

BERKLEE COLLEGE OF MUSIC

Valencia, Spain

INDIGO

Live-Loop Performance

by

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Music Production, Technology & Innovation

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INTRODUCTION

“INDIGO” is an audio/visual live-loop performance incorporating both acoustic and digital instruments. The music styles are diverse with a focus in combining Electronic, R&B and other music from around the world. Filled with deep 808’s, lush synthesizers and evolving pads, “INDIGO” seeks to combine original music and visuals to create the ultimate audio-visual experience. This project is a representation of everything learned through music, new experiences, and the knowledge gained this year at Berklee Valencia. It will showcase the new skills gained this year as well as demonstrate the direction this project will take in the future.

STATE-OF-THE-ART REVIEW

“INDIGO” uses technology in an innovative way to perform and gives more creative freedom to musicians. Depending on the performer, they would have the option to play multiple instruments and create different layers in their songs on the fly by looping themselves. This gives artists the option to add different elements and sounds to their music that they might not have been able to do without this set up.

A few artists have similar performance rigs, which have helped in creating this project. Artists such as FKJ (French Kiwi Juice), Disclosure, Binkbeats, and Jack Garratt, all perform by playing multiple instruments and looping themselves. This is what initially inspired the idea of this project, and by adding custom visuals it adds another element to the performance.

With the visuals, they are meant to add the vibe of the music and not take away from the actual performance, seeing as how the performance has a visual element itself. The visuals work by having MIDI notes being sent from Ableton Live to Max MSP, and those MIDI notes are affecting certain parameters of the visuals (ex: size, color, rotation, scaling etc.) therefore adding

an interactive element between the music and the visuals. In addition, both visual and audio parameters will be mapped to the same MIDI controller helping ensure the music and visuals are in sync.

A number of different software was used in making this project happen. For the music, only Ableton was used. The entire writing and recording was done at home, while the mixing was done using school studios. For the visuals the end result was generated using Max MSP and Blender. In the beginning it was thought that Resolume and Adobe After Effects would be the main software used for visuals, but after learning more about Max and Blender it felt more comfortable and true to what this project is trying to do.

DESCRIPTION OF CE (THE WORK)

Growing up learning drums as my principle instrument, when the time came that I wanted to start a band there weren't that many other musicians around that I knew who could help make that happen. So from then on I attempted to teach myself other instruments like guitar and keys, so that if there were ever a time when no musicians were around to play with, that I could do it all by myself. Then, during my time as undergrad at Berklee College of Music, it opened my eyes to new ideas and technologies and ways of thinking about and creating music, that would eventually all contribute to making "INDIGO" become a reality.

It took a few iterations of this project to get it optimized and working in an efficient way. Originally, the goal was to play acoustic drums, electric guitar, electric bass and keys, while also controlling elements of the visuals. After a few rehearsals and trying to get everything together, it was evident that the set up was too large and would be difficult to comfortably control and play all the instruments by oneself. Trying different set ups out and figuring out what to scale back

on was crucial to finding what would be best for the type of music. With a mix of Electronic and R&B music, having only acoustic drums was somewhat limiting seeing as how there was very little control over the sound. Switching to the SPDS-X made it possible to swap between samples, control volume and effects, as well as being able to trigger one shots on the fly.

INNOVATIVE ASPECTS / NEW SKILLS

This project aims to use technology and create an innovative performance method. For multi-instrumentalists, it allows them to perform their music by themselves without having to rely on other musicians, as well as making a great way to collaborate with other artists. Some people prefer to do things on their own and with this set up it makes that possible.

By incorporating the custom visuals, it showed the progress made this year on a completely new subject that I had never studied or even knew existed. In the music industry, especially in today's age, it is so important to have a visual element to the music. In today's age with so much information being bombarded at people, finding a way to keep the audiences attention is important. Prior to this year, I would have no idea where to even begin to create visuals. But this year has shown me different ways to go about creating visuals, and how they can interact with music and really enhance the experience.

CHALLENGES; EXPECTED AND UNEXPECTED

Needless to say, there were a few hiccups in the process of putting this project together. The biggest challenge was finding a way to keep the set as simple and manageable as possible while still having the freedom to take the music in different directions. With this setup it is easy to want to do everything and can easily get out of hand for just one person. Scaling back and keeping it simple is key. With so much technology being used, time was specifically allotted in the schedule to fix or figure out any issues that arose during the process, which was beneficial. Originally, the plan was to have acoustic drums that would be played but some feedback issues arose when trying to make that happen. Since the drums would have to be mic-ed up, it caused unwanted feedback. In addition, after going through a few demo songs that would be performed, the sound of acoustic drums didn't quite fit. By playing the drum parts on an SPDS-X, it gives me control over the sounds being played as well as giving the option to switch between different sample banks and change sounds depending on the song.

One thing that was not really accounted for in the early stages was the amount of CPU that would be used and if the computer would be able to handle the load with Max and Ableton Live open simultaneously; both with heavy processing. It took some time to figure out what would be the best way to go about fixing this without losing any major quality or effects to the audio. What helped a lot with this problem was printing the audio with the processing on them already and minimizing the amount of plugins and processing being used.

FUTURE PLANS FOR WORK

The idea is to continue to build on this performance set up, and see what else can be added and modified. Eventually the end goal will be to perform out at clubs and festivals using this performance rig. Though before that happens a few things would still need to be adjusted before it is ready for the public.

In theory, doing everything alone and not having to rely on people may sound like a good choice, but the reality of it is that it is a lot of work for only one person to do. For future plans, it would be best to scrap the visuals or at the very minimum think of other ways to incorporate them in. Originally visuals were added to this project because that was a new topic that was learned this year (Max MSP/Blender) and I grew to end up really enjoying it. But I found that trying to juggle manually manipulating visuals, while live-looping and playing multiple instruments was too much to handle. While having a lot of parameters to adjust sounds like it would give you more freedom to get creative, but it can actually be overwhelming and slow down the process.

CONCLUSION

“INDIGO” went through a lot of different stages to get to where it is at now, and will most likely continue to build and get better. This idea has been floating around and in the works for over a year, and to see it finally start to take shape is great. This project is representative of myself as an artist and accurately shows the direction I plan to take my music career in. It combines my years of performance experience with all of the new information gained at Berklee Valencia and truly encompasses all of the progress that has been made throughout my year here.

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