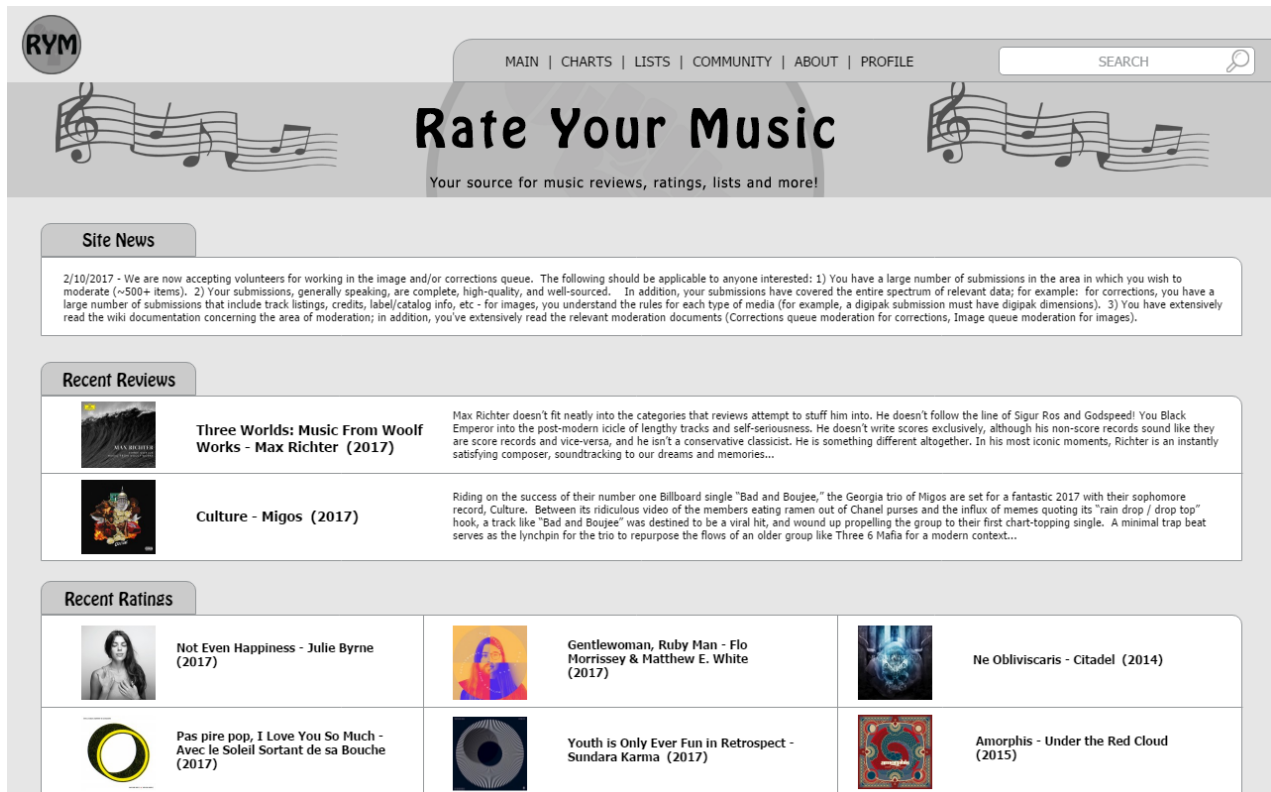


7-1 Final Project Submission: Testing and Defense Paper

GRA-470-Q3703 User Interface and Experience 17EW3

February 15th, 2017

By: John Barca



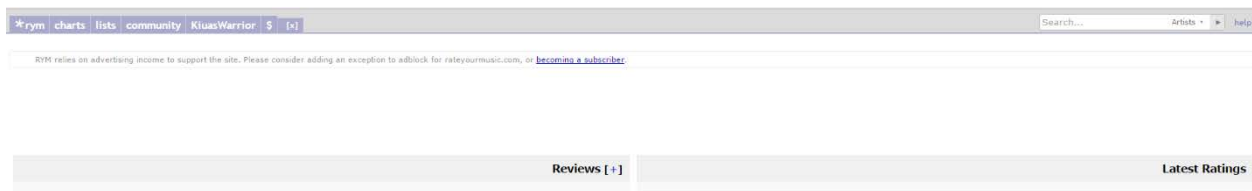
Heuristics & Solutions

The screenshot above illustrates the final prototype design of Rate Your Music that demonstrates improvements in areas of Jakob Nielsen's 10 Usability Heuristics for User Interface Design. The current design of Rate Your Music presents a minimalist display of design and an overwhelming amount of content on several pages including the main page and artist pages. The new design shows a balance of the two while maintaining good usability and user

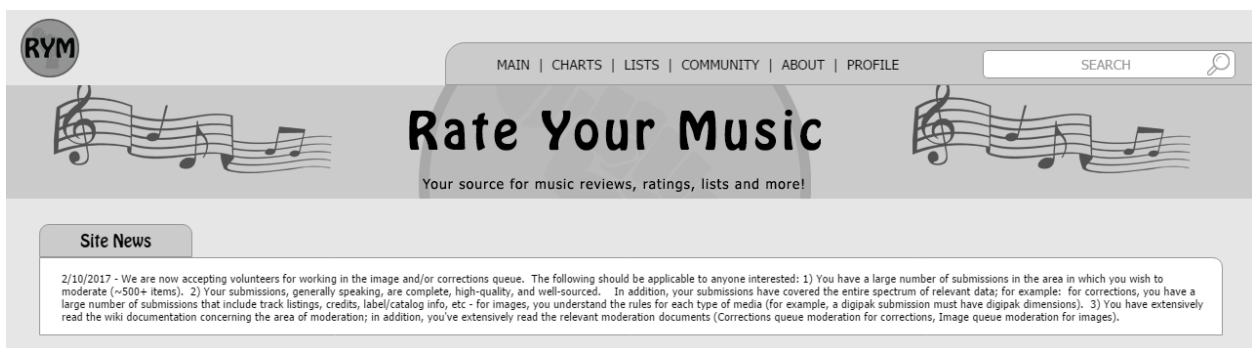
experience. While we can acknowledge that the central goal of the website isn't its appearance; the focus is on the content, but how you deliver it to the user is vital.

RYM struggled immensely in one area that should be noticeable from all designers' perspectives and that is an identity or "visibility of system status". The site was needing an identity to remind the user where they are, why they are there and letting the user understand the many features available to them. This starts on the main page by simply developing a logo/banner/slogan for the site. Below is an example of the gaping space of nothingness on the current RYM version. Right below that is a screenshot of the banner that is welcoming to the users and establishes a visibility of system status:

(current)



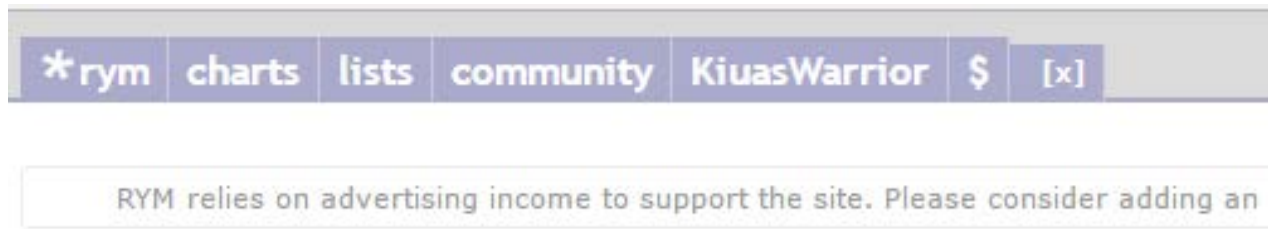
(redesign)



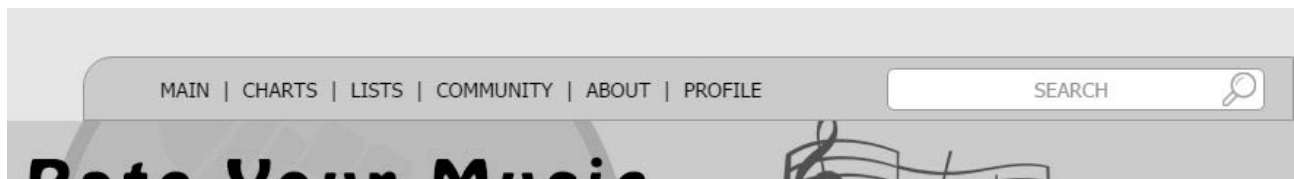
The music notes on the banner design remind the user that they are actively browsing a music related website. It also benefits the site that they have their name and purpose largely displayed upon arrival; which allows old and new users to easily recognize and remember their

experience that can impact future traffic positively. The current navigation menu of RYM needed retooled to allow better “user control and freedom”. The current navigation menu has some options that seem confusing like the “\$”, “[X]” and “*rym” links as seen below. Keeping the links self-explanatory can go a long way to keeping a user frustration-free.

(current)




(redesign)



Next we move onto another very impactful redesigned area of Rate Your Music and that is the content itself. This is in regards to the reviews and recent ratings made on the website. While some imagery is being used on the current design, the overwhelming amount of content is enough to turn away visitors in the blink of an eye - thus the need to keep an “aesthetic and minimalist design”. The screenshots below show the vast difference between the wall of text of the most recent review (current design) versus a well-organized section of the two most “Recent Reviews” (as shown in the redesign).

(current)



Max Richter doesn't fit neatly into the categories that reviews attempt to stuff him into. He doesn't follow the line of Sigur Ros and Godspeed! You Black Emperor into the post-modern icicle of lengthy tracks and self-seriousness. He doesn't write scores exclusively, although his non-score records sound like they are score records and vice-versa, and he isn't a conservative classicist. He is something different altogether. In his most iconic moments, Richter is an instantly satisfying composer, soundtracking to our dreams and memories. His textures are thick, simple and evoke the moments we forgot or are too afraid to remember and the memories we treasure.

But his discography isn't that simple. Yes he has [Memoryhouse](#), yes it is perfect. And [The Blue Notebooks](#) and [24 Postcards in Full Colour](#), which comprise the populist segment of his discography, but he also has a rich discography of scoring. They are straightforward and less well regarded, but a part of the story, nonetheless. Then he has his weird records like [Infra](#). Then he has records like [Sleep](#) that challenge the very fabric of what music is for and in general, is. Think I am using hyperbole? Listen to [Sleep](#) in full over a whole night, preferably on a night with 8 hours between sunset and sunrise. It will make [The Flaming Lips 7 Skies H3](#) aka 24-hour song seem like the thin stunt that it was. This is music, this is life.

Max Richter's new work – *Three Worlds*, doesn't neatly fit into any of those categories, it has moments of *Memoryhouse* radiance, and is orchestral enough to recall *Four Seasons* but doesn't necessarily remind me of either of those. The record is based on the works of Virginia Woolf, the 20th century fiction author. What exactly that means, is unknown, I would doubt that anyone listening to this record without knowing the title, would say, "Yes this reminds me of 20th century modernist writer Virginia Woolf," but it is an interesting hook to the record.

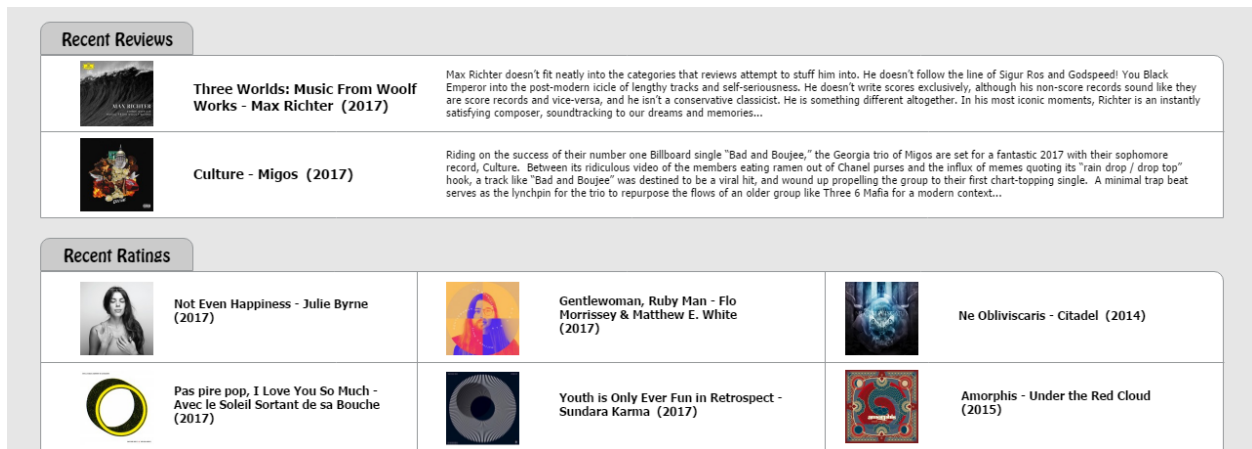
Her work does inform the record to a certain extent, this record being written to soundtrack the Wayne McGregor ballet based on Woolf's work. The key question to ask when listening to a soundtrack, is, does this work outside of the existing piece of art it was created to accompany? For example – *Twin Peaks* – yes; almost everything else – no. This record then being a massive exception the rule, stands completely on its own, whether you are a McGregor fan or a Woolf fan.

The record is morose and cryptic, like the best Richter. It begins with "Words" containing a beautiful church bell and a sample of Woolf reading. It is tragic, mostly because it is difficult to hear outside of her painful suicide letter. The calm piano on "In The Garden" which follows contrasts completely, as if to comfort those who know the end of Woolf's story. The violin accompaniment is simple, but flowering, the passages build and blend and crescendo with ardent movement.

"War Anthem" will be a highlight to those drawn to the more orchestral side of Richter's discography. It is full sounding and lasts over six minutes, it is a strong enough piece to anchor a late scene in a Christopher Nolan film, but doesn't need pictures to accomplish what it sets out to do emotionally. The music pounds until it drops out completely, echoing with the same church bell from square one. The spoken word track "Memory – the Seamstress" is the rare spoken word interlude that adds rather than distracts on repeated listens, and it acts as a perfect prelude to "Modular Astronomy" which is the bridge of the record from purely classical to a mix of electronic amongst other styles.



Semi-disonance and echoes remind anyone listening of [Boards of Canada's](#) excellent career. From there the record travels back and forth across familiar ground with mostly glowing results. "Transformation" is short and powerful and "Morphology" is its immediate follower and polar opposite, pulling plays from [Brian Eno's](#) decades long exploration of the ambient worlds.

(redesign)









The screenshot displays a redesigned website interface with two main sections: "Recent Reviews" and "Recent Ratings".

Recent Reviews

	Three Worlds: Music From Woolf Works - Max Richter (2017)	Max Richter doesn't fit neatly into the categories that reviews attempt to stuff him into. He doesn't follow the line of Sigur Ros and Godspeed! You Black Emperor into the post-modern icicle of lengthy tracks and self-seriousness. He doesn't write scores exclusively, although his non-score records sound like they are score records and vice-versa, and he isn't a conservative classicist. He is something different altogether. In his most iconic moments, Richter is an instantly satisfying composer, soundtracking to our dreams and memories...
	Culture - Migos (2017)	Riding on the success of their number one Billboard single "Bad and Boujee," the Georgia trio of Migos are set for a fantastic 2017 with their sophomore record, <i>Culture</i> . Between its ridiculous video of the members eating ramen out of Chanel purses and the influx of memes quoting its "rain drop / drop top" hook, a track like "Bad and Boujee" was destined to be a viral hit, and wound up propelling the group to their first chart-topping single. A minimal trap beat serves as the lynchpin for the trio to repurpose the flows of an older group like Three 6 Mafia for a modern context...

Recent Ratings

	Not Even Happiness - Julie Byrne (2017)		Gentlewoman, Ruby Man - Flo Morrissey & Matthew E. White (2017)		Ne Obliviscaris - Citadel (2014)
	Pas pire pop, I Love You So Much - Avec le Soleil Sortant de sa Bouche (2017)		Youth is Only Ever Fun in Retrospect - Sundara Karma (2017)		Amorphis - Under the Red Cloud (2015)

Also shown above in the redesign screenshot is the "Recent Reviews" section of the main page. Both sections highlight the most recent content given from the users. Instead of

displaying a large wall of text like on the current design; the main page will feature only a highlight into both sections. From there, the user will have the choice to click each header to navigate further. This aesthetic and minimalist design choice is a major part of why RYM is struggling with its current design and why the redesign will enable users a better experience overall throughout each section of the website.

The redesign of RYM is significant because the focus is on what the user wants, understanding what they are looking for (their needs) and delivering it to them the best way possible. The “UX Honeycomb” and Nielsen’s 10 Usability Heuristics for User Interface Design were exemplary step by step processes that allowed myself to look into each aspect of how to make the experience better for the user. Each area of the UX Honeycomb allowed me to research and improve upon RYM in just a few small but very beneficial ways. What’s most intriguing about the honeycomb, is that it’s a stackable design that enables any designer to come up with some steps and processes of their own, building on the present features of great UX.

References:

10 Usability Heuristics for User Interface Design | Design Principles FTW. (2013).

Designprinciplesftw.com. Retrieved 16 February 2017, from

<http://www.designprinciplesftw.com/collections/10-usability-heuristics-for-user-interface-design>

Duggirala, S. (2016). 10 Usability Heuristics with Examples. Prototyping: From UX to Front

End. Retrieved 16 February 2017, from [https://blog.prototypr.io/10-usability-heuristics-with-](https://blog.prototypr.io/10-usability-heuristics-with-examples-4a81ada920c#.inln067uo)

[examples-4a81ada920c#.inln067uo](https://blog.prototypr.io/10-usability-heuristics-with-examples-4a81ada920c#.inln067uo)

Morville, P. (2004). User Experience Design. Semantic Studios. Retrieved 16 February 2017,

from http://semanticstudios.com/user_experience_design/