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CE Reflection

SUMMARY OF PROJECT COMPLETED.

My Culminating Experience was a truly valuable project. Throughout the completion of my CE, I gained new and unique perspectives that contributed to my overall academic, personal, and professional goals. Prior to coming to Berklee College of Music, I was somewhat confused and indifferent regarding what I wanted out of the program. Music and entertainment have always been my greatest passions. My entire life, I knew that I was someone who had to work in a passion-based field. When I arrive to Valencia in August, I knew that I wanted music and entertainment to be at the center of my career. However, I had really definite idea regarding how I would do that. I also was not aware of the different types of jobs and functions within the global entertainment industry. During the first semester, my classes at Berklee enlightened me about the different jobs, roles, and functions within the industry that I am now about to enter!

The subject of my CE came to me after taking Graham Ball's Branding and Sponsorship class in the fall. In Graham's class, we studied the evolution of brands involvement in music. We also did numerous case studies focused on what a proper marketing campaign needs to accomplish. I learned the value of brands in music and their impact on the future of the industry. For example, in 2012 alone, "brand sponsorships for music festivals, tours, and venues totaled 1.22 billion dollars."¹ I

¹ Fromm, Jeff. "Marketing at Music Festivals: Playing to the Millennial Crowd." www.millennialmarketing.com. Accessed June 5, 2015. <http://www.millennialmarketing.com/2014/01/marketing-at-music-festivals-playing-to-the-millennial-crowd/>.

became aware of how dependent the music industry has become on brands. With increases in technology and the inevitable decline of the record industry, artists are forced to find alternative means of funding. I discovered that non-music brands are some of the most important forces in today's global music industry. From this class, I discovered a very interesting and important music research group called "FRUKT." I began studying various FRUKT reports, which documented and evaluated the involvement of brands across the global music scene. Frukt really honed in on the "who, what, when, where, and why" of brand activation in music. FRUKT is a research group based out of London that specializes in brands and the music industry. FRUKT is an international company and also has offices in New York City, Los Angeles, Milan, and Rio de Janeiro. Their LinkedIn company profile describes their mission:

"Hi- we're FRUKT. We create and deliver smart ideas for brands to engage with their audiences through music and entertainment."

After studying Frukt reports and other credible sources on music branding, sponsorships, and partnerships, I began to focus my attention on alcohol brands. I learned that alcohol brands were some of the biggest and most common players in the global music industry. It After becoming aware of this trend, I really started to study and analyze different international alcohol companies and their role in the music industry. By the end of the first semester, I decided that my goal after graduation was to work for a major international alcohol brand that was heavily involved in music. I was drawn to this side of the industry because of the wide range of creativity and reach that it allowed. I feel that working for a major international alcohol company would provide me with unparalleled exposure into the global music industry. Also, my dream is to work for an international company that would move me throughout the world. My goal after graduation is to work for a company that sends me on new assignments to new regions

of the world every few years. The reason I choose Berklee Valencia was that I wanted to learn about similarities and differences in music across diverse cultures.

When formatting my CE, I decided to do a research paper. My end goal was to have research paper that I could use when applying for jobs at international alcohol companies. I wanted my project to be a reflection of my academic and professional goals. When structuring my CE, I had to find a way to summarize what is already known about alcohol brands and music. I wanted to give a historical background, which explained why these brands were so powerful and how they went about gaining control of the music industry. Next, I identified the different problems and complications that are inevitable when non-music brands try to make their mark in the music industry. Often, brands take away from the authenticity of music and threaten the true creative fiber live entertainment. We live in a world dominated by corporations. Music has always reflected the current cultures. My goal of my research was to identify and analyze the different ways that alcohol companies could avoid hurting the future of music. More importantly, my goal was to present different strategies, practices, and limitations that alcohol companies could use to project themselves as legitimate and influential players in the global music industry.

PROCESS

The most difficult part of my entire CE process was limiting my research and staying focused. By the time I began to write my CE, I had overwhelmed myself with information. I had studied dozens of alcohol brands throughout the world who were involved with music. Throughout this process, I gained a wealth of knowledge. However, my research was too broad to make a valuable research paper.

After multiple conferences with my CE advisor and other Berklee professors, I began to narrow down my research in a way that made me more of an expert, rather than

a generalist. I decided to use two major companies throughout my CE. I wanted to focus my research paper on two companies that I felt were the most important in the global music industry. I also selected these companies based on my own personal evaluations. In my opinion, the companies that I choose were leading the music industry in terms of brand activation. In addition, I felt that these brands were setting a great standard for other companies doing similar things.

The two brands that I chose to investigate were AB InBev and Heineken International. AB InBev and Heineken International are two of the largest beer companies in the world. AB InBev has an international portfolio of over 200 brands. AB InBev is the world's largest brewer and has 25 % of the global market share. AB InBev employs 155,000 people in 25 countries. According to Billboard, "Anheuser-Busch is the top-spending company of all music festivals at \$335.5 million."²(billoard).Heineken International operates over 190 breweries in 70 countries. Besides being two of the worlds most massive beer companies, I also picked these brands for strategic reasons. My long term career goal is to work with alcohol brands in Asia. Both AB InBev and Heineken International are extremely powerful brands throughout Asia.

In order to begin the process, I really had to understand how to properly format a research paper. Before I actually started to write my CE, I had to go through what seemed to be an endless amount of research and secondary documents. Before I actually structured my CE, I had a wealth of information, a good network or industry professionals, and a true passion for this side of the music industry. My problem was I did not have a coherent structure for my CE.

² Hampp, Andrew. "Festival Sponsorship Spending Projected to Set Record in 2013." Wwww.billboard.com. May 10, 2013. Accessed June 4, 2015. <http://www.billboard.com/biz/articles/news/branding/1561337/festival-sponsorship-spending-projected-to-set-record-in-2013>.

The idea of how to structure my CE actually came to me after a conversation with Benji Rogers. When I spoke with Benji Rogers last semester, I told him what I ideally wanted to do after graduating Berklee. I had a great discussion with Benji about the impact that brands have on the music industry. Being a super fan and music purist, Benji expressed great concern and skepticism about the role that non-music brands played in music. From this conversation, I really started to understand that although this type of branding is extremely widespread, all music fans do not necessarily embrace it. In fact, many music lovers are staunchly opposed to the emergence of non-music brands working in the music industry. At the end of the day, I am a music lover. After my conversation with Benji, I started to really reflect and study the impact and trends of non-music brands. I began to evaluate what companies were actually contributing to the quality and art of music.

Through my research, I wanted to expose and evaluate how brands can still be involved with music in a way that is beneficial to both the brand and the music consumer. From here I found a way to structure my research. For the first part of my CE, I wanted to set the scenario. I explain the role of non-music brands involved in music today. In the first part of my CE, I wanted to show the evolution of brands involvement in music overtime. Here, I explain various cultural and historical reasons for the remarkably rapid increase of non-music brands getting involved in music. In the next part of my research, I wanted to elaborate on what type of brands is involved the most and why? At this point in my research, I direct my attention to alcohol brands. Here I elaborate on the basic ways that you see brands involved in music. Next, I go into the problem with alcohol brands being involved in music. I shed light on the fact that sometimes these brands are labeled as greedy and having no real investment in the quality of music. To conclude the first section of my research paper, I introduce the brands that I am going to focus on and explain why I chose them.

The most valuable component of my CE is my interviews. Throughout this process, I was able to network with a diverse range of people inside the industry. I tried to focus my attention on different parties involved in the process. One of my most important interviews was with my lifelong friend Robert Greenfield. Robert Greenfield is probably one of the most knowledgeable Rock n' Roll historians still alive. Robert Greenfield was the associate editor of Rolling Stone magazine in London during the early 1970s. In addition to working for Rolling Stone magazine, Robert also went on two tours with the band The Rolling Stones. I interviewed Bob because he understands live music better than anyone I know. He has toured with the most famous bands in the world. When I talked to Bob he had amazing perspective on the role of brands in music. He said that when he went on tour with the Stones, there wasn't a single brand sponsorship. He shed light on the idea that back then, teaming up with brands would inevitably make you a "Sell-out." He gave me some very interesting perspectives regarding the dichotomy of how my generations compared to his viewed the presence of non-music brands in the music industry.

Another great interview I had was with Jon Kaku. I was introduced to Jon Kaku through my classmate and good friend Alan Hensley. Jon is a world class DJ who operates out of Beijing and Taipei. Jon has been DJing across the most famous nightclubs and festivals in the APAC. In the past few months, Jon has played at Ultra Korea, Ultra Macau, and Ultra Tokyo. I interviewed Jon because he has extensive experience working with alcohol brands. He has worked with all the major international alcohol brands across Asia. He shed a lot of light on why these brands are so powerful. He also explained how the companies operate and promote themselves as music industry professionals. Jon shared a lot of knowledge regarding the various pro's and con's of working with these types of brands. He also told me which brands were the most powerful and influential across different parts of Asia.

RESEARCH

My research came from a diverse range of sources I studied various marketing journals and blogs. The most influential and useful source I used was FRUKT. An extensive portion of my research came on different marketing campaigns done by both companies. In addition to studying different campaigns, I tracked these companies annual marketing reports. I looked at overall marketing reports, as well as regional and local marketing reports. I wanted to understand which parts of the world each company was thriving in and why. I also looked at what regions in the world each company was doing poorly in. I tried to see if there was any correlation in the amount of music marketing taken place and overall sales. I used these combined sources to evaluate the impact that music and entertainment branding had on the company's revenue and sales growth.

Another objective was to track how each company engaged with their audiences on a local, regional, and global level. It was interesting to see how each company utilizes their diverse portfolio of beers across different regions of the world. A major benefit that AB InBev and Heineken have is their extensive portfolio of beers. Having a wide portfolio of brands "allow the company to charge higher prices, resulting in higher margins" (wsl). This gives them the opportunity to use host an endless amount of events without making it look like they are oversaturating the market. For example, Heineken can use its Tiger brand beer in Southeast Asia.

In addition to online research, I also got a wealth of information from social media. I began to follow the AB InBev and Heineken on Facebook and Twitter. I noticed that they constantly make posts about their cultural marketing activities. Another way that I research this industry was by following various nightclubs and music festivals around the world. For example, I am very familiar with the club scene in Seoul,

Korea. I began to follow all the top clubs in Seoul. I began to notice almost all of the events and parties had sponsorships and partnerships with the big alcohol companies.

RESULTS

Overall, I felt that this project as incredibly beneficial. My CE helped me re-establish myself as an academic. In addition, it highlighted the connection between the academic and professional world. My goal was to learn as much as I could about the global alcohol industry. In addition, my main purpose was to establish a network within this side of the entertainment industry. Throughout my research, I wanted to discover exactly how alcohol brand activation worked in the music industry. After studying this field for over eight months, I feel extremely confident and knowledgeable in the subject matter. When talking to people who work for these alcohol companies, I feel very confident. During my conversations, I have been able to make valuable contributions and provide my own unique feedback.

The main reason I chose AB InBev and Heineken International was that they were two companies that I would love to work for one day. I figured that over the course of my research, I would be able to build rapport with various individuals within each organization that were prominent in the music-branding sector. When reflecting on my overall CE journey, I fell very satisfied. For the most part, my CE was highly beneficial to my academic, professional, and personal goals. While I feel confident with my overall performance, there were still some factors and areas of my CE that did not fully meet my expectations.

From this project, I learned how complex and intricate the world of branding is. While studying various branding campaigns, I feel like I gained a unique perspective regarding exactly what it takes for a campaign to work. I also learned how branding and

music are totally aligned. I now understand how consumer culture always represents pop culture.

I did face some set backs with the project. Most of my setbacks were my inability to get in contact with certain individuals. There were several people that I corresponded with for interviews that never pulled through. I had a hard time networking with anyone at AB InBev. I had sent out various emails and LinkedIn messages, but I was never able to properly get in contact with anyone for an interview.

NEXT STEP

The completion of my CE is just the first step for me. From here, I want to work in music branding. From this process, I feel like I have developed a clear understanding of how music branding works. In order to be totally component on the subject matter, I am going to start to research music branding from different angles. As of now, I feel like I truly understand how branding, sponsorships, and partnerships work from the side of the brand. I have a clear idea of how the marketing minds and creative teams within these companies operate. I also plan to continue reading as much as I can on this subject matter. I will study various campaigns from different types of company's. Another goal of mine is to study this subject on a smaller scale. When I am back in the States, I will begin to follow some local craft breweries in my area. I want to really see how they engage on a totally local level. Also, I want to see if I can think of new ways that a smaller brewery can use music marketing to expand their name and increase sales.

Next, I want to research how branding works from new angles. First, I want to learn about the branding and sponsorship teams on the side of the festivals. For example, I want to understand how live entertainment companies like ID&T and Superfly Presents engage with brands. I think having an inside perspective on how festivals and promoters engage with brands will make me a valuable team member to any

company that does music branding. I also want to understand how branding works on the side of the record company. I recently read that Sony was opening up “its Brand Solution Hub, the first-ever music brand-consultancy under Sony Music.”³ To accomplish this, I will expand my network to include individuals working for music festivals and other live entertainment venues. I want to learn their perspective. For example, I am really curious as to which brands are the most desirable to work with and which brands are notorious for being difficult to work with. When talking to the people at festivals, I will ask questions about what they look for in a brand and what they expect from their relationship with a brand. In order to be truly successful in this field, I need to fully understand the mindset of all parties involved. I also want to understand how branding works from the side of the record company. It is very important to understand how these record companies use branding, partnerships, and sponsorships to fund the musicians signed to their label.

I plan to continue working on my CE even after I turn it in. My goal is to become as knowledgeable as possible on the subject of branding. My main interest is with alcohol brands that work with music. However, I am very interested to learn and study all types of non-music brands involved. My plan is to draw conclusions from both successful and failed campaigns. I want to establish myself as someone who could consult the brands, musicians, and promoters.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE DISCIPLINE AND PROFESSION

³ "Sony Music Entertainment Announces Launch of Asia Pacific Brand Solutions Hub." www.edb.gov.sg. May 21, 2015. Accessed June 10, 2015. <https://www.edb.gov.sg/content/edb/en/news-and-events/news/2015-news/sony-music-entertainment-announces-launch-of-asia-pacific-brand-solutions-hub.html>.

The best part about this CE was the network I built. I purposely chose this subject because I knew that it was the area of the music industry that I wanted to be involved with. Working on my CE perfectly aligned with my job searching. Throughout this process, I gained great perspective on the brands that have the biggest impact on the music industry. I also learned how they operate and what types of standards they strive for. After completing my CE, I am proud to say that I have established good relationships at some of my dream companies. I plan to maintain these relationships after graduation with the end goal of landing a dream job.

I am very grateful for the people I met during this process. I established good relationships with prominent employees at various companies that I would be honored to work for. I also learned a great deal about different trends and movements in the global music industry. By focusing my research on a global level, I now have a better appreciation and understanding of the music industry across the world. Also, this project educated me on the business and cultural significance of different genres of music. For example, I learned a great deal about EDM. Before my CE, I really didn't have any unique insights on EDM culture and its future potential.

IMPACT ON THE STUDENT DOING THE WORK

Overall, I am very thankful that Berklee had us do a Culminating Experience. The CE process refined and improved my research and academic acumen. In addition, the nature of the CE requires me to become an expert in one area. During orientation week, we were introduced to the CE. Emilien Moyon told the GEMB students to really reflect on what you want to do after Berklee. He advised us to pick a subject that you feel will lead you to your dream career. At the time, I found this very intimidating. But after a few months of thinking, I grew to appreciate having a CE. The CE almost forced me to really reflect on what I wanted to do as a career. In addition, the CE has motivated me to

become an expert in this field. I believe that I will come across as extremely knowledgeable and confident in future job interviews.

Additionally, this project drastically improved my knowledge of corporations and how they function. Through my research, I tried to understand how these companies work. I learned about the division of talent in these mega international corporations. My CE required me to really understand the structure of international companies. I feel that I now have a much better understanding about how international corporations function. I now value how important it is for a mega corporation to have a clear set of principles and standards on a local, regional, and global level. Also, throughout this process, I spoke to business professionals from all over the world. I gained new perspectives on work etiquette and cultures across regions.

The CE also had a strong impact on my academic and research skills. I graduated university in 2011. Before coming to Berklee, I was very nervous about getting back into the academic environment. Having spent three years outside of academia, I had lost some of my habits and skills. Doing a CE caused me to restructure and organize the way I go about projects. I really benefited from having a long-term project that required me to identify objectives with clear deadlines. Also, Emilien helped me structure what I knew about my subject into my own unique and independent discovery. I think that the ability to write a clear and insightful research paper will be highly beneficial throughout my professional life. Regardless of what I do for a profession, I will constantly be taking in new information. My ability to garner information in order to make independent conclusions will distinguish me from others in my field.

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