

BERKLEE COLLEGE OF MUSIC

GRAVITY DUO: A BRAND OF AUDIO VISUAL EXPERIENCE

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Degree of
MASTER OF MUSIC PRODUCTION, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

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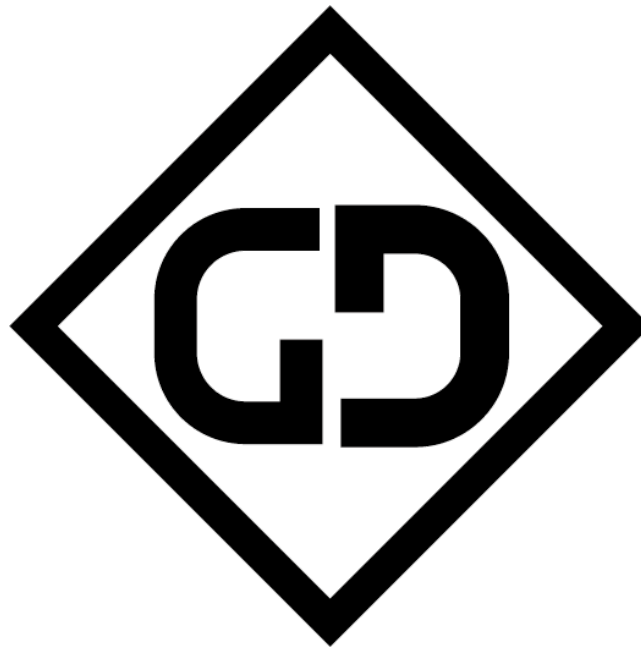
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ABSTRACT

This Culminating Experience (CE) is Gravity Duo: a project to create a brand of audio visual experience through chill/ ambient electronic music. This project is a combined CE between Phui Kuan Kok and Diego Demarco to design and generate live performance experience that is a cross breed between a Tomorrowland (an electronic music festival concert experience) and an Adele concert (challenging live vocals). Through this project, we have produced and recorded 8 original electro acoustic music, along with original visuals that is incorporated into the live performance. Inspired by the high energy scene from the electronic music festival and the captivating experience from a power house concert, this project was started to capture the best elements of both through an audio visual experience. The goal of this project is to challenge creating and curating an experience that pairs the usage of both electronic and acoustic sounds with luscious visuals that indulge both senses.

LOGO



SECTION 1

REVIEW OF THE STATE OF THE ART

1.1 Introduction

Gravity Duo, a brand of audio visual experience through chill/ ambient/ electronic music. The branding of Gravity Duo is established through a consistent presence: from music and visuals, to website and Electronic Press Kit, this project aims to create an well rounded and consistent image that represents a unique experience through original music and visuals.

1.2 Audio Visual Experience

Gravity Duo started out with the determination to explore electronic live performance and live production with live vocal at a deeper level, bridging acoustic instruments into electronic music. With an aim to create a continuous set of music, Gravity Duo has written and produced 8 songs and created a 15 minute live set to be performed live.

Instead of relying on real acoustic instruments, Gravity Duo's music focuses on the synths as main sounds while using acoustic sounds as embellishments to create a unique ambience. This set involves at least one real instrument, the vocalist, which is paired with the vocoder. This project has explored more to create a flexible set that transits between voice and synths to create and drive the arc of the performance, allowing more room for smooth transition in between songs and motives.

Performances similar to this project, ones that incorporate live electronic production with intricate live vocals, have been done by artists Alicia Keys at the 2016 BET Awards performance¹, Youtube artist Kawehi's Ableton loop performance², Youtube artist Ekin Beril³, electronic duo Odesza's A Moment Apart concert⁴.

¹ BET, 'Alicia Keys Just Slayed Her Performance of 'In Common'', bet.com, June 26, 2016, accessed November 21, 2017,

<https://www.bet.com/video/betawards/2016/performances/alicia-keys-performs-in-common.html>

² I Am Kawehi, 'Heart-Shaped Box by Nirvana (Cover by Kawehi)', March 4, 2014, accessed November 21, 2017,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=077UIBtrqWs>

At the 2016 BET Awards, Alicia Keys live produced a performance with two synthesizers, a drum pad and an acoustic guitar. Throughout her performance, Alicia Keys went back and forth between playing the synthesizers and the guitar, and utilized creative effects such as delay into her. Looping is a feature that is exploited in live production performance to create multiple rhythmic and harmonic layers. However, other than Alicia Key's 2016 BET performance, most live production performances relies mostly on acoustic instruments and voice, and don't involve a lot of electronic instruments and sound. Youtube artist Kawehi, on the other hand, does loop performances with synth and while recording challenging vocal lines and harmonies. Her live performances that fully utilizes live looping and recording production are most similar to this project. It encompasses both the elements of live production using electronic sound and creative challenging live vocal. As for electronic duo Odesza, both their studio release and live footages are paired with colorful lights and vivid footages that further emerges their audience into the reality of their music. Similar to Odesza's audio visual experience is DJ and producer Zedd's 2017 Echo concert, using visually indulging videos designed to bring music to bring his music to live⁵.

This project has been explored by other artists, but live production performance (of chill/ ambient electronic genre) as such that fuses two elements from two different musical experience paired with reactive visuals and lights is gaining it's demand.

³ Ekin Beril, 'Ekin Beril - Shape Of You (Ed Sheeran)', April 5, 2017, accessed November 21, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CBsrk7QcOcs>

⁴ Hannah Sawa, 'ODESZA: A MOMENT APART TOUR LIVE @ THE ANTHEM (DC) [11.25.2017]' December 6th, 2017, accessed February 14th, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qak4vLRHhCo>

⁵ JXen, 'Zedd Echo TOur (Full Set) in 1080p at Bill Graham San Francisco 2017', October 11, 2017, accessed February 14, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tt9j8HSPGt4>

SECTION 2

INNOVATION & PRACTICALITY

2.1 Introduction

Gravity Duo is a project that has challenged the author to break out of her acoustic comfort zone into a new, electronic genre.

2.2 Innovative Aspect

While the idea of creating chill/ ambient electronic music is not unique to Gravity Duo, it is the author's first time challenging writing and producing electronic music and creating visuals that are reactive to the music live using Ableton Live and Resolume Arena. Although creating visuals that are reactive is no longer an innovative aspect in the industry, it is, however, an unexplored musical avenue for both Jasmine, from a singer wong writer background, and Diego, who was a professional sound engineer.

Through this project, the author had the opportunity to learn skills beyond her usual creative process:

2.2.1 Writing and Producing Electronic Music

As a singer songwriter with a Bachelor's Degree in Music Performance, the author has only been familiar with the writing and arranging with an acoustic band.

2.2.2 Creating Visuals

The author has no experience with any adobe products prior and has not recorded professional footages to be used as performance visuals.

2.2.3 Creating A Brand

Although the author has experience working as a marketing personnel, she has yet to create an artistic image for her music and image.

2.2.4 Creating An Audio Visual Experience

Through this project, not only does the author gain more understand on an audio experience through music and visuals, but also how to create such experience through performing her originals.

SECTION 3

CHALLENGES

3.1 Expected

3.1.1 Producing Electronic Music

The first expected challenge was producing electronic music. While it was part of the Masters program curriculum to learn and master electronic production, it was still a creative challenge to create through these new perspective: from arranging different layers of acoustic sound to manipulating electronic synths and sound to create different textures. After mastering creating and producing electronic music, the author started learning producing electronic with better mixes.

3.1.2 Creating and Editing Visuals

As Gravity Duo is an audio visual experience, through ambient electronic music paired with lush colorful original visuals, the author, this project has given the author the opportunity to create visuals from scratch: formulating the idea, gathering the required equipments, process the recorded clips and finally making each clip a complete loop. After deciding to record colorful ink drops in a tank, the author learnt through video tutorials⁶⁷⁸ on how to record videos at different settings, how to process and manipulate videos through Adobe After Effects and Adobe Premiere to create visuals that fit the style of music that was being made.

⁶ Macro Room, 'Ink In Motion', April 29, 2017, accessed November 28th, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BmBh0NNEm00>

⁷ Macro Room, 'Colors In Macro', September 8, 2016, accessed November 28th, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNbSjMFd7j4>

⁸ Video Maker, 'Creating Design Elements: Ink Spreads And Drops', January 12, 2010, accessed November 28th, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4wwJWMoxNsk>

3.1.3 Building and Designing Website

Gravity Duo is a brand of audio visual experience. Therefore, besides creating music and visuals, it is also a part of this project to create and curate an image for this duo. It was a great challenge to build and design a website for Gravity Duo (www.gravityduomusic.com) as a platform that encompass the creative products both visually and auditorily. Although with no prior experience of building a website, through survey and research, the author published the website through Wordpress.org, hosted by Blue Host. Through experiments and official Youtube tutorials^{9 10 11}, the author was able to build a website that is both captivating and functional. It was also decided that an extra investment would be made for the Divi Builder feature, which allowed the author to customize many features on the website to fully represent this project both creatively and stylistically.

3.1.4 Creating Electronic Press Kit

Other than a website, an Electronic Press Kit (EPK) is an equally crucial document for an artist's image and brand. As EPKs are prepared for members of the media and promotional purposes, the author had to make sure that this press kit not only contain all the promotional materials for Gravity Duo, but to make sure that this press kit has a consistent presence as the website, as well as brand image. After thorough research, the author and partner, Diego, has decided to create use Adobe Spark as a platform for their EPK, as Spark¹² offers unconventional, modern layout that makes a press kit looks more fitting to Gravity's brand.

⁹ Elegant Themes, 'How to Add Social Icons to Divi's Primary Menu', June 27, 2017, accessed March 14, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVQzUVN-B7E>

¹⁰ Elegant Themes, 'How to Update the Divi Theme', December 20, 2017, accessed March 16, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BhYj41np17c&t=66s>

¹¹ Elegant Themes, 'The Divi Full Width Menu Module', December 20, 2017, accessed March 8, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q2heZC2GbNg&t=183s>

¹² Adobe, 'How to Use Adobe Spark to Create Standout Content For Your Business', May 30th, 2018, accessed June 2, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5HndAYUtlbM>

3.2 Unexpected

3.2.1 Creating A Set That Tells A Story

After creating 8 songs through Gravity Duo, the author and project partner, Diego, have to arrange a set that tells a story while building energy as the show progress. The challenge started when the author realized that most of the tracks have the Duo's signature structure, which is an ambient verse that is paired with a highly energetic drop, and that it is crucial for the song order to transit smoothly from one to the next without losing the energy and attention of the crowd. It took multiple listening and experimenting for the author to arrange a set that achieve this.

3.2.2 Working With A Partner

The author has experience working and collaborating with musicians prior to this project, it is her first time creating with another person through the whole process: from developing the idea to producing the track. While the author share a clear vision and purpose with Diego, they sometimes react differently to a same idea and sometimes, the process of arriving to a middle ground that satisfy both parties take longer than expected. Through this partnership, the author has learnt how to trust the difference between her and her partner and focus on moving the project forward respectfully through disagreement.

3.2.3 Visual and Music Pairing

While creating original visuals and electronic music was an expected for the author, the challenge to pair the right visual with the right song at the right moment wasn't realized until the author had to arrange for the Duo's first 15 minute live performance. Just like the musical set that builds throughout the show, it was equally important for the visuals to build and excite more through the show. Through this project, the author learnt how to maximize the impact of a visual

loop, through different effects and repetition, without exhausting the available before the show ends.

SECTION 4

BUDGET & SPENDITURE

ITEM	PROPOSED	REAL	ACTUAL (RUNNING)		
			INITIAL	AFTER 1 MONTH	FINAL
MATERIALS (disposables)					
Hard Drives	\$140	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$140
Pen Drives	\$76	\$0	\$76	\$0	\$76
Subtotal	\$216	\$0	\$76	\$0	\$216
EQUIPMENT					
HARDWARE					
Microphones (Rental) 6 days	\$200	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Interface (purchase)	\$245	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Computer (purchase)	\$3,260	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Ableton Push	\$799.00	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Korg Nano Kontrol 2	\$45	\$45	\$0	\$45	\$45
SOFTWARE					
Ableton (purchase) 120 days	\$600	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Subtotal	\$4,305	\$45	\$0	\$45	\$45
PERSONNEL					
Engineers	\$3,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Mixers	\$2,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Videographers	-	-	-	-	\$80
Subtotal	\$5,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$80
OVERHEAD					
Rent	\$360	\$360	\$360	\$360	\$250
Utility	\$50	\$50	\$50	\$50	\$50
Phone	\$20	\$20	\$20	\$20	\$20
Food	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200
Subtotal	\$630	\$630	\$630	\$630	\$520
FEES					
Your fee	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	-
Your partner's fees	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$-
Subtotal	\$1000	\$1000	\$1000	\$1000	\$0

SECTION 5

DELIVERABLES

5.1 Eight Original Music

- 5.1.1 Show Me
- 5.1.2 Without You
- 5.1.3 Come Away
- 5.1.4 Gone
- 5.1.5 I'm A Devil
- 5.1.6 Push And Pull
- 5.1.7 Summer Dance (instrumental)
- 5.1.8 Playground (instrumental)

5.2 A 15 Minute Live Production Performance Set

A video that documents a 15 minutes performance by Gravity Duo on May 22nd, 2018 at Sala-E, Berklee Valencia

Campus: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_mVpNYu6umwkePewlg0TrplVmAEyeCdn/view?usp=sharing

5.3 Gravity Duo Website

Website link: www.gravityduomusic.com

5.4 Gravity Duo Electronic Press Kit

EPK link: <https://spark.adobe.com/sp/design/page/80fac0a7-f62d-4feb-8363-ad03498169b2>

SECTION 6

FUTURE RAMIFICATION & PLANS

6.1 Getting Signed Under A Label Company:

As a freshly established electronic band, the duo lacks experience and exposure that might make it challenging breaking into bigger stages and festivals. Having the support of a label company not only open doors to more performing opportunities, marketing to the label's existing audience also amplifies promotional effort. A few big record labels that are planned to be approached are Counter Records, Bit Bird and Ultra. These label companies are currently the leading platforms in promoting Future Bass/ Pop Electronic music and might be a great starting ground for Gravity Duo to expand.

6.2 Increase Visibility:

Upon having all the elements ready for Gravity Duo - music, visuals, live set and a branded image- the next steps would be sending and submitting to different high trafficked platforms and festivals. A small tour is planned be set up around Valencia, Madrid, Barcelona, London and Berlin.

6.3 Determine Performance Venue/ Platform:

There are quite a few performance platform and festivals that have been set as a goal to work towards. To start out, music festivals in Spain will be focused, such as Sonar, Sonar + D, Primavera and Barcelona Beach Festival. Popular festivals around Europe such as Ultra Europe, Creamfields, Mad Cool Festival and Tomorrowland.

6.4 Music Release:

Through this project, a list of 8 original music has been written and produced. These tracks are planned to be released as singles after July 2018. These singles will be released through all major platforms such as Spotify and Apple Music.

SECTION 7

CONCLUSION

Gravity Duo is a project that both the author and her project partner, Diego Demarco, started as a platform to create an immersive experience through original visuals and music. After working intensely for 10 months, not only were the duo able to achieve every target they have set out to accomplish in the beginning, the author has also gone through a continuous change and growth as a producer. Stepping into the Masters of Music Production, Technology and Innovation without much electronic production experience, the author is now able to translate ideas into production confidently. Through this 10 months, the author, along with project partner Diego Demarco, has also created a brand for this project that gives a clear identity to this experience through a well-customized website and Electronic Press Kit. This Culminating Experience has allowed the author and her project partner to create a solid foundation of a band, from a list of music to a complete website, and this foundation will serve as a vital support for all future efforts to grow and expand Gravity Duo.

SECTION 8

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