

Essay

“HOW I PLAN TO INTEGRATE MY LOVE OF MUSIC INTO MY PROFESSIONAL CAREER.”

As a kid growing up, virtually every figure of authority who bestowed their wisdom upon me made sure to mention that being involved in music would improve my math test scores. I mean my algebra wasn't stellar, but I was getting by. I remember taking this advice with a grain of salt thinking to myself, “are they trying to tell me something?” Turns out that regardless of how well I did in Mrs. Honogman's 5th period math class, it was the best advice I could ever have received.

Since I began classical training on the clarinet as a ten year old, I have followed music ambitiously. High school proved a positive turning point as far as my musical ability and my desire to perform live. While continuing my music studies in various band classes at school, I ventured out in my personal life and met new friends who played in garage punk bands. Looking back, these friendships were the single most influential step in my decision to pursue a career in music and audio.

Freshmen year, starting out at San Francisco State, I declared the BECA major with confidence. At the time, music production was my main focus. Due to my lack of experience, I was largely unaware of other career paths involving audio. Since, I have discovered the amazing art of sound design for film. Although music production remains my primary interest, both career paths have grabbed my attention in a serious way.

Like my mother and father before me, there is a great deal of entrepreneurship in my blood. It is my plan to diversify my skill set and approach a career in audio through multiple avenues. I believe that if I become competent with the technology industry professionals use there is no reason that I can't be a “jack of all trades.” My hands-on experience thus far has introduced me to a variety of formats. For example, Digidesign's ProTools, Steinberg's Nuendo and Apple's Logic are all software tools used in digital pro audio. In addition, I have had experience with recording and mixing on two inch tape in the seemingly archaic analog domain. The more exposure to different formats I receive, the more prepared I am to enter the work force.

Obviously the most direct connection between my love for music and a career in audio would be music production. Much of my time over the last year at SFSU has been spent in Professor John Barsotti's music studio in the lower level of our Creative Arts building. This resource has proven invaluable to my knowledge. Here I have been able to stand in front of a mixing console and fuss with the seemingly endless number of gadgets at my disposal. With

Professor Barsotti's help, I also have learned and practiced various theories in music recording. The link between musical performance and the recording studio is undeniable. Often the engineers themselves are musicians. This is certainly the case for me. I currently drum for an indie/rock project local to the San Francisco area, and much of what I have learned in class has transferred to my role in the band. In 2007, we produced and recorded an EP in our collaborative home studio. I am in the process of applying for an internship with Talking House Productions, an indie record label and recording studio, and last semester I got my foot in the door as an employee in promotions and marketing at Clear Channel's Star 101.3 radio. With each small step I feel that I am coming closer to realizing a career doing exactly this type of work.

Recently, I also developed an interest in sound design for film. As a Netflix customer and long time movie buff, I have always appreciated good sound in a feature film, but never truly understood the work that went into it. Another teacher of mine, Professor Vinay Shrivastava, introduced me to the work of a man named Walter Murch. Murch was the primary sound designer for two of George Lucas's earlier films, "American Graffiti" and "THX 1138," but is most famous for his oscar winning sound montage of Francis Ford Coppola's "Apocalypse Now." In these films, Murch brings fantasy worlds and situations to life through his sound effects. His work reveals new connections between my interest in audio and a possible career path. Contemporary sound designers utilize many of the same software tools used by music producers. They also use many of the same recording techniques. Sound effects like footsteps and the closing of doors are recorded on sound stages just like music is recorded in the studio. This is known as Foley sound recording and this artistry is both respected and well paid in the industry. In any and all cases, this means that my training at SFSU is equally applicable to music recording *and* sound design.

As a performer, producer and student, my love for music as a form of art and expression has blessed me with knowledge and self-fulfillment. My time in the BECA department at SFSU will always stay fond in memory and every day here proves there is always more to learn. More than ever, my ambitions are clear and I feel so lucky to say that I know exactly what I want to be when I grow up. Whether I become the next George Martin, Quincy Jones or Walter Murch, I know that my future stays closely woven with music. The path I have chosen so far has taken me in the right direction and it is my every intention to keep the ball rolling with positivity.

"What's music? It makes me feel weightless, in my room, on the floor, clenching tight to all that I am..." -Martin Mattern