

Benny Goetting's Senior Project
Hold My Hand Original Music Video
Presentation Sheet!

Opening

Hello! Thank you for taking the time to watch and read my presentation about my senior project. Along with the video presentation you will be watching, this document is a readable version of the information discussed in the video. This won't be a word-for-word script of the video (I've done enough scriptwriting in this video process), but the major sections of the project I discuss will be elaborated upon here and you can refer back to this document if you need to later on. And don't forget, all of the specific details of my project are viewable on my portfolio, found at this link you can copy and paste! <https://pages.stolaf.edu/cis-bgoetting/>

Original Concept

As my major is Film Writing: Script and Score, my project was to be something that worked to combine film and music; my two passions. Of course a music video was the best option. In terms of the video and its contents, I wanted to create a story that both shows the emotion and theme of the song while also creating a storyline. In addition to creating a narrative, this project was also designed to test and showcase my skills as an independent creator of film and music. The song is original, the video was directed, edited, produced, and acted by me (and with help, more on that later). All together, this video is not just a combination of all aspects of my major, but it is also a product of my talents and interests to create independently. Obviously I'm not a whole music label or production studio. In terms of location, which will be touched on specifically later, I wanted to take advantage of St. Paul as it was a visually interesting city and had people and locations within I liked and knew.

Major Themes

Within the video and song, this piece takes on many of my own struggles, thoughts, and simple joys about trying to engage in romance while being who I am. One thing I don't enjoy about many music videos is how the content of the video usually has nothing to do with the song itself; I wanted my video and song to actually go hand in hand with one another. The big themes the song and video take on are sexuality, gender identity, and physical love, and the complex relationship they share. More on these will be better explained with my words in the video.

Music Production

For sake of clarity, music and film production will be discussed in separate sections! All of my music is produced digitally. My software of choice for music is Logic Pro. I started making digital music with Garageband on Mac back in early high school, and Logic is many steps above the prior. I use Logic's software instruments to create multiple tracks of instruments. Their digital instrument library actually sounds very good, so I don't have to get any extra instrument plug-ins. So with all the instruments you hear like piano, strings, drums, etc., I record them on individual tracks via a MIDI keyboard, which is really any keyboard that has MIDI outputs that plug into my computer. When all put together on top of each other, my song looks like this when it's mixed:



As you can see, there are six tracks in total in this mix, including my vocals. Something to note are two separate string tracks and two separate drum tracks. I do this for very specific reasons. For strings, one track is legato and smooth strings that I use for bass and chord movement. The one below that are staccato strings that come in about halfway in the song. I use these to create high-pitch rhythm and bouncy-ness. For drums, they're divided into cymbals and kick/tom drums. This is something I do whenever I use drums as advised by my music producer Jake Bruce. Kicks and cymbals have very different frequencies as you can hear; the cymbals are high and ring-y, and the kicks are low and provide beats. So when they're separated, I can mix and master them to sound better on their own. When I have one track to just focus on making one thing sound good, it makes the job easier.

Another term to explain is the difference between "mixing" and "mastering," which are done by myself and Jake respectively. A "mix" refers just to the process of me sitting at a piano, creating these tracks, and playing the song so that it's all put together. It's like putting the ingredients on a pizza. "Mastering" is actually cooking the pizza and making it look and sound good. That's what Jake does. Jake Bruce is a classic "sound guy," having majored in music engineering at St. Mary's University. When you master a song, it's a very intricate and detailed process of taking each track and making them all sound the best they can be. This includes adding effects (reverb, ambience, etc.), balancing (dynamics and limiters), and even changing exact frequencies with an EQ. So while a couple of these edits are done by myself, they're largely done in the mastering process by Jake, someone who really knows what he's doing. In addition to using tools already within Logic, Jake and I use Waves, which is an audio engineering plug-in that provides new tools to do things like reverb or EQ. It goes without saying that this whole part of the song-making process is complicated, so thank you for following along as far as you have! So once the song goes through the mixing phase at my station, goes through the mastering process at Jake's, then it's sent back to me and ready to listen to!

Video Pre-Production

What's a music video without the video? Well, it's just a song. But for creating the video itself, I had an entirely different team and set of goals I needed to accomplish. This

said, I will add that sitting down at a piano and creating a song on my own is MILES easier than shooting and producing a video. My right-hand in this creation process was Phil Countryman, a friend of mine from the Cities who studied film production at the Minneapolis College of Arts and Design. Phil has truly proven time and time again to be indispensable to helping me create this video. From my original script and concept, Phil helped me choose locations and provide equipment and techniques to make a great-looking film. In the many steps to making the video, the first part (after writing the script) was assembling the cast.

In my video, there are three characters: myself (played by: myself), the "Director" of my music video, and my date from the night prior. The Director is played by my very dear friend Katie Anderson, a fellow senior Ole. She and I are the people most familiar with acting in my immediate friend group, since we both have long histories of live theatre. She played her role solidly and was flexible and willing to help, which I'm very thankful for. My date in the video is played by my friend and old coworker Mitch Rassett, who I met working at the Black Dog Cafe in St. Paul for the past two summers. While he doesn't have "acting" experience, Mitch is a stand-up comic and is always willing to perform and help out. And I'm very happy with how much energy and conviction he brought to his character. The biggest issue with working with the cast was just days/hours that would work to film. Otherwise large chunks of the video are just myself.

The last part of the pre-production and filming process was location. Thankfully the two main places I wanted to film in was The Black Dog and the city of St. Paul itself. And since I had worked at Black Dog, my old manager Sara Remke was kind enough to let me rent the Black Dog's event room for an affordable rate! Thankfully it doesn't cost money to run around a city block and film silly stuff with Mitch and Phil. I loved the natural not-too-big-city feel St. Paul has, and Mitch volunteered to use his apartment for one of our scenes that was originally planned to be shot in a car, which would've been much harder.

I would like to say that this section is the most important in terms of discussing how this whole project got made: having the right people to help you is imperative. I would not have come close to making anything like the video I envisioned all on my

own. It is from the talent, hard work, and dedication by everyone involved that makes this possible, I cannot stress that enough. Even from producers, actors, audio engineers, and especially teachers and faculty that guided me along the way; everyone played a very important part.

Video Post-Production¹

I believe the two steps of the production deserved two sections, just because they deal with different steps and challenges. Post-production, similar to the mixing and mastering relationship, refers to what needs to be done after we actually get the footage. This covers many duties done largely by Phil, which is taking the footage and processing it for color correction, effects for lighting, and eventually editing together an actual video with sound and all. Disregarding specific challenges I faced (which will come later), together Phil and I filmed just over 100 GB of footage; footage that I had to download and edit on my own. Of course the original plan was for Phil and I to work together on the editing process, but with distance and time restraints as are, I handled it myself. Thankfully with classes like my interim documentary class and my spring digital filmmaking class, I'm much more comfortable using Premiere Pro on my own as my primary editing software.

In the two classes I just mentioned, I learned a lot about the editing process and use a lot of techniques to make audio and video flow together, which I'm familiar with when it comes to using music in film. It's kind of one of my crutches as a filmmaker: using music as the main theme of my films. But obviously a music video gets a pass. But the main components in making a music video actually seem put-together and flow well is taking footage carefully and examining visual cues and themes that compliment the music, whether that's actually in terms of theme or rhythm, mood, dynamics/speed, etc.

Academic Influence

While I would say that anyone *could* make a music video, I have to say for myself that a lot of what went into making this video came from classes and projects I had taken and

¹ You can find all software and equipment used in the "Senior Project + Presentation" tab of my online portfolio.

done previously while at St. Olaf. In the music division, I "took" music theory classes in my freshman year, and "took" is in quotes because I was not good at theory at all. I will proudly say that only a fraction of what I learned in two semesters of theory classes are ideas that I still use in music creation to this day. However, the really influential music classes I took were composition in my sophomore year. These coupled with Electronic Music I took in interim of Junior year, it greatly improved my ability to create music electronically. These classes also encouraged me to incorporate other instruments and how they blend together, and not just focus on the piano every time I make a song.

One section of classes that played a huge role in this project are my writing classes from the wonderful people in the English department. Taking classes such as creative writing, screenwriting, and fiction writing have helped my ability to create narratives and actually practice proper technique in scriptwriting and making sure my ideas/vision is properly documented. These classes helped me hone skills of creating narrative, dialogue, and using writing to create images and make it into film.

Lastly, a good handful of film classes played a huge role as well. In the practical sense, my digital filmmaking class and documentary filmmaking (both classes I took this year) proved necessary in preparing me to actually make film independently. From software to cameras, these classes covered all the bases of teaching me how to be a competent beginner filmmaker. Another important branch of film classes are film theory, which took the form of Film Studies and Film History from the great Linda Mokdad. To actually make film, you need to know what it is you're doing; knowing the terms and techniques, basic knowledge of equipment, and pretty much everything else in between.

Challenges

In all three major areas of this project (music, writing, and making the film), each had its own challenges that varied in severity. The smallest of my problems was my lack of scriptwriting software. While I nowadays use Highland 2 for screenwriting, I had previously been using Celtx online, which then switched to only paid subscriptions for unlimited projects. Not wanting to deal with hassle of that, I wrote a script in Google Docs. I know, it's sacrilegious, but it's what I had available at the time. The only real

"issue" with this was the formatting not being conventional and Phil gave me some deserved ribbing for it. For music, I faced an early challenge in the mixing process. When I sent Jake my first version of the mix to be mastered, he sent it back to me asking I redo some instruments and do some early EQing on the instruments and my voice. This wasn't Jake being picky, it was actually a necessary step for me to take so that the song was able to be mastered properly. It's a two person job in making the music.

The largest of issues was a little global pandemic that actually prevented me and Phil from getting the last ~10% of footage we had planned to get. Just as we tried to find a day or time to get it done, the world started ending and we were forced to our own homes three hours away with no ability to get the last footage whatsoever. So luckily we have plenty of footage to work with (the infamous 100 GB of footage) that I would edit on my own. The big issue was actually getting me the footage in the first place. You can't exactly share 100 GB of footage on a Google Drive link. Phil's plan was to torrent the footage over. I don't *exactly* know how torrenting works, but think about it like the online equivalent of handing someone a USB drive of all the footage. Phil puts the footage online and sends me a link, and the link initiates a download on my end that downloads whatever footage Phil uploaded to the torrent. Our first attempt at this nearly failed, but luckily upon a second try, I waited many hours for all 100 GB to download onto my SSD, and I got the footage and began editing on my own.

Lastly, a small problem that we encountered a couple times during filming is time constraints. It takes a long time to film anything, simply put. To anyone trying to make their own video of any kind, please know that it will take longer than you plan. There's time for setting up equipment, travel, light and sound tests, and then multiple takes when you actually get around to filming. Take for example the first moment Phil and I began filming, his camera's battery died; not in the "out of juice" way, but it was a third party battery that totally lost its life. So we waited nearly an extra hour for Phil to get another battery so we could actually film, which we did, but we lost the opportune natural sunset lighting we had planned on using. But the biggest lesson about facing challenges is remaining adaptable no matter what happens. Either come in with a Plan B or just learn how to think on your feet. I've had to reimagine many ways how this video will come together after many set-backs, but it's all been worth it.

Closing Thoughts

First off, thank you for taking the time to watch/read my presentation. Whether you're a faculty/staff member who's helped me along the way, a friend, family member, or anyone else, I'm very thankful for your support.

I'm very glad I chose a music video as my final project. When I came up with this major as a sophomore, I thought making a ten minute short film as my final project, but that really wouldn't utilize the "score" part of my major. And while my future career is ambiguously in the world of the arts (theatre, film, music, all of it!), creating this music video was something I loved doing and can see myself doing again in the future and hopefully improve my ability to do so.

On my portfolio you can find a list of everyone I listed as special thanks, but I'll take a moment to re-write/repeat them here:

- Phil Countryman
- Jake and Shea Bruce
- Greta and Harvey Goetting
- Katie Anderson
- Mitch Rassett
- Sequoia Nagamatsu
- Susan Carlson
- Sara Remke and The Black Dog Cafe
- Jade Virginia and Hannah Verbeke
- Tracey Engleman
- Linda Mokdad
- Ezra Plemmons
- Cole Bucciaglia
- Mickaylie Bade
- James McKeel
- Bruce Benson
- Justin Merritt
- Paige Dhalke
- Dana Gross

- The Contented Cow

This concludes our presentation, and I hope you thoroughly enjoy the final product of all these efforts, *Hold My Hand*.