians and peers increased these proficiencies even more.

Softwares such as ProTools and Ableton had been used before coming to Berklee. Therefore the writer got used to using those faster and more in detail.

The author wasn't very comfortable with using hardware before the Master Programme. Throughout the past months the usage of these got clearer and simpler, which will be valuable when working in other studios.

Regarding the engineer role, different and new learned recording techniques and microphone placements were applied. Additionally more evolved mixing strategies were adopted throughout the sessions. All these new skills will be helpful in undertaking sessions in the future and being able to mix on a higher level.

Looking at the producer role, many different techniques and sound design was applied in various projects which will be advantageous when working on self produced songs and collaborating with other artists.

A totally new skill learned was the production and editing of music videos. New programmes were practiced and the correct usage of cameras had been a new experience.

Challenges:

Different challenges came up during the last couple of months. One challenge by far was the editing of the music video. The idea was to produce it for the acoustic version, however, in the end it was used for the remix of that song. Therefore lip syncing was a big problem and because of the fact that the video was shot in a location further away, it has not been possible to reshoot the video. Resulting in many hours of editing.

Another challenge resulted from the pandemic as in not being able to go to a professional studio for recordings. It was planned to have around 13 projects, having two more acoustic songs and another music video. Because of those challenging times and adaptations, the portfolio was downsized to originally ten projects, which ended up being eleven as there is a song with two versions, one being an instrumental version. After all it has been able to adapt the CE during those times without any major difficulties.

Future Ramifications:

As the portfolio got downsized to eleven projects it is planned to record and produce further songs and videos. Some of the songs in the projects will be resumed and more developed. Skills such as recording, mixing, producing and video editing will be the main focus for future improvements.

Besides recording and engineering, the author hopes to publish EPs with self produced and engineered electronic tracks. Music video production for self produced electronic tracks will be pursued in the future.

An online portfolio was created as well where all the projects will be published.

Conclusion:

This portfolio was created to take over many different roles as a female engineer and producer. Starting with recording and organising sessions, to producing and mixing various projects. The aim was to leave Berklee with different songs to show all the skills learned as a producer, engineer and video maker, which has been achieved.

Recording, mixing and producing decisions were based on newly gained skills throughout the year at Berklee. Some of the projects evolved with collaborators and others were self made by the author. A few challenges were faced, which have been overcome over the months.

For the future the author hopes to be able to apply the knowledge gained in other collaborations and work situations. Possible EPs with her own electronic style will be a future plan.

The author hopes that this project will be an exemplar for girls and women in the music industry to be encouraged being able to carry out different tasks in a male dominated business.

Appendix

Plan of Action & Projected Timeline:

Table 1. Timeline

	Electronic Songs	Acoustic Songs	Videos
November '19	Practice and development of sounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recording of 1st song: "Feelin' so high" by Chris Nicolosi Rehearsal & Recording of 2nd song: "Other Woman" by Serin Oh 	Planning of first music video: Trying out different lights, effects and places to shoot video
02/12/19 - 08/12/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start of remixing song 2 (by Serin Oh) Start of producing song 3 for Electronic Production class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overdubs of 1st song If needed more recording of 2nd song 	Start editing
09/12/19 - 15/12/19	Remixing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixing If needed overdubs of 2nd song 	Editing
16/12/19 - 20/12/19	Remixing and mixing	Mixing	Final editing
Summary of projects	2 electronic songs	2 acoustic songs	1 video
2nd Semester			
January '20	Practicing more techniques/ development of sounds	Finding musicians, rehearsals	Looking for film shooting spots

	Electronic Songs	Acoustic Songs	Videos
February '20	Production of 2 songs	Rehearsals, recording of "Kanmani"	Learning more effects/ techniques
March '20	Production of Sound Design songs	Overdubs of "Kanmani" - Mixing	
April '20	Producing & mixing	Recording of "Black Sea" - Mixing	
May '20	Producing & mixing Song Awakening & Beginnings	Mixing	
Summary of projects	4 electronic songs	2 acoustic songs	-
3rd Semester			
May '20	• Mixing	• Mixing	-

Deliverables:

- 11 Master Files
- Music Video
- Journey Video
- MegaMix

Credits:**Other Woman Acoustic:**

Artist: Serin Oh

Guitar: Luke Williams

Producer: Shakthi Prasad

Recording | Mix Engineer: Selina-Marisa Schmalisch

Other Woman Remix Music Video:

Artist: Serin Oh

Assistants: Henrike Kresser, Cole Nelson

Photographer: Cole Nelson

Video Editor | Producer: Selina-Marisa Schmalisch

Kanmani:

Artist | Cajon, Tabla: Lalit Kumar

Producer: Michael Lucarelli

Drums: Jorge Salas Quesada

Piano: Sungeun Ong

Saxophone: Carolina Araoz

Assistants: DJ Hepburn , Monica Andrade

Recording | Mix Engineer: Selina-Marisa Schmalisch

Feelin' So High:

Artist: Christopher Nicolosi

Arrangement: Nasir AlBashir

Producer: Dylan Scott

Recording | Mix Engineer: Selina-Marisa Schmalisch

Horns: Kieran Wallace, Destiny Carter, Cole Nelson, Jawren Walton

Drums: Calder Wiggers

Piano: Chris Gough

Assistant: Emily Shek

Bass: Gillian Harwin

Guitar: Michael Shanks

Awakening | Sound Design #1 | Sound Design #2 | Beginnings | Other Woman Remix:

Mix Engineer | Producer: Selina-Marisa Schmalisch

Black Sea:

Vocals: Keana Peery

Lyrics: Keana Peery, Wyatt Cmar

Electric Violin: Shaden Nahra

Recording | Mix Engineer | Producer: Selina-Marisa Schmalisch

Mastering Engineer:

Jamie Blake

Resources & Budget:

The main facility was the studio where most of the electronic production, recording and mixing happened. Equipment like Ableton Push were checked out from the Equipment Room from campus.

The production and engineering was handled by the author. But there was a need of some Assistant Engineers during recording sessions, various musicians and assistants for the video filming and a mastering engineer.

Regarding the music videos, cameras , tripods and lights have been checked out from the Equipment Room. To add different effects, coloured gel filter, smoke bombs and other lightning equipment were necessary to be purchased.

During the second half of the second semester it has not been able to go to school anymore, which therefore led to working in a little home studio. Students were able to borrow equipment from Berklee to have the necessary materials for their projects.

Table 2. Budget

ITEM	PROPOSED	REAL	ACTUAL :	INITAL	AFTER 4 MONTHS	AFTER 6 MONTHS	FINAL	SUBTOTALS
MATERIALS								
Hard Drives	200,00 €	200,00 €		200,00 €	200,00 €	200,00 €	200,00 €	200,00 €
								200,00 €
EQUIPMENT								
HARDWARE:								
Mics (Rental)	1.300,00 €	0,00 €		0,00 €	600,00 €	1.300,00 €	1.300,00 €	
Interface (purchase)	165,00 €	165,00 €		0,00 €	165,00 €	165,00 €	165,00 €	
Headphones (purchase)	160,00 €	160,00 €		0,00 €	160,00 €	160,00 €	160,00 €	
Laptop (purchase)	3.199,00 €	3.199,00 €		0,00 €	3.199,00 €	3.199,00 €	3.199,00 €	
Camera (rental)	800,00 €	0,00 €		0,00 €	300,00 €	800,00 €	800,00 €	
Camera Equipment (rental)	300,00 €	0,00 €		0,00 €	100,00 €	300,00 €	300,00 €	
Filming accessories / Car rental	500,00 €	500,00 €		0,00 €	300,00 €	500,00 €	500,00 €	
SOFTWARE:								
ProTools (purchase)	599,00 €	599,00 €		0,00 €	599,00 €	599,00 €	599,00 €	
Ableton (purchase)	599,00 €	599,00 €		0,00 €	599,00 €	599,00 €	599,00 €	
Adobe Programs (purchase) 20€ / month	200,00 €	200,00 €		0,00 €	200,00 €	200,00 €	200,00 €	
								7.022,00 €
PERSONNEL								
Musicians: 12 players, 20€ / hour	2.880,00 €	0,00 €		0,00 €	720,00 €	2.880,00 €	2.880,00 €	
Camera Assistance: 2 people, 15€ / hour	600,00 €	0,00 €		0,00 €	200,00 €	600,00 €	600,00 €	
Assistant Engineer: 1 pers., 20€ / hours	720,00 €	0,00 €		0,00 €	180,00 €	720,00 €	720,00 €	
								4.200,00 €
STUDIO								
BERKLEE daily	44.750,00 €	0,00 €			14.250,00 €	44.750,00 €	44.750,00 €	
HOME daily	0,00 €	0,00 €			0,00 €	0,00 €	0,00 €	
								44.750,00 €
OVERHEAD								
RENT 850,00€ / per month	8.500,00 €	8.500,00 €		0,00 €	3.400,00 €	8.500,00 €	8.500,00 €	
PHONE 20,00€ / month	200,00 €	200,00 €		0,00 €	80,00 €	200,00 €	200,00 €	
								8.700,00 €
CATERING								
MEALS cost/person	1.500,00 €	600,00 €		0,00 €	200,00 €	600,00 €	1.500,00 €	
								1.500,00 €
FEES								
My Fee	200,00 €	200,00 €					200,00 €	
								200,00 €
EXCHANGE RATE	1 € = 1.12 \$							
TOTALS	67.372,00 €			0,00 €	29.352,00 €	67.372,00 €	67.372,00 €	67.372,00 €

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