

A CELEBRATION

**ANIMATION DESIGN PROJECT II
AN II - 66**

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a Celebration

Project II

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Approval Sheet

The project titled 'A Celebration' by Vinit Masram, is approved for the partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of 'Master of Design' in Animation Design.


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Declaration

I declare that this written submission represents my ideas in my own words and where other ideas and 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 fabricated, misrepresented or falsified any idea/data/fact/source in my submission.

I understand that any violation of the above will cause for disciplinary action by the institute and can also evoke penal action from the sources which have thus not been properly cited or from whom permission has not been taken when needed.

Signature: 

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Date: 20-12-2013

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my project guide Prof. Nina Sabnani for her constant support and expert guidance in my work leading up to the finished stage of the film. Her inputs have helped me shape my initial ideas into a concrete form which hopefully will be turned into a deliverable animation short.

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Lastly I would thank Ashwin Vasudevan, Divya Bhardwaj and Ravi Rao for listening my ideas patiently and providing valuable insights.

Vinit Masram

December, 2013

Abstract

The project being developed named “A Celebration” is a 2D short animation film, dealing with the emotion of loneliness. The story focuses on a male character in his early 30s, making preparations for a special evening.

In a time where loneliness and social anxiety is becoming an unavoidable norm in the younger generation, A Celebration is an attempt to portrays the emotion with a lighter shade without glorification of its negative aspects.

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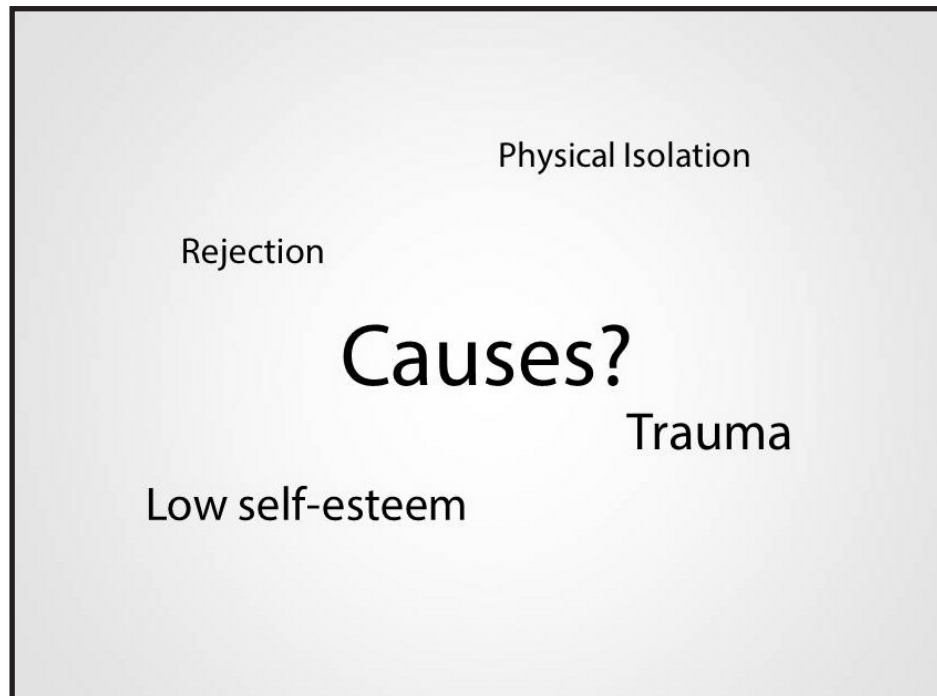
Introduction

Vincent Dowling of the 'The Great Lake Shakespeare' theater company once said, "All the great stories in the world are all about loneliness". And if one look at the stories that have been written, told, read and seen, has the theme of loneliness engraved at the very heart of most if not all the stories. Ultimately, Dowling continues, it is all about, why am I alone? I want to be with somebody who feels the same way I do and views the same things as important as I do. It's a universal emotion everyone one of us is constantly running away from.

What is loneliness?

The dictionary definition of loneliness defines it as a state of being alone in solitary isolation. But it is a little complex than that. Because loneliness is in fairness a state of mind, hence it is both complex and at the same time unique to each individual. It causes people to feel empty, alone and most importantly, unwanted. People who are lonely often crave human contact, but their state of mind makes it more difficult to form connections with other people, making the condition more difficult to cope.

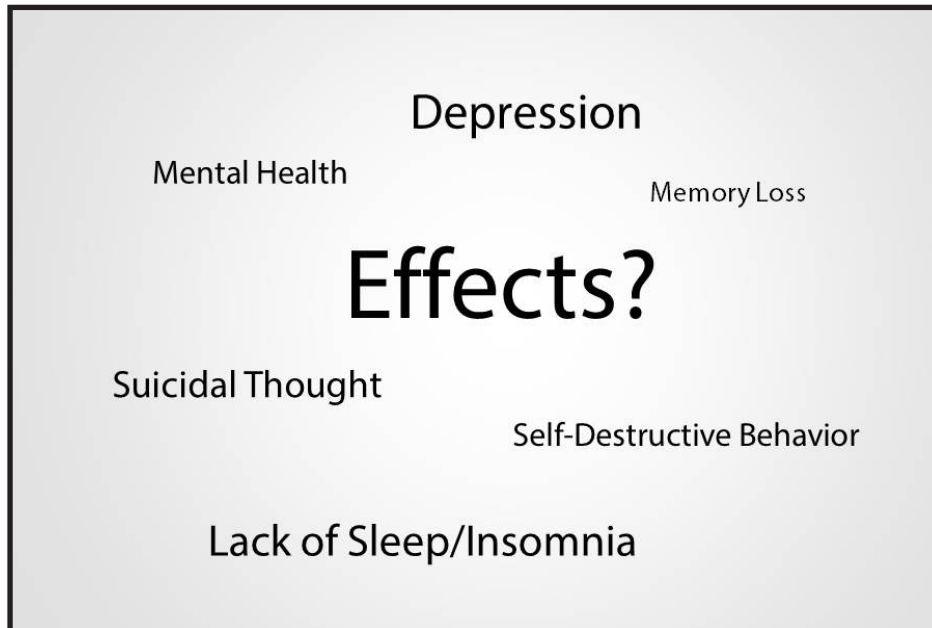
There is clear distinction between loneliness and the being alone that needs to be understood as the later term is often used mistakenly as a substitute for loneliness. Loneliness is the perception of being alone and isolated that matters most. It is a subjective experience. You can feel lonely although you are attending a party and surrounded by your friends and peer whereas you can sit in a movie theater watching a film all on your own and still not feel lonely. The state of being alone or solitude can be a matter of choice but loneliness is not. If a person thinks they are lonely, then they are lonely.



What are the causes of loneliness?

There are constantly recurring causes of loneliness. One of the primary cause of loneliness to be considered is rejection. Rejection, from either friends or family members or loved one can make a person feel unwanted which helps a great deal in terms of making one feel lonely. Similarly, death of someone significant in one's life can also make one feel empty and lonely. According to research by John Cacioppo, a renowned psychologist from University of Chicago and one of the top loneliness experts, loneliness is strongly connected to genetics. Other contributing factors include situational variables, such as physical isolation, moving to a new location[1].

Loneliness can also be attributed to internal and psychological factors such as low self-esteem. Also lack of confidence in oneself often make them believe that they are unworthy of the attention or regard of other people. This, in turn, can lead to isolation and chronic loneliness. Any traumatic incidence can also cause loneliness[1].



Effects of loneliness?

Loneliness can affect a person in a various way, both physically and mentally. Loneliness can send a person down a path toward bad health. It can cause a person suffer sleep deprivation, sometimes insomnia. Intense loneliness, studies have shown, can generate the threat of cancer.

Amongst the primery effects of loneliness is depression and increase in mental stress. It also leads to cardiovascular disease, loss of memory, altered brain function, poor learning ability, inability to concentrate. Loneliness, often observed in studies, causes alcoholism and drug abuse as well. Extreem cases of loneliness can cause self-distructive and anti-social behavious which sometimes lead to either suicides or murders respectively[2].

Loneliness due to Digital Media

While doing my research on loneliness so that I can have a story on which to make a short film, I stumbled upon a YouTube video called "Connected, But Alone?" by Sherry Turkle. In this talk, given during a TedTalk event, Turkle focuses on effects of the world of social media and sociable robots. As she puts it, these are technologies that propose themselves "as the architect of our intimacies."

In her most recent book, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More From Technology and Less From Each Other*, Turkle argues that the social media we encounter on a daily basis are confronting us with a moment of temptation. Drawn by the illusion of companionship without the demands of intimacy, we confuse postings and online sharing with authentic communication. We are drawn to sacrifice conversation for mere connection. Turkle suggests that just because we grew up with the Internet, we tend to see it as all grown up, but it is not: Digital technology is still in its infancy and there is ample time for us to reshape how we build it and use it[3].



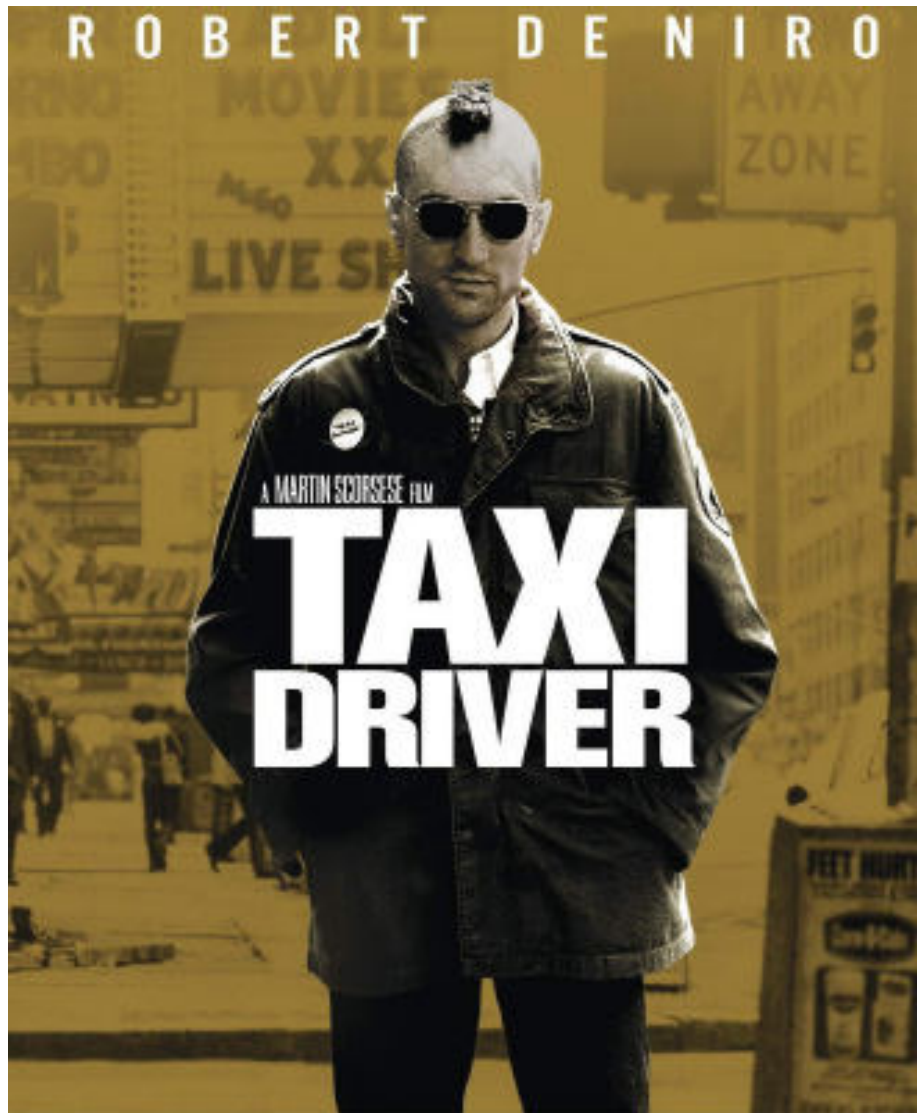
Pre-Production

Research

Before narrowing down to a concrete story and a concept, a thorough research was conducted to understand the concept of loneliness in the form of both visual and literal storytelling. Through the research, it was found that many of the mainstream characters have been depicted as either suffering or becoming the victim of loneliness due to several reasons like traumas and depression due to emotional imbalance and many other reasons mentioned before.

Literary Research

Loneliness, in literature, is depicted in great depth through a character in F. Scott Fitzgerald's classical novel *The Great Gatsby*. The lead character, Jay Gatsby, is a fictional multimillionaire, haunted by his failed love life, living in a giant mansion throwing large parties for the whole of the New York with the blindly hoping his long last love will somehow end up visiting the party.

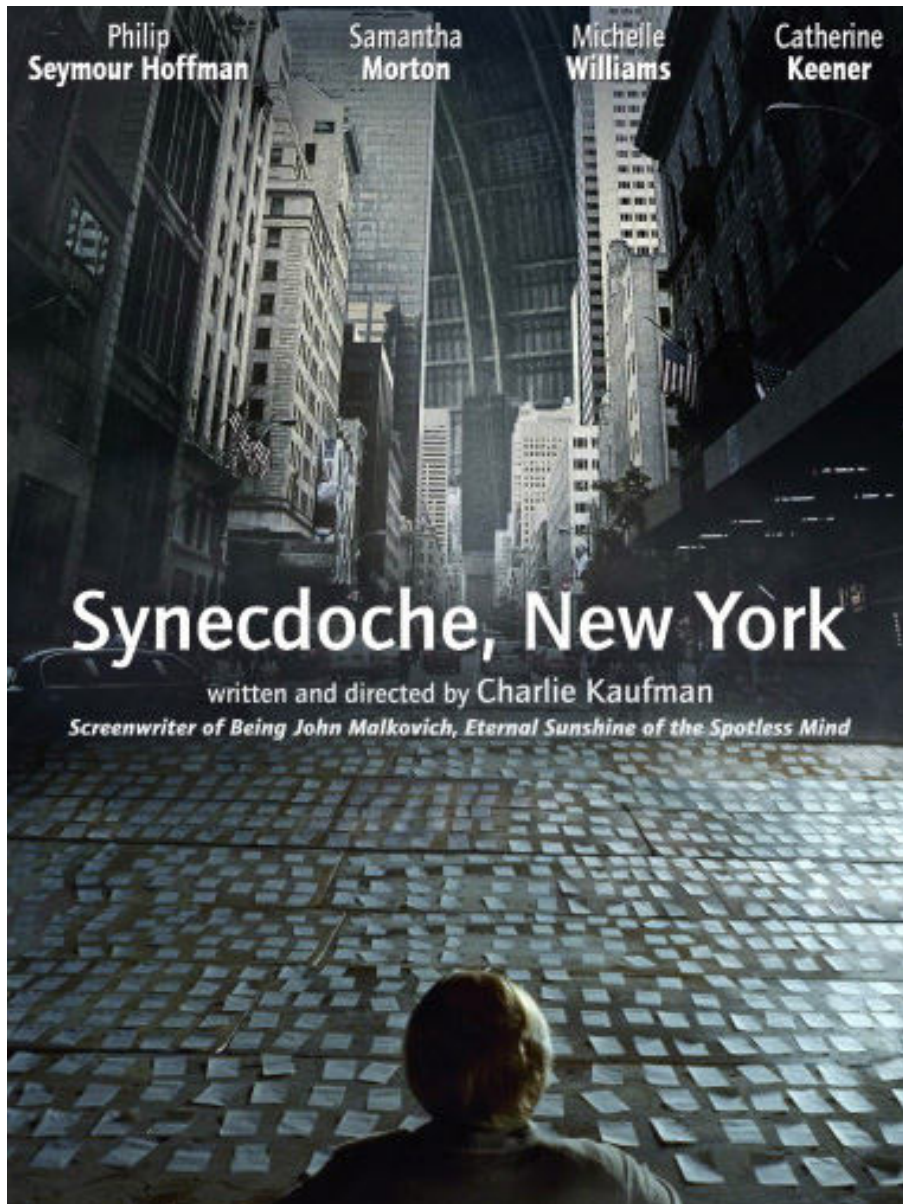


Also, during the research, the work of a legendary Austrian writer Franz Kafka whose literary work like his short story's collection Contemplation proved very influential for the development and understanding of the idea of absurdity of life where social anxiety and loneliness lies at heart of it but in a Kafkaesque way.

Live Action Films

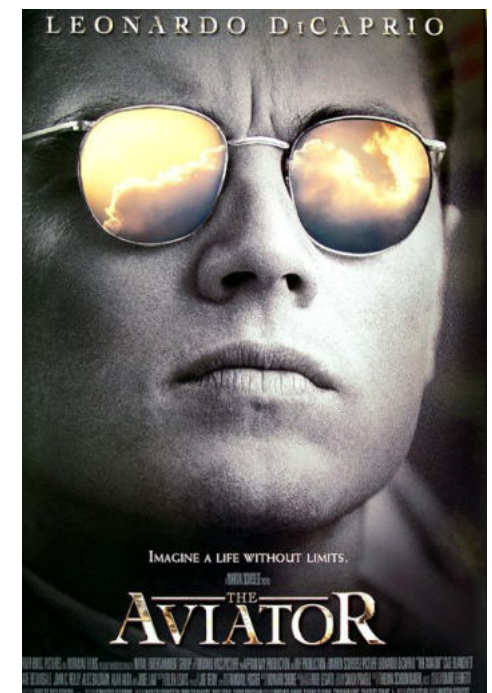
There is a substantial amount of films and filmmakers who have dealt with the human state of loneliness, one way or another. During the research, there were some films which attracted more attention than any other for their sheer brutality in their depiction of lonely characters as emotionally detached and socially inept human being.

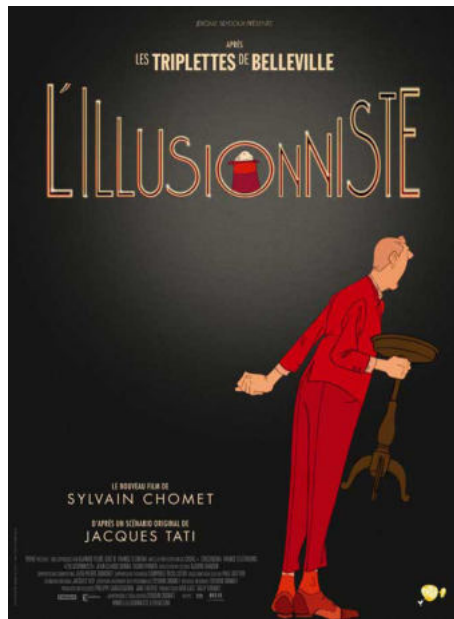
Among the most influential, during the research in terms of understanding the visual representation of loneliness was Martin Scorsese's 1976 classic, Taxi Driver. Loneliness is at the heart of Taxi Driver. Travis Bickle exists in Taxi Driver as a character with a desperate need to make some kind of contact somehow--to share or mimic the effortless social interaction he sees all around him, but does not participate in[4].



Similarly, in *The Aviator*, a 2004 biopic by Scorsese again, the lead character Howard Hughes, suffers loneliness after he survival from a plane crash which causes him loose millions of dollars building failed airplanes. The series of events during multiple sequences portrays the physical as well as mental effects of loneliness[5].

Paul Thomas Anderson's 2007 epic, *There Will Be Blood* portrays the character of Daniel Plainview, an ill-fated lonely oilman drenched in his own narcissism and greed. And finally, Charlie Kauffman's 2009 psychological drama *Synecdoche, New York* analyses the journey of Caden Cotard trying to find the meaning of his existence but on the way losing everything that he has[6].





Animation Films

Animation, as a storytelling medium, has tackled the subject of loneliness through several films, short and feature length, as a central point. Among the films that served as a mean of inspiration for the central plot of A Celebration is Sylvain Chomet's 2010 2-D French animation drama film, *L'illusionniste*, a film about an old man and a young woman helping each other fill the void created by time while ensuing an adventure[7].

Another film made on the similar ground is PIXAR's 2008 animated feature *WALL-E* by Andrew Stanton. Set in the distant future, *WALL-E* focuses on a waste collecting robot on his quest to find the beauty[8].



In terms of short animation films, the loneliness is wonderfully depicted in 2008 Japanese short *La Maison en Petits Cubes*. It's about an aged widower, now lonely, relives the most memorable time of his life while searching for the pipe fallen on the ground floor of the tall house which is now underwater[9].

The major piece of influence proved to be PIXAR's 1997 short, *Geri's Game*. The film focuses on an old man Geri, who sets up a game of chess to play his greatest opponent himself[10].

Initial Concept

Once the research through reading literature and studying the relevant films; a particular thematic pattern started to occur. Of the films seen during the research period, most were focusing on the darker aspect of the loneliness with either an innocently naïve approach or with more brutal approach.

The whole overwhelming approach towards the depiction of the darker side of loneliness prompted the approach of this film project towards more calmer direction where the loneliness should be depicted through a character who is lonely but isn't suffering through any sort of a depression or social anxiety. A story of a character who is in terms with his loneliness and lack of social involvement. A story which can portrait loneliness convincingly without glorifying its negative aspect while at the same time, do not mistake the condition something which you can ignore or accept as a desired way of living.

Final Script

Once the initial concept was narrowed down to a more concrete form, and a one liner story treatment was finalized (which if revealed now, will result in spoilers), a script was written for further development.

FADE IN:

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT:

Camera zooms in on a tall Bombay apartment building window from outside. A light switches on in a window.

DISSOLVE IN:

\INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT:

A drawing room of the apartment is lit with a florescent tube light. A briefcase bag is kept on the sofa in front of the wall with a shelved cupboard and a wall clock hanging.

CUT TO:

CONTINUED:

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT:

The Clock reads 9:05. The sound of running water can be heard.

CUT TO;

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT:

A man in his early 30's opens the lid of his Laptop. A web page titled Make a Birthday Cake in 6 Steps is opened on the screen. Starts reading the instructions very carefully,

(IN THE SCREEN)

INGREDIENTS:

1 1/2 cup (192 grams.) flour

1 cup (201 grams.) sugar

1/2 teaspoon (7 grams.) salt

1 teaspoon (2 grams) baking soda

3 tablespoons (43 grams.) cocoa

1 tablespoons (15ml.) vinegar

6 tablespoons (90 ml.) oil

1 teaspoon (5 ml.) vanilla essence or

2 tsp. (2ml) vanilla extract

1 cup (200 ml.) water

2 eggs

All fired up he gathers all the ingredients and arranges them on the table and eagerly reads...

(IN THE SCREEN)

Step 1 : Sift the dry ingredients together.

He then, stirs in the liquid ingredients and stirs everything together well. Whistling with all the delight, he pours the mixture into an 8-inch greased and floured round pan. Finally, puts the cake in oven for baking and sets the timer on 30 minutes.

CUT TO;

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT:

He takes the a small packet of balloons out from drawer of the cabinet besides the wall. A photograph of him with his wife is kept on the top of the cabinet. He starts blowing balloons.

CUT TO; MONTAGE;

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT:

of different photographs of two of them kept at different places.

CUT TO;

IINT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT:

The balloon bursts straight in his face while blowing. He picks another one up and starts blowing it.

DISSOLVE;

The clock on the wall running a little faster...time reads, 10:50

DISSOLVE;

Around 15-20 balloons have been blown. He pick them up and starts sticking them around the house walls.

DISSOLVE;

The clock reads 11:15. A sharp buzzing sound of the alarm alerts him about the cake.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT:

The cake is baked. He takes it out and places on the table in drawing room and starts garnishing it. Brings a couple of candles and sticks them up on the cake.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT:

Changes into a more formal clothing. Puts his blazer on. Combs his hair while in the mirror. There is this one hair which refuses to stick back along with every other hair. He fights with it for a while, glances towards his wife's photograph placed on the dressing table, takes a deep breath and then to his own agony, pulls that hair out.

His scream synchronizes with sound the doorbell. Startled, he runs to the drawing room.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT:

He looks towards the clock, it's 12:00 in the night. Lights the candle up. Adjusts the photograph on the cabinet. Switches the lights off. It's all dark. The sound of the door opening and closing is heard. Doorbell rings again. A person puts the key in the lock, opens the door and switches the lights on.

WIFE
(ONLY VOICE)
SURPRISE!!!

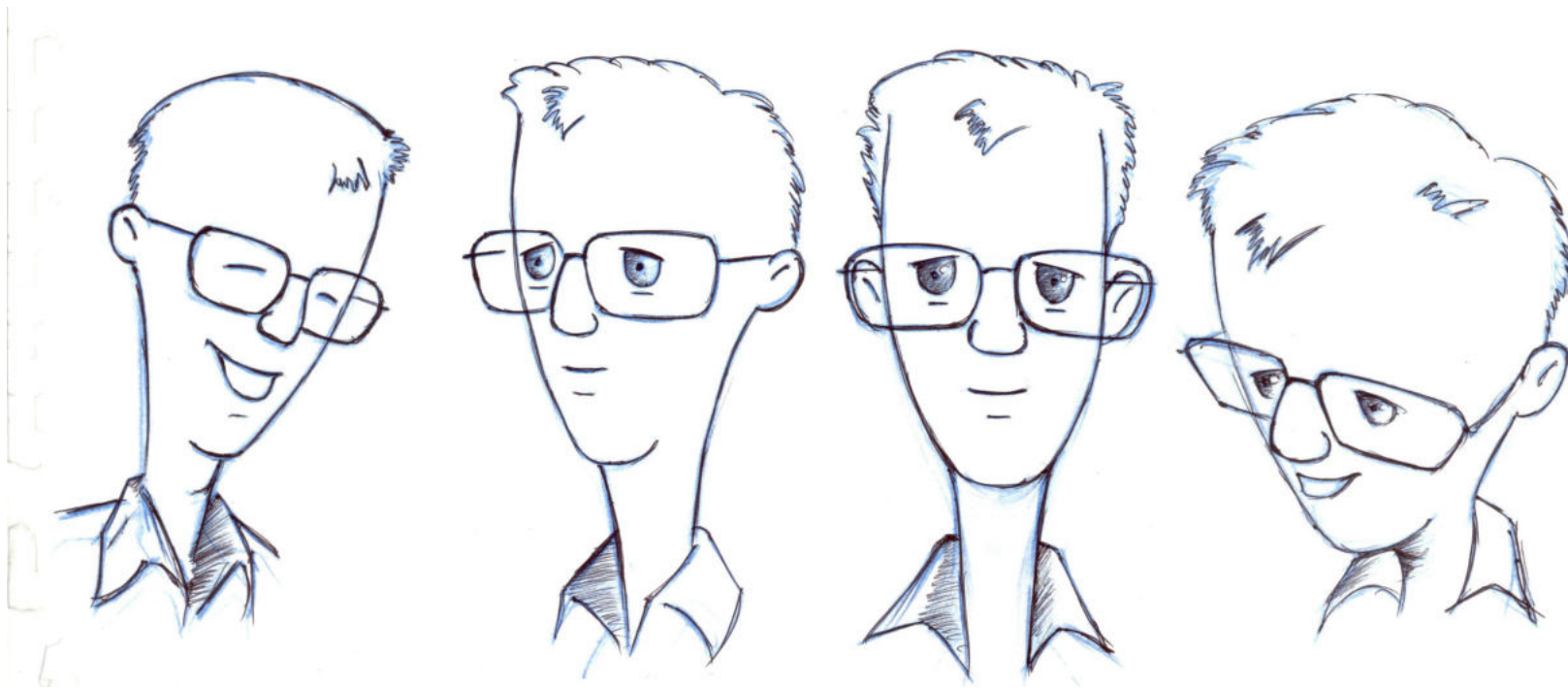
The same guy, comes inside his own house with a surprised and then a little embarrassed look on his face. Camera tracks him and catches his point of view to see the cake with lit candles placed on the table. Stands across the table. He looks towards his photograph with his wife while the Happy Birthday song sung by his wife is playing in the background on some speakers. A content smile appears on his face while he sits in his chair. Takes a deep breath and blows the candles.

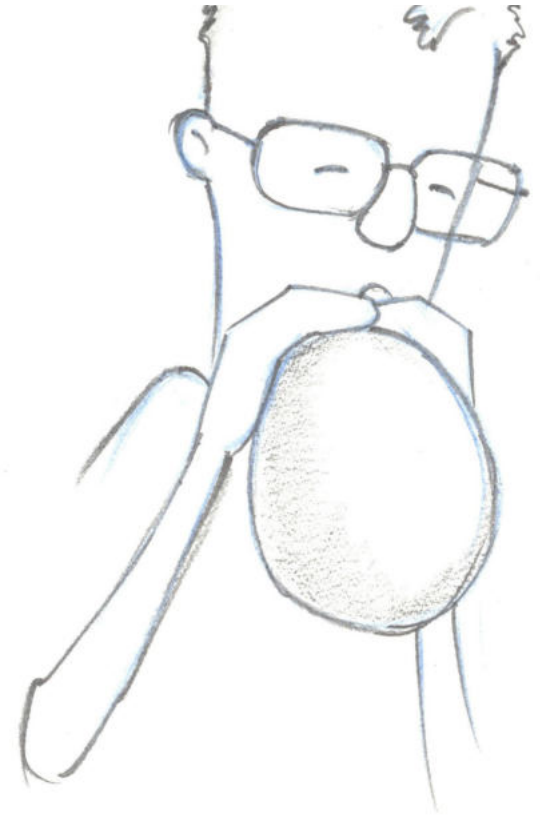
FADE OUT:

(ROLL CREDITS)

Character Design

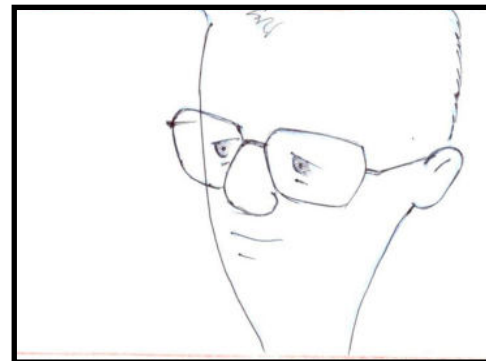
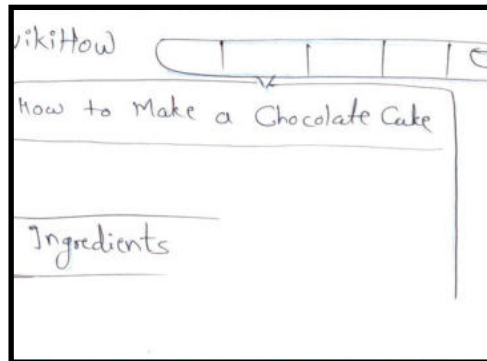
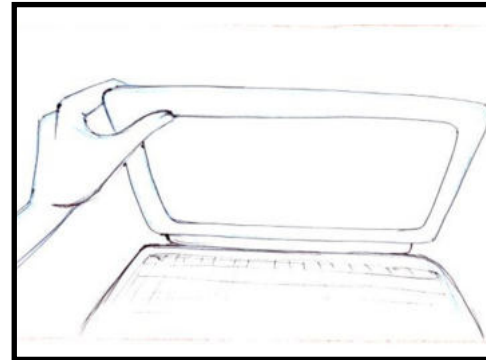
While developing the character, two things were always kept in mind as a parameter. The first is that the character has to be either in his 30s or more so that the whole event/act of Birthday preparation feels believable. And second is to make the character more likable by using an event which causes pratfall effect to take place to make sure audience will feel empathy towards the character.

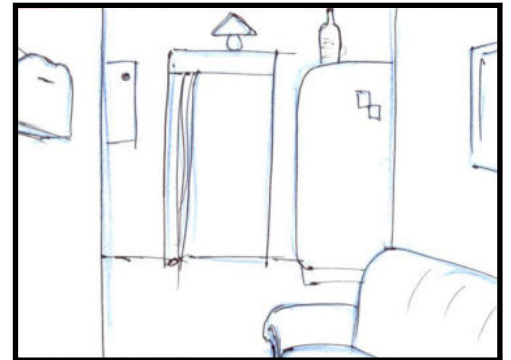
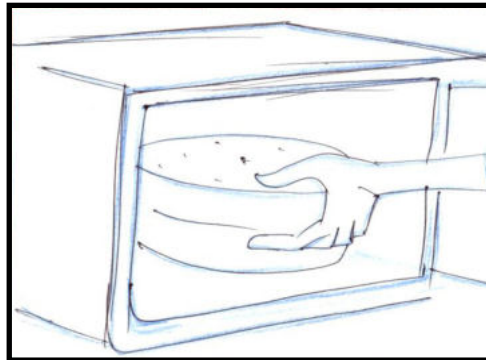
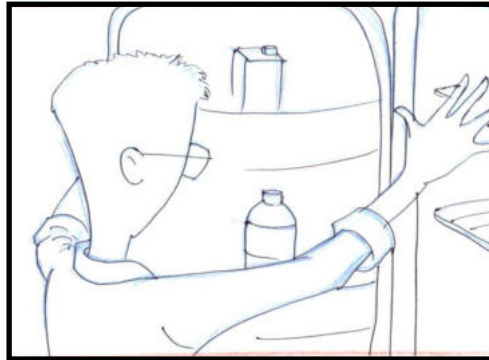
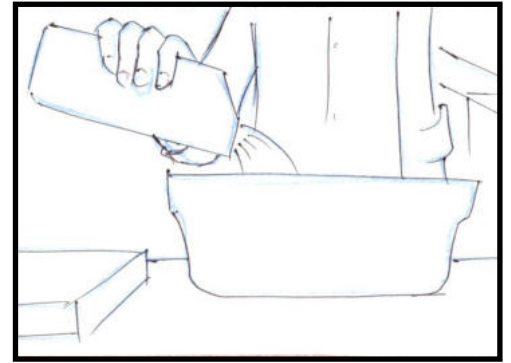
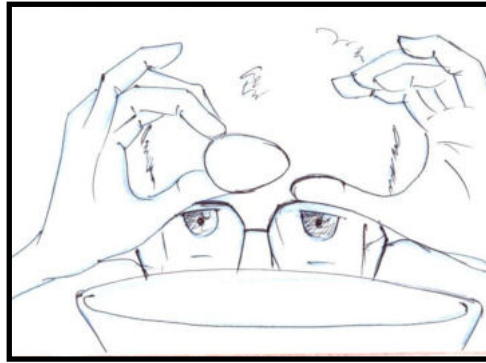
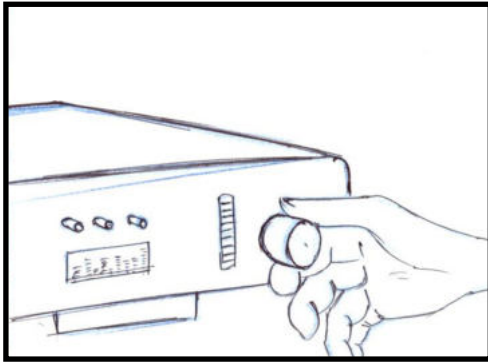


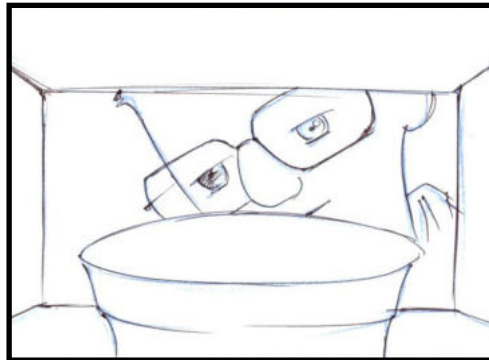
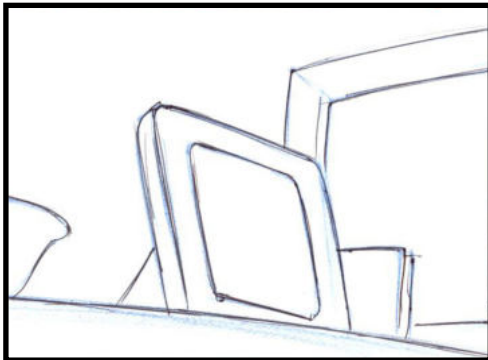
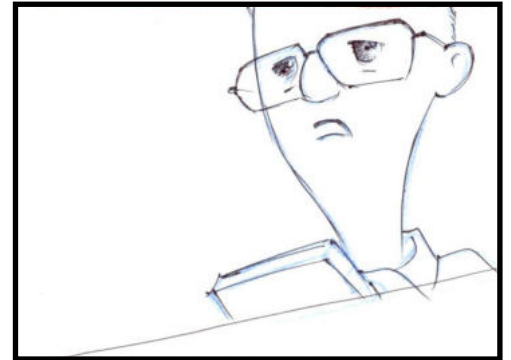
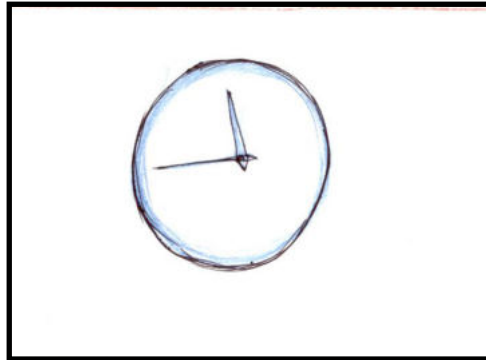
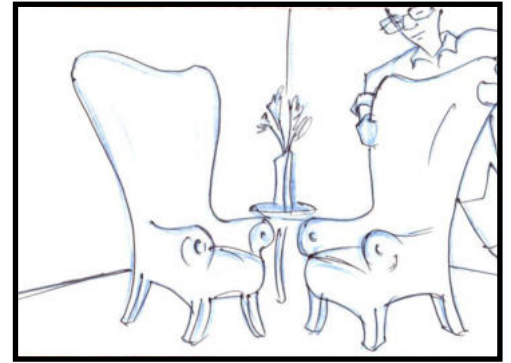
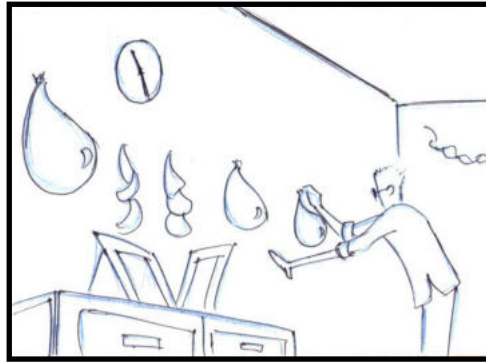
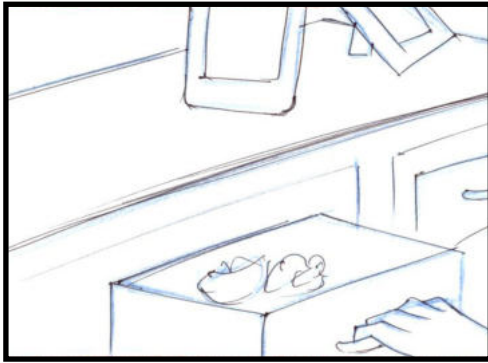


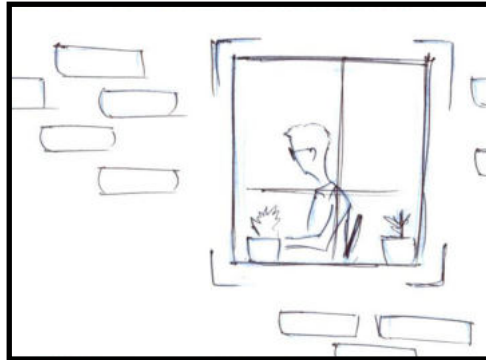
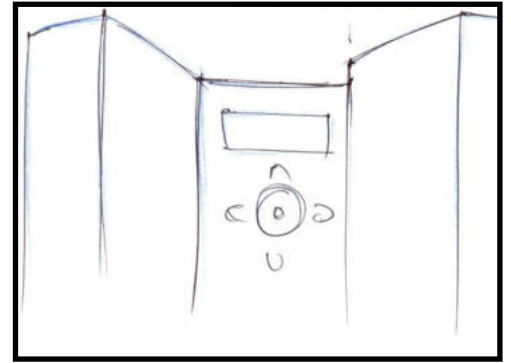
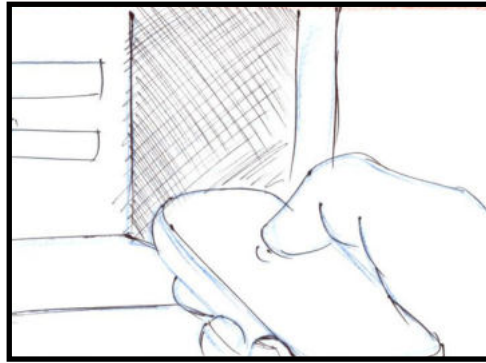
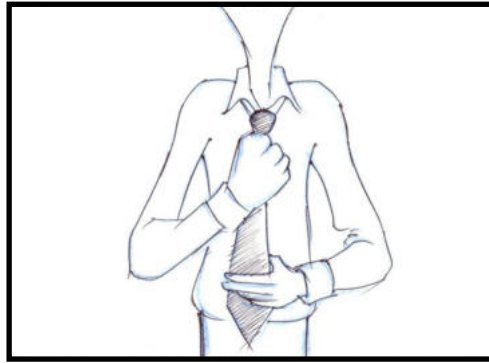
Storyboard and Animatics

From the script, a detailed storyboard was created to get the flow of the story and divide shots with respect to the script. After the completion of storyboard, an animatic of the entire length of the film was created along with the scratch sound to test if the movement and transitions work or not. The animatic, once deemed good to work on, was used as the foundation of the final animation.





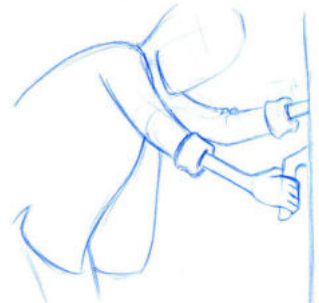
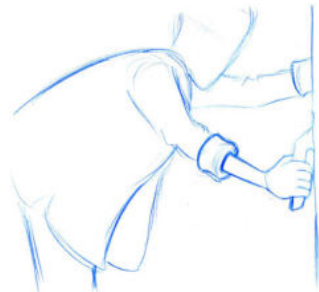
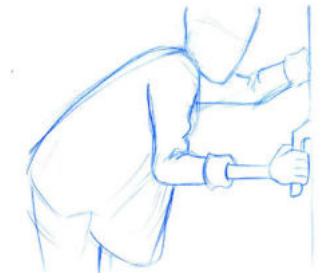




Production

Animation

With several options to select from, traditional hand drawn 2-D animation technique was chosen for the production of the animation. But the whole workflow does not follow the traditional route from start to finish. The initial animation, i.e. the rough volume animation and then the line test with the rough character laid over the volumes was animated on paper using traditional lightboxes. Once the animation was approved to be good enough for further process, these rough animated frames were cleaned up in digital animation and painting softwares like Photoshop CS6 and Toon Boom Animate Pro.



Ink and Paint Process



Once the animation was completed to the requirement of the shot, the frames then went through the inki and paint process which was carried out using Adobe Photoshop CS6.

Post-Production

Composition

Final composition is carried out using Adobe After Effects CS6, a compositing software. At this stage of the project, the final animated character which is now cleaned up and painted, is composed with the background layouts and foregrounds. The final composition is done in such a way that it gives an effect to the whole scene as if it is placed in a three dimensional environment. Also at this stage, the scenes are given additional dimension with some light effects and vignette.

Editing and Sound

Once the composition is done, the individually composed scenes are edited together into the final cut of the film. The editing is carried out in Adobe Premier Pro CS6. The final sound mixing and editing is carried out using Apple Inc.'s Logic Pro. The sound mixing is done by Mr. Shantanu Yennemadi, the sound engineer at IDC IIT Bombay.

Conclusion

The project turned out a great lesson in terms of understanding the whole process of making an animation film. My understanding towards developing a story from a broader concept to a working script which is adequate as a shot animation improved while working along with my guide. The pre-production stage did come up with a lot of obstacle but tackling each obstacle turned out to be a new learning experience each time.

Making the film in traditional 2D method help me understand the whole workflow of the 2D film-making while at the same time made me appreciate the historical significance of the traditional hand drawn animation.

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<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0131409/>