

Perfecting the Major Multimedia Project

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In NSW, university entrance is primarily based on a mark generated from the final Year 12 exam, the Higher School Certificate (HSC). This article is written by a student, Jonah, who sat the HSC in Industrial Technology Multimedia in 2014. His work was well received and was selected to appear in the exhibition of major works that travels the state. He worked extremely hard and achieved a top mark in Industrial Technology. What follows is his perspective of the subject.

Think 2013: the year when Edward Snowden leaked information that refuelled the spark of global privacy concerns over the Internet, and the 50th anniversary special of Doctor Who was released in cinemas with David Tennant in it. You know, important stuff. But probably one of the most significant events that occurred was the beginning of my HSC year in December and in turn, the start of an HSC Major Work.

My Multimedia teacher, Mrs Kelly Bauer, who was one of the best teachers I've ever had the pleasure of having (she totally did not tell me to write that, but seriously I'm being sincere), told her Multimedia class the same thing she told her previous classes:

“I'm always right.”

No wait, hang on. That's not it. It was:

“Listen to my advice.”

Best piece of advice I was ever given during the HSC.

And I think students looking back would agree with me when I say that 90% of the time, the teachers were surprisingly right. For once. Just kidding (a little bit). Fixing essays, tweaking projects, following formulas in a structured way, and for once, fix your illegible writing.

Anyway, my teacher told us to start planning our projects immediately. Do something over the holidays, do some solid research before coming in next lesson, and make sure you have the capacity to do it, instead of watching an 18-minute YouTube video figuring out what the hell masking is on After Effects before October. I want to say I did all that, but it was the holidays, so I did a something: I came up with an idea.

I love comic books and film-making. I love old-time science-fiction in the 50s and 80s, where almost everything was props, costumes, cheap lighting and cheesy plots. And I also love the Fallout games (Fallout 4 and Doom, everyone!). So, why not make a major work out of it? My original plan was to create a science-fiction short film that takes homage to the 1980s and 1950s (arguably, the greatest decades of science-fiction films) and a small 12-page comic book that exists in the universe of the short film I was creating. In other words, a short film of 5 minutes and a prop replica that exists in the short film. That was my original idea. Probably one of the

most important things I ever learnt during my Multimedia Major Work is that you cannot be too complacent with the original idea you have. You must adapt to the changing circumstances as the year progresses. You must learn how to kill your (metaphorical) baby.

I became overly concerned with creating a proper plot for my short film and comic book.

What is the story I can tell? Who are the characters? Why are they important? And then I realised:

‘What have I actually done? How’s my folio doing?’

And like the hero my teacher was, she said that the HSC major work was about showing enough skill; impress them with your mastery of post-production effects and graphic design, not how well you can write a screenplay. That’s English Extension. Teachers marking the major works will have 20 minutes to mark your work. They want to see your progression throughout the year, your evaluations, the folio essentially, and probably, the last thing they will watch is the final product. It was the reality check I needed.

That’s when I changed my project. I decided to switch priorities of dedicating my time to creating a comic book that homages, to 1950s comics and the Fallout universe, and an accompanying science-fiction short film trailer that can be watched in a good-old 1950s drive-in. Good move, me. Finding the time to work on my folio, an integral part of the assignment, learning how to create something with the Adobe suite and simultaneously creating that thing.

I’m not going to lie. It wasn’t easy. As the title may suggest, I am a perfectionist. Every little detail counts. I would spend the entire day and most of my night until I am fixing small details on one page of a 24-page comic book. A lot of late nights, a lot of stressing, and then there is the rest of the HSC to worry about.

I used a variety of techniques to create my comic book. I utilised Wacom graphics tablet to draw my assets from scratch, place them into Adobe Illustrator and colour them using Adobe Photoshop, and then organise them in Adobe InDesign. I also sketched my assets on A3 pages using pencils and ink brushes, scanning them, scaling them down in Adobe Photoshop to the recommended size and refining outlines when digitised in Adobe Illustrator. It was important, of course, to take into moderation and always keep learning on how to be more efficient: in my folio work and my major work.

Since I was initially creating a short film, I spent the entire holidays filming and making sure it was all right, until I changed it. After changing my Statement of Intent slightly, I had all these video assets to create something spectacular. From meteor showers and image compositing to 3D backgrounds and laser beam effects, it took a long time learning at home and applying it at school to create all these assets and compile them in Adobe Premiere. I’m not sure if you noticed, but our school LOVED the Adobe Creative Suite. For better or for worse.

There's nothing more satisfying, and also odd at the same time when you realise you're done. Am I really done? Is that it? Is it finally over? Wow, that went by so quickly. It wasn't then until I realised that a lot of my time spent creating this Multimedia Major Work was all about planning and evaluating, rather than actual doing. Organising an efficient time plan, finding efficient processes to create something yet shows enough skill, researching media in the 1950s and 1980s for inspiration, and killing almost every idea that was critically evaluated by your peers, teachers and most of all, you in the Development of Ideas. It was important to keep track of what I was doing so I kept a blog to track my development over the Major Work year. I constantly updated my teacher with my progress as a way of validation mostly for the sake of me keeping a less-stressed mind (if that were even possible, during the HSC). But I will tell you, once your folio is finished, your video is uploaded and your other media is printed, you can't but help put your fist in the air on the footy field. Or go on a float during a city parade and sing 'Twist & Shout'. I may have been watching a lot of John Hughes' movies before writing this.

I loved my HSC Multimedia class, when we talked about the right pronunciation of cache or when our principal tried the Oculus Rift for the very first time, and I'm proud of the work I created even if it stressed the hell out of me. And I guess hard work pays off because I was invited to showcase at the Annual InTech Exhibition for getting 97% on my Major Work. And I also received the coveted Band 6, that every student wants in their HSC year for their grade.

So what can you do as a teacher as December arrives or what you can do now to say to your students? Tell them to be optimistic, and a little stressed as well (because stress genuinely helps). Tell them to always be evaluating every idea they have, run it by you or their peers. Tell them to research on a daily basis and gather inspiration. Tell them to update their folio every time they make progress because they will forget what they did that Friday afternoon. But most of all, make sure you give them advice and that they adhere to it because it's YOU who has the most experience with the HSC, and it's their first time.

Or, during December, you can tell them, "Welcome to Hell", put your feet up on the desk and watch Star Wars: The Force Awakens as you sit there laughing at the misery of your students. Okay, maybe not that last bit, but seriously:

One of the most important things you can do right now is to listen to the teacher's advice (especially during the HSC year) and watch Star Wars: The Force Awakens this December. You know, important stuff.

Links:

Short-Film Trailer – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aEIw9HbMO7c>

Evidence of Progression – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SaLO0nRNCo>

In-Tech Exhibition Video – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DgLM24otDJY>