

Berklee College of Music

ConnorSchon.com: An Online Mixing Portfolio

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Master of Music in Music Production, Technology, and Innovation

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Abstract

ConnorSchon.com is a mixing and engineering website showcasing Connor Schon's portfolio, services offered, biography, contact information, and recording journal. It was a challenge to design the website, but moreover to make sure the six new songs for the portfolio material were properly recorded and mixed with the scarce studio time and poorly designed recording spaces at Berklee Valencia. The website will continue to be revised and updated with Connor's newest material and used as the launching point for his freelance career.

Keywords: creative project, recording, business, portfolio.

1. Introduction

As an already established recording engineer, Connor came to Valencia to hone his mixing skills and launch his career. The website connorschon.com presents an engineering and mixing portfolio with five new songs from Connor's time at Berklee Valencia in addition to his existing work. Other critical elements of the website include: logo, photos, bio, contact information, recording services offered, social media links, and a recording journal. The music services section is divided into two categories; world-wide engineering and mixing, and audio surgery and tuning.

The three main objectives of the project are: completion of a website, showcasing Connor's work, and establishing a niche starting point for an independent career in engineering, mixing, and production.

Connor's culminating experience took a turn when he was challenged with the idea that traditional studios are closing every day and the old working model for engineers presents an extremely difficult career path. This led to his development of a "world-wide engineer;" viz., a recording engineer with a mobile recording rig that travels to the client and renders all services on-location, outside of the confines of a traditional studio. There is a growing demand for engineers who can work in a variety of environments on smaller budgets, and Connor's project targets that audience.

2. Review of State of the Art

The main influences for the project are the websites of engineers Sylvia Massy, Chris Lord-Alge¹ and Dave Fridmann, as well as the work of engineer Kevin Killen and producer Daniel Lanois. Sylvia's site² features photos, music services, and contact information, as well as a mixing portfolio. Chris Lord-Alge's website has a prominent logo and tabs for a bio and social media links. Dave Fridmann's³ page is otherwise unremarkable, but the news section was an inspiration for Connor's recording journal. It presents simple headlines describing projects that Dave is working on listed by date. Connor also had the firsthand experience of hearing engineer Kevin Killen speak at the 2019 Audio Engineering Society Convention in Dublin, Ireland about his experience recording Peter Gabriel's "So" and U2's "The Unforgettable Fire" with producer Daniel Lanois. The albums were recorded in a cowshed in the English countryside and castle in Ireland respectively. "So" is one of Connor's favorite albums, and hearing Kevin talk about how it was recorded in such a non-traditional space helped give Connor confidence in his plan for worldwide engineering.

The synthesis of the aspects offered by Sylvia, Chris, and Dave on their sites, and Kevin in his presentation form the basis and inspiration for Connor's website.

¹ Lord-Alge, Chris. "Official Chris Lord-Alge Website | Chris Lord-Alge." <https://www.chrislordalge.com/>

² Massy, Sylvia. "Sylvia Massy - Recording Unhinged." <https://www.sylviamassy.com/>

³ Fridmann, Dave. "Tarbox Road Studios." <http://www.davefridmann.com/dave/Main.html>

3. Description

3.1 Homepage

Connorschon.com's homepage consists of a photo of Connor at a console, the title of the site with the subtext "audio engineer and record producer," a logo, tabs for music services, portfolio, news, contact, and a link to Carmine Audio, a company Connor co-founded with Madly Stock that designs and sells telephone mics. A second photo with a biography is found lower on the home page that offers a background for site visitors who wish to get to know more information about Connor. It reads:

As a musician himself, Connor brings a rare level of understanding and patience to the recording environment. Known for his creative recordings, Connor frequently incorporates experimental production and engineering approaches, and promises to make every recording or mix session unique. Originally from Los Angeles, Connor now works as a traveling freelance engineer and endeavors to record in every corner of the world.⁴

Social media links to Connor's Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube pages are found at the bottom of the home page, along with copyright information.

3.2 Music Services

The music services page that follows describes the work Connor offers, beginning with worldwide engineering, production, and mixing:

⁴ Schon, Connor. "Audio Engineer & Record Producer." Accessed July 4, 2019. <https://www.connorschon.com>

In today's changing music industry and landscape, the commercial recording studio is neither a viable nor desirable option for many artists. Connor has developed a mobile studio, with state of the art equipment that he can bring anywhere in the world. Featuring Genelec Smart Active Monitoring, Solid State Logic analog summing, EQ, and compression, Metric Halo mastering grade conversion, and handmade, boutique microphones from Soyuz, Josephson, Beyerdynamic, and Extinct Audio, Connor is able to bring the recording studio experience to you. If you'd prefer to record in a traditional studio, Connor is happy to work with you there as well, and will supplement the studio's mic locker with his own trusted tools. Contact for rates and availability.

The page continues with Connor's audio surgery and tuning services:

Connor has extensive experience with Isotope's RX Advanced audio repair software. He has fixed clipped masters, sniffs, clicks, crackles, buzzes, hums, plosives, and all manner of unwanted noises. Connor also offers exceptionally natural sounding vocal tuning with the groundbreaking Melodyne Studio software.

3.3 Portfolio

The next tab, Portfolio, showcases Connor's work in a stream-able format. This consists of six songs from his time at Berklee in addition to some of his existing work. These songs are "Hysteria," "Lay Me Down," "26" "Dream" and "Etude for Harp No. 2" and "Worthwhile." Connor engineered each of the songs except "Worthwhile," and mixed all of them except for "26." They were all recorded at Berklee Valencia's campus, with the exception of "Worthwhile," recorded in Washington, DC, and "Dream," recorded at Real World Studios in Bath England and at Jazztone Studios in Valencia, Spain.

3.4 News

The following page of the website, News, features Connor's recording journal. It is a dated list of recording sessions he has engineered with microphone input lists and relevant innovative techniques used. It also describes engineering-related events such as Audio Engineering Society Skype sessions that Connor led with Bob Katz, a Grammy-winning mastering engineer, and Sylvia Massy, a legendary recording engineering and producer known for her work with Johnny Cash, System of a Down, Tom Petty, Red Hot Chili Peppers, and Tool.

3.5 Contact

The final page is a contact form so that prospective clients can reach Connor. Each of these aforementioned pages were selected as the ideal amount of information that a client would need or be interested in without creating an overcluttered or conversely, overly stark, website.

4. Innovative Aspects

The main area of innovation in Connor's website is the worldwide engineering service offered. Connor's mobile recording and mixing rig has been hand-selected to survive the rigors of the road, featuring custom rugged ribbon mics designed by Extinct Audio in the UK, a near-bulletproof audio interface from Metric Halo, a dual-hard drive equipped MacBook Pro, a small

Solid State Logic Super Analogue mixing console, and portable Genelec monitors with room correcting software. Connor's rig has been carefully designed to fit in an overhead compartment to reduce client costs when compensating Connor for travel.

Connor also found innovation in his recording techniques. For instance, "Etude for Harp No. 2" features a harp recorded with a contact mic attached to the body of the instrument that is fed into a reverb pedal for otherworldly shimmering textures. Connor's work with Carmine Audio is also innovative; the company repurposes vintage telephones into microphones.

5. New Skills Acquired

Although Connor was a proficient engineer before coming to Berklee, he honed his ability to mix on headphones while in Valencia. This was in part due to an unfortunate lack of resources—particularly studio time. This skill will continue to serve Connor as he travels the world, often engineering in spaces where there is no acoustic treatment. Though his Genelec monitors will compensate in some part, having the reference of a reliable pair of headphones to check mixes on is an invaluable resource. Connor also gained website design skill through working on connorschon.com that will remain useful as he updates his website and edits the Carmine Audio site.

6. Challenges

The main challenges Connor faced all stem from the limited resources at Berklee Valencia. The studios were overbooked and crowded with undergraduates and business students, meaning that MPTI students were unable to find the necessary time to record and

mix their projects in the studios. This was an unexpected challenge, as the Berklee website advertises that students “spend ample time in our recording studios.”⁵

In particular, the scoring stage at Berklee Valencia was booked solid for nearly the entire year for class projects and petition sessions. This presented a unique challenge, as it is the only room at Berklee Valencia where drums and string ensembles can be convincingly recorded. Connor overcame these challenges by seeking out other studios and mixing at home on headphones.

7. Future Ramifications

Connor plans to work with his existing clients in Los Angeles, California post-graduation before moving to Sydney, Australia to work as a freelance engineer. He will continue to update his website with his newest and best work. He plans to record all over the world and capture the regional cultural sounds of the human race.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, connorschon.com presents a new take on the traditional audio engineering portfolio. The innovative aspect of worldwide engineering is directed towards the ever-growing market of indie artists who cannot afford or otherwise wish not to record in a traditional studio. This flexibility allows for the capture of recordings that have a unique sonic character and is in-line with Connor’s personal desire to push back against the cookie-cutter

⁵ "Master of Music in Music Production, Technology, and Innovation." Berklee Valencia Campus.

nature of modern popular music. Berklee Valencia, in all its disappointments and false promises, helped Connor to realize this website and new business idea by forcing him to look outside of the studio.

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