Myles Johnson

After School Cartoons

ART 4160

Senior Thesis II

Myles Johnson

3D Character Animator + VFX Artist

Contact

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Education

Austin Peay State University

BACHELORS OF FINE ARTS IN ANIMATION + VFX

Dean's List every semester

Focus on 3D Character Animation and live-action Visual Effects

Accomplishments

National Siggraph Convention, Los Angeles
2019 Faculty Submitted Student Work

Best in Fest
2019 Jackson Alley Film Festival

Best Male Lead
2019 Jackson Alley Film Festival

International 24 Hours Animation Competition
2018 & 2019

Software

- **Maya**
- ToonBoom Harmony
- Adobe Suite
- Nuke

Skills

- **Acting**
- Voice Acting
- Voice Impressions
- Compositing
- Filming

Artist Statement

Entertainment has always been a passion of mine, making people laugh especially. Getting a reaction from the audience is a feeling like no other. While I could pursue another route, like acting, I constantly find myself being drawn to animation. It functions as the perfect outlet for my desire to entertain. Animating allows me to be an actor, director, writer, and editor all while breathing life into any static object. In most animation productions, the technical aspect of the animation matters above anything else.

The technical side of animation matters. Does a character's walk feel off? Do they need to hold a pose for just a few more beats or even frames? These questions and many more are asked on a repeating loop while animating, as to bring about the best outcome. I believe that the end product matters more than the technical. Does the animated short bring joy to the audience? Are the correct emotions evoked at the right story beats? Most artists would not consider laughter at their pieces as a good sign. If people laugh at my animated shorts, I did my job correctly and I entertained the crowd. Famous writer/director Quinten Tarantino once said, "…play the audience like an orchestra. When I want you to laugh, I'll make you laugh. When I want you to cry, I'll make you cry, then change right back to laughter in an instant."

Proposal

I am doing a different take on "Saturday Morning Cartoons" from my own nostalgic experience of watching after school cartoons. My show will capture a specific moment in time in my life, where there was no stress and plenty of animated shows to watch. This will be accomplished by animating a looping movie consisting of unique vignettes from original shows in various animation styles that will switch between themselves in a channel-surfing manner as if it were really on TV. The shows will have live-action commercials interrupting periodically, featuring myself, to make the audience feel as if they are watching "Live TV". This will also be an installation that transforms the space into a stereotypical living room to reinforce the idea of being brought back to simpler times of coming home from school and television.

After School Cartoons

Senior Thesis Proposal By Myles Johnson

Abstract

- I am doing a different take on "Saturday Morning Cartoons" with my own nostalgic experience of watching animated shows after school. This will be accomplished by animating a looping movie that consists of unique vignettes of original shows changing between each other in a channel-surfing manner. To reinforce the nostalgia feeling, I will be creating an environment that will be a stereotypical living room with the animation playing on the TV.

Methods

- Animate original shows in different styles
  - 3D Animation
  - 2D Animation
- Create original commercials with live-action footage
  - Motion graphics
  - Green Screen VFX
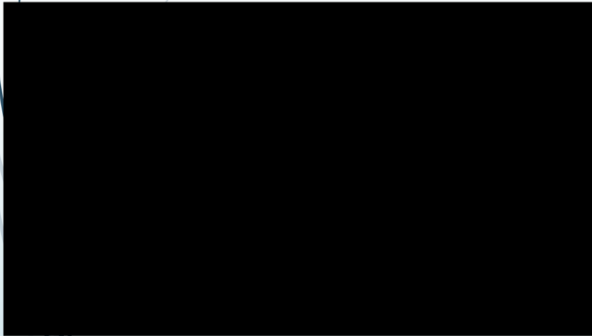
- Post-Production
  - Compositing
  - Editing

Research Shows

- Cartoons from 2005-2009
  - Butch Hartman
  - Steven Oedekerk
  - Danny Antonucci

Research Tropes

- A kid genius
- Hero/Alien character
- High-octane sport show
- Twins

Previous Works

- I made sure to add videos of my previous and current works so that the faculty could know exactly how I plan to animate this project. What good is a presentation about animation without something moving?
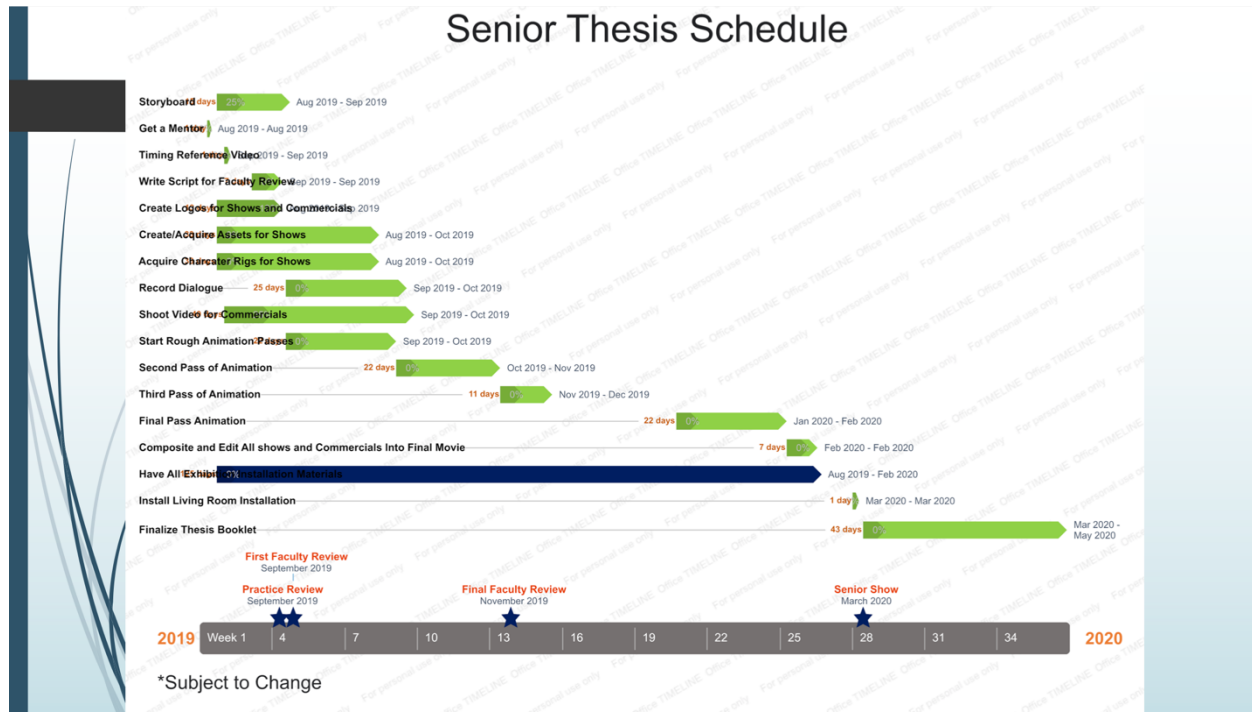
Exhibition Plan

- Turn the show space into a living room
  - Couch
  - Coffee table
  - Rug/Carpet
  - TV
  - TV stand
  - Lamp(s)
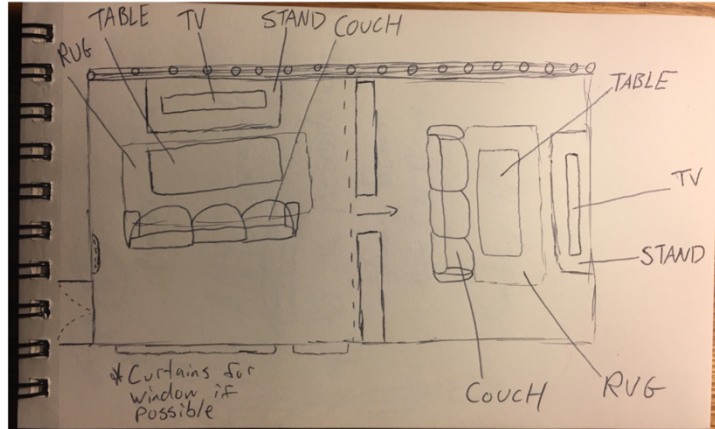
Goals

- My main goal with this show is to express the nostalgia I feel for the times when I would come home from school, forget about everything, and just enjoy my favorite cartoons. By expressing this nostalgia, the audience will be taken back to a specific point in time in my life, and hopefully be reminded of a time in their own.

- Another goal of mine is to show my appreciation for the shows that got me interested in the entertainment world and helped me figure out that I wanted to animate for a living.

Senior Thesis Schedule

Storyboard — 25 days — Aug 2019 - Sep 2019
Get a Mentor — Aug 2019 - Aug 2019
Timing Reference Video — 2019 - Sep 2019
Write Script for Faculty Review — Sep 2019 - Sep 2019
Create Logos for Shows and Commercials — 2019
Create/Acquire Assets for Shows — Aug 2019 - Oct 2019
Acquire Character Rigs for Shows — Aug 2019 - Oct 2019
Record Dialogue — 25 days — Sep 2019 - Oct 2019
Shoot Video for Commercials — Sep 2019 - Oct 2019
Start Rough Animation Passes — Sep 2019 - Oct 2019
Second Pass of Animation — 22 days — Oct 2019 - Nov 2019
Third Pass of Animation — 11 days — Nov 2019 - Dec 2019
Final Pass Animation — 22 days — Jan 2020 - Feb 2020
Composite and Edit All shows and Commercials Into Final Movie — 7 days — Feb 2020 - Feb 2020
Have All Exhibit Installation Materials — Aug 2019 - Feb 2020
Install Living Room Installation — 1 day — Mar 2020 - Mar 2020
Finalize Thesis Booklet — 43 days — Mar 2020 - May 2020

First Faculty Review
September 2019

Practice Review
September 2019

Final Faculty Review
November 2019

Senior Show
March 2020

2019 | Week 1 | 4 | 7 | 10 | 13 | 16 | 19 | 22 | 25 | 28 | 31 | 34 | 2020

*Subject to Change

- As soon as 4150 started, I was planning out the animated shows and actually started filming my live-action commercials. Within a few weeks, the commercials were done and edited and looking great. At the same time, I was sourcing all of my animating assets like rigs and environments. After getting the green light from the faculty to continue with this project, I started animating right away. My show date is April 27th, so I have more time than I originally planned for. By Winter Break, I had my commercials all done, edited, and ready to go. I also had all of my Maya scenes ready to go with every rig and environment set up ready to start animating. As soon as the Spring semester started, I spent hours upon hours in AD 206 (My home away from home). Luckily, I got almost all of the shots in my project into CBB (Could Be Better) stage before spring break, and also before the pandemic swept through the states and closed everything down.

Progress Images:
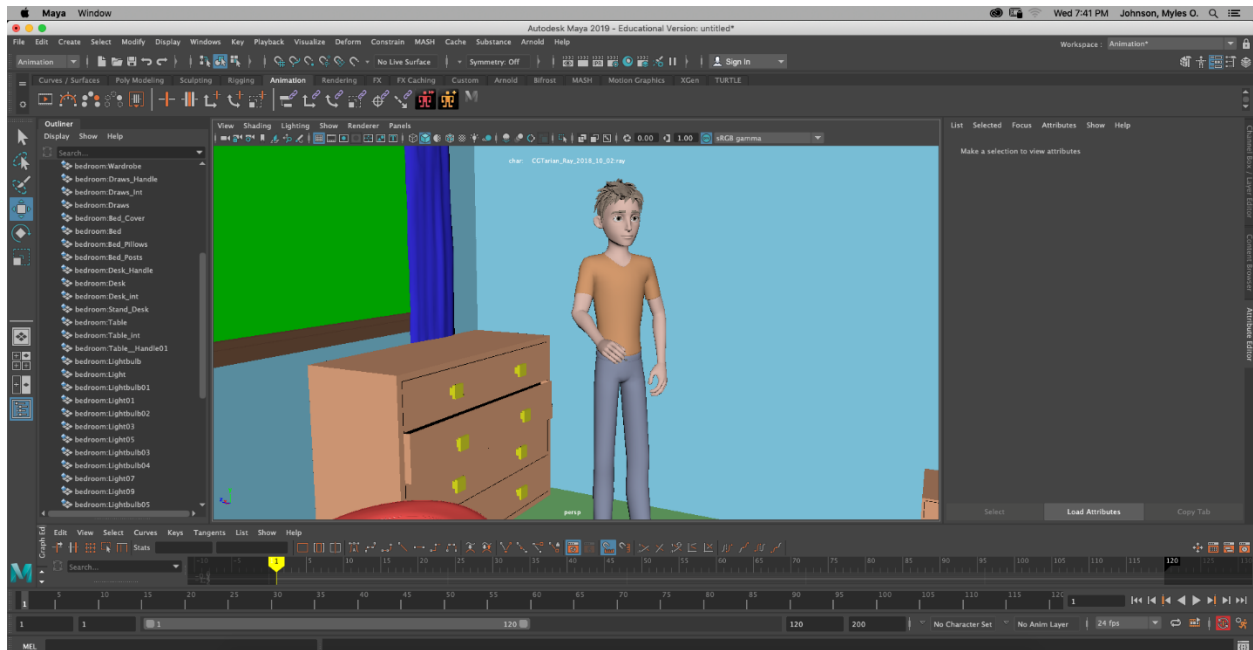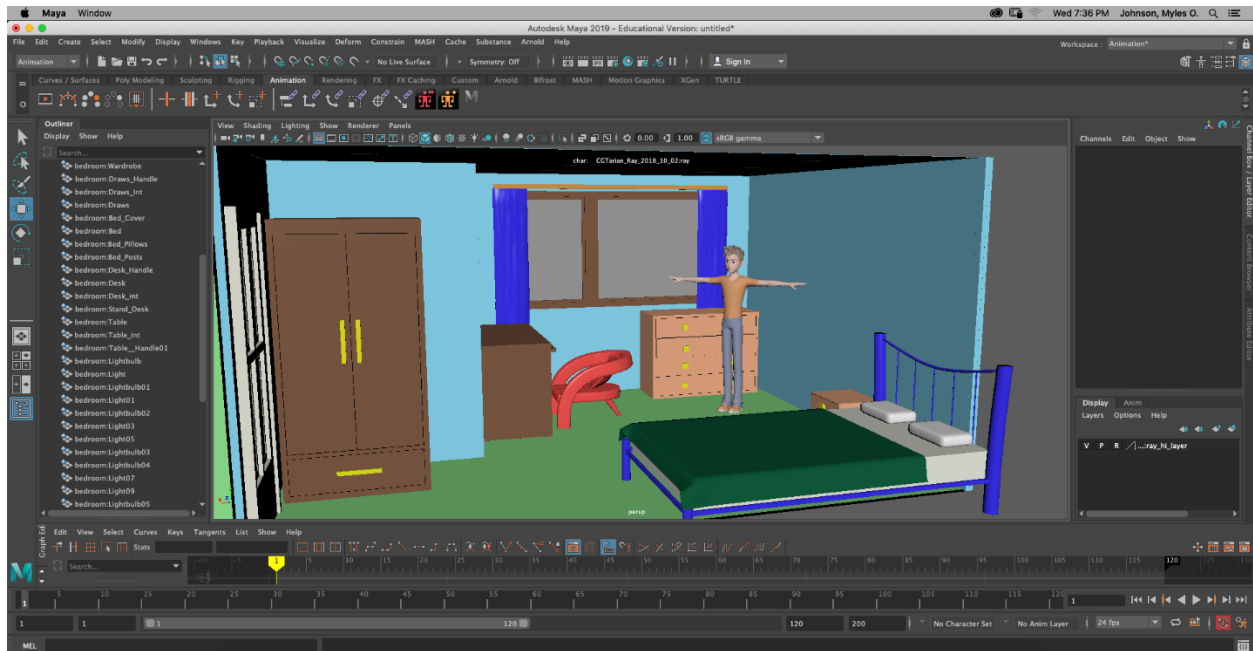
- I started by sourcing my character models and all my environmental assets. I then would start to stage my characters in their respective "sets" in Maya, starting on frame 1. I used a green plane in the window so I can easily key it out in post.
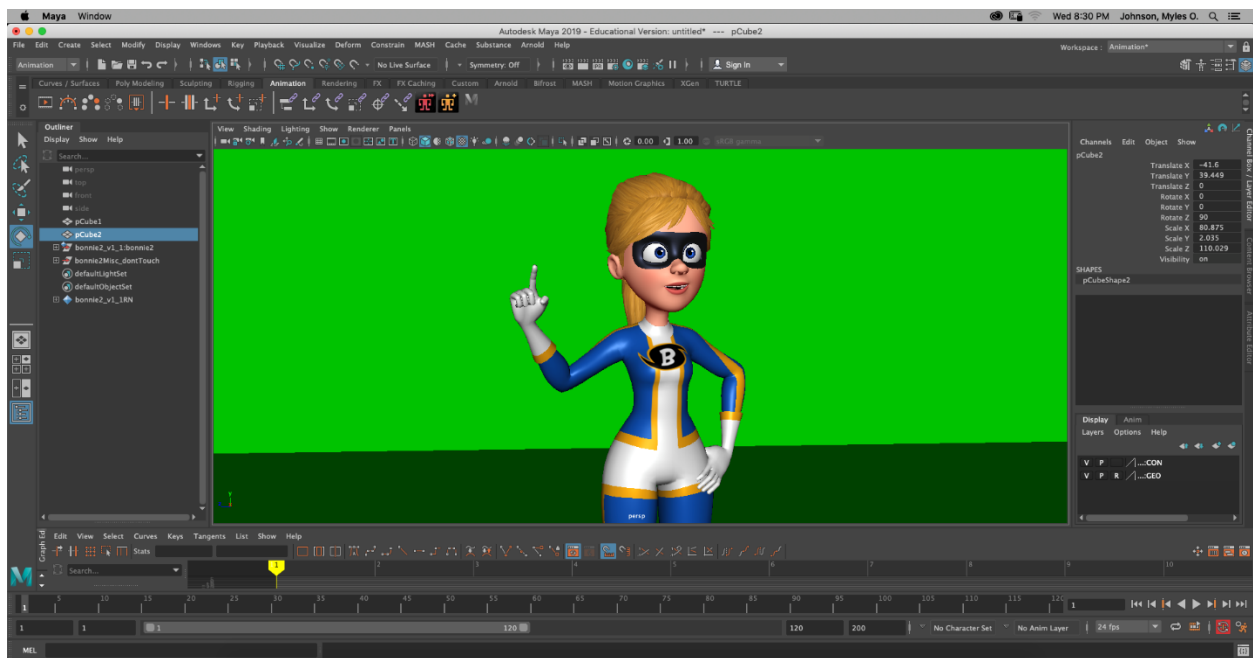
- The first actual animation I did on this project was matching the lip-sync to the dialogue I had recorded myself and with the help of a couple of friends. After that, I would use reference footage of me acting out each scene so I know how to pose the character in each major key frame.

- I put the characters against a green poly-0rectangle to act as a green screen later on in post.
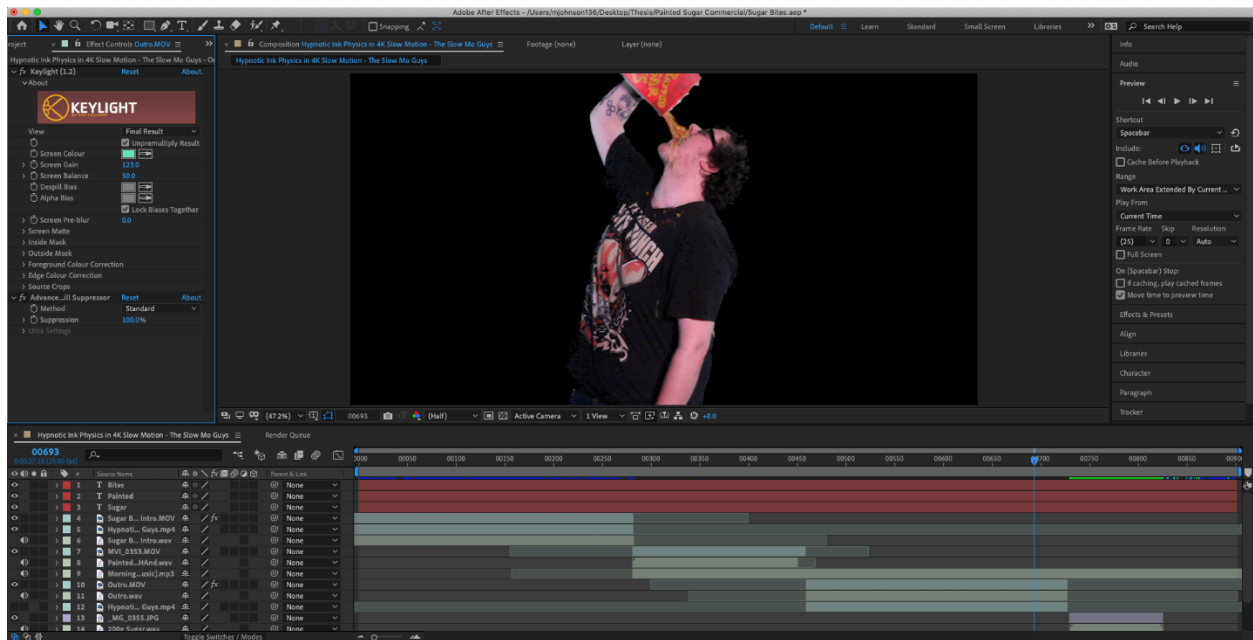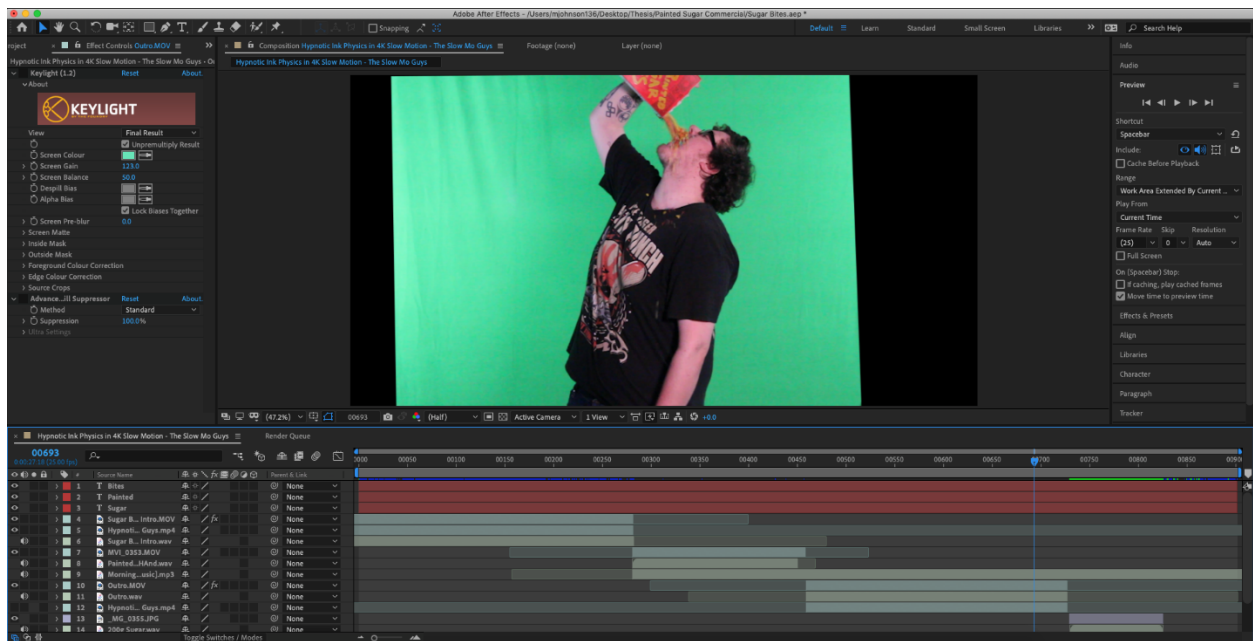
- With my live action commercials, I went for a "cheesy" feel. The Painted Sugar Bites commercial was filmed in front of green screen so I could key myself out and replace it with the cheesiest, colorful background I could find. (Thanks to the Slow Mo Guys)

- The keying isn't perfect, but that's the point. Commercials during this time had plenty of flaws. Also, this was made to be played on an old CRT TV.
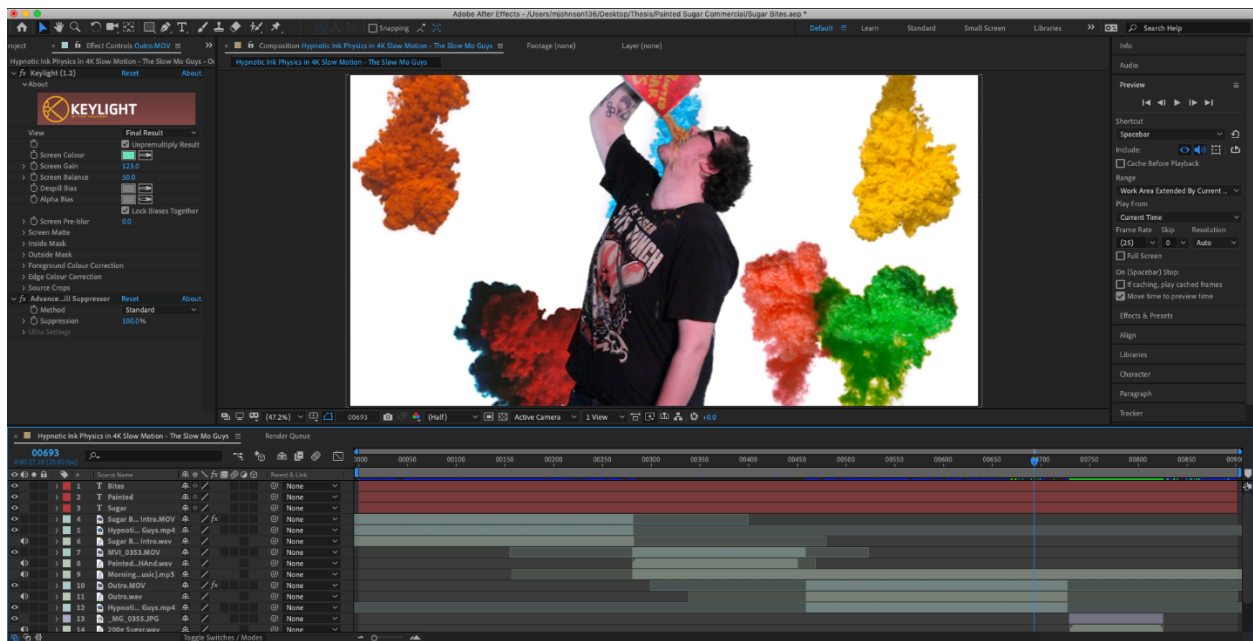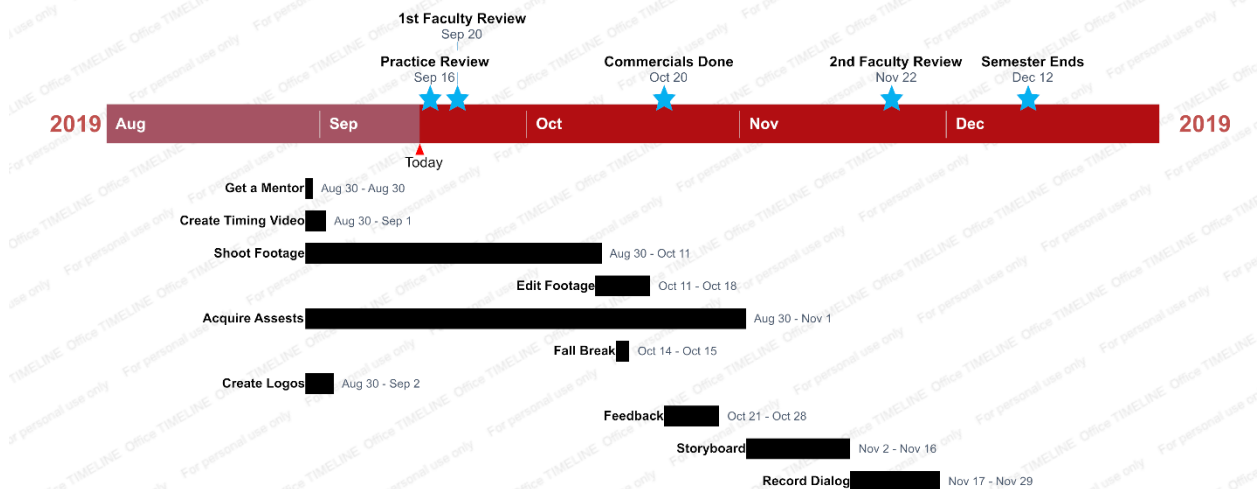
- I ended up filming the entire commercial, even though I knew only certain segments

  would be in the final project. I did this so that I had options on what to show in my

  project. It also made the channel-surfing manner of the overall project more believable

  because the commercial would actually be interrupted, rather than acting as though it
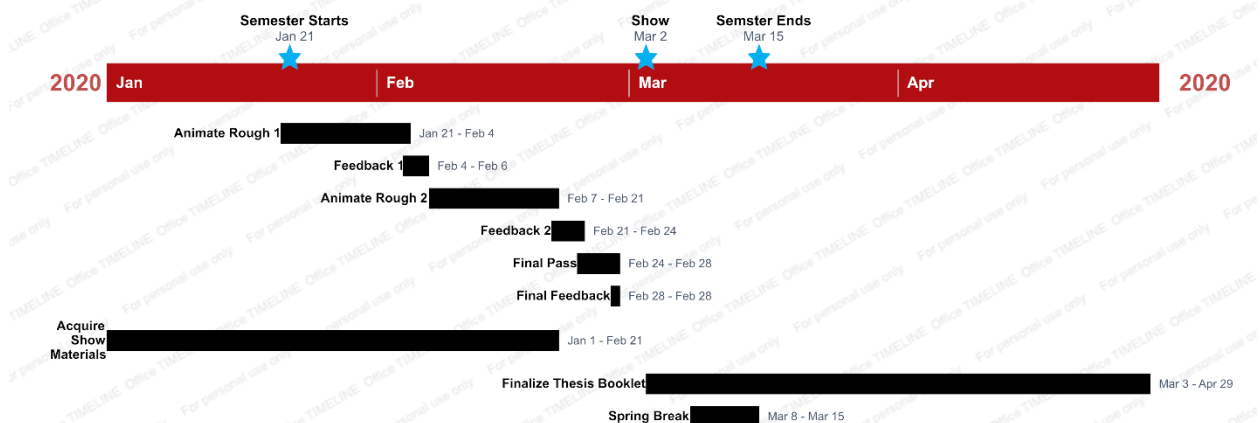
  was
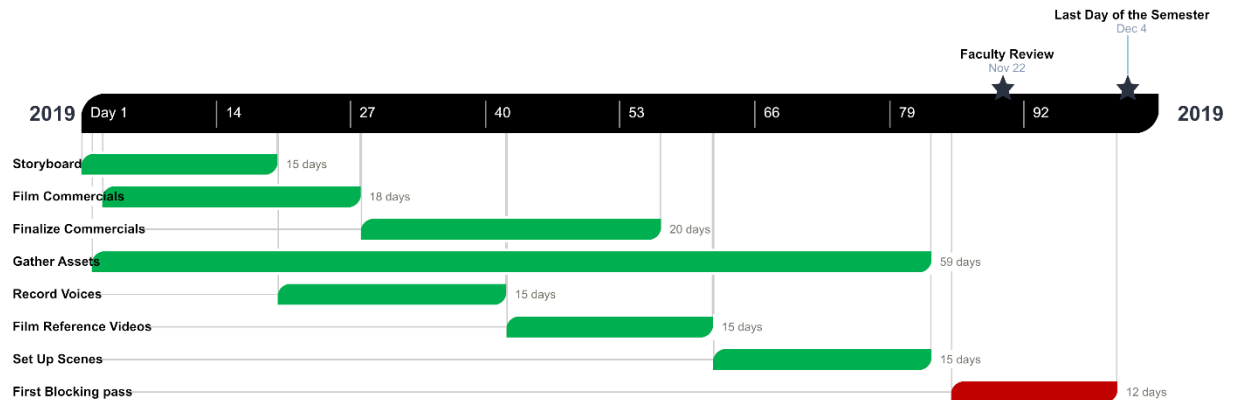
Schedule:

First Version

Fall Semester

1st Faculty Review
Sep 20

Practice Review
Sep 16

Commercials Done
Oct 20

2nd Faculty Review
Nov 22

Semester Ends
Dec 12

| 2019 | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | 2019 |

Today

Task	Dates
Get a Mentor	Aug 30 - Aug 30
Create Timing Video	Aug 30 - Sep 1
Shoot Footage	Aug 30 - Oct 11
Edit Footage	Oct 11 - Oct 18
Acquire Assests	Aug 30 - Nov 1
Fall Break	Oct 14 - Oct 15
Create Logos	Aug 30 - Sep 2
Feedback	Oct 21 - Oct 28
Storyboard	Nov 2 - Nov 16
Record Dialog	Nov 17 - Nov 29

*Subject to Change

Spring Semester

Semester Starts
Jan 21

Show
Mar 2

Semster Ends
Mar 15

| 2020 | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | 2020 |

Task	Dates
Animate Rough 1	Jan 21 - Feb 4
Feedback 1	Feb 4 - Feb 6
Animate Rough 2	Feb 7 - Feb 21
Feedback 2	Feb 21 - Feb 24
Final Pass	Feb 24 - Feb 28
Final Feedback	Feb 28 - Feb 28
Acquire Show Materials	Jan 1 - Feb 21
Finalize Thesis Booklet	Mar 3 - Apr 29
Spring Break	Mar 8 - Mar 15

*Subject to Change

Schedule:

Second Version

Fall 2019

Last Day of the Semester
Dec 4

Faculty Review
Nov 22

| 2019 | Day 1 | 14 | 27 | 40 | 53 | 66 | 79 | 92 | 2019 |

- Storyboard — 15 days
- Film Commercials — 18 days
- Finalize Commercials — 20 days
- Gather Assets — 59 days
- Record Voices — 15 days
- Film Reference Videos — 15 days
- Set Up Scenes — 15 days
- First Blocking pass — 12 days

*Subject to Change

Spring 2020

Thesis Show (at the earliest)
Feb 17

| 2020 | Day 1 | 5 | 9 | 13 | 17 | 21 | 25 | 2020 |

- Second Rough Pass — 4 days
- Clean Up Pass — 6 days
- Final Editing — 7 days

*Subject to Change

- We didn't know what day our projects would be on until he last day of the Fall semester. So, I planned my project workflow as if I had the first show of the semester, that way no matter what day I ended up getting, I would be either on time or ahead of schedule.

Spring Semester 2020:

The Year of Covid-19

After pulling the best possible date for my show, April 27th (the last show date), I immediately got to work to finish my animations. From the day the Spring semester started in January to our Spring break, I was in the Animation lab in AD 206 every night until midnight, or sometimes later. I finally got all my animations to a point to where I could edit all the shots together and finally see what my thesis project would look like as a living, breathing movie. After showing it to my mentor, Scott Raymond, all I had to do was keep adjusting and fine tuning my animations until the big day came.

Fast-forward to spring break and we are in the midst of a global pandemic. Austin Peay moves all of its classes online and cancels/postpones all social events. This means my show would not be happening in the traditional sense. Now I have to make a website where my show can live in a virtual gallery type of space. This presents a new challenge, but luckily animation lends itself to being online only very well. The only downer is that I can no longer have the full living room setup I was hoping for. Now I need to figure out a way to make it have that same living room feel without the actual presence of the furniture.

Stills from the Test Video

- All of these shots are CBB (Could Be Better). At this stage, in almost all animation industries, is a great place to be. It means that if I have the time and bandwidth to make any of the very minor imperfections better, than I should do so.
- All of the free time I had was dedicated to nit-picking all of my shots and fixing anything, not matter how big or small the issue was.

Final Show Website
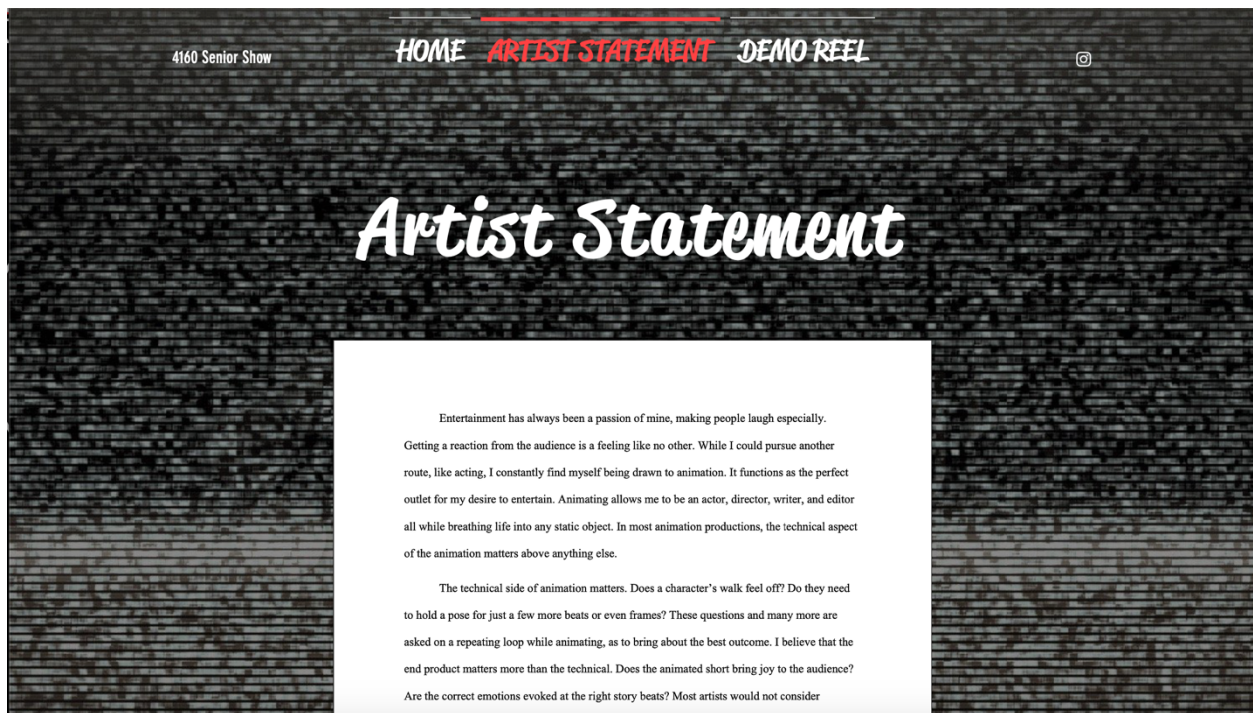
- My show's website will be promoted to the public on my original show's date of April 27th on APSU's Instagram and Facebook.

Show Promo Materials

- Made a promotional video/trailer for my thesis project that showed the highlights of my project. (Top)
- Contracted a graphic design friend of mine to make the promo thumbnail. (Bottom)

Self-Critique

From day one of 4150 in the fall of 2019, I was working on this project. The first thing I did was film all of the live-action commercials. That took about 2 to 3 weeks, and any free tie I had after that was dedicated to animating all of the shots I had in this project. My first main goal was to get the main poses for all of the shots. After that, I would take what I had to Scott and get critical feedback. I would then go and work on any notes he gave me, and boy, were there a lot of notes sometimes. At that point it was rinse and repeat until my shots reached a point called "Could Be Better (CBB). Once the shots were all in CBB, I just had to keep making everything that could be better, better. So that is where my technical critique is. The shots are fluid and the stories are fun, but every should could be better. Lip sync doesn't quite match up and there is some model clipping going on.

Overall project critique is a little tougher than the technical. I feel that my original project idea of having a channel-surfing animated video play in a living room environment was an awesome idea. It really would have driven home the idea and atmosphere of being home just after getting out of school. Since that was no longer an option after the pandemic started, I had to do my show online on a website. Sadly, I don't think a website was enough to capture the original feeling and atmosphere of the idea before. I would have done a virtual gallery, but I couldn't find one that supported a video format. The channel-surfing manner of the animated and live-action segments help keep the idea, but I honestly feel that the idea

Self-Critique Cont.

was never fully imagined because I couldn't have it set in a living room. For the circumstances, this project was successful but would have been more impactful if my original idea could have actually been fleshed out. I was even going to cater food that I, and most kids my age, would have snacked on after school. It was going to be a whole immersive experience, along with awesome animation. Again, I feel this project was successful, but I wish I could have had my entire original idea realized in the gallery.

Overall, I'm happy with the results. As previously mentioned, I do wish I could have had the gallery, but things were out of my control, so I just had to roll with all the punches.