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PIMLICO: AN ADOLESCENTS JOURNEY

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A capstone project submitted for Graduation with University Honors

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APPROVED

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ABSTRACT

Pimlico: My Story is a storytelling musical album that will dive deep into the contents of our society, through the perspective lens of an immigrant, me. *Pimlico: An Adolescent's Journey* is a creative project in which an album will be produced and engineered, along with corresponding research about the concept of storytelling through the art form of Electronic. While a variety of music genre sounds such as R&B, Ambient, Hip-Hop, Alternative and LoFi may be utilized, the sound and background of Electronic will be at the core foundation of the album. To further, a conversation will follow the roots of storytelling and using emotional cues. *Pimlico: My Story* seeks to highlight personal problematic experiences with race and ethnicity in minority scenarios and showcase the philosophies of age and mental health. The album will center it's focus on the concepts of race and mental health by illustrating those said stories by electronic sound. *Pimlico: An Adolescent's Journey* was ultimately coined to catalyze conversation and answer questions such as: How does mental health impact and individual? What causes philosophical changes in adolescence? What are the impacts of racism to a young immigrant? *Pimlico: An Adolescent's Journey* will be based off purely personal experiences that will describe the background of growing up in the Bay Area as an Indian immigrant, and the struggles associated with it.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Professor Bradley Butterworth for accepting and providing me the guidance as an excellent faculty mentor throughout this program. Their willingness to teach and guide me and provide new meaningful ways to learn about music production have allowed me to provide this project. Passion and commitment were always upheld for which I am thankful.

I would also like to thank my first faculty mentor, Professor Dana Kaufman. Professor was the first faculty mentor I had who paved the way for this project. They accepted me with open arms and instilled the confidence I needed to complete this project.

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INTRODUCTION

Pimlico's inception was based off my desire to share my passion and story with the world. Ultimately however, I am trying to answer the question: How does storytelling convey emotion and illustrate experiences to their full extent? Growing up in the East Bay area as an Indian immigrant was emotionally difficult. I was constantly ridiculed and targeted with racist motives during my formative years in Elementary and Middle School. Children will be children, though the essence of ignorant bliss would effectively be obliterated during my adolescence. Constant and consistent experiences of failed attempts of friendship, love, family life and finances would collectively parade itself as trauma. This trauma is deeply rooted in my character, and it is a definitive characteristic of all my intentions. Through my academic years of conversation and experience with my peers I would come to understand many others endured similar occurrences. At the time of my Junior Year in High School, I would begin to produce and engineer Hip-Hop music through inspiration from J. Cole's 2014 *Forest Hills Drive* and Kendrick Lamar's *good kid m.A.A.d city*. This inspiration allowed me the opportunity to create songs and share stories of pain that resonated with myself and those around me. *Pimlico: An Adolescent's Journey* was first created in 2017, though I wanted to wait a few years until I had all the necessary components. These components are in the forms of experiences, sound developments and ideas. The inception of this project in its entirety will draw upon essential inspiration from Paulo's Coelho's *The Alchemist*. As quoted in my annotation: "Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist* illuminates the essence of our dreams. This essence can essentially be discussed by the dream's function and intention. Coelho's literature showcases one of the most important ideas for my Capstone project album, dreaming." Before embarking on the approach to this creative research project, I want to define Hip-Hop first in relation to my project. Hip-Hop is a

music genre that combines lyrical rapping and instrumentals that follow a “1, 2, 1, 2” rhythm scheme. First coined by inner-city African Americans, predominantly on the East Coast, Hip-Hop has become a phenomenal musical movement that provides each individual with a voice and perspective to be expressed! Hip-Hop has had changes over a linear time. Yet, “stylistic changes over the last four decades have altered the approach many take with their music, the basis of most rap songs is still fundamental storytelling” (DJBooth). Hip-Hop will be at the centerpiece of this album’s conversation. In other words, Hip-Hop is at the foundation of this album as well as. Electronic. Listening to Kendrick Lamar’s *good kid, m.A.A.d city*, concepts of self-love, hatred and familial pain expose themselves to be integral to Lamar’s conversation. In my project I will be utilizing mental health, and race/ethnicity as the core concepts to illustrate and discuss personal experiences of hardship with also using general sound to invoke these emotions.

APPROACH

Utilizing campus amenities and organizations such as the Experimental Acoustic Research Studio, I produced and organized my collective thoughts of growing up. Through the music album format, I signified initial conversations with obstacles of race and utilize shared experiences from my peers to support it. The central focus of *PIMLICO* follows the core concept of sound and using it to create an environment. A sound scape that attempts to instill specific emotions through scales and different keys. These stories of race and insecurity can be understood through the way the melodies and drums are programmed and arranged. Storytelling is the foundation of the entire album. Thus, storytelling through tactical sound selection, and pad dreamscapes would be essential in communicating shared experiences of growing up. The creative section of the project is produced and engineered by me. Production is defined as collecting the necessary sounds and creating chord progressions and melodies, in combination with percussion usually in the form of drums. Engineering is defined by utilizing software to balance sound frequencies, clear up any sound distortion, adding effects to maximize the sound, and compression for a unified, and great sounding song/mix! However, it is worth noting that collaboration will be welcomed and will be pursued to maintain collective thought. The sound and engineering components were established alongside my faculty mentor.

INSPIRATION

The earliest moments of inspiration for this creative project began when I would travel across my home country, India. My parents would bring my sister and I almost every summer to visit family. My relationship with India when I was growing up was a bit distasteful, as I frequently would complain of the lifestyles and relational environments that compose Kerala, my home country. Kerala is a beautiful place with water and large coastal trees surrounding the seas. Once you embark on a journey towards the city however, Kerala becomes just like the rest of India which was dirty and filled with health dangers. Though as I grew older, I would fall in love with this whole environment. Travelling through the city and hearing the KSRTC bus (Kerala State Transportation Corporation) were some of my earliest memories and have been implemented in the first track of *PIMLICO*, titled "Intro." Kerala's early morning birds who would begin singing at the early morning, and the environmental sound of the monsoon season were also implemented into the first track to provide the context of where I am from!

My earliest inspirations of music would be instilled by Hip-Hop though I would find more creative meaning from Electronic music such as House, Techno, Deep House and even Jungle. These are genres stemming from the Electronic foundation, though differentiated with changes in drum patterns, melody arrangements and even the way it is mixed for listeners. Early influences such as Daft Punk, Approaching Nirvana and even the Electronic music label, Monster Cat, provided me an outlet at an early age to consume music. This consumption led to catalyzing psychological cues that would make me very emotional or find meaning I have never experienced before. These feelings were brand new to me and would begin to push me into learning production.

MOTIVATION

Reflecting back to the biggest piece of motivation can be reflected on from my obsession of an Electronic artist, Fred Again.... Transferring to Southern California for college was a big move and was accompanied by a lot of emotions. I would find comfort when listening to Fred Again... as their utilization of simple and natural components of life such as voicemails, street interactions and even poetry invoked excellent use of emotions. I found intense motivation to follow a similar route and to have a similar purpose! Though my production quality may not be up to the quality of Fred Again..., the intention and context of storytelling I create exists. This album begins with an ambient introductory track that utilizes sounds from my childhood, and immediately transitions into the next track titled "It'll Be Okay." This is my favorite track on the album as it perfectly encapsulates my emotions of sadness, regret and ultimately optimism. I would utilize a sample melody and then arrange/chop it up into different sections to create a striated piece of storytelling. I then followed the programming of these drums to be complementary by having ambient elements of percussion, but having the dominant clap and kick is heard throughout House music.

PIMLICO may reflect the sadness and the unfortunate circumstances that surrounded my early beginnings. With that said, it is also worth noting the excitement and optimism I carried for several years. These emotions can be heard through tracks such as "CostaMesa" and "Ryder." I produced "CostaMesa" with the intention of showcasing my motivation from Latin music, reggaeton and even Caribbean percussion. This is an optimistic track intended to get you off your feet and dance with the people around you! The dancing intention is furthered with the track "Ryder," as it is a more club driven and themed piece. "Ryder," showcases my ability to create

music that directly reflects my changing attitudes as I grew up. Emotions of anger, frustration, disgust, and overall disassociation of my environment is illustrated; the main melodic synth and bass lines seek to display this rough concept.

PROCESS

The process to create an album that attempts to showcase my emotions when growing up was a difficult task. I frequently found myself changing ideas, sounds and overall stories to create the best capture of my mind. Though as I continued to work on the project, I began to release some structure of telling stories and began to just create with the context of what felt “right.” What felt “right,” was a great notion for me as I would become less scrutinized with my own work and began to appreciate every little thing I would produce and engineer. This level of self-confidence became a form of self-care that provided me the structure and confidence I needed to proceed with the album. My process to creating began with emotion since I tend to create best when I have an emotion or story in mind. This emotion or story then translates into melodies through pianos initially, and then moving the arrangement of the MIDI into synth keyboards, bass lines and even atmospheric elements such as drawn out, reverb induced, one-note samples. My process would always begin with melodies, then translate into bass lines, then include atmospheric elements, to ultimately achieve a creative song that showcases an emotional scale to the best ability.

Upon completion of the rough mix and arrangement of my song, I would begin to listen to the piece several times to figure out what elements should be removed, included, or transitioned in slowly. Of course, throughout the production process I engineer as I apply multi effects such as Delay, Reverb, Distortion and even dynamic resources such as a Compressor, Limiter and even an Imager which helps shape a sound to be fuller and surrounding. A final mix is then engineered after a certain level of completion is achieved. Concepts of stereo panning, automation and even layering sounds was an integral part of this album as I created and

programmed my own drums. Synthesis of sound was a focal point as my faculty mentor would guide me through this process. Sound synthesis is a great component of this process as it is the optimal way to truly create your own emotion-related sound; this can be directly heard through the track titled, "The Verse." "The Verse" was initialized to follow the thematic elements of Spiderman: *Into the Spider-Verse*. The element of excitement, optimism, and overall eagerness to explore the hidden world was established in this track. This piece was tailored to instill those emotions in the listener, but to also provide a soundscape that makes it sound like a story.

CONCLUSION

Reflecting on this past year has been such a rewarding experience. A time in college that has been filled with ups and downs, wins and losses, but overall, the opportunity to learn has been the biggest blessing. I conclude my Honors Capstone and my time here at the University of California, Riverside with my favorite track of all time, “LUDAXRIS.” This song was initially coined in late 2018, (though would be worked on and completed in early 2023), when I was nearing my High School Graduation and was experiencing pure optimism for the future. Though, I was also afraid of what would be coming in the future. “LUDAXRIS,” begins with the claps and a tom percussion to create energy and the movement. This movement is then fully realized with the bassline that comes thundering down to showcase the excitement and energy I was feeling. This energy was pure, yet the track begins to slow down and see a complete opposite side at the 1:45. This was done intentionally to conclude the album that *PIMLICO*. No matter what I have achieved through the production and storytelling process, there is a dark side of me that reflects on the trauma that composed my childhood; hidden emotions that I continue to experience as I get older. “LUDAXRIS” is not just a track of this album, it is the perfect sound representation of who I am and who I have become, an individual who is optimistic and excited, though carries the fruits of pain and neglect that continues to haunt him.

LINK TO PROJECT:

[SoundCloud](#)

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