

VR NEIGHBORHOOD

HERALD TO THE METAVERSE

VOLUME 1

AUGUST 28, 2021

FIRST ISSUE

INTRODUCING A VIRTUAL GOLDEN AGE

FROM THE TEAM

BY VR NEIGHBORHOOD, INC

Dear Reader,

Within these pages you will find metaverse inspired original stories, art, opinions, and ideas from business owners, students, professional artists, and creative minds from around the globe.

What is the Metaverse you may ask? Well, that's the exciting question. Unlike Mars, or the moon, or even Antarctica, it doesn't quite exist yet. In it's best form, it is a creative playground within but outside of reality, a place where the human imagination has no limit and where we can connect in ways previously unimaginable. At its worst, it's an escape or entrapment from a planet riddled with problems we have created; a brave new world like distopian reality

While our company's primary technology and IP is focused on virtual reality applications related to residential architecture, we understand that we are blending realities, and working inside of a new paradigm for imaginative and spatial exploration. It's an exciting frontier.

We hope that you enjoy the art work, thoughts, and stories in our company newsletter and that they inspire and excite you, as we are inspired and excited.

Welcome to our VR Neighborhood.

-Derek, Irem, and the
VR Neighborhood team.

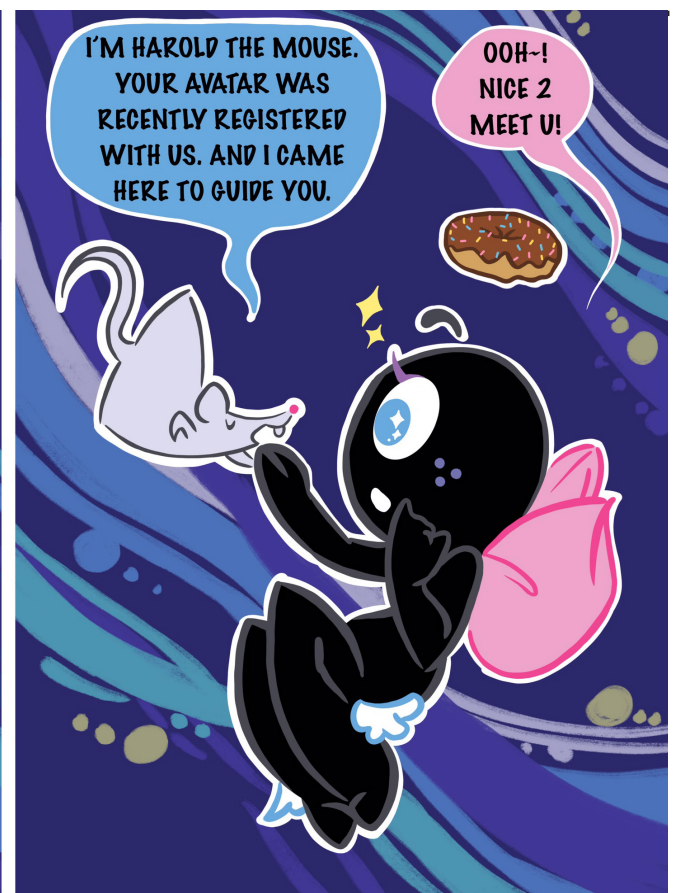
VIRTUAL REALITY: THE ULTIMATE PLATFORM FOR MUSIC

BY SOPHIE CHARRINGTON, THE MUSIC TRIP

Virtual Reality (VR) is a format of entertainment most people commonly associate with gaming - and fair enough, it's an enormous industry. Even pre-pandemic in 2019, the global VR gaming market was valued at a staggering [\\$11.5 billion](#) - and the rush of headset sales throughout 2020 will have added to this considerably. I believe, however, that consumer VR will not always be synonymous with gaming only, and that there is one industry in particular that is on the cusp of taking its first big virtual step: Music.

VR VICKI AND HAROLD THE MOUSE

BY NESS USKERT AND AVA BERMAN



We've seen trailblazing artists dip their toe in the pool of Extended Reality media over the last few years (DeadMou5, Gorillaz, Run the Jewels to name a few) but as with most new technologies, it now needs to make commercial sense to make it a viable endeavour for more artists. This, to me, is the exciting developmental period the music industry currently finds itself in.

Consisting of 360° (and commonly 3D) visuals that users can interact with, Virtual Reality media is designed to be enjoyed with VR headsets and controllers to allow full interactivity and immersion in the content. Participants block out their reality to

experience the game first-hand as the main character: they forget their surroundings and are transported into a fictional digital experience.

VR centres itself in this ability to take you anywhere, and though the technology is still developing, the level of believability it can achieve already is outstanding. VR headsets are designed to mimic human actions: look in one direction and you'll see one thing; move your view slightly and you'll expose the corresponding area of content. Combine this with spatial audio

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)

'BOY IN METAVERSE' BY GIULIA GUALAZZI



JUNE’S WORLD

PART 1

A story by CHRIS MOSLEY

London, England - The Year 2052

The city’s iconic clock rang in the distance while a sea of humans roamed the streets. So many, they appeared still.

A young woman pushed her way through the crowd to board the commuter train. Her petite frame and aggression ushered her in with little resistance. Wearing a cheap business suit, she removed her wedding ring and placed it in her pocket.

Things she noticed during the commute:

A billboard that read, World Population – 13 billion.

An old man reading a newspaper with the headline, Childbirth Remains Illegal, No End in Sight.

And a news monitor, where a mother and father are being arrested for birthing a child.

It was a grim reality that led many into the abyss of hopelessness.

Later that day, the young woman nervously stood in the wings of an auditorium. She was next in a long line of other hopefuls competing for the chance to improve the quality of life for many.

Her high heels clicked across the stage as she took her place behind the podium. The screen overhead displayed her name and occupation -- Ava Campbell, Software Engineer. She launched into her spiel:

“Ever since the mandate of no childbirth, cases of depression have increased by 500%. And we all know depression can lead to dark outcomes none of us care to think about. Unfortunately, by next year, we can expect that number to double. But none of us should be surprised by this. For example, if you take a dog’s toy away, he’ll mope around like it was the end of the world. But what if we could give the dog another toy, one nearly as good as the other.”

“Get to the point,” yelled someone in the audience.

“What if we could recreate the childbirth experience in such a way that a mother could feel every contraction, a father could literally feel the sweat on her forehead.”

“Rubbish, how do you propose we do that?” shouted an audience member.

“Through virtual reality, a metaverse, a world where all this and more are possible. I have already engineered the software, it’s completely self-sufficient. And to access it, all you need is this.”

She revealed a small computer chip.

“What about the people who have no clue what to expect?” Ava was confused by the question. A lady in the audience continued: “When I had my first child, many moons ago, it was quite challenging, I would even describe it as... traumatic. Can you imagine

the legal fallout? Did you think about that when you were... engineering?”

Ava stammered; how could this have gone downhill so quickly, she thought.

“Ms. Campbell, have you ever even bore children?”

The audience laughed, leaving Ava frozen with embarrassment.

In a modest condo, Ava’s husband, Daniel, washed dishes in the kitchen. After hearing arguing from the couple in the next unit, he banged on the wall to shut them up.

In walked Ava, tired and disappointed. Daniel took notice of something peculiar. “Maybe we should put it up for sale, we could use the money.” Ava put her wedding ring back on. “I told you, if they know you’re married, they don’t believe you’re fully committed to the work,” she said. “Did it help?” he rebutted. Ava ignored him and walked down the hall toward the loo --

But not before stopping at a bedroom. It was adorned with a crib, stuffed animals, and pink wallpaper with flowers to boot. Nothing had been touched in years; not even the lettering on the wall that spelled out Baby June.

Ava held back tears. “I’m sorry.”

The next morning, Ava had her ear to the wall, eavesdropping on yet another argument next door. Daniel lumbered in. “What are they roaring about now?” Daniel inquired. “The same thing; she wants a child, he doesn’t.” “Can’t blame the bloke. After all, you can’t raise a child if you’re in prison. And leaving them in the care of a stranger is even worse,” Daniel remarked.

The argument intensified. Ava headed for the door, hoping to put a stop to it. But Daniel blocked the exit, expressing that it was none of their business. She demanded that he move. Daniel shouted, “They’re going through a major shit storm and I don’t want my wife in the middle!”

At that moment, she had an epiphany. “You’re a bloody genius.” She lovingly slapped him across the face and sprinted down the hallway.

Ava sat behind a massive computer terminal in her home office, much of it was old equipment she had pieced together, but it was impressive, nonetheless. She pulled up the internet and ran a search for MIDWIFE.

2 Weeks Later...

The couple from next door sat on a couch on the auditorium stage, unconscious, the small computer chip nested just under the skin of their wrists.

The government officials watched skeptically. The lady that busted Ava’s chops the last time is especially cynical.

Ava clocked a stopwatch as it ticked down to zero. The couple awakened. The woman rubbed her belly like expecting mothers do, only she wasn’t pregnant. The man puts his ear to her belly, hoping to feel a kick.

“Please share your experience with our audience,” said Ava.

“It was so... real. And beautiful. I could feel him and see him. The contractions... were painful, but there was someone, a woman helping, coaching us. Who was she?”

Ava got choked up. “June... her name is June.”

The couple embraced; something they hadn’t done in a long time.

Ava addressed the officials with a caveat: “There are a few kinks that still need to be worked out...”

But the audience drowned her out with applause, even the cranky lady swallowed her pride.

Ava smiled. And why shouldn’t she - - she was about to change the world... by creating a new one.

CYBERPUZZLE

Down:

1. Coined the term 'Cyberspace'

2. Neil Stephenson Novel

3. Non-Fungible _____

5. Spielberg flick

7. Real world simulation. Digital _____

8. Virtual reality presence

10. Collective virtual shared space

Across:

4. Real time rendering king

6. Possible foundation for virtual world currency

9. Fortnite maker

11. Internet Predecessor

12. Most succesful VR headset. _____ 2

13. Father of Cybernetics

14. Coined the term 'Cyborg'

15. Decentraland Art gallery owner

16. Mike Winkelmann

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(Answer key at www.vrneighborhood.com)

VIRTUAL REALITY: THE ULTIMATE
PLATFORM FOR MUSIC (CONT)

BY SOPHIE CHARRINGTON, THE MUSIC TRIP

techniques (where sounds are placed in an audio field to come from their visual sources in the 360° media) and haptic feedback (vibrations simulating physical sensations), and you have enough sensory cues to temporarily fool someone’s perception of reality. It is VR’s unlimited ability to provide people with first hand experiences of anything, fictional or not, that makes VR so perfect for music.

Musicians use music videos to visually express the concept, aesthetic or tone of a song. Whether a music video makes sense, is funny, tells a story or is simply an animated visualiser, it is a way by which listeners can enhance their experience of a piece of music and gain a deeper understanding of it as a piece of art. If you love a song, the chances are you’ve watched the music video of it (if it exists) to get closer to the artist and build on your enjoyment of the track. Every time you do this, your understanding and loyalty to the musician who created it grows - you’re more likely to listen to their other tracks, follow them on social media and stay up to date with their releases.

Music videos are also vital in promoting music to a generation of listeners who respond more to visual entertainment off the back of social media-induced short attention spans, and the [increasingly fast-paced digital world we live in](#). Building on this necessity for complimentary visuals, music videos are also used to create a buzz around artists: statement concepts, loud key messages and shocking visuals are a direct route for musicians to attract publicity and start conversations - just look at Lil Nas X’s latest music video for MONTERO (Call Me By Your Name). These are just a few reasons why, despite rarely earning musicians direct income, music videos and visual assets are so important in the artist ‘brand’.

But how are we experiencing this artist brand? Currently, we view music videos on a small portable screen. This screen is competing with everything else in the room and our role is to sit back and watch. There is little to no relationship between you and the experience. We are distanced, disconnected and uninvolved in the media, and consequently we forget much of what we watch: it gets lost in the sea of content we see everyday.

“Memory is anchored and made stronger when there is increased multi-sensory and emotional input.”
Education Psychology Review

Immersive VR experiences use multiple senses and reality replacement techniques to communicate stories more effectively, and as a result [we remember them more](#). This is because the combined audio, visual and sometimes tactile cues match each other, tricking parts of the brain into believing it’s a real experience. Combine this capability with animation and VFX and there’s an unlimited potential for creative experiences that truly transport people into entirely fictional worlds. Does this sound

like the building blocks of a piece of media you’d forget quickly? With VR music videos, musicians can create highly-stylised, totally imagined, and physically unbounded music videos and experiences that aren’t distractingly watched by a viewer out of the corner of their eye, but are experienced first hand like a real-world event.

To give an example, in 2020 The Music Trip made a [VR music experience](#) for Luke Jerram’s Sky Orchestra. 7 hot air balloons rose into the sky with live musicians in them and floated above Bristol for an hour, serenading the city with music composed by a collective including members of Massive Attack and Portishead. Viewers who experience this with a VR headset are transported back to that extraordinary moment in time into a hot air balloon with guitarist Jerome Gamble. Viewers become participants of the Sky Orchestra and get an immersive experience incomparable to the 2D and ‘flat’ 3 minute summary videos.

I believe gamers and music fans are cut of the same cloth, and as gaming has graduated to incorporate VR, so will music follow in its steps. This is because both seek powerful and spine-tingling ways to experience entertainment and art, and it only makes sense for gaming, music’s more technical younger sibling, to lead this exploration of new technology.

Music is ready for an exciting new arena through which it can be enjoyed. VR music videos and experiences do not need to compete with our existing ways of enjoying music, instead they are a new avenue of expression that adds to an artists repertoire of media for their listeners. They can be an occasional investment to help musicians communicate larger-than-life ideas and concepts. What’s important, however, is that music’s mainstream adoption of VR is done on the music industry’s terms, and offers promotional, useful and financial rewards that benefit the artist as much as the listener.

So where are we now? Are more people in music looking towards XR technology? Absolutely. In 2019, I, with my business partner Murray Hitchens, set up The Music Trip. We are obsessed with VR’s potential in experiencing music. We want to celebrate its ability to transform music tracks into multi-sensory immersive experiences, and were stunned to see that we were amongst the first generation of companies to have that idea.

Of course, artists like Gorillaz and Squarepusher have already explored and created VR music videos - and have done it well - but there are only a handful of dedicated XR production companies around that exist to take it further than just a novelty idea for chart-topping artists. And so began The Music Trip journey to make VR music mainstream.

When we say mainstream, we don’t mean just popular, we mean sustainable. Sustainability comes in all shapes and sizes, but mine and Murray’s experience as artist managers and event promoters meant we understood the music industry perspective: we knew that we had to make VR music videos a financially rewarding investment for musicians. As a result, The Music Trip VR arcade

was created; a mobile pop-up that visited events allowing people to try VR and XR (Extended Reality - any technology that immerses us in a digital world, whether fully or partially) with music experiences. Every time someone pays to experience a VR music video at The Music Trip arcade, their money is redistributed to the creative forces behind it at a fair rate that values the artist.

It was not long into starting this event service, however, that we realised there were limited VR music videos available for us to show guests at our arcade - and, added bonus, the Coronavirus pandemic was rearing its ugly head for the first time. With events cancelled and an opportunity to expand, The Music Trip adapted like many companies did in 2020, and we began producing VR (and consequently AR) media for musicians. Again, our previous experience as project and artist managers gave us the perfect foundation for knowing what content would work and what wouldn’t - our standards were, and still are, high. We understand our clients and prioritise creating VR media that is an extension of music and excites the artist as much as it does the listener. We also want to ensure that immersive content is accessible - so our passive VR music videos are uploaded to YouTube (like any other videos) and can be watched through smartphones, phone VR headsets, tablets and desktops.

Successful modern music releases are about providing fans with the ‘whole package’. With so much competition and so many distractions, artists need tools like VR, AR and 360° media to help them express and promote their ideas. This is what The Music Trip does. Throughout our production journey, we have picked up 360° / VR live streaming, Augmented Reality asset production and virtual tour creation, as well as VR music video production. Our obsession with creating immersive music experiences with musicians will always be evolving as new technologies appear and it is this that excites us most.

Extended Reality media is the ultimate, unlimited platform for musical expression, and as The Music Trip continues to work with breakthrough artists and explore new concepts and ideas, I, for one, cannot wait to see the future of the immersive VR experiences and music.

STUDENT PERSPECTIVE:
SUMMER INTERNSHIP 2021

BY VIDESHA BANSAL (VIRGINIA TECH)

My summer of 2021 has been very fruitful. I got some amazing opportunities which I never thought I would experience so early on in my career. I am a rising Junior at Virginia Tech majoring in Architecture. I have always wanted to get professional experience during my college years. I started off as an architectural intern at Atelier Derek Uskert but was eventually introduced to the world of virtual reality. I was not very familiar with the concept of combining architecture with virtual reality. As I started learning about it, I was extremely fascinated by this concept and wanted to learn more and more.