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The Playlist of Life

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The Playlist of Life Podcast

(Complimentary Paper)

Austen Lane

Murray State

Abstract

Music has helped shaped cultures, mold religions, entice revolutions and define generations. With so many contributions on a global scale it's hard to forget this constant's effect and importance on our own human psyche.

Motivation, solace, joy, and comfort are just a few of the basic human emotions people submerge themselves with listening to music. The purpose of my senior project is to prove that music perception is one of the strongest influences tied to human emotion and my goal is to support this theory not on paper... But through audio dialogue and music.

The following paper is a complimentary piece to go along with the main idea of my podcast titled "The Playlist of Life". This document will include information such as the breakdown of podcasting, where the idea for the Playlist of Life came from, research and analysis revolving around the topic of music perception, the equipment and software needed to start a podcast, and the end goal for my senior project.

Podcasting

Podcasting or audio-blogging, began to take shape in the early 2000's. Christopher Lyndon had a long stint as a news anchor in Boston before he switched to radio and created The Connection at Boston University on WBUR. The radio station not only hit popularity on the east coast but also across the entire U.S. resulting in WBUR to go from a 5-million-dollar to 25-million-dollar operation. Over this time, Lyndon would lock horns with WBUR management over rights to his shows that the company was streaming on the internet. Lyndon ended up losing the dispute which resulted in him being fired from his own show and the WBUR company.

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Later in that year, Landon crossed paths with Bloggercon creator Dave Winer. Bloggercon was a convention featuring people from various communication spectrums such as journalism, radio, television, and blogging. Being a big fan of Lyndon and hearing about the situation regarding WBUR, Winer invited Lyndon to his studio on campus to record audio blogs. These random mumblings reaching a few people on a blog quickly began to snowball into thousands when Lyndon began conducting audio interviews from people around the area. Armed with only a cheap basic audio recorder, a laptop, and a server to upload, Lyndon wasn't only pioneering audio blogging but the simplicity of how to conduct it. Even though Lyndon could have sat on his format and been satisfied with a growing audience he decided to take things one step further changing the world of audio blogging forever.

In November of 2013, Lyndon created a new project involving his commentary on the U.S. election titled "Blogging of the President." Being that the subject matter was such a hot topic and no one was audio blogging on it, anytime someone would use a search engine regarding the election, "Blogging for the President" would appear just a few clicks down. Thus, giving Lyndon a national audience and a new found fame.

At the 2013 Bloggercon, Former MTV host Adam Curry and fan of "Blogging of the President" encountered Lyndon and expressed his frustration that even though he was a big fan of Lyndon he was upset that he couldn't listen to his blogs "on the go" while on his morning commute. The problem forced Curry to create software with the ability to transfer audio content from a blog or website directly to a portable MP3 player. It was this software that led to the revolution known as Podcasting.

According to the Edison Research institute (2016) podcasts are listened to by 52% of Americans over the age of 12 with 71% of those Americans listening on a cell phone or tablet.

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With most of the research reports only taking place in the U.S. one can safely assume that trends like a 23% yearly increase of podcast listeners from 2015-2016 are not only taking place in our backyard but all around the world and if cell phone and computer companies keep pushing convenience and technology it won't be long until the podcast becomes the number one outlet in which we turn to for information.

The Idea

For my senior project, I knew I wanted to do something out of the norm of just writing a 50-page research paper of a topic I was passionate about. The idea of a podcast was always in the back of my mind because it involved three big components that I flourish at: Talking to people, social media, and creativity. After discussion with my advisor and having him ok my idea it was time to think of a premise.

Like most great ideas, mine came with some trial and error. My first idea was to gather up professional athletes of various sports and interview them about; training regimens, how they started out, and the rules of the specific sport. The idea sounded good in my head but it later dawned on me that people may not be interested in learning all the rules of cricket, or what it takes to be an Olympic rifle shooter. It was in that at that moment I designed my target audience diagram. My target audience goal was 14-65 being they were in the primary ranges in which people owned a smartphone, giving them access to my content. Targeting just the male demographic would cause me to lose half of my possible audience so this scrapped out the sports podcast and led me to the question of what was something that Males and Females of ages 14-65 all had in common. The answer: Human emotion. Everyone has once felt joy, sadness, pain, guilt, and fear. With that question answered the 6th strand podcast was born. The goal of the 6th

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strand podcast was to take 5 well known professionals (Strands 1-5) and bring them down to the listeners (The 6th strand) level showing that we are all connected via the human psyche. In order to achieve the goal, I created a unique format where each episode would focus on a topic and not just one guest. The topics consisted of the 6 basic human emotions of happiness, anger, surprise, sadness, fear, disgust. I would then edit sound bites from each interview so that each episode consisted of 5 stories regarding the same topic. For instance...

Sadness

Guest 1 shares story about sadness

Guest 2 shares story about sadness

Guest 3 shares story about sadness

Etc...

After the 5th guest I would then summarize what the listener just heard and give some parting words for the 6th strand (viewer.) The goal was to have the listener leave feeling connected to my five guests and knowing we are all intertwined regardless of race, religion, class, and upbringing.

The format had all the makings to be successful but I started to fall out of love with it. I had something unique but I couldn't picture myself so doing it 5 years down the line. I envisioned myself being burnt out talking about the basic human emotions especially considering 4 of the 6 emotions fell into the negative category. I still planned to keep the idea involving the human psyche but I wanted to have a podcast that I looked forward to doing on a weekly basis and take pride in.

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Two nights before I had to turn my topic in I found myself wandering aimlessly through a valley of formatting ideas and frustration began to set in. That night I received a text from my friend asking me if I was interested in going to see the band Korn in concert after receiving free tickets and needing someone to tag along. Korn, as you may or may not know are a band from the mid' 90's whose key influences included metal, rock, hip-hop and are considered one of the godfathers of the genre: Rapcore. Korn were a huge influence on me growing up so much that four of their shirts found their way into my weekly clothing rotation. Nerveless, that was middle school and I had no urge to see them now being they hadn't had a number 1 hit in over a decade and while I'm into a lot of genres of music, rapcore was low on the depth chart. Reluctantly, I agreed to go and met my friend at the venue. I was surrounded by drunk 30 somethings' who seemed to make it a habit of bumping into me and spilling beer on my shirt. The show hadn't even started yet and I was ready to leave but everything changed once the band got on stage. It's a general rule of most bands to play new stuff accompanied by some of their better-known hits just to appease the crowds. Korn made it a habit to play every one of their hits from my childhood. Suddenly nostalgia covered me like a warm fuzzy blanket. "Freak on a Leash" came on and I immediately was back in 7th grade, skateboarding with my friends with smell of the hot black top in my nostrils and the feel of gravel in my knee from another failed attempt at a kick flip. "Here to stay" played next and by the second verse I was back in my friend's basement playing video games and pounding Mountain Dew's as to give us fuel to perform a regrettable all-nighter. Of every Korn hit that was played that night I found myself transported to a time that reminded me of that certain song. By the 8th song it was clear to me, I finally had my podcast idea, and just like that the Playlist of Life was born.

Music Perception and the Playlist of Life Podcast

Every time a song is heard music perception is in play. Catchy beats, powerful lyrics and compositions that stop us in our tracks are all apart of music perception. Not only do we analyze every song we hear with logic, but also with emotion.

A recent study conducted by Lila Taruffi (2017) in Amsterdam took 981 respondents from the ages 13-30 and gave them quizzes revolving around level of education, a personality profile, hours spent listening to music, and music preferences. After the quizzes, Taruffi (2017) revealed that 70% of teenagers and young adults used some sort of music to console them. The subjects also revealed that music that evokes oneness and togetherness will have a positive influence on the listener's life. Surprisingly education, age, upbringing, and environment have been shown to play zero factor on the music analysis quiz even to the point where non-musically trained subjects could guess emotion the composer was trying to display in their music.

While emotions are a main component of music perception research, its effect on the brain's ability to comprehend and learn information is new trend of the past decade. According to Laure Ferreri and Laura Verga (2016) studies have shown that music can in fact boost your work productivity depending on the genre. Studying with classical music to increase your ability to comprehend information has always been the gold standard with college students but as it turns out that is not entirely true. Ferreri and Verga (2016) go on to state that If a student prefers the genre of classical music then this holds true but if classical music is foreign to a student it has shown to hinder work rate and over stimulate the brain. Ferreri and Verga (2016) finish in stating that the ideal music for a student to listen to is something they are familiar with. This isn't to say

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that a student should blast dance, or rap music. Music with a steady pitch, low beat output, and slower pace has showed the best results. Not only does this boost study rates but also it also increases creativity in right side brain activities.

There is no denying that music holds a strong respect in the science community but there's no need to get bogged down with charts and graphs to know the effect music has on people for that I can attest to myself. I've seen 30,000 fans sing in unison as people around me unexplainably start to get misty eyed or middle aged men who work normal jobs in an office exit a mosh pit with a pair of bent bifocals, a bloody nose, and a smile on their face. Music allows the release of unadulterated emotion and when that sentiment is allocated with a group of people, the capacity for such emotion becomes that much greater. This is the philosophy I plan to explore on the Podcast of Life.

My format consists of each guest selecting 7 to 10 songs (the playlist) ranging from their childhood up until now. We then breakdown each song and the guest will explain the special significance behind it. By the time the interview is done every emotion on the human spectrum is just about covered. To add to the auditory effect of the listener I will also play each song in the background as the guest shares their story enhancing the overall listener experience. It's known that playing music on a podcast is a direct violation of copyright law and subjects can result in losing their podcast and facing heavy fines. However, after case studying and conversing with a few expert podcasters I discovered that my format falls into the Fair Use Doctrine which states: The practical effect of the Fair Use Doctrine in quoting from a copyrighted work are is allowed if the following works; criticize, review, comment, or teach. Being that my podcast qualifies for providing commentary on each song it falls under the doctrine making the music legal to use.

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The first season of my podcast will be released once a week for 7 weeks or until the cycle of my interviews are done. When a group of guests have all been compiled and recorded, season two will be out following the same concept of a weekly release.

Equipment

The first piece of equipment I researched is also one of the most important items in podcasting. A mic will hurt or help your podcast seeing that sound quality is the first thing the listener will notice. There are two different routes you can take when selecting a microphone. You can either choose a USB, or an XLR mic. A USB mic was specially made for podcasters in mind. The USB mic has a cable that allows you plug directly into your computer eliminating the need for a converter. Aaron Dowd (2015) showed that while the USB mics are easier to use, all the moderately priced ones lacked the sound quality of even less expensive XLR mics. As a result, I opted for the for the XLR mic.

Traditionally you would see an XLR mic used by a musician, reporter, or radio personality. The only drawback of these microphones are the extra steps needed to use them for podcasting. XLR mics have a three-pronged output that makes it impossible to plug into a computer without an XLR audio interface. An audio interface allows you to plug in your XLR cable through it and run a USB cable to your computer. The audio interface comes with at least one or two XLR jacks and seeing how my podcast was going to involve guests the need for multiple jacks was paramount.

The next equipment I purchased were microphone accessories. You're not going to hold onto the microphone the entire time that you're talking so a mic stand is an essential need. You can purchase a variety of mic stands and holders depending on personal preference. I decided to

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get two boom scissor arm stands that are standard in the world of radio and podcasting. They clamp on to a table or desk and offer enough movement capability for any situation. My recommendation is to know your studio and purchase one that can complement your needs.

Another accessory I highly recommend purchasing is a pop filter. A pop filter or pop shield is an anti-pop noise protection clip-on filter for microphones. The filter serves to reduce or eliminate 'popping' sounds caused by the mechanical impact of fast moving air on the microphone during recorded speech and singing. Dowd (2015) states that these popping sounds can especially be found in words that start with "P" and "B" and regardless of studio acoustics can cause your recording to be distorted and at 5 dollars apiece it's an inexpensive way to boost the quality of your podcast.

There are tons of options when it comes to podcast software and it really comes down to personal preference. Having a MacBook, I opted for Garageband because it already comes installed on apple computers and is also user friendly when it comes to editing. For those of you without an Apple computer Audacity is another great editing software that comes free on most computers. On top of the recording software you will also need an application on which to upload your podcasts. The plus side of using a podcast uploading service is that they write all the code for you so all you have to do is send them the audio and they will share it in outlets like iTunes, Soundcloud, and Sticher. This convenience will cost a monthly fee around 10 dollars depending on how much you post but it's a small price to pay to get your idea out into the airwaves.

When you are ready to upload your podcast, you will also need cover art of at least 1400 x 1400 pixels. Along with your title the cover art is the first thing people will see when they are browsing through podcasts. The cover art can truly make or break your podcast and even though

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you have the option to make one on your own I hired a professional graphic designer to make mine for 50 dollars.

Recording content can be tricky if your co-host or guest are in a different location. Instead of listing out all the options I'll just share the one that I found works the best for any situation. Source-Connect Now is a digital recording interface that uses the search engine Google Chrome. Here you can interview and record a guest with no lag, low sound quality, or lost connection. All you need to do install the free Google Chrome web-browser and go to the Source-Connect website. When you are ready to upload your podcast, you will also need cover art of at least 1400 x 1400 pixels. The cover art is first thing people will notice when they are browsing through podcasts. The cover art can truly make or break your podcast and even though you have the option to make one on your own I hired a professional graphic designer.

Headphones aren't a necessity but they do help in the editing process when your playback the audio. You must also think that besides listening to podcasts in cars people are going to listen along with their ear buds so getting an idea what the podcast sounds like in editing can be beneficial to your final product.

Lastly, be sure to have a quiet and closed space to record. Smaller rooms with doors work the best because then sound can't escape. Also try and hang pictures and knick-knacks on your walls to reduce echo.

In recap the things you will need to start a podcast are as follows...

- A concept
- Cover art
- Computer

- Microphone
- A microphone boom or stand
- Editing/Recording/Podcast uploading software
- Source-Connect/Skype to conduct remote guest interview
- Headphones (optional)
- A quiet small room, with good acoustics.

Guests/End Goal

Each guest is influenced by music in some sort of way and are required to give me their playlist in advance so I can do any research on artists who may be unknown and allowing me to map out the conversation. For the first season, each guest I've either met or spoken to at some point in my life. It is at a later goal that I hope the podcast catches on and I start to get requests from bigger celebrities asking to be on. The final and ultimate goal of this podcast is to use as part of my resume' when I apply for my dream job at Rolling Stone Magazine.

The following are break downs of references used in this paper, The Playlist of Life podcast and topics that will be brought up on future episodes.

Reference Break Down/ Bibliography

Bogt, F. M. T, Vieno, A., Doornwaard M. S, Massimiliano, P., Eijnden, J.J.M., R. (2017).

“You’re not alone”: Music as a source of consolation among adolescents.

PSYCHOLOGY OF MUSIC, 45, 2.

The contributing authors on this piece set out to investigate the consolation of music between adolescents and young adults. The research leads to 3 questions such as: Do adolescents and young adults use music as a medium for consolation? Which aspects of music listening are perceived as consoling? Which characteristics, personal feelings, and music factors enhance consolation through music listening? The one big surprise found in the research was that internal problems didn’t have any correlation to music consolation, although consolation levels were higher with anxious and depressed subjects. The biggest takeaway from the article was the fact over 70% of the subjects reported in using music as a form as solace. That fact alone will be beneficial in my podcast reiterating my theory that music is one of the strongest mediums tied to the human psyche.

Jungers, K. M. (2016) Language priming by music and speech: Evidence of a shared processing mechanism. *MUSIC PERCEPTION, 33,1.*

The author tested how the rate differences in music and language perception influences the subsequent production of speech. The theory stated that if language and music share a common processing mechanism then the priming rate in one domain should lead to rate variation in the other domain. The results showed that speakers production rates were influenced by priming auditory stimuli for both sentences and melodies. Speakers produced faster sentences with faster primes and slower sentences with slower primes. When they attempted the same test in a cross domain platform the results came back the same showing that music and language to share a common processing mechanism that could be considered interchangeable. This research will be great in my research paper explaining that not only does music effect our moods but it can also influence our language and how we speak.

Taruffi, L. (2017). Individual differences in music-perceived emotions. The influence of externally oriented thinking. *MUSIC PERCEPTION: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL*, 34,3.

The author explores the theory that a person's mindset will have a direct correlation on how one perceives music. Empathy, alexithymia, personality traits, and musical knowledge can all play a role in the emotional state of music response. Each subject was asked to identify various songs and put them into 1 of 5 emotional categories. There were 10 songs total played on a loop twice and of the 5 emotional categories 2 songs belonged in each one. Musically trained subjects with high scores on empathy and low scores on alexithymia posted high grades when it came to identifying emotions of a song. Punk and Rock music were the easiest to identify seeing how they revolved around anger.

The only behavior pattern that was shown to affect the scores was alexithymia. Subjects that were classified in the alexithymia group had problems displaying any kind of emotion and could not tie personal memories to any of the songs thus leading to low test scores and an inability to identify emotion in music. t

I found this article to be helpful in sharing my research on music perception. The fact that only people that are detached from their own emotions had trouble identify the certain emotion in a song goes to show you how important memories are and how we use our own life experiences in music.

McNulty, J. N. (2015). The effects of music on employees. *UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON HONORS THESIS.*

The author set out to figure out what type of effects music had in the workplace. The theory was that if classical music was played at an office worker morale would be boosted in turn causing the office to work harder leading to a better environment. In retrospect, the author predicted that once the music was taken away work place morale would lower causing people to look for the stimuli they once had leading to lower production. For 2 weeks' subjects spent time working in a music and non-music environments. They were then given surveys to ask about their overall experience and much to the author's and my surprise the results showed that workers were happier and worked harder without the music. It was later discovered that only classical music was used as the stimuli and when asked about music preferences most the workers stated that they weren't fans of classical music.

This article was fascinating in that I always heard that studying or writing with classical music on will increase your productivity. What a lot of people failed to comprehend is that

everyone has their music preferences and if you get too far out of your comfort zone it can have negative results. I look forward to using this journal in looking for patterns in what kinds of music my guests listen to and I will also bring up the point if any of their songs increase productivity in their everyday life.

Garrido, S. & Schubert, E. (2015). Music and people with tendencies to depression. *MUSIC PERCEPTION: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL*, 32, 4.

The author sets out to analyze the cause/effects of depression as it relates to music and more specifically the unhealthy practice of listening to sad music when one is depressed. Depression is associated with reduced motivation to engage in activities to improve one's mood. 175 students were given a piece of sad music via YouTube and asked questions to evaluate depression before and after the song. The students were given rumination levels based on the results of their quiz. A higher rumination level meant the student was very distressed while a low rumination level meant the opposite. Students with a higher level of rumination were shown to be more depressed after listening to the music track as opposed to the low rumination group that showed no change. Only in a small percentage showed a positive effect in listening to sad music while being depressed which can show that a state of mind is key to how we interpret music.

Even though none of these students were diagnosed with depression the reader must assume that they fell into the spectrum which can be hard to be fully vested in. Also, I think self-awareness of one's mental condition needs to be considered when evaluating how music makes a person feel. The research showed that short-term supplementing sad music in a depressed state can be detrimental to one's health but the long-term effects still haven't been

analyzed. This information will be used in my podcast when a guest reveals a sad song and I in turn will dive into the question if that certain song has a positive effect or negative effect on their state of mind short term and long term.

Ferreri, L. & Verga, L. (2016). Benefits of music on verbal learning and memory. How does it work? *MUSIC PERCEPTION: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL*, 34, 2.

The article covers the controversial topic of music and its cognitive functions linked to learning and memory. Prior research has shown conflicting results in that some studies believe the right kind of music can stimulate the brain allowing one to concentrate allowing for a better environment to comprehend information. The counter to that theory is that music or any kind of sound serves as another piece of stimuli therefore making your brain must work harder in comprehending what is being heard. In the first experiment kids and adults were given information by verbal speaking. They were then asked to write down all they could remember. Then as not to sway the results to the music side, a new list of information was presented but this time it was sung. Findings showed that the information that was sung showed to resonate with adults and especially kids more than just having someone speak the information. The second experiment was used to find the effects of background music. The subjects were asked to take quizzes with just white noise and then were asked to take a different quiz with light background music. The results didn't show any correlation as some people found the music beneficial while others found it as a distraction. It wasn't until each subject's personality was evaluated that they made a giant conclusion. Introverts, who tend to keep to themselves performed better with the white noise while extroverts craved the extra stimuli of music to help the focus and perform better.

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This journal had some of the most fascinating research that I came across in that introverts and extroverts differ on how they feel about music stimuli. I consider myself an extrovert but never found myself using extra audio stimuli in my studying. As I work on my senior project I find myself listening to increasingly music causing me to have extra focus and motivation. The proven theory of introverts and extroverts will be great for my podcast discussions.

Dowd, A (Producer) (2016, June 4th). Podcasting on a budget, *THE PODCAST DUDE* (audio podcast)

The host starts out talking about how the XLR mics sound quality are unmatched and they are a lot cheaper compared to the USB mics. You do need to purchase an interface to plug into the computer and when that's done the price point between the mics are about the same. If you do a lot of traveling for your podcast the USB mic might be the better route but if you're talking about the best sound quality for the buck then the XLR is the way to go. Another inexpensive tool you can purchase to up your production values are pop filters. A pop filter goes over the microphone and helps keep sound levels, background noise, and mic crackling at bay. Pop filters cost around 5 dollars so having one is a no brainer.

I found this episode to be extremely helpful in purchasing a microphone. The info I gathered will all be shared in my paper seeing how the microphone is one of the most important pieces of equipment in podcasting.

Dowd, A (Producer) (2016, December 2^{6th}). When is the right time to pause a show? *THE PODCAST DUDE* (audio podcast)

The host dives into podcasting format and how many times you should release a podcast a week. Ideally a producer should release their show at least to keep their audience interested

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with fresh content. It's important to be consistent on which days you release content because people love routine and if you can find your way into a listener's daily routine that can increase the number of subscribers you get. Podcasts fall into two formats, weekly and seasons. Seasons will see a host release content daily for a month or so but then stop until a new season is developed. People who are short on time or who are considering podcasting as just a mild hobby start off with the season format. It's important to let people know whenever you plan to release a new season so they can stay up to date and you don't lose followers. Also, using social media as a form of publicizing up an upcoming season can help spread the word.

This podcast was very informative in that it inspired me to take the season approach as opposed to the weekly. Seeing how I will use a lot of editing and how I have a lot going on in my life the season format will be great in producing in my wheelhouse.

Dowd, A (Producer) (2016, March 2^{1st}). Pros and cons of video podcasting? *THE*

PODCAST DUDE (audio podcast)

The host discusses pros and cons when using video for podcasting. Video Podcasting has become a new trend in the podcasting world and some of the most successful podcasts stream via YouTube and other video streaming services. One of the biggest draws with video podcasting is that you can reach a more massive audience and with more people watching the more advertising is willing to kick in to sponsor the show. However, video podcasting does come with its downsides. For instance, when you stream your podcast on YouTube you need to abide by their rules. That means you can't play any music from various artists and you can't watch any kind of

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video while doing the podcast. This results in copyright fines and the possibility to get you kicked off YouTube. Another problem one may find is that the video can lag on the podcast thus making the show unwatchable, hence driving people away. You should only shoot video if you already have a successful podcast and you're interested in making more sponsorship money.