

Music Video Production — Workbook

This workbook is your on-set and post-production companion for the Music Video Production course. Each section corresponds to one course module, giving you exercises, worksheets, and checklists you can use before, during, and after each project. Complete these as you work through real productions — they compound in value across multiple videos.

Concept and Treatment Development

Develop and pressure-test your concept before you write a single line of treatment.

Exercise: Blind Listen and Song Breakdown

Choose a released track you did not produce. Listen to it three times without screens or notes. On the fourth listen, complete the song breakdown grid for every section of the track.

- What was the first raw image or memory that appeared during the blind listen — before you thought analytically about the song?

- Which song section (verse, chorus, bridge) has the strongest visual potential, and why?

- Does the arrangement suggest a performance concept, a narrative concept, or an abstract concept? What specific sonic element drove that instinct?

- Name two films or photographers — not music videos — whose visual world fits this track. What specifically do you borrow from each?

Worksheet: Song Breakdown Grid

Complete one row per song section. Use the grid to build your treatment and edit map. Add rows as needed for intros and outros.

Section name (e.g. Verse 1)

Timecode start — end

Dominant emotion (single word)

Key lyric or melodic phrase

Raw visual idea

Proposed treatment type (performance / narrative / abstract / hybrid)

Proposed location or environment

Checklist: Treatment Completion Checklist

- Opening statement written — names the concept and its emotional core in 2–3 sentences
- Visual world paragraph written — names colour palette, texture, era, and mood
- Section-by-section visual breakdown written following the song structure
- Lighting reference image selected and captioned
- Composition reference image selected and captioned
- Colour palette reference image selected and captioned
- Texture / wardrobe reference image selected and captioned
- Production notes paragraph written — names locations, crew size, and shoot days honestly
- Treatment exported as PDF and shared with at least one person for feedback
- Feedback received and one revision made before final submission

Exercise: Budget Tier Self-Assessment

Before writing a budget, answer these questions honestly to identify which tier your project belongs to. Misidentifying your tier is the most common cause of over-promised treatments.

- What is the total cash budget available for this production (not time, not favours — actual money)?

 - What equipment do you own or can borrow at no cost? What must be rented or hired?

 - How many locations does your current concept require, and are they permissible within your budget?

 - Based on your answers, which tier does this project belong to: micro (under \$500), low (\$500–5,000), or mid (\$5,000–25,000)? Does your treatment match this tier?
-

Directing Performance and Narrative Scenes

Plan your shoot and practise the direction protocols before you arrive on set.

Worksheet: Shot List and Schedule Builder

Complete this worksheet for your next shoot. Every row is one setup. Total the estimated time and compare to your available shoot hours before the shoot day.

Setup number

Setup name / description (e.g. Hero Performance — Rooftop)

Location

Must-have shots in this setup

Nice-to-have shots in this setup

Lighting configuration (natural / artificial / mixed)

Estimated setup and lighting time (minutes)

Estimated number of takes per shot

Total estimated time for this setup (minutes)

Priority rank (1 = highest)

Exercise: Performance Direction Rehearsal

Before the shoot, run a direction rehearsal with the artist or a stand-in. Practice giving each type of direction and note which produced the most natural result.

- Write three task-based spatial directions for the performance location you have scouted (e.g. 'Move toward the window as the chorus hits'). Avoid emotional or quality-based language.
 - Write two active-verb emotional prompts for the song's most intense moment. Replace any adjectives with physical verbs (not 'look sad' — 'reach for something just out of frame').
 - After rehearsing, which direction type produced the most authentic result from your talent — task-based, spatial, or emotional verb? Why?
 - What is the single most important thing you want the audience to feel when they watch the artist in this video? Reduce it to one sentence and post it where you can see it on set.
-

Checklist: Shoot Day Readiness Checklist

- Call sheet distributed to all crew and talent at least 48 hours before the shoot
- Master audio WAV file loaded on the playback device and tested at performance volume
- Shot list printed or loaded on a tablet — every crew member has a copy
- Must-have shots asterisked on the shot list
- Each location confirmed accessible and any permits or permissions verified
- Wardrobe and styling confirmed with artist — no surprises on set
- Camera batteries charged, memory cards formatted and labelled
- Performance direction prompts written out and in your pocket
- Post-mortem template open and ready to complete within 48 hours of wrap

Sync Editing and Post-Production

Build a clean, professional post-production workflow and verify your edit before delivery.

Worksheet: Post-Production Project Checklist

Complete every row before delivering any version of the edit to the artist or label. Use this to track status across the edit stages.

Task

Status (Not Started / In Progress / Complete)

Completed date

Notes or blockers

Exercise: Sync Accuracy Audit

After assembling your rough cut, run this audit before proceeding to the fine cut. A sync error found now costs 10 minutes; found on delivery day it costs hours.

- Export a low-resolution H.264 proxy of the rough cut and watch it in a separate media player. List every moment where lip-sync feels wrong — even slightly.
-

- For each flagged moment, check the source clip's timecode against the audio track. Is the error a placement issue (clip is on the wrong frame) or a drift issue (sample rate mismatch)?
-
- What is your plan for any clips that cannot be corrected to sync? Do you have alternate takes that cover the same section?
-
- After fixing all sync issues, watch the entire rough cut from start to finish without pausing. What is the single weakest edit point — the cut that jars most? How will you address it?
-

Checklist: Delivery Checklist — Pre-Export

- Picture lock confirmed with artist or label — no further edit changes after this point
- Colour grade applied to all clips — correction, match, and creative grade steps completed in order
- Technical LUT applied to any log-profile footage before creative grade
- Audio levels checked — final mix at -14 LUFS for streaming platforms
- Lip-sync spot-checked at 50% playback speed at 5 random cut points
- YouTube delivery export created: H.264 or H.265, 1920x1080 or 3840x2160, Rec.709
- Social crop (9:16 vertical) exported for Instagram Reels and TikTok if required
- Spotify Canvas version exported if applicable: 1080x1920, H.264, no audio track, 3–8 seconds
- All deliverables renamed with project name, platform, resolution, and date
- Final files backed up to at least two separate physical locations before delivery

Portfolio and Professional Practice

Build the professional infrastructure that converts completed videos into a sustainable directing practice.

Exercise: Reel Self-Assessment

Watch your current director's reel (or a rough assembly of your best clips if you do not have a formal reel) and answer these questions honestly.

- What is the single strongest shot in your current reel? Why is it the strongest? Can you open the reel with it?
-
- What is the weakest clip currently in the reel? What would have to be true for you to remove it?
-
- Does the reel communicate a consistent visual identity — a point of view that is recognisably yours? If not, what is missing?
-
- If an artist manager watched your reel and had 30 seconds to describe your aesthetic to a client, what would they say? Is that what you want them to say?
-

Worksheet: Project Post-Mortem

Complete within 48 hours of delivering a finished video. Use the findings to update your templates and checklists.

Project name and delivery date

What went exactly as planned (list specific moments or workflows)

What required improvisation — was it planning failure or genuine production volatility?

Must-have shots that did not happen — root cause

Unplanned shots or moments that ended up in the final cut

Single most important change to make on the next project of this type

Template or checklist updates triggered by this post-mortem

Crew members to rebook and why

Crew or talent not to rebook and why

Checklist: First-Year Director Milestones Tracker

- Song breakdown grid template built and tested on at least one track
- Director's treatment written and submitted (to any artist, paid or unpaid)
- First video shot and edited — even if imperfect, released publicly
- Director's reel assembled from completed work
- Vimeo Pro account created and reel uploaded
- Portfolio website live with reel above the fold and contact form working
- Three unsolicited treatment pitches sent to independent artists
- First paid commission received (any rate)
- Post-mortem completed for every completed project
- Crew contact spreadsheet started with at least 3 collaborators
- IMDB credit page created
- Three to five completed and released videos in portfolio by end of year one

Your Action Plan

1. Choose one released track you did not produce and complete the blind listen and song breakdown grid within 24 hours of finishing Module 1
2. Write a full director's treatment for that track — all five sections — and have one person review it before you consider it done
3. Scout and photograph at least two locations for your next production and assess each against your budget tier
4. Build a shot list for your next video and back-time it against your shoot hours; cut until it fits
5. Run a playback and direction rehearsal with your artist before the shoot day — even 30 minutes of rehearsal changes the outcome
6. On shoot day: check all must-have shots off the shot list at every setup transition, not at the end of the day
7. Immediately after the shoot, log every clip into your post-production folder structure before doing anything else
8. Complete the sync accuracy audit on your rough cut before touching the colour grade
9. Deliver to at least one platform with a verified export preset — do not eyeball the specs
10. Complete the post-mortem within 48 hours of delivery and update at least one template or checklist based on your findings

