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*Lorem Ipsum, A Story about Words and Pictures:
What They Can Do, and What They Can't*

By David Huth

Thesis submitted for the
Master of Fine Arts degree from
Rochester Institute of Technology
2004

Thesis for Master of Fine Arts Degree

Rochester Institute of Technology
College of Imaging Arts and Sciences
School of Design
Computer Graphics Design

Title

Lorem Ipsum, A Story about Words and Pictures: What They Can Do, and What They Can't

Submitted by

David Huth

Date

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David Huth

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Abstract

Lorem Ipsum,

A Story about Words and Pictures: What They Can Do, and What They Can't

David Huth

Everything we understand about the world comes to us through, and can be captured by, the linguistic use of words and pictures. Or does it? This is a question that addresses the core function and purpose of visual communications design. The question is explored in this film thematically, narratively, and technically, by portraying a story about a person struggling to understand language and solve a unique, high stakes design problem: the library cataloging of an entire human life.

This is a creative project that uses computer graphics design technology and the unique presentation of typographical design problems to provoke thought and discussion about some of the human challenges in the fields of linguistics, philosophy, semiotics, communications, theology, and art. A convention of the film is to display spoken and non-verbal language in typographic and pictorial form.

The project is delivered on DVD with multi-feature interactivity.

Keywords:

Language, images, linguistics, philosophy, semiotics, communications, theology, art, digital filmmaking, DVD technology, educational materials, multiple perspectives, typography, independent film, cancer.

Lorem Ipsum: Working Method and Progress

Pre-production

Script writing and editing

Script by David Huth, © 2003, 2004, Completed January 21, 2004

Editing assistance by Lori Huth and Rand Bellavia

Major scene rewrites/additions March 1, March 7, March 8, March 12, March 19

Cast

Character: Actor

Garrison: Marc Wallace

Natalie: Abigail Owen

Sharon: Kim Wallace

Neil: Rand Bellavia

Jason: Jason Poole

Dan: Thomas James Woods

Monica: Elizabeth Sands

Pam: Kristina Lacelle-Peterson

Amber: Allyson Murphy

Steve: Douglas Gaerte

Maria: Anjuli Na Mee Perkins

Bradley: Bradley E. Wilber

Fluffy: Lord Antony Dewhurst

Extras:

Susan Liedke

Kelly Johnson

Lori Huth

Anna Maria Johnson

Steven Johnson

Cynthia Machamer

Stephanie Pocock

Nathan Boyd

Rebecca Mohrlang

Ruth Kroeger

Robin Ha

Doug Roorbach

Scot Bennett

Locations

Houghton College campus buildings and property (Houghton, NY)

Letchworth State Park (Letchworth, NY)

East Rochester Public Library (East Rochester, NY)

Private residences (Houghton; Honeoye Falls, NY)

Production assistant

Susan Liedke, credited as “Associate Producer” - Susan is a college senior majoring in art (concentration film and video) at Houghton College. Her responsibilities included recruiting extras, running camera 2, running camera 1 for dolly shots, second unit, and camera 1 when director appeared as an actor, operating boom mic, other production errands.

Equipment

See separate section: “Equipment Notes”

Aesthetic and style

Hand-held “indy style”

Camera in frequent motion, varied angles and zooms

Use of live, ambient lighting, sound, and location props/staging

Post-production

Software

Adobe Photoshop

Apple Final Cut Pro (FCP)

Apple LiveType

Apple Soundtrack

Acid Loops: Orchestral Series

Apple iTunes

Apple DVD Studio Pro

Experiments and training

LiveType motion graphics test reel completed March 9, 2004

Online tutorials: LiveType, FCP (in particular audio filters)

Motion graphics inspiration: <http://www.2-pop.com>

Critique

Critique group and technical advisors: Steve Johnson (multimedia and video designer), Lori Huth (writer), Rand Bellavia (writer), Marc Wallace (film maker), Theodore Murphy (art professor), Andrew Huth (photographer), Committee members Scot Bennett (professor, Houghton College), Chris Jackson (assistant professor, RIT), Jim VerHague (professor, RIT), and Nancy Ciolek (associate professor, RIT)

Music

Original violin compositions by Denise Huizenga

Original Soundtrack loop compositions by David Huth

Scratch tracks from mp3.com and other online/recorded sources

End titles crawl: “LA (la land),” Written by Rand Bellavia and Adam English, performed by Ookla the Mok

Deliverables

Thesis defense

Delivered April 14, 2004, Galisano Auditorium, RIT, Rochester, NY Passed for thesis show April 16

Final DVD

Video:

Trailer

Feature (45 minutes, audio version 1, music soundtrack beta version)

Bloopers reel

Defense presentation

LiveType test reel

Stills:

Production stills

Actors stills

Shooting script

Audio:

“LA (la land),” performed by Ookla the Mok

Film festival submissions

Preparations in summer 2004, with first submission to Sundance in September

Other festival submissions beginning December 2004

Lorem Ipsum: Equipment Notes

LIGHTS

The “garbagebag light rigging” refers to a large plastic bag filled with extension cords (stinger), light bulbs (40 to 60 watt incandescent), colored cellophane (improvised gels), tin foil (improvised reflectors), and 6 silver half dome clip-on work lights from the hardware store. It’s called garbagebag because that’s pretty much what it looks like. While it was stored inside the front entryway of my apartment building, a visitor to one of my neighbors saw it there and thought she’d do a favor by carrying it outside and stuffing it into the building’s trash cans. I had to retrieve it late at night before an early morning shoot.

VIDEO

This project’s video is shot entirely on mini-DV.

Canon GL-1a — this is a camera borrowed from a friend and fellow video artist Steve Johnson (the a is nomenclature of mine to distinguish it from the other GL-1 camera used in production). See “Equipment details” for technical information about this camera.

Canon GL1b — this is a secondary camera borrowed on a few occasions from the Audio Visual department of Houghton College. Its picture quality was occasionally of lower quality because of the “mini DV lubricant problem” discussed in the “technical challenges” section.

Canon GL-2 — this was the primary camera used most often (though not always) for recording footage requiring clean and clear audio (most dialogue scenes). It was borrowed from the Houghton College PR office.

Tapes — I used 2 brands and grades of mini DV tape. Sony Premium DVM60 (for GL- 1 a and GL-1b) and Panasonic Master DVM63 (for GL-1b and GL-2).

AUDIO

Whenever possible I used a Sennheiser shotgun mic, borrowed from Houghton College’s AV dept. or PR office. The GL-2 camera has available XLR input and so this was the preferred camera when shooting dialogue. The AV dept. made available to me an XLR adapter and levels reader for the GL-1 that I used on one shoot (newspaper office scene). A short somewhere in the adapter created pops, static, and gaps in the resulting audio. Occasionally (when the story called for a certain sound and feel to the audio) I used the GL- 1 a built in condenser mic.

COMPUTER

My computer is a dual 1 GHz G4 Apple Macintosh (“mirror door” variety) with 1.25 GHz of RAM.

Internal storage: 330GB divided over 4 drives (80, 30, 60, 160).

COMPUTER PERIPHERALS

External storage: 160GB firewire backup drive, 10GB Apple iPod

Flatbed scanner: Epson perfection 1660 Photo

Digital still camera: Canon Powershot S50

Desktop printer: Epson Stylus Photo 820

Media: Apple superdrive (internal CD-ROM, DVD-ROM burner)

Lorem Ipsum

Shooting Report

Date: Saturday, February 7, 2004, 8:00 a.m. — 2:00 p.m.

Scene: WOODS INTRO, including Letchworth Park location

Location: (I) The woods behind my apartment building, (II) Letchworth State Park

Location notes:

There are about 12 to 14 inches of snow on the ground in the woods, and during much of the shoot more snow continued to fall. This was great luck, and the light remained mostly consistent except for a weird break in the clouds for the snow angel action. That bit may have to be cut because the light is so dramatically different (brighter) than all the rest of the footage.

Letchworth Park was deserted, and the access roads were blocked off for the winter. Marc and I had to hike about a mile into the park and then another 1/2 mile or so to the overlook location.

Cast:

Garrison — Marc Wallace

Extras:

None

Equipment notes:

GL- 1 (no audio recorded)

Performance notes:

Today was the first day of principal photography and Marc and I worked hard at getting used to each other's working style. I chose a no-dialogue, mostly scenic set of shots for the first day so that we weren't leaping directly into a complicated set of demands.

Additional notes:

The snow was a problem for the camera of course, so the first 20 minutes of the day were spent rigging up a makeshift cardboard "umbrella device" for me to hold over the camera at all times while shooting. Awkward, but it kept the camera diy!

Lorem Ipsum

Shooting Report

Date: Saturday, February 8, 2004, 8:00 a.m. — 2:00 p.m.

Scene: CONTACTS scene, EMOTIONS scene

Location: Marc Wallace's apartment

Location notes:

The CONTACTS scene was shot in the tight quarters of Marc's bathroom. We spent a long time working out interesting camera angles (standing behind on the toilet, standing on the edge of the tub, etc.) and working out how to place lights and run power cords. There are quite a few scenes shot in this tiny bathroom, and so we needed to work out a comfortable set-up.

We set up the EMOTIONS sequence in Marc's kitchen in front of a sink of dishes. I thought up the sequence in the car on the drive to Marc's place, and so I basically sat down, scribbled out the emotions signs on scrap paper, explained what I was thinking to Marc, and let him run with it.

Cast:

Garrison — Marc Wallace

Extras:

None

Equipment notes:

GL- 1 (no dialogue recorded)

Performance notes:

Marc was what I can only call a "trooper" for the abuse his eyes took screwing around so much with his contact lenses. I originally had in mind that this would be a kind of serious, painful to watch scene, but as we filmed I began to think that it could eventually turn out pretty funny with the right editing and audio. I will have to play with the footage in editing and see which way the scene develops.

As far as the EMOTIONS sequence goes, all I can say is that Marc is a genius and I am very lucky to have him in my movie. We tried running the scene with me behind the

camera, but he was too self conscious and kept cracking up, so I just set it up and left the room. He made faces alone in a room for about 45 minutes, and the results are fantastic.

Lorem Ipsum

Shooting Report

Date: Monday, February 9, 2004, 9:00 a.m. — 11:00 a.m.

Scene: WOODS sequences pickups and details

Location: The woods behind my apartment building

Location notes:

The purpose of today's shoot, which I went out alone to do, was to gather a bunch of details shots for the WOODS INTRO sequence. I want there to be plenty of footage to work with for the things that Garrison sees and photographs on his walk in the woods.

The lighting was much brighter than the footage shot on Saturday, but I hope will be able to work with it in post.

Cast:

None

Extras:

None

Equipment notes:

GL-1 (no dialogue recorded)

Lorem Ipsum

Shooting Report

Date: Thursday, February 20, 2004

Scene: NEWSPAPER scene

Location: Houghton College public relations office

Location notes: Permission secured from Doug Roorbach, director of public relations. I set up for an hour trying to transform the space into something like a newspaper office. There was lots of space in and around the main cubicle I chose, as well as space to work in the main portion of the office for dolly work and lots of moving camera stuff.

Actors:

Marc Wallace

Doug Gaerte

Brad Wilber

Anjuli Perkins

Extras:

Lori Huth

Susan Liedke

Kelly Johnson

Cynthia Machamer

Equipment notes: GL-1 with XLR microphone adapter borrowed from Houghton College AV office. Shotgun mic, with boom. The helix used for dolly shots

Performance notes: Some of the performances were awkward at first and I didn't feel I was connecting with the actors to offer good direction. Eventually it evened out and everyone performed well, particularly Doug.

Additional notes: Overall this was a problematic shoot. The location and lighting were good and the footage looks great. But it was a very complicated location and scene with many actors. I didn't get good coverage and technical problems with the audio complicated the whole thing further.

Lorem Ipsum

Shooting Report

Date: Sunday February 22, 2004

Scene: Library scene

Location: Houghton College Library

Location notes: Permission secured from Larry, library director. Library is closed to public Sundays, we have full access. Use of downstairs video, periodical, and circ desk sections. Large windows with bright late afternoon sunlight. Large space in front of and behind desk for camera/lights.

Actors:

Marc Wallace

Jason Poole

Extras:

Lori Huth

Anna Maria Johnson

Becky Mohrlang

Ruth Krueger

Stephanie Pocock

Nathan Boyd

Equipment notes: GL-2 with XLR microphone attachment borrowed from Houghton College PR office. Panasonic "Master" tapes. Single silver dome key light on grey light pole. Shotgun mic, no boom operator so attached to gold camera tripod and set out of frame on desk. No equipment problems other than about 4 minutes shot without mic plugged into camera. Planned to use "The Helix" (see equipment list) but ended up tracking wide action on foot to save time.

Performance notes: Jason and Marc did not have lines memorized but became familiar during 2 quick read-throughs and 2 fast run-throughs. They became more comfortable with the scenes and gave progressively better performances, asking for repeated takes even after I was satisfied. Jason's first acting before a camera; said he enjoyed it and was fascinated by the process.

Lorem Ipsum

Shooting Report

Date: Monday February 23, 2004

Scene: Newspaper office scene (pick-ups and details)

Location: Houghton College PR Office

Location notes: Just stopped by the office and looked for people at their desks working.

Extras:

Steve Johnson

Annie Valkema

Robin Ha

Doug Roorbach

Cynthia Machamer

Equipment notes: GL-2 with no microphone borrowed from Houghton College PR office. Panasonic "Master" tape. No lighting or sound set ups. Handheld.

Performance notes: These were random pick-up shots of people working in an office setting to cut into the newspaper office scene for authenticity. Annie's footage probably too dark to use. Robin and Cynthia also poor lighting but possibly usable. Very pleased with Steve and Doug's interaction.

Lorem Ipsum

Shooting Report

Date: Saturday, March 6, 2004; 8 a. m. to 2:30 p. m.

Scene: Gallery scene

Location: Ortlip Art Gallery

Location notes: Permission from the gallery director, and also from the artist whose photography work is hanging in the gallery. Arranged for campus security to open gallery at 7:00 a.m. but I overslept and didn't get there to set up until 8. Gallery remained open to public, but no one came in the entire day. Rock band practicing loudly at start of shoot, but I talked with them and worked out a timing compromise.

Cast:

Monica Elizabeth Sands

Neil — Rand Bellavia

Dan — Thomas James Woods

Garrison — Marc Wallace

Natalie — Abigail Owen

Extras:

Rod McCallum

Ruth Kroeger

Susan Liedke

Kelly

Marc Wallace

Equipment notes:

GL-2 with microphone borrowed from Houghton College PR office

GL-1 (a) borrowed from Houghton College AV Services

GL-1 (b) borrowed from Steve Johnson

GL- 1 (a) set on tripod for static wide shots

GL-1 (b) for details and extra coverage, Susan Liedke

GL-2 primary camera with sound

Mic boom (Susan)

Silver tripod borrowed from AV Services

Performance notes:

Elizabeth Sands agreed to the role the day before, after another actor couldn't do it.

Actors were familiar with lines (except Liz of course) and seemed to enjoy the experience. The best performances of any shoot yet, Abigail in particular was professional and natural.

Additional notes:

Rand, Thomas, and Abigail all live in the Buffalo area and rode down together. Break for lunch (pizza provided by me). Also Abigail brought her 2-year-old daughter and I arranged for and paid a baby-sitter (Julia Jacob, Houghton student).

The 3 stationary camera was of limited help. Though it caught a few shots that may make it into the final edit, it probably wasn't worth the 2 hours of tape that it used. Ideally a third camera operator would have resulted in much better coverage.

A "slate" was improvised (piece of paper with the take number written on it) for the bench conversation, because there were 2 cameras but clean sound recorded on only one (the GL-2). The "slate paper" helped keep the two cameras on the same page for audio sync in editing.

The dolly shots were made by Susan L. operating the camera while I pulled her in the radio flyer wagon.

Lorem Ipsum

Shooting Report

Date: Tuesday, March 9, 2004; 6:30 p.m. — 9:30 p.m.

Scene: Gallery scene pickup (Coatroom), Gravestone scene

Location: Ortlip Art Gallery; exterior: behind Houghton College art building

Location notes: After scouting out local cemeteries to use for the scene as written, actor schedules prevented them from being able to arrive during daylight hours. Abigail's new child was due to be born any day, and I really needed to get the scene filmed before that happened, so I rewrote the scene Monday night to not involve visiting Garrison's future grave site, but instead to be the purchase of Garrison's future grave stone. There was no time to cast the character of "sculptor" so I had to play the role myself.

Cast:

Garrison — Marc Wallace

Natalie — Abigail Owen

Sculptor — me

Extras:

none

Equipment notes:

GL-2 with microphone borrowed from Houghton College PR office.

Mic boom (Susan)

Silver tripod borrowed from AV Services

Performance notes:

We rehearsed the lines to both scenes in my apartment before driving to Houghton campus for shooting. The actors had their lines mostly memorized and incorporated the adjustments and changes I needed to make as a result of the rewrite. The stuff with the sculptor was entirely improvised, and I feel I did pretty much a ridiculously lousy job. I'm hoping I can salvage the scene in editing. Also, I hadn't done any blocking, storyboarding, or preparation for the rewritten location. It was all made up on the spot and as a result looks a bit "stagey."

Additional notes:

Susan Liedke assisted me in the exterior shoot. She held boom mic and ran primary camera during the scenes I was in. She was easygoing as usual and a big help. Shadows of the boom mic were a problem to shoot around, but not as bad as in the art gallery.

I underestimated the amount of time we needed to do the scenes and kept the actors over an hour longer than I said I would. They were very enthusiastic however, and even though I planned to cut out a part of the scene (the brief conversation in the car) to finish earlier, they insisted on filming it while we were there.

I also jumped the line in the coat closet scene in a way that is going to be impossible to edit correctly. Also a glaring continuity error (Garrison's coat) was noticed during editing and is impossible to fix.

Light was too low to shoot. Used an outdoor flood light on the side of the building and trained my car's high beams on the scene. Cranked the gain up to 12 or 18 db. Footage looks red, and probably grainy.

Mic performed well but the environment was completely uncontrollable. Traffic, pneumatic drills, airplanes, and helicopters plagued the entire shoot. We simply shot through it, and I hope I can fix the audio in editing.

Also I leaned the mic boom against the outside of the building while breaking down and left it there for 2 days before remembering to retrieve it. This could have been a disaster if it had rained.

The last minute changes and lack of planning made this a problematic shoot.

Lorem Ipsum

Shooting Report

Date: Monday, March 11, 2004; 11:30 a.m. — 12:30 p.m.

Scene: Gallery scene pickups and still photos

Location: Ortlip Art Gallery

Location notes: I simply took the cameras and tripod to the gallery during normal business hours to film details and pickups of the location. No one was there during the hour I was shooting.

Cast:

None

Extras:

None

Equipment notes.

GL-1

Gold tripod borrowed from Steve Johnson

My canon digital still camera

Additional notes:

The artist of the photography exhibit I am filming came to hang a picture and we had a pleasant conversation about my thesis project.

Lorem Ipsum

Shooting Report

Date: Friday, March 12, 2004; 6:30 p.m. — 8:30 p.m.

Scene: Gallery scene pickups (Reception, Garrison and Sharon)

Location: Ortlip Art Gallery, Houghton College Fine Arts Center student lounge

Location notes: An actual artist's reception is being held, so I wanted to film Garrison in a large crowd of people looking at his work. I asked Marc and his wife Kim to come down for the reception.

Cast:

Garrison — Marc Wallace

Sharon — Kim Wallace

Extras:

Many, unreleased

Equipment notes:

GL-2 with microphone borrowed from Houghton College PR office.

Performance notes:

The entire evening was mostly improvised. The Gallery reception pickups were staged to have one of my friends (Thesis committee member Scot Bennett) stand in the crowd and converse with Marc and Kim. As they know each other this was easy. No storyboards; I simply looked for interesting shots on location.

Additional notes:

Inept handling of the camera destroyed all of the good footage of Garrison at the reception. Though I saved some good crowd footage, footage of Garrison and Sharon specifically is all lost. I haven't told my actors this yet. They drove an hour and a half to be here and I feel rotten. It's possible that at the end of April they can return for the next gallery reception, but the artwork on the walls will be different that time which will pose obvious continuity problems.

The same camera problem (actually camera operator problem) lost the last and best footage of Kim's performance in the dialogue scene.

Though much of what I filmed looks good, the loss of the other great footage is nearly unbearable.

Lorem Ipsum

Shooting Report

Date: Friday, March 19, 2004; 9:30 a.m. — 1:30 p.m.

Scene: Speakerphone scene, Natalie montage

Location: Owen apartment, Depew, NY

Location notes: I drove to Depew, NY (Buffalo area) to record Abigail's reading on digital tape. While there I filmed her reading on the phone in a chair in her living room.

Cast:

Natalie Abigail Owen

Extras:

None

Equipment notes:

GL-1 (borrowed from Steve Johnson) using built in condenser mic for voice recording, no audio for montage shot.

Performance notes.

I read Garrison's lines and Abigail read hers. We took 4 or 5 takes with the camera at various distances and angles. I wrote take number on scrap of paper and held it in front of lens to stay organized. It was a challenge to not rustle (or touch) script pages during recording, and we had to make an effort to leave space between each line. Last take Abigail read lines straight without me reading Garrison.

Additional notes:

For montage footage, we improvised position, lighting, and props. Ended up having Abigail read graphic novel Blankets into her cell phone in an easy chair. Tried to shine desk lamp against profile, and outdoor light from window illuminated the room.

This should complete Abigail's contributions, not a moment too soon. Her family spent the day literally waiting around for her baby to be born.

Lorem Ipsum

Shooting Report

Date: Saturday, March 20, 2004; 8:30 a.m. — 11:30 p.m.

Scene: PAM scene

Location: Houghton College PR office

Location notes: This is the same office we filmed for the NEWSPAPER scene. I chose a different cubicle area for the desk and working space of the character Pam, and dressed only that desk. Dressing these sets has been pretty simple: stacking newspapers around and placing cameras on the shelves. I did unplug 2 laptop computers from other desks in the office and moved them to the set; I hope I put them back correctly afterward.

I misunderstood access to the office and showed up at 8 am without a key, but the office was locked up. Had to call campus security and talk my way in.

Cast:

Garrison — Marc Wallace

Pam — Kristina Lacelle-Peterson

Extras:

None

Equipment notes:

GL-2 (borrowed from Houghton PR office)

Stationary mic stand, boom pole (borrowed from Houghton AV dept.)

Garbagebag light rigging

Performance notes:

The actors and I reviewed the lines together before the shoot. Neither had them memorized but they came up to speed quickly. Shot mostly takes of Kristina, as she was most nervous and had never done this before. Shot several takes on tripod of Kristina, then several of Marc, then a take of Kristina from handheld camera, and same of Marc.

Additional notes:

Susan Liedke held the mic boom for the tripod takes. I planned to use her on second camera for extra coverage, but I was able to borrow only one camera for the day.

Lorem Ipsum

Shooting Report

Date: Saturday, March 20, 2004; 3:00 p.m. —. 4:00 p.m.

Scene: Gallery conversation between Neil and Garrison

Location: Ortlip Art Gallery

Location notes: The art show from a couple weeks earlier is still on the gallery wall, and so it was easy to replicate the earlier location. I didn't get any special permission, and didn't expect anyone to mind. In fact, no one even came in to look at the photographs while we were there shooting.

Susan Liedke couldn't be contacted to ask for mic assistance, so a risky and elaborate trick of balancing the stand on top of a movable gallery wall had to be devised. It took a lot of experimenting, but eventually we figured out how to lay the mic stand along the top of the wall, with the mic end hanging over the top and pointing to the actors. The mic stand base created a stabilizing counter weight.

Cast:

Garrison — Marc Wallace

Neil — Rand Bellavia

Extras:

None

Equipment notes:

GL-2 (borrowed from Houghton PR office)

Stationary mic stand

Performance notes:

The dialogue for this scene is based on a brief improvised bit between Marc and Rand at the gallery shoot 2 weeks previous. We watched the footage of that conversation together, and I transcribed the dialogue they came up with. The two of them improvised a bit more until we came up with a set dialogue we liked, restaged it for better coverage, and shot it 3 ways: coverage of Marc, coverage of Rand, and wide coverage of both from the back.

Staging obscured most of the wall they were looking at so they stood in different locations for different angles, and they had their lines taped to the wall where the framed photograph would be.

The performance was kept loose and slightly improvised still to keep the spontaneous feel of a real argument, and so each take is slightly different from the others. The basic structure is consistent however, and so I expect to be able to cut together a cohesive whole.

Additional notes:

This brief bit of dialogue arose from an insignificant improv bit among many in the gallery shoot, but became more important as I decided to expand the character of Neil into a more significant character. Rand has been very generous about spending more time returning to town from his home in Buffalo in order to shoot the additional scenes that require this new aspect of the story.

Lorem Ipsum

Shooting Report

Date: Saturday, March 20, 2004; 4:30 p.m. — 5:00 p.m.

Scene: Final montage: Neil arrives at Garrison's apartment, Neil and Garrison sort photos

Location: My apartment, Houghton, NY

Location notes: because of shooting schedules, I have had to shoot scenes in Garrison's apartment in 2 separate locations: my apartment in Houghton and Marc Wallace's apartment in Honeoye Falls. I've tried to divide Garrison's apartment into several distinct locations: Kitchen sink area, kitchen stove area, kitchen table area, sofa area, bed area, bathroom sink/toilet area, bathroom shower area. I have to take care when shooting one area to not ever show the other area. For example, while shooting the bathroom sink area (Marc's apt.) I can't pan to show the shower area, because it won't match footage when I show the shower area later (my apt.). This is complicated, but hopefully the different locations will cut together to form a believable unified Garrison's apartment. *[note: evaluations from my critique group suggest this was successful].*

It was pouring rain outside for the shots of Neil at the apartment building door and I had to rush through it because the camera was getting wet. The lighting was also all over the place for this scene (very bright outside, and very dark inside). I hope the result is stylish and interesting rather than out of control and dumb looking.

Cast:

Garrison — Marc Wallace

Neil — Rand Bellavia

Extras:

None

Equipment notes:

GL-2 (borrowed from Houghton PR office)

Garbagebag light rigging (2 lights for picture sorting scene)

Performance notes:

No dialogue, all action improvised under my direction. Some particularly nice interactions between Marc and Rand during the picture sorting sequence.

Additional notes:

Rand came up with the idea to tear up pieces of paper and label them to place on stacks of paper in some kind of organization system. After the shoot we had a good laugh reading the things he write on them such as "Why not trust your pharmacist?" and "Stop talking about comic books or I'll kill you."

My cat Mooch spent some time walking around the area during the shoot and performed some funny bits for the camera. Unfortunately I had previously established Garrison's cat as a different animal (Marc's cat Dewhurst) and so I won't be able to use the Mooch footage.

Lorem Ipsum

Shooting Report

Date: Saturday, March 20, 2004; 4:30 p.m. — 5:00 p.m.

Scene: Final montage: Garrison doing dishes and looking at bird feeder; Garrison looking at and photographing pill bottles

Location: My apartment, Houghton, NY

Location notes: In the bird feeder scene I broke my rule about not showing the same apartment area between the 2 apartment locations. Garrison's kitchen sink is filmed for the EMOTIONS sequence in Honeoye Falls, and the sink is filmed for the bird feeder scene in Houghton. I just have to hope no one notices it is two different sinks.

This bird feeder scene is meant to provide a thoughtful and interesting moment for Garrison in the final montage: a moment of contemplating life that goes on untroubled outside of Garrison's world. Also it's a chance to show some great footage of birds at my window feeder shot in a snow storm several days ago. I just love birds and want them in my movie!

The pills were shot on my kitchen counter beside my stove. I placed the camera at one end of the counter and shot down the length (over the stove top) to a tight framing of Marc sitting at the end of the counter on a chair with his head level with the counter.

Cast:

Garrison — Marc Wallace

Extras:

None

Equipment notes:

GL-2 (borrowed from Houghton PR office)

Garbagebag light rigging (2 lights for picture sorting scene)

Performance notes:

No dialogue, all action improvised under my direction.

The bird feeder scene will be intercut with close up shots of birds I shot days earlier out the window during a snowstorm. A terrific transition from Marc's performance to the intercut was shot over his shoulder at the outside feeder just as a bird landed clearly on the feeder and hopped around for the camera. I sure couldn't have planned it that way, and it will make the cutaway shots of the birds at the feeder much more believable.

Marc thought of some great on the spot improvisation of the pill bottle scene on his own. I had anticipated a shot of Garrison looking dejectedly at a bunch of pill bottles, and a shot of him photographing them. Marc came up with a lot of great rearranging and fiddling around with them, stacking them in towers for his photo, and photographing them by holding the camera out toward me and pointing it at himself, thus giving the video camera a view of the LCD display on the back of the digital still camera. GREAT idea!

Additional notes:

The final montage is going to require at least 3 minutes of interesting, rapidly changing footage of Garrison during his final weeks of life, growing increasingly sicker and demonstrating some things about the advance of his illness and the wrapping up of his

cataloging project. Because of a tight shooting schedule, limited time, and limited subject matter (Garrison moping around his apartment), it is going to be hard to continue to come up with interesting shots and creative ways of filming. Marc's improvised stuff with the pill bottles is good indication that I'm working with an actor who will help me to keep it from becoming too boring.

Lorem Ipsum

Shooting Report

Date: Saturday, March 20, 2004; 5:15 p.m. — 5:45 p.m.

Scene: Final montage: Shower scene

Location: My apartment, Houghton, NY

Location notes: It's hard to shoot in a shower. I had Marc stand in my bathroom shower with all the lights on, the door propped open, and a silver dome light on a light pole wedged behind the towel rack over so it would stick up in the air.

Found that light should be diffuse to be believably filtered through a shower curtain, and the shot needed to remain framed tight otherwise it looked like a guy showering with the curtain open.

I stood on a chair and the toilet lid to get alternately interesting angles. I tried low angles aimed up but the water kept splashing the camera lens. Also the steam occasionally interfered with the camera's auto focus, particularly near the end of the shoot.

Cast:

Garrison — Marc Wallace

Extras:

None

Equipment notes:

GL-2 (borrowed from Houghton PR office)

Garbagebag light rigging (1 silver half dome light on pole)

Performance notes:

No dialogue, all action improvised under my direction.

Marc tried many approaches to emotion in this scene, from stunned numbness to emotive pounding the shower wall. I'm looking forward to reviewing the footage to see which takes work best.

Additional notes:

The production difficulty is of course finding a way to show Garrison believably pulling small clumps of hair out of his head. I had been growing my hair longer than I normally do in the hope that I would trim pieces of my bangs for Marc to pull from his soapy head, but I was looking too unkempt and had to get it cut.

The problem was therefore finding hair. I pulled my wife Lori's hair out of her combs and hairbrushes and trimmed it shorter with scissors. Rand Bellavia, hanging around after his scene shot previously, ran a stiff bristle brush through his hair for 5 minutes, and that yielded about 20 hairs for me to trim into smaller pieces. Then I attacked what hair was left on my own head with the scissors, cutting out random chunks.

We ended with far more hair than we needed. A little hair looks like a lot when it's wet and soapy. We experimented with Marc pulling out various sized clumps — from nothing pantomimed as if it were hair, to huge ridiculous wads.

The prop idea of using the tape recorder sealed in a zipper plastic bag worked fine — it was completely water tight and looked like I had envisioned.

Lorem Ipsum

Shooting Report

Date: Sunday, March 28, 2004; 8:30 a.m. — 2:30 p.m.

Scene: Garrison and Sharon: BED scene, BATHROOM scene, PREGNANCY scene

Location: Marc Wallace's apartment, Honeoye Falls, NY

Location notes:

It is convenient to use husband and wife actors to play husband and wife characters — they are comfortable with each other, they can kiss without seeming awkward, and they have a ready-made couple's apartment together.

Presenting a production challenge, Marc and Kim Wallace have a one-year-old baby, whose presence is felt all over the apartment. As a shooting location I therefore had to be careful to shoot around baby toys, crib, diapers, etc. And the baby couldn't be sent away during filming, so she was often nearby making her opinions known. Eventually they put her in her high chair in the next room watching a cartoon video.

This shoot was planned and executed on the fly. Very rough storyboards were drawn up long before I even decided to shoot at the Wallace apartment, and I simply showed up and tried to find a good shot. I'm afraid the resulting shots are a bit stark with awkward framing sometimes. I hope it will give an impression of "raw, indie" filmmaking.

Cast:

Garrison — Marc Wallace

Sharon — Kim Wallace

Extras:

None

Equipment notes:

GL-2 (borrowed from Houghton PR office) with shotgun mic and heavy base mic stand

Improvised lighting using desk and floor lamps from around the apartment

Performance notes:

Actors and I reviewed lines together before the shoot. They hadn't memorized (or reviewed) the lines beforehand, but the scene is simple and easy to explain, and they became comfortable with the dialogue quickly.

The CONVERSATION scene is shot with no audio, yet it's a sensitive and important dramatic scene for the story. I toyed with the idea of directing it very emotional and melodramatic, but I am not confident in directing that kind of scene, especially with the limited preparation I had with the actors. So I decided instead to craft the scene in the opposite way, with understated, quietly intense performance. I think this is the best way to go: rather than go big and loud with emotion and risk losing control and coming off silly, I think it's a better policy to keep it low key and let the audience bring whatever implied intensity the scene deserves.

Additional notes:

BED scene — Bedroom

Challenge was to find a framing that displayed Marc and Kim in interesting composition, shot around the baby paraphernalia on one side of the bed, and avoided the large starkly blank spaces of the walls and bedspread. The light was funky and hard to get right, I decided an “early morning dim look” was the way to go because a lot can be forgiven under the guise of “it’s an early morning dim look.” Also the bookcase behind their bed is unusual because it’s filled with Marc’s collection of giant red binders. In the end I chose the best framing I could, and went with the old standby of shooting extreme close ups.

BATHROOM scene - Bathroom

I considered staging this argument elsewhere in the apartment. This is the bathroom I filmed the CONTACTS scene in, and it was very tight quarters for 1 person. I was worried about 2 people looking like a cramped mess. The scene would be better here though because of the symmetry with the early CONTACTS scene, and because it makes the most sense to have Garrison removing his contact lenses in the same pace he put them in. So in the end I decided to try it.

I filmed Marc’s coverage from the bathroom and from pressed against the door behind Kim. Kim’s coverage was shot standing on the toilet. I used the same floor lamp from the CONTACTS scene, but stood it on the toilet for Marc’s coverage, and outside the door for Kim’s. Sound was recorded by mounting the mic on a tall stand, set on a stool in the shower.

PREGNANCY scene — Bedroom, foot of bed

This was the hardest shot to set up. We were running out of time, I hadn’t planned the framing, and I had no idea how I would direct the scene. Basically I took 15 minutes ordering the actors into various positions around the bedroom, and ran around with the camera trying to get a good composition and lighting combination. As I was working it out, I developed a conceptual staging that would accent the distance they were feeling from each other, and accentuate Garrison’s vulnerability and smallness. I finally decided on not having them face each other, and sit Marc low on the floor in a position of defeat. Lighting was spotty; hopefully I’ll be able to adjust it some in post.

Lorem Ipsum

Shooting Report

Date: Monday, March 29, 2004; 5:00 p.m. — 9:45 p.m.

Scene: CONTACTS scene pickups (shaving), SPEAKERPHONE scene Location: marc Wallace's apartment, Honeoye Falls, NY

Location notes:

When I originally wrote the script, I intended this scene to be puttering around Garrison's kitchen. However, the kitchen has been shot between 2 separate locations and any more footage of either location would reveal the discontinuities. I decided to locate Garrison among his photos, sorting them into the bag he would then deliver at the library. However, the kitchen table where I shot the SORTING footage weeks earlier is rearranged with much of the furniture. I therefore decided (when I arrived) to shoot at the computer desk set up in Marc's living room.

I had a very short time to shoot this sequence, in very tight quarters. Marc's wife Kim was trying to get work done at her computer, their baby was crying because she didn't want to go to bed, the dog was agitated, the cat kept obsessively sniffing the props I brought. I had to pick a framing, and light it with the usual hack-job positioning of lamps. The position of the mic stand on one side of Marc and the lamp on the other gave me about a 10-degree window to shoot through. This was the most rushed, chaotic shoot of the project.

Cast:

Garrison — Marc Wallace

Extras:

None

Equipment notes:

GL-2 (borrowed from Houghton PR office)

Shotgun mic (PR office) mounted to heavy base mic stand (AV department)

Performance notes:

Marc was not familiar with the lines. We read through them together for about 10 minutes and I gave him minimal direction. While shooting he spread the pages out on the desk and read the lines one at a time, without the benefit of anyone reading Natalie's lines with him. He gave a natural and convincing performance despite the hassles.

Additional notes:

Natalie's lines (recorded earlier) will be dropped in on top of this footage. Foley will be added for the ringing of the phone, etc., and I will have to cut around the cries of the Wallace baby.

Lorem Ipsum

Shooting Report

Date: Thursday, April 8, 2004; 6:30 p.m. — 11:00 p.m.

Scene: VOICEOVERS (audio only)

Location: Marc Wallace apartment, Honeoye Falls, NY

Location notes:

This was easy, as it was audio recording only. The only thing that was important was a reasonably controllable sound environment. Marc has a baby, so I showed up when she went to bed at 8:00. Marc's wife went shopping for the evening so we had the apartment to ourselves and didn't have any problems aside from the occasional down-shifting truck on the road out front.

Cast:

Garrison — Marc Wallace

Extras:

none

Equipment notes:

GL-1

Performance notes:

I wrote the lines for this voiceover this week, and Marc read them well. The idea is that these are Garrison's thoughts and descriptions recorded on his hand-held tape recorder so I used the condenser mic on the GL-1 rather than the nicer Sennheiser mic with the GL-2.

I also encouraged Marc to stand and move around a bit, holding the camera and passing it back and forth between his hands to simulate Garrison's hand-held tape recorder.

After a quick rehearsal together, Marc read the lines through about 3 times, with only occasional direction from me. His performance was very satisfying.

Lorem Ipsum

Shooting Report

Date: Sunday, April 11, 2004; 12:00 p.m. — 7:00 p.m.

Scene: SPEAKERPHONE pickup; FINAL MONTAGE: JASON by stacks, JASON cataloguing, GARRISON shaving head (parts 1 and 2), GARRISON sorting in bathroom, GARRISON eating crackers

Location: Marc Wallace's apartment, Honeoye Falls, NY; East Rochester Public Library

Location notes:

This was a very tightly scheduled, rushed, long day of shooting. There were many shots to get between 2 locations about a half hour apart.

-- SPEAKERPHONE pickup: I needed a fast shot of Garrison putting on his coat and leaving his house after the Speakerphone/bed conversation scenes. I filmed this quickly while we were preparing to go to East Rochester.

-- JASON by stacks: Jason Poole lives a block from his workplace, a public library. He had permission for us to shoot there the week before, but we had to reschedule; frankly I don't know if he asked if we could shoot there this week. Sundays the library is closed and Jason has a key, and we never saw anyone else. It took us some time to find Jason's apartment and walk to the library. The stacks were well lit and interesting, and believably matched the Houghton library.

-- JASON cataloguing: Upstairs is Jason Poole's actual desk in a cluttered office setting. I shot him sorting through a mound of now-infamous plastic grocery bags of sorted photos.

-- SHAVING head part 1: This was shot in the Wallace apartment kitchen, in the same spot where we shot the EMOTIONS sequence. I set up a second camera on a tripod to get extra coverage of this unrepeatably scene. The cat wandering around provided some nice moments.

-- SHAVING head part 2: This was shot back in the familiar bathroom, which will create some nice symmetry with the earlier shaving/contacts scene.

-- GARRISON sorting in bathroom: The same location, but sitting on the floor near the toilet. Lots of infamous grocery bags and a blanket we used earlier in the montage when Garrison is listening to Natalie read over the phone.

-- GARRISON eating crackers: on the couch in the same place where we shot the phone reading montage shot. Marc wore a black hat so that his one-year-old daughter wouldn't be frightened by his bald head.

Cast:

Garrison — Marc Wallace

Sharon — Kim Wallace

Jason — Jason Poole

Extras:

None

Equipment notes:

GL-1

GL-2 (borrowed from Houghton PR office)

Silver tripod (AV department)

Performance notes:

-- SPEAKERPHONE pickup: Marc Wallace is such a good actor that even a shot of him putting on a coat and walking out a door feels natural and believable.

-- JASON by stacks: Marc and Jason play well off each other, with Garrison as kind of jaunty and goofy, and Jason as befuddled and stressed out.

-- JASON cataloguing: Jason Poole understood right away what this shot was supposed to be about and did terrific at creating believable, random little bits of business for me to shoot from multiple angles.

-- SHAVING head part 1: I didn't expect Marc to cry, but was awfully glad he did. I am carrying a terrible burden of guilt with me now that this man is such a good friend that he shaved his head for my thesis project. His wife Kim was not very happy about it, yet she doesn't seem to be holding it against me. I owe them both big time.

-- SHAVING head part 2: For a guy who never shaved his head before, Marc seemed to know what he was doing. Doing it shirtless was his idea, and a very nice touch.

-- GARRISON sorting in bathroom: More great and believable acting (nausea) from Marc.

-- GARRISON eating crackers: I pulled this shot out of nowhere at the last second, realizing I needed some kind of final shot of Garrison now that the trip to the cancer treatment center (as written) was abandoned. I figured a simple moment between

Garrison and Sharon was all that was needed, but Marc came up with the weird cracker-eating mugging on the spot. It is a perfect bittersweet way to end Garrison's story, with some symmetry to the goofiness of the early EMOTIONS sequence.

Additional notes:

This was an exhausting day of shooting, second only to the NEWSPAPER scene. No audio which will make editing easier. Bad lighting through most scenes, which will make it harder.

Lorem Ipsum

Shooting Report

Date: Sunday, April 18, 2004; 2:00 p.m. — 6:15 p.m.

Scene: EPILOGUE (Library II)

Location: Houghton College library, interior and exterior

Location notes:

As originally written, this epilogue was to be in 2 scenes: the library, and then the graveyard. When I re-wrote the graveyard scene into the gravestone purchase scene, I changed the epilogue to take place in only one location. It is important that the final shot of the film be of Amber looking at the photographs. Precisely where she does this is not important, and I ended up placing her outside the library atop a cement wall in the sun.

The library is meant to be the same building we saw near the beginning of the story, but 10 years later. So we shot in a different part of the library, and did some simple things like move plants and signs around.

Cast:

Neil — Rand Bellavia

Amber — Allyson Murphy

Jason — Jason Poole

Extras:

Ted Murphy

Others (unidentifiable)

Equipment notes:

GL-1 for shots without dialogue

GL-2 (borrowed from Houghton PR office) for dialogue

Shotgun mic (PR office) mounted on camera (I forgot to arrange for a mic stand)

Performance notes:

Allyson Murphy is 10 years old and shy. I had no idea if she would be up to the task, but had a gut feeling that if she could deliver the lines believably she would be perfect. As it turns out she was fantastic. I haven't edited (or even captured) the footage as I write this, but I was thrilled with her performance on set. She was nervous and uncertain about her lines and the many takes, but she got the hang of it and performed exactly as I had hoped.

The characters of Neil and Jason are changed by this point of the story. Rand worked well with me to construct a person who is completely the opposite of who we saw earlier, and looked surprisingly different with his beard trimmed, a nice shirt on, and the glasses I gave him to wear (an old pair of mine that made him unable to see much of anything).

Additional notes:

This shoot went fast and smooth, with no real problems to speak of. It was the most difficult shoot to schedule for some reason. It was rescheduled at least 5 times, maybe even more. I couldn't seem to coordinate everyone's availability, and had to repeatedly change the date. It was the final shoot, however, and was filled with serendipitous touches such as Houghton

students walking by at opportune moments and a very nice window reflection that Rand noticed around which I planned the first exterior shot of Neil and Amber walking to the library.

The exterior shots were done in semi-public. It wasn't crowded, but there were other people around for most of them. I wasn't at all conscious of being on display or in the way and it wasn't distracting at all.

Lorem Ipsum: Editing and Post-production Notes

Saturday 2/7/04

I will begin these detailed production notes today, which was the first day of principal photography, and my first day of editing. After a full day of shooting the WOODS scene, I logged and captured the footage this evening and began editing into the night. The project has really begun in earnest now and I am enjoying cutting together what I envision as a somewhat slowly-paced and thoughtful introductory sequence of the character Garrison walking through the woods.

The purpose of this footage and the sequences I am building is to slowly introduce the character, a cold and lonely atmosphere for him, and an introduction of the audience to the motion graphics vocabulary I will be using throughout the project in ever accelerating degrees.

Sunday 2/8/04

Today after filming the footage of Marc for the CONTACTS scene, I immediately logged and captured it and began to edit it this evening.

Wednesday 2/11/04

This week, in addition to embarking on the scheduling nightmare of casting, securing locations, and planning the next couple of shoots, I have been editing at night. I've been working back and forth between the CONTACTS scene and the WOODS INTRO sequence. The contacts scene, being simpler and shorter, is mostly done already.

The scene has a kind of weird, almost absurdist quality to it. After showing it to some people for critique, one friend remarked that it almost feels like a Monty Python sketch in its drawn-out absurdity (does anyone really have THAT much trouble putting in their contact lenses?) It gets some pretty nice laughs however, which is good because it's important for the audience to like this character early in the story. I'm toying with the idea of starting the film with this scene rather than the more thoughtful WOODS scene, but I'm torn about that.

I haven't edited video in FCP in a while (the last major project in grad school was months ago) but, fairly quickly, I've found a comfortable groove working in FCP's work environment.

Saturday 2/14/04

Today I got the actors together for a read-through rehearsal for the NEWSPAPER scene next week.

Tuesday 2/17/04

Today one of my four principal actors for Thursday's shoot of the newspaper office scene dropped out (the part of the editor). Fighting panic, I recruited my friend Douglas Gaerte, a professor of communications at Houghton College, to step in to read the scene cold. This is a big relief and requires only minor changes to the script (such as the character's gender!). Doug's schedule Thursday evening doesn't quite match the original plan, but it looks like that will work out ok.

Thursday 2/26/04

This evening I learned a few things about audio filters. The audio from the newspaper scene has serious problems. There are many screeches and pops, but also a persistent hiss throughout all the audio. Research online brought me to several tutorial pages about FCP's audio control filters.

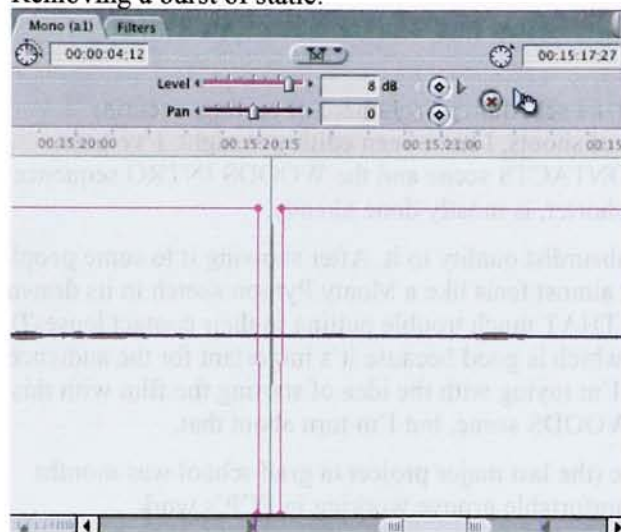
This is amazing and better than I had hoped for. All the tutorials talk about how limited FCP's filters are, and how you can't really count on them to make weak audio strong. But hiss is one of the things easiest to remove and I was amazed when I was able to dramatically reduce the hiss in my edited footage.

The key is to simply find the frequency at which the hiss is made, and drop it out. The tutorials were helpful in giving pointers about how to identify the frequencies, and I spent the evening clearing out most of the hiss from the lines.

Uneven volume and intensity is a separate problem that I also spent a lot of time manually adjusting. Anjuli's lines tend to be quieter and farther from the mic. Doug projected strongly right into the mic. Marcus comes and goes depending on mic position. This makes for a difficult time of inching levels up and down to try to even the scene out. This was less successful than the hiss reduction.

It is time consuming, but if I can find the time to do it I'm confident the audio for other scenes can be improved also.

Removing a burst of static:



Filtering out hiss:

Name	Parameters	Nav	
▼ Mono 1 Filters			
▼ 3 Band E...		✕	
Low Frequency	100	◀ ▶	
Low Gain(dB)	0	◀ ▶	
Mid Frequency	2500	◀ ▶	
Mid Gain(dB)	0	◀ ▶	
High Frequency	5000	◀ ▶	
High Gain(dB)	-10	◀ ▶	

Saturday 2/28/04

Today I had a complete meltdown on the newspaper scene. I have decided to walk away from it for now and not look at it again for a week or two.

I fear that this scene is not salvageable and I will have to cut it from the film. Below is a list of the main problems that may add up to a complete loss.

1. A bad shoot with incomplete coverage

I completely botched the shots. My thinking was to shoot from all over the place with 2 cameras, and it would produce enough footage from which to piece together a scene. This wasn't at all helpful. Though I planned the visuals for the shots, I did not think through the editing process. I got a lot of partial coverage of many angles, but no complete coverage of any one angle. This left me with fragments of audio to split between multiple scenes, and points of view that just didn't make sense.

2. Lousy audio

The technical flaw in the microphone (actually a bad xlr adapter on the camera) made even some of the carefully recorded audio unusable because of loud pops, crackles, and hiss. For example, there is only one take of all of Doug's lines miced. Thank goodness it is a good take. I spent many hours lip syncing Doug's audio from this take to the video of other takes.

3. Actors' performance

Unfortunately, particularly Anjuli was awkward and stiff in the first hour of shooting, and tragically the majority of the usable audio for her lines was recorded in this first hour. Sometimes the awkward lines lip synced to a more natural looking performance later was possible, but most of the time it was not. Her stiffness was due as much to my ineptitude at directing her well as it was to her nerves and inexperience. A few takes of her look great and are really compelling, but the majority of the video/audio combinations for her lines are from the beginning of the shoot and her awkwardness is distracting.

4. Inconsistent directing and staging

It is really hard to piece together a cohesive scene when I did such a horrible job at running the show during shooting.

Over the past several days I have hammered the footage hard into some semblance of a scene. The result is mediocre at best. Today's brainstorm was to go insane in the motion graphics to distract the audience from how bad the scene is overall. That's how desperate I've become: use the graphics to obscure the content rather than reveal it.

My solution actually gives me a small hope. My wife Lori had the idea that I could lay out the screen like a newspaper page, and insert multiple photographs into the composition. The photographs would depict the characters in the scene and will alternately "come to life" to display the different pieces of conversation. Initial tests actually looked promising so I simply dove into it hoping to make for the most interesting looking composition possible, with non-realistically shifting and changing newspaper elements accompanied by rustling paper audio.

I hammered the entire scene together in a marathon editing session. The result is only passably interesting. In critique Lori simply shook her head and said the problems remain.

The key when I return to the scene later to give it one last chance will be to use headline style text on the screen to reveal things about the characters and comment on their conversation. These headlines can animate on and off the screen in ways that will look interesting, and at the same time use the newspaper graphics metaphor to further the story by giving information

about the characters' thoughts and reactions. As of tonight I am clueless about whether I will actually be able to pull this off. We will see when I get back to it after a rest.

Screen composition using my kooky "newspaper layout metaphor:"



Wednesday 3/10/04

Today were the departmental thesis progress report presentations.

Ostensibly this was to give the first year students an idea of what our theses are about and how far along we are in the work. By the end of the day it seemed to turn out to be an exercise in getting our thoughts untangled about the amount of work that remains for us to finish.

My presentation went ok I think, except that I spoke too long (25 minutes instead of 15). I had a brief outline of some of my main ideas displayed in PowerPoint, and I'm not sure anyone really understands what I am trying to accomplish. I should work on summarizing my thoughts and goals better for the defense.

The test reel video seemed to impress everyone enough, and my classmates spent the day dismissing my worried whining by stating over and over again that obviously I am far along. I'm not sure why they think this from a 2-minute set of typography tests.

The hammer blow of the day was the revelation that we are expected to have completed our theses by the defense April 14, except for user testing. This makes me panic. It seems absolutely impossible to me, and I need to talk with my committee about this.

I have already given up on intricate conceptual interactivity on the DVD. My hope now is to have a 20-minute conceptual film that looks good and uses computer graphics to support the narrative rather than simply tickle the eyes. This in itself seems like a huge task and I am now wondering what I was thinking when I took on a project of this magnitude. The real question is: "Can he do it?" Of course, I'll be humiliated if "He can't."

Screenshots from my test reel:



I also showed a rough edit of the CONTACT LENSES scene:



Sunday 3/14/04

I had to think seriously about musical score today. I spoke with Denise Huizenga through email and iChat about how I am hoping she and I can work together. I also spent a lot of time online downloading mp3s of musical passages that I think meet the flavor of the vision I have for the story's musical score (see separate correspondence with Denise for the details of my plan).

Also while rendering the test scenes to send to Denise for our collaboration I realized just how long rendering alone will take. I wonder how many days before thesis defense I should begin the rendering process. Probably I should give it a week, but that is not feasible. I guess I will stay up for 3 days before hand and hope for the best.

If I begin to run out of time, which seems highly likely, I will let the musical score drop from my agenda. Denise will come up with some wonderful music I am sure, but this will still take time for me to edit together. I am going slow in my Soundtrack experiments and training, and I have DVD studio Pro to learn as well. I am laying in scratch music for now, and I'm sure this will be sufficient for me to defend my thesis. I hope I will be able to take the month of May to replace the scratch tracks with Denise's original compositions for the completion of the thesis and the eventual submission to film festivals.

I should run this by my committee, but I don't anticipate they will have a problem with it.

Which reminds me that I should organize another committee meeting before the defense. I need something substantial to show them of course and so maybe I will have to do it right

before defense. This timetable is a ridiculous joke and I need to figure out what defense is going to look like. There's simply no way this project can be "90% complete" in 4 weeks.

Monday 3/15/04

Today I finished up several days of editing together the GRAVESTONE scene.

Overall I'm pleased with the way the scene pieced together. Coverage was good and thorough, and despite the weird (extremely low) lighting, I think the lines flow easily into each other. The performances were good, especially Abigail, and the story gets told.

Audio is all over the place. For the most part the signal is clear, but the environmental noise was completely uncontrollable, leaving me with tons of noise of all kinds. This will by far be the most difficult scene to audio filter. I hope what I learned on the newspaper scene will serve me well on this scene and that I can learn some more fast enough to bring this under control.

ARTISTIC EDITING CHALLENGES

I want this to be a believable piece of storytelling art, and so much of my editing time is taken up trying to achieve artistic goals with no easy technical solution.

I want the scene to "flow." I want there to be a certain kind of "rhythm," I want emotions to "build," to not be over the top, but to not be too subtle. I want the lines to seem "believable," I want the actors to seem "natural."

Sadly for the editor on this project (me), the director on this project (me) has been so obsessed with getting the actors to show up and stand in the right place and get their lines all recorded on tape, that there wasn't much attention given during the shoot to "flow," or "rhythm."

The writing of the script, and subsequent re-writes after valuable editing advice, tried to establish some of the artistic things I am hoping to edit into the final scene. So a lot of effort went into allowing for these things in the script.

But when people are standing up and saying lines, they always, always come out differently than the way they were imagined by the writer on this project (me). So there are three things I've found to hope for when trying to achieve some kind of artistic legitimacy.

1. Good actors — if the performers are good at what they do, many emotional threads and scene rhythms will naturally emerge for the editor to shape into something cohesive and believable.

I was very lucky that, particularly in this scene, Marc Wallace and Abigail Owen are very good at what I asked them to do. They were able to give me very natural moments on tape that I was so grateful for in the editing. The only other actor in the scene is myself and I tried hard to keep whatever I did to a bare minimum — think and talk and act like what I am: an exhausted artist who doesn't know what's going on and who wishes he had more money.

2. Luck — I can't overestimate the importance of serendipity and random things that turn out good. There aren't many of these, but when they happen, I am very grateful for them.

3. Editing chopping block — I've found that I can use the shot footage as a kind of raw material from which I can tease out the bare essentials of a scene, shaping it the way I want it to be as I go.

I mean this almost literally. The way the scene was finally cut together is quite different from the way it was originally scripted and shot. Lines were cut out, shortened, stretched longer or combined. I made it a habit of wasting tape by letting the camera roll on the actors during set

up, while I was messing with lights, while someone left to use the bathroom. This resulted in many shots of actors' faces just looking around, standing relaxed, thinking about something else, etc. I used these moments of down time a lot in this scene to create pauses, to suggest feelings, etc.

The main challenge was sorting through the many (6 to 10) takes for each part of the scene. I had about 4 or 5 takes of coverage for each actor and so had a lot to choose from. I was able to add pauses and moments of silence by cutting in extra shots of each actor listening while the other delivering lines. I would like to experiment more with this and get better at it.

The lines were also delivered fairly consistently and so were not difficult to lip sync at times. Also I was able to rearrange a couple of lines and cut out some phrasing and words that I didn't like. If you have a clear consistent audio signal you can get away with a lot of overdubbing and rearranging. In this scene I started to get the hang of breaking audio tracks from video tracks in order to run audio over cuts between camera angles. This adds a smoothness to the conversation that I need more of to compensate for my choppy shooting style.

In the end, I was able to push the raw material into the shape of something pretty close to what I wanted.

Tuesday 3/16/04

Today I cut together the library scene.

This was the easiest and quickest edit so far. The dialogue fell together nicely and I had a lot of coverage to choose from.

Originally I had logged and captured the entire day's shoot in essentially 2 long 20 minutes captures. This was too difficult to work with, however. Scrubbing through long entire takes took too much time and it was harder to compare lines from one take to lines from another take.

So I re-logged all of the dialogue between Garrison and Jason, and recaptured it. This broke the dialogue up into discreet takes, and this was much easier for me to edit with. I had developed a rhythm editing the GRAVESTONE scene in which I would stack all the captures together, divide by take, and simply go through each of them a line at a time, comparing the lines from each take as I worked to find the best one. After I got the footage recaptured in these manageable chunks, the scene came together in just a couple of hours.

I ran into a technical snag that puzzles me. On several of the captures, the audio was out of sync with the video by 10 to 20 seconds. I called Marc to ask his advice about this and he said he has had it off by a couple of frames but never by such a large margin, as I was experiencing. He said it is related to breaks in time code.

This may be the case because I was using an improperly blacked tape (I think I just forgot to black this tape and so each time I turned off the camera I risked a break). Marc said the thing to do is to manually realign the audio and video tracks, or recapture in 5-minute chunks. Each of my chunks was already 5 minutes or less, so I simply ignored it. I had so many takes to work with that I just didn't worry about the 2 or 3 that were unusable because of this weird glitch.

One of Marc's takes at the end I did decide to use from the out of sync capture. I manually realigned the tracks and it didn't take more than 5 minutes to do this. The result was the best take from what I had available.

Wednesday 3/17/04

Today was Grandpa's 85 birthday, and I worked so long on this project I forgot to call him. These are unforgivable consequences of working on a thesis.

This evening I spent over 2 hours adding visual texture text animation to the establishing shots of the library scene. The establishing shots reveal people in the world of books/words, and I would like for each character to be interacting with words given physical form to demonstrate that this is the world of words that have powerful presence.

I began working out a LiveType animation of typing on a computer keyboard. This took a long time and was frustrating. I knew what I wanted the letters to look like but struggled with making LiveType create the animation I desired. After finally achieving a good look, I added the text streaming from a book I created weeks ago for my test reel. The "spaghetti text" streaming off a book like tentacles was a challenge because of the constant camera motion, but in the end it is a good effect. The "brain text" coming out of the reading woman's head like a cloud is only partially effective. I will probably have to go back and redo the animation to be more clear. As it is it is getting a little lost.

In critique Lori said that the establishing shots last too long so I have cut out 3 of them. She also isn't impressed with the animations. As usual, she says they look nice but lack meaning. I disagree of course but don't know how to get across the idea that these text animations are meant to reveal that the library is a place where words take primary importance and have presence.

I am planning to use a lot of text overlays in the conversation between Garrison and Jason. As yet I don't have a clear idea of how to accomplish this and spent some time sketching possible layout and storyboard ideas.

The rest of the night was spent creating motion graphics overlays for each of the still images in the EMOTIONS sequence. I have created a framed set of text labels describing the facial features of each emotional state, and placed it as an overlay over top of each B/W still image. The overlay needs to be transparent so the still can show through from underneath. I've added a center-out wipe transition to give the feel of some animation.

I built the overlays in FreehandMX and exported them as Macintosh EPS files. My plan was to bring the eps files into Photoshop as perfect art, then export as .PNGs to get a clear, crisp transparency. This was a disaster. What was I thinking? Well, I know what I was thinking; I was thinking that Freehand would not directly export a PNG of high quality. Why I thought this without running a test I have no idea. It took over 2 hours to build and export all 33 overlays in Freehand, and then Photoshop was able to work with only about half of them. Batch conversion to .PNG was useless as half of the file formats were weird somehow and unreadable. I had forgotten how difficult working with EPS files is. Fireworks also had no idea what to do with them.

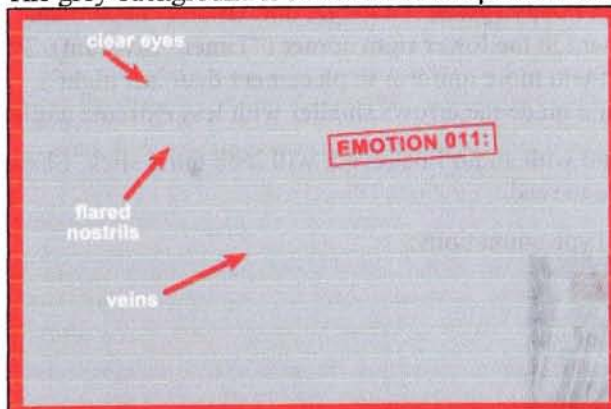
Typographic animations in the library establishing shots:



Eventually I opened each EPS overlay individually using File-* open in Fireworks and individually set the export properties and exported as PNG. The first time through I set the bit depth wrong and then had to go back and redo them all.

This killed the entire night, and I didn't get to bed until 4:30 am. It was a technical nightmare, and in the morning a quick test showed that direct export from Freehand to PNG created a clear crisp transparent overlay.

The grey background is shown here to represent the transparent portions of the overlay:



The set of 33 overlays was imported into FCP and placed over each 2-second still image.

In critique Lori (see entry for 3/18) thought the design was great, but the text over top of the still image distracted from the impact of the still image's humor and its striking ability to be a perfect summary of the emotion being explored. She also complained as usual that the text overlay, while it looked nice, does not do anything to reveal character or advance story.

The time wasted over technical screw-ups with EPS files, the tepid reaction by Lori in critique, and my fears that the elements placed so close to the screen edges are not broadcast safe have made this a depressing day.

Thursday 3/18/04

Tonight's main struggle is designing and working out the EMOTIONS scene motion graphics. Last night's still image overlays now look stiff and awkward to me. Also, the still emotions photos are onscreen for 2 seconds, and this doesn't seem to be enough time to take in the image, laugh at its humor, and read the appearing text overlays. Critique with Lori was confusing to her. As usual she insisted that the text should reveal something about story or character rather than technically describe the image.

I have been running tests all night to build the motion graphics entirely in LiveType. I am building 4-second animations, using each EMOTIONS still as a base. My hope is that the first 1-second will reveal the still image alone, and second 2 will animate the text

elements over the image. Second 3 and 4 can then be spent by the viewer reading the text information. I've added 3 main elements:

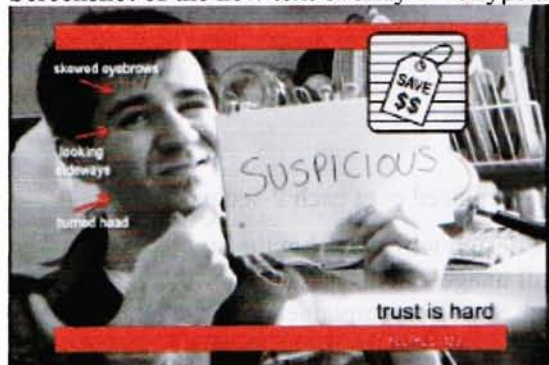
1. Descriptive technical text (3 notes with arrows)
2. A B/W icon relating to the emotion.
3. A "relevant character thought from Garrison." The purpose of this is to give personal information about Garrison and his life related to the emotion. This will hopefully build the character rather than being exclusively eye candy.

2 seconds is probably not enough time to read all the information. (In critique with last night's 2-second overlays, Lori did not even notice the dog icon). Therefore, there needs to be a hierarchy of importance set.

Most important is the "garrison's thought." Secondly are the descriptive notes. Last is the icon. To set this hierarchy I've made the thought text large and shrunk the descriptive labels. To call further attention to the thought text I have given it a longer animation ("Type") and added a constantly changing visual element in the lower right corner ("Timer" Livefont). To make the labels read faster I have made them more uniform in placement than last night's overlays (roughly even left alignment) and made the arrows smaller with less extreme angles.

Overall the animation is very pleasing and with audio I believe it will look quite slick. I have no idea how easy or difficult they will be to read.

Screenshot of the new text overlay LiveType animations:



Doubling the length of the still images/motion graphics required cutting 4 more emotions from the sequence. It is still 4:30 long, about a minute longer than I wanted. Oh well, luckily it is entertaining.

Friday 3/19/04

Today's editing challenge is the completion of the emotions motion graphics.

The adjustments from last night's design:

1. Reduce the overall "mechanical" feel of the graphics by using "wiggly" arrows and a shifting foggy light behind the thought-text rather than a hard rectangle (fog effect is distorted "fireball" LiveType object)
2. Rather than a complete thought statement from Garrison's mind, the text in the lower right are now impressionistic "phrase poems" giving general suggestions about Garrison's state of mind, his character traits, his relationship with other characters.

I guess the descriptive text and arrows don't need to be read in any detail. I'm hoping the viewer will be aware of them there and understand what they are, but the important part is the lower right text. Hopefully the viewer will be able to read them quickly and get a quick impression, and then move on to the next interesting emotion.

I have no idea if anyone will even notice the B/W icons. And I suppose it doesn't matter much to me at this point. I want the motion graphics to be a rapid, interesting to look at, impressionistic sense of motion and shifting visual field. Any of the thought-text the viewer picks up, the more thematic knowledge they will gain about the story. Aside from that they don't have to comprehend much beyond a persistent sense that text and changing images can constantly be superimposed over the narrative to comment on it or offer more information.

Settled for now on 1 second of B/W still image, and 3 seconds of animated motion graphics. I need audio under the motion graphics and am thinking about possibilities: music, percussion, papers rustling, natural sound like wind or leaves or waves. No time for the audio details now, I hope later I decide on a direction.

Saturday 3/20/04

More editing notes about the problematic NEWSPAPER scene:

Today I had a critique of several scenes in progress (Emotions, Library, Gravestone, Newspaper) with Marc Wallace, and there are two main opinions he expressed that I have taken to heart.

1. The Gravestone scene is long. There are two approaches I could take to fixing this. On the one hand, I could just cut dialogue from it, and tighten the whole thing up. On the other hand, I could leave it the length it is and wait to see how it feels after I add the substantial text animations to it. My thought is that with extra information appearing and disappearing on the screen, the things that make the scene feel long now will be reduced. I'm not sure though, so I suppose I will add text and motion graphics to the first half of the scene and then see how it feels.
2. About the Newspaper scene, Marc said to me directly, "I tell you this in love: lose this whole scene." He affirmed the brutal truths about this scene that I know already: the performances are stiff overall, the staging isn't so hot in terms of following the narrative, and it has some storytelling problems. It seems to be an anomalous scene. It's the only scene not told from Garrison's point of view, and it doesn't have the same character and narrative direction that the other scenes have.

The Newspaper scene is lit and shot beautifully (rich warm colors and good tonal range) and it's some of the best writing of the script (according to my 2 script editors) but the weaknesses of how it finally came together in editing distract from the overall quality of the film.

This is a difficult decision to make because there is so much effort that went into it, an entire week of work. In a 9 or 10-week project, that is a huge percentage of time and effort to discard.

Digital storytelling is about making brutal choices, however, and I've decided to make this one here.

I have thought for a while, and discussed a bit with Marc, the possibility of using some of the footage and some of my cool editing layouts (the newspaper page visual metaphor) to turn this part of the story into an impressionistic rumination about newspapers and the way words and images combine to move information around in a democracy. It could be based on Garrison's tape recorded voice-over, and be a discussion of the various ideas and themes that are important to me about newspapers and information media. I could also write it carefully to include character development and details about Garrison and his life, and support the whole thing visually with this shifting and changing tableau of pictures of Garrison's co-workers, snippets of their idiosyncratic statements ("Don't you know the difference between a word and a picture?!"), text blocks, and headlines.

What exactly this will look like in execution is anyone's guess, but I have begun to storyboard ideas for it based on some of the edited footage I've already got. That way maybe it doesn't have to be a total wash.

Sunday 3/21/04

This afternoon a freeze/crash of FCP during log and capture forced a system restart, and it had been a while since I saved. When I returned this evening to see if any of the logging was lost, it was all missing from the file.

I pulled the most recent project file from FCP's AutoSave vault, and about 2/3 of the logged clips were there. This saved a lot of time after the crash, without the AutoSave file I would have had to re-log all of the clips, which would have taken about 1.5 hours.

A note about AutoSave and the editing process:

The AutoSave vault had saved my neck last year when working on an elaborate final project for one of my grad classes. I accidentally trashed and deleted all project files and captured media for my project, representing a loss of about 14 hours of work. It would have been impossible to repeat the work and complete the assignment on time.

Luckily the AutoSave vault was up to date, and I was able to open the most recent AutoSave file, recapture all of the media from the original tapes, and re-render based on the project file's filters settings. This took about 4 hours total (from initial moment of panic and consultation with FCP user friends to recapturing the footage from the tapes) as opposed to 14 hours of misery redoing the entire project to the point where the files were trashed.

This "learning experience" last year made me set the AutoSave vault to save every 5 minutes when I began editing work on *Lorem Ipsum* in February. Unfortunately this became an interrupting distraction. When the files are new without many clips and data in them, AutoSave happens very quickly so that I barely notice it. But as the files become larger and the sequences more elaborate, AutoSave takes longer, and seems to happen in two stages — a sudden pause to save, then a resumption of editing, and an immediate pause again. It's really not much time at all, but when I get in the zone I edit very quickly and these interruptions,

short as they were, became increasingly frustrating, as I had to suspend my editing groove for even 5 to 10 seconds waiting for AutoSave every 5 minutes.

I therefore reset AutoSave for every half hour or so. I realize if I had left it at 5 minutes, my crash this afternoon would probably have resulted in the loss of no logging data. This is a workflow compromise I've had to make because of how much I hate the AutoSave pauses while I am editing.

Monday 3/22/04

Had good critique response today to my motion graphics text effects for the library scene, and so will pursue my ideas for this scene with vigor now.

Conceptually I am moving in the direction of using the presence of animated text to reveal the inner life of the characters. In the library scene I'm editing together simple statements that reveal the emotions and thoughts of the characters, supporting or expanding on what the characters are saying in dialogue.

This fits nicely with my attempt to use language as a physical presence in the story. In this library scene, the text crawls across the characters' faces revealing their emotions and thoughts in the way that facial expressions change to reveal the same thing.

Thematically, using text to reveal the inner life lends support to the idea that Garrison's project is only partially successful. The text animations are a reminder that photos and recordings can capture only the outer expressions of who were are, but to capture the totality of a person you would have to somehow get at what is inside. Image-making and language recording can't do that, only relationships give access to the inner lives of people, and relationships can't be captured and catalogued. Of course, in the story, Garrison's daughter has relationships with people who had relationships with Garrison, and this may pass on something of who he was. But that's mostly for the viewer to think about afterward.

From a technical standpoint, I shot the film completely wrong to add these text animations. My committee noticed this and warned me about it. The "fast and dirty" indie film aesthetic that I like keeps the image onscreen in constant motion. So any text overlays that need to track the objects and characters in the moving image have to move over top of the image to stay in sync. I've done this through a somewhat painstaking dedication keyframing in the "motion" tab of the individual text animation clips.

Basically the keyframing is handled through "center," (for x and y motion) "scale," (to follow camera zooms and to simulate z axis movement) and "rotation" (for changing position).

So for example, I've stuck text to the characters' faces. When the character moves his head, the text has to track along with the movement to stay in roughly the same position on the face, and when the camera moves, this essentially moves the face within the picture frame, and the text has to track that as well. If the camera zooms in or out, the text has to be scaled up or down to remain in proportion to the face. Tilting of the head is compensated for by choosing a line somewhere on the face (such as the eyebrows) and rotating the text to remain aligned.

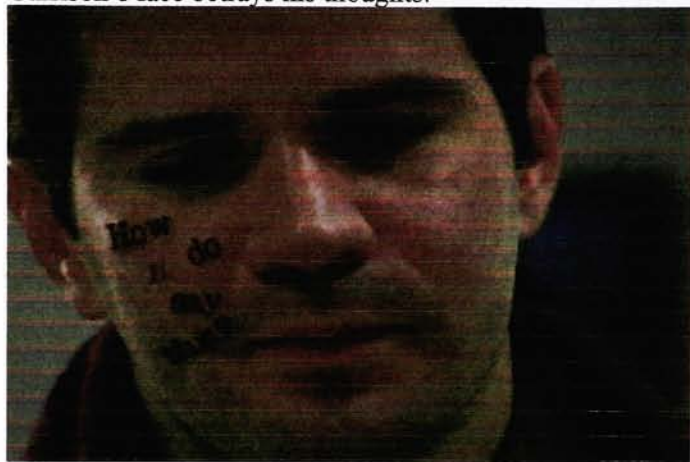
This is time consuming, but not as hard as I had feared. I have gotten the hang of setting keyframes for all three variables and then scrubbing through the clip in 2 to 4 frame chunks, setting new keyframes as I go by adjusting which variable (or variables) changed. My cuts are short (2 to 5 seconds) and so this keyframing doesn't have to be done for extended time periods. Of course the short cuts are easier to keyframe, but that means there is less time to read the text. So I've been keeping my text short and sweet.

The animations in LiveType I am using for this scene use twitchy effects (“ribbon” and I think one of the “grunge” effects) so I don’t have to be perfectly precise in my keyframing. Use the effects to the best advantage is my motto.

It’s slow going, partly because I am making design decisions as I go rather than working from a carefully planned storyboard, for which I don’t have time. I like how it’s coming out so far though, and I’m taking advantage of serendipitous opportunities, such as the clip of Jason rubbing his nose and mustache — I was able to keyframe the text so it looks like he is wiping the text off of his face. Pretty slick.

I’m very pleased with the unwrapping sequence in the INTRO scene. The effect of the small images flickering past is a good one once everything is timed correctly. The audio cues add interest as well.

Garrison’s face betrays his thoughts:



Thursday 3/25/04

I’m very pleased with the unwrapping sequence in the INTRO scene. The effect of the small images flickering past is a good one once everything is timed correctly. The audio cues add interest as well.

Friday 3/26/04

I find the pace I need almost impossible to sustain. I will work long hours and see real accomplishment in the editing, and then I will have 3 or 4 days where I am unable to move significantly forward. Today I spoke with a woman who basically gave up sleep when completing her MBA degree and the deprivation gave herself shingles. This isn’t something I want to experience. I had some success this week getting up early rather than staying up late. I will try that for the next few days.

I have finished most of the text effects for the library scene. I don’t want to overdo it at the beginning of the film, so I haven’t gone nuts like I plan to in later scenes.

I started tightening up the rough edit of the Gravestone scene, and this is slow going. The scene is too long so I am going through carefully and cutting lines. The shots are also uneven so I am trying to come up with a still photo montage technique that I hope will cover over many sins. I need to storyboard it out though. Just sitting down and trying to come up with interesting techniques on the fly is not working out.

Many challenges ahead in the next 2 weeks. My goal is to get the first 10 minutes of the film nailed down solid in time for the defense. Can he do it? This remains the primary question.

Saturday 3/27/04

The only work on Lorem Ipsum I did today was media management. This is difficult and I have made some errors that will take time to repair. I would like to migrate all of the production of the film to my large 160GB drive. When I move the earlier scenes to this drive I do it by managing the media through FCP, and cut some of the fat in the process. It's never a perfectly smooth transition, however, in part because I don't always understand exactly what is happening in the process and also because I often screw it up.

Today I deleted several long pieces of the library scene that will need to be recaptured directly from the tape. I have to keep in mind to let the media manager make the decisions. I thought that these 3 files weren't being used by my project, but of course after I deleted I realized that they are. So now there are 3 big holes in my library edit. More hard lessons learned from the trenches.

Sunday 3/28/04

I continue to run into time code problems during logging and capturing. I don't understand any of what's going wrong:

- a. Sometimes the audio and video in the captured clip are just out of sync. It is a pain to realign them and so most of the time I just ignore those clips. It's not outrageous, of course, to realign them if I have to, but 90% of the time I just use the tapes I have that are properly synced up.
- b. Sometimes the wrong clip is captured during batch capture. I assume this is because somehow two spots on the tape have the same time signature. I get around this by fast forwarding or rewinding to the correct spot on the tape I want to capture. I assume FCP will capture the timecode closest to where the tape has stopped.
- c. Sometimes the clip just won't capture and I will get an error about there not being enough lead time to the clip I chose or something like that. [copy down exact wording of error next time]

Now that I am completing rough cuts of the scenes, I am struggling with how to decide how much or what kind of text to put in motion over the images. I don't want to become silly or distracting. I'm taking a "start slow" approach, but on some scenes like the BED conversation that I am editing tonight I don't have any idea what to put on at all. Should I leave some scenes without the text? Since it is the central computer graphics technical challenge of the thesis, I want to use as much text as I can.

For the most part I would like to use the text to reveal the inner lives of the characters, but just how to do this is often a mystery. I keep a pad of paper by my bed because often I will get ideas when falling asleep and waking up.

Tuesday 3/30/04

Thesis defense is 2 weeks away, and I need to seriously assemble 10 to 15 minutes of film to show at the defense. This is a public showing and determines whether I may show on May 21 (and hence pass my thesis reasonably thereafter). Everyone (students and faculty) in the program seems to think I'm in great shape and this will be a wonderful presentation. I feel like I'm playing cello in that string quartet on the Titanic.

Today I planned a final arrangement of scenes and sequences for the final structure of the film, as follows:

1. Prologue — Amber opening envelope, “Hemlock is my favorite tree..
2. Woods, part 1 — opening credits (includes sort #1 and opening T-Shirts)
3. Emotions
4. Woods, part 2
5. Contacts scene (with shaving footage)
6. Speakerphone
7. Sharon conversation #1: in bed
8. NEED A TRANSITION HERE ???
9. Library
10. Newspaper montage
11. Pam
12. Gallery, before the reception
13. Gallery reception montage
14. Gravestone (with short coatroom and car scenes)
15. Sharon conversation #2: bathroom
16. Pregnancy sequence, call to Neil
17. Final montage
18. Epilogue — Amber and Neil at the library

My plan is to show the first portion of the story (excluding the prologue) up until the Library, maybe the Newspaper montage. Unfortunately, when I began to string these sequences together into a whole, it ran much longer than I expected. After cutting and shortening extensively (including removing another 3 emotions) above numbers 2 through 4 runs 7:12! What the heck, why is this so long? This is all preliminary stuff before any real story even begins. I am faced with the length and pacing being a serious problem, and much of the next two weeks will be spent trying to address this. I have no idea how, I can't think of anything more to cut!

I guess I'll have to.

Note on removing 3 more emotions:

The EMOTIONS sequence was still very humorous and interesting, and still too long. So I decided to cut 3 more emotions. It was hard to decide which were “the least great,” because I have already removed so many. Marc recorded well over 45, my first edit had 40, tonight after my cuts there are 30 left. This still seems like too much, but what more can I remove? I removed “Haughty” because it doesn't have much story connection, I removed “Fury” because it's similar to apoplexy and is a less dynamic expression, and “Freaky,” again because it has little story connection and, although it cracks me up every time, most people who see it don't think it's as funny as I do.

Unfortunately the “Fury” emotion had a text overlay that referred to Neil and family, so I re-rendered the “Apoplexy” QuickTime with “Fury's” text and icon. The Apoplexy text overlay I replaced was nice; it was about politics and had a cool catch-phrase (“Opinions aren't

sacred"). Maybe if I cut more I can replace something that remains with the previous Apoplexy text and icon.

I also ran into a worrisome technical problem when exporting same video to show Jim VerHague. I am too tired to write about this now and will have to pick it up again shortly.

Thursday 4/08/04

This evening I drove to Marc's place to record his voiceover. I wrote most of the lines this afternoon. I had been thinking about what I want the voiceover to accomplish and sound like for a long time, but I wonder if I'm riding some kind of ragged edge of disaster by waiting until right before I record to finish the writing. Aren't I supposed to give the stuff I write time to be edited?

I generally don't like voiceovers in movies, but I need something extra to help the audience make sense of this story, particularly in the beginning, which is pretty impressionistic and mysterious. The Garrison character spends a lot of time using words and language to describe his world, and so a voiceover can make sense to the internal world of the film by adding another layer of descriptive language.

So the idea is that the voiceover is a sampling of what Garrison is recording into his hand-held tape recorder. Therefore, I recorded Marc's reading without the nice Sonnhaiser mic, and had him hold the GL-1 so he could speak directly into the built in condenser mic as if he were holding the tape recorder.

The onboard mic on the GL-1 is just too nice to be believable as the cruddy mic on a cheap tape recorder. I may decide to scratch the audio up a little bit if I have time, otherwise it is simply a standard, nicely recorded film voiceover, which I can certainly live with.

I captured the audio from the tape as soon as I got home and even tested dropping the hemlock lines onto the edited footage for the upcoming defense. It all goes together smoothly and makes sense, plus Marc's reading was right on for most all of the lines I'd written. I particularly like the last minute brainstorm I had about adding the voiceover describing the girl's upper lip. This is nearly a direct quote from a dear friend who is probably the best painter I know. It's one of the most profound descriptions of how an artist sees the world I've ever heard, and I'm glad I was able to work it into my story.

Monday 4/12/04

This evening I held a one-hour critique group with Scot Bennett, Ted Murphy, and Steve Johnson. Scot is on my committee and knows my ideas, approach, goals, and has seen some rough footage. Steve knows the general direction of my thesis proposal but no specifics and has seen no footage. Ted is coming to the entire project fresh with no knowledge of what I'm doing.

Wednesday 4/14/04

Today was my public thesis defense.

It consisted of a 15-minute speech with simple PowerPoint slides, a presentation of the first 10 minutes of the project, and about 5 minutes of questions from the audience.

I was extremely nervous before and during my presentation; I suppose I felt the weight of the past 2 years riding on my back. The relief when it was over was exquisite.

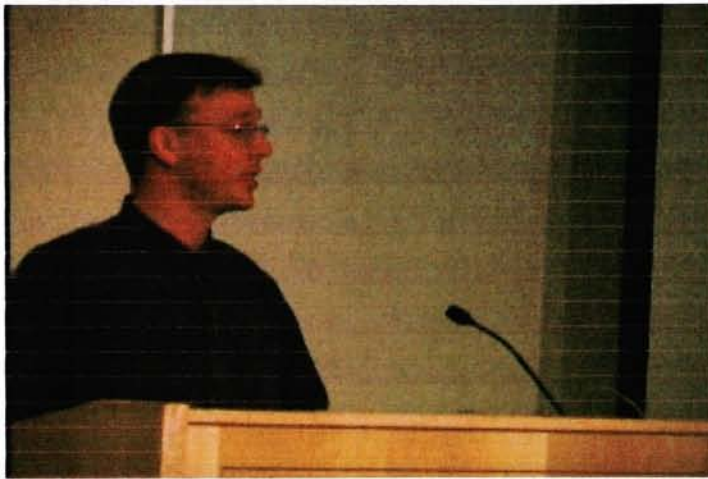
I was able to video tape my presentation so that I can include it on the final DVD as part of the thesis documentation.

The questions from the audience were mainly about open captioning for the Deaf and the problem of internationalizing the project for speakers of other languages.

There are captioning solutions in DVD Studio pro, but my blood runs cold when I try to think about what it will take to learn this and devote the time to it. I am afraid that I won't be able to accomplish this in time for the thesis show, which will be embarrassing as I have several Deaf friends who I plan to invite.

Internationalizing this project will be nearly impossible. I can always subtitle in any language I get a translation for, but there is so much text in the motion graphics, I don't know how this could be adapted. Since the story is about and relies on language, I had to pick one. Naturally I picked English, which I know limits it.

Overall I heard good response from classmates and faculty. Personally I felt my speech was a bit dry and rambling. During lunch break several classmates told me to stop working and not do any more, because I've done "enough work for a thesis project already." This is a nice sentiment, but of course I need to finish the story.



Friday 4/16/04

Received a note from Chris Jackson (acting department chair and a committee member) today with the following happy sentence:

"After consideration of your presentation and progress to date, it is our recommendation that you participate in the thesis show on May 21, 2004."

Hooray!

Thursday 4/22/04

I have taken a week off from any significant work on my thesis.

After the defense I was relieved and tired and had other school assignments and life tasks (like beginning my post-graduation job search!) to take care of, and planned to begin the final push the morning of April 22 (my birthday) after a good night's sleep.

I went to bed early on the 21st (9:30) and woke filled with anxiety at 1:30 am. So I worked on some prep and some documentation for 4 hours.

Insanely, I am running out of hard drive space. The 160 GB drive had only 8 GB remaining — not enough for the next few scenes (LIBRARY, NEWSPAPER, and PAM) so I spent time moving the NEWSPAPER sequence to the 60 GB drive, still unused and empty. Of course, I

screwed this process up, breaking links, losing render files, and accidentally deleting important media. Sorting this out took a couple of hours when I added the time it took to prepare the files to finish up the LIBRARY scene.

I did some editing too. I got the impression from my last critique that the library scene is too long so I combed through it trimming and cutting. I also had to recapture a piece of media that somehow got lost, and then I ended up deleting that shot from the scene. I added one new LiveType animation to get back into the swing of the process, and I am ready to finish the scene off very soon I think.

I had neglected the last several shooting reports so spent over 30 minutes trying to get updated. I'm about a third of the way finished with the shooting reports that I need until that part of the documentation is complete.

When you let the process wind down for a rest period on a project this size it takes quite a bit of effort to get it up and running again. I think I am on my way now though and plan to do nothing else from this moment on until this puppy is finished. As I type this it's about 5:30 a.m. and I suppose I should grab a couple hours of sleep before I spend the rest of the day editing.

I'm filled with excitement to be within sight of the end but also dread and fear of the effort it will take to finish.

Friday 4/30/04

















As an example of how my personal life affects the project schedule, my grandparents are visiting my parents this weekend in Syracuse (about 2.5 hours drive from my home) so I have packed up my G4 and moved it with me to my parents' house for the weekend. I wanted to visit with my grandparents but can't afford to take of any more time from working. Any time you travel with a machine, you are at risk of dropping it, frying something, getting it wet if it's raining while you carry it from the car to the house, etc. So I took care to back up everything very carefully before the big transport.

I began editing the PAM scene and am continuing with the bizarre schedule of going to bed early, sleeping a few hours, and then getting up to work in the wee hours through sunrise.

This is the first time in weeks that I've assembled a scene from scratch, and it is challenging.

My working method is to focus on dialogue as a way of structuring the scene. "First person A says something, then person B says something, then person A says something again, etc." If I've shot the scene correctly, most dialogue is followed by alternating over-the-shoulder frontal shots of whomever is speaking, with occasional wide shots to establish or re-establish location.

Since I shoot each take with only one actor mic-ed, I capture the footage in full takes, organized by speaker (whomever is mic-ed for each take). In the case of the PAM scene, which is a simple conversation between Pam and Garrison, I ended up with about 14 separate captured dialogue files, labeled in order of take, with a few log notes to help me remember anything about each clip that I think I need to remember. Example below...

PAPER_COMBO_final 3		Effects		
Name	Duration	In	Out	
 kristina_freeze5.jpg	00:00:00:02	00:01:00:00	00:01:00:01	
 kristina_freeze6.jpg	00:00:00:02	00:01:00:00	00:01:00:01	
 kristina_freeze8.jpg	00:00:00:02	00:01:00:00	00:01:00:01	
 kristina_freeze9.jpg	00:00:00:02	00:01:00:00	00:01:00:01	
 Layer 1	00:00:05:00	00:01:00:00	00:01:04:29	
 pam_take1	00:00:06:21	Not Set	Not Set	
 pam_take10	00:00:04:29	Not Set	Not Set	
 pam_take10	00:00:03:12	Not Set	Not Set	
 pam_take10 1	00:00:04:29	Not Set	Not Set	
 pam_take11	00:00:11:13	Not Set	Not Set	
 pam_take11	00:00:05:15	Not Set	Not Set	
 pam_take11	00:00:03:15	Not Set	Not Set	
 pam_take11 1	00:00:03:05	Not Set	Not Set	
 pam_take11 2	00:00:05:15	Not Set	Not Set	
 pam_take11 3	00:00:04:07	Not Set	Not Set	
 pam_take11 4	00:00:05:02	Not Set	Not Set	

I then move through each take sequentially in order to choose the best take for each line. For example, if the line is “Hey! Stop that!” (the first line of the scene) I play just that portion from take 1, watching and listening in the FCP video preview window. Then I play that portion from take 2. Then I play it from take 3, etc., and when I decide which take seems best, I splice and drag it into the timeline. I do this line by line throughout the scene. Theoretically, I then have the best takes of each line.

As the scene builds, of course, this becomes more complicated. Some lines sound better immediately before or after other lines. Also as the scene is built, a mood or tone will emerge that the lines have to match. Sometimes this requires replacing some earlier lines with different takes if the overall mood doesn’t seem consistent. I’m finding this all very difficult.

Tuesday 5/04/04

I tackled the completion of the GALLERY sequence around 6:00 p.m., and I am typing this at about 4 a.m. the following morning (other than a break for dinner and another one to catch up on e-mail, I’ve been working straight).

This scene was written to be one of the most important scenes, but it isn’t shaping up to be how I imagined it (especially the BENCH section, which I cut from scratch tonight).

First of all, in reviewing the footage, I was surprised to see that it’s just not as good as I remember it. I realize I don’t direct large groups of people well at all. In addition to very light coverage of key dialogue scenes, I also didn’t direct the actors very well and they seem a little lost at times, with lots of weak delivery of lines. Also, I am surprised and disappointed that the sound wasn’t any better on the BENCH dialogue scene. Have no idea what went wrong. Audio is a bane and the most serious stumbling block.

If I had it to shoot over again, I would not have used Sue on second camera for that scene, which yielded footage that was all unusable (the GL-1 I borrowed from Houghton’s AV department has some serious artifact and color fidelity problems). I should have used Sue on boom mic to get crystal sound. Instead it’s weird, echo-y, tinny, and faint.

I will have to try some audio filter magic to try to minimize the distraction of the bad audio. But during all of my experiments tonight FCP kept crashing on me. This is very worrisome; if it starts crashing regularly now at the end of the project, I won’t survive. I am considering a

big system sweep with Norton utilities to check everything over really well. Worries are piling up!

The other problem with the GALLERY sequence is that it's SO RIDICULOUSLY LONG! I underestimated the length of most of the scenes in this project horribly, especially the gallery scene. It could end up 8 minutes long, which is unacceptable.

A whole lot of time in editing is spent hacking and slashing to cut down time. For example, much of this sequence is built from short vignette style conversations between characters as they discuss the framed photographs in the gallery exhibit. These were all improvised by the actors, and I had lots of material to work with. When I first cut them together, I thought I was being brutal, and each one ended up a minute or more long.

Ridiculous! I removed line after line after line to get them down to 15 to 30 seconds. That is my goal but I still have a ways to go.

This is a very difficult task of editing: slash-and-burn, over and over again to cut down on time. Time has become my enemy in this project and I am squeezing everything to the bare bones. I know that I will eventually have to drop entire sections of dialogue, but I have no idea how to make those decisions tonight. Hopefully the light of day will make that easier.

Also, somehow I missed the schedule for the completion of this documentation. Today in a meeting with Jim my chief advisor I learned that the documentation should be already just about complete. I have to step up the pace on the documentation and report now.

Wednesday 5/05/04

I think I may be hitting a wall.

I hate my thesis project.

It may be sleep deprivation, overwork, and overexposure, but as I sit here at 3 a.m. reviewing edited chunks of the film, it all seems extremely incompetent, pointless, and unintelligible.

I'm including this small crisis in my documentation because I am wondering if it is a common experience at this stage in the pipeline.

Today and tonight I have been tweaking and re-tweaking and triple-tweaking the GALLERY scene. I hate it, it is horrible. There's nothing new to document other than that. All day I have been doing more of what I have been doing all along: editing, cutting lines to shorten scenes, motion graphics, etc. All of the usual things are depressing me:

awkward performances due to bad direction, insufficient coverage, lousy sound. Pretty standard.

The only thing new is that the frustrations seem overwhelming and I expect to be utterly humiliated May 21 (2 weeks and 2 days! !!) when I premiere the film at RIT.

I've decided that the workaround for this unexpected despair is to go to bed and sleep for a long time.

Saturday 5/15/04

This morning at 9 a.m. my critique group met to review the near-completed project. All of the scenes were edited together in order, with the exception of:

1. Intro scene/opening titles
2. Final montage
3. Epilogue

4. End titles

Response of the group was good overall. The themes and character identities seem to be getting across, as well as the plot, with an important exception:

The gravestone scene didn't read well at all. No one understood what was happening; they didn't understand what Garrison was buying or why it upset Natalie. This is a pretty big problem, considering that this is a major scene intended to deliver major thematic and emotional hits.

We discussed ways that the scene could be adjusted to convey the simple information:

Garrison is buying his own gravestone. The scene title is displayed as "the stone" and it was suggested that it be called "the gravestone" instead. We debated whether "gravestone" or "headstone" is a better word; I'm inclined toward "headstone" since it is slightly less cliché of a term, while retaining meaning (everyone knows what a headstone is, right?).

A big problem is that no one seemed prepared to accept the video footage of the gravestone as an actual gravestone. Someone said it looked like a pedestal for a statue, someone else thought it looked like a little stone house. It will be important that, no matter what information I add, it comes across clearly as a gravestone.

Other than that the group was enthusiastic and expressed eagerness to see the final portions of the story (the final montage and the epilogue). When I explained what these sections will be like, they seemed satisfied and agreed that it was a good way to wrap up the story. Also missing is the voiceover to the Garrison/Sharon conversation scene, in which the audience deduces that Sharon is pregnant. The group responded well to my ideas for voiceover to communicate this information, and Steve Johnson suggested that I include video of an ultrasound to hammer the point home visually. He offered to donate an ultrasound of his daughter Eliza to the cause.

Several suggestions for small elements to add were offered. The one I like best is the addition of thought text for the housecat at the end of the transitional sequence in which Garrison puts on his jacket and leaves the house. Marc Wallace suggested the cat look into the lens of the camera and think, "Feed me." I think this is the first addition I will make to the project when I start work again tonight!

Beginning in the evening and lasting throughout the night, I worked through all the completed footage, making adjustments based on critique feedback and my gut instincts for what can be quickly improved. These included creating the voiceover for the conversation sequence, adjusting sound levels on various sequences and clips, tightening music and other audio editing, adding clarity to the gravestone scene and preparing for editing the last few sequences. My plan was to complete all of the main body of the project by the time I went to bed, so for the remaining 5 days before the show I can concentrate on the final brief sequences, and preparing for projection. This was accomplished, and I want to record notes on 2 important resolutions:

1. Final conversation voiceover — My plan was to show Garrison and Sharon talking about something with no audible dialogue. Underneath I planned to run music (which I built from acid loops in Soundtrack) and a voiceover lifted from old 1940s educational films about starting a family and having a baby. This would of course mimic the voiceover from the contact lens scene and add a sad sort of ironic twist against the straight humor of the earlier voiceover.

The footage I had downloaded contained some very good corny statements about the happiness and joy, the anticipation, etc. but I couldn't quite find that one clear and

comprehensive statement that clues the audience in right away to what is happening. I kept thinking that I needed a clear concise statement something like: "The announcement of the arrival of a new baby in the family is one of the happiest moments in the life of any young couple." This would, of course, make very clear to the audience what Sharon is (inaudibly) saying to Garrison and also be a great contrast to the grim and gritty sequence I edited depicting the conversation.

I couldn't find just the right phrase and so finally decided to simply record my own voice saying exactly what I wanted. I recorded what I wanted verbatim on the GL-1, captured the audio, and used audio filters to alter the sound to roughly match the voices of the other surrounding voiceover. [note: My wife, Lori, said she recognized my voice, but no one else has told me that they figured out it was my voice in that one sentence.]

2. Gravestone clarity — I did several things to clarify the gravestone scene. What was most important to communicate to the audience is:

- a. Garrison and Natalie are going to buy a gravestone.
- b. Garrison is buying the gravestone for himself, to use on his grave after he dies.

I changed the title card of the scene to "the headstone" according to Rand Bellavia's suggestion, but I wanted to communicate additional information to the audience about what was going on, rather than forcing them think back to the beginning of the scene to connect the title card to the actions. The scene's intent is to clear up most of the lingering questions about the story, rather than add new ones.



The logical thing to do would be to add motion graphics to the footage that adds clarity to the scene, since additional shooting is impossible, and additional audio recording would be a time-consuming pain in the neck. This perfectly fits the basic experimental premise of my storytelling method: motion graphics can be used narratively to convey information and develop plot and characters. The simple way to do this is to generate text over the brief images of the headstone that label it as "Garrison's headstone," or something like that.

I wanted it to be more sophisticated than that and to not look so "tacked on at the end" (which is what it is!) so I devised a setup and payoff that would get the information across with pictures and non-direct text, with a final gimmick at the conclusion of the scene for anyone who still doesn't get it.

I began at the beginning of the scene, while the title card "the headstone" would still be fresh in the audience's mind, to introduce moving images of headstone of various sizes and shapes to the environment. These are non-literal, non-realistic insertions, almost like overlays. The image-text combinations are meant to seem sort of technical and explanatory. A headstone zooms into view over top of the footage, and text appears around it in a technical format showing the size, shape, and naming the parts of each headstone. This runs over top of the

dialogue and action of the scene, and so had to be carefully placed and timed, and not done too much.

This sets up a vocabulary of headstone identification for the audience, so that when Garrison's headstone is actually revealed within the action of the scene, the same "technical readout" can be applied to it. What this does is communicate (to anyone who thinks what Garrison is buying looks like a little stone house): "this is a headstone, like the previous few that were displayed for you." That way the audience has already been educated into accepting different shapes and sizes of stone edifices as legitimate headstones, including this one that Garrison is purchasing in the story. A strange set of mechanical/industrial non-literal sounds were added to each set of "this is a headstone!" graphics to further ram the point home.



For the end of the scene, during the brief montage where Natalie is photographing Garrison posing with his purchase, I held a freeze frame where you could see the top of the headstone and superimposed Garrison's name and birth date over the face of the stone in case anyone still didn't get it. [note: audience response to this technique, at least in terms of understanding what this scene was about, was very good. I guess it worked.]



Sunday 5/16/04

Today (yes, 5 days before the thesis show) I built the entire final montage sequence.

The purpose of this sequence is more focused on plot and emotion than theme and concept. For that reason there is not much in the way of experimental text and motion graphics (though there are some). The point is to show what happens to Garrison after all of the dialogue and action of the day's events are over. The answer of course is: he gets sick and dies, with a few additional story points (Neil becomes involved in his archiving project, he decides to take a preemptive act against chemotherapy by shaving his head, he remains kind of weird and goofy throughout the last stages of his illness).

I built the scene in a very straightforward way: first, by listing the events that needed to be depicted, in chronological order, and then cutting them piece by piece like they were little "mini-scenes."

1. Neil arrives at Garrison's home and helps him sort through photos
2. Garrison washes dishes and spots a bird outside his window
3. Garrison is surrounded by pill bottles and photographs them



4. Garrison is feeling sick on the couch while Natalie reads to him over the phone
5. Garrison delivers a big batch of photos to Jason at the library
6. Garrison is showering and his hair starts to fall out
8. Jason begins the tedious process of cataloging all the pictures
9. Garrison continues sorting through photos; he's bald and sick



10. Garrison is sick on the couch and Sharon takes a final picture of him while he eats crackers



As I was cutting these short scenes together, I began to adjust the chronology of them for storytelling and dramatic effect. Mostly I did this around the phone/shower/shaving/Jason bits by intercutting them with each other. I had something like this in mind when I wrote the script, but I didn't refer to it while editing. Mostly I just worked intuitively and cut back and forth between the scenes in a way I thought made sense to me at the time.

Final intercutting sequence:



After completing the sequence, I ran it by a trusted critiquer. There were a couple of audience comprehension problems: 1. It wasn't clear that Natalie was reading to Garrison over the phone, 2. The shower sequence seemed a little too long, 3. The pill bottle sequence was way too long.

I have found that something about the way I shoot scenes or the kind of stories I want to tell involves very rapid movement through dialogue and cuts. More will be said about this later in the summary section.

I responded to the critique by cutting way down on the pill bottle stuff I ended up cutting it about in half. I added a few seconds of footage involving Natalie on the phone to try to carry more clearly the message that she is reading a book to Garrison over the phone.

I just couldn't figure out what to cut from the showering. Each little bit communicated some information or image I wanted: a. Garrison is in the shower (important baptism-like image of water flowing over his head), b. Garrison even brings his tape recorder into the shower with him, c. Garrison is shampooing his hair and clumps come out, d. Garrison is upset about this. So I shuffled the order of the scenes a bit, bringing the shower sections closer to each other in time. When I showed my feedback person again, she said "the shower scene is the right length now" even though I hadn't actually removed any footage.

The cutting and rearranging left a gap in the footage. I didn't want to shorten the whole thing, because much of it was timed to music I didn't want to change. I went back to my original tapes and found footage of Garrison sorting pictures with the cat and Sharon interacting. Bringing this footage in was a good way to close the gap.



A note about the music: all of the music for this scene was created by me in Apple's new Soundtrack software, using a combination of Apple and Acid loops.

The entire editing process was very organic. I experimentally (even somewhat randomly) created about 30 seconds of music, then edited some footage, then returned to Soundtrack and added another 30 seconds of music, then edited some more footage, then went back and changed the first 30 seconds of music somewhat, then tweaked the timing of the footage -- back and forth like this for the entire montage.

Some of the footage hadn't even been logged and captured from the original tapes when I began editing. It was a very loose back and forth process that saw the entire sequence build literally from scratch. A more ambitious film project with higher production values and, frankly, more money at stake would probably require a more streamlined and systematic approach. But for the purposes of this small, personal project I could work intuitively and organically with almost no plan. It reminded me of the creative process of creating an oil painting, and I suspect that this alone is enough of a change in the creative process of digital projects to qualify contemporary achievements as part of a "revolution." More on this also in the summary portion of this report.

Finally, a note about the motion graphics I used at the end of this sequence.

I did add text to the final series of shots of Garrison being photographed while eating crackers. I wanted these last moments to be a culmination of the word/image project. His image captured in repeated moments, while a wave of text comes over him. Conceptually, the images fade, and the text overwhelms and obscures him: a nod to the end futility of trying to capture a human being with pictures and words.

The text in this series of shots is non-literal and not meant to be read, what my committee chair Jim refers to as "text as visual texture." To ease into this wave of text I used a smaller smattering of text around Garrison in the previous shots (sorting pictures while covered in a blanket) and flashed them quickly and randomly to introduce the audience to the idea that text is coming that is not meant to be fully read and comprehended.

To save time, most of the text in the final shots are repeats of text used earlier in the film, primarily from the gallery conversation between Garrison and Neil. The blurry white text is simply a default object lifted directly from Apple LiveType (I only tweaked the color and timing). On such a tight deadline, I was looking for any timesaving shortcut I could find.

Monday 5/17/04

Today was devoted to editing (from scratch, including logging and capturing the original video) the epilogue sequence.

This task was a joy, because I really like the scenes with Allyson Murphy, the 10 year old who plays the character of Amber, and because there was nothing to do but cut straight footage; no graphics, no text, no effects. It was pure story cut from simple performances.

This isn't to say that it was easy. I struggled a long time evening out wildly varied sound, and I ended up cutting together many lines in a chronological order that was different than the order in which they were shot. But because this sequence exists in the story purely to deliver plot and character information with an emotional punch at the end of the tale, I was able to work quickly and fluidly and was personally pleased with the results.

This scene included many added sound elements to create atmosphere and a sense of place. The library was shot on a college campus. But I was careful to avoid shooting things like ivy-covered walls and the academic-looking shapes of other buildings nearby. Adding the sounds of a suburban street (mostly traffic and car engine noise) seemed to result in bringing the library out of a quiet campus setting and into a more public environment. The chirping birds were all added by me in editing in order to emphasize that the action of this sequence takes place in a time different from the wintertime of the rest of the story.

I left off the motion graphics because the action of this scene takes place in a different world than the image/text environment of Garrison's last days.

Tuesday 5/18/04

The task today was to cut together the end titles and opening titles, and to prepare the final technical details for projection.

The opening titles section was easy enough. I used a short section of the epilogue scene, with the birds and traffic foley running underneath. It is a very short prologue book-end, so the titles had to be kept at a minimum. I wanted to include the names of everyone with a scripted speaking part, but instead had to settle on the main characters who appear in more than one scene. I simply didn't have enough time in the very brief prologue, so I had to reluctantly leave out Kristina Lacelle-Peterson, Thomas Woods, Elizabeth Sands, and Allyson Murphy. Oh well.

For the title Lorem Ipsum I used the very first LiveType animation test I tried back in January. It is a slow, multilayering of blur and glow effects that I think really sings.

The end titles proved more of a challenge than I expected. Wanted to simply load them into LiveType and scroll the whole thing over 1 1/2 minutes. A weakness of LiveType right now is that it slows down soon after the length of time lengthens or effects pile up. A 1 .5-minute simple title crawl was way too slow to be even remotely usable.

I tried creating the titles as a jpeg in Photoshop and bringing it into FCP to keyframe animate. This didn't work. In the end I used FCP's built in titling filter, which turned out to be very manageable. It wasn't as crisp and clear as I may have liked, but it was certainly good enough and, most importantly, didn't take too long to render.

Today I solved the "Film Look Problem," which is discussed in some detail in the summary conclusions section.

Wednesday 5/19/04

MEDIA MANAGEMENT

Over the last several days I have had a nightmare managing the media and preparing final rendered Quicktimes for final assembly in the final project. This process was completed today.

To save valuable and shrinking hard drive space I have been repeatedly using the media manager to copy all the files to a central location, and I have had a few aggravating instances of being careless and deleting clips that weren't backed up anywhere else. This is due to FCP's system of moving original files to a new location, or creating copies of all files and clips in the new location. Ideally, what you want is for FCP to move the clips you use in a sequence to a central folder that contains all the media for that sequence, and delete any clips or other media that the sequence doesn't use.

Unfortunately, sometimes this moves media used by other sequences, and then those other sequences have a hard time finding the shared clips in their new location. This results in a hunt and peck search for the missing media the next time you open the other sequence.

A few times, some of the clips that were used by other sequences were deleted, and once I had to hunt through old tapes to re-capture the deleted clips. This is a big time-waster, and a frustration.

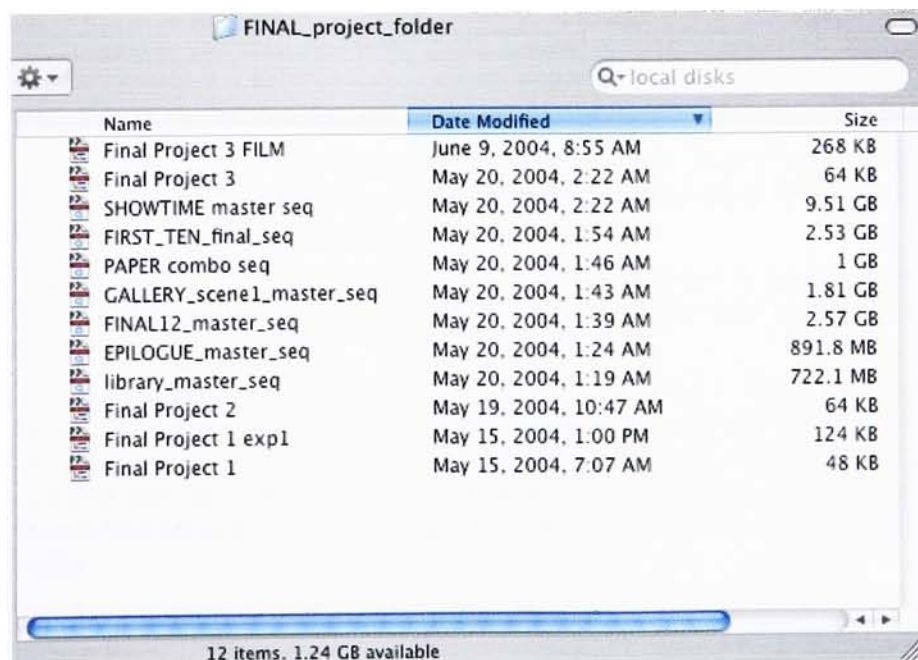
FINAL PROJECT

When I think that a sequence is finished and I won't be doing any more work on it, I export a Quicktime movie (uncompressed) directly from FCP to a folder used for the final chunks of rendered media. I ended up with several movie "chunks" in the final render folder, labeled for the scenes they depict.

Each of these exported, uncompressed Quicktime files was used as a media clip in a final project FCP file, in which I simply strung them all together in order along the timeline.

Then that string of clips was exported as an uncompressed Quicktime file, which is what is intended for public projection at the thesis show.

Below: The final project folder containing exported Quicktime movies of each section of the movie (library, paper, final 12 minutes of the story, epilogue, etc.) as well as the final rendered combined movie (9.5 GB, called "SHOWTIME") ...



Because I decided to *not* add “Film Look” filters to the final movie (see conclusion section to read why) the final assembly and render went relatively quickly (about 30 minutes to export the completed Quicktime movie).

THESIS SHOW PREP

The plan is to have a public presentation of the project in Webb auditorium, across the hall from the lab where the rest of the MFA candidates will be presenting their work at individual computer work stations. My assigned workstation will essentially be an “advertisement” explaining that I made a movie and inviting all guests to the auditorium for the show at the conclusion of the in-lab show.

I spent several hours building a cardboard display of still images and text signs about the movie, and there will be a computer monitor in the center of the display running a trailer for the movie.

Black cardboard, foam core board, resume paper, professionally printed screen captures, and lots of tape and glue came to about 80 dollars. Whew! Assembly of the display took a total of about 6 hours.

TWEAKING

Even though a section of the film is determined to be “finished,” and the Quicktime is exported for final assembly, every time I watched it there would be another small change to make. Aligning a graphic slightly, changing the wording of a piece of text, adjusting sound volume, etc. Every time I made a small tweak like this, the final Quicktime would have to be re-rendered and re-exported and moved to replace the previous version in the final assembly folder. I truly believe that this process could conceivably go on indefinitely. It was very difficult to decide to stop.

A large amount of time today was spent adjusting audio levels. Although all the audio in each individual section is adjusted to a reasonable level, the sequences don't compare similarly to each other. This means that one section, such as the library, sounds fine with the master volume set at a certain level, but then the next section is far louder or far softer when the sound is projected at the same master level.

So rather than stand next to a master volume knob during the thesis show and adjust the master volume up or down depending on what section the movie is playing, I decided to try to go through the entire film section by section and try to even the sound out without touching the master volume of my system.

It quickly became obvious that this was a fruitless effort, at least for one day of work. So I went through the whole project scene by scene and adjusted the most jarring volume differences (mostly by bringing loud levels down) and decided to hope for the best. Ignoring sound levels throughout the editing process ended up being one of my biggest mistakes, and this is discussed more in the conclusion section.

The last editing tweak was adding Eliza Johnson's sonogram video. I finally received a CD-ROM containing the Quicktime today, and dropped a short clip of the sonogram into two sections of the film. This was the final thing I did, I finally had to get up and walk away from the endless tweaking process. I knew I couldn't work on the film any more after today. Tomorrow is the on-site testing of equipment and the set-up of my lab space, and I needed to devote a couple hours tomorrow to creating a short trailer for the story to run at my lab workstation. So today is it.

The final movie was rendered, exported, and tested to show NO PROBLEMS at 2:30 a.m. in my quiet, dark apartment. I celebrated by drinking a large glass of grape juice, eating a piece of cheddar cheese, and going to bed!

Thursday 5/20/04

What a spectacular feeling to not work on my thesis project at all! The movie is done and whatever is in that "SHOWTIME" folder backed up onto all 4 of my internal hard drives, as well as my external firewire drive (and my wiped-clean iPod!) is what I will be showing tomorrow at the thesis show. Let the wind blow as it will, I am done with this beast.

Ok maybe not quite done. Though I don't have any more work to do on the project itself, I did spend 2 hours this evening cutting together a 2-minute trailer for the movie. This was fairly easy to do, the thing practically edited itself.

Though not done in the style of a trailer that would be shown in a theater, it was a bit more slow and thoughtful in order to explain a bit more to the more attentive crowd that will be at the thesis show.

The first section is the text display tests I did back in January, which look cool and summarize pretty well the shifting textual nature of the project ("A story about what words and pictures can/can't do.") The rest of the trailer was a series of interesting shots from the film that don't give any plot, but give a sense of the style and mood. I showed it to a few friends who all said they were intrigued and wanted to see the movie, which is the point of a trailer.

The day was spent in Rochester making technical and practical preparations for tomorrow night's thesis show.

My plan is to project the final movie in the same way that I projected my defense presentation in April — plugging my G4 into the smart podium and playing the Quicktime movie direct from my hard drive. My friend and technical advisor Steve Johnson protested this

vehemently. He is worried that a computer can potentially have problems that would not be a risk if projecting from digital tape or even DVD.

No way. I can't even begin thinking about unknown technical issues in burning a DVD and running it from a DVD player attached to the projector. And I could dump the whole thing back to tape, but I've never done that before, and don't even know if the smart podium can connect to the digital camera for projection from digital tape.

I've decided to throw my trust and hope into my trusty, rusty G4, and as usual hope for the best.

In Webb auditorium, it was a simple set-up. Testing the projection confirmed for me my decision to not use any Film Look filters. The auditorium projection looked even more like celluloid film than on my computer monitor screen. I was thrilled with the visual look, and the clear resolution, even when projected 15 feet wide.

Sound is, as I feared, somewhat of a problem. Some of it is just too loud and some of it is just too soft. Also, where did all the bass come from? The bottom line seems to be that the auditorium sound system is far superior to the speakers and headphones I was editing with. The audio is troublesome in parts but overall not a serious problem. However, film festival submission will need to be perfect, and so audio is a grave concern for the festivals. More on this in the conclusions section.

Set-up in the lab went fine and my display looks good. Got home in the evening, spent two hours editing the trailer, set it up to render, and WENT TO BED. It felt good.

Friday 5/21/04

Thesis show and public presentation of "Lorem Ipsum."

Lorem Ipsum: Summary Conclusions

This section of the report is a set of evaluative essays that discuss my conclusions related to several aspects of the “Lorem Ipsum” digital storytelling project. It is divided into two sections: Concept and Post-production.

“Concept” deals with observations and conclusions related to the storytelling methods, new application of computer graphics techniques, and other artistic concerns.

Essay 1: Theoretical Basis of Technique

Essay 2: Theoretical Basis of Narrative

“Post-production” covers editing and effects concerns specific to the technology I’ve chosen for this project.

Essay 1: Film Look vs. Video Look

Essay 2: Audio Quality

Summary Conclusions: CONCEPT

Theoretical Basis of Technique

There's no doubt in my mind that some of the most beautiful visual artifacts of our culture are intended to sell beer.

I am unwavering in my conviction that, whatever museums look like in 200 years, they will contain television commercials. I also am persuaded that they will contain music videos, movie trailers, Web sites, video games, and other commercial graphic design in which time or interactivity is a primary element of design.

Time and interactivity are the key distinguishing factors of all of the computer graphics design education I have received. In terms of image creation and manipulation, and other elements of visual control of a picture plane, the older and somewhat more established field of graphic design can do everything that a computer graphics artist can do. Except for one thing: a traditional graphic designer's work does not change over time, nor in response to user input.

I've heard some graphic designers claim that they are, in fact, able to incorporate elements of time and interactivity into their printed work. Their arguments offer graphic design projects such as books (the page in front of the user changes as the pages are turned), fold out brochures, and the ancient craft of origami.

I concede these types of projects contain the seeds of interactivity and change-over-time, notably because much of the results of computer graphics "interactivity" result in analogous changing of Web "pages" in the same way as printed texts flip by, or the "unfolding" of brochure-like displays by clicking the "start" button on the opening screen of a Flash animation.

I don't wish to concede more than this simple nod to the fact that a graphic designer can design a mobile that spins and shifts in a breeze. The tools at the disposal of a computer graphics designer, and the technological nature of the computer graphics designer's primary medium of display (a lighted computer-controlled screen as opposed to paper) offer a level of fine control to the elements of time and interactivity that, when broken from the analogies and metaphors of traditional graphic design, go far beyond anything that can be accomplished on a printed page.

This is the most theoretically and practically important distinction of computer graphics design. In my opinion the most exciting advances in the field, those that can be called "ground-breaking" or, dare we pronounce it, "revolutionary," are those that make new use of these elements of time and interactivity.

On a personal note related to this thesis project, I have concentrated on time at the exclusion of interactivity. My primary interest is in designed and displayed images that change over time, presented to a user who watches rather than interacts. The tools I've chosen allow me the freedom to determine the rate and nature of the changes. This is because of my interest in storytelling, which by nature is antagonistic to interactivity in ways that I am not interested in overcoming at this time.

The main problem with telling a story interactively is the loss of linearity. Robyn Miller, co-creator of the "interactive stories" *Myst* and *Riven*, eventually left the company he founded because he felt that stories have their best power when told linearly. Thousands of years of human social development of storytelling forms have resulted in the storyteller maintaining control of the pacing and manner in which story information unfolds to an audience.

I find Miller's reservations about interactivity's disruption of storytelling linearity, and his arguments about why most stories cannot be told effectively with a high degree of audience interaction, mostly persuasive. Because I've decided to structure my project around narrative with fairly strong emotional content, I've decided to focus on designing for tight, linear control of the passage of time, and leave interactivity out of the equation for now.

Despite any (often valid) critique leveled at many beer commercials (or car commercials, or Britney Spears videos, or in-flight on-screen presentations of how to inflate and don a floatation device) for common subject matter, banal market appeal, or dubious cultural value, there is no doubt that these computer graphics creations can be deeply aesthetic and often stirringly emotional visual feats.

The most basic form of computer graphics that change over time is digital video. This involves the computerized recording and display of shot video: pointing a lens-based visual recording device at something that is moving, to record the imagery for later playback.

Exertion of control begins when, in the editing process, the timeline of visual changes is manipulated by an editor. Motion can be slowed down, or sped up. Other moving imagery can be intercut within the recorded video. The designed images look one way, change in some way, and finally end as something different from what began. We call this beginning-middle-end progression a chronology, which is the foundation of plot, which is the basis for all stories told. "Something was this way, and then something happened, and then something was like this."

Historically, before images themselves could change over time, it was up to the storyteller to encourage the changes to take place in the imaginations of the audience.

Either a succession of changing images were described in words to be conjured in the imagination of a reader (we call this process "writing," and it is an art alive and well today), or a succession of images were created which depicted static conditions along the narrative's development, and the audience was encouraged to imagine for themselves that one image changes into the other. Hieroglyphic accounts, the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, and comic strips are examples of this.

When the created imagery itself could change without the negotiated imagination of the audience, it was natural to call them "move-ies," a reference to the most striking form of their change: elements within the picture plane could move.

If digital video is a basic form of computer graphics time-based design, a step up from that in terms of image control would be computer generated animation of some kind (and there are very many kinds).

Most animation is predicated not upon the recording of moving objects that already exist (such as Britney Spears's crooning profile) but in creating all of the visuals wholesale — recorded images of things that don't exist (Mickey Mouse, Buzz Lightyear, and Jar-jar Binks come readily to mind).

The storytelling application of computer graphics has developed from these two time-based image-making pursuits: photographic recording of changing reality, and the generation of other changing elements with no physical existence in reality (video and animation). Nowadays, a combination of the two is where some of the most interesting work is being done, and this is the basis for my own thesis project.

As I've said, TV commercials and music videos got there first. Or rather I should say the technology and techniques of video and animation have developed side by side between the movie industry and the advertising industry, but their applications have been different.

In the kind of storytelling produced by Hollywood, there is a limited type of information needed to deliver a narrative. It involves the depiction of actors and locations in which stage theater was the first, and remains a dominant, informing analogy. The audience doesn't need any information aside from the sights and sounds of the characters' lives, except in the very beginning and very end, when the convention has been to inform the audience of the names of the production crew and cast.

Even in an animated film, the type of visual information presented takes its cues from the stage: a "literal" world is established for the animated characters. It may be fantastic, it may be invented, but it is a place, and it is consistently a place that's meant to be understood literally.

Not so in the advertising industry. Television commercials rely less on the metaphors of stage theater and accept a strong influence from print advertising. In print advertising, the world established by the images is much less literal and more abstract, with different types of information communicated.

Let's take for example a common magazine ad construction of the 1950s or 1960s, say for a household cleaning product. Photographic recording of real actors is central to many of these ads. The glowing face of a housewife smiles out of the printed page, this is a photographic representation of a point in a narrative ("I've just finished cleaning my floors and oh how they shine!") presented in much the same way as a housewife in a Hollywood film may be presented. We are meant to understand that this portion of the ad's story may be comprehended literally -- in the story told by the ad, there is a person, in a place, doing something.

But there is something added to the print ad that we don't see in Hollywood films: a different type of information. In the print ad, we may actually see the words this woman is speaking, or thinking, printed in the negative space of the photo, somewhere between the top of her head and the edge of the picture plane.

"I've just finished cleaning my floors and oh how they shine!" appears in a recognizable typeface above her head, and now the audience (magazine readers) must make a break from the Hollywood paradigm and move into an increasingly abstracted way of understanding what they are looking at.

What is presented is not meant to be understood literally. We don't look at this ad and understand it as the story of a woman who has giant floating words appearing in the air of her kitchen. The woman and the letters do not occupy the same place, though we see them together, and the entire process becomes a means of receiving information that surrounds a story and supports a story but is not the story itself.

Other information, both visual and textual, may also appear in this ad. Perhaps a bar graph chart is nestled in the out of focus section below the kitchen counter comparing the cleaning power of competing brands. Again, this is not understood literally, the viewer does not think that the woman in this kitchen has a literal bar graph in her kitchen. This additional image occupies a different conceptual space that combines with the other information to support the central floor-cleaning narrative.

Maybe there is another photograph, scaled down and inset in the corner of the page, of the woman demonstrating how her floor is mopped. A literal understanding of the total image would lead a viewer to conclude that this kitchen contains multiple copies of the woman at various sizes. But we aren't confused by what would be a weird scene if taken literally. We have learned to receive this kind of multi-layering of information abstractly, in a way that

assists our understanding of the presented narrative, rather than confusing it. And as a result, lots of household cleaner is sold.

Digital video and animation in the service of the marketplace has continued this tradition of delivering multiple types of information in layered and varied presentation styles. As the technology has developed to allow an ever wider range of image and time control, the results have been, as I stated in my opening paragraph, aesthetically stunning and conceptually fascinating.

In the stories told by commercial narratives coming from the advertising industry, computer graphics techniques resembling “graphic design on acid” are a common integrated element. Only a minority of the best television commercial achievements rely on literal places and spaces. They are highly conceptualized and abstracted presentations of information that retain their ability to present emotionally strong and visually stunning pieces of (I’ll say it) art.

Just because the stories told in most TV commercials are of little interest to me personally (I don’t really believe the world needs another SUV, and so I’m not that interested in telling a 30-second story meant to convince a million people otherwise), this does not mean I am not excited and invigorated to explore the computer graphics techniques and technologies that make this kind of storytelling possible.

A central question of my training and education has addressed the emotional power and narrative potential of computer graphics design. Can these computer graphics techniques, the storytelling power of creating non-literal imagery of real and invented visuals, can this be put to the service of something other than the market? Can a person use the full range of computer graphics conventions and techniques to tell a different kind of story, i.e. to make a movie?

These techniques and conventions have shown up from time to time in the Hollywood style conventional narrative film. But most often when this does happen, they are small inserted moments, usually for comedic affect.

For example, in Woody Allen’s movie *Annie Hall*, the characters in one scene speak together about love, while suddenly large “thought bubbles” appear above their heads filled with text that betrays their thoughts (to the audience, not to each other) in some clever and ironic way. This lasts only a few moments, and comes across as a self-referential post-modern gag rather than a serious visual device meant to support the overall narrative. Other films break from the literal conventions in brief moments as well, but this is almost always in the separate realm of an opening credits sequence, or a very limited “funny moment” elsewhere in the story.

The task I set for myself was to record on digital video a traditional Hollywood style movie, a narrative with a plot, developed characters, carefully written script, etc, but then to add to the final image-making a set of computer graphics conventions that were not meant to be understood as a literal part of the filmed world. Instead this additional imagery is meant to be supplemental, or in some cases even central, parts of the storytelling presentation. Can I make a movie the way people make TV commercials?

I found very quickly in my storyboarding, discussions with creative friends, and preliminary graphics tests, that it was easy to be funny using these techniques. Video of a person yelling “holy mackerel!” doesn’t seem particularly funny. But place a speech balloon above him containing a large fish beneath a glowing halo when he says it, it becomes conceptual slapstick.

I think I could have made a comedy with a lot less conceptual and artistic work. Transforming the filmed world of my actors into a kind of pseudo-cartoon wouldn’t have

required the many hours running ideas by people and brainstorming for just the right way to depict a graphic impression of more serious emotions or relationships.

But I decided to pursue more serious subject matter in order to push my theories to a more challenging level. The stuff they do to sell beer on TV can get a laugh. Can it help bring a lump to the throat as well?

Summary Conclusions: CONCEPT

Theoretical Basis of Narrative

Throughout the construction of this ambitious project, family and friends and people I encountered in my research usually got around to posing the same question: “What is your story about?”

I worked hard at trying to come up with some kind of summary statement answering this question. I also struggled with it during a couple of class presentations reporting on my project’s process to my department of fellow MFA candidates.

When I think about “the story” of *Lorem Ipsum*, I think about it in terms of plot, character, philosophical themes, and technical concept. It’s been hard to separate these when trying to summarize the point. Yet I should, after all this time, money, anxiety, and elbow grease, have a point — and be able to state somewhat articulately what it is!

For the presentation of my public thesis defense, I came up with the following few sentences:

This is the story about a day in the life of a man named Garrison who is working on a personal project that is at first a mystery. He’s trying to record in words and pictures, by carrying around with him a tape recorder and digital camera, his entire life. We eventually find out that he has a terminal illness, and that he wants to leave a complete record of himself behind.

This is revealed by using text to explore the ways language and images express reality. What people say, and what they are thinking and feeling, takes physical form in the world around them in a way that the audience can see and read.

I’m mostly satisfied with this as a beginning point to summarize the ideas and philosophical questions of the story. I have developed the project the way that I have because of some very strong personal connections, notably a certain interest in the metaphysical questions surrounding mortality and my own experience of facing the prospect of death.

Having always been a creative person, I’ve worked as an artist and designer for many years. I enjoy visiting museums, going to movies and plays, reading novels, and collaborating with people on creative projects.

After being diagnosed with a serious chronic illness in the relatively recent past, I became focused on creative endeavors more earnestly, and at times even obsessively.

I threw myself into many creative pursuits, including painting, sculpture, writing, digital art and photography, cartooning, and computer design. I spent a lot of money on a trip to Italy to see the great art masterpieces of the Renaissance. I redoubled my efforts and went deep into debt to get to graduate school, and once there worked extremely hard at my assignments, learning as much as I could.

I try to be as reflexive and intentional in my life as possible, and so I began to examine the drive I felt to, quite frankly, make stuff. An artistic temperament didn’t seem to explain why facing my mortality would so dramatically increase my creative output.

On examining the kind of things I was creating, they all seemed to fall into the categories of words or pictures (or a combination). This probably has something to do with where my personality and skills lie. If I were disposed toward ceramics, I would probably be throwing a lot of pots and mugs.

I began to read a lot about ideas of mortality and the afterlife. I have been a fairly religious person throughout my life, but one may be surprised to find how little most religions have to

say about the specifics of the afterlife, even though there are plenty of elements of my own religion Christianity that offer some comforting generalities.

It's not rocket science to conclude that my new obsession with writing words and making pictures is an attempt to minimize the empty spot that will exist in the world if I happen to die.

This realization left two impressions on me.

First, I was amazed that this is not an uncommon response. Whether it's a child, or a "good work," or a magnum opus, nearly all people desire to "leave something behind." I wonder what it is about human beings that makes us strive for this as a way of extending our lives, particularly in light of my other impression...

I was struck, even as I rushed to complete more creative projects, at how futile the effort seemed.

I'm also a moderately relational person, and so I have a pretty clear idea that no matter what a person can make to leave behind in the world after he or she moves on to whatever comes next, it doesn't really add up to the rich fullness of a human life and personality. Yet we keep trying. How come?

The story I wanted to tell in my thesis project is about a person caught in this dilemma. I've tried to construct the whole narrative around an obsessive drive to fix a person's life in words and pictures, and the seeming inability for such an effort to make up for the loss that will inevitably come when the person is gone.

Perhaps due to a lack of narrative subtlety on my part, the protagonist (named Garrison) of my story is a man kind of like me (same age, marital status, similar creative vocation) with a terminal illness. The story then unfolds in a swirl of words and pictures.

The methods and conventions I use to tell the story are tightly enmeshed with the technical concept of using computer graphics to create non-literal ways of communicating narrative information.

In the library, a world of words, animated text flies around the bodies of peripheral characters in surprising textural displays. When the central characters visit a local artist to deliver images of Garrison so that the artist can sculpt another image of Garrison, and Garrison can have his image recorded photographically during this visit, the picture plane of the movie repeatedly breaks, comes apart and reassembles, splits and rejoins, shifts in a constant image-making series of flashes, freeze frames, and photographic sounds.

Through the application of motion graphics and animation effects, the audience is constantly confronted with Garrison's attempt to codify his experiences as collections of images and words. The audience watches these images and words reach for closure, break down, establish themselves again, break down again, hammering home the question of whether a person can really accomplish what Garrison is attempting.

Animated text begins to take shape and give visual form to the thoughts and feelings of the characters. This is the central problem of Garrison's project. Although words and pictures seem to capture much of what defines a person, the audience is constantly reminded that there is an inner life to all of the characters that can't be captured. The totality of who they are can be experienced only through relationships with them, relationships that are inevitably severed by death.

Relationships are an important recurring theme throughout the story. I'm trying to suggest that relationships are how you come to know a person. Relationships are the mechanism by

which we can eventually gain access to a person's inner life. Pictures and words describe the outer life. This is reinforced by the labeling that Garrison does of his relationships: brother, cousin, librarian, etc. Yet these single words and the constantly freezing frames of pictures are inadequate to describe the totality of how Garrison relates to them, some of which remains an undisclosed mystery.

The sound of a camera shutter opening and closing becomes a constant presence through the story, encouraging questions every time it intrudes on the lives of the characters: "Is this what they are? A collection of images and words? Or are they something more?"

This question is answered in many ways at many times, but Garrison's friends and wife seem to have a handle on the sad but more realistic truth: this creative project is not going to compensate us for your loss when you are gone.

But still...

Garrison asks near the end of the story, "Isn't it better than nothing?" The audience should be left with a sense of ambivalence at the conclusion of the story. True, Garrison was more than a collection of words and pictures, and the project was a failure at making him immortal. Yet his project seems to have had something of a redeeming effect on the void he left behind him.

Because of the project, his marginally estranged brother reconnected with him, and remained connected to his life as a presence for his daughter. Plus his daughter, though robbed of a relationship with him, continues to return to the words and pictures he makes. So is it a complete failure? Ultimately I don't expect the story to offer a definitive answer.

The meta-narratives of the story can be followed and chased around corners all day long. Friends who have watched the entire movie have responded in many diverse ways, making connections and noticing things I wasn't sure anyone would catch, and even drawing clear connections I didn't even intend but am struck by.

One friend found it very amusing that the character portrayed by myself in the story, the "glib sculptor," perfectly mirrors my own state of mind and being at the time of the filming and editing of my thesis. He is sleep deprived and exhausted, baffled by the story taking shape around him, wondering what it all means, and in need of money!

This is the thread of meta-narrative that I end up indulging when I think about the finished movie. Because at the completion of my thesis project, what have I done? I've driven myself to the creation of a complicated project of words and pictures in the hope of somehow distilling in permanent form what it is about me and my ideas and philosophies that mean the most to me.

Do I hope it lasts after I die? Do I hope it fills some of the blank spaces left after I'm gone? Is it even capable of such a thing?

Summary Conclusions: POST-PRODUCTION

Film Look vs. Video Look

It's clear that footage shot and projected via celluloid film looks very different from film shot and projected via video (digital or analog).

It's a common phenomenon for a person to recognize the difference, to be able to identify whether footage was shot on film or on video immediately, yet be unable to precisely describe what the exact visual differences between the two media are.

Additionally, conventional wisdom holds that film (celluloid) is more "aesthetic," it appears more pleasing to the eye and is generally more beautiful to look at, whereas video has a utilitarian or shallow look that is unsuited for the kind of immersion and suspension of disbelief necessary for an audience to become "lost" in the story told in a movie.

I'm not ready to offer a definitive argument as to why, but I am — for the most part — inclined to agree with the conventional wisdom on these points, with some reservations.

This is not to say that I embrace these conclusions whole-heartedly and without controversy. There's a whiff of snobbery or elitism among many of the die-hard film- only proponents, who sometimes go so far (film maker Steven Spielberg and critic Roger Ebert among them) as to say that the so-called "digital video revolution" will never go anywhere because it is an aesthetically inferior movie-making technology.

It's true that video does have its own "look," or an aesthetic objectively its own, and I believe that any aesthetic, pleasing or otherwise, probably has a use in the creation of some mood or feeling, and so I feel the storytelling possibilities of this should always be left open and explored.

Yet I can't deny that, when viewed side by side, footage shot and presented on film has a quality that I can't really find any word for other than "legitimacy," whereas video footage looks kind of "fake" and not serious.

This is a common reaction of people, and the reasons for it are hotly debated. One bulletin board conversation I followed at one time on the popular digital video Web sit 2- pop.com ran for over a year and was still going strong when I finally needed to take a break (due primarily to mental exhaustion) from reading the hundreds of very thoughtful and argumentative posts.

The arguments about why most people find the aesthetic of video to be distracting and displeasing and film to be acceptable and preferred when watching a movie fall roughly into two camps: what I call the psychological conditioning view and the inherent technical.

The psychological conditioning view asserts that the reason most people prefer to watch movies shot on film is because that's what they are used to. This view holds that people are trained from childhood to expect a certain kind of weight and meaning to be found in imagery bearing the qualities of a film look, because that is simply the traditional look of what is seen in the theater, whereas the video look is what people are conditioned to expect from more plebeian experiences of moving imagery, such as home videos and television sit-coms.

This argument is demonstrated to have some merit, as evidenced by the small changes that are observed in the overall principle of "film = good, video = bad."

As more and more people experience more and more digital video imagery put to more and more "serious" narrative uses (thanks in large part to the budget-conscious independent film movements of the late 1980s and 1990s) there seems to be wider acceptance overall (on an

aesthetic level) of the particular visual qualities of video (with some adjustments of the look in the direction of celluloid film).

This is by no means a widespread sea change in the movie-watching public's willingness to accept video on equal aesthetic terms to film, but there does seem to be a noticeable shift in that direction.

The other argument, the "inherent technical" argument, asserts that there is simply something inherently more well suited to human narrative perception in the technical qualities of film, as opposed to the technical qualities of video. This view holds that the human eye and mind are simply "wired" to accept a level of artistic immersion inherent in film technology, and the mind resists narrative immersion in the technical qualities of video.

The main tenets of this argument rely on the principles of abstraction, and claim that the presentation of film is characterized by a greater level of visual abstraction than the more realistically representational presentation of video. People respond to abstract images on a more intuitive and deeply buried psychological level, and therefore film, which will always possess these subtly more abstract visual traits, will always draw a more positive response from viewers.

Personally, I have thus far concluded that there are merits to each argument. For now, I am mostly interested in identifying the particular visual qualities of film that seem to make it more acceptable to an audience for movie storytelling, and trying to find ways to inject some of those qualities into video footage.

A technical breakdown of film look vs. video look covers many subtle and technical differences. I've read some very long lists describing what it is that makes the two appear so different. But the main differences seem to rest in a few key technical areas.

Grain — celluloid film, even the most clearly recorded and precisely defined, possesses what is called "grain" in every frame. This is an extremely subtle, all but imperceptible uniform veneer of texture that results in a slight blurring together of form and line in celluloid film.

Film grain is an inevitable result of the manufacture of celluloid and the projection of light through a moving physical strip of it. This blurring together of line and form is partly responsible for the abstraction referred to by those making the "inherent technical" arguments about why most people prefer to watch stories on film.

Frame rate — It's widely understood that film is captured by cameras and projected by projectors at a rate of 24 frames per second. This is fast enough to take advantage of the quality of human perception known as "the persistence of vision," in which the visual stimulation of the human retina remains for a fraction of a second after what is being looked at disappears.

The smoothness of the transition from one frame of film to another happens so quickly that we are unable to perceive the change, and so we perceive continuous motion.

There's some evidence to suggest that 24 frames per second are not quite enough to completely fool the retina for most people. Though it varies in degree from person to person, even at 24 frames per second there seems to be the smallest, nearly subconscious perception of a flicker of blankness between each frame of film. This absence of image while one frame of film disappears and the next frame is coming into view is so brief that it is not even consciously perceived let alone distracting. Nevertheless, this "flicker effect" is not present in video, which is recorded and

presented at the equivalent of 30 frames per second, a frame rate seemingly too fast for even the fastest of retinas to apprehend.

Interlacing — Film imagery and video imagery differ fundamentally in how each is presented to a viewer, and this may account for one of the largest differences between the way each is perceived.

As a strip of celluloid film passes behind the lens of a projector, what is thrown on the screen is an alternating projection of image and darkness, controlled by a very rapidly flashing strobe light synchronized to the speed the celluloid strip passing in front of the light bulb. An image is flashed on the screen for 1 of a second, the light goes out for the briefest of instants, and by the time the light comes on again the next image has moved into frame for its 1/24 of a second lifespan.

Most video is presented not by strobing discreet images on screen (presenting a complete new image to the eye 24 times every second) but by interlacing individual frames of footage together simultaneously. For example, on a television screen, each frame of imagery is divided into horizontal lines, and each frame is refreshed to the screen twice for every frame. First the even numbers of lines are refreshed, and then the odd numbers of lines are refreshed.

The result is a complete absence of the “blank” areas between individual frames of celluloid film. This method of refreshing frames seems to work with persistence of vision in a way that completely eliminates the flickering and blurring of imagery of film. Video therefore appears crisp and clear, with bright contrasts and very distinct edges to forms. In fact, video seems to more closely mimic the quality of imagery we see around us in “real life.”

Other “imperfections” — Celluloid film recording and projection possess other qualities not present in video imagery, and these are again a result of the technology used.

Film gate movement and stutter (imperceptible but cumulatively significant back and forth movement of the celluloid on its track in both the camera and the projector) are characteristic of the look of film. The projector’s flashing strobe light, the way colors are affected by passing light through celluloid, all of these technical differences seem to add up to produce a significantly different “look and feel” between film and video.

Most significant overall in demonstrating the difference between film and video aesthetics seem to be frame rate and interlacing/dc-interlacing differences between the two media. The end result is that, for whatever reason, audiences find video distracting when sitting down to watch a narrative story, and video imagery seems to be more pleasing and readily accepted than the more visual qualities of film that it takes on.

This is especially important when presenting video footage on video-specific screens, such as a television. This is because other video presentation screens, such as computer monitors, refresh their screens progressively (one pixel at a time, in linear order) rather than in interlaced scan lines. While this does not precisely match film’s strobing full-screen update of entire frames at once, it more closely approximates film projection than the every-other-line interlacing of a TV screen.

This is why progressive video shown on a computer screen appears more “film-like” than video imagery displayed on a TV. A common shock for digital movie-makers is to spend months editing video footage on a computer monitor, only to be shocked and appalled at the

extreme “video look” of the footage when the movie is transferred to DVD and displayed on a TV.

Digital technology offers many solutions to prevent this heartache and shock.

The goal of computer image-making technology is to offer increasingly fine degrees of image control. Is the image red but we want instead for the image to be blue? Computer code can be written that makes the pixels of the image bluer. Does video imagery lack film grain? Code can be written that allows for the addition of grain to the image. If film imagery changes 24 times per second, digital video frame rate can be reduced from 30 frames per second to any lower number desired.

In the editing software I used for my thesis project (Final Cut Pro 4), this control takes the form of third party filters which make the adjustments to video imagery necessary to make it look more like film.

The filter package I purchased and used, created and sold by an independent computer graphics programmer named Graeme Nattress, was very well reviewed and offered many levels of control for many types of film-like imagery.

There were filter presets that created the look of antique film stock, film shot in low light conditions, Technicolor film, film developed for warm or cool tones, and other permutations.

The essential adjustments to the image were made primarily in the areas of grain, frame rate, and dc-interlacing. Wanting my movie to look as much like film as possible, I spent a lot of time testing out presets and adjusting these filters to create the film look I desired.

In the end of my editing process, for the public presentation of the movie at the thesis show, I decided to scrap the film look filters altogether and leave the footage presented as progressive video.

The reason for this is because of the nature of the projection I used for the public presentation of the project.

The projection set-up I used was all computer-based. Rather than adding the final steps of preparing the film for DVD or dumping the completed movie back to digital tape, I decided to transport my computer to the presentation auditorium, and plug into the digital projector that was there.

This resulted in a digital projection of progressive video, which, though it had a higher frame rate than film, had a refresh style not that different from film’s full-frame-refresh. When I tested out the projection, it seemed that there was something in the digital projector itself that made the video footage seem even more like film footage, and so I decided to not use the film look filters at all.

I also made this decision because my film filter tests made the digitally projected video imagery look even worse.

Film look filters are written for video projection equipment, such as a TV. They are meant to prepare video footage to look more film-like on interlaced video devices.

Therefore when 30 frames per second video was changed to 24 frames per second and displayed on a progressively scanning computer monitor, it just ended up looking kind of jerky (a quality intensified by my hand-held, always-in-motion shooting style). Film grain, when added to a crisp computer monitor image, just made it look fuzzy.

Later tests in which I applied film look filters to my movie and then displayed it on a TV were beautifully successful. It seems that the interlaced fields of a TV screen blend together

and reduce much of the “jerkiness” of 24 frames per second, as well as even out the fuzzy effect of film grain, strobe flicker, etc. The end result is much more like a pleasingly aesthetic film image than when I attempted to show film-filtered footage on a progressively scanning computer device.

Any time I distribute the project for TV viewing, such as on DVD, I will use the version with film filters applied.

Summary Conclusions: POST-PRODUCTION

Audio Quality

Many movie-makers consider themselves visual artists, and therefore they don't like to admit that the primary carrier of emotion in narrative film is in the audio track.

Of course, the most effective means of generating feeling in an audience is a perfectly matched combination of image and sound. But the emotional content of an image can usually be improved by improving the audio. Bad or distracting audio can rarely be improved by making the picture better.

Good, clean audio is notoriously hard to get on small operations like the one I have embarked on. All advice I've read on shooting a video project on mini-DV, from Web discussion boards, to books published about the subject, to the user manuals of the software and cameras I'm using, to online tutorials, all sources stress over and over that the audio environment needs to be controlled as much as possible during the shoot.

Audio filters in editing software can clean up messy audio, dialogue can be dubbed in, foley sound effects can be added to cover up less than optimal results. But all of these patchwork fixes consume time and require finesse that few people can develop on the fly. A guerilla filmmaker's best bet is to get the audio right the first time.

I had a lot going for me in the audio department, which I hoped would set me up for good audio at the outset.

First of all, I had access to a Canon GL-2 camera, which I borrowed from the audio visual department of the local college in my town. This camera is the upgrade from the previous model, the GL-1. One of the nicest additions in the newer model is the addition of on-board XLR ports for external microphones. This freed the shoot from the constraints of using the built in condenser microphone.

The condenser mic on the GL-2 is a pretty good microphone for recording stationary audio such as the voice-overs for my project, but it has problems when it's the only mic used in full acted scenes on location. Mostly this is because it is omnidirectional and picks up every sound in the vicinity, including the whir of the zoom motor in the camera and the sound of the camera operator swallowing. The ability to plug a separate mic directly into the camera during shooting goes a long way toward controlling sound recording.

Additionally, I had a pretty great microphone, also borrowed from the college's AV department. It is a Sennheiser shotgun mic, unidirectional and suited for capturing dialogue in acted scenes. To make optimum use of the mic, I had a production assistant with me on location for most dialogue scenes, who most often operated the mic on the end of a boom, positioning it in the best position for vocal recording (over the head of the speaker aiming downward at his or her face).

In retrospect I may have been relying too much on the technology to help me capture the quality of sound I needed. In nearly every scene of dialogue there was something going on that messed with the sound. Air conditioning units, nearby street noise, echoey ceilings, rustling papers, chatty neighbors, airplane (or helicopter!) flybys, fans, humming office equipment, squeaky chairs, hollow floors — there seemed to always be something present to interfere with clean, clear dialogue recording.

In one respect, the on-the-fly, on-location nature of the project makes the ambient sounds of actual locations inevitable. This can enhance the "indy feel" of a video project like mine, and not all of the ambient location noise was a problem.

But in the end there was far too much of it. When my assistant wasn't available to hold a boom, we would improvise by setting up the mic in elaborately balanced arrangements if microphone stands, ropes, duct tape, or stacked chairs. Often a tug on the XLR cable between the mic and the camera would swing the mic out of position, aiming it at a humming heat vent rather than at the actors. It was during takes where I forgot to wear monitoring headphones that this seemed to happen most often.

For one scene I shot the dialogue with the shotgun mic mounted to the top of the camera, thinking that the unidirectional nature of the mic would not pick up camera noise if it was pointed away from the camera at the actors. In these situations the actors' voices were clear enough, but the camera noise remained a problem. Even though the mic did not pick up the vibrations of the camera sounds through the air, the camera would actually vibrate the microphone itself adding a substrate of whirrs, clicks, even the sound of the tape spindles turning.

More rare but no less ruinous were the occasional technical problems. On one very large important shoot, when I didn't have access to the GL-2 and had to use a borrowed GL-1 from a friend, I had connected the shotgun mic to the camera by using an external XLR adapter. Unfortunately the adapter was faulty, and an electrical short inside the mechanism destroyed most of the night's otherwise usable audio with screeches, snaps, cracks, and electric pops. For some reason, this was not detectable in the monitor headphones.

Finally, I made the mistake of editing the film with something less than the best possible sound system. I usually used a pair of \$20 Sony headphones — perfectly serviceable for listening to music on my iPod or online radio programs, but significantly more limited in range and quality than the sound system my final movie was presented through on the night of the thesis show.

Though I edited most of the movie together with reasonably even sound levels and adjustments, the high caliber sound system of the projection auditorium revealed all sorts of imperfections and problems that I previously hadn't even been aware of.

A huge surprise was the audio track's bass qualities. The lowest bass of my headphones were nowhere near the lowest bass of the microphone's capabilities, or of the auditorium speakers. There was an entire range of sound that existed in my movie that I was completely unaware of, because the speakers I edited with weren't up to the task of handling it.

This manifested itself mostly in sections where the audio bass overwhelmed higher frequencies, and this muddled some of the dialogue at times. It wasn't a disastrous problem, but on one of the audience response surveys someone had answered the question of what could have improved the movie with the hard truth: "a sound studio!"

Though I don't plan on changing the audio significantly for the purposes of this thesis project, aside from some adjustments to the bass in some scenes, the movie will be presented in the future when the sound will have to be much cleaner and clearer.

I'm thinking most notably of my plans to submit to film festivals, beginning with Sundance in the Fall. I expect I will need to buy a very expensive set of headphones and re-edit the sound throughout the entire project to bring it up to the capabilities of high end projection systems.

Appendix A

***Lorem Ipsum*: Viewer response surveys**

This section presents the findings from a brief survey administered to audience members immediately after viewing the entire *Lorem Ipsum* movie. The majority of the surveys were filled out by people who saw the film the night of the RIT CGD thesis show. Other surveys were filled out by smaller groups of people at other times.

The majority of the surveys were filled out in response to first time viewings. Four of the surveys were filled out by people who had seen parts of the film once before.

Total surveys: 50

“Lorem Ipsum”

Audience response card

(Percentage of respondents in parentheses)

Total surveys: 50

PLOT

(74) I had no problem clearly following the plot.

(26) I could understand most of what was happening, with a couple exceptions.

(0) I had no idea what was going on.

CHARACTERS

(76) I could tell who all the characters were, and how they related to each other.

(24) I could mostly tell who the characters were, with exceptions.

(0) I couldn't keep track of who was who.

THEMES

(88) I understood the main ideas and themes.

(10) I could follow the point of most ideas, but was lost a couple of times.

(2) I don't understand the point of this movie.

TECHNIQUE

(86) The text and animations added to my understanding and enjoyment of the story.

(14) The text was interesting and added something at times, but not always.

(0) The text and animations were distracting and unhelpful.

AESTHETICS

(98) The images and scenes were interesting and enjoyable to look at.

(2) It mostly looked good, but a few things were ugly.

(0) I didn't care for the visuals.

AUDIO

(94) The music and sound effects were enjoyable and supported the story.

(6) I thought the music and sound were good sometimes, bad at other times.

(0) I think the audio doesn't work and needs improvement.

Appendix B

***Lorem Ipsum*: Daily production log**

Saturday 2/7/04

8:00 a.m. — 2:00 p.m.

Shooting — WOODS INTRO sequence

7:00 p.m. — 1:00 a.m.

Log and capture, editing — WOODS INTRO

Sunday 2/8/04

8:00 a.m. — 2:00 p.m.

Shooting — CONTACTS scene and EMOTIONS sequence

7:00 p.m. — 2:00 a.m.

Log and capture — CONTACTS scene

Editing - WOODS INTRO, CONTACTS

Monday 2/9/04

8:00 a.m. — 11:00 a.m.

Shooting - WOODS INTRO pickups and details

9:00 p.m. — 1:00 a.m.

Log and capture — WOODS pickups

Editing - WOODS INTRO, CONTACTS

Saturday 2/14/04

2:00 p.m. — 3:00 p.m.

Rehearsal — NEWSPAPER scene

Thursday 2/20/04

6:30 p.m. — 7:30 p.m.

Prep — set up for NEWSPAPER shoot

7:30 p.m. — 10:00 p.m.

Shooting — NEWSPAPER scene

10:00 p.m. — 11:00 p.m.

Cleanup location

Sunday 2/22/04

12:30 p.m. — 2:00 p.m.

Prep — set up for library shoot

2:00 p.m. — 5:00 p.m.

Shooting — Library scene

9:00 p.m. — 10:30 p.m.

Editing — newspaper office scene

Monday 2/23/04

11:15 a.m.— 12:00p.m.

Shooting — pick-up shots: extras, details, newspaper scene

2:00 p.m. — 4:30 p.m.

Editing — newspaper office scene

Log and capture — newspaper scene pick-ups

9:00 p.m. — 10:00 p.m.

Editing — newspaper office scene

Prep — motion graphics tests

10:30 p.m. — 12:00 a.m.

Hardware upgrade — install new 30 GB scratch hard drive

Tuesday 2/24/04

12:00 a.m. — 1:00 a.m.

Log and capture — library scene

12:30 a.m. — 1:00 a.m.

Documentation —journal and shooting report

12:00 p.m. — 5:00 p.m.

Prep — blacking tapes

Editing — Library scene

Research — Online reading: 2-pop, Adobe Web site, LiveType Web site

Prep — Motion graphics tests

LiveType training (Ripple tutorial)

9:00 p.m. — 12:00 a.m.

Prep — Motion graphics tests

Soundtrack experiments

Editing — Woods scene

Effects — Woods scene (motion graphics)

Wednesday 2/25/04

12:00 a.m. — 2:00 a.m.

Prep — paperwork and scheduling

Editing — Woods scene (motion graphics)

10:00 p.m. — 12:00 a.m.

Prep — LiveType training (Ripple tutorials)

Editing — Newspaper scene (motion graphics)

Thursday 2/26/04

12:00 a.m. — 2:30 a.m.

Prep — Sound filters training (online research and tutorials)

Editing — Newspaper scene (rough cut and sound filters)

9:00 a.m. — 10:00 a.m.

Prep — Sound filters training (online tutorial)

Editing — Newspaper scene (rough cut, motion graphics, sound filters)

Friday 2/27/04

5:00 p.m. — 12:00 a.m.

Editing — Newspaper scene (rough cut, motion graphics)

Saturday 2/28/04

9:00 a.m. — 5:00 p.m.

Editing — Newspaper scene (motion graphics)

Sunday 2/29/04

4:00 p.m. — 5:00 p.m.

Prep secure location (gallery), shoot scheduling (gallery)

8:00 p.m. - 12:00 a.m.

Log and capture — intro sort montage

Editing — intro sort montage

Monday 3/1/04

8:00 a.m. — 9:00 a.m.

Writing — rewrite restaurant scene (gallery)

9:00 a.m. — 11:00 a.m.

Prep — correspondence with cast/crew, shoot scheduling (gallery), casting 1:00p.m. — 3:00 p.m.

Troubleshooting — software, corrupt files

8:00 p.m. — 2:00 a.m.

Editing — intro woods sequence

Tuesday 3/2/04

9:00 p.m. — 12:00 a.m.

Log and capture — emotions scene

Overnight

Prep - download stock footage from Prelinger Archive

Wednesday 3/3/04

11:00 a.m. — 11:30 a.m.

Prep — scout location (gallery)

10:00 p.m. — 3:00 a.m.

Editing — emotions scene

3:00 a.m. — 3:30 a.m.

Documentation — journal

Thursday 3/4/04

9:00 a.m. — 11:30 a.m.

Editing — emotions scene

1:00p.m. — 3:00 p.m.

Prep — contacting actors, extras, babysitting (gallery scene)

Friday 3/5/04

11:00a.m. —3:30p.m.

Prep — shopping for props, supplies (gallery scene), procuring equipment 3:00 p.m. — 5:30 p.m.

Prep props (creating T-Shirts)

11:00 p.m. — 1:30 a.m.

Prep — storyboarding, preparing props and equipment (gallery)

Saturday 3/6/04

7:00 a.m. — 9.00 a.m.

Prep — setup location (gallery)

9.00 a.m. — 4:00 p.m.

Shooting — gallery scene, emotions scene

4:00 p.m. — 7:00 p.m.

Editing — review footage (gallery)

11:00 p.m. — 1:30 a.m.

Log and capture — gallery scene

Monday 3/7/04

9.00 a.m. — 5:00 p.m.

Log and capture — gallery scene

6:00 p.m. — 8:00 p.m.

Prep — plan shoots with actors, locations, props (gravestone) Writing — rewrite cemetery scene

8:00 p.m. — 3:00 a.m.

Editing — emotions scene, LiveType test renders

Tuesday 3/7/04

3:00 p.m. — 6:00 p.m.

Log and capture — gallery scene

Prep — prepare thesis progress report presentation

6:30 p.m. — 9:30 p.m.

Shooting — Gallery pickup (coatroom), Gravestone scene

11:00 p.m. — 2:30 a.m.

Editing — LiveType tests

Log and capture — gallery scene, gravestone scene

Wednesday 3/8/04

10:30 a.m. — 5:00 p.m.

Business — CGD thesis progress presentations all day

9:00 p.m. — 2:00 a.m.

Log and capture — gravestone, coatroom scenes

Thursday 3/9/04 and Saturday 3/13/04

I've neglected this journal and so don't have a blow-by-blow account of how I spent this time. My summary is: worked round the clock. Completed log and capture of all footage shot to date and edited significant portions of EMOTIONS scene, GALLERY scene, and some intro sequence.

Friday 3/12/04

6:30 p.m. — 8:30 p.m.

Shooting — Gallery reception pickups

Shooting — Gallery pickup (Sharon and Garrison)

10:00 p.m. — 2:30 a.m.

Log and capture — gallery pickups

Editing — gallery scene

Sunday 3/14/04

9:30 p.m. — 5:30 a.m.

Prep — discuss score with musician (Denise Huizenga)

Prep — rendered and uploaded rough edits to Denise

Editing — gallery scene, gravestone scene

Monday 3/15/04

10:30 a.m. — 12:00 p.m.

Editing — gravestone scene

9:00 — 11:30 p.m.

Editing — gravestone scene

Tuesday 3/16/04

[forgot to record my work today, and only 3 days later I've already forgotten what I did. Likely, it was long hours working on something difficult. Mostly it was editing of the library scene.]

Wednesday 3/17/04

8:00 a.m. — 12:00 p.m.

Editing — library scene, gravestone scene

9:30 p.m. — 4:30 a.m.

Editing — library scene motion graphics, emotions scene motion graphics

Thursday 3/18/04

9:00 a.m. — 10:00 a.m.

Editing — emotions scene

1:00p.m. — 5:00 p.m.

Prep — weekend shooting, critique

9:30 p.m. — 2:30 a.m.

Editing — emotions scene motion graphics

Friday 3/19/04

9:30 a.m. — 11:30 p.m.

Shooting — travel and shoot: speaker phone scene, Natalie montage 4:00 p.m. — 6:00 p.m.

Prep — designing emotions graphics, planning tomorrow's shoot 8:30 p.m. — 3:30 a.m.

Editing — emotions scene motion graphics

Saturday 3/20/04

8:00 a.m. — 6:00 p.m.

Shooting — Pam scene, Gallery pickups, Gallery Neil conversation, Final montage:

Neil at door, Neil sort, Birdfeeder, Pill Bottles, Shower

Sunday 3/21/04

2:00 p.m. — 3:30 p.m.

Logging— Pam scene

Prep — Media management

9:00 p.m. — 5:30 a.m.

Prep — planning conversation with Denise Huizenga re: musical score

Log and capture — Pam scene, Gallery pickups, Gallery Neil conversation, birdfeeder, Pill bottles, Shower

Documentation —journal and shooting report

Editing — Audio for Emotions scene

Monday 3/22/04

2:00 p.m. — 3:30 p.m.

Editing — Library scene motion graphics tests

9:00 p.m. — 1:30 a.m.

Editing - Library scene motion graphics

1:30 a.m. — 2:00 a.m.

Documentation — journal and shooting report

Tuesday 3/23/04

12:00 p.m. — 12:30 p.m.

Meeting — Thesis meeting with Jim VerHague to discuss defense, scope, changes from proposal, etc.

11:00 p.m. — 1:30 a.m.

Editing — Library scene motion graphics

Wednesday 3/24/04

9:00 p.m. — 1:30 a.m.

Training — Soundtrack experiments

Editing — Library scene motion graphics

Thursday 3/25/04

5:30 a.m. — 9:30 a.m.

Editing — INTRO sequence motion graphics (unwrapping)

12:00 p.m. — 1:30 p.m.

Editing — INTRO motion graphics

2:00 p.m. — 5:00 p.m.

Editing — INTRO sequence audio

Friday 3/26/04

8:30 a.m. — 10:00 a.m.

Editing — LIBRARY scene

9:00 p.m. — 12:00 a.m.

Editing - LIBRARY scene, GRAVESTONE scene

Saturday 3/27/04

9:00 a.m. — 11:00 a.m.

Media management

Sunday 3/28/04

8:30 a.m. — 10:15 a.m.

Travel to Honeoye Falls

10:15 a.m. — 1:15 p.m.

Shooting: Garrison and Sharon conversations: BED, BATHROOM, PREGNANCY

1:15 p.m. — 2:30 p.m.

Travel back to Houghton

10:30 p.m. — Log and Capture — BED conversation

Monday 3/29/04

7:30 a.m. — 10:00 a.m.

Log and Capture — BATHROOM, PREGNANCY conversation 2:00 p.m. — 4:00 p.m.

Editing — BED conversation

5:30 p.m. — 7:00 p.m.

Travel to Honeoye Falls

7:00 p.m. — 8:15 p.m.

Shooting — SHAVING scene, SPEAKERPHONE scene

8:15 p.m. — 9:45 p.m.

Travel back to Houghton

Tuesday 3/30/04

12:00 p.m. — 12:45 p.m.

Meeting — with Jim

9:00 p.m. — 12:00 p.m.

Editing — First 7 minutes of film

12:30 p.m. — 1:00 p.m.

Documentation — Journals

Thursday 4/8/04

6:30 p.m. — 8:00 p.m.

Travel to Honeoye Falls

8:00 — 9:30 p.m.

Shooting — Garrison voiceovers (audio only)

9:30— 11:00p.m.

Travel back to Houghton

11:00 p.m. — 1:00 a.m.

Log and capture — Garrison voiceovers

Sunday 4/11/04

11:30 a.m. — 1:00 p.m.

Travel to Honeoye Falls

1:00 p.m. — 6:00 p.m.

Shooting — in Honeoye falls, and East Rochester:

GARRISON APARTMENT PICKUPS

GARRISON and JASON in LIBRARY (montage)

JASON CATALOGING (montage)

GARRISON SHAVING HEAD (montage)

GARRISON SORTING in BATHROOM

GARRISON EATING CRACKERS (montage)

Monday 4/12/04

7:30 p.m. — 8:30 p.m.

Critique group

10:00 p.m. — 11:30p.m.

Editing — motion graphics for WOODS sequence

Tuesday 4/13/04

10:00 a.m. — 10:30 a.m.

Prep — meet with Jason Stryker re: Defense technical setup

12:00 p.m. — 12:30 p.m.

Meeting with Jim

Wednesday 4/14/04

6:00 a.m. — 7:30 a.m.

Travel — to RIT

7:30 a.m. — 8:00 a.m.

Prep — set up and test computer for defense

10:00 a.m. — 10:30 a.m.

THESIS DEFENSE presentation

Sunday 4/18/04

2:00 p.m. — 2:30 p.m.

Prep — set up for EPILOGUE library shoot

2:30 p.m. — 6:15 p.m.

Shooting — EPILOGUE in library

Thursday 4/22/04

1:00 a.m. — 5:30a.m.

Prep and management — NEWSPAPER, LIBRARY scenes

Editing, motion graphics — LIBRARY scene

Documentation — shooting reports, journals

Wednesday 4/28/04

9:00 p.m. — 3:00 a.m.

Editing — LIBRARY scene

Thursday 4/29/04

4:00 a.m. — 10:00 a.m.

Editing — LIBRARY scene (refinements and motion graphics)

Saturday 5/01/04

2:00 a.m. — 6:00 a.m.

Editing — PAM scene (from scratch)

Sunday 5/02/04

2:00 a.m. — 6:00 a.m.

Editing — PAM scene (refinements)

Monday 5/03/04

1:00 a.m. — 7:00 a.m.

Editing — NEWSPAPER scene (refinements)

Editing — PAM scene (refinements)

Tuesday 5/04/04

11:00 a.m. — 11:20 a.m.

Meeting — with Jim

4:30 p.m. — 6:00 p.m.

6:30 p.m. — 8:00 p.m.

8:45 p.m. — 4:00 a.m.

Editing — GALLERY sequence (including motion graphics)

4:00 a.m. — 5:30 a.m.

Documentation

Wednesday 5/05/04

2:00 p.m. — 4:00 p.m.

9:30 p.m. — 3:30 a.m.

Editing — tweaking GALLERY scenes, motion graphics

Prep — media management and backup

Documentation

[haven't recorded entries in this production journal recently because my schedule has fallen into a complicated and involved schedule that basically never stops. My general working method is to edit (various scenes) from between 7 and 9 p.m. until 5 or 6 a.m., sleep for 2 to 4 hours, get up and take care of non-thesis related school work and life errands, nap for 1 to 2 hours, and edit throughout the afternoon. After a break in the evening for a couple of hours to spend time with my wife and occasionally socialize with friends, I then return to the above editing cycle.]

Saturday 5/15/04

9:00 a.m. — 12:00 p.m.

Critique group meeting — feedback and discussion

9:00 p.m. — 5:00 am

Editing — tweaks to various scenes based on critique feedback

Sunday 5/16/04

Editing — final montage

Monday 5/17/04

Editing - EPILOGUE

Tuesday 5/18/04

Editing — End titles, opening titles

Wednesday 5/19/04

Final editing tweaks

Final renders and exports

Thursday 5/20/04

Thesis show set up and equipment check

Editing — trailer for thesis show

Friday 5/21/04

Thesis show and public presentation of “Lorem Ipsum”

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