**Evaluation of the User Interface**

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the effectiveness of our user interface. In order to do this, I will be measuring our work against Nielsen’s 10 Usability Heuristics and will be providing specific examples of where these Heuristics have been met within our interface.

The user interface gives lots of feedback to the users to keep them informed about what is going on within the system in order to help the user easily use the system without confusion. For example, on all the table pages when a user adds or deletes a record from the table, they are provided with a suitable message informing them that the action has successfully been completed. This helps to prevent repeated actions which are frustrating to the user and can influence the consistency of the database, for example if two of the same records are added. Another example of feedback in the user interface is on the authorisations page. When the user inputs the information in order to check an authorisation, they are told whether they are denied access to the given stage at on the given date or whether they are allowed access. Another piece of feedback can be seen on the login page. Users are told whether they have entered an incorrect login.

The user interface uses language that should be very familiar to the user. An example of this are the buttons on the header use words such as bands and performances. These words would be familiar no matter the type of user. For example, a user could be a member of a band or an administrator of the system and both would easily be able to navigate the system because the use of language is not system oriented. The most system oriented the language gets is in the authorisations page where the user is asked to input a stage number and a member ID. However, these are terms that should be familiar to users of the system.

The system has features put in place to aid users that have, by mistake, chosen the wrong system function. When adding records to tables users are given the option to cancel the option to cancel the addition. This saves the user both time and frustration. Another example can be seen in the authorisations page. Users must press a button to submit the information which gives the users time to change any of the information if they have made a mistake. One way this could be improved within our system is by adding a way to undo the delete of a record.

As well as error messages, preciscely indicate the problem, such as those that appear when the user enters no values for required fields, the system implements a number of features that are in place to stop errors from happening all together. A few example of these are drop down menus, for field where the are a set amount of choices. This can be for foreign keys or regular fields. When adding a band the user has to choose both the agent and the music style. Another important error prevention tool that has been implemented is a calendar. This is a very useful feature as dates come in and are processed in a number of different formats . An example of a calendar can be seen when adding a new performance. Drop down menus also help to minimise the user’s cognitive load as they no longer have to remember foreign key values when adding new records. For example when adding a perormance without drop down menus a user may need to keep going back and forth to check values which is time consuming and frustrating. another way the system minimises the user’s cognitve load is by giving the system a minmalist design. There are no wordy dialogues and everything that appears on screen is relevant, this includes buttons, tables or input boxes. It could be argued that the tables provide a lot of information to the user all at once however this information is organised and individual records can be viewed separatley. A good example of this minalmalist design can be seen on the authorisations page.

For the colour scheme and layout we have chosen a white backgroud and black text to contrast this so that information can clearly be seen by the user. We used a contrast cheker to decide on the colour scheme and it passed all of the WCAG 2.0 criteria. For the header we used a soft blue colour that contrasted slightly with white background of the main body, enough so it clearly separated the two parts but not so much that it made the website hard to look at. The buttons are all different colours that stand out from eachother and the page and they all feature bold white text to clearly signify which button links to what. The different buttons having different colours also helps to minimise the users cognitve load as the user will be able to associate colours to each page and after a little while will not have to read the text to know what button does what. The navigation bar itself has been split into two sections, with the main pages on the left and fuctions like logout on the right. This has many benefits. First of all it helps with navigation. Generally people read from left to right so putting the more important information on the left helps the user more easily and quickly navigate round the page. Secondly by placing the logout button further away it keeps the user on the page for longer. Also a lot of users will find this layout familiar as many other websites follow similar conventions, placing the home button on the far left is an especially common convention.

Overall I believe that the system implements an effective user interface. I believe this because it meets almost all of the heuristics outlined in Nielsen’s 10 Usability Heuristics. The only heuristic we have not implemented in any capacity is number 7, which includes the addition of things such as keyboard shortcuts that make the system more flexible and efficient for expert users. However, the web browser itself has keyboard shortcuts that can be utilised on the system. In addition, the layout and colour scheme has been crafted using tools such as contrast checkers, and by studying other website layouts to ensure information is clearly displayed for users.