PARANOIA

Project III – Animation film

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M.Des. Animation Design

Project Guide

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Declaration

I declare that this written submission represents my ideas in my own words and where others' ideas or words have been included, I have adequately cited and referenced the original sources. I also declare that I have adhered to all principles of academic honesty and integrity and have not misrepresented or fabricated or falsified any idea/data/fact/source in my submission. I understand that any violation of the above will be cause for disciplinary action by the institute and can also evoke penal action from the sources which have thus not been properly cited from whom proper permission has not been taken when needed.

Signature:

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Roll no.: 09634006

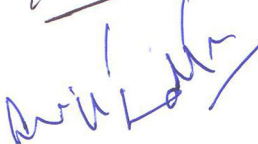Date: 12/07/2011

Approval Sheet

This Animation Project entitled *'Paranoia'* is approved in partial fulfilment of the Masters Degree in Animation and Film Design.

Guide : _T. Dhani_

Internal Examiner :

External Examiner :

Chairman :

Contents

1. Acknowledgements

I sincerely thank my guide Prof. Phani Tetali for his invaluable inputs throughout the making of the film.

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I am also thankful to my friends and batch mates for their help and inputs at various stages of the project.

2. Abstract

The film aims to take a look into the fear experienced by a person in distress and subsequently its gradual rise leading to paranoia. Paranoia literally is a medical condition attributed to delusional and often irrational sense of perceived threat to self. This perceived threat overwhelms the individual into doing things not they would not do otherwise. The technical learning objectives of the film are 3D rigged animation with facial expressions, backgrounds using matte layers, scene composition in the 3D space, and shot composition.

3. Introduction

Fear is a very basic survival mechanism occurring in response to a specific stimulus, such as pain or the threat of danger. Fear triggers the fight-or-flight response, i.e., either face or run away from the recognised danger. Fear is different from anxiety in that the latter can happen without any external threat. Paranoia is termed as a thought process heavily influenced by anxiety where a person perceives threat to self to the extent of delusion. In the case of paranoia the danger is more of a perception than recognition of the danger. This means that the person will assume the gravity of danger based on his own perception and will act in accordance. This perceived danger may in fact be non-existent, i.e., delusion.

The film tries to portray this sense of paranoia in the protagonist in the state of distress and attempts to build upon the fear which furthers itself into paranoia.

4. Readings

Paranoia is a state of mind that is heavily influenced by anxiety or fear. It is usually to the extent of delusion and exteme irrationality. Paranoid thinking typically includes a belief that one is in grave danger and threatened. In the state of paranoia, the intellectual abilities of the person are not reduced but are overwhelmed by the perceived threat to self. The various degrees of fear range from mild caution to the extremity of paranoia.

Fear can also be spread by influence of a larger social group and become hysteria. This is usually the case when rumours are spread among a group regarding something almost everyone has only heard of.

Reassurance can help get over some mild forms of fear by repeatedly doing something to gain trust in it. This is when a person recognizes his fear and tries to face it repeatedly to get over it.

Fear can be acquired by a frightening traumatic experience or observing others facing the trauma. Like in the case of hysteria, the fear is learnt or acquired from other people who have suffered or by having observed them suffering from something.

There are many myths known in the IIT Bombay campus community related to leopard sightings. Almost everyone in the campus has heard a lot of stories about the leopard straying into the campus from the adjoining forest fringe area. There is a particular isolated stretch of road leading to the hostel which is surrounded on either side by a thicket of trees

and bushes. At night time commuting along this stretch is a mix of anxiety and fear. These myths and facts of the wild cat in the campus led to the *human-animal* conflict.

The human- animal conflict has a very long history between them. The human encroachment into the natural habitat of animals has brought the humans face to face with the animals in their own territory. While reading I came across a number of instances in history during the British regime when the wild cats were hunted down as a trophy to the affected ego of the rulers. To mask the guilt of having killed the wild cat for game, the trend was to declare the animal as a threat to human life and property and hunt it down. There were quite a few genuine cases of killings of wild cats turning man-eater; but most other cases were made up by fashionable elite of the times. This is evident by the sudden spurt of man-eater cats around that time.

5. Film references

Ward 13 is a claymation short directed by Australian animator Peter Cornwell. The story goes like this: After a car accident, Ben wakes up in hospital. Not knowing where he is or what is going on, he starts exploring the corridors...only to find that the staff does not have his health in mind! The hapless patient must pull himself together and do everything he can to escape. It's an action/horror/comedy — ending with the wheelchair chase from hell!
The story is a mix of dark humour and has a very eerie feel.

Mighty Antlers is an animated short film by Sune Reinhardt, Mikael Ilnæs, Michael L. Fonsholt, Jouko Keskitalo. A man drives his car furiously down a narrow road, surrounded by a vast forest. When he encounters a deer in the middle of the road he makes a villainous attempt to ram it. However this particular hit and run has jaw crushing, battering consequences.

The film has a very interesting way of representation of the indifference of the main character and the consequence that befalls his.

6. Evolution of the story

The original idea of the film was derived from the cautionary mail that everyone in the campus receives about the leopard been sighted at a particular area in the campus. This kind of mail usually caused anxiety when I walked back to the hostel in the dead of the night. At a particular stretch on the way, the road is covered by a big canopy of trees and a thicket of bushes on both sides. This place always gives a feeling that the leopard might be lurking behind one of the bushes. That it might just jump out of one of the huge branches. This experience gave an idea of the story about a guy who while walking along such a place anticipates an encounter with a leopard out of his anxiety. The anxiety grows in his mind as he moves on and finally he sees a manifestation of fear in the illusion of the leopard which he treats as real. The guy's state of mind here is his paranoia.

This idea had a very specific context relatable only in the campus community. For the film to be taken in proper context in general there was need to give the viewer some initiation into the idea of stray leopards and its rumours. Although leopards and other wild cats stray into human settlements, the film would have still needed a lot of establishing of the idea to really be believable. The root of the idea was the Human-Animal conflict.

Another idea on the same lines of human-animal conflict was about a person who tries to track down a leopard after getting reports of the latter being sighted in the locality. The person

armed with a handy cam goes around the place searching for the leopard. He has to face his own fear and at the same time face the cause of the fear. This seemed to be an interesting element for the story to be built upon. It was pointed out that the idea of someone facing an extreme fear was not convincing for the audience and hence would need a lot of initiation into the concept to be believable.

The other idea was about two guys getting stranded in the forest and one of them leaves for getting help while the other stays back waiting for the former guy. The guy who waits starts to get anxious all alone and then the turn of events triggers his anxiety to paranoia. This story was quite linear with a scope for adding some twists in the events that trigger the paranoia.

7. Story

Avinash and Abhas are two siblings who venture out on a journey into the highway. Avinash is the elder brother and is a adventure seeker while Abhas the younger brother is a bit recluse and fainthearted. They go on a trip at night on Avinash's insistence and move into the jungle going across the forest department check-post. A few kilometres into the jungle they accidentally hit something on the road. Avinash goes to check what got hit and comes back hurriedly. Their vehicle stalls and they are stranded in a very dense and remote area of the jungle. The road they were travelling along is less frequented and they do not have any vehicles to seek help from. So Avinash asks Abhas to stay inside the vehicle while he goes to get some help from the check-post they had crossed earlier. Abhas now begins to get anxious being alone in this forsaken place. He is not aware of what they hit as it was Avinash who went to take a look. Avinash takes his gun with him cautioning Abhas to stay calm and stay inside the vehicle.

Abhas in his bid to quell his anxiety starts to dig into the book he was reading but the noises from the jungle don't help easing his uneasiness. He looks all around with nothing visible except the moonlit canopy of the trees. He goes back to reading for a while and is jolted by a thud from the end where they had got into the hit. He pulls out a torch and points in the dark to see someone lying there. His anxiety takes a leap as he is swinging between thinking of who the person can be. He then concludes that it might be his brother in distress and gathers courage to go and get him back. Just as he ventures

out he hears a growl which takes the wit out of him. He scrambles for a wrench out of the vehicle and along with a flashlight goes behind the vehicle tip toeing cautiously. Sweating hard he reaches the place to find nobody there. He is now flummoxed and tense. Just then a hand rests on his shoulder and he turns back wide-eyed with a jolt.
This is where the film ends.

Abhas
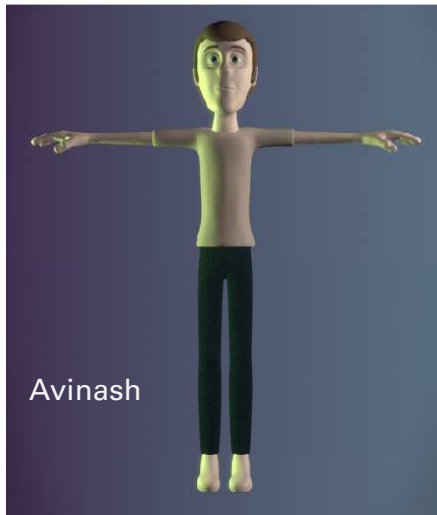
Avinash

7. Characters

There are two main characters in the film – Avinash (elder brother), Abhas (younger brother). There is another character who is the gatekeeper at the check post.

Avinash – He is a forest ranger who lives in the Forest Department quarters within the forest.
He is adventurous and takes charge of things. He carries a gun around for his safety in the forest. He has a younger brother Abhas.

Abhas – He is a student and has come to visit his brother for his vacations.
He is extremely afraid of the wild place his brother lives in.
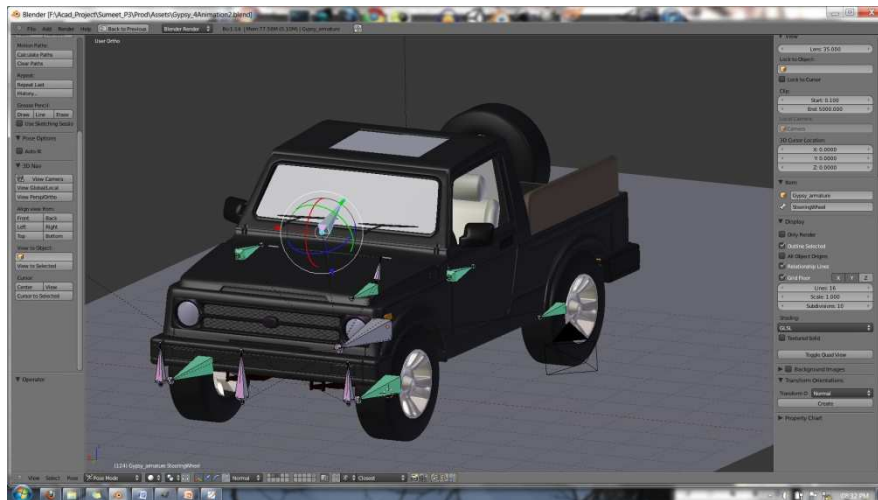He likes reading and carries a book with him to keep busy.
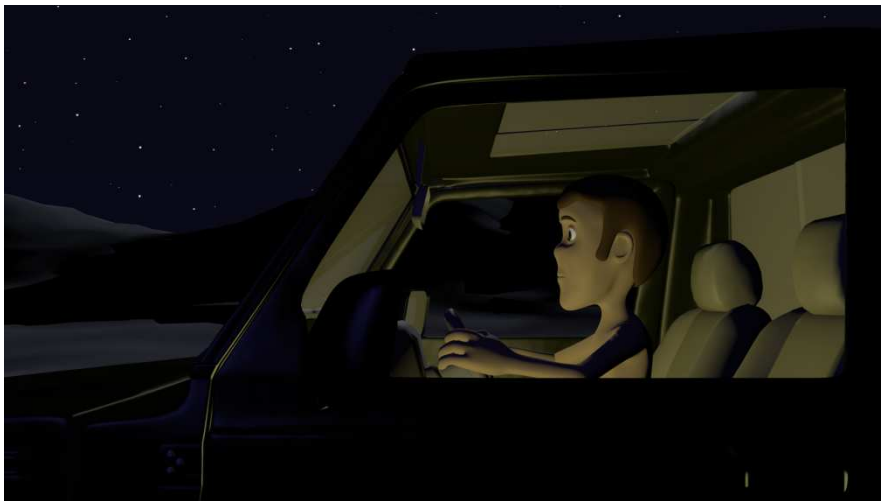
8. Storyboard

9. Production:

The medium of animation is 3D with fully rigged system including facial rig. The vehicle and landscape was modelled and textured using *Blender* 3D and GIMP respectively. The character models in the film are open resource characters used under the creative commons share-alike licence. The characters had to be revised in the mesh structure as well as the rigging system to suit the film. The choice of using pre-rigged characters was driven by the need to explore expressions and acting in the characters within the time frame of the project.

The 3D workflow begins with the collection of references for all the elements in the film. Image references were collected for the vehicle, the jungle ambient, and character look. Though the characters have not been changed much from their earlier form, they fulfill the particular look desired for each character. A few texture changes were made to the characters to suit the film. The clothes for two of the characters had to be modelled into the existing mesh and the armature had to be adjusted accordingly.

After getting the characters, the scene layout was prepared according to the storyboard. A lot of changes had to be incorporated in the layout because of the differences in the actual perspectives in the 3D view as compared to the storyboard sketches. The changes were made keeping in mind the objectives of the particular layout.

The creation of the forest was one of the trickiest tasks. Having a polygon based dense forest would have meant an unmanageably high vertex count resulting in high rendering times. Also managing heavy files would have been a very tedious task. So a middle way of having actual tree models in two layers and a matte background was used. This is a standard practice in CG scenes to use a matte painting for detailed backgrounds. Once all the common elements of the scene are ready they are linked to the individual scene file. The shots are animated in the scene file and rendered out individually as TIFF images.

The TIFF file format as exported by Blender has some header issues that render them unreadable in Premiere. So the images were taken to After Effects and then rendered out as an uncompressed Quicktime movie. Some of the shots were composited within the Blender Sequence Editor while the others were taken into After Effects for compositing.

The composited sequences were taken into Premiere and lined up along with the sound in the timeline.
The sound track comprises of individual foley tracks and the music.

Softwares used:

Animation:	**Blender**
Image processing:	**GIMP and Inkscape**
Sound:	**Audacity**
Compositing:	**After Effects**
Editing:	**Premiere**

Wireframe view

Composited shot
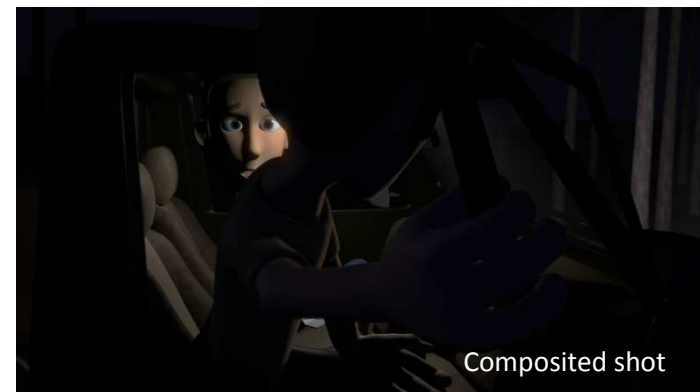
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