**Describe a project that you worked on with multiple collaborators that left you feeling proud and fulfilled. Discuss your role in the project and explain why this collaboration was successful. Then, describe another collaborative project that left you unsatisfied. Discuss your role in the project and explain why this collaboration frustrated you. Finally, summarize what you learned from each of these experiences and describe the lessons you learned that inspire your future collaborations.**

Blood dripped down her chin while she grabbed her crewmate’s neck, laughing maliciously. “Cut! That’s a wrap!” yelled our coach and director. Immediately, all seven performers, including me, burst into a huge cheer. It was nearing midnight, but our spirits were as high as ever. As we cleaned up and changed out of our costumes, I couldn’t help but think about the laborious process that it took to get there. Over six months’ worth of practice went into the final product: a short, 5-minute dance cover video that I had done with my sub collective, Ribelles, of a rising K-pop idol group named Dreamcatcher, but with a few unexpected twists.

We knew in the beginning that we wanted to do better and unlike anything we’ve done before. After listening to Dreamcatcher’s songs, we settled on two that allowed us to showcase our duality - one exuded darkness, and the other, poise. Inspired by the eerie aura of their music videos, we were determined to elevate our performance. One of our coaches proposed to infuse an element of horror storytelling that involved dark spirits possessing lives when a girl mistakenly plays with a haunted doll. We had never incorporated storytelling in our performances, and this was the perfect opportunity to do so. To add yet another layer of complexity to the choreography, our coaches, who both had roots in waacking, challenged us further through an original dance break that involved said dance genre.

Stepping into uncharted territory was one thing, but I was also blocked in the center of the dance break and was trusted with a stunt I had never tried - I would be dragged underneath two teammates to give the impression that I was being claimed by a spirit. Additionally, I wasn’t the best with facial expressions and was a newbie to waacking, but I was determined to make it work. The fact that this project was a massive team effort was all the more reason to push myself to put in my hundred hours. One critical lesson I learnt was to take a step back, and listen: to constructive criticism, like poorly executed movements and missed details, as well as to creative ideas, like the most appropriate camera angles and how certain sequences should be shot. Without everyone seeing eye to eye and locking in together, we would not be able to deliver a powerful performance.

For six months, we learned to grab the choreography by its reins and master it with the help of our coaches, who constantly reminded us to lock and flow our bodies accordingly, make sharp movements, and effectively communicate through facial expressions. The small, sweet moments where we formed inside jokes and shared longer-than-intended breaks of laughter during practice were some of the most memorable moments during practice. It would be foolish, in my opinion, to disregard the fact that one of the reasons this project produced satisfactory results was our chemistry. In our four years together, we’ve won and lost competitions, seen each other improve, and most importantly, grown together as a team. The long hours spent working on this project brought us closer and strengthened the desire to deliver our best.

The final cut showed exactly that — our best. I realized that I didn’t care if this video didn’t get a significant number of views or if the audience wasn’t fond of it. With this project, we all left our comfort zones and challenged ourselves artistically in ways we hadn’t done before. I myself struggled with facial expressions a lot as they weren’t my forté, but by the time we shot this I truly felt that I had delivered on that end. I had never seen me, personally, and us as a group, perform that way. I went in there, poured my heart and soul into it to truly deliver Ribelles’ crème de la crème of performances, and left feeling absolutely content. However, the same could not be said for this next project.

Similarly, this was a K-pop dance cover video of a group called Twice; however, unlike the previous project, in retrospect this felt like making art for clout, not for the sake of making art. Twice had released their song “Fancy” and my main collective, Kindo Project, wanted to ride on its wave of popularity. So, a short-term project was established. Its time-sensitive nature meant that we had only four practice sessions to get things right. Tackling a complex choreography that involved nine dancers within that short time span was challenging, and we wanted to knock it out of the park. Hence, I took the initiative to learn some parts ahead of time to not burden the team.

A few days prior to the shoot, we had published a dance cover video of Blackpink which took two months to finalize, performed in front of one of Jakarta’s major landmarks. To our surprise, the video garnered 300k views in a week and viewers commented that they loved that we performed in public. With this knowledge, my teammates chose to follow suit as it was a step towards higher exposure and more views. I was hesitant as this meant we had less control over the environment and the Jakarta swelter would undeniably affect our performance. Their enthusiasm was contagious, but in hindsight, I should have voiced the concern.

The sun was relentless on the day of the shoot and I just wanted to get it over and done with as soon as possible. The lack of preparation and undesirable shooting conditions made it more difficult to bring my A game to this. Energy was drained at a much faster rate and details were forgotten. I cringed watching the final cut; we looked weak and minor mistakes even made it into the video. Technically speaking, we could have done so much better; spend more time polishing the details and the blocking. Given the poor footage, we had to rely on editing to salvage it, utilizing zooms to cut out awkward bits. At the end of the day, we did incur over 100k views and received positive comments. However, we were sacrificing quality for a better response.

Frankly, I think this demotivated me. I was glad the video helped us gain more exposure, but my intentions didn’t align with that of the project. Concerns revolved around chasing the early deadline and capitalizing on the location instead of solidifying the performance. I took on this project because it was lacking in dancers, and only upon reflecting did I realize the nature in which it was conceived. I can’t blame it though — I understand that they wanted our small channel to grow. This was an easy way to accomplish that goal, and that is completely fine. However, I still had a responsibility as a team player and should have contributed more instead of simply sitting in the passenger seat, perhaps suggest a more suitable shooting location, or even delay the deadline for a bit to improve the performance.

These two experiences were major eye openers in terms of how I would approach subsequent collaborations and continued my artistic career. The former collaboration planted the lesson that it was important to always bring 120% to every project, no matter how big or small in order to produce successful and satisfactory results. The latter reminded me that even though artistic integrity is important, sometimes, a compromise must be made in order to grow. As a team member, it became apparent that taking initiative and being the first to voice any concerns is invaluable. A substantial final product cannot come about without an environment that prioritizes listening and cultivates clear lines of communication amongst collaborators. Greater engagement through communication and conscientiousness are two things that I’ve decided to bring to my future collaborations, like a recent visual concept video I’d done with my friends.