

Berklee College of Music

Essence - EP

Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Degree of
Master of Music in Music Production, Technology, and Innovation

Supervisor: Pablo Munguia

by Atman Sheth

Valencia Campus, Spain

July 2019

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iii
1. Introduction	1
2. Review of the State of Art	2
2.1. Indian Carnatic Music.....	2
2.2. Brazilian Music.....	3
2.3. West African Music	3
2.4. Mediterranean Music	4
2.5. American Pop Music.....	5
2.6. Arabic Music.....	5
3. Description	6
3.1. Essence.....	7
3.2. Sem Fim.....	7
3.3. Afrogue	8
3.4. Vida.....	9
3.5. Back Home.....	10
3.6. Dissolve.....	10
4. Innovative Aspects	11
5. New Skills Acquired	11
6. Challenges	12
6.1. Expected.....	12
6.2. Unexpected	12
7. Future Ramifications	12
8. Conclusions	13
9. Bibliography	14

Abstract

For his Cumulative Experience project as a part of the Music Production, Technology and Innovation Master's program at Berklee College of Music, Atman Sheth produced an EP with 6 original songs incorporating different genres and music styles from around the world including influences of Indian Carnatic, Brazilian, West African, American Pop, Mediterranean, and Arabic styles fused with Electronic, Future bass, Trap and Ambient Chill music.

Keywords: Creative, Collaboration, Multi – genre, electronic music, EP

1. Introduction

Atman's passion for music grew when he was in high school. He loved playing the guitar and singing songs. Later in college, he formed a progressive rock band and dove into arranging, writing and producing music. He taught himself Logic Pro X and since then his journey into the depths of sound design, music production and post production began.

When Atman listened, he always analysed in depth each production and studied in detail what it took to make that piece of art so very interesting. Ever since he started using the right tools to create music, he knew his path was in one direction. After finishing his undergraduate degree in Electronics and Communication Engineering, he wanted to pursue music as a career and make a living out of it, so Atman went to K M College of music in Chennai, founded by A.R Rahman and took the electronic music production course. His understanding of the Digital audio workstation (DAW) grew and the search for the perfect process to achieving the right sound begun.

Atman always had a dream of studying at Berklee College of Music as there weren't such learning resources in India. Berklee College of Music was the temple where he definitely wanted to go to develop a unique skillset. After coming to Berklee, Atman was fortunate to learn various sound design techniques, which helped him manipulate sounds like never before. He also learned new recording techniques, which made him understand the instruments and the source of the sound better. He finally felt confident to play around and experiment with his music so he found his creativity reaching a whole new level. The reason why Atman decided on the 6 songs for his CE was that he wanted to explore the world of versatility so he thought of collaborating with different musical styles from around the world.

2. Review of the State of the Art

The world has so many stories to tell through music. Each musician has been culturally brought up in a different way with a unique musical influence. Here in this 6 track EP, Atman envisions the world of telling different stories through music by painting a musical picture with colours from countries around the world. There will be 6 songs each from incorporating the following styles: Indian Carnatic, Brazilian, West African, Mediterranean, American Pop, and Arabic. Atman read many articles about the types of music he would be working with and also heard the music of the musicians he was collaborating with, some influences of music Atman fused with his music are :

2.1 Indian Carnatic Music

Carnatic music, also known as *karṇāṭaka sangītam* is the south Indian classical style of music. Carnatic music is based on historical developments that can be traced to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Carnatic Music was substantially influenced by the pan-Indian bhakti movement, which inspired the use of religious themes. The main emphasis in Carnatic music is on vocal music; most compositions are written to be sung, and even when played on instruments, they are meant to be performed in *gāyaki* (singing) style. Carnatic music was traditionally taught in the gurukula system, where the student lived with and learned the art from his guru (master). References to Indian classical music are found in many ancient religious texts, including epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharata. ¹

¹ Wikipedia "Carnatic Music," Accessed July 03, 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carnatic_music.

Atman came across a Carnatic violinist – Apoorva Krishna at Berklee Valencia, and was fascinated by the style, and so he immediately wanted to collaborate with her on a track fusing Carnatic and Electronic influences of music.

2.2 Brazilian Music

The music of Brazil encompasses various regional musical styles influenced by African, European and Amerindian forms. Brazilian music developed some unique and original styles such as forró, repente, coco de roda, axé, sertanejo, samba, bossa nova, MPB, música nativista, pagode, tropicália, choro, maracatu, embolada (coco de repente), funk carioca, frevo, brega, modinha and Brazilian versions of foreign musical styles, such as rock, soul, hip-hop, disco music, country music, ambient, psychedelic music, rap, classical music, fado, and gospel. Samba has become the best known form of Brazilian music worldwide.²

An incredibly talented bass performer from Brazil, and full scholarship classmate of Atman's, German Scheufler, was featured on Atman's second track.

2.3 West African Music

The main types of drums in Western Africa are the Djembe and the Talking Drum. Also an instrument named the Balafon is very often found in West African music, such as Yiri. There are string instruments found throughout the region. These include the Kora, Ngoni, Adjalin and the Xalim.³

² *Wikipedia*, "Music of Brazil", Accessed July 03, 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_of_Brazil.

³ *Wikipedia*, "Music of West Africa", Accessed July 03, 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_of_West_Africa.

Joyce, a specialist in playing the dumbak and djembe, helped incorporate West African rhythms for Atman's third track. Atman is also heavily influenced by Boombox Cartel's track Moonlove⁴ which is a hybrid trap track, which led Atman towards producing a similarly arranged track.

2.4 Mediterranean Music

Living in Spain for a year, Atman was inspired by the Mediterranean culture and was moved by the local music styles. He chose to close his eyes and soak in the musical air that was around him and incorporate some of those flavours into one of his tracks. The music of Spain has a long history. It has played an important role in the development of Western music, and has greatly influenced Latin American music. Spanish music is often associated with traditional styles such as flamenco and classical guitar. While these forms of music are common, there are many different traditional musical and dance styles across the regions. For example, music from the north-west regions is heavily reliant on bagpipes, the jota is widespread in the centre and north of the country, and flamenco originated in the south. Spanish music played a notable part in the early developments of western classical music, from the 15th through the early 17th century.

Atman has keen interest towards Flamenco and Mediterranean styles of music and featured Eve Matin on the harp and Luca Bordonaro on the clarinet as well as the bass clarinet.

⁴ Cartel Boombox "Boombox Cartel - Moon Love (Feat Nessly) [Official Audio]", March 15, 2018, YouTube video, 4:03, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0OEJWoI9Y-M>.

2.5 American Pop Music

American popular music has had a profound effect on music across the world. The country has seen the rise of popular styles that have had a significant influence on global culture, including ragtime, blues, jazz, swing, rock, bluegrass, country, R&B, doo wop, gospel, soul, funk, heavy metal, punk, disco, house, techno, salsa, grunge and hip hop. In addition, the American music industry is quite diverse, supporting a number of regional styles such as zydeco, klezmer and slack-key. ⁵

When Atman came across Katie Sharbaugh's magical voice, he immediately decided to feature her in his fifth song as her voice had a fresh rock/pop feel to it, which would fit really well with the rock flavoured guitars in his electronic - future bass track.

2.6 Arabic Music

Arabic music (Arabic: الموسيقى العربية, romanized: *al-mūsīqā al-'Arabīyah*) is the music of the Arab World with all its different music styles and genres. Arabic countries have many styles of music and also many dialects; each country has its own traditional music. ⁶

A phenomenal singer, Rebal Alkhodari, who is a classically trained vocalist was featured in Atman's last piece – 'Dissolve', which features bass music along with Indian and Middle Eastern percussive elements revolving around the powerful voice of Rebal Alkhodari.

⁵ *Wikipedia*, "American Popular Music", Accessed July 03, 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_popular_music.

⁶ *Wikipedia*, "Arabic Music", Accessed July 03, 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabic_music.

3. Description

For his Culminating Experience project, Atman created a 6-track multi-genre EP exhibiting his creative and vibrant production skills. Atman composed, recorded, produced, mixed and mastered all the songs himself. Atman primarily used Pro Tools to record all the tracks and did all the programming in Ableton Live.

He collaborated with instrumentalists to bring in an element of organic approach most often through improvisation. Atman allows his musicians to feel free and improvise over his programmed tracks in order to bring the best out of everyone's creative minds and ideas.

In the production of this EP, Atman's sounds were mostly designed by himself. Some of Atman's favourite synthesizers were Serum, Massive and Operator and some of his go-to VST plugin companies included Universal Audio, iZotope, Waves, Plugin Alliance, Spectrasonics, Native Instruments, FabFilter, and Slate Digital which he used for his productions and to achieve the finest mixes possible.

Atman tirelessly spent a lot of time on composing, arranging, recording and producing his tracks and soon started to develop his artistic identity in spite of collaborating with such a vast and wide variety of artists, genres, cultures and traditions.

He combined acoustic elements and soulful melodies as well as punchy and impactful drops with original sound design, and a wide range of world percussions..

After the recording process, Atman spent a lot of time creating the sound design in order to compliment all the natural live recordings. For instance, in the track Vida, there is tabla, frame drums ,shakers, tambourine, along with trap-styled electronic drum beats and so, to create sound design not interfering with all these percussive and rhythmic elements was quite a challenge. It took about a month to rearrange all these tracks after recording the live instruments, after which Atman soon dove into his intense mixing processes. Thanks to

Berklee Studios and his favourite Hifiman Ananda - planar magnetic headphones, he was able to mix and master his EP.

Following are the details pertaining to each song of the EP, in depth.

3.1 Essence

Through the meditative drones, soaring melodies and delicate microtones of the swaying violin, Essence brings about a unique collaboration of modern electronic with the Indian Carnatic classical style of music. This track features my fellow classmate Apoorva Krishna on the violin, who is the first Indian recipient of the London Tarisio Award⁷. In this track Apoorva explores and blends in her interpretation of Carnatic ideas fused along with the electronic vibe for her first time. The process of production began with a drone which Atman provided for her to feel more natural and comfortable, as it is very common accompanying instrument for Carnatic musicians. From then onward, it began and Essence came to existence. Atman then created a spacious backing track following the style of bass music containing guitars, arpeggios, and pads on top of which Apoorva started jamming and coming up with creative melodies. The innovative part of this song was that this type of collaboration hadn't been commonly heard yet in India.

3.2 Sem Fim

This refreshing Portuguese track expresses the feeling of gratitude and love through the combination of electronic pop with Brazilian flavours, however with a more mellow arrangement giving more importance to making the piece have a touch of its acoustic self. This track features German Scheufler, who also wrote this song, on vocals and bass.

⁷ "Young Artists Grants 2017" Tarisio. Accessed July 03, 2019, <https://tarisio.com/about-us/tarisio-trust/young-artists-grants-2017/>.

The lyrical translation of this Portuguese piece is as follows-

Lonliness

Come take away my pain

Caressing wind

In your womb I want to lay

Redentor

Open your arms, your peace

Tell me something that would fill my inconsolable void

My heart asked for redemption

Whispering the words of revelation

Begged to give up on this pain

Sighing in ecstasy and implored love

Meditating, without purpose, giving redemption bringing unexpected companies

Begging for never ending love

3.3 Afrogue

This immersive hybrid trap8 track, on the other hand, dwells around the rhythmic vibrations of West Africa. The rhythmic repetitions are inspired from the groove of indigenous West African djembe patterns which is used in the build-up in the track, right before the Drop (Chorus). After coming to Berklee, he was heavily influenced by modern

⁸ *Wikipedia*, "Trap Music (EDM)", Accessed July 03, 2019, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trap_music_\(EDM\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trap_music_(EDM)).

electronic music styles such as trap, house, and Dubstep and it made him understand sound design and rhythms better.

This track features Joyce Lindsey on the djembe and dumbak. It was an interesting combination between the organic sound of the live percussion and the synthesized elements following a very heavy dubstep texture. The speciality of the track lies in the energetic rhythmic sound design and arrangement revolving around the classic West African beats and ambience giving birth to a tropical and upbeat vibe.

3.4 Vida

This track highlights the feeling of going back down the memory lane to his arrival as well as first time visit here in Spain through influences of Mediterranean styles incorporated with ambient electronic chill music. It incorporates Flamenco melodic and rhythmic influences with Eve Matin on the harp, Patrick Duke Graney on percussion, Luca Bordonaro on the clarinet and bass clarinet, and Atman on the flute. The piece was first composed by Atman, programming the percussion, harp and the electronic backing track even including elements such as tablas which was later replaced by the actual recordings of the live instruments.

The X factor of this production was when Atman comped over 50 recording takes of each instrument to create a completely different arrangement and melody, by bringing in his own creativity, as if it was resampled. Another key element in this piece is the rhythmic change from 7/8 to 4/4. During a particular section, the clarinet and harp together collide and coincide with each other harmoniously and sensitively, thereby depicting keen understanding and intuitiveness. This piece was developed in a very unique way.

3.5 Back Home

Home is not just a place, it's a feeling. This track revolves around the feeling of reminiscing a loved one through the vibes of modern American Pop and Future Bass music. The song talks about one longing for his/her soulmate to return home at the earliest. Being a huge Illenium fan, and also lucky enough to attend his concert in Barcelona this year, Atman certainly wanted to capture that feeling he got when he heard Illenium's melodic compositions. So this next song Atman recorded is called- 'Back Home' which is a future Bass track with American pop vocals, featuring Katie Sharbaugh.

3.6 Dissolve

This fresh piece highlights the influences of Arabic and Middle Eastern traditions fused with electronic music. It mainly features Rebal Alkhodari on vocals as well as Aliya Cycon on the Oud, Kezia, Lisa and Apoorva on strings, Ricky Liu on piano, and Siyuan Zhang on Moog Sub37.

This piece revolves around a love story between the writer- Qais ibn Al-Mulawah (also known as Majnún) and his beloved Laila.

lyrical translation⁹ is as follows-

“A wise friend asked me: Do you see that bright planet in the dark sky? Looking at the bright planet, I remembered Laila. I remembered those days when we didn't fear society and were in love.”

⁹ *Wikipedia*, "Layla & Majnún", Accessed July 03, 2019, https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Layla_y_Majnún.

4. Innovative Aspects

Atman's music depicted that modern electronic and dance music could also be mellow and emotional rather than the usual upbeat feel, by incorporating more live instruments. It was a new approach for him. He believed that recording traditional instruments in particular styles and bringing and uplifting the entire energy of those styles all the way up to the electronic music level was the innovative aspect for him. It was something Atman had not seen before and the fact that he didn't particularly refer to any similar inspirations shows the innovativeness in his work. The entire EP has so many vibrant colours showcasing Atman's strength of versatile production across multiple genres. He believes that his songs are also cinematic and colourful in ways that can be portrayed not just in the Music Industry but also in the TV and Film Industry.

5. New Skills Acquired

Before studying at Berklee, Atman primarily used Logic Pro as his Digital Audio Workstation to produce all his projects. He mostly relied on the stock sound libraries and presets in his productions, however, after coming to Berklee, he learned Ableton Live and Protools and ever since then has been using them extensively. All the tracks which were produced in this EP were recorded in Protools and programmed and produced, and mixed in Ableton Live. Atman also learned various sound design techniques using software and hardware synthesizers such as Serum, Operator, Omnisphere, Doepfer and Moog Sub37. Incorporating original synthesized sounds into his productions was something unique that he had never done before. Also techniques such as resampling and reprocessing audio taught by Mr. Bill and Ben Encantil helped Atman's production skills immensely and elevated his creativity drastically.

6. Challenges

6.1 Expected

Atman was never formally trained in Western Classical music and so one of his expected challenges was that he harmonically required a bit of help. Also, since he initially didn't read or write western notation, while he started to collaborate with different artists, he had to spend additional time trying to communicate certain topics due to lack of theoretical language and terminologies.

6.2 Unexpected

At one point in time during the course of the year, Atman was featuring a particular artist who all of a sudden ended up backing out of the song, thereby causing a sort of inconvenience considering the fact that Atman had to spend a massive amount of extra time changing the entire arrangement, instrumentation and composition, as the artist could not be replaced by someone else. However, he still managed to do so smoothly with the help of other wonderful musicians a little guidance. Also, there were several situations where the studios at school would be completely booked for days together and could not be reserved during critical times because of which Atman would have to mix on his headphones at his home studio keeping in mind to maintain quality and standard all throughout.

7. Future Ramifications

Atman plans on releasing his EP independently or through a label on all major music platforms later this year. Atman wrote and produced the songs of the EP in Ableton Live 10 suite by programming and designing his own sounds using Serum, Massive, Rounds and other synthesisers. Atman plans on mixing and mastering the tracks in Pro tools himself. Atman also plans on approaching music producers and composers in the Film/TV industry. He also plans on creating his own album art and figuring out a solid release plan with

marketing strategies to be able to effectively target the right audience. He also plans to launch his website where he will be showcasing his productions. He also plans on doing an internship in Boston for 3 months soon after graduation at Soundtrack Group, Boston, USA.

8. Conclusion

Atman believes that music is a world beyond this world that has no borders. He feels pain when he sees the world tear itself apart with people fighting for power, while they miss out on so much joy and beauty that this world has to offer through love, art and creativity. He believes that music can connect to people across boundaries regardless of what language they speak or where they come from.

Atman is extremely passionate and dedicated towards his music, and believes solely in the concept of constant learning and growth every day from every possible experience and opportunity available. He has so far received good feedback from his teachers and fellow classmates with regard to his 6 songs, and wishes to implement all the post production tips he has received in the future. Atman sees himself as an open, versatile and inspired musician, producer and composer in the years to come. He believes in striving for innovation and freshness in his music as he progresses along the way and hopes to raise the bar higher than the time before.

10. Bibliography

- "American Popular Music". Wikipedia. June 16, 2019. Accessed July 03, 2019.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_popular_music.
- "Arabic Music". Wikipedia. June 30, 2019. Accessed July 03, 2019.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabic_music.
- "Carnatic Music". Wikipedia. June 27, 2019. Accessed July 03, 2019.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carnatic_music.
- Cartel Boombox "Boombox Cartel - Moon Love (Feat Nessly) [Official Audio]". March 15, 2018. Youtube video. 4:03. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0OEJWoI9Y-M>.
- "Layla & Majnún". Wikipedia. October 07, 2018. Accessed July 03, 2019.
https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Layla_y_Majnún
- "Music of Brazil". Wikipedia. April 17, 2019. Accessed July 03, 2019.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_of_Brazil.
- "Music of West Africa". Wikipedia. June 27, 2019. Accessed July 03, 2019.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_of_West_Africa.
- "Music of Spain". Wikipedia. May 16, 2019. Accessed July 03, 2019.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_of_Spain.
- "Trap Music (EDM)". Wikipedia. June 11, 2019. Accessed July 03, 2019.
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trap_music_\(EDM\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trap_music_(EDM)).
- "Young Artists Grants 2017" Tarisio. Accessed July 03, 2019.
<https://tarisio.com/about-us/tarisio-trust/young-artists-grants-2017/>.