

Presentation Notes: Emtunes

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My Client

My client is my dad, Emmitt Tierce — he's retired now, but he's been a musician since he was 13 years old, when he spent a whole summer bagging groceries so he could buy his first guitar at Sears for \$37. Throughout the 60s, 70s, 80s and early 90s, he fronted and played in over a dozen different bands, and he's got a ton of music and memorabilia to show for it. He will be referred to interchangeably throughout this presentation as "my dad", "my client" and "my dadclient."

Side note: as a really rad bonus aspect of this project, I got to see photos and hear songs that I've been pestering my dad to share with me forever, like these, which he recorded with his band Ariel between 1974 and 1978.

Needs Assessment

Originally, I felt like my needs assessment was sort of lacking, but now I just think that's just because, you know, he's my dad, so I already have a lot of the background I might have to get from a "real" client during the process. Also, his needs were ultimately pretty simple: he wanted a website where he could share music, photos and memories from his storied career in music. The challenges we identified mostly involved the audience, which was broad: friends, family, former bandmates, former fans, fellow reminiscers. Ultimately, it had to look good, but still be really easy to use.

Architecture Diagram

Not a whole lot to see or say here — since the content of the site wouldn't be particularly far-reaching, it didn't call for an overly-involved diagram. I tried to use color coding to identify different templates. Based on the feedback I got during the following class, I revisited the diagram to fix my key, which didn't originally list the homepage. I also nixed the "about" page and moved that info to the homepage, since it seemed a little redundant/unnecessary. In the end, I actually wound up using the same template for the "about" page as I used on the project pages, so I updated the diagram a third time, and this is the final version.

Wireframes

I liked the wireframing process, because it added some gravity to things — it finally felt like a website, instead of just an idea. I think it helped my dad take the project a little more seriously, too — he had kind of a "yeah sounds great whatever" attitude before he saw the wireframes, so I think they had a similar effect on him. The main thing I would do differently in the future is avoid making them this "concrete". I

think they imply more of a layout than I meant them to, which led to some unintentional pigeonholing... because my client really liked that layout.

Sketches

This was one of the bigger challenges for me — I'm a pen-and-paper guy when it comes to things like note-taking, but drawing/drafting isn't really in my bailiwick. I'm much more comfortable working digitally, but one of the major things I've learned from almost every class since I started the certificate program last fall is the importance of iterative sketching. I'm trying to step out of my comfort zone a little more, and make this step part of my regular practice, so I did my best to embrace it.

I was actually pleasantly surprised by the results, but if I were to do it again, I would definitely set aside more time and really push myself to complete more sketches and do more conceptual exploration.

Static Mockups

At first glance, my client really dug the “4-track recorder” concept, so I started thinking about how it would work in practice, and even sourcing some imagery to execute it, but before I really got into creating the mockups, he doubled back and decided it might not be straightforward enough for the site's potential audience (especially with all of the extra knobs, etc., which may have caused some confusion). So instead, we worked to cobble together elements of the two “clean” sketches — which were pretty similar — to come up with what became the layout used in the static mockups and the finished site.

I really enjoyed creating the static mockups — prior to this, I didn't really understand Photoshop's layer comps feature, and it was incredibly useful. Definitely a great tool to have in the kit for the future.

HTML Conversion

The conversion process was a little daunting at first, but I tried to streamline it as much as possible. I used Photoshop's Info Panel to take measurements based on the mockups, and I made judicious use of the internet for coding resources and tricks. For example, rather than struggle with precise spacing and calculations for the gallery, I found a method someone had posted that allowed me to justify the images as if they were text, by making them behave as inline-block elements. It took a little tweaking when the images didn't take up a whole row; I had to make use of some dummy images to fill the space.

There were definitely one or two surprises — one in particular was how the code for making the header transition cascaded and affected the nav links, so they sort of fade in and out instead of abruptly changing color. I actually really liked the way that looked, and wound up applying it to other elements of the site, such as the band and project indexes.

If I were to do this project again, I'd definitely try to approach it with more forethought, especially during the mockup and conversion stages. There were things I implemented in the final build, like the lightbox, that weren't reflected in my mockups, and probably should have been. During the conversion

process, I dove right into building things rather than taking time to set up a good HTML template, which created additional work down the line. I'd also take more time to think about my file structure, which I went back and forth on a couple of times.

Overall, I think the site is mostly successful, although I still think it could use a fair amount of work. It does what it needs to do, but I think there are a few glaring oversights, like being able to go forward and back between band or project pages. I got talked out of drop-down navigation, but I think one or the other would be really helpful.

The Future

I tried to make the site somewhat modular, so it wouldn't take a ton of work to add further bands — Itchie Brother, Pressure Point, Substantial Evidence, Wild West... there are a bunch. We've also talked about the possibility of implementing a CMS one day, so that dadclient can post stuff on his own.

There are definitely a few aspects of the site that I consider unfinished, including a couple related to issues that came up late in the game. The bio my dadclient provided for his "about" section is more of an in-depth history, which makes me feel like there should maybe be two pages, or at least sections — "about" and "history". He originally wanted "contact" to be a direct email link, but since he has Bandcamp now, and he's big into Facebook, I'd like to create an actual page, with some links and maybe a form. I think it would also be cool to add Facebook integration, such as being able to like pages and leave comments. Since his birthday is coming up, I'm going to try and get some of that up and running over the next week, then launch this sucker with a domain name as part of his birthday present.