This is Bouyon: An Exploration of Dominica’s Own Genre of Music

Garford Alexander

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This is Bouyon
An Exploration of Dominica’s Own Genre of Music

Garford Alexander
This is Bouyon: An Exploration of Dominica’s Own Genre of Music
Master of Fine Arts in Visual Communication Design
School of Design | College of Imaging Arts and Sciences
Rochester Institute of Technology
May 15, 2014
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table of Contents</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of Literature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject Matter</td>
<td>7–10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Parameters</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animation</td>
<td>12–14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>15–16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Questions</td>
<td>16–17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filming</td>
<td>17–20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>21–23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video Editing</td>
<td>23–25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logo &amp; Typography</td>
<td>26–27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Issues</td>
<td>28–29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usability Testing</td>
<td>30–31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience Feedback &amp; Refinement</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Proposal</td>
<td>33–45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>46–47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bouyon music is a mixture of rhythms, melodies, and musical styles from genres, such as Soca, Zouk, and traditional genres native to Dominica, a small island nation located in the Caribbean Sea. The music is one of the most popular musical genres in Dominica, and one of the Caribbean's best-kept secrets. As Dominica is one of the lesser-known islands, this genre of music is unknown to much of the world outside of the West Indies. My project aims to document the history, and create awareness for Bouyon music. Using firsthand interviews with the creators of the genre, footage of performances, and cultural influences, viewers will be able to grasp a better understanding of the genre.

Dominica, Caribbean, Roseau, West Indies, Bouyon, Jing Ping, Bélé, Lapo Kabwit, Cadance, Cadance-lypso, Calypso, WCK, Triple Kay, First Serenade, Documentary, Animation, Audio, Branding
Introduction

Dominica is a small island nation located in the Caribbean Sea, often confused with the Dominican Republic. Known as the nature isle of the Caribbean, this island is home to many unique wonders, which make this island one-of-a-kind. One thing that has become particular to the nature island is the musical genre of Bouyon. However, this genre, coming from one of the best-kept secrets of the Caribbean leaves many people simply asking, what is Bouyon?

Bouyon is a mixture of rhythms, melodies, and musical styles from genres, such as Soca, Zouk, and traditional genres native to Dominica. However, a written definition does not do the genre justice. Just as it is difficult to succinctly describe the color blue or the flavor of water, the task of describing this music is one that cannot be done with just a few sentences. An exploration of the genre of Bouyon is one that involves more than just the sense of hearing, but sight as well.

My project aims to document the history and create awareness for Bouyon music through a composition of interviews and supporting footage. Using firsthand interviews with the creators of the genre, footage of performances, and cultural influences, viewers will be able to grasp a better understanding of the genre. While learning about this unique genre of music, viewers get a sneak peak of the island and see how people interact with the music.
Survey of Literature

Design

**How To Conduct an Interview | eHow**
December 2, 2013
ehow.com/how_8743580_conduct-interview-musician.html

The article covered five key steps to conducting a successful interview with a musician. It covers practices such as performing background research on the musicians beforehand, utilizing multiple audio recording devices, and going with the flow, rather than sticking to a script. Though I had an idea of the information I was seeking, I utilized this article as a reinforcement of best practices. This article ultimately helped me with the tip on using multiple audio recorders in case of technical issues.

**Cinema 4D Music Visualizer**
February 6, 2014
youtu.be/vz4GUqZU5GE

This is a 3D animation of cylindrical sound visualizer. The designer of this animation cloned cubes in a cylindrical formation and applied the scale parameter to all cubes. Doing this allowed all the cubes to scale up and down in relation to the audio. This video showed an alternative way to use the audio effector as it shifted the frequencies around the whole object allowing the highs and lows of the music to affect different areas. I thought this might be a cool way to show the visualization of the music I created.

**Bouyon Connection Concert ft. Royalty, Triple Kay, Clint, Mystic**
October 18, 2014
youtu.be/gnog25glz7c

This video covers Bouyon Connection, a New York City concert focused on the promotion of Dominica and Bouyon music. This video is compromised of performances and interviews with musicians, disc jockeys, and artists. This video was a good example of how I could film and edit interviews and live performances.
Frampton Ettiene – Danse Kolte Ft. P Bouche Cultural Group
October 30, 2013
youtu.be/PpyImfJe84s

This is the official music video for the Bélé song Dansé Kolté by Frampton Ettiene and the Paix Bouche Cultural group. Bélé is another traditional music genre found on the island of Dominica. The traditional clothing and dance of Bélé music are showcased throughout this video. Bélé was integral for the percussion and rhythm of Bouyon music.

Interview with Cornell Phillip
February 24, 2014
Roseau, Dominica

Cornell Phillip, is one the founding members of WCK Band and creators of Bouyon music. Based in Dominica, Cornell has seen the evolution of the genre first hand, and is still an active and respected musician on the island. Cornell described some of the original instruments used in the creation of Bouyon music and how they evolved over time. Cornell told of his childhood, as he and former WCK band mate, Keith Goddard, imitated cultural bands his family worked with, using electronic instruments.

Interview with Gildon George
February 24th, 2014
Roseau, Dominica

Gildon George also known as “DJ Flip Tha Boss”, is a disc jockey and emerging producer on the island of Dominica. Gildon is on the forefront of the revolution of Bouyon music, producing and pushing a majority of the new “riddims” and beats being created. He defined Bouyon as a mixture of different styles, both traditional and current, creating a new generation of music. Gildon attributes the popularity of this new style of music to the incorporation of pop culture and current trends in music.

Interview with Erskine Eaton
February 24th, 2014
Roseau, Dominica

Erskine Eaton, better known as DJ Popcorn, is a local disc jockey and employee at Graphics Music shop located in the Roseau city center. Erskine is a well-known individual in Roseau and the south of Dominica, who is employed in one of a handful of places that distributes local music. A long time lover of Bouyon music himself, he proved to be a very valuable resource giving a history of the music and how it has evolved.
Interview with Emile Depooter
February 25, 2014
Roseau, Dominica

Emile Depooter, was the former manager of WCK Band and is the current manager of Triple Kay Band. Emile defined Bouyon from a cultural standpoint as he defines the word, explaining how it relates to a soup, with various genres of music as its ingredients. He gave examples of some of the electronic instruments that were implemented in the creation of Bouyon as well as the role these electronics play in modern day Bouyon.

Interview with Derick Peters
February 26, 2014
Roseau, Dominica

Derick Peters, better known as Rah was the former drummer and leader of WCK Band. Derick has been credited on numerous occasions for the creation of Bouyon, through his contributions to the genre. He broke down Bouyon music, explaining the various cultural instruments and their origins.

Interview with Midian Pacquette
February 28th, 2014
Roseau, Dominica

Midian Pacquette, better known as DJ Midian, is an on air DJ at Kairi FM and former singer of Esclav Band. Midian defined Bouyon music in relation to food. He referred to it as a pot of ingredients with various types of music thrown in. He did a great job comparing the past and current Bouyon music, with a positive outlook on the future. Midian pointed out that Bouyon is very similar to electronic music played at concerts as it captivates listeners and subdues them into a trance much like ecstasy.

Interview with Wayne Robinson
February 28th, 2014
Goodwill, Dominica

Wayne Robinson, better known as Shadowflow, is a Bouyon artist and former member of WCK Band. His contributions to Bouyon music are invaluable helping infuse the vocal styling of Dancehall music and chanting in to the genre. He described Bouyon music from a cultural standpoint using local foods as an example and ties it all in with descriptions of the cultural instruments used. He ended the interview with a great explanation of the feeling that Bouyon music evokes, euphoria.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Matter</th>
<th>Interview with Wadix Charles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 5, 2014</td>
<td>Roseau, Dominica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wadix Charles, is a well known DJ and on air personality at the Dominica Broadcasting Station. Wadix defined Bouyon as a fusion of indigenous spices unique to Dominica, such as cadancelypso and Jing Ping. Having decades of experience in Dominica’s music industry, he gave a one of a kind depiction of the evolution of Bouyon music covering early songs of pioneers WCK, to today’s dominant band Triple Kay.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview with Kendel Laurent</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>March 5, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roseau, Dominica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kendel Laurent, is a keyboardist and band leader of Triple Kay Band. Kendel played a large role in shaping Bouyon music into what it is today, utilizing synth instruments over traditional instruments and employing the chord progressions of other styles and genres of music. With the growing popularity of Triple Kay Band, his style is often emulated and inspires other musicians and producers to think outside the box.</td>
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</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>Interview with Asa Edwards</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 5, 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grand Bay, Dominica</td>
</tr>
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<td>Asa Edwards, best known as Asa Bantan, is an upcoming solo artist of from Dominica. Over the past couple years his music has caused a stir in Dominica and many other neighboring islands in the Caribbean. He blends Bouyon music with calypso injecting social commentary on issues around the country. Asa chose, to focus on the lyrics and content of Bouyon music, as this was what he knew best.</td>
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</tbody>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview with Antonio Paul</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 8, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronx, New York</td>
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<td>Antonio Paul, also known as O.Banga, is a musician and producer from Dominica. Antonio focused on how Bouyon has changed over the years and it’s current state today. Having worked in mainstream media he relates the current trends in Bouyon music to the Hip-Hop music industry as many artist take any catchy beat and throw in lyrics to create a song. By the end of the interview Antonio expressed his care for the genre, but calls for more effort in its production.</td>
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| JING PING BAND ON CREOLE DAY 2010, ROSEAUP, DOMINICA                          |                                                                                  |
|                                                                                | April 24, 2014                                        |
|                                                                                | youtube.com/watch?v=EZVtCOCruCg                    |
|                                                                                | This video shows a small group playing Jing Ping music in Dominica’s capital of Roseau. Jing Ping music is one of Dominica’s oldest and most celebrated musical genres, dating back to the days of slavery. This group consists of three members playing the “Gwaj”, a metal grate like instrument, the tambourine, and the accordion. The video was relevant to my project, as Jing Ping was integral to the creation of Bouyon music. |

| WCK – MET VAYE VIDEO                                                          |                                                                                  |
|                                                                                | April 24, 2014                                        |
|                                                                                | youtube.com/watch?v=RktaUXOXMTQ                    |
|                                                                                | This is the official music video for WCK bands classic song Met Vaye. WCK is one of Dominica’s national treasures and is credited for the creation of Bouyon music. This happy and playful song deals with the issues of nosey neighbors and switched back and forth from English to the native language of Patois. This video was a great fit, showcasing the cultural influences such as the “Lapo Kabwit”. |

| WCK – BANDWAGON TRAIN VIDEO                                                   |                                                                                  |
|                                                                                | April 24, 2014                                        |
|                                                                                | youtu.be/mYeMp5rHh8M                                |
|                                                                                | This is the official music video for one of WCK bands classic songs Band Wagon Train of the 1990’s. This song epitomizes Bouyon music of the 90’s, heavily saturated with electronic instruments and samples. This video is mash up of performances by the band, footage of the band in the studio, and people dancing and enjoying music. This was relevant and a great fit for my project showcasing the band and giving a glimpse of the history of Bouyon music. |
This video walks you through the process of making a Drag and Drop Kit in Logic Pro’s Ultra Beat drum machine. Rather than using premade drum kits to create music in Logic Pro 9, users have the ability to load their own audio files to create music using Ultra Beat. This video shows how to load and map audio files to Logic and an external MIDI device. This was very useful walking me through the process of creating my own kit from start to finish.

Tempo Automation for Logic Pro
December 2, 2013
youtu.be/hr9YHllcLB

This video shows how to automate a project in Logic Pro. Tempo automation is predefining shifts in a song’s tempo. This is useful for smooth transitions in a song’s tempo. This walks you through the process of automating a song in Logic Pro 9. This was useful to me, because I wanted to change the tempo in a medley I was creating for this project.

Utilizing Cinema 4D’s Sound Effector
February 13, 2014
vimeo.com/53128568

This video tutorial demonstrates how to manipulate 3D objects with sound in Cinema 4D. Nick Campbell of Grey Scale Gorilla goes through a variety of parameters that can be used in conjunction with audio to affect multiple elements. He creates an equalizer out of spheres cloned in Cinema 4D and applies different effects such as scaling to achieve an abstract equalizer. This was relevant, being a cool way to visualize the audio created.
The production of my thesis project was comprised of three main components, an introductory animation, filmed interviews supported by b-roll footage, and original background music reflecting the evolution of Bouyon music. This comprehensive package explains what Bouyon music is from various perspectives, with examples that portray what Dominica has to offer.

**Thesis Parameters**

This animation introduces the project through a combination of audio and 2D visuals. The music used was a remix of the 1984 Dominica Calypso classic “Never Hang Your Heart” by Bernard “De Rabbit” Alexander. The excerpt from the song was limited to a few key instruments in a Bouyon song. For Dominican’s listening to this, it is a memorable tune catching their ear.

This animation was produced using Adobe After Effects incorporating music and the logo I produced. This animation focused on quick fluid motions of four spheres. The spheres move independent of each other but utilize the same origin and end points. To emphasize the speed of the spheres motion blur was applied to everything. (Fig. 1)

(Fig. 1) Opening sequence
The visuals in the animation are derived from Dominica’s flag, focusing on the dominant colors red, green, yellow, black, and white. The animation begins with the dominant red sphere which has its scale property key framed in sync with the bass drum of the audio. Other sequences in the animations are key framed in time with the waveform of the audio. The flag sequence was created by hiding color bands behind the dominant red sphere, and animating them in time with the audio as well. (Fig.2)

The hand written effect of the words “This is” was achieved by using the generate stroke effect of After Effects. The first step was writing out the words “This is” using the typeface Daniel and applying the generate stroke effect on that selected type layer. With that effect active the pen tool was used to trace each letter of the words of “This is” sequentially. The properties of the stroke effect were then used, turning on all masks and changing the brush size to 10 to cover up all of the letters. The final step was setting the key frames for the start and end of the effect, with the starting key frame at 0 and my end at 100. (Fig.3)
To complete the introduction of the logo, the word Bouyon needed to be presented. Using the Illustrator file of the logo, each letter of the word Bouyon was imported without any color as a separate layer. Each letter was placed set to be shown sequentially, scaling up from 0 to 125% then 85 to 100%. This coupled with the motion blur applied on top of this gave the letters the look of elasticity as introduced. (Fig. 3)

The final addition to conclude the animation was to give color to the logo. To show this the spheres were reintroduced, moving horizontally behind the word Bouyon. (Fig. 4) The colorization of the letter forms was achieved by employing squares of colors behind each letter which changed values in opacity from 0 to 100%. To end the animation sequence the letters dropped vertically off the canvas in the order they were introduced, ending with the words “This is” dropping last together. (Fig. 5)
The best way to define Bouyon was to go directly to the creators, the musicians, singers, and disc jockeys that shaped it into what it is today. Dominica is home to many musical artists and groups that have gone international, such as WCK Band, Triple Kay Band, and Asa Bantan. From this talented group of individuals, the individuals that have had the greatest impact on the music were chosen.

Eleven individuals were interviewed for this project, each of which played a role in the creation and evolution of Bouyon music. They all provided different perspectives on the genre.

**Interviews**

**Cornell Phillip**
Founding member of WCK band. Cornell is credited with the creation of Bouyon music and is still a well sought after producer on the island.

**Gildon George**
Also known as DJ Flip, popular local disc jockey. He is best known for his remixes and infusing pop culture and music into Bouyon music.

**Erskine Eaton**
Also known as DJ Popcorn, local disc jockey and employee at Graphics music shop. Graphics is one of very few outlets that still sell local and traditional music of Dominica. Working in this shop for years Erskine knows the ins and outs of Dominica’s musical history.

**Emile Depooter**
Former manager of WCK band and current manager of Triple Kay band. He has been a part of Bouyon from the day the idea was first conceived.

**Derick Peters**
Also known as Rah, singer and former member of WCK band. He is also credited for the creation of Bouyon music through his contributions in WCK.

**Midian Pacquette**
Also known as DJ Midian, on air personality and local disc jockey. He is known for his contributions as a member of Esclav band and production work at his studio, O5 Studio.
Interviews

Wayne Robinson
Best known as Shadowflow, singer and former member of WCK band. He is known for his lyrical skills and infusing Dancehall and chanting into Bouyon music in the 1990s.

Wadix Charles
Also known as Prince Wadix, long time disc jockey and on air personality at the state owned, DBS Radio. He was part of Wadicolé one of the most popular DJ duos of Dominica during the 1980s.

Kendel Laurent
Keyboardist and leader of Triple Kay band. He is best known for his creative “riddims” and use of synth tones in Bouyon music.

Asa Edwards
Best known as Asa Bantan, singer best known for his catchy songs and controversial songs. Over the past couple years Asa has become one of the most popular singers in Dominica.

Antonio Paul
Best known as O.Banga, New York based singer, musician, engineer, and producer. He has worked with numerous Dominican bands and artists on stage and in the studio.

Interview Questions

What is Bouyon music?
This gave interviewees an opportunity to define Bouyon music in their own way. Based on their experiences and history in the music industry, I received an array of answers ranging from literal to metaphorical.

What are some elements and/or instruments of a Bouyon song?
Aimed towards the musicians and producers, this question offered interviewees an opportunity to define the most basic components of the genre. Answers given for this question varied by age. Older people answering this question gave examples of traditional instruments, while younger people mentioned the inclusion of chanting and rhythm or the electronic beat that drives the song.
Interview Questions

How has Bouyon music changed over the years?
It was inevitable that the genre would change. People had the chance to describe how they have seen the music progress over the past 25 years. As technology has advanced the world over, it was important to show how it has been applied to the music created. Cultural diffusion has also played a large role as the inclusion of mainstream musical references and sampling has become more prevalent over the past decade.

How does Bouyon music make people feel?
This was opportunity to reflect on how the music they created or broadcast has affected others. To describe the genre, it was important to explain and depict how listeners perceived the music. Overall Bouyon can be described as party music. People have described the music as euphoric and mesmerizing, with an infectious rhythm that captivates the crowd.

What would you like to tell the world about Bouyon music and Dominica?
This open-ended question gave interviewees the opportunity to elaborate on what was said and send a message out to the world. These individuals have been on the forefront of Dominica’s music industry and still have a great impact on what is produced and broadcast to the nation. The message they give here gives an optimistic outlook on future of Bouyon music and encourages musicians the world over.

Filming

Filming this project I used two Canon T3i cameras to capture two unique perspectives. During interviews a camera with an 18–55mm lens and shotgun microphone was placed in front of the interviewees with a tripod to capture a wide view and show the setting. The second camera with a shorter 28mm lens was used to capture a close up shot. The decision was made to handle the second camera to add a personal touch. At times this created the perception of speaking directly to the musicians through the camera.

Filming took place in Dominica during the “Carnival Season” as many call it. From January to March, the streets of Dominica are filled with the music of the island. Colorful and flamboyant parades take place with costumes that are out of this world. You can find parties, performances, pageants, and even musical competitions nearly every night that leads up to carnival parade on Monday and Tuesday. If there was ever a time to visit Dominica, it would be then.

I was granted permission to film from atop Triple Kay Band’s truck on the morning of Carnival Monday. On carnival Monday and Tuesday, the streets of Dominica’s capital of Roseau, were filled with people following tractor-trailers that transported bands who performed throughout the city. It was important to capture Dominica’s carnival festivities which rely heavily on performances of the Bouyon bands. (Fig.6)
Filming took place throughout the island, capturing footage at scenic beaches, rooftops, busy city centers, and small villages. It was important to show these places to viewers who may have never heard of Dominica and see what the country is really like. Footage of life on the island also supported ideas and topics mentioned in the interviews. (Fig. 7)

To further support and explain aspects of Bouyon music, Dominica’s culture, and foreign terms, footage of cultural groups, performances, and music videos from bands of Dominica were added. I was granted permission to use footage of the Paix Bouche Jing Ping band, a local Jing Ping band in Roseau, and three music videos, Danse Kolte by Frampton Ettiene and the Paix Bouche Cultural group, Met Veye by WCK band, and Bandwagon Train also by WCK band.
During the month of independence, culture and tradition are celebrated throughout the nation. A four-member Jing Ping band played the traditional instruments in a cultural competition in this video. Though its popularity has declined over the years, it is still taught to younger generations. (Fig. 8)

During the annual independence celebrations at the end of October, Dominica comes alive. On Creole Day, the nation’s culture is celebrated with feasts of traditional dishes and wearing madras clothing. In this video a smaller three-member Jing Ping band plays on the streets of Roseau in their outfits. (Fig. 9)
Process

Filming

“Dansé Kolté” showcases Bélé music, traditional outfits, and dances. (Fig. 10) Bélé music was important to the creation of Bouyon music lending the percussion and rhythm to Bouyon music.

(Fig. 10) Dancers flaunt their dresses as the dance to rhythm of Bélé music

WCK’s music videos showed the band as they performed and worked in the studio back in the late 90s. Though many of the instruments have stayed the same since then the style of music has changed drastically. (Fig. 11 & 12)

(Fig. 11) Rah, Martindale Olive, and Keith Goddard in the Met Veye music video
Image courtesy of Keith Goddard of WCK Band

(Fig. 12) WCK band performing for the Bandwagon Train music video
Image courtesy of Keith Goddard of WCK Band
Music

Rather than including the music created by a select few, original music was created that best exemplified the message of this project. As the underlying storyline of the video followed a path of past, present, and future, music was produced that followed that theme.

Beginning in the late 80’s through the mid 90’s the production of Bouyon music consisted of traditional instruments such as the accordion and congas. During the late 90’s to the mid 2000’s the supporting rhythm of the music shifted to an electronic style, favoring the sounds of drum machines and samplers over traditional instruments. From the mid 2000’s to this present day there has been a complete technological shift. Almost all traditional influences have been replaced with the sampling of Hip-Hop, Pop, and Dancehall music samples and lyrics.

The first song produced was a remake of 5 songs originally produced by Bernard “De Rabbit” Alexander. Though these songs were originally Calypso songs, they were adapted to Bouyon by the First Serenade band in 1999. These songs fit the mold of Bouyon music easily because they were all intended to be upbeat party songs. With the help of Antonio Paul and the permission of Mr. Alexander, the songs “Marry the Girl”, “Never Hang Your Heart”, “Run Solomon”, “You Follow”, and “Saddam”. These songs were selected to be remade to demonstrate how other genres could be integrated into Bouyon music.

To create this medley of songs Antonio and I loosely followed old recordings of original songs and performances, attempting to recreate them on a Roland Fantom-X7 Workstation keyboard. Once we were able to reproduce parts like the verses, choruses, and bridges, we fabricated our own beat and recorded our remakes in Digidesigns Pro Tools 8. For some sections we added our own styles, such as in the song “You Follow” playing the bridge in a Merengue style. At its completion, the medley was 7 minutes 37 seconds. (Fig. 13)
The second song produced emulated the music of the late 90s, driven by electronic beats. This song titled “Like So” featured some traditional instruments such as a brass section and featured a more modern synth lead. We created this song using the Fantom-X7 and worked within Pro Tools and Logic Pro 9. To emulate the style of that time we used the marimba to create a repetitive sequence that would drive throughout the song. *(Fig. 14)*

For the third song I sampled popular Dubstep producer and artist Flux Pavilion. I was granted permission by Joshua Steele, also known as Flux Pavilion, to sample his hit song, “I Can’t Stop”. I chose this song as it best exemplified the spirit of Bouyon music. It is a genre of music that cannot stop, and will not stop changing. I envisioned the melody and vocal sample of the original song over a Bouyon beat, and I did just that.

To do this I imported the song into Logic Pro and cropped the song to what I needed, the female vocals singing, “I Can’t Stop” and a four-chord synth clip. In the original song the vocals echoed throughout the song. To recreate this I added a Tape Delay plugin and increased the feedback to achieve the desired effect. The four-chord synth clip was looped in the song creating the overall melody. This was all brought together with a beat consisting of a kick drum, snare drum, and low tom. As simple as it may have been, it fit the style of current Bouyon music. *(Fig. 15)*
While filming in Dominica, 90 minutes of solid Interview footage was recorded and just as much in b-roll footage. The next step was to sort out which videos best answered the questions asked and arrange them in the most effective manner. Looking back at the questions asked during the interviews, the project was broken into three sections defining Bouyon music, discussing its current state, and the outlook on its future. Asking everyone the same questions allowed for the use of the best answers for each section.

The video began with a black screen with the text “The Origins of Bouyon Music” and the Calypso medley playing lightly in the background. I followed this with footage of two local musicians on the bay front singing an old Bélè song to the beat of a conga and a beaten piece of bamboo. This clip introduced viewers to Dominica, using the flag as a backdrop and the traditional music of the country. This first segment of the project focused on defining Bouyon music and defining the elements and instruments.

The first interview shown is with Cornell Phillip as he defined Bouyon as “The modernization of the traditional rhythms and songs of Dominica”. It was important to lead in with Cornell, who was a co creator in this genre of music. As he spoke about the various traditional instruments used, the video cut to footage of the Paix Bouche Jing Ping Band and the smaller Jing Ping Band on the streets of Roseau. It was more valuable to cut to these videos, so that viewers may see the instruments they were hearing about.

Next was footage of Emile Depooter as he explained the definition of the word Bouyon, a fusion. He lead into examples of the music created by WCK in the past, which provided a great opportunity to cut to a clip of WCK’s “Bandwagon Train” music video. The clip used showed the band working in the studio and performing, which directly correlated to what Emile was saying.
**Video Editing**

The original video quality was very poor and was nowhere near the size of the majority of footage in 1080p. To resolve this I scaled up the video and changed it to black and white, doing this reinforced the fact that this was different from the rest of the footage. The footage became very pixelated as a result, so I duplicated the video onto another layer, added a glow effect and reduced the opacity of the upper layer. This softened the jagged edges of the pixels and helped focus on the people in the video.

I followed the WCK video with the music video “Dansé Kolte”, as Emile spoke of the inclusion of the Bélé beat in Bouyon music. This 17-second snippet showed off not only the music, but also the traditional dances and outfits. Following this clip was footage of Shadowflow as he related the fusion of Bouyon to food. As he spoke I switched to the wider view, as he began communicating with his hands while describing instruments and how the music made you feel.

As Shadowflow began speaking on Dominica and it's culture I introduced Rah as he explained the topics and subjects of the music in the past. As he spoke of the culture and lifestyles I showed footage of people fishing, the hustle and bustle of the city, and cultural parades. Coming back to the music and instruments, Midian was introduced, who mentions non-electronic instruments that were once used, such as a simple piece of iron.

To bring what he spoke of to life, I cut to a clip of a band known as a Lapo Kabwit band. This street band uses drums made out of goatskin and a variety of metal objects to make music. To make sense of this visual I followed up with a clip from WCK's “Met Veye” music video in which they integrated the drumming style of a Lapo Kabwit band. To wrap this up I cut back to Midian, as he explained how the use of these instruments is no longer the case, as technology and music have evolved. This was a great way to conclude the first segment as he summarized the shift in Bouyon music.

The next section began with the title screen “Bouyon Music Today” with the “I Can't Stop” Bouyon remake playing in the background signifying a different style in music. Cornell and Rah were reintroduced as they explained how Bouyon music has evolved since its conception. To explain how and who was responsible for this change, I introduced Wadix, who explains how Triple Kay Band has reshaped Bouyon music. As he speaks I show footage of the band performing throughout Carnival. To give an example of the new trend in music I included a short collection of clips accompanied by a live Bouyon remix performed by Triple Kay of the Hip Hop song “Monster” by Rihanna.

To explain what and why things have changed, I cut to Kendel Laurent, who was also shown in the clips of Triple Kay performing. He explained that changes in the music could be attributed to American influences. To reinforce that I briefly cut to Gildon George who also explained that tradition is often left out to create things that “suit the times”. To further explain Triple Kay's success in Bouyon, we come back to Wadix who explains their methods and what makes them unique.
We see Emile once again as he explains more in depth the shift in technologies. He described the inclusion of devices such as laptops and drum machines; To visualize this, the video cut to close ups of musicians using such devices. It was more beneficial to show what they were using rather than just talking about them.

To further illustrate the impact of these technologies, I cut to clips of Midian and Kendel, who both explained the power these devices held. They could control thousands with a lowly play button. I then cut to a montage of people dancing and partying in the streets to Bouyon music. To keep the continuity of this collection of clips, I timed the movement of the people in the footage to the beat of the kick drum. This gave the illusion of everyone dancing to the same song. Emile rounds up the montage explaining joy the music brings and technologies place in the music.

As we get closer to the next segment, Emile and Midian answer the question on how Bouyon made people feel. Emile described Bouyon as infectious and happy, and Midian compared Bouyon music to listening to electronic music at a rave. These descriptions give viewers who may be familiar with rave culture, something to relate to as it’s more common outside of Dominica.

We move on to the final segment titled the future of Bouyon music. Throughout this section, I continued with the music of the montage. This helped keep an upbeat momentum. I felt that this would end the video on a high note. In this segment, I compiled the strongest messages given in relation to Bouyon and Dominica. Kendel and Midian gave an optimistic outlook on the future for Bouyon. I ended this segment with a close up of Shadowflow speaking directly to the camera. He gives a message to musicians to keep up the good work, especially Dominicans who are always representing the country. This was powerful way to end to this segment as Shadowflow commands the attention of the viewers with his gaze and hand gestures.

Concluding the interviews, I ran clips of the interviewees formally introducing themselves and stating the title of the project. Though everyone’s names were displayed on screen, I felt that it would leave a lasting impression as they reminded us one last time who they were and what roles they played in Dominica’s music industry.

Rather than ending the video with traditional credits, I chose to split the on screen real estate with additional unused footage. This extra footage ranged from informal interviews to bloopers and a comical candid of myself. For the last portion of the project, I chose to use music produced by DJ Flip, who was promoting an upcoming project. This upbeat track was a perfect for this hodgepodge of clip.
To top off this project I needed to create a logo that captured the spirit of Dominica and Bouyon. The color scheme in mind utilized the dominant color of the flag; red, yellow, green, black, and white. This logo had to incorporate characteristics of the original Bouyon style while still feeling modern.

My original design used block letter forms for the word Bouyon. The letters were created in illustrator and based on a grid. The block letter forms represented modernism and the grungy stroke offered a home made feel. After showing this to colleagues it was recommended that I keep the style in mind, but use a typeface that best suits my needs. (Fig. 16)

The revisions of the logo used various free typefaces on the Web. I tried using the typeface “Orbitron”, however, I found this typeface to be too open and wide as it detracted from the block like type I had in mind. (Fig. 17) I tried the typeface “Phoenix”, however letter forms such as the U and the N were not as easily read as the other letters. (Fig. 18) It was the typeface “Blocked” that best fit the logo that I had in mind. It utilized a uniform rectangular shape and carried the colors well with the grungy strokes.
In addition to the main text of the logo, I added the prefix, “This is” to the logo and project title, to better define the project. I wanted a handwritten typeface that also carried that homemade style. The first typeface I tried was “Lot”, a cursive typeface. However, “Lot” had an italicized feel that often made me want to slant the two words, “This is”. After deliberating for quite some time I settled on the handwritten typeface, “Daniel”. This typeface gave me the simplistic handwritten feel I was searching for and was a great fit with the main typeface, “Blocked”. I decided the best placement for the prefix was above the B and O of the word Bouyon, keeping the overall height of the logo low.

To introduce everyone on camera I designed and implemented a custom lower third. This vector element was designed with the logo in mind following a similar color scheme of red, yellow, and green with a grungy stroke. The lower third was broken up into three sections and animated consecutively from the lower left hand side of the screen. To exaggerate the speed the objects were introduced, motion blur was added. Once the lower third showed on screen, individuals name and titles faded in, using the typeface Daniel for consistency.
Technical Issues

Working with footage I captured, the biggest issue I came across was the audio. Though I utilized both cameras as audio recorders, I still came across audio distortion and background noises. On one camera, using a shotgun microphone, I found that the microphone's battery was fading. As a result, a steady buzzing sound was captured throughout the video. I was able to find and fix this issue through Adobe Audition's Spectral Frequency Display view. (Fig. 22)

Sounds that were unnatural or man-made had a defined shape to them. In this case the buzzing noises were seen as a bright steady line across the display. Highlighting the noises in both the left and right channels and simply deleting them quickly resolved this issue.

Another issue I came across while working on this project was captioning. Adobe Premiere Pro has the capability to create and embed captions directly into the project. Upon completing the video editing I began captioning the entire video to better support the language of the project and comply with the needs of the deaf and hard of hearing communities. Captioning required me to write out the spoken words throughout the video in time with the audio. Upon completing the captioning and exporting the video I had issues viewing the captions. I tried both exporting and embedding the captioning, however, nothing worked.
It was not until I sought out the help of RIT’s captioning services that the issue was resolved. Though I had correctly captioned the video, an unknown error occurred in the time code of the captioning. It was recommended that I export the captions separate from the video and reimporting the caption file back into Premiere Pro to complete a final export. Though it seemed like a confusing and complicated process, it resolved my issue. (Fig.23)
Usability Testing

During RIT’s annual Imagine RIT event I sought out the assistance of the general public to give feedback on my nearly completed project. I produced a small feedback form asking viewers to describe Bouyon music. Of the four completed forms, one person explained “Bouyon is combination of instruments and computers with a mix of Reggae and Calypso beat(s) and rhythm(s). Though this was not a 100% accurate, this was the response of a 10-year-old boy, who still understood the overall idea. Two of the responses commended me on my work and professionalism. On the last form the viewer wished me the best of luck.

I received much more feedback verbally as I sat at my station throughout the day. Many were in disbelief that I single handedly created such a documentary. Many wanted to know and see more. Scenes of people dancing and partying in the streets captivated many younger viewers, as they wanted to know where this was. Some could relate to the music and environment, being from neighboring islands and encountering the music at parties and events.

Audience Feedback & Refinement

I received valuable feedback on numerous occasions from supporters who had the opportunity to preview my project. During the first few showings many stated that they would rather see what people were talking about, rather than watch them talk about it. This posed some difficulty, having already left Dominica. To resolve this, I sought out additional material from the connections I made while traveling. I was able to collect additional cultural and music videos, which showcased various instruments and historic groups.

I also received helpful feedback concerning my audio. Some stated, that some of the audio was too noisy making it difficult to hear what people were saying. During peer reviews, a few people made the point that a project about music needs more music and less talking. To resolve noisy audio I cleaned up some of the audio in Audition and Premiere, applying de-noise effects and adjusting audio levels. Clips that were too noisy were simply removed or trimmed down. To help with any further audio issues and comply with the needs of the deaf and hard of hearing I captioned all the interviews. To satisfy the request of more music I utilized music videos I received and extended my ending credits with the beat of a full length Bouyon song.
Usability Testing
I set out on this project to inform and create awareness for my country and for the music I love. Completing this took all my skills as a designer as well as required me to learn and develop new ones. I have been able to utilize all that I have learned at RIT into a thesis project. I have gained a greater interest in the field of film and animation as a result of creating, This is Bouyon!

This was not an undertaking just for myself but for Dominica. This project holds great significance being the first of its kind. Beyond Dominica, most of the history related to its music and culture goes unheard and is often unavailable. The information I found relating to Bouyon music, came in the form of amateur YouTube videos and outdated websites. Speaking to people on the island, I was told that this was something the country has needed for a long time. With that in mind, my desire to complete this noble project was fueled by pride and love of my culture.

As a result of publishing this project, conversation has sparked on social media and even on the radio stations of Dominica, asking my same question, what is Bouyon? Debates rage on the Facebook walls of pioneers of this music and fans beckon for the good old days. For the older generation this has brought up concern for tradition. As we continue to move forward and evolve, we lose sight of the original definition of Bouyon. Nevertheless, this battle for change and conservation is long from over, and we can only wait to see what the future has in store.
Appendix

Thesis Proposal
Bouyon Music
An Audio Visual Exploration of Dominica’s own Genre

Garford Alexander
Thesis Proposal for the Master of Fine Arts Degree

Rochester Institute of Technology
College of Imaging Arts and Sciences
School of Design
MFA Visual Communication Design
November 21, 2013
# Thesis Committee Approval

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Abstract

Bouyon music is one of the most popular musical genres in Dominica, and one of the Caribbean’s best-kept secrets. As Dominica is one of the lesser-known islands, this genre of music is unknown to much of the world outside of the West Indies as well. My project aims to inform and create awareness for Bouyon music. My project consists of a motion graphics animation that depicts the music in a visual form and is complemented with interviews with pioneers of the genre.

Problem Statement

Dominica is a small island nation located in the Caribbean Sea, often confused with the better-known Dominican Republic. Known as the nature isle of the Caribbean, this island is home to many unique wonders, which make this island one-of-a kind. One thing that has become particular to the nature island is the musical genre of Bouyon. However, this genre, coming from one of the best-kept secrets of the Caribbean leaves many people simply asking, what is Bouyon?

To give a definition of the genre, which is a mixture of other musical genres, such as Soca and Zouk, as well as other lesser known only found in Dominica, does not do the genre of Bouyon justice. Just as it is difficult to succinctly describe the color blue or the sound of a bird, the task of describing the genre of Bouyon is one that cannot be done with just a few sentences. An exploration of the genre of Bouyon is one that involves more than just the sense of hearing, but sight as well.

My project aims to inform and create awareness for Bouyon music in a composition of audible and visual components. Breaking down a song into its basic elements of instruments and complementing the audible components with visual elements, viewers will be able to grasp a better understanding of the genre. The imagery shown in the composition will vary from abstract shapes to minimalistic imagery that resembles musical instruments. The colors used in the composition will range from colors closely associated to Dominica's culture, flag, and natural island scenery. Short interviews with various musicians that have paved the way for Bouyon music will accompany the motion graphics piece. These interviews aims to explain what the genre is objectively as well as what it means to them as musicians.
Survey of Literature

From the information collected I have gathered a better understanding of how to execute my project. From the many different design examples I have a broader idea of the possibilities of visualizing audio not only in 2D & 3D space but also in live footage and a real space installation. There are many different methods to which I can use to execute my project, which can diversify the interpretations of my project. Looking at different videos of my subject matter I know to consider not only the audible elements but the culture as well. From all of this I can confidently continue on with my project.

Design

AVOL: Towards an Integrated Audio Visual Expression
Nuno N. Correia
August 2011
Date Accessed September 13, 2013

Audio Visual Online is a student made online application, which allows users to combine visuals based on premade audio loops. The designer created the application with audio loops that trigger various visualizations. The variety of visualizations for several different instruments allows for numerous combinations and design possibilities. Though slow at times, limited by flash, the application creates synchronized animations flawlessly. This project relates to my project as its shows a variety of relationships of audio to the visual elements.

Daft Punk Skrillex Remix – Conte
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kXpn8thEGbE
Uploaded April 8, 2013

This is the first video of Jack Conte I came across that demonstrates a cohesive relationship between audio and visual elements. Conte takes simple shapes such as squares and expresses the characteristics of the audio. Conte is able to coordinate all the visuals as well as pre recorded video clips during the video, creating a seamless video for his self produced mash up of Skrillex and Daft Punk. This is helpful to me as it gives me an insight of what to look for in demonstrating these expressions in my own project.

Daft Punk - Doin’ It Right - Conte Remix
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TAJBc7gW-Vc&list=SPpdRdeex1L9lc4WhR0tIwLXgoijzP4Ncv&index=4
Uploaded June 17, 2013

Jack Conte creates a one of kind visualization utilizing shapes, colors, lights and footage all in sync to his live studio production remix of Daft Punk’s Doin’ it Right. This video appeals to any audiophile or general music lover. Conte uses bright neon colors similar to what would be used at a show, but shows the softer side of his music as he cuts to clips of him playing his guitar in breaks of the song in 3 video clips simultaneously. All elements of the video synced spot on capturing the feeling of the audio as it is played. This is a step above all of his other videos. This video is helpful as it show how audio visualization can be conducted in real space.
Design

Night Stroll
http://vimeo.com/69949278
Tao Tajima
Accessed August 26, 2013

This motion graphics piece combines the use of video footage and geometric figures timed with audio to create a one of kind visual. The designer uses lighting techniques to emphasize the relationship of the figures in the environment. This reveals a different approach to audio visualization, which is typically done, on a solid background to have the greatest affect. The designer does a good job relating all the elements, but I am not certain if the audio was purposely out of sync with the shapes. This will be helpful in deciding the style of my project.

Launchpad Played on Sideways TV
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FJuu6LNRDCA
Uploaded July 31, 2013

This video takes a unique approach to audio visualization as it seems to be generated live as he plays back the audio. Conte mixes the visualization with pre recorded video clips, which he introduces and exits live during the video. This video effectively establishes a relationship between different sound levels and velocities to various shapes and designed elements. This helps me, as I will need to establish similar relationships in my motion graphics piece.

Technology

Lynda.com- Ableton Live 8 Essential Training
Uploaded December 10, 2010
Date Accessed September 11, 2013
Author Rick Schmunk

This training from Lynda.com covers everything needed to know to get started with Ableton Live 8. This music production software allows for music production and live performances using audio and midi technologies. Ableton live has become the popular program of choice in the many Bouyon bands in Dominica and abroad as it isn’t limited as the traditional tools such as the Akai MPC. This is very helpful as I aim to use Ableton to compose the music for my motion graphics piece.

Mograph Techniques: Animating to Music
Uploaded June 26, 2013
Date Accessed September 13, 2013
Author Ian Robinson

As I trying to visualize the genre of Bouyon and all it’s components I need to select a method of doing so. One method is using the Application Cinema 4D to display the audio components in a 3D space. This lesson by Ian Robinson will cover methods such as using sound keys to animate my graphics and “generating animated colors,” as stated in the lesson. This is very helpful, as this will add another dimension to visualize my project.
Technology

Editing and Animating to Sound with Adobe After Effects
Uploaded August 9, 2013
Date Accessed September 12, 2013
Author Chris Meyer

Though this lesson is intended for beginners learning to read audio, this lesson goes over topics such as crossfading and how to effectively match audio to video. This relates to my thesis as I interpret audio in a visual form. Though I already knowledgeable in match audio to video, I hope to pick up some new tricks and fine-tune my skills.

Bliss Paint 2
http://www.imaja.com/blisspaint/index.html
Last Updated 2005
Greg Jalbert
Accessed September 12, 2013

This application was design as an artistic application with the added ability to use audio to generate design. A one of a kind application, bliss paint stood out amongst the rest and was recommended by professor David Biles as an application worth reviewing. This relates to my project as it generates the designs in real time as to my timed motion graphics piece. This is helpful, as it will give me insight as to their programmed interpretation of audio in their application. This application, however, is only supported on machines supporting Mac OS9 and earlier.

VSXu
http://www.vsxu.com
Vovoid Media Technologies
2003-2007
Last Accessed September 11, 2013

VSXu is an application divided into three parts as an audio player creating pre programmed visuals, an application allowing users to create visuals with their own audio, and a server system allowing users to create visuals for events. The VSXu “Artiste” section stood out to me as it allowed for the creation of visuals easily by customizing parameters to create one of a kind visualization. This will help as I look deeper into others interpretations of audio.

Subject

Bouyon Music Talk with Skinny from Dominica
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dd2zVDgJhJg
Uploaded January 9, 2008
Socamatic

This informal interview focuses on the question, what is Bouyon music? This interview features Skinny Banton, former member of WCK. The video begins with a brief textual explanation of what the genre is. Skinny takes it a bit further as he lists the different cultural instruments that are vital in the genre. He expresses an understanding of the new generation of Bouyon as musicians are now sampling music to create the new. This relates to my project as it helps identify key instruments and the background to the genre.
Interview with Mr. Benji N°0 (August 2008)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pXp_gQjuA8Y
Uploaded August 30, 2008
ddgvideos

This video with Benji, then up and coming front man for Bouyon band Triple Kay International. During the interview Benji acknowledged WCK as his greatest influence in creating Bouyon music. This interview discusses the future of the genre as well as the international expansion and acceptations of the music outside of Dominica. This video does a good job explanation of what Bouyon is made of rather than what it is derived from. This relates to my project as it agrees with the future direction of the genre as new producers work with what has already been created to create new music.

Bouyon Documentary Part 1- Bouyon Chef Rah
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fUlgf4PaU_I
Slam Magazine
Uploaded February 9, 2011

This documentary follows the musical career of Derrick “Rah” Peters of the WCK band. As one of the pioneers of Bouyon, Rah is an icon, not only in Dominica, but also in the music industry of the island. Rah remarks on the origins of the Bouyon genre as well as his influences. The documentary mixes music videos, live video, songs by Rah, and footage from the interview to get across the message of Bouyon. This relates to my project as it explains the origins of the music.

Meet The New WCK
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bb5BPuD4Meo
Numusiczone
Uploaded December 12, 2010

This is a mixture of a promotional video and a documentary of the then “new” WCK band. The video focuses on more of the band than the music itself. The two feature band members of the video are Keith Goddard, original and founding bass guitarist, and Nigel JnoBaptist, front man and lead singer of the band. The band members acknowledge the past of Bouyon music as well as the future and growth of the genre in the next generation. This video contains footage from interviews and live performances of the band. This relates to my project as it gives a bit of story to the history of Bouyon.

A Definition of Musical Terms
http://www.avirtualdominica.com/music/define.htm
Accessed September 13, 2013
Last Updated 2004

For those looking to become better acquainted with Dominica, Avirtualdominica.com gives a general overview of everything from the island history to where to get your next bite to eat. In a clearly older part of the website, the dominant music genre’s of the island are defined giving examples of popular artists dominating the genre. The page defines the composition and roots of Bouyon music as created by the band WCK. This helps with my project as it explains some of the other genres that influence the genre of Bouyon.
Design Ideation

Color comp based on Dominica’s Flag

Color comp based on cultural clothing

Univers 65 Bold
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890

Univers 45 Light
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890
Methodological Design

Approach

My project is comprised of two main visual components, a motion graphics piece and compilation of interviews. The motion graphics portion will contain visual elements that are timed to audio, which I will also produce. The interview portion will contain excerpts of the interviews with various musicians and will focus mainly on the music and the emotions evoked by it.

This video will be 5-7 minutes being split between the motion graphics animation and interview portions. The dimensions for the animation and interviews will be 1920 by 1080 pixels. Though there is no written dialogue for the animation, it will follow an order of instrument introduction as such:

- Drums
- Piano
- Synth
- Bass guitar
- Accordion (Brass)

The interview will include talks with 3 – 5 musicians including Derrick “Rah” Peters, Cornell Phillips, and Wayne Benjamin.

Target Audience

My target audiences for this project are those that have an interest in music as well as designers that are interested in a different approach to audio visualization.

Software

- Adobe After Effects
- Adobe Premiere
- Adobe Illustrator
- Ableton Live 8
- Cinema 4D
- Fl Studio
- Logic Pro 9

Hardware

- Canon EOS D600 - Rebel T3i
- Novation Launchpad
- M-Audio Oxygen 49 Key USB Keyboard
Implementation Strategies

For my thesis I will create a composition of video interviews and a motion graphics animation. To create this compilation I will need to produce and audio track for which I will create graphic elements, which will be animated, in sync with the audio. The interviews will be conducted in New York and Dominica, where the majority of the musicians reside. As I will be overseas and will be working with experts of the subject matter, I will gather feedback from them, helping to fine-tune the project.

Dissemination

My thesis will be disseminated through various mediums, including, but not limited to:

- YouTube
- Vimeo
- Marpin Telecoms
- SAT Telecommunications LTD
- Dominica News Online
- Numusiczone

Evaluation Plan

Once the first part of the project is completed, I plan to complete two evaluations of the motion graphics piece.

For the first evaluation I will show the video to two different groups, individuals that have never heard of Bouyon music and those who have.

The second evaluation will be done with the artists that I intend on interviewing for the second half of the project.

The goals of these evaluations are to determine if viewers are able to make a connection between the visuals and audio. From the musicians I seek feedback on the accuracy of the portrayal and alignment with Bouyon music.

Budget

Travel: $1,000
Camera: $750
Keyboard: $85
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