

Sean Magee uses YouTube, original music to set himself apart

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Senior Reporter

"It's just a little bit different, a little bit different, a little bit something more..."

These lyrics to the song "A Little Bit Different" written by Elon University senior music technology major Sean Magee, ring true to the industry he seeks to enter. The music business constantly looks for original talent, and Magee has worked, through his studies and his extracurricular endeavors, to make himself an act to be noticed.

Magee started his work with music at age six when he began playing piano, but it wasn't until he started writing his own material that he saw music as a possible career for himself.

"At about age nine, I started writing melodies and songs, no lyrics or anything," Magee said. "My piano teacher [Gerry Diamond] was into creating your own music, and I fell in love with that. I realized music was what I wanted to do."

Diamond is a musician in his own right, who performed and wrote original songs with his band in Boston in the early nineties. Then, he moved to North Carolina and opened the Family Piano Academy in 1993, where he fell in love with teaching. Diamond met Magee in 1999, when Magee was six years old and eager to learn.

"He was one of those kids that brought great energy to a lesson every time," Diamond said. "He never had a down lesson. He was fearless in everything. He was attentive to detail and disciplined. You have to really give his mom credit, because kids that age don't just have that kind of discipline."

Diamond's teaching emphasizes the creation of original compositions because he thinks the feeling of accomplishment after completing an original work is empowering for any musician. Diamond is particularly impressed with Magee's songwriting and says its impact has hit close to home.

"His original stuff is so good," Diamond said. "He's the perfect combina-

tion of a musician's musician and a pop musician. Little kids are great barometers for what's catchy, and my kids sing Sean Magee songs around the house constantly. His songs are really well-crafted and catchy."

Magee worked with Diamond throughout high school. He eventually chose to attend Elon because a lot of schools don't offer music technology or music production majors. He also liked Elon's more commercially driven curriculum. Citing U2 and Billy Joel as his major influences, Magee said he didn't want to study music in a classical environment.

Clay Stevenson, a professor in the music department at Elon, has worked with Magee in a number of his classes, including his senior seminar. He praises Magee for his passion for the subject and his drive for excellence.

"Sean practices his craft tirelessly," Stevenson said. "He is known to spend hours on end rehearsing on the piano and writing songs in the practice rooms at Center for the Arts. He is also a competent music producer and engineer. He has a great ear for how sounds fit together in a musical landscape, and his productions are known for being very 'tight' and tuned."

As Magee works hard to hone his musical skills, he has also discovered ways to make himself marketable. Last year, Magee worked with cinema students to create a music video for his original song, "A Little Bit Different." Despite the logistics of creating a music video, Magee said he had an enjoyable experience and looks to do it again.

In the meantime, he uses YouTube to grow his audience. He has arranged and recorded popular songs to post on his YouTube channel. His cover of Pitbull's "Timber" has more than 60,000 views, and his other videos are headed in the same direction.

"Last semester, I was going to Raleigh to play live gigs and I wasn't getting anywhere," Magee said. "It was good to make a few bucks, but at bars and restaurants, no one is listening. Online content is



JANE SEIDEL | Staff Photographer
Senior music technology major Sean Magee has been a pianist since age six and today has found his following on YouTube with his cover of Pitbull's "Timber", which reached over 60,000 views.