Netribution **Ltd & 0.1 present**

# Methods and models
# for enhancing the social experience
# of live film : Evaluation Report



**Project reference : AK246K**

netribution.co.uk

HelloIdeas.com
creative development social network

# Contents

# 1.    Introduction

**Background to the proposal**

In June 2008 an application was made by Netribution Ltd to the Technology Strategy Board for feasibility study investment in a project to explore

The business argument behind the proposal was simple – while the loss of revenues to piracy and free content in the music industry was offset to some degree by income from live events and touring – up to 70% in the case of acts such as Radiohead, in the film industry income from the non-piratable experience, cinema exhibition  was both hard to access and for all but the biggest features, rarely profitable.

At the same time, in the midst of a recession, cinema has proven itself as resilient as it has been in previous downturns (US cinema rose 40% after the 1929 crash) as a cheap form of entertainment – with cinema figures in the UK at a 40-year high in January 2009. Not including refreshments, estimated to make as much money as the films themselves, the UK cinema market earned £904m in 2007, with admissions rising a further 2.5% in 2008 to 170 million from 162 million.

Another motivating argument was the creative impetus. While the last 20 years have seen a sea-change in the film world – from 3D graphics making the impossible filmable, to affordable digital cameras and desktop editing, through to widespread digital distribution online and the rise of the short, mashup, viral and vlog, the mainstream cinema experience has barely shifted, other than to slowly shift projectors to digital, and in some cases show opera or other entertainment via digital connections.

The mainstream social experience of filmgoing has mostly stayed in the model of paying £7-12 for a cinema tickets, up to a similar amount for sugared corn and water, and a shuffle-in / shuffle-out experience with adverts potentially peppered with teenagers chatting on their mobiles. Luxury cinemas have appeared in major cities offering a more exclusive (and expensive) experience, and film festivals and private screening clubs have exponentially increased in number, but the basic format hasn't changed.

Which isn't to say there isn't groundbreaking work in the production and experience of live video. From backdrops at big rock concerts and VJs such as Hexstatic and Coldcut, through to product launches, visual arts festivals and Robert LePage's Dr Faustus at the New York Metropolitan Opera – a sub-industry of live-AV has emerged with a vast array of tools and techniques. Some such as the Bristol-based European collective AntiVJ specialize in mapping and massive outdoor art installations, others such France's EasyWeb has built a name at corporate events and arts festivals.

Netribution had explored this AV world as part of the 0.1 collective (www.0point1.com), which produced a number in 2003/04 , including building  a cinema in an underground car park in Soho for the launch of Hewlet Packards HyPe Gallery Project (which went on to win several advertising Lions at Cannes). As publisher of the Global Film Finance Handbook (www.fundyourfilm.info), the issues of business models for producers in an online world, and the collapse of much independent multi-party financing in 2007-08 has also given Netribution a strong awareness of the needs of independent producers who are mostly struggling in the current climate, with the collapse of bank and gap finance, presales and uncertainty over public funds in some countries. With the future payment models of digital distribution uncertain and unresolved, against a web-wide pull towards free content across all media, the ability for filmmakers to include exhibition in their business plans and forecasts would make a huge difference.

It was against these issues that Netribution decided to undertake the 'living cinema' research project and applied for Technology Strategy Board support to "look at how, by collaboration with the live music and performance sectors, to make the live film experience more accessible, socially engaging, and profitable for filmmakers…  In practice this could mean bringing together music, film and space in a new way, potentially with other elements such as food, VJ-ing, cabaret, spoken word, graffiti, simulcast, mapping and spatial design."

"As well as designing, building, costing and testing a prototype screening space with partners; we need to research whether the next phase after a feasibility study should focus on building a pilot venue in a single location, or creating a transportable system that can travel to different locations. We would also look to meet with other sectors, such as education and community arts to explore further ongoing, socially beneficial use of the environment. "

The outcomes were remarkable, and the project picked up sufficient momentum from partners to see the initial in-kind contribution rise from £5,000 to over £58,000.

Nicol Wistreich, March 2009

# 2. Details of the study

## 2.1 Period One – research and planning – October to December 2008

After a delayed start as other projects were wound up (the original plan to start at the beginning of September) the project began with a period of wide appraisal of current activity across alternative cinema, live audiovisuals, public screenings and AV technology.

### 2.1.1 TECHNOLOGY

To do this we created a four-stage workflow to filter a huge amount of information into the areas most of relevance, in a form that could be easily reused and referenced.
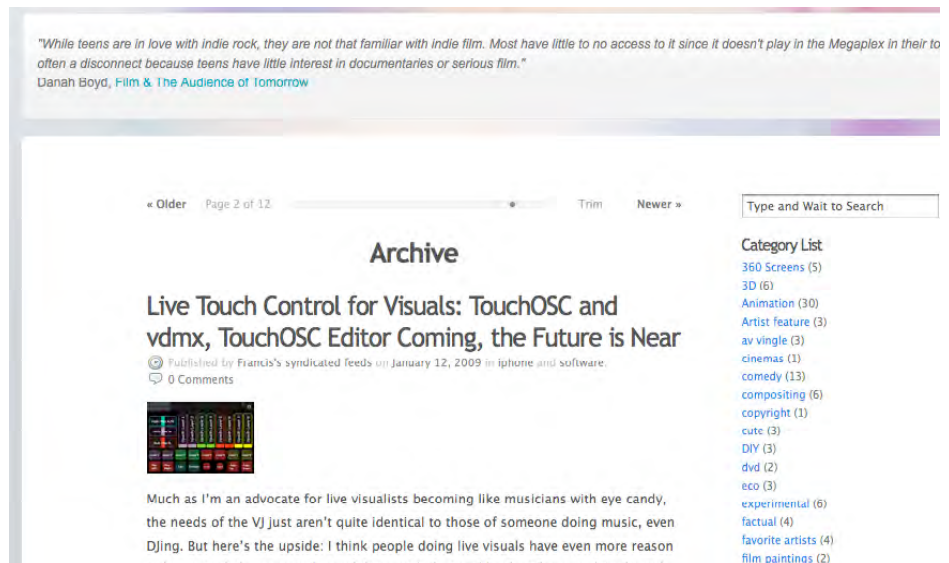
RSS feeds for blogs, industry sites, practitioners, tutorials, sample videos and theorists were subscribed to via Google Reader.

This produced several dozen new posts each day which were read, filtered and categorized under a number of topics. These included 360 Screens (5), 3D (6), Animation (30), Artist feature (3), av vingle (3), compositing (6), copyright (1), DIY (3), dvd (2), eco (3), experimental (6), factual (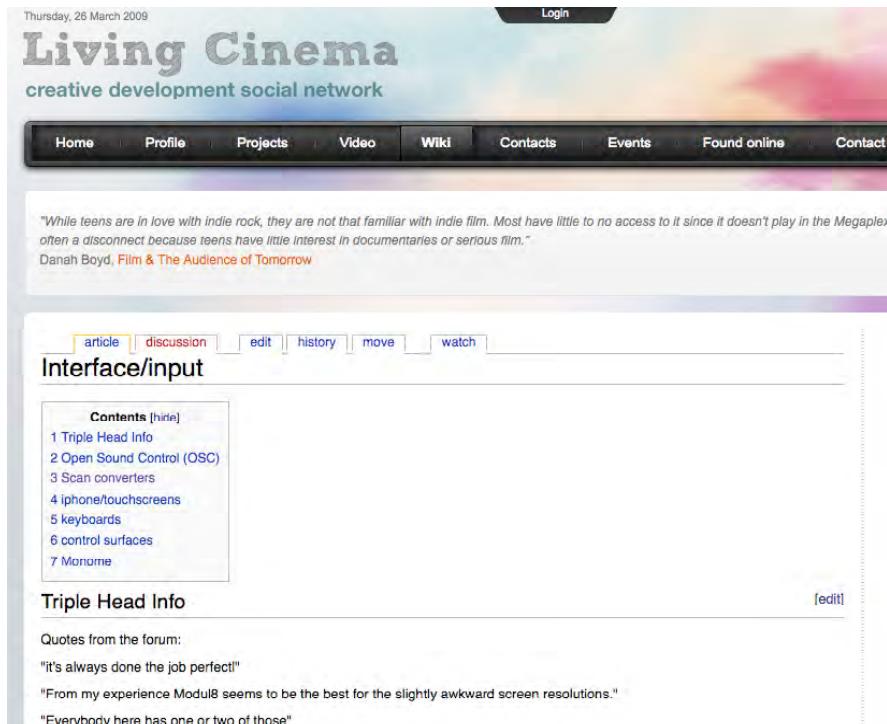4), favorite artists (4), film paintings (2), hardware (4), health (2), human & video performance (3), input devices (22), installation (19), interactive screen (13), interviews (2), iphone (17), Links (6), Live Action Animation (12), long exposure (4), mapping (9), mashup (3), multi screen (10), music video (4), narrative (1), processing (25), projection methods (5), projectors (3), reels (3), Rigs (2), software (17), Sound Reactive (22), Still Art (4), stills (5), technique (2), touchscreen (7), tutorial (2), Uncategorized (93), video (7), vj sites (2), wiimote (2).

Each category in turn was turned into an RSS feed via Google Reader which fed into a group blog, using WordPress. This allowed members of the team to flag interesting posts or articles and it would automatically appear on the group blog.
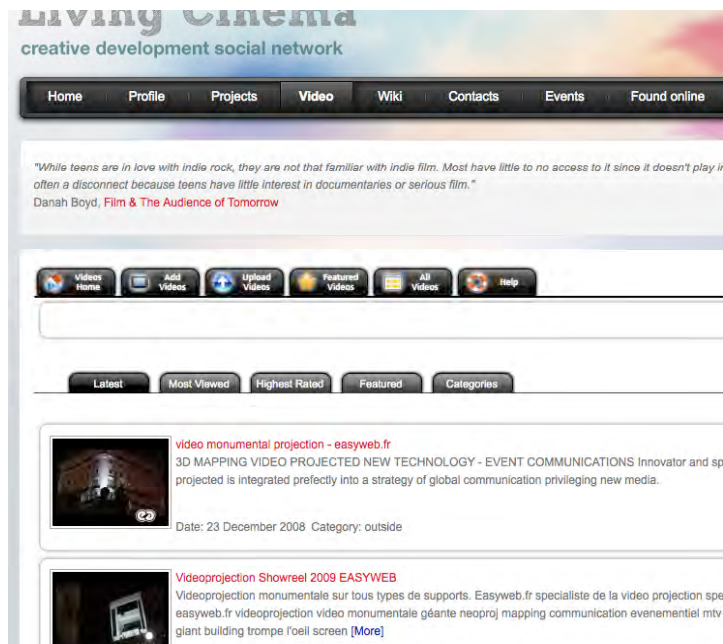
The most useful items from this blog were taken in turn and further refined by reposting the most valuable into dedicated sections at the project extranet helloideas.com, which we modeled on a Social Network – across Wiki pages, contacts directory and video repository.
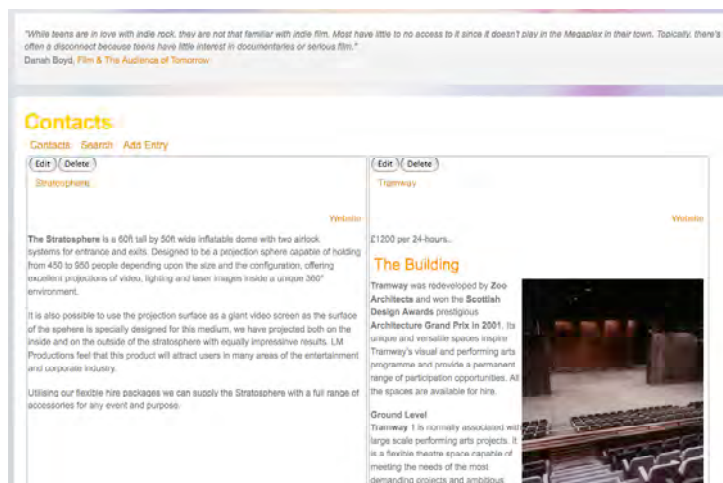
2.1.1a    Wiki

## 2.1.2    RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS - SOME CURRENT MODELS

- In the US, Village Roadshow Gold Class Cinemas, are pushing for a $35 cinema ticket for luxury seating, concierge service, chef cooked meals and valet parking, following success since first appearing in Australia in 1997 and expanding to Singapore and Grece. A consortium is set to invest $200m in building the screen network in the US – http://www.variety.com/article/VR1117982907.html?categoryid=1236&cs=1

- Arclight Cinemas, also in the US, is a luxury cinema chain with state of the art equipment, luxury seats and a café. http://experience.arclightcinemas.com

- Mobile Movies (www.mobmov.org) use a web driven social network to create open air cinemas for DIY drive in screenings. A radio mast broadcasts audio which cars can tune in to, while a central car sends a projector signal. http://www.usaweekend.com/08_issues/080817/080817drive-ins.html

- The Electric Cinema, Notting Hill. (and similar 'sofa cinemas' at the Everyman, Balham and Bedford). Charges up to £15 a ticket for twin-size leather armchairs and the chance to bring a wide range of chef-prepped food, drinks and cocktails into the film with you. http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/travel/destinations/england/article678011.ece

- MovieMobz.com is a social network owned by a Brazilian cinema chain where audiences can vote on the films they want to see at their local multiplex (and encourage their friends to vote and turn up as well).

- In 2006, cinema and festival promoters B-Side created a website that allowed fans, radio stations and local clubs to host their own screenings of a documentary called "*Before the Music Dies,*" a chronicle of the changing music business over the last 30 years. In 3 months, the film had more than 100 screenings and played to more than 15,000 people. In 18 months, that number grew to 300 screenings in 250 markets. In 2008, Netflix's stoner documentary "Super High Me" screened in close to 1000 markets thanks

to B-Side's "Roll Your Own Screening" program. On an $8,000 marketing spend, "Super High Me" went on to outperform other titles on Netflix with 100 times the marketing budget. http://www.bside.com/

- BraveNewTheaters.com is a social destination for producers to find screenings organizers and for those interested in documentaries to find a local screening. All films are screened outside of conventional cinemas, and for the release of Robert Greenwald's film Iraq for Sale, saw over 3,000 screenings and 'house parties' organized across the US, with live Q&As with the production team and relevant experts streamed across the web to those organizing screenings.

- Future-Cinema / the Secret Cinema - http://www.secretcinema.org/ & http://www.futureshorts.com. Future Cinema have long been running bespoke and acclaimed cinema events which include live music, actors, extensive venue dressing, and unusual venues. The Secret Cinema programme, sponsored by Nokia, has seen them take over the Hackney Empire to screen the Marx Brothers' Night at the Opera, and screen the new Watchmen movie in transformed tunnels under London Bridge station.

- Screen Machine is a portable lorry-based cinema which travels across Scotland to communities with limited cinema provision - http://www.screenmachine.co.uk. Cinemobile - http://www.cinemobile.net/ - provides a similar service in Ireland.

### 2.1.3   FOCUS

By late November it was decided that the project would aim to focus on a few areas out of the vast variety of options given the broad subject:

- An event that could tour to a community setting which might not normally encounter cinema beyond blockbuster films at their local multiplex.

- A 'living cinema' which could respond to local issues, and so include local footage or films and ideally some kind of discussion

- The combination of food and film seemed both a way to earn more per audience member, and also a more social experience. Likewise live music would give the event a lively feel.

- To create a unique AV experience we decided to further explore the world of live visuals (moving image triggered live, often in response to inputs such as Midi instruments or audio analysis).

### 2.1.4    PARTNERS

#### 2.1.4a    Eelyn Lee Productions

Eelyn Lee Productions (www.eelynlee.com) is a North London production company making documentary and participatory video projects with schools and communities in London, as well as arts engagement projects and filmmaking workshops.

We decided to work with ELP because of their high regard within the community-film sector (the preferred production company for Creative Partnerships London – now called A New Direction), and an existing link with one of our team. An existing relationship with the run-down and soon-to-be redeveloped Kidbrooke estate in South London seemed perfectly suited to our aim to work within a community not normally on the radar of alternative cinema.

ELP also contributed office and studio space for two months in Bethnal Green, advice, community liaison and  some management for the actual event, as well as establishing links within the Kidbrooke community.

#### 2.1.4b    Onzo designers

Two product design engineers, Thomas Leach and Jeremey Stimson, working at Onzo (the 'Apple of cleantech' – Earth2Tech.com) were approached in a freelance capacity with regards designing a new screening system that could be used in a variety of spaces and for unusual sizes, including surrounding images. Their environmental credentials from working at sustainable product designers Element Six (acquired by Onzo in May 08) also encouraged us, as we want our work to have minimal carbon impact. The use of bamboo was discussed.

### 2.1.5    EVALUATION OF PERIOD ONE

It would be disingenuous to claim that at the end of 2008 we weren't a little concerned about the number of options on the table. We did a broad range of research , while very useful, seemed to throw up more and more possibilities. My preference is for simplicity in projects, yet in reappraising cinema, there seemed a near infinite number of directions to go – whether to pull it closer to clubbing, music concerts, restaurants, pubbing, theatre, cabaret, community cohesion, education – before even considering content and technology.

The economic climate brought its own questions – on the one hand cinema admissions, as a cheaper former of entertainment than most, were rising, which was reassuring. But the future remained uncertain. A lead came from a concept mentioned in a blog by Cory Doctorow talking of a touring group of creative technologists who could visit disadvantaged communities, forgotten suburbs, places with racial tensions or areas with mass unemployment and both share knowledge/skills, and create community cohesion and entertainment/relief. It was a sustainable concept that matched Netribution's own social entrepreneurial aims and seemed a possibility with ELPs link with the Kidbrooke estate, where tensions were high over the planned redevelopment, with the community feeling ignored.

We finished this first period with greater certainty that we were working in a key area, an emerging market, perhaps, and a full understanding of the scope and range of activity in this space. One thing that impressed us was the speed of development online – no sooner had one VJ created a new mapping technique, for instance, than it was imitated and evolved by other artists, and then co-opted to

the mainstream and used at, say, the MTV awards. Their seemed to be opportunities in both Live AV software and technologies that could bridge the huge resources of knowledge, tutorials, original content and information online, and the real world. But we still hadn't found our commercial edge.

In retrospect, given how quickly things began to move together in 2009, this groundwork, in spite of its lack of conclusions at the end of 08, was essential and a further validation of the nature of the feasibility funding – we could afford to break for Christmas with unresolved questions and uncertainties because we weren't tied to commercial deadlines. As things got locked in the next period, our earlier wide research would return in unexpected ways. Uses of the Nintendo Wii remote control, for instance, seemed of limited application when first explored, albeit interesting, yet ended up being incorporated to our event in the last week and being positively responded to by the audience.

## 2.2 Period 2 – Development, Design & Build – Jan-March 2009

After initial meetings in London in early January, Nicol Wistreich and Francis Morgan Giles headed to a rented studio in the famous Hidden Lane Creative 'village' in Glasgow where content and techniques could be tested in a large space, with enough room for a wide variety of kit that had been brought together. Glasgow was chosen for a number of reasons – it was cheaper than London, is the base of Netribution, and has a wide range of talented people working there with less opportunities competing for their attention as in London. The Hidden Lanes, in turn, play a key part in Scotland's creative sector, birthing bands from Franz Ferdinand to Belle and Sebastian, Turner prize winner Jim Lambie and leading new media companies.

### 2.2.1 PARTNERS

#### 2.2.1a Yuva

Yuva(.tv) is a Glasgow based post-production, design and visuals company. With a background in events, having run the LiveVevil club night for five years, Yuva have carved a niche for high quality graphics, events visuals and TV stings for the likes of the BBC.

Of most interest was a seven month project Yuva had completed before meeting, whereby they had produced a live 3D responsive animation to Debussy's Claire De Lune http://www.yuva.tv/portfolio.php#id=album-74&num=431

This was built using Apple's Quartz Composer software, a tool which lets developers access the Mac's advanced OpenGL graphics engine to create graphics effects and environments, and became a core part of our eventual project.

#### 2.2.1b ID Gaft (IDG)

ID Gaft is Ryan Gray, a Glasgow-based percussionist, composer, drums teacher and 3D modeler with an interest in audio responsive visuals. Ryan came in late to the project but became integral to the final performance, with midi drums triggering visuals.

#### 2.2.1c Thomas Tallis School (TTS)

Early in January 09 a partnership was forged by ELP with Thomas Tallis School on the Kidbrooke Estate. The school is a specialist Arts College, Leading Edge School and one of 30 national Schools of Creativity in the UK. The 1700 pupil school featured in Jamie Oliver's School Dinners and resides in a neglected area of South London with high levels of poverty.

In return for making an event that teachers and some pupils could attend, and running some workshops for students, TTS agreed to provide their large drama studio for four days as a venue for the event. The adjoining home economics classrooms could be used for cooking food on the night, with the Creativity Action Research Group students available to help prepare food and serve it on trays to event-goers. The school also put £500 towards the cost of the evening, which would be free for those attending.

#### 2.2.2d Frolic AV

Frolic AV is a London based AV hire company with a specialism in VJ and art installations, and provided projectors, screens and associated kit at a discount or free

#### 2.2.2e Rosa Goncalves

A local of the Ferrier Estate, Rosa agreed to cook and manage the three course meal, including mentoring the school students who would help her. She is planning to launch a community café on the estate and her involvement helped to emphasise the link between community and food.

### 2.2.2 TECHNOLOGY

#### 2.2.2a Multi-projection system

An early aim of the project was to surround the audience with visuals, potentially with cinema screens on three or even four walls of the venue space. This had its own technical challenges which required solving.

In the end we decided to output all content at a pixel resolution of 1200x300 – ie a 1:4 aspect ratio (see below), equivalent to three 4x3 standard TV screens in a row.
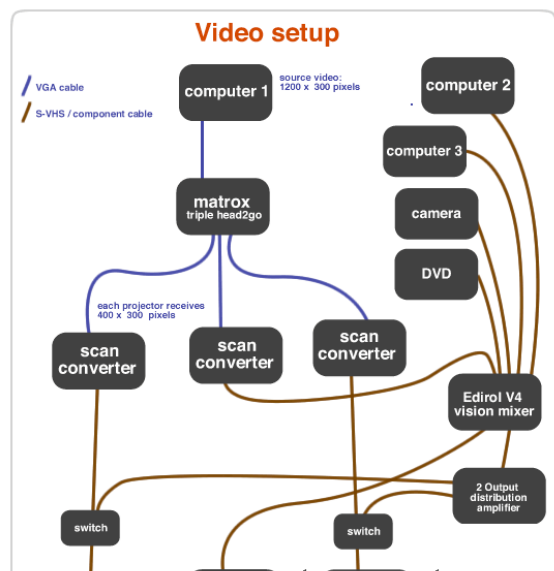
The Matrox TripleHead2Go offered an affordable (under £250) way to output three separate VGA signals to three projectors which could be aligned to produce a super wide panorama. Scan convertors on each VGA signal, in turn, could turn the VGA signals into a form that allowed vision mixing, so another source (ie DVD player / live camera feed) could be included.



## 2.2.2b    Alternative screens

We were very impressed with the first design back from Thomas and Jeremy, which was a very flexible (and affordable) system that could create a wide range of screen shapes in many different spaces. The design scheme is colour coded across each three sheets:



| Estimated costs (not including screen material) | |
| --- | --- |
| 2 Screens  =  £28.28 + (2 x £0.50) + (6 x £1.50) + (6 x £0.50) + (6 x £0.94) | = £46.92 |
| 3 Screens  =  (2 x £28.28) + (3 x £0.50) + (9 x £1.50) + (9 x £0.50) + (9 x £0.94) | = £84.52 |
| 4 Screens  =  (2 x £28.28) + (4 x £0.50) + (12 x £1.50) + (12 x £0.50) + (12 x £0.94) | = £93.84 |
| 5 Screens  =  (3 x £28.28) + (5 x £0.50) + (15 x £1.50) + (15 x £0.50) + (15 x £0.94) | = £131.34 |

Screen Versatility

Basic System

Screen Versatility

Inside

Outside
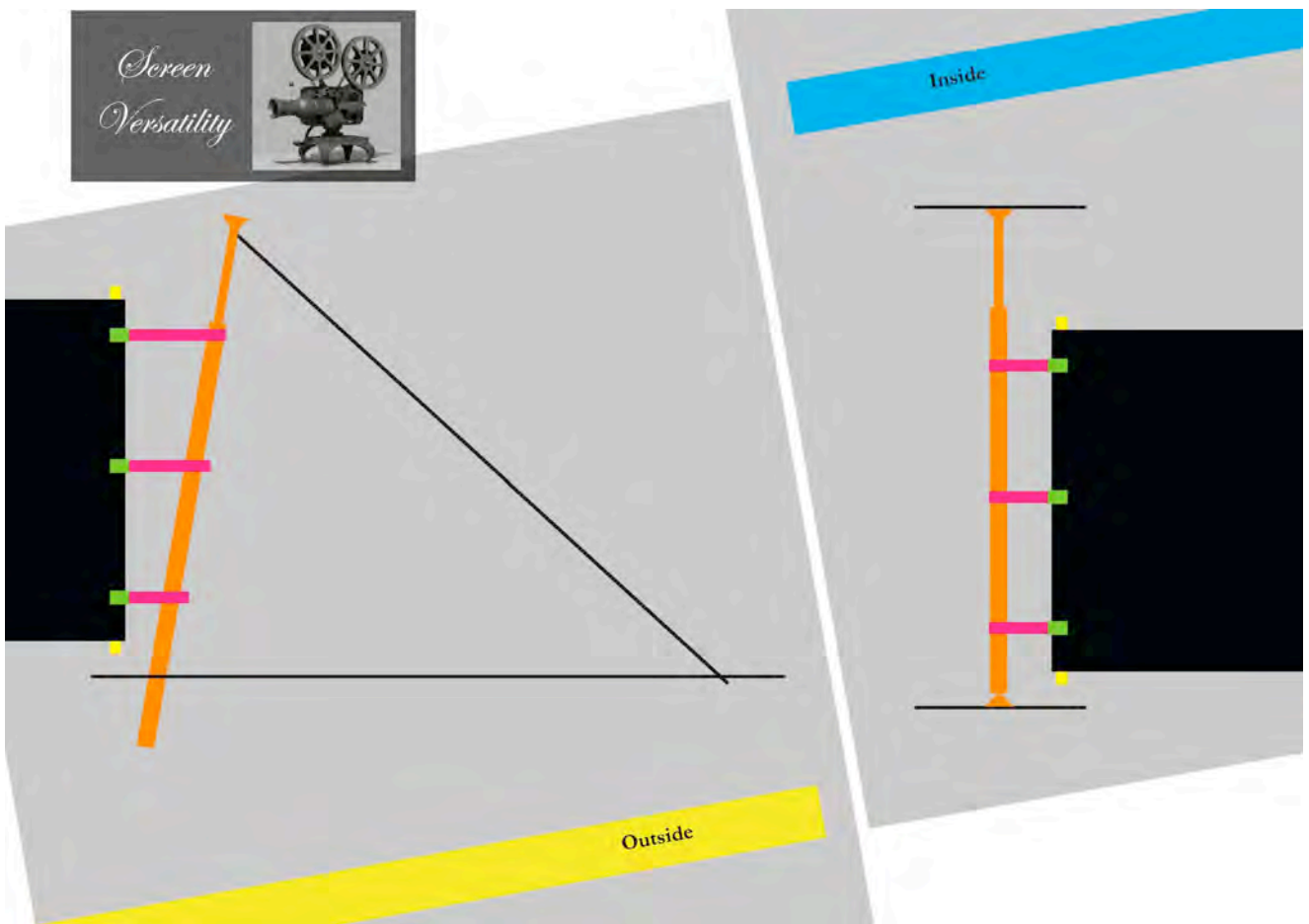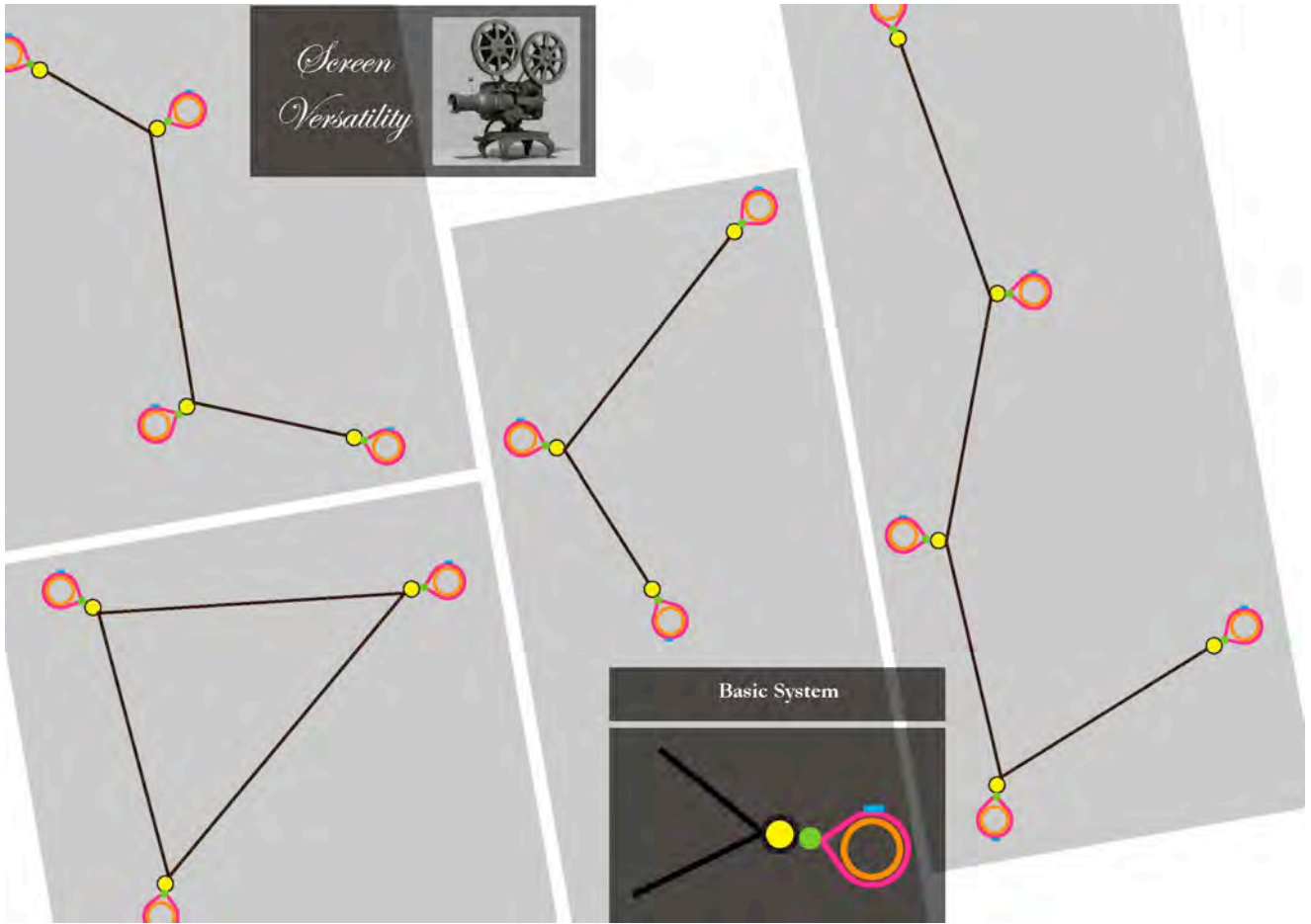
Despite being fond of these screen designs because of their flexibility, its dependency on scaffold poles, wedged between floor and ceiling created, we felt, a health and safety risk as if such a pole fell it could be very serious. Similarly, lengthy poles would be heavy and tricky to

transport. A new design was explored and prototyped with bamboo that could be free-standing.
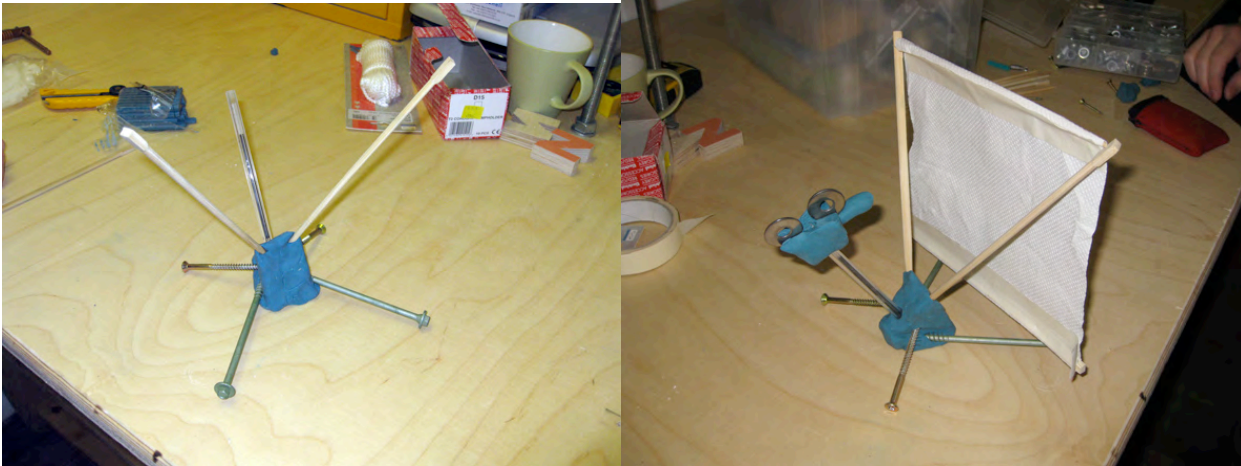


### 2.2.2c    Midi/video controllers

Central to the creation of live triggered visuals is controller software, with a wide number of suitable applications on the market, which were all considered and tested in Glasgow:

- **MAXMSP** – a popular highly configurable system for creating unique controllers through an object orientated programming environment.

- **RESOLUME** – a live controller for audio-VJ (AVJ) triggering with great potential

- **MODULE8** – a very strong system, especially for mapping (projecting onto odd shapes, such as columns of buildings, or 3d cubes). Audio capabilities are limited.

- **ARKAOS** – well suited for linking with a midi piano, and

easy to add effects to footage, but we found it unstable and not very expandable

- **VDMX** from Vidvox – like MaxMSP is a framework for building complex AVJ aps, VDMX is in constantly evolving beta. It includes live video input feeds, Quartz Composer patches (see below), audio analysis, countless plugins and effects and Photoshop-like use of layers.

We eventually settled on VDMX as, despite having a steep and often challenging learning curve, had the built in capabilities for countless applications, and was well suited for the content we were exploring – live video triggered by musical instruments and audio. The support of the developers is also very strong, with them taking crash reports, bugs and feature requests very seriously.

Working with Yuva, we prepared a complex VDMX setup (above, right) separating background, midground, foreground and top. The background could include skies, the midground could include elements such as flying birds and lightening, the foreground could include buildings or silhouettes of trees and the top could have further elements such as short films, appearing on the side of a building or within a billboard. This way full virtual environments could be created – a city with stormy sky and buildings, or a valley with a stone circle under an Aurora.

Each layer had its own effects channels and opacity settings which could be changed by Midi or OSC input. We aimed to create a visual performance that could test a range of live audio and audience triggered effects.

In the below example, the five main layers can be seen in the five boxes containing grids. In the first box, BG (background) we have the traffic layer – a video file that can be sped up, slowed down, paused, reverse or jumped backwards and forwards. The second box, MG (midground) is empty. The third box FG (foreground) contains a 3D quartz model of a billboard, with it's poster area is showing a feed from the fifth box AUX, where our short film is playing in full, without effects. To finish the effect the fourth box, TOP1&2 has a smog filter which gives a moving layer of smoke over the entire image when rendered. The combined output can be seen at the bottom.



The best thing about this system was the way an entire show could be loaded up with transitions from one scene to the next made effortless and integral (buildings could fall, the sun can rise, thunder can clap overhead, we can zoom into an apartment window).

The high levels of support from developer VIDVOX proved itself invaluable three days before our final test event. A bug in their system caused it to not save effects added to each layer. Emailed on a Sunday afternoon, within five hours the developers had created a new version of the software which they emailed to us that evening. A further version was sent the next day with an even better bug fix.

### 2.2.1d    Quartz Composer

Once we began to work with Yuva in late February it became clear that many of the techniques being attempted through VDMX could be easier produced through Quartz Composer, Apple's development tool for using the OpenGL engine to produce real time 3D graphics.

Dan and Nick of Yuva created original quartz patches (one screen grabbed on the left) using 3D models that can now be reused and even distributed - and provided in turn the competitive edge we had been looking for. With Quartz we were able to:

Create a flock of several hundred thousand 3D birds to fly over video panoramic footage. Their wings could flap in time to the music beat and their direction, speed and ordered formation could be changed by midi controller in real time. During the
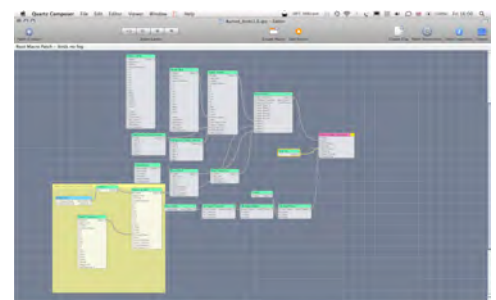
event we used a Nintendo Wii remote to control their direction, which we passed around the audience to looks of great wonder! (patch for this below left)

Manipulate 3D environments in real time. Following the birds, Yuva created a 3D space within which 3D models could be dropped in. A stone circle and coal power station could grow out of the ground, and in real time we could spin around it and zoom in to aspects. Power station cooling towers in turn could be connected to different drum sounds, emitting smoke and light on key triggers.
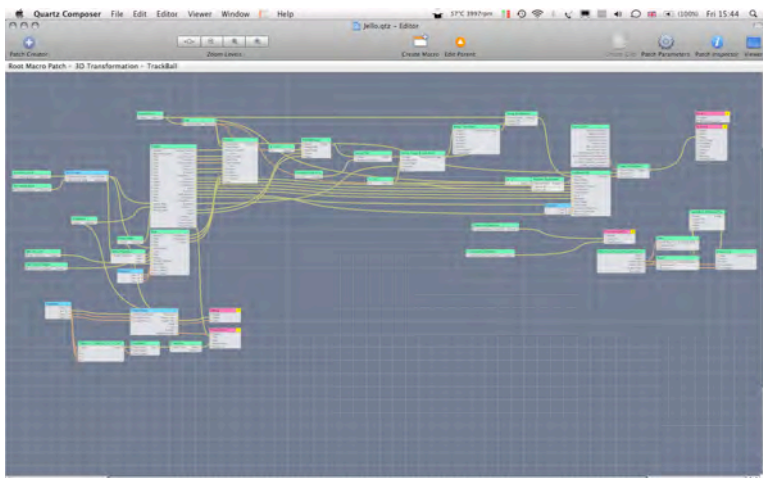


Create visual pads. A flowing multicoloured visual layer was created that mimicked the appearance of the Aurora Borealis, with its colour and speed of movement affected by different audio frequencies. During the performance a singer (a GCSE student from the school) improvised notes into a microphone, and the Aurora responded in real time.

Use unique framing devices. Returning to the original proposal of presenting shorts and features in different ways, Quartz let us include video within 3D spaces. For example a billboard on the side of a road could contain any short film we wished to play, while the camera could rotate around the space and zoom in closer or further from the screen. Skyscrapers modeled in the space were turned into giant mosaic screens where video clips could be played via their lit or unlit windows, a powerful effect that could be used in real time to include video of a live musician.

### 2.2.3    EVALUATION OF PERIOD 2

The second period of development accelerated from a steady, measured start, following a relocation from London to Glasgow and the setting of a date for the first event in the Thomas Tallis School for March 17th. Technology was explored and tested and progress was steady until mid February when we were joined by new partners Yuva and began exploring Quartz Composer. Quite rapidly the project picked up steam and it became increasingly clear that there was a lot of potential with the software, especially when used in combination with VDMX.

As a result focus was turned away from the unique screen design and other aspects of hardware exploration to instead focus on software and the possibilities of using a live triggered 3D environment that could 'frame' video content, produce audio responsive effects, create a visual backdrop to parts of the evening where focus is elsewhere (ie eating) and engage the audience in new ways, such as with visuals that respond to their movements, or triggering of a games joystick.

The final month of activity up to the event on the 18th March became focused almost entirely on getting to grips with the software, developing new patches, and connecting them to midi instruments, as well as attempting to create a narrative for the evening itself which would be entertaining and engaging for the audience.

Our strengths in this period was the sheer determination and work input as the Dan and Nick of Yuva joined myself and Francis, with Ryan of ID Gaft. Working on a deferred, expenses only basis, the team regularly worked 12 hour days six days a week, rising to 70 hours in the four days before the event. The team worked very productively together and produced unique visuals and effects at a very high quality level.

Our weaknesses in this period was largely one of not having enough , which meant in retrospect a need to have better allocated time. This could be attributed to the final test event not taking full shape until quite late in the research period. If we had started work with Yuva or ID Gaft sooner more could have been achieved, although they did join at a point when much ground work had been prepared. Aspects that took up a lot of time in the early period, such as figuring out how to power and test three projectors working in panorama was unnecessary as we ended up using two projectors with no scan converters for the final event, and have since decided we would normally aim to use one projector in future.

A lot of time was also lost trying to establish a partnership with a projector company. After 0.1 worked on Hewlett Packard's award winning HyPe campaign, we assumed, mistakenly, that it would be easy to form a relationship with a projector company who could let us have cheaper equipment and let them develop a relationship with a company specializing in a new use of their kit. Not only were projector companies unhelpful, much time was wasted following false leads from them and others in the industry.

On a practical level, the speed at which new skills were picked up, and existing management practices were challenged and required to evolve was breathtaking – a challenge that nevertheless left most of those close to the project much more competent and capable in a professional capacity.

### 2.3    Period 3 – The event at Thomas Tallis School, March 17th

We debated about producing a series of events so different combinations of entertainment could be offered and tested, and also we could explore different venues.

### 2.3.1    DETAILS

Following three days of access to the space to set up and practice, on one final day, a large curved screening fabric was hung and two large 6k lumen projectors were positioned at the back wall screen. Rostras formed tables and were dressed with small flowers, the crew set up at

the back of the studio, a second team managed lights and camera from the gallery.



netribution and 0.1 presents

# Living Cinema
a feast for the senses

**Tuesday March 17th,**
6.30 – 9.30 free

Live music from
**The Bollywood Brassband**

RSVP required by 10th March
to **invite@helloideas.com**

Thomas Tallis School
Kidbrooke Park Road
Blackheath
London
SE3 9PX

Direct trains for Kidbrooke
depart from Charing Cross,
Victoria, London Bridge
and Lewisham stations.
5 mins walk from the station

Come and experience cinema in a new kind
of way. Three projection screens, live music,
discussion and a three-course meal

A team of video artists, filmmakers and musicians will
create a unique environment for an invited audience to
feast on food, film and sound whilst reflecting on our
environment, change and building a creative community.

In partnership with Eelyn Lee Productions
the Technology Strategy Board
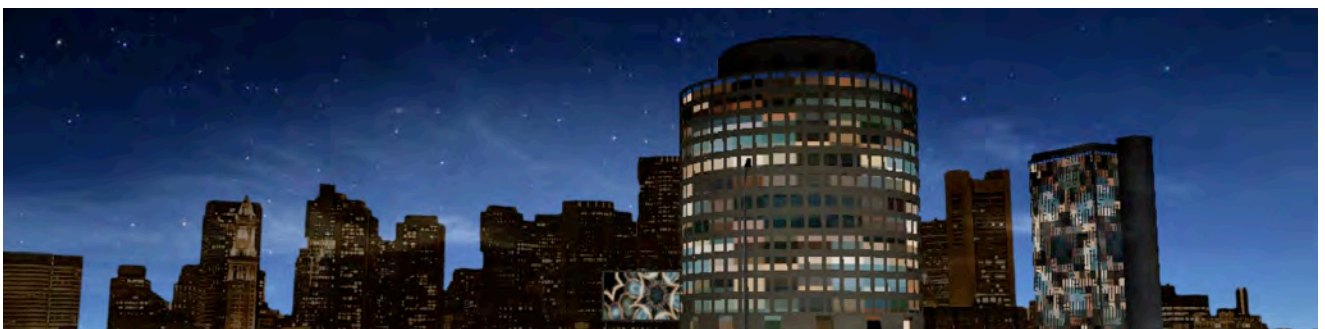and Thomas Tallis School

www.helloideas.com

The evening took the following shape:

6.30 Audience arrive, handed drinks, programmes and surveys, simple space visuals in response to the music.

7.00 The show starts. Lights down and live music and visuals take us through the earth. Birds fly over wide vistas of sky and mountains. Starters are served by students to the audience.

7.20 The evening is briefly introduced before a short film, sourced online, is shown.

7.25 A live music and visuals sequence that takes us from nature into a city

7.35        Another short film is shown before we return to the visuals sequence.

7.45        The sequence finishes and the main courses are brought out. Underwater footage appears on the screenings, with calming music.

8.15        Another short film is played as dishes are cleared.

8.25        The Ferrier estate is projected onto the screens as a debate is led across all the audience about change and community.

8.50        Pudding is served during a final short film

9.00        The Bollywood Brass Band – a nine piece brass band, accompanied with live visuals from Bollywood films – walk in playing. A paid dancer was planted in the audience to encourage them to dance.

9.30        Finish

## 2.3.2   AUDIENCE EVALUATION

Audience members were handed surveys at the start of the evening – 25 were collected, out of 70 guests in attendance. A casual tone was used to encourage honesty in responses.

# Your Thoughts Please

## A FEEDBACK SURVEY

This event at Thomas Tallis School is the first test showing of a new event and is the first outcome of six months of research and development, part funded by the Technology Strategy. We would *really* welcome your feedback and thoughts on the evening.

1 – How would you rate the following elements on a scale of one (crap) to five (amazing)

Food                    Visuals                    Films

Music (not band)        Band                       The space/venue          Overall

2 – If you had the chance to go to another night like this, would you?

3 – What would be a fair price for a ticket?

4 – What's the most you would pay for a ticket (if at all!)?

5 – Do you think this sort of evening is something councils & government should pay for so it can happen in poorer or remote communities?

6 – Are there other elements you would like to see included? Rate between 0 for "oh my god no!" and 5 for "that would rock". Please mention any specifics artists/genres/etc that you would like to see.

| | |
|---|---|
| stand up comedy | televised sporting events |
| dance | full feature film |
| theatre | puppetry |
| art exhibition | activites / team games |
| poetry/spoken word | videos you have made |
| rapping | table tennis / pool |
| choir | board games |
| orchestra | lego |
| DJs / club | |

7 – Is there anything else you'd like to add – criticisms, suggestions, feedback or nice words?

8 – If you'd like to be notified if we do another event, you can leave your email below

Thank you very much for filling this in, it will really help us make our evenings even better.

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The average overall mark out of five for the night was 4.4, with the most popular element the live band, and the least popular the live visuals, which is where the bulk of the technical problems occurred.

100% of respondents said they would attend such an event again.

The average price suggested for 'fair price' for the event was £7.50 on a range of £3.50 and £12.50

The average price suggested for 'maximum acceptable price' was £9.38 on a range of £3.50 and £18

Asked if the evening was something that councils and governments should fund so it could happen in poorer communities, 91% of respondents agreed. Comments to this question included 'depending on budgets and existing provision' and 'kind of'.



Mark out of 5

Legend: food, visuals, films, music, band, venue, overall

Chart categories (top to bottom): Exhibition / art, Dance, Theatre, Orchestra, Poetry, Audience's videos, Choir, Club / DJ, Feature film, Rap, Team games, Comedy, Lego, Puppetry, Board games, Pool / table tennis, Televised sports

Legend: ■ Cumulative score   □ Average score x 10
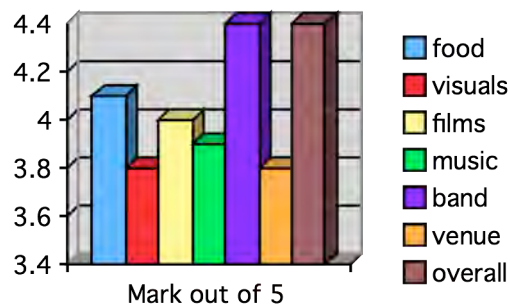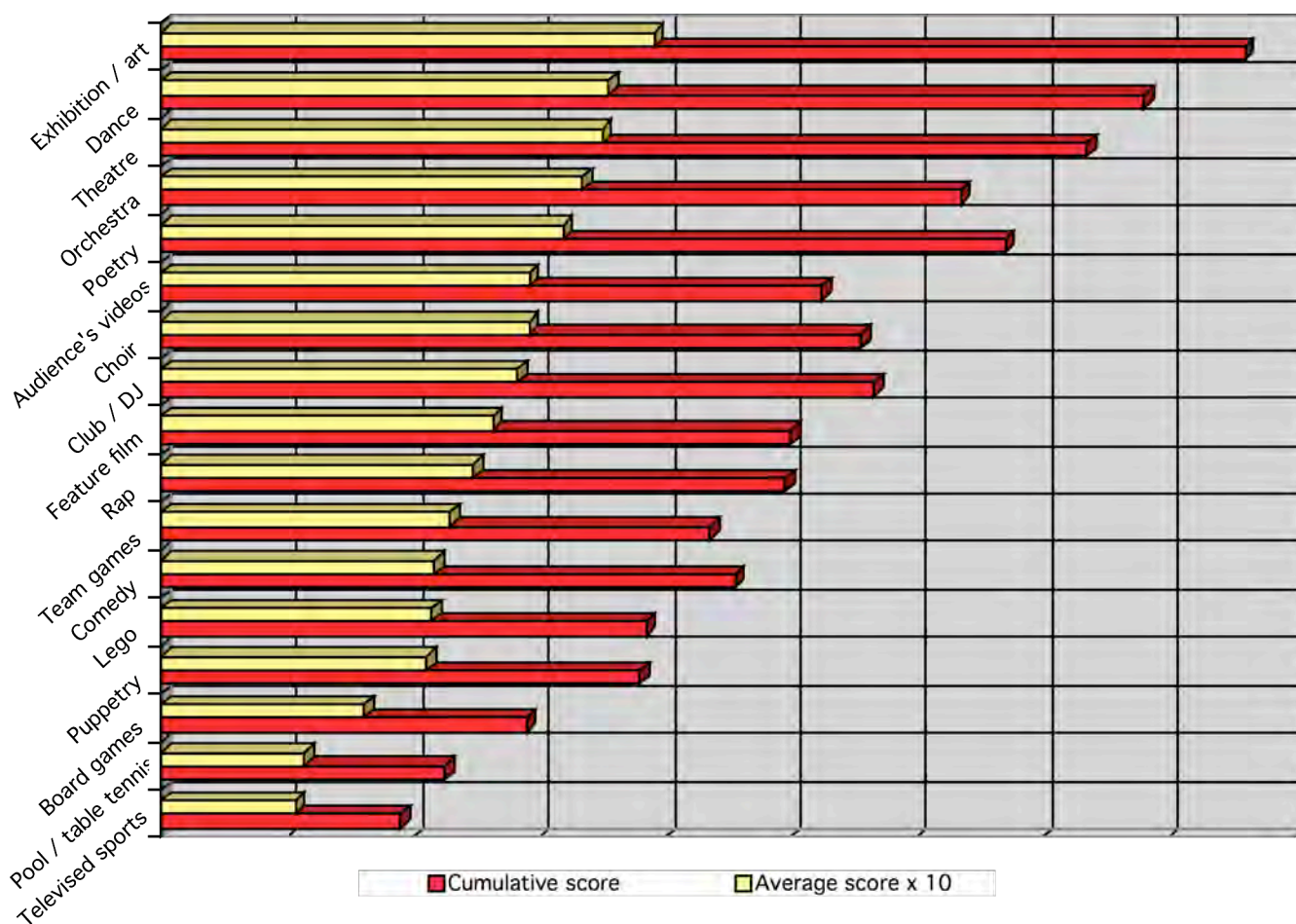
Asked what other elements they would like to see in an evening there was a range of responses suggesting the project could partner with many other artforms. Classical forms incuding dance, theatre and poetry scored much higher than more populist forms such as feature film and televised sports, though this doubtless reflects the audience which included a number of arts and humanities teachers.

All comments from the audience on the forms included below (caps as written):

"GREAT EVENING"

"Really enjoyable evening"

"really interesting event - want to know more about technical side of the live vj stuff -> would've been nice to be surrounded by the project[ions] horseshoe style ->would've liked to have been able to see what artist / technical creatives were doing whilst performance was happening - either movie screen showing them at work below main screen - or them orchestra style in front of visuals"

"Very nice event"

"Great evening, thanks!"

"PUT THE ARTISTS UP FRONT, MAYBE BEHIND A GAUZE (TRANSLUCENT) SCREEN WITH PROJECTIONS"

"The music and videos were great! The band and food were amazing! Thanks for the wonderful event!"

"This was great!"

"Really enjoyed tonight, thank you. Found the films inspiring, music uplifting & food very tasty indeed. Your waiting staff were lovely. Thank you for a great evening. Xx"

"WOULD BE NICE TO SEE THE MULTIMEDIA ORCHESTRA AT WORK"

"more guidance/explanation half-way through of how it was/is made/why?"

"On the whole, a great event"

"Very interesting - never been to anything like this before - it was good. Film at beginning was a bit 'self indulgent' definitely let audience participate in film a bit more, eg controlling birds etc - people like this kind of thing!"

"One ironed screen would do the miracle"

*"some are already living the simple life"*

*"VERY GOOD"*

*"fascinating event combining visual and sounds with the human voice"*

*"Great event, very nice students, lovely food, wonderful entertainment"*

*"Thank you for having me, I had a great night, I've never been invited to a night like this before and it was a pleasant surprise."*

*"It was wonderful, I loved it!"*

*"more youth representation"*



### 2.3.3    Team Evaluation

In evaluation the event as a team afterwards we have had to assess it on two levels. One, as a format for an evening's entertainment, including many elements in a new and unusual combination (food, live music, debate, visuals, dressing, etc) which we can only conclude a success given, the 4.4 average rating and 100% of respondents who said they would come again. Talking with people who were there has further confirmed this position. Despite many new and unusual elements it was felt that the general concept we entered the project with, that film could be experienced in a larger and more social setting, was confirmed and received more positively than we could have hoped.

On the other hand, the technical performance of live music and visuals was not at the standard we had hoped for. Although this does not seem to have been picked up on in the survey comments (the audience was warned in advance that this was a test event and to not be surprised by glitches), it was painful for us to watch after spending so long perfecting content. A number of problems in particular, most of which were out of our control showed the need for further expertise on hand:

- The **SCREEN** – which was 12m by 8m - was creased, and as it moved or blew, the projectors would go in and out of focus and their join in the centre would shift. Stretched fabric is required, preferably on a firm frame, while aligning two projectors is both time consuming and, for this kind of projection, unnecessary.

- The **VENUE** did not have 'clean power' meaning a hum was created when video and audio was played from the same source. We had no warning of this from the school, or in our three days of tests in the venue – it only occurred after the powerful projectors arrived. This was a major problem that lost us our final day of rehearsal and illustrated a shortfall of knowledge in our technical team. It also meant that some films were played out of sync (audio and video not perfectly in time) as we had to trigger the sound and image from two sepate laptops without any ability to sync them (even a midi or Ethernet cable between the two machines would create the hum).

- The **VUSICIANS** were at the back of the space, meaning many audience members were not aware that the visuals were being generated live, until they were told by a speaker.

- There was no easy way for technicians to **COMMUNICATE** with each other during the event, cans/intercoms are needed.

- So much time was allocated to solving technical problems and building software that there was not adequate **REHEARSAL TIME**. The hum issue took up the planned dress rehearsal as we had to remake footage separating audio and video, meaning there was no full run-thru ahead of the show on the day and the total live visual show was much shorter than originally planned and rehearsed.

- **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES** had not been tested – when an audio cable inexplicably burnt out during playback of a short film, there was no standby system or content to replace it, despite us having back-up rigs on standby for other more complex sequences.

- Further exploration is needed to better understand and use the triggers audiences expect to know when to stop and start talking, when to watch, when to stop watching. Even in the course of the evening we picked up some methods – but it does require a fine tuning of lights and sound levels.

# 3 Outcomes & Deliverables

## 3.1 Original outcomes

### 3.1.1 RESEARCH CUTTING EDGE PRACTICE AND THINKING IN THIS AREA

Done – see above and wiki/blog at helloideas.com.

### 3.1.2 BUILD A PROTOTYPE SCREENING ENVIRONMENT

Done – see above.

### 3.1.3 PARTNER WITH EDUCATION/ARTS PROVIDERS AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

Done – partnerships established with Eelyn Lee Productions, Yuva Ltd, ID Gaft, Thomas Tallis School and Frolic AV – all of which, in varying degrees, have led to follow up work, projects and discussions.

### 3.1.4 PROGRAM AND PRODUCE A RANGE OF MATERIAL AT A TEST EVENT OR EVENTS

Done – see above

### 3.1.5 EVALUATE THE METHODS AND FORMS MOST LIKELY TO LEAD TO SUSTAINABLE ACTIVITY AND SUCCESS IN THIS AREA

This question has been central in our minds throughout the project, indeed it has been the question at the back of everything we've done. If our instinct is correct – and that cinema is going to continue to spill out from conventional screening environments to other venues and formats in the next decade then there are severa; possible areas for commercial exploitation:

- providers of hardware - ie screens, projectors, interfaces and playback devices
- specialist venues, venues fitters/designers
- event promoters / curators / presenters
- content producers - particularly those whose work sits best live - ie audience responsive, multiscreen/cinemascope, music triggered, spatial work (ie panoramas)
- curatorial tools
- community engagement and education / arts

### 3.1.6 PREPARE A FULL NEXT STAGE PLAN

This is underway. Having increased the in-kind spend from an initial forecast £5,000 to over £60,000, based on normal day rates (but not including overtime), we've decided to collectively and privately invest in further tests. The first of these is an event planned for Newcastle in mid-April. Taking place at a venue with bar this will test commercial viability as we sell tickets and monitor bar takings. The format will be similar – a large nine-piece band, hot cooked food, shorts and visuals, but we hope to have resolved all technical problems by this point and have a level of excellence that could see us invited to other venues and events with the concept.

A week of workshops in late May in the Kidbrooke community will explore further using the technology in an educational context, with the possibly of integrating generated work with the produced content. Other leads are still to be explored, with Saatchi for corporate events, with Thomas Tallis School, who are looking to continue the relationship, and the new Shetland MaReel arts centre which opens in 2010 as the island's first cinema and arts centre, and are looking for an event to open the venue which includes local talent.

The key partners of Netribution, 0.1, Yuva and ID Gaft are committed to taking our work further, but the nature of the business approach we take depends in many ways on the outcome of these upcoming events.

Of key interest is the early stages of a plan for a software product within a potentially lucrative part of this sector, that exists parallel, yet separate, to the work we have been doing to date. A new plan is currently being drawn up for this. After partners have been approached in early-April it is hoped to become a proposal for further investment from the Technology Strategy Board Creative Industries competition.

## 3.2 Unexpected outcomes

### 3.2.1 DEVELOPED A WORKING SOCIAL NETWORK INTRANET & ORIGINAL RESEARCH WORKFLOW

The helloideas.com site, although neglected a little as we got closer to production, proved invaluable and as an open source built modular software system can both be re-used in other applications, and if this project grows will make managing software development, content creation and event management for a team spread throughout the UK (and potentially beyond) much more efficient and flexible.

### 3.2.2 PRODUCED ORIGINAL SOFTWARE AND QUARTZ PATCHES

The VDMX rig created for the event is a more complex use of the software than normal and in itself I probably a sellable 'preset'. Quartz patches, in turn, have pushed that software forward. Much of the quartz/vdmx developer community work on a shared/open source basis – indeed a few of our patches were using open source software in part or sometimes full and it will be good to 'give back' something to the

community.

### 3.2.3 FORMED A VUSICAL ORCHESTRA

Although often discussed, the number of factors leading to success in this area kept us from putting it too central to our plans. Throughout the project it was clear that while groundbreaking, without original content, the project would seem theoretical. If content exists it can support the other activity by demonstrating a use for the technology and software. It also can create demand, and hopefully inspire others to develop for the concept, increasing the market base. It also provides a creative outlet that, because of it's total newness, is very exciting – and is something of great interest to the core team outside of commercial considerations. It is almost like being given a new art form to play with.

## 3.3 Further outcomes

### 3.3.1 SPENDING ACROSS GLASGOW, LONDON, AND – SOON – NEWCASTLE

The investment was well distributed between London, including a deprived area – Kidbrooke, Glasgow, and soon, Newcastle. Food and subsistence spending in each place further increased the re-investment of the TSB grant, contributing to local economies.

### 3.3.2 SKILLSBASE EXPANSIONS OF ALL INDIVIDUALS

The mixture of research and practice ensured that all six key individuals, and others on the periphery, massively increased both theoretical and practical knowledge and skills which will have many applications beyond the project.

### 3.3.3 DEVELOPED NEW WORKING METHODS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Through better understanding the needs and form of a non-hierarchical, yet managed, working structure, the project not only expanded management skills and understanding, but set in place a structure for future work. Bringing in a consortium of partners, autonomous for their own business survival, but sharing an excitement for the area and common interest in working in this space was both enriching and highly promising for the future.

## 4 Next Steps

Having barely finished our first event, and already in pre-production on our second event – to a paying audience – on 18th April in Newcastle, the next step discussions are intensive and ongoing. Evaluation of the past six months is an ongoing part of that, as well.

There is no debate that all key partners are looking to take this further, and the main question seems to be less 'what?' and more 'how much of this can we do'?

Potential areas for further development include:

- o **DELIVERY SOFTWARE** – how do venues get hold of this content?

- o **EVENT MANAGEMENT** – in both the corporate event / product launch, arts and public / entertainment contexts such events will have unique management needs

- o **VUSIC SOFTWARE & HARDWARE** – the ability to 'perform Fantasia live' requires dedicated tools. Existing software and controllers can be developed much further

- o **SCREENS** – the shortage of a flexible, light, cheap and attractive screen that can be used in a range of different venues remains a strong requirement. Current designs, and discussions on how these may be further improved, show much promise and would be useful not only for our events, but as a sellable product.

- o **VUSICAL ORCHESTRA** – in an entertainment industry hungry for the latest thing, there is undoubtedly little like this on the market

- o **EDUCATION** – a live generated cinema makes for a strong learning environment, as work can be quickly shown on a big screen, tutorials can be shown and audience responses can be incorporated. Because of the screen size and spectacle surrounding them, films and documentaries can be made more engaging than if they were watched on the Internet or a classroom TV.

- o **COMMUNITY** - A cinema which can include local video, films brought to the event itself, and video feeds of people talking also opens up many social and community strengthening possibilities.

- o **RIGHTS TRACKING** – The clear assignment of re-use rights and permissions requestion, and the collation of content repositories in themes, is vital to success, and is an area Netribution is now looking at and hopes to make a provision for soon.

- o **SOCIAL CONSORTIUM NETWORK** - Developing existing collaborations into a consortium of any practitioner or company interested in this space. With web software facilitating consortium management in a lightweight way, are there strong reasons why many more partners couldn't come on board? In a new area it would both provide a central point for further evolution, and ensure our activity was at the centre of gravity.