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Synopsis

The sequence tries to show, in a unique way, the value of sanity. It is meant to be a teaser for a SCI-FI movie with philosophical substrates, thrilling moments and an overall claustrophobic feeling. In a world where machinery is all around us, sometimes even inside us and our way of living and existence is based on these machines, someone might lose their sanity. Starting with normal events, like reading a book, Bastila loses her grip on reality and her mind is forced into confrontations with imaginary machines. Her sanity hangs in balance and only her ability to feel can save her.

Treatment

The sequence is meant to be a teaser for a SCI-FI movie with philosophical substrates, thrilling moments and an overall claustrophobic feeling. Because of this, there are no dialogue lines. The plot mainly features one character, Bastila. Her story is that of a person living in a metropolis where everything is mechanized. She is lost in the current days where everyone is so busy doing different things (most of them involving machines) that she starts to ponder about the possibility of being a machine herself. Based on this belief, her mind is influenced into having imaginary moments when she interacts with different machines.

In the envisioned script all the environments where her sanity starts to slip and her mind imagines things, are indoors, like a bus, room, restaurant, subway, etc. In her visions there is always a robot in two phases. The first phase is an organic looking one, like water, mud, etc and a robotic phase where the robot's true face appears. A morphing phase exists transforming the robot from one phase to another. The encounter has an interrogative feeling, she and the robot marveling at the other existence. For the teaser depicted by the animatic the location is selected to be a bus and the catalyst for her imagination is the reading of a book.

The sequence features a normal pace in general, except of the robot encounter moments when the pace changes to a slower one.

The overall narrative of the sequence does not give away to many clues regarding what happens until the very end when it ends with a bang showing the morale of the sequence.

The lighting in all the scenes have a high contrast between lights and shadows, with no color blended zones. This is to signal the duality of the events happening in the bus environment, like the duality of her mind.

There are two distinctive color palettes. The reality color palette features an overall yellowish tint with the colors being highly desaturated, to signal the viewer, that Bastila is lost in her daily life, with no clear purpose of things. The imaginary color palette features an overall greenish tint, with much more saturated colors. This is to signal the viewer, that in the imaginary world, the robot world, everything makes sense and has a purpose. The environment also changes in the imaginary world, everything being perfect and grid-like like the grills in front of the bus windows, signaling the viewer that there is no escape, etc.

The overall art design is inspired by everyday life for the reality world, while for the imaginary world all the objects have perfect colors, details, and forms with a hyper-realistic look.

The sequence uses mostly medium shots, extreme close-ups and point of view shots. The real life shots are filmed in a "documentary" like manner, intentionally to show the difference between the real world, where everything is not perfect and the imaginary world where everything is perfect. In the imaginary world there is no camera shaking.

The composition and framing during the phase where the water tentacle appears and morphs to the robotic is done on purpose in such a way that Bastila is in the center of focus and not the entity. This is to emphasize Bastila's unawareness of what is happening around and to cast the water serpent in a layer of mystery. During the second phase of the encounter both characters are in focus. From the compositional point of view, Bastila, who is the good character, is in the left part of the frame while the robot, the antagonist, is on the right side of the frame.

The robot from the imaginary world should be created in CG, both the organic looking version and the robotic version. The morphing is also computer generated, and later added to the recorded footage during composing phase. The shots that require CG elements are the ones from the imaginary world where everything must be enhanced via CG and post process techniques to obtain the hyper-realistic look.

From sound design point of view, the sequence features normal un-modified sounds for the real world, to fully synthesized sounds in the imaginary world. There is no soundtrack in the sequence.

Reflective account

For the storyboard and animatic, due to the time constraints of 30 seconds, I have selected one sequence from a larger plot that I thought about. The resulting storyboard and animatic that I created is meant to be a demo that can be shown as a possible movie teaser/idea.

The script for the sequence depicted in the animatic and storyboard suffered a lot of iterations, but I didn't touch the main idea of the story.

For the main character, Bastila, I was inspired by "The Butterfly Effect" (2004) movie in which the protagonist could lock away in his memory different events from his life, only to use them later in order to change the future. I refined this idea for Bastila so she is able to imagine events that will have an impact upon her. Like the character from "The Butterfly Effect" (2004) movie, she doesn't know why this is happening to her and what the purpose of these events are. I've done this to cast the protagonist in a layer of mystery.

Another idea that I took it from the movie is the way the camera is handled into breaking the flow of action. In the animatic this can be seen when the robot is suddenly vanishing. I saved an example of such an effect and can be found on the DVD in "Reference" folder.

The idea of the subconscious affecting her judgment I did not inherit from any particular movie, but it is a biological known fact that an individual who is exposed to a traumatic event will be marked by it in the way he thinks and his subconscious works. (J.A. Bargh, E. Morsella, 2008)

For a lot of elements in the creating of the sequence I was inspired by "The Matrix" (1999) movie. During the initial research I watched the documentary related to how "The Matrix" (1999) was created ("The Matrix Revisited"(2001)) and I selected a lot of elements to be part of the plot:

- Man VS Machine, probably the biggest idea in the Matrix Trilogy. In the sequence I used this to depict the imagination moments when Bastila is face to face with the machines. As in "The Matrix" this could only make sense in a world where machines are highly used every day for every purpose and unwillingly enslaving us to them (by forgetting how is to do simple tasks without them).



The Matrix (1999)

- The difference between the real world and the machine world. In the real world everything is chaotic. In the machine world everything is perfect. In the storyboard and animatic I used this idea for the grid looking grills surrounding the bus' windows.
- The color palette. I slightly changed this from "The Matrix" movie, where the green tint is used for the matrix world and the blue tint for the real world to a green tint for the imaginary world and a yellow one for the real world.



Green tint

The Matrix (1999)

Blue tint

- The ability to morph from an organic form to the true form. Even if in “The Matrix” (1999) movie this is not done explicitly and in this order, I was inspired by this idea from here. I used the morphing state to show the duality of the machines: what they really are and what they strive to be: they are machines (the robot phase) and strive to be organic (the water serpent phase).

For the initial water serpent/tentacle look I used “The Abyss”(1989) movie as a source of inspiration. This idea works perfectly as a concept with the machine version of the robot:

- First an organic looking form, curious and interested in the surrounding and somehow camouflaged in the real world.
- Once it finds Bastila, the robot reveals his true nature and is curious to understand her.

Another element that inspired me for the face to face contact and the curiosity of both, the robot and Bastila are also present in “The Abyss”(1989). I saved the whole movie clip and can be found on the DVD in the “Reference” folder.



The Abyss (1989)

The “Requiem for a Dream” (2000) movie proved to be a big source for inspiration for me:

- The yellow color palette that I selected for the real world was inspired by the



Requiem for a Dream (2000).

- The somehow claustrophobic mood of the movie. This is reflected in the animatic by Bastila being alone in the bus and no one to witness what she is experiencing (except the person who is recording/viewing the scene).
- The lack of a soundtrack. In the animatic I didn't put a soundtrack on purpose, because I wanted it to reflect the un-altered crudeness of the reality, both real and imaginary. This also helped me a lot into adding an extra layer to the plot, the psychological one. This can be seen at the end of the animatic which ends with a “BANG” sound and shows the morale and somehow forcing the viewer to think about the conclusion.
- For the real world, I decided to take a documentary movie approach by using the camera shake technique. “The Blair Witch Project”(1999) movie was the one that inspired me and which produced a lot of controversy at the time of its launch exactly because it was this technique that confused the viewers into believing that the events from the movie actually happened. For the imagination world all the shot are done with a fix camera. I

wanted this difference in the way the shots are taken to explicitly show the difference between the real world (not perfect) and the imaginary one (perfect).



Camera shake as seen in The Blair Witch Project 1999

- I decided to make all the medium shots from the same perspective in order to accentuate the documentary look of the sequence where the cameraman shots from the same angle, like he is actually witnessing the events unfolding.

For the book cover art depicted in the storyboard I was inspired by the Mass Effect Ascension (2008) comic book cover which I like mainly because it provides a good mix between mystery and SCI-FI.

Overall, I believe and hope that I was successful in combining and integrating different elements from different movie styles which can work very good together and this is reflected in the animatic.

The only thing that I feel sorry about is the 30 seconds target for the storyboard and the animatic. I would have loved to make it longer and be able to show the complexity of the plot, that I thought about.

References:

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