

Final Reflection on My 2015 Summer Enrichment Experience at New York University

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Between July 12 and August 8, I attended a Recorded Music Program at Tisch School of the Arts at New York University (NYU). I stayed at Weinstein Hall, which is where a man named Rick Ruben founded Def Jam Records during his freshman year (and he has since gone on to produce artists like The Red Hot Chilli Peppers and Jay Z).

The Classes

During the program, I typically had an “A Day” and “B Day.” On A days, we had class with Lauren Davis (the daughter of Clive Davis), where we learned about the music business for two hours. In her class, we were taught about the revenue streams that artists and songwriters can exploit. For instance, there are different agencies that collect different royalties for different things, like radio play or play on Pandora and Soundcloud (i.e., public performance royalties) or downloads from iTunes (i.e., mechanical royalties). She also taught us who gets those royalties and how. For example, if you sign on to a record label, the label promotes your music and sets up recording sessions for you, but the label also gets a chunk of the change you make from royalties. Likewise, if you sign a publishing deal, the publisher sets you up with different songwriters, but the publisher also takes a chunk of the change. If you are the songwriter AND the artist on a song, then you get royalties for being both, but, if you are one or the other, then, of course, you only get a percentage of the money. Record deals have their pros and cons. While

they do promote your music and give you connections, the record company typically ends up owning all of your music and gets to decide what to do with it. Lauren also taught us about how artists can promote and develop their brand by choosing how they are portrayed in social media, who they collaborate with, what songs they are featured on, and more.

In the afternoon, we had another music business class with Marat Berenstein, and the information we learned in the morning was reinforced through specific examples and stories. We often had guest speakers that gave us an insider's look at what that day's lesson was about. For example, on the day that we learned what publicists and tour managers did, we talked to Beyonce's publicist and Bruno Mars's tour manager.

In the evening, we usually went in the studio to work on whatever recording project was assigned.

The next day was B day, which started at 9 a.m. with Production class. We were in a computer lab where each computer equipped with a keyboard and editing software, and we experimented with different sounds that we could get out of the songs via different effects and other production techniques. We learned how to EQ (i.e., adjusting frequencies on tracks) and compress (i.e., making a track's volume more consistent), as well as general things about how to add different "colors" and "flavors" to a song, just through production. We also learned a lot about signal flow, which provided for a cohesive way to understand what equipment does what and how it works. (Before attending the program, it seemed to me like every piece of gear on the internet had a separate function).

The Field Trips and Industry Interactions

When we did not have class, we went to a lot of different field trips. We went to a Foo Fighters show and a Meagan Trainor show, visited Sterling Sound (where we met the guy who masters artists like Nick Jonas and 21 Pilots), saw Roc Nation (which is Jay-Z's headquarters), and got to go to a lot of other great places. We also had Q and A chats with people who have started their own record labels or are representatives for media platforms like Spotify and Soundcloud. Going to all of these different places and talking to these different professionals in the industry

allowed for a better understanding of how people get where they are and how the music business functions from the inside out.

Take Aways

The program was exactly the extra push that I needed to get more serious about making a career out of recorded music. It reminded me that there are people my age who are *way* more talented than I am, and it reinforces how much I have to learn before I can even call myself a “producer” or an “artist.”

As soon as I got back home to Carbondale, I emailed a few recording studios about internships, emailed WDBX about getting my own radio show, and set up a better recording space in my bedroom. I am going to work on recording and producing my album, promoting my artistic brand on social media, and registering my songs with different corporations like ASCAP that protect my song’s copyright and collect royalties. Also, anytime a guest speaker came in, I made sure I talked with them and got their contact information, so I will send my music to a few different record labels and publishing companies as soon as I finish my album.

Most of all, being at NYU gave me a baseline for a lot of things. I now know what a perfectly sound-proofed room sounds like and also what passionate teaching at the college level is like. I know what an expensive compressor sounds like, and I now also know how to be more professional in workplace and make myself essential to an operation. Furthermore, I learned how to live on my own, economize my own money better, and even how to hail a taxi. I was reminded of how great other kids my age can be and how hard I need to work to get where I want to be. I am looking forward to putting in all the time and effort to make myself a better musician, producer, and business person. I can happily say that I have found a career to pursue; one that I love and am happy to work at every hour of the day.