

THE LIFE LINE OF MUSIC:  
HUNGRY MELODY,  
THE MUSIC OF SAN MARCOS

HONORS THESIS

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by

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Youtube: Hungry Melody

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=enyYO0S--W8>

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this to the hardworking hip hop and rhythm and blues artists in San Marcos, Texas, who feel that their work is not being seen enough. You *ARE* seen. You *ARE* noticed and I want to acknowledge you and let you know that you will get the attention your music deserves. This entire documentary is for you.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
DEDICATION .....	v
ABSTRACT .....	vii
STATEMENT .....	1
REFERENCES/LITERATURE CITED .....	9

## **ABSTRACT**

This author's statement is an overview on why I created the San Marcos, Texas, hip-hop and rhythm and blues scene documentary. Explaining the San Marcos music history and my own experience with music. I also discuss each artist and why I chose them to be a part of my project. It is an in depth explanation on my creative process. It is to show you it isn't my first rodeo with artists so I am one to trust when giving these artists a platform.

## AUTHORS STATEMENT

Hungry Melody – The Music of San Marcos, is a short documentary I put together to recognize hip-hop and rhythm and blues artists in the area. Generally, when people first think of the San Marcos, Texas, music scene, they immediately think of the rock and country music genre, overlooking another world of music created by current and previous Texas State University students. Although short, I wanted to provide a visual platform for several artists to showcase their love for music.

Personally, I love music. Music is a language that everyone speaks. It conveys emotion, reminds you of particular memories -- music can speak to the soul. When you listen to music it can transport you into an entire new world. Just another part that makes music...music. Lyrics on instrumentals are the equivalent of poetry. According to Britannica Encyclopedia, the definition of poetry is literature that evokes a concentrated imaginative awareness of experience or a specific emotional response through language chosen and arranged for its meaning, sound, and rhythm

(<https://www.britannica.com/art/poetry>) The words over instrumentals are extra rhythms that complement the already set tempo. When put together it creates a masterpiece. The lyrics also match the feeling that the instrumental gives off as well. Lyrics and instrumentals are kind of like painting. The words are the paint and the instrumentals are the canvas. Of course, music can be just as emotional without words. For example, when a bride is walking down the aisle and she hears the harp and the piano in harmony together, she might cry. The music is brightening up an already happy moment. It brought out more emotion in her and made the scene much more impactful. This is one

reason why music is important. Some say music only exists and it doesn't make a difference but what do you listen to in your car? What plays in the background of shows? What do you do in the shower (I am referring to singing)? Music is all around us. It has such a big role that we don't even notice.

I do music. I classify as a singer and choose to make my own music because, as much as I enjoy hearing songs by other artists, sometimes their lyrics don't say exactly what I need to hear. I have learned that I am better at explaining my feelings over a beat than in person, or even over a text message, so I choose to make music that speaks to me. It makes me feel like my life is one big musical. I could be going through a tough situation and when I write a song about it, all of a sudden, I have said what I needed to say and now I am practicing a new song. I love being able to generate my feelings in such a unique way and that I can allow other people into my world. My music is something that I share because it shows people that they are not alone and can relate to my own situations.

Being an artist is difficult. Being a student on top of that can be even more challenging. Between deadlines for assignments and deadlines for work it can become overwhelming. Some days you won't have any time to write a song or record because you have to study for a test and do four assignments. Other days you have time to do music but you're stuck in-between writing and recording. Or maybe you have a show to perform at that you know you will have a large audience but it is the same night as your study session. It is a life full of dreams versus education. Both equally important but they will continue to fight for your time until you graduate. On top of time management, music is a career that is kind of frowned upon. It is a career that few are successful in so

sometimes you have to encourage yourself to keep going. You will hear more no's than yes's and it has already begun here in college. Getting your peers to support your music can even be a stretch because your name isn't shining in lights. You will question your work all the time, never knowing how good you really are or if you should choose a different career path. This explains why college can be questionable. You have to choose another interest you are passionate about, and get a degree, 'just in case' life doesn't work out. Like having the words GIVE UP stamped on your music resume.

I want my audience to dive into the mind of a music artist. What music means to them, how they create their music, and what makes their music their own. Seeing an unfiltered story of an artist can be an eye opener. You get a chance to be in their shoes. The idea of making a visual thesis came about because I am a film student. My major is electronic media with a minor in theater in order to satisfy my desire for a film degree because there is not a film school at Texas State University. I also figured that doing my thesis in this way would show off some of my editing skills I have learned during my time here. I also chose a visual approach because, to me, it can be less fulfilling to explain an artist's vision without seeing and hearing their work. I wanted a personal approach to give the artists the freedom to express themselves. I wanted the audience to feel as if they were the artist themselves when they are watching the finished film and to experience what it is like to be a musician.

San Marcos is known for many things, including its music scene, but hip hop and rhythm and blues always seem to be on the back burner. With Artists like George Strait and the Ace in the Hole Band rising from the area, it was easy for the country and rock genre to take over the city. Ever since the late 1970s, San Marcos has given the country

and rock genres a platform to showcase music. This includes making venues like the Cheatham Street Warehouse to feature the early talent within those genres. Today, venues for country and rock have a larger audience, and bands from across central Texas travel to San Marcos just to perform in this area because of its reputation. Bars in the square like Valentinos and Kiva even opened up their weekends and created small stages to all country and rock bands to give them more of a spotlight. The city supports country and rock because it is all it sees. Besides Wake the Dead coffee house in San Marcos, it is rare for a venue to give stage time to hip hop and rhythm and blues artists. However, every day these artists find a way to get their names out there without a hand out from the venues in the city. As an illustration, at one point hip hop and rhythm and blues shows were being created by other hip hop artists to help each other perform. These shows were held in a couple of San Marcos bars by other hip hop artists which allowed a larger audience. It was harder to convince bars to have hip hop shows because in their experience hip hop music brings ‘rowdy crowds.’ ‘No’ is not an answer hip hop and rhythm and blues artists would take.

In the process of creating this documentary, I was able to see a raw side of San Marcos artists and to really understand why they continue to create music and why they love it so much. The three artists I chose, Jas the Philo, Jide, and Delisha J, are well known students at Texas State. Besides their music they are passionate in their studies and continue to go to school to get their education, even though music is their ultimate goal.

Jas the Philo is a recent Texas State graduate with her master’s degree. She agreed to do this documentary because she said it would give her an opportunity to share her

story and love for creating music. I chose her because her music is different from the average artist. Her singing style, and the type of melody she sings, attracted me to know and hear more about her. If you listen to her music, you will notice that her choice of melodies do not follow the normal outline of rhythm and blues music. She is developing her own style, which I think is creative because other artists cannot create the same sound she does. Eventually her different style will make her a star and other artists will follow in her footsteps.

Jide is a new artist. For a long while, he only made beats never playing the role of a lyricist. Recently he started recording his own music and performing in the area, surprising everyone that he too, did music. Jide was chosen for this documentary because he is a new San Marcos artist who has quickly made his presence known in the Texas State hip hop community. Jide performed at South by Southwest (SXSW) in Austin, Texas, and the Hip Hop Congress Epidemic with only two months of experience and only one music video. He is putting in the work needed to be an artist, so I had to have him participate. I wanted to get Jide's story so far on becoming an artist in the area and to understand how he has developed with the help of other artists here. San Marcos has a small hip hop community that he takes advantage of.

Delisha J has been a well-known rhythm and blues artist in the San Marcos area for two years and has taken full advantage of the music scene here. She has performed everywhere and has taken her music outside of San Marcos for better opportunities. She has attracted the attention of artists in Atlanta and will be flying out to work with them soon. The other artists support her to the fullest extent. She goes out of the box with her music and mixes non stereotypical genres with her hip hop taste. It was important for me

to include her because she will soon venture out of San Marcos. Out of all the artists I know here, she is one of the few that is progressing at this moment in time, so capturing her progress was critical to show the audience that these artists are moving up.

Getting the footage throughout this semester was hectic. A lot of artists did not start recording until late February which put me behind schedule. However, I understood their progress because you cannot rush the process of music making. Music must be done from the heart and soul and I wanted to capture that elegance whenever they were working. I wanted natural enjoyment and emotions that would come whenever they were creating a song. I consistently reminded them that I was a 'fly on the wall' and to 'pretend I was not there' in order to calm them down when I had the camera. By March I had finally gotten some b-roll footage but not any interviews. Interviews were essential for me because I wanted their words to lead the story. I did not want any commentary because I felt it would take away the authenticity of the work. So I let their words narrate. In the editing process, I organized their words as best as I could. Because of this I was still behind. As said before, the artists are also students, so school work and projects took up most of their time during the week making it harder to get footage. Luckily, I was able to work around the schedules of said artists and gather as most footage I could. They are extremely busy so I was happy they took time out to assist. The original idea was to have seven artists share their story but the other five did not have time. Some were on tour, some were always on the go and some wanted to remove the label of being a 'San Marcos artists' so that they could grow and develop. Overall, I am happy with the footage I was able to collect and I was happy I could still tell a story with what I had.

Most of my b-roll footage consisted of studio work. A real behind the scenes look

on how the music is created. Most people think artists go to fancy studios when the truth is that hip hop and rhythm and blues artists start at in-home studios. This is a truth that the audience should be made aware of. Artists start off on their own, finding producers and sound engineers that love hip hop and rhythm and blues as much as they do, and that are willing to join forces to make a mark on San Marcos and make it to the top. Footage of artists at work is the core of the documentary. The hip hop artists here are more than ‘SoundCloud rappers’. They put their money and talent into music. You can tell that they are doing it for the love of music not just to get attention. Seeing them work can change the minds of those who think that the hip hop scene is just a game. These days it is hard to find a hip hop or rhythm and blues artist who cares about the music and has a definite goal of making it in the music industry. It seems like everyone is making music just to say they do music. People constantly release music, good and bad, and weeding out the best for a music career is the challenge. These artists put their best foot forward doing their work and presenting their own music.

When I finally collected the footage I needed, I began editing using Adobe Premiere video editing software. It took me quite some time to edit the entire video. Organization was the hardest part because of all of the interviews. I wanted to make sure that I made a story out of the artist’s own words and that it made sense. Finding key words or sentences that would make the audience understand the flow of the story was hard because everything they said felt important to me. Honestly, because they were so real in the interviews with me I wish I could have put their entire interview in.

The final edited product presents the artists love for music, how they make music and how the San Marcos scene has helped them and their artistry. It’s a conversational

documentary, very natural and casual letting the audience understand the artist, to see their side of the world of music. In the end, I hope that my audience will gain respect for the hip hop and R&B artists in San Marcos. They work so hard to create shows and gather the attention they need to have their music heard. With the work ethic and path they are on now I am sure that over time they will gain the needed attention by the city. Hip hop and R&B is taking the industry by storm with new artists like SZA, Cardi B and Travis Scott. San Marcos is going to have to adjust and add new genres to their historical music scene in order to gather a broader audience to the city. Bars and more venues will eventually open their doors to hip hop and R&B or maybe a venue will be created just for live music. The local hip hop and R&B artists are starting a movement and San Marcos will soon catch up.

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