

Tileyard London

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MA Commercial Music Producer

Creation Module

Element C1

CMP0920

LEVEL 7 2020/2021

Word Count: 2750

In this written proposal I will lay out my ideas for my final project, what research has inspired them. I will also share my project plan and what outcomes I anticipate and how I will measure the success of this project.

My Creative Intentions

For my portfolio submission I plan to have two branches to my creative project. As described by Beentjes (2021) the modern music producer works on several activities simultaneously, wearing many different hats. One day mixing, one day writing, one day composing or mastering. It is commonly thought that there are two main reasons for pursuing this type of portfolio career rather than simply being an artist. It is firstly to have better financial security as you are not relying on only one income stream, and secondly because it allows creatives to continue to develop and grow their skills. Apparently 93% of millennials see ongoing skills development as an essential part of future music careers.

Teague and Smith (2015) claim that pedagogical approaches in higher music education could prepare students better for a realistic future in complex working lives like portfolio careers. However, I personally perceive Tileyard doing a good job of this, as we are frequently reminded in this course, and throughout many articles and literatures that producers and musicians should diversify their work base and be open to many avenues in the industry. For my final project I want to take on board that advice by looking at my submitted work in two parts.

Firstly I will create some of my own creative work as an artist and secondly I will produce some work for sync. These are both avenues I would like to take in my future career, so it seemed appropriate to incorporate both into my submission.

“The majority of today’s professional musicians create satisfying “portfolio” careers, braiding together part time work and entrepreneurial ventures to capitalize on their talents, interests, and experience.” Beeching (2010) pp. 7

So taking on what Beeching has stated, I will look at my own work is more of a creative outlet for me and the sync work as an entrepreneurial pursuit where I would receive my income.

My work for Sync.

I have decided to choose one real life brief and submit those pieces both in reality and in my portfolio. Even though the work I create for sync is a financial pursuit it is also important that I enjoy the music I am creating. At the moment I could find an abundance of K-pop, Christmas and happy lyrical briefs online, however, none of these are things I would enjoy making, and even though in my career I will have to make things I don't personally engage with, for this project I would prefer to.

Ultimately, I would like to create music for video games, sci-fi TV, documentaries etc. so after some searching I found a brief that piqued my interest (see figure.1), and so I will use it as my foundation for this aspect of my project.

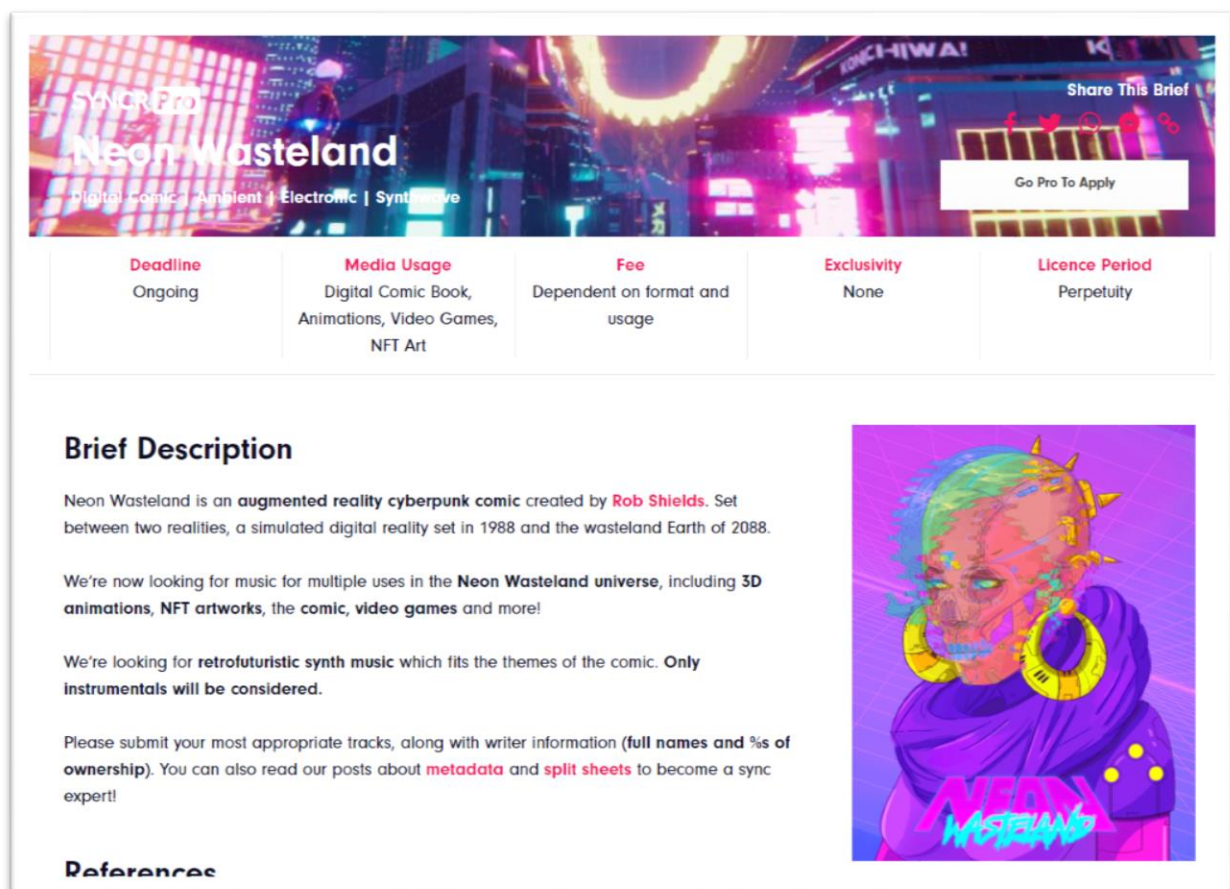


Figure 1 Neon Wasteland Brief

An augmented reality cyberpunk comic is something I would really enjoy creating music for. I think their project sounds really interesting and innovative, so I am thoroughly looking forward to it.

My own creative works

This is a creative outlet for me, I would like to make a small body of work that establishes my own artistic and production style. However, I recognise it is important that I consider "If your music sits in the world, what is its life going to be like in the world?" Cole (2021)

I have never officially released any music as an independent artist. Historically I have been a band member or produced for friends. My initial thought for creative aspect was to write music again with my old band now I am back in Ireland (due to covid), however, I decided against this in pursuit of doing something solo. Creating solo music to eventually release goes against every fibre of me, as a drummer I have always been in the background, and even with producing I am behind with the "artist" up front, it feels safer that way, only ever making my own music for myself. However, a couple of years ago I uploaded a song to SoundCloud as part of my BIMM University submission, I hadn't officially released it, with no intention of doing so, it

was just on SoundCloud forgotten about and two years later I found an artist called Tokyo Rose had ripped off my whole song, practically a carbon copy minus the Stephen Hawking speech I had on part of it. I found it flattering, but it made me realise that if I am going to make music I need to actually release it officially so I have some ownership over it and not just have them sitting on my hard drive or on a forgotten cloud. It also made me realise, that maybe if someone went to the hassle of copying, or being “inspired” by my music, it must actually be ok, so, I hope that including an aspect of my own independent music in this project will help me get to the point of releasing something instead of always second guessing myself. So answering Steve’s question about where my music would live, the first step is off my hard drive and out in the world.

Musical Inspiration

‘The Algorithm’ is a solo producer who started creating a blend of EDM and prog metal music in late 2009. When asked in an interview how he would describe his music he replied “It sounds like some prog metal created by a computer virus that lives in a Tron movie” Jacquin (2015) what a brilliantly accurate description of his own music. He has performed numerous live gigs and alongside releasing four albums he also made some music for video games. I really enjoy the mash up of two genres with the dark synth vibes mixed with progressive metal, but my favourite thing about him is how successfully he pulls it off as a one man production. When reading reviews of his work, some people talk about the songs as if it is a whole band playing them, not knowing it’s all digital, this is something I would hope to achieve with my own music.

‘Their Dogs Were Astronauts’ are an instrumental progressive metal and Djent band who have released 4 albums. They are a duo, but bring a full band feeling to their music with interesting experimental electronic vibes. I would like to incorporate the unconventional sound that they bring to their music, from their time signatures to their choice of instruments, (all based off their love of guitar riffs). So musically I would like to create music that captures the experimental and full instrumental band feel of these two artists, however with some more synthwave undertones and my own personal style.

Alongside the tracks themselves I would also like to create music videos, this is not something I have ever done before, and rather than source it out I would like to push myself to try and develop this skill. I have a lot of ideas in my head, but being aware of my time constraints I will set the goal of a minimum of one video for a title track, but with the hope that I can create one for each song. People naturally associate synthwave music with neon cartoons of cars driving, so I want to have a nod to this aesthetic by keeping cartoonesque stylized video and some of those colour accents, however, I want to use real video I record myself. Starcadian’s ‘Interspace’ (2017)

has a real life video (see figures 2-3) with some after effects added to it which I like the style of and plan to use this concept in my own videos.



Figure 2 Starcardian Interspace Screen Shot 1 – Neon strips added



Figure 3: Starcardian Interspace Screenshot 2 - colour grading added

Michael Oakley's 'Left Behind' (2019) also has a music video with a real video of him singing neon after affects added to him, and lots of random clip art on it. I personally don't like the collage style of his video, it's very kitschy, but I appreciate the neon aspects and his use of black and white under video, so I may play around with a mixture of grey scale and neon, but not use any clipart style images found in his video.



Figure 4: Michael Oakley Left Behind Screenshot – Neons and clip art added

As well as the musical style and the video style, it is also necessary to be aware of the story I want my music to tell. The message behind the music and the journey it takes you on should be linked to the realities of our consumeristic world and the digital age we now live in. Without lyrics, the nods to it will be in the progression of the music and the instruments chosen and the images provided. Some videos that display a similar dystopian message in their own way are “Are you Lost in The World Like Me” by Steve Cutts (Cassella, 2017) (see figures 5-6) and The Sad Reality of This World (The Outcome, 2019) (see figures 7-8) These are much more visual with their message than I will be capable of, but I hope to incorporate in some subtle way the realities they portray of how trapped and lost some people feel in our current world, in my own way within the scope of my own skills in this project.



Figure 5: Are you Lost Screen Shot 1

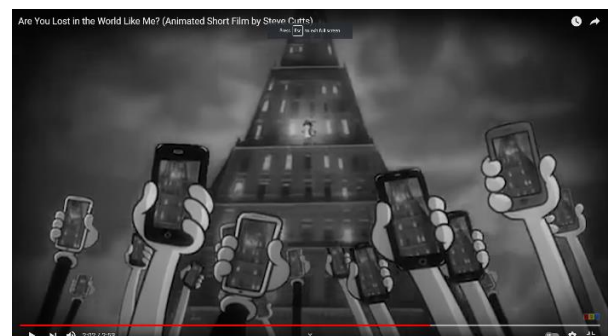


Figure 6: Are You Lost Screen Shot 2



Figure 7: The Sad Reality Screen Shot 1



Figure 8: The Sad Reality Screen Shot 2

A unique song that I feel embodies all three aspects, the sound, the video and the message is 'Terminal Slam' by Squarepusher (2020). The song is a dark instrumental warped electronic sounding track. Not only does it sound like the inside of a computer, but visually the video maintains this theme and style with lots of glitches. The message that I perceive the song musically and visually portrays is that of overstimulation. The music is very intense, fast paced and gritty sounding, with moments of intensity and darkness. All the while the video shows a woman on her commute completely bombarded with advertising, billboards and signs everywhere, her senses being constantly stimulated with human consumerism, difficult to escape the constant bombardment. It comes to the point where even people around her are perceived as glitches in her technological goggles that she sees the world through (see figures 9-11). It's a very poignant piece for me, after watching it I'm left feeling a little vacant, but in a good way, it inspires me to want to make music like this, music that when it and the video are over people are left sitting in that moment of silence pondering everything. I am not sure I will be able to pull it off to his standard, but I am excited to try.

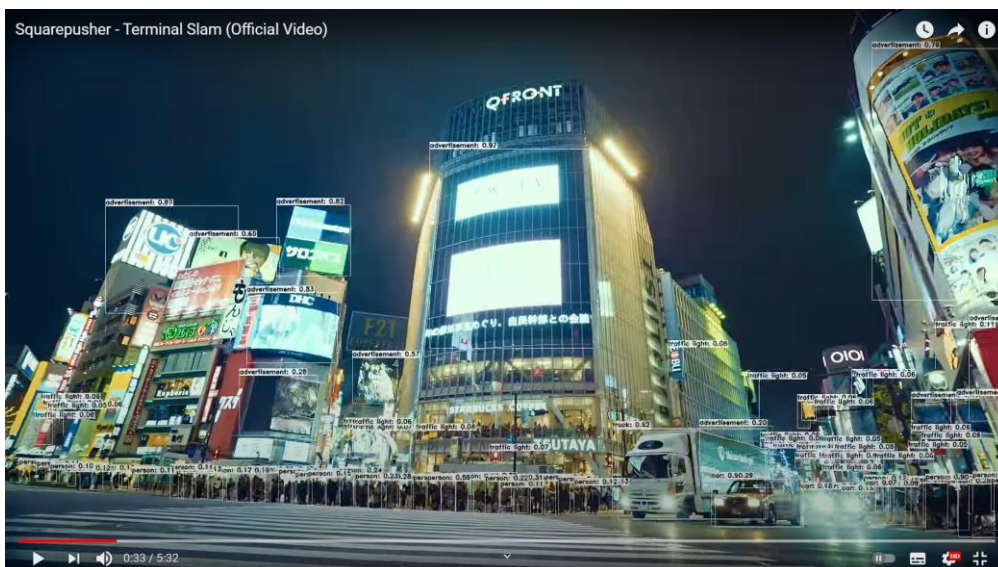


Figure 9: Squarepusher 'Terminal Slam' ScreenShot1 – Goggle View

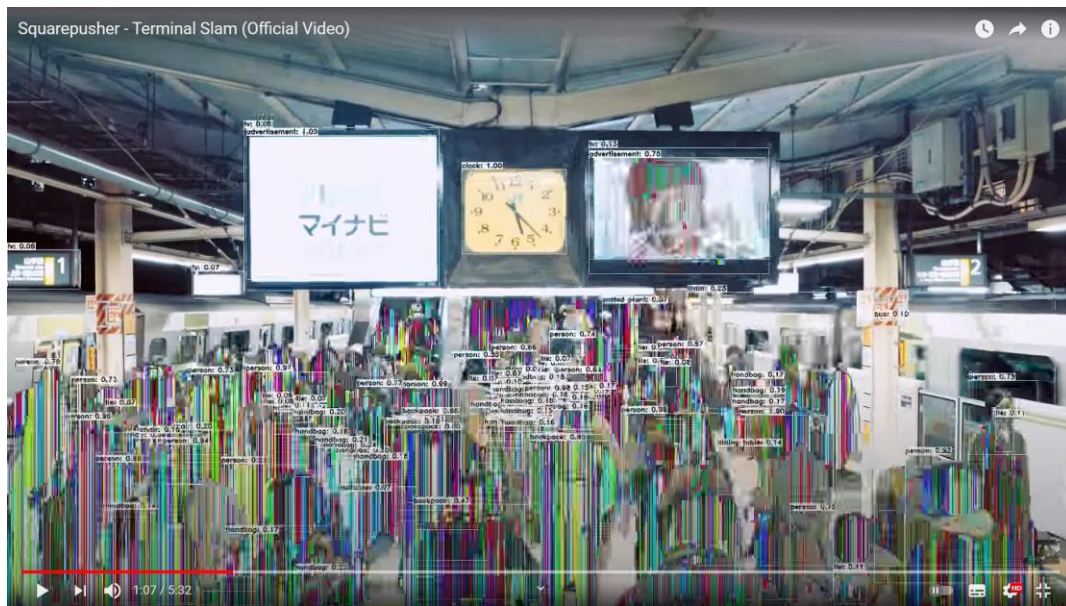


Figure 10: Squarepusher 'Terminal Slam' screenshot2 – glitched people

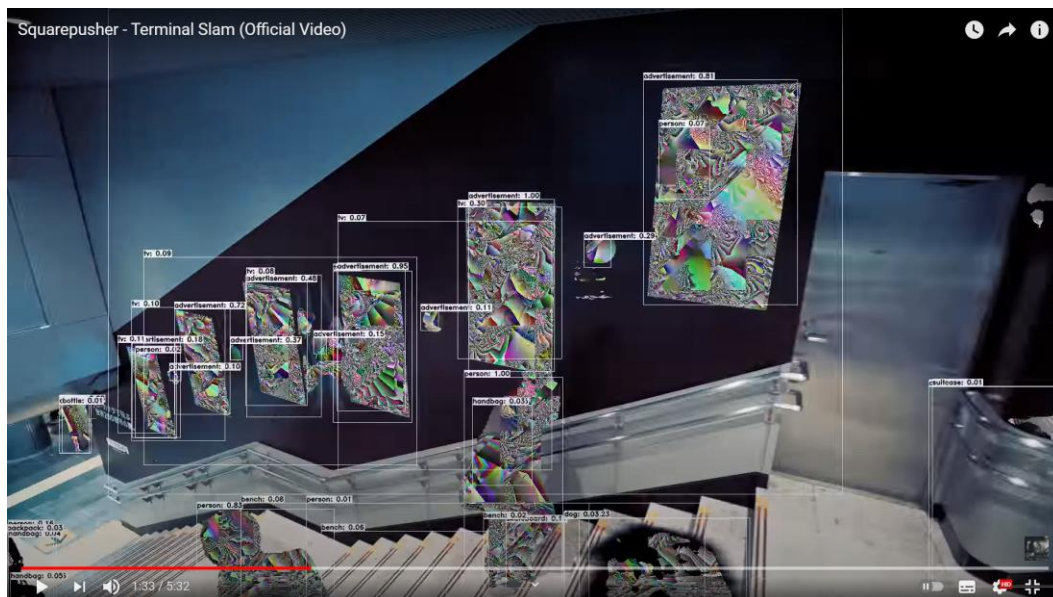


Figure 11: Squarepusher 'Terminal Slam' Screenshot3 – Advertisements

Emotional responses to music

There is a lot of fascinating research on the emotive powers of music, it is easy to get lost in numerous academic articles on such. There are a few worth note in the context to this project. A survey carried out by Scherer et. al (2002) showed that the structure of music and acoustic features carried more weighting in emotional reactions than the listener mood or contextual factors. So theoretically independent of the mood or other factors at play in my listener's current state, it should be possible to alter their emotion to coincide with that of the music if done effectively. Both Huron (2006) and Sloboda (1991) discuss what it is that music exploits in order to achieve an emotional response: motifs, instrumental changes, unexpected harmonies or appoggiaturas, all these things posed to be linked to humans' natural

instinct and awareness of sounds in our surroundings. In this creative aspect I will implement some of these techniques in the hope to evoke a human response, however linking to the story behind the music there will also be long periods of monotony reflective of the human condition in our 9-5 world, absence of layers at time as a reflection of the human isolation. Trying to tell a story instrumentally will be challenging but hopefully effective if done well, and as mentioned before Square Pusher (2020) has done it very well, so I hope to emulate this in my own way.

Project Planning

I have created a rough outline of my time plan for this project (see fig.12). I would like to prioritise the music I am writing for the sync brief so I can get it submitted as soon as possible. Then I can focus on my own artist music and the creative elements I have in mind for that as I know video creation will be a challenge for me. I will do this process for one song to begin with and then judge from the success of creating a video for that one song if I believe it is feasible to carry on doing so for all my other tracks.

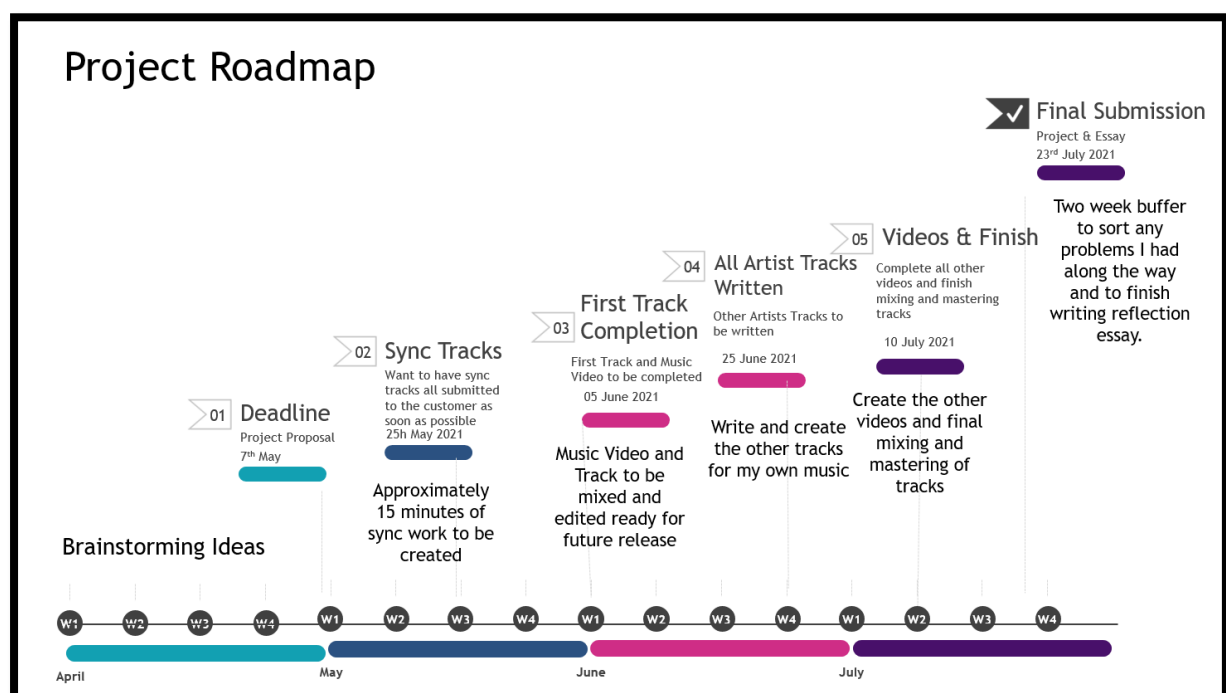


Figure 12: TimeLine of Project

For the Artist aspect of my project it is important to know your target audience. Luckily I have previously done some demographic research off the back of a synthwave track I had created (the one that I suspect "inspired" Tokyo Rose), effectively showing that my target audience is myself and for this project it will remain similar (see Fig.13)

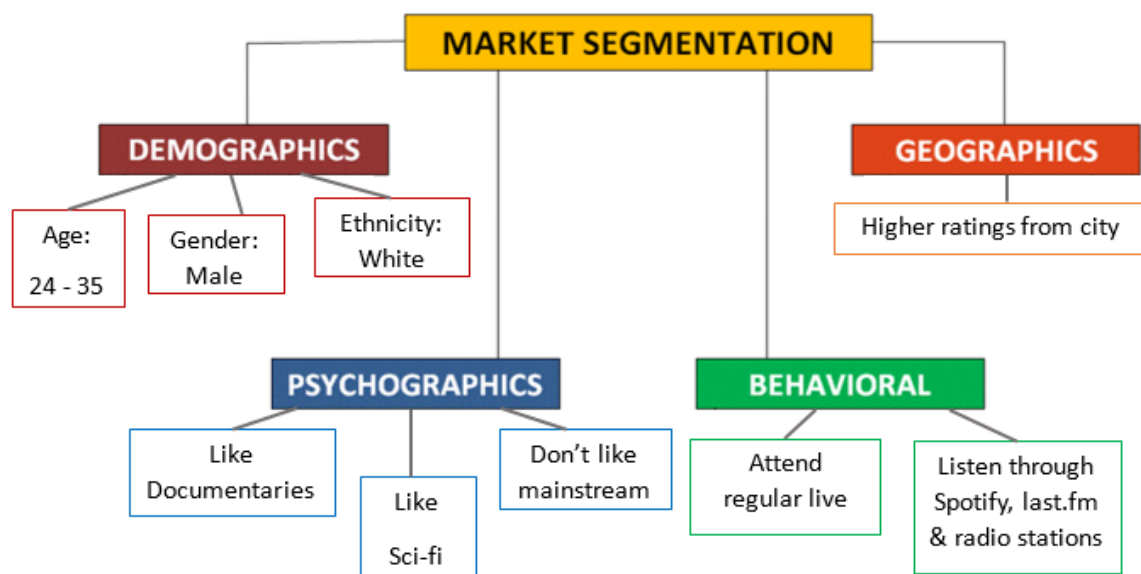


Figure 13: Market Segmentation

I am now branching into a different demographic from before though in the fact that I am now making a video associated with my music, tapping into YouTube market, so this aspect will require further research going forward, but I am satisfied with the inspiration mentioned previously as my starting point for video creation.

What are my benchmarks for success?

For the Sync Aspect of my project, the ultimate benchmark for success would be if the client actually used my music in their online comic book and I got paid for it. However I would still classify this aspect of my project successful if I submitted music to the customer I am happy with and would be able to submit for other similar briefs in the future if not chosen for this one.

For the personal creative aspect of the project success is a more interesting thing to define. The success comes from whether I have successfully managed to pull off the aesthetic and mood I desire from my music, and this comes down to the audience's experience. To establish whether my music was successful at what I wanted it to do I would need to collect opinions of listeners, effectively carrying out research on a sample of consumers. I could define whether I am happy with what I created and if I achieved what I desired, but at the end of the day if my intent is to create music for other people, then their perceptions and feelings are as valid as my own.

For this project as a whole the benchmarks for success will be linked to my ability to manage my time effectively, was I able to create everything I wanted to in the time I wanted to and to an appropriate standard. Which things took more time than expected, and which deserved more time than they were given? All questions that can only be answered on the other side of this project.

Another benchmark for success would be on the video aspect, from limited skills to actually producing at least one music video and hopefully more. The quality and

quantity of videos created will be a strong marker of success for me on the project as this is outside my comfort and experience zone.

Final thoughts

I am both excited and scared by this final project, but I am aware that if you aren't being challenged you aren't growing. In the words of T.S. Eliot:

"If you aren't in over your head, how do you know how tall you are?"

(McAlpine 2015)

So for me this final project on top of the other projects taken on during this masters course are helping me to finally see my true metaphorical height.

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