

Elie Bashkow Arts Award Outcome Report

March, 2023

Original Proposal:

I applied to spend the summer living in Nashville, TN, networking and making music. I asked for \$2500 to cover two months of rent and utilities as well as an additional \$500 to spend on other expenses such as food and travel expenses.

Outcome:

As proposed, when last summer rolled around, I packed up my whole studio and drove to Nashville where I spent 2 and a half months subletting an apartment, making music and professional connections in music city. My experience there was so long, diverse, intense, and profoundly life changing that to do it justice in this format is quite a challenge.

For one thing, it was the longest amount of consecutive time I ever spent away from Charlottesville since my family moved here when I was a baby. This feels funny considering how much I've traveled and how many places I've seen as well as that I've been living on my own for 4 and a half years but I'd never before spent so much consecutive time in another place. Aside from the creative and professional aspects of this trip, the personal experience of finding myself in a new city without any structure or strong connections was immensely beneficial.

As I mentioned, I pretty much brought my entire home studio setup with me...my Honda CR-V was packed to the ceiling with instruments, speakers, preamps, etc. I even brought the acoustic panels I bought with my minigrant last spring. With all that stuff, I also brought a pretty decent workload of existing production projects and mixes that I knew I had to work on and that gave me a fallback in case things were slow.

As it turned out, things were anything but slow. I very quickly began to find myself meeting people, jamming with other musicians, going to writing sessions, and producing with other artists and producers. I met a number of highly successful producers and engineers who shared their perspectives and thoughts with me and made a lot of friends.

Since trying to give a comprehensive overview of what I gained and learned from this trip would be impossible, especially considering how intangible the majority of these lessons were, I figured I'd tell a singular story about one of the many amazing experiences I had in Nashville that might give a sense of how this summer opened doors for me.

One night, about a week into my time there, I was driving home after having an introductory writing and production session at the home studio of a country rapper who would go on to become one of my closest collaborators of the past year when I realized I needed to get gas. I pulled into the nearest station and started filling my tank.

Suddenly I heard a voice say “are you from Virginia?”. I turn around to see a young man standing there.

“I saw your license plate and couldn't help but ask” he explained “I went to college at UVA”.

Of course, I immediately shared that I was currently at UVA and we struck up a conversation. It turned out that he was a singer-songwriter who had been in Nashville for a few years since he graduated. We exchanged numbers and he told me he was having a little party at his house a couple weeks later and invited me to come by.

At the party a few weeks later, I randomly struck up a conversation with a cheerful looking guy who introduced himself to me as Mikey and we found we had a lot in common. He also studied anthropology in college and is Jewish. He had just moved from Nashville to Brooklyn and was back recording an EP that week. We became good friends and started working together on various projects. Mikey ended becoming a strong collaborator and even mentor type of figure to me. In fact, later this week, I'm going to NYC to work with him on a sync-licensing project we are starting together.

That type of spontaneous and serendipitous happening was a daily occurrence and the amount of funny little coincidences that turned into meaningful experiences and relationships continues to astound me when I really stop and think about it.

Ultimately, even after my great experience there, I've never felt like Nashville is really a place I should move to. I have, however, returned on two separate occasions since the summer to work and hang out with my friends there. Thanks to my time there, I was able to meet so many amazing people like Mikey. In the past few months, I've decided that New York is probably a better fit for me in terms of living; however, without my time spent in Nashville first, I don't know if I would have had the perspective to have that realization. Paired with the countless friends, collaborators, and connections I made there, I can truly say that my trip to Nashville changed my life for the better and I'm very grateful to the Miller Arts Scholarship for allowing that to happen for me. It truly would not have been possible without that support.



My transplanted home studio in the bedroom of my Nashville sublet apartment



Playing a show at the East Room in Nashville with artist Claire Ernst



The studio of prominent record producer and engineer Vance Powell. We spent about an hour and a half together and he gave me a lot of extremely valuable advice.



Recording drum parts for country-rap artist “Cowboy Killer” in his living room. He and I are still actively collaborating.



Listening party for an unreleased record by punk rock band “The Foxies”. I became good friends with the band’s guitar player and he introduced me a lot of cool people.