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your audience – big or small –*

on all platforms and networks.

(Even if you are not tech savvy!)

– Guaranteed results –

– Guaranteed fixed costs –

Transmedia Case Study:

The Alexander Wilson Project

The Alexander Wilson Project

– Case Study

The Problem...

How to engage a 21st century youth audience in a story delivered over multiple platforms?

The Answer...

A transmedia thriller containing video, games, social, competitions and live events.

The Alexander Wilson Project

www.thealexanderwilsonproject.com

In 2008 illegal file sharing, digital piracy and audience fragmentation were creating big problems for traditional broadcasters and media companies. Global media markets were experiencing a disruption similar to that which had radically changed the music industry earlier in the decade. In the UK, Regional Development Agencies were given funds to find new models of storytelling. Bellyfeel were commissioned to create a new type of dramatic entertainment pilot that would engage young audiences across the numerous platforms of modern media distribution.

Background

Bellyfeel were developing several ideas in a search to find a suitable follow-up to their interactive multiplatform film, 'Crimeface'. The success of 'Crimeface' drew new partners to Bellyfeel including established film maker Philip Shotton ('Rising Tide') who became a collaborator on several of the interactive scripts being developed. At this time Philip was asked by Northern Film and Media to put forward ideas to a new fund for innovative new entertainment products and so one idea in particular was focused upon.

Creation

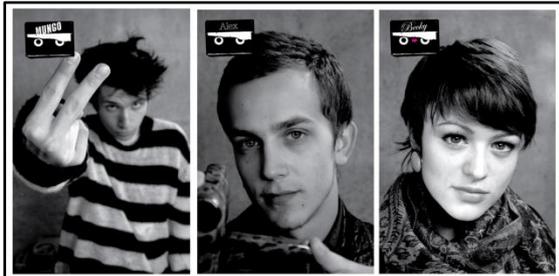
The aim was to create a story that took advantage of the rise in online video and would be able to scale through social media. 'The Alexander Wilson Project' was based around a young media student and his friends who were out filming for a college project when they inadvertently caught something on video that propelled them into the heart of a modern day conspiracy thriller. The script was written within the storyworld of an imaginary northern coastal town and featured video clips, narrative-related gameplay and audience interactions.



The idea was pitched to Northern Film and Media in summer 2008 and Bellyfeel were awarded funds to produce 'The Alexander Wilson Project' as a pilot and to distribute it.

Production

Production began early in 2009. A recce was made to find suitable locations, and a visual identity was created for the story and storyworld. The project was cast via callouts across the web resulting in 300 young actors and actresses sending in their details. From seven exciting auditions the three main characters were cast.



Technology systems were developed focusing on a strong social aspect to activity. The video elements were shot in March between Newcastle and Manchester. There was a strong presence of technologists, writers and designers all present and participating in the shoot.

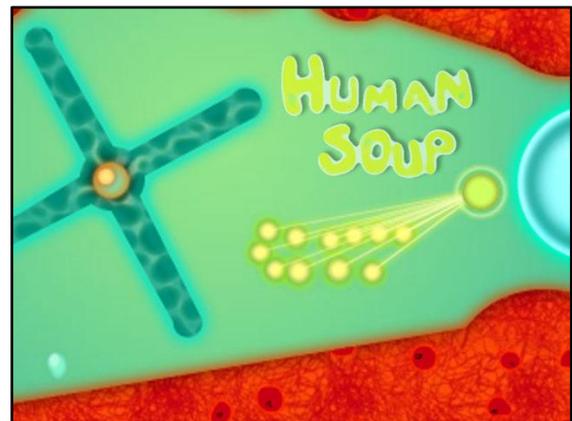


During technology development and post production a new vein of story was discovered in the material based on what the three main characters were making for their college project. This was expanded in several additional shoots.



The challenge of how to keep an audience engaged over time was overcome with the development of new narrative methods combined with traditional novel techniques such as digression and tangential stories. These sat within the storyworld and blended organically with the main conspiracy plot.

An online game was licensed from Russia to form part of the experience and represent the storyworld in pre-history times.



Distribution

'The Alexander Wilson Project' was tested and soft launched in summer 2009 and officially began in October. From an initial share out to 50 family and friends the project picked up momentum and a campaign lead up to Christmas.

The campaign introduced the characters and the storyworld in daily video clips and interactions. Competitions were run and a hard core membership grew to 5,000 over several months.



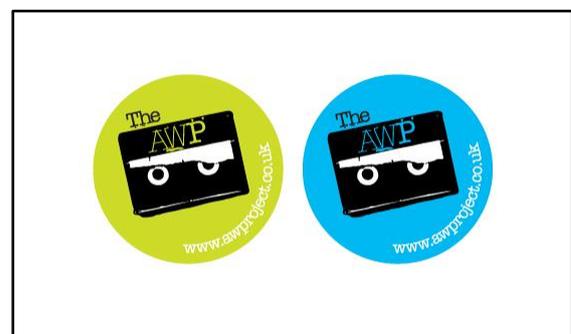
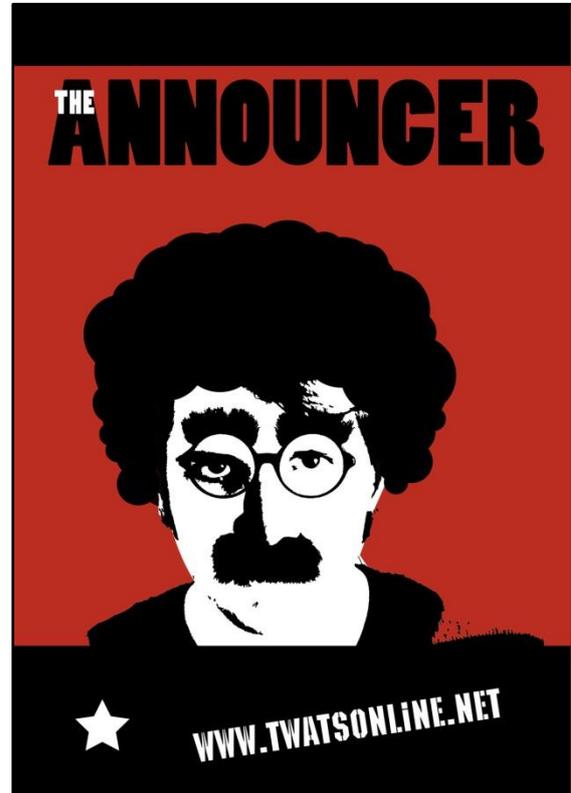
At Christmas a live event was put on in Newcastle to a packed audience. The event consisted of screenings, live music, film shoots and live story scenarios featuring the main characters from the story in various subplots.



The live event created a great deal of real world buzz and led to a partnership with the well established Live Theatre in Newcastle.

Live Theatre put more investment into the project. The online campaign ran for several more months and then the project was paused, expanded and rewritten.

A final live event was put on in autumn 2010 at Live Theatre using a similar format to the first but expanded to include mobile audience interactions.



Results

The project fulfilled the initial requirement well and went on to surpass expectations both creatively and audience wise.

The project was developed, written and executed as a native transmedia experience. It received great reviews in the press and attention from the academic community as a model for future entertainment.

The level of engagement from users was high. They got heavily involved with the story, the games and the user generated content competitions. There were 5,000 signed up users participating with the project (of which 75% within the target demographic of 16-35 year olds) and many more (100,000 unique visitors per month at peak) from the wider community.

A positive 'by-product' of the project was how Bellyfeel's transmedia storytelling skills were greatly increased; we honed our abilities to create fragmented narratives and to deploy technology to deliver an engaging, exciting and entertaining transmedia experience.





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