

Re-Thinking Photojournalism

<https://youtu.be/-ydgxLDPJHw>

Part 1:

Photojournalism and documentary photography have long aimed to reveal unseen realities while raising questions about truth and representation. Photographers such as Dorothea Lange documented social hardship during the Great Depression, emphasising empathy and human dignity. Similarly, Gordon Parks used photography to confront racial inequality, showing how photographs can shape public understanding. Contemporary photographers continue this approach, but with a greater awareness of ethics, consent, and power dynamics between the subject and the creator.

In researching these practices, I considered how representation can either reinforce stereotypes or challenge them. Ethical concerns, such as gaining permission, avoiding exploitation, and accurately portraying subjects, are especially relevant in documentary work. In my own project, which focuses on the behind-the-scenes of the music industry, I aim to present an honest and respectful perspective of artists and production environments. Rather than glamorising or exposing individuals unfairly, I intend to highlight the collaborative and often unseen labour that shapes music culture. Moreover, this approach aligns with documentary traditions that prioritises authenticity while remaining sensitive to the people being represented.

Part 2:

Workshops and experimentation with both digital and traditional processes significantly developed my technical and creative skills which helped me achieve my aim of documenting the behind-the-scenes of the music industry. Through practical sessions, I improved my understanding of camera settings such as aperture, shutter speed and ISO, allowing me to confidently shoot in low-light, fast-paced environments. Whereby I explored depth of field, varied compositions, and different viewpoints to capture both production and performance moments. I also developed stronger observational and timing skills, enabling me to capture decisive moments within unpredictable live settings.

In post-production, I enhanced my digital editing skills using Adobe Photoshop and Camera Raw. I defined how to control exposure, contrast, tonal range, and texture to create more refined and visually consistent outcomes while maintaining an authentic documentary style. I

experimented with black and white editing, further developed my understanding of how tone and contrast shape mood and narrative.

Additionally, working with film improved my ability to work instinctively and adapt to limitations, strengthening my problem-solving skills. However, this module also highlighted gaps in technical preparation, such as managing battery life and storage, which affected my workflow . Moving forward, I aim to improve my technical consistency while continuing to develop both creative and practical skills.

Part 3:

My project developed from initial research and access to the Swansea Arena “House Party” event, where I aimed to document both performance and behind-the-scenes activity. Initially, my focus was broad, exploring production, equipment, and preparation. This is evident in my visual studies, which show a wide range of compositions, including overhead shots, eye-level perspectives, and detailed close-ups of instruments and staging . These early outcomes helped me refine my visual direction, leading to a more focused portfolio that emphasised atmosphere, texture, and the unseen labour behind live music.



As the project progressed, I selected stronger images for post-production and began developing a consistent editing style. I was influenced by photographers such as Chris Sidoruk and Charles Peterson, I experimented with high contrast, monochrome tones, and grain to create a raw, documentary aesthetic. Furthermore, this development is visible in my final portfolio, where images feel more cohesive and intentional, particularly in the use of lighting, composition, and subject focus.





This portfolio then informed my final multimedia submission, where I extended the narrative beyond still images to create a more immersive representation of the music environment and behind the scenes. Overall, my practice has improved through stronger technical control, more confident composition, and a clearer visual identity, allowing my work to feel more authentic, dynamic, and resolved.

Part 4:

In selecting and sequencing my portfolio, I focused on building a visual narrative that felt intentional rather than simply presenting a collection of strong images. Using my contact sheets as a starting point, I was able to compare compositions, lighting conditions, and subject matter to identify which images worked both individually and as part of a wider sequence. My selection process prioritised images that suggested atmosphere and trueness, rather than only performance, allowing the work to communicate a broader perspective of the music environment.

In addition, the sequencing was structured to guide the viewer through a gradual shift in pace and intensity. I began with quieter, more observational images before introducing more dynamic and behind the scenes moments. This progression was designed to create a sense of build-up and movement without relying on explicit explanation. I also considered visual relationships between images, such as contrast, framing, and repetition of forms, to ensure the sequence felt cohesive and deliberate.

This approach informed my multimedia outcome, where I translated the still image sequence into a time-based format. I made decisions around pacing, transitions, and sound to enhance the viewing experience and extend the narrative beyond what a static portfolio could achieve. Rather than using narration, I relied on the combination of image, video and audio to allow rhythm and atmosphere to carry the piece. The inclusion of sound was particularly important in

shaping how the work is experienced, adding a sensory dimension that reflects the environment being documented.

A key strength of my work is its consistency in tone and visual identity. The images work well together as a series and demonstrate a clearer understanding of composition, timing, and editing decisions. The multimedia outcome also strengthens the project by making it more engaging and immersive. However, one limitation is that some images remain visually similar, which slightly reduces the overall impact of the sequence. In addition, while the work communicates atmosphere effectively, it could be more conceptually challenging.

If I were to develop the project further, I would take more risks with subject matter and approach, pushing beyond observational documentation to explore more unexpected or personal perspectives. This could create a stronger narrative and add depth to the work.

Overall, my decisions shape how the audience engages with the project, guiding them toward a reading focused on atmosphere and experience. However, the absence of explicit explanation means that interpretation remains open, allowing viewers to construct their own understanding based on the visual and auditory cues presented.

Part 5:

I did not attend all tutorials, group seminars, and workshops throughout the module. However, I continued to engage with the project independently, taking responsibility for developing my skills and progressing my work outside of these sessions. This encouraged me to become more self-directed in my learning and problem-solving.

In terms of professional relations, I demonstrated effective communication when organising access for my shoot. As shown in my Visual Studies work, I contacted staff at Swansea Arena, including the creative learning director, to confirm schedules, permissions, and the areas I was allowed to photograph. This required a professional approach, ensuring I communicated clearly and respectfully within a working environment. It also helped me understand the importance of building relationships and working collaboratively within the creative industry. Moreover, for my multimedia outcome, I communicated with Mojo JNR, the band, with the aesthetic and needs for their music video, which led me to capture the behind the scenes of a music video.

I have aimed to present all of my work to a high standard, ensuring consistency across my portfolio, written work, and final outcomes. Attention to detail in editing, layout, and structure has been important in achieving this.

My time management throughout the module has been okay. While I met deadlines, there were points where better organisation could have improved my workflow. In future, I aim to plan my time more effectively to allow for further development and refinement of my work.