HYBRID FILMMAKING:
USING DIGITAL PHOTOGROPHY AND COMPOSITING ANIMATION
TO CREATE ""A STORY FOR STEPHANIE""

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by

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Date

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Morehead State University, 2008

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Producing the animated children's short "A Story for
Stephanie" posed several challenges including limited
resources in similar projects, a lack of professional
performers in eastern Kentucky, and a multitude of
technical issues. Techniques and methodologies new to the
filmmaker were implemented to achieve the exact look
desired for the film. Technical expertise and artistic
talent working synergistically to create a positive
experience became a necessity. Also, the ability to
effectively lead small groups became paramount for
completion of the film in a timely manner while still
delivering a great piece of art.

Accepted by: _____, Chair

Robert E Frank

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There is a certain alchemistic nature to producing
film and video; in essence, filmmaking is a magical
synergy of art and science that must be in perfect
balance to function properly. Filmmaking wizards use
their skills and creativity to transport audiences to new
and exciting places. Moviegoers have literally seen far
away galaxies to the deepest recesses of the human mind.
A film featuring brilliant acting and plot cannot be
considered well crafted if it is technically wanting.
Likewise, a film with state of the art computer generated
images cannot be considered successful with no real sense
of creativity. It is in the melding of the science and
the art where truly great cinema is created.

The budget and scale found in typical Hollywood
films allow for amazing technical achievement and in some
cases great artistic merit. Major motion pictures, be
they block-buster space epics or independent films
exploring personal interactions, all share one common

bond: to be successful there must be a synergistic connection between the creative and the technical. Micro-budget films, such as student productions, are generated with minuscule funds when compared to large-scale films. Therefore, greater forethought concerning creative techniques and technologies must be given to produce unique and innovative pieces. With creating an original video production as the main goal of this project, the finished movie became "A Story for Stephanie," (Appendix A) a computer animated short. Producing this product successfully required the development of alternate moviemaking techniques to those found on most small-scale productions. By utilizing alternative production techniques to those found on similar projects, a hybrid filmmaking method dubbed "video storybook" was developed.

   This document describes the filmmaking process of unconventional methods of production and editing used to create an animated mixed media video. Each area of the production process, from pre-production (where the initial production is initiated, analyzed and planned) through the production phase (where the performance is captured to film or video) to the postproduction (where

the picture, sound, music, effects and titles are melded
and merged into a completed piece) is thoroughly detailed
and explained. The document concludes with an analysis of
the strengths and weaknesses of the project producer and
the finished product. The analysis indicates the measure
of success in melding the aesthetic and technical,
thereby determining the synergistic relationship between
the art and science of filmmaking. To consider this film
successful, the producer will must achieve the following
goals.

1. Crate an original film that is found to be
   entertaining to the target audience of children,
   with hopes of entertaining adults as well.
2. Use various forms of technology in the production
   process, opting for innovative rather than
   traditional filmmaking techniques.
3. Achieve a greater understanding of the medium,
   thereby growing as an artist.

Only if and when these goals are met can this project be
considered a success.

   The producer faced many obstacles preceding the
development of this thesis film. To achieve the goal of

developing a student film, creating a skill set for

filmmaking is a personal obsession. Beginning with "Fire

Under the Mountain," (Appendix A) an hour-long

documentary recounting a coal mining disaster that took

the lives of 38 men in the winter of 1970, the first

tools of filmmaking were introduced; essentially becoming

on the job training. Shot in the summer of 2002, camera

techniques, interviewing skills, non-linear editing and

basic composition were all areas of personal growth for

the producer, with virtually no involvement from

professors or industry professionals. The following year,

"Fire Under the Mountain" premiered to over two hundred

and fifty eastern Kentuckians including several family

members of the men who were killed in the blast.

The success of "Fire Under the Mountain" resulted in

a position with WYMT-TV, the only network affiliated

station in the region. This job provided a more

professional level of video production. Being named

Studio Director a mere six months after being hired

offered the opportunity to steer both live and pre-

produced broadcasts. After a mere three years, station

management awarded a promotion to Promotions Manager, a

position which included the responsibilities of writing, producing, shooting, directing and editing on-air spots designed to promote and extend the brand of WYMT-TV. This resulted in what amounted to mini-movies being produced on a weekly, if not daily basis.

A focus of study on the research and criticism of Film and Film Theory continued upon entering graduate school. Whenever possible, projects dealing with film were chosen; some of which featured research papers on horror films for an east Kentucky market or the depiction of violence in horror films in comparison to the violence represented in nightly newscasts. Others included speeches on pop culture icon Superman and even a persuasive film sales presentation. The incorporation of video production into projects also increased the level of film training. For a class on Media Criticism, a collection of four short films that explore the major criticism theories was presented. (*Media Criticism,* Appendix A) A directed study class provided another opportunity to stretch as a filmmaker, writing a feature length screenplay, "At Summers End," with the assumption that it would be filmed for a graduate thesis. However,

this proved to be too ambitious and the plans to shoot "At Summers End" as a thesis film were scrapped.

In conjunction with prior academic study performed by the producer, a short horror film appeared to be the logical next step, as previous success had been found in that area of filmmaking. The producer created a short film entitled "Goodnight, Sweetie" (Appendix A) about an elderly man who kept the decapitated head of his former lover stuffed on his bedroom wall. A concept was developed or using "Goodnight, Sweetie" by incorporating the piece into a mini-anthology film in the style of "Tales from the Darkside: The Movie" (Harrison, 1990) and "The Twilight Zone: The Movie." (Dante, Landis, Miller & Spielgerg, 1983) This mini-anthology resulting from this project would be a film approximately thirty minutes in length. It would feature three short horror films linked together with a wraparound story. Unfortunately, the scope of this project was estimated to be too expensive and expansive to be produced successfully.

Following this setback, the possibility of creating several filmed monologues as opposed to a multi-actor production was examined. One such piece, "Z-Day,"

Films (2004) describes the filmmaking process from idea conceptualization through the festival circuit and distribution. Anatomy of Film, (Dick, 2005) and Film Theory (Stam, 2000) are texts used in several film schools that expound the film medium. The history of the medium and the theoretical principals are explored in great detail. For modern filmmaking, specifically digital production, The Filmmakers Handbook: A Comprehensive Guide for the Digital Age (Ascher & Prince, 1999) not only explore the technical aspects of both filmmaking and video production, but also the post production for both disciples as well. Sheridan's Digital Short Films (2004) follows a similar path, but focuses solely on the production of digital shorts. Here, more credence is given to the artistic aspects of video production, offering insight into generating story ideas and developing methodologies for converting these thoughts into actual films.

What a Producer Does (Houghton, 1991) presents an explanation of producing films as a profession, recounting the responsibilities and benefits of the position, giving insight into visualizing every step in

completing the film before the script is written. Similar instruction for directing was found in Katz's Film Directing Shot by Shot. (1991) Here, practical advice for working with actors is merged with technical instruction for movement both within the frame and from the camera. For storyboarding, Setting Up Your Shots (Vineyard, 2000) offers insight on many different camera angles and methods of capturing images. The process of compositing shots in editing was also simplified through the use of this book.

Stage Makeup Step-by-Step (Swinfield, 1994) instructs makeup applications from basic corrective procedures through advanced liquid latex appliances. More advanced makeup techniques, such as lesions, limb removal and assorted viscera are covered in Vinther's Special Effects Makeup. (2002) The techniques found in this book were regarded during the early, horror film stages of this project.

The practical tips and tricks found in Kenworthy's Digital Video Production Cookbook (2006) offer real world expertise on issues found during the course of gorilla-style filmmaking. For actors, Acting for the Camera

(Barr, 1997) gives an excellent explanation of the subtleties of performing for the lens as opposed to acting on the stage. Techniques in this text, such as body positioning, or physicalization, offer incredible insight for an inexperienced cast. Lighting for Digital Video & Television (Jackman, 2002) offers specific lighting setups ideal for small chromakey shoots.

A method of digital art similar to the one used in this project can be found in Photoshop for Right-Brainers. (Ward, 2006) While the effect used in this film was achieved with a non-related method, the one featured here offers similar results.

Several films were also studied as part of this process. These included historically significant animation feature films, such as "The Secret of NIMH," (Blooth, 1982) "Toy Story," (Lassiter, 1995) "The Nightmare Before Christmas" (Selick, 1993) and "The Lion King." (Allers & Minkoff, 1994) These examples show what can be achieved with animation techniques. "In NIMH," Blooth incorporated groundbreaking technologies, for the time, to create a universe new to the silver screen. "Toy Story," the first fully rendered 3-D animation film,

offers insight into the implementation of new media and technology into children's cinema. "Nightmare," however, uses stop motion animation, a technique used primarily for special effects and not for the entire production. Here, stop motion is used exclusively, making "A Nightmare Before Christmas" the first film to be generated entirely from stop motion animation. Disney's "The Lion King" was influential to this production due to the film's ability to invoke a sense of wonderment in viewers. Artistically, the Adult Swim Cartoon *Tom Goes to the Mayor.* (Heidecker & Wareheim, 2004) served as the basis of the look of the piece. While there technique features characters depicted only in blue and white, this production took their work one step further, adding a full color pallet to the art.

Training software for special effects editing techniques were also examined. (Holmes, 2006 a & b) Here, graphic artists disclose methods of using three-dimensional software in a standard compositing program.

Methods and Materials

To complete "A Story for Stephanie," many computer programs and technical equipment were used. The following

is a listing of all materials used throughout the course of creating the film from the preproduction stage through initial public screening.

Software

12 inch Design: Royalty free graphics library used for pre-built animations found in the SPACEMAN sequence.

Adobe After Effects: Motion graphics and visual effects generator. Used during the compositing process to animate characters, alter visual perspective and move other objects within frame.

Adobe Photoshop: Photography retouching software. Used to alter digital images into a faux color pencil drawing.

Final Cut Pro: a non-linear editing program, used to cut audio tracks and complete final composition of film.

Live Type: text animation software used for animated objects.

Soundtrack Pro: a music-generating program used for all sound effects.

Final Draft: Script writing software used to generate teleplay.

Garage Band: Music generating software used for three note sequence found in library sequence.

iDVD: DVD authoring program. Used to create DVD menus and generate finished discs.

Image Capture: Apple software used to import still images from the camera to the hard drive of the computer.

Snap! 10,000 Photos: Royalty free image collection used for

background generation.

Hardware

Canon Rebel XTI: Digital camera used to capture images of all visual performances.

Canon XL2: Digital camcorder used to record audio tracks of

actors.

Kasear Chroma-Key Fabric: Large green fabric used to key performers. 9'x 12'.

Kasear Support System: Photographers backdrop stand used to hang chroma-key fabric behind performers. 9'x 12'.

Lowell 4-Point Light Kit: Digital Video lighting kit used during the photo shoots.

Power Mac G5: Apple computer used for all editing.

During the preproduction phase of "A Story for Stephanie," several steps were needed to prepare before capturing the performances onto some form of media. Using Final Draft to format the script for "A Story for Stephanie" required three weeks to compose and refine. (Appendix B) After the script was written, storyboards, or thumbnail images for each shot used in the film, were created. (Appendix C) These images served as templates for future shots and gave others a guide for how the director visualized the text. The meticulous process of storyboarding resulted in a crucial document that was referred to during the photography sessions.

It was during this time that the final concept of the film began to formalize. No professional actors were readily available, so non-professionals were utilized. Traditional filmmaking relies heavily on the talent of actors in front of the lens; using untrained performers would ultimately result in an unsuccessful film. To rectify this issue, traditional filmmaking would not be the primary form of production and instead an amalgamated cartoon-like film was created. This meant visual cast members would not record dialogue while performing.

Instead, trained professionals would be brought in at a later time to record sound. Since "A Story for Stephanie" was a children's film, the decision was made to create a visual style similar to those found in picture books.

The filmmaker gained several advantages over traditional filmmaking by using this process, which came to be known as "Video Storybook." The actors' performances did not hinge on their vocal talent, only on their ability to follow instruction from the director. Also, the visual style was very unique and offered a new and innovative form of filmmaking to those working on the production.

Once the script was written and the conceptualization finalized, actors were chosen to portray the characters. Costumes were procured for them to wear, adding another layer of depth to the film. Once all actors were fitted with costumes, makeup tests were needed for the GNOME. Latex appliances were used on the actor's nose and chin, elongating both. Various shades of green, black and gray makeup were used to add a troll-like appearance to the actor. This, in conjunction with a medieval costume, resulted in a strong, inhuman

appearance. (Appendix D, Figure 1) The actor was then photographed in full costume so that final look could be judged before moving on to the next phase.

Production on a film such as this required the use of a digital camera and some form of backdrop featuring a key color. For this project the XTI, the support stand and the green fabric were used. A tripod may be used if desired, but not required. The lighting kit was also not essential, but improved the finished piece. After the equipment was in place, the actors were positioned between the camera and the key wall. Ideally, the subjects stood eight feet from the wall behind the actor and eight feet from the camera. The camera was optimally sixteen feet from the wall. This distance gave ample room to avoid light spillage on the actor and excess shadows on the background. Unfortunately, this distance was not possible for most shots due to limited space.

Two days were required to capture all still images needed for the film. Day one was spent working with the child actors. Over two hundred and fifty pictures were taken of the actors during the two and a half hour session. Knowing that dialogue would be recorded later,

this time was spent focusing on positioning the actors into the various poses and facial expressions needed for the film. Hannah, the actor portraying STEPHANIE, followed direction well and maintained focus while under the hot lights. Colin, the super hero BROTHER, excelled at performing with his mask and cape. FAIRY GOD SIS Emma was also fantastic as the world's youngest fairy godmother. At only three years of age, she was the youngest member of the cast.

Day two was spent with the adult actors. Digital photographs of the six characters were taken over the course of five hours. As in session one, no audio was recorded, allowing for total focus on visual performances. Chris Combs, who portrayed both the COWBOY and the SPACEMAN, needed a few small accents to his costume. A fake mustache gave the COWBOY a rugged look that really fit the character. (Appendix D, Figure 2) The SPACEMAN needed an otherworldly appearance, which was achieved by adding red and blue makeup around his eyes and to the sides of his face. (Appendix D, Figure 3) After compiling a total of over six hundred and fifty pictures, all that remained was to record audio.

The vocal tracks were recorded two weeks later due to conflicting schedules. Two professional actors from the Lexington area were kind enough to lend their voices to the film. James Hamblin had the thankless job of reading the NARRATOR role, while Adam Luckey provided the voices of all other male characters. Traveling to Adam's home in Lexington for the recording, a Cannon XL2 digital camcorder along with two stick microphones on stands and cables were the only hardware needed. This one-hour session consisted of four complete readings of the script and a few extra takes on lines that did not meet the director's needs. While not part of the visual cast, the two audio performers make a cameo in the final film as the BARDS, (Appendix D, Figure 4) who briefly fly across screen in the final shot. The skill of these trained actors elevated the script in unimagined ways. These brilliant artists delivered textured performances that raised an admittedly simple script to something truly special. The production was fortunate to have procured their services.

The final step of the production consisted of capturing sound with the lead actress. Six-year old

Hannah had limited experience working with a script. The recording process became much smoother when Hannah was given line readings, a process where the actor is fed the line just as the director wants it to be said. Hannah worked well with the instructions and the session concluded after only an hour.

Postproduction was the last phase of filmmaking, where the visual and auditory elements captured in production were edited together into a cohesive film. All digital elements of the film were transferred into an Apple G5 computer. The audio recordings, which also included video shot of the performances, were captured onto the computer using Final Cut Pro, a non-linear editing program designed for use on Apple computers. Still images were transferred from the camera via Image Capture, Apple's standard program for such a process.

With all data stored, the images were digitally altered using Adobe Photoshop to match the "Video Storybook" style. To achieve this effect, the following process was performed on every still image of the actors used in the film. First, the "Background Eraser" tool was used, removing as much of the green key as possible.

Setting the tool's strength to 90 often resulted in the best results, but there was some variance from picture to picture. Next, the layer was duplicated twice, resulting in three layer of the same image stacked upon each other. The effect "Photocopy" was applied to layer one, making sure that black was selected as the foreground color and white as the back. This resulted in a black and white image that resembled a pencil drawing. The settings for the "Photocopy" layer varied from character to character, but all used a detail level between four and twelve and a darkness level ranging fifteen to thirty five. Layer 2 features a change in the blending mode setting. The blending mode changed the properties of individual layers regarding how they interact with the layers found below them. By changing the blending mode from "Normal" to "Color", a black and white image now looked stenciled in colored pencil. Finally, layer three's blending mode was altered from "Normal" to "Overlay," giving the image even more color and enhancing the colored pencil look. This process was used on every still image found in "A Story for Stephanie."

Completing the three-layer process on all frames would have been an arduous and time-consuming process without the use of Photoshop's "Automate" function. Using the "Batch" tool in Adobe's Photoshop, many of the steps detailed above were automatically processed by the program with no human involvement. Each image still needed to be tightened and cleaned, however.

"Automate" requires the user to record the steps that need to be performed on all images into what Adobe refers to as "Actions." These actions can then be applied to entire folders of pictures and saved in a separate location for ease of use later. However, most, if not all of the pictures resulting from the automated process had to be corrected manually in some way, with incorrect keying being the most common of these errors. Nonetheless, countless hours of monotonous work were avoided by implementing this automation.

The next postproduction step in making "A Story for Stephanie" involved editing the audio tracks of the actors into the actual film narrative. To accomplish this process, Apple's NLE, or non-linear editor, Final Cut was utilized. This program, like most NLE programs, allowed

the editor to cut, trim, position and rearrange audio and video tracks across a timeline. Each take was reviewed and monitored for quality and clarity. The best takes of each line from the performances were culled out from the rest of the data. Next, a rough cutting between the Lexington Session and the Hannah footage was constructed by placing the individual cuts in order in accordance with the script. Next, video from each shot was removed, leaving only the audio tracks.

After all characters were digitally altered to match the storybook theme and the audio track was compiled, compositing the final animated sequences began. Photoshop's sister program, After Effects, was used to compile the film into segmented scenes. This program allowed for the complex sequences to be composed from several individual elements. Every frame of "A Story for Stephanie" was compiled in After Effects.

The animation process involved building environments for the characters to inhabit before they were incorporated into the frame. Every sequence began with a stark white background so that each cut would resemble a page from a storybook. For example, grass-like brushes

were used in Photoshop to create the cornfield in the COWBOY sequence. Two cornstalk images were created and dissolving between them resulted in the illusion of cornstalks swaying in the breeze. The elements found in the castle scene with the GNOME were taken from stock photography. The castle door and turrets were processed in the same manner as the character images and then blurred slightly, creating a separation of foreground and background. The lunar ground seen with the SPACEMAN was actually composed with photos of caves, de-saturated and distorted to emulate the moon.

As soon as the environments were created, the process of animating the characters began. "Key Frames" were set at the point of origin where the object or character needed to be at the start of the sequence. Another Key Frame was set for each object correlating to where it would end. When rendered, After Effects animated every frame between the key frames. This resulted in a smooth, continuous shot for each render. Many sequences in "A Story for Stephanie" used 3D-style animation, altering not only the position on both the X and Y-axis, but the Z-axis as well. This allowed for freedom to

digitally manipulate how the viewer sees the composition

in three-dimensional space, even within the flat space of

a viewing screen. In Figure 5, STEPHANIE stands in the

foreground while her family stands behind her. (Appendix

D) Key fame changes on the z-plane created movement

within the frame, mimicking a tracking shot where the

"camera" is on a dolly moving away from the home. While

all shots in "A Story for Stephanie" do not use 3-D

positioning, every sequence used key frames to alter X

and Y movement, along with transparency and scale.

Special effects and animations were used to add the level

of fantasy needed in "A Story for Stephanie." After

Effects was able to accommodate some of these needs.

Specifically, using the "Cylinder" effect enabled the

creation of the tornado used by the COWBOY. (Figure 6,

Appendix D) Also in the Spaceman sequence, After Effects

was used to easily create the star field seen in the

background on two separate shots. (Figure 7, Appendix D)

Other graphics, such as the magic ball and the explosion

used in the introduction of Stephanie's MOTHER came from

a separate program called Live Type. This program's

primary use is the animation of text to be used in video

production. It does, however, feature pre-built graphic

elements that worked well in this film. Live Type was

also used to create the text background for STEPHANIE

seen just before she leaves on her quest. There is an

"Easter Egg" hidden in this shot of STEPHANIE standing

with words animating on frame behind her. If one looks

closely, the producer's name appears just over her right

shoulder. (Figure 8, Appendix D)

Another source of pre-built animations was the

digital library from 12 Inch Design. This royalty free

digital graphics package included several elements found

in the final film. These included the spaceship, the

various planets in the Kalgon shot, (Figure 8, Appendix

D) and the spinning Earth used in the opening. Each of

these external elements was animated within the frame and

digitally altered to match the desired look using After

Effects.

When all video sequences were composited and

rendered from After Effects, they were imported to Final

Cut, matching them to the audio tracks. This was a

relatively simple process, being that special care was

taken to match the on screen motion created in After

Effects to the audio tracks in Final Cut. Sound effects were then incorporated into the mix, adding another layer of depth to the audio track. These audio effects were collected from the music-generation program Soundtrack Pro. All sound not generated by the actors or the music track came directly from Soundtrack Pro.

With the rough cut finished, the film could now be scored. Marcus Hudson, a gifted musician who had previously worked with the production team, volunteered to compose original music for the film. He delivered a data disc with seven tracks for use in the film: a main theme, in lengths of both thirty and sixty seconds, a guitar riff for the COWBOY, a collection of space sounds and tribal beats for the SPACEMAN, a melodic theme for the GNOME, a xylophone sequence for use with DAD, and a melancholy version of the main theme. These tracks were mixed into the rough cut, elevating it from a collection of vignettes into a cohesive, flowing film. The music dictated the tone of the scenes and effectively heightened the dramatic tension. This was an improvement over the first cut.

The final edit of "A Story for Stephanie" was completed on October 24, 2008. This version of the film was exported from Final Cut as a QuickTime file and then imported into iDVD, Apple's DVD authoring software. In iDVD, the "Anime Pop" preset was used for the opening menu. Stills from the film were added to the menu to create a customized effect. A second menu, listed under "Extra Stuff," was created using the "Sliding Panes" preset. Here, all films created by the producer in conjunction with this project were included. Finally, a master disc was burned, concluding work on "A Story for Stephanie."

Presentation of Project

The thesis project that eventually resulted in "A Story for Stephanie" was a long and arduous production process, lasting over sixteen months from start to finish. After all the time and effort that went into producing this film, those involved were excited about sharing their talent with the public. Before any public screenings were planned, however, the producer conducted small screenings for friends and family to gather feedback prior to a screening for a wider audience.

"Flawless" and "amazing" were some of the comments received after the showing. When the film ended, the children in attendance immediately asked to watch again. More interesting comments came from educators in attendance. A grade school principal, along with a former school librarian, mentioned that it would be ideal to show in classrooms for the purpose of encouraging students to read, write, and take advantage of the library. The positive reactions received during these small screenings confirmed that it was time to show Stephanie to a wider audience.

Several factors were taken into consideration for the initial public screening. In the summer of 2003, "Fire Under the Mountain" premiered to a crowd of over two hundred. At just under an hour in runtime, it was believed that the piece warranted a viewing in this traditional manner. With Stephanie, however, a different approach was taken. At 7 minutes, the film is too short to warrant a large-scale screening. This, along with Stephanie being produced for children, led the producer to premiere the film at a children's Halloween festival held at Hyden Citizen's Bank. This allowed for many more

children the opportunity to see the film as they entered the bank's candy giveaway. Also, while there was no cost to either the production or the bank, but both would benefit. The bank had new visitors looking to see the film while the film received many more viewers than would have come to a simple screening.

The film played for audiences every twenty minutes over the course of the three-hour festival. During the night, over eight hundred costumed kiddies, along with their adult supervision, passed through the Halloween exhibition. While some candy-crazed children simply wanted to fill their bags and leave, those that stayed seemed to enjoy the film. Some parents even called back their children in order to see the film.

In regards to public feedback, special attention was paid to what specific scenes of the film drew the attention of the audience. More often than not, young boys would stop for the sequences with the COWBOY and SPACEMAN, while girls seemed to remain during the opening and closing segments. The appearance of the GNOME may have frightened the audience, resulting in little connection between them and the character. (Figure 10,

Appendix D) The employees working the event, who had to

endure over twelve viewings over the course of the

evening, offered great praise for the film. Several

viewers also inquired about purchasing a copy of the film

to share with others.

<div align="center">Discussion of Results</div>

In the terms set forth by the producer at the

beginning of this process, "A Story for Stephanie" should

be considered a successful project. The need to crate an

original film was achieved with the completion of the

final edit. As for entertaining the target audience, all

feedback received in both public and private screenings

has been positive. The use of various forms of

technology, such as videography, still photography,

musical composition, acting and others achieved the

second goal. The producer has achieved goal three as

well, learning many new techniques during the course of

the project, as well as expounding his personal

boundaries as an artist.

Several factors must be taken into consideration

when confirming the success of "A Story for Stephanie."

The amount of planning and the process of storyboarding,

while demanding at the time, eventually paid huge dividends during production and editing. Surprisingly, the quality of animation achieved with no traditional drawings or computer modeling being used is impressive. The animation is simple compared to other computer-generated films, but it thematically matches the tone of the piece well. The methods used in "A Story for Stephanie" worked well in achieving the initial goal of producing a video representation of a children's storybook. Using Photoshop to create the color pencil effects was a huge boon to the piece and in conjunction After Effects; a special piece of art was created. It is this aesthetic that draws younger viewers to the film. This, along with the dramatic content, results in an entertaining film.

This is not to say that the production was perfect. Scheduling and time management became huge issues in finishing the piece. Even with local talent and readily available equipment, the process took much longer to complete that originally anticipated. Also, the development of the color pencil technique used in Photoshop was lengthy and laborious. It is in these

difficulties, that the second goal was met, however.
Utilizing alternative filmmaking techniques, such as
still photographs in place of moving video and the color
pencil method are not typically found on a film set.

While the equipment chosen for this project was done
so based on availability and familiarity rather than
perfectly fitting into the method, all hardware and
software worked perfectly in finishing the piece. The
Canon cameras, both still and video, met every need
required of them. And, perhaps most importantly, new
techniques and features of all software were learned over
the production process. During the editing of Stephanie,
a new method for video storybook filmmaking was
discovered that allows full video to be processed as the
still photographs in the film. Video is shot in front of
a chroma wall, just as the still were in the previous
method. Next, a still image of each frame is exported as
a separate file, resulting in thirty separate pictures
for each second of video. Using the Automate feature in
Photoshop as previously described, all frames are
processed in the color pencil method. After Effects is
then used to import all still images as an image

sequence, which reconstructs the images into a video file. This new video now has full motion along with the color pencil look. Also, the background will be empty, allowing for anything to be composited behind the video file. This discovery was both exciting and disheartening in that developing this method will help any filmmaker use this technique more effectively. "A Story for Stephanie," however, was too far into the editing process when this discovery was made to benefit from the technique. Nonetheless, the finished piece derived from this production is a successful artist piece of mixed media that accomplished all goals the producer had for the film. These new techniques and growth fulfill the third and final goal set forth by the producer.

However, there are some aspects of the finished film that do not meet all standards of the filmmaker artistic standard In particular, the voice acting for the GNOME character, while brilliant, does not match the physical appearance of the character on screen. Altering the GNOME's appearance so that he was smaller on the frame was attempted, but the proportions of the actor forced the scale to remain as it was shot. If time and budget

restraints were less stringent, a new actor could portray the GNOME with a smaller stature. Another solution to this problem would be to record another audio track of the GNOME'S section of the script. Better direction to the actor would rectify this problem and another session would relieve this issue. Additionally, the second shot of the film, where the camera zooms and tilts between the houses into a sign is off a bit. (Figure 11, Appendix D) The physics of the shot were difficult to manage, with houses moving awkwardly in relation to the road and the sign. This was a quick shot and not distracting; yet upon multiple viewings, was an issue with the producer.

Conclusion

It could never be claimed that "A Story for Stephanie" is a perfect film, but few films are. After examining this process as both an artist and a technician, utilizing both creativity and scientific knowledge, it became clear that I achieved my goals set out at the start of this process. Melding and merging still photographs that were digitally altered with music and dialogue, I produced an actual film. I created an

original piece of art and was successful in sharing that art with an audience.

The synergy between art and science needed to produce a successful production could not be more evident than in this film. Untrained amateurs could not achieve the technical proficiency found in this film. The artistic sides of the piece: the actual creativity of generating the script, capturing the performances, even applying the makeup, are all areas that need artistic sensibilities to be performed in a proper manner. However, it is in the coming together of these two vastly different worlds that the magic of making movies really shines. Without one, the other cannot function. "A Story for Stephanie" epitomizes this belief, and stands out as an example of what can be accomplished with multimedia productions.

Producing "A Story for Stephanie" was truly a labor of love. This piece was by far the most difficult ever undertaken by the producer, but also one of the most rewarding. Much was learned during the course of this film, both in front of and behind the camera, at the

computer writing the screenplay, as well as editing and mixing the final cut.

These characters have existed in one form of another for over sixteen months, eliciting both love and hatred from the producer. STEPHANIE and her friends have been companion and albatross, friend and foil. And yet, now that they aren't around the office quite as much as before, I feel like I have lost an old friend. This was a rich and rewarding experience and one that no one who worked on this film will soon forget.

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Appendix A: DVD Contents

1. "A Story for Stephanie"

2. "Goodnight Sweetie"

3. "Z-Day"

4. "Fire Under the Mountain"

5. "Media Criticism"

Appendix B: Script

TITLE SCREEN

"Tales From Mythsville: "A Story for Stephanie"" by Joel B.

Slow dissolve to fly-by of a small town. Strange buildings
are interspersed with normal houses

        NARRATOR
    There is a land where imagination
    is a way of life. There is a
    nation made from a notion. There is
    a place where stories are born.

Zoom into Mythsville city sign.

        NARRATOR (CONT'D)
    There is a place called Mythsville.
    Everyone that lives in Mythsville
    is from one story or another.
    Everyone, that is, except
    Stephanie.

Whip pan to STEPHANIE'S house. STEPHANIE stands in the
foreground with her family in the distance. She is dressed
in bland cloths and looks disconnected.

        NARRATOR (CONT'D)
    All the people that Stephanie knows
    already have stories of their own.
    Her father is a famous detective

"The Case of the Missing Chips" in text comes on screen.
DAD, dressed in a suit, Sherlock Holmes hat. With a spyglass,
he examines a set of footprints that lead to STEPHANIE holding
her fathers chips. She Shrugs and smiles

        NARRATOR (CONT'D)
    Stephanie's MOTHER is a well know

witch with amazing powers!

Haunted house graphic behind MOTHER. SHE waves her wand and
a slice of pizza appears in her other hand. She takes a big
bite and smiles.

> NARRATOR (CONT'D)
> Stephanie's brother Clark is a
> Super hero sidekick.

CLARK, dressed in a cape and tights, shoots laser beams out
of his eyes and flies off screen.

> NARRATOR (CONT'D)
> Even Stephanie's baby sister has a
> story. She's the worlds youngest
> fairy god mother.

EMMA dressed as a fairy princess waves here star topped wand
and proclaims "Bibitty Bobity BOO!" Cut back to STEPHANIE,
looking sad.

> NARRATOR (CONT'D)
> But none of these stories were for
> Stephanie.

> STEPHANIE
> I've got to find a story of my own.
> But I don't know where to start!

DAD sits beside STEPHANIE and puts his arm around her.

> DAD
> Why don't you go to the library?
> That's where all the stories are
> kept. Maybe one will find you
> there.

Cut to STEPHANIE walking down road with her house and family
in the background.

> NARRATOR
> And so Stephanie set out to find a

story all her own. She hadn't gone
half a mile when...

A LASER BEAM blasts across STEPHANIE'S face. Cut to SPACEMAN,
wearing silver cloths and holding a laser pistol

                    SPACEMAN
          You won't get away this time
          Kalgon! I'm going to take you away
          to the prison plant Detention 12!

SPACEMAN stops next to STEPHANIE and looks around.

                    STEPHANIE
          Sir, who are you talking to?

                    SPACEMAN
          Not now, little girl. I'm on the
          hunt for the evil Kalgon!

                    STEPHANIE
          But I don't see anyone?

                    SPACEMAN
          You wouldn't! He's only visible
          with these special sunglasses...

SPACEMAN reaches to his face and realizes he has forgot his
glasses.

                    SPACEMAN (CONT'D)
          Not again! Being a science fiction
          hero is SO HARD!

SPACEMAN touches his chest and beams off screen.

                    STEPHANIE
          Well, I don't think I want to be in
          a Sci-fi story now.

STEPHANIE again begins her trek to the library.

                    NARRATOR

So again, Stephanie sets out to
find her place in Mythsville and a
story to call her own.

Something catches STEPHANIE's attention to her right. She
stops to take a look.

        COWBOY (O.S.)
EXCUSE ME! Little girl, can you
help me.

STEPHANIE sees a cowgirl tangled in her own lasso.

        COWBOY (CONT'D)
Hi there. Do you think you can help
me? I seem to have roped myself
here.

        STEPHANIE
What happened?

STEPHANIE begins untangling COWGIRL

        COWBOY
Well, I was rustling some steer
when a tornadee got stuck in my
lasso and 'fore ya know it...I'd
roped myself. What are you doin'
out these parts?

        STEPHANIE
I'm looking my own story.

        COWBOY
Well, you could be in westerns like
me. Sleep under the stars, ride
horses and such.

        STEPHANIE
That sounds like a lot of fun, but
I don't think it's MY story

COWGIRL and STEPHANIE shake hands and STEPH walking again.

                    NARRATOR
    ·   So the Cowgirl thanked Stephanie
           and sent her on her way. She could
           see the library in the distance
           when something...or someone bumped
           into her.

STEPHANIE and GNOME bump into each other. They both rub their
heads in pain

                    GNOME
           Sorry there, young miss. Didn't see
           you there. You wouldn't happen to
           have a ring for me?

                    STEPHANIE
           Ring?

                    GNOME
           Or was it a sword?

                    STEPHANIE
           Sword?

                    GNOME
           Magic Scroll?

                    STEPHANIE
           I'm sorry, I don't have any of
           those. I'm just going to the
           library.

                    GNOME
           For a book of spells no doubt.

                    STEPHANIE
           No, I'm just looking for a story of
           my own.

                    GNOME
           Would you care to join my quest to

find the mythical shield of Steve?
It is said to grant you the power
of...something

    STEPHANIE
Thank you, but I don't think that's
the story for me.

    GNOME
Suit yourself. But you're going to
kick yourself when I find the
sandals of Sammy.

The GNOME exists as STEPHANIE continues to the library.

    NARRATOR
After a day of walking and talking
and thinking and searching,
Stephanie finally arrived at the
library. However!?!

Cut to close-up of Library doors. "CLOSED FOR RENOVATION: See
you this Fall!"

    STEPHANIE
CLOSED!!! It can't be closed.

STEPHANIE sits on the ground and begins to sob.

    NARRATOR
Stephanie was lower than low.
Sadder than sad and sure that she
would never find a story of her
own.

    STEPHANIE
OH, I'll never find my story now!

AUTHOR walks to the library door, sees STEPHANIE and
approaches her.

    ARTHOR
Hey. You lost little girl?

                    STEPHANIE
No, well, not really. I just want
to find a story of my own.

                    ARTHUR
A story of your own?

                    STEPHANIE
One that is for me. One that fits
me!

                    ARTHUR
I see. Well, my name is Arthur and
I write stories. Why don't you
tell me about yourself and I'll see
if I can help you.

                    NARRATOR
Stephanie began to tell the man
about her day and the people she
met and the library. Everything.
She didn't leave a single bit out.
As she spoke, Arthur began taking
notes and drawing pictures. When
she had finished, Author patted her
head and smiled.

                    ARTHUR
Stephanie, don't you see. You don't
need to find your story because
you're already in it. What do you
think today has been. This is your
story Stephanie.

STEPHANIE looks puzzled, so AUTHOR stands and walks to the
library. He puts his notes into a slot and out pops a book.
He looks at the cover and hands it to STEPHANIE

                    STEPHANIE
What's this?

                    ARTHUR

This...is "A Story for Stephanie."

STEPHANIE looks down at her book and smiles the largest smile
any child has ever smiled.

>STEPHANIE
>This...it's my story. A story for
>me? About me?

>ARTHUR
>Why don't you read it and find out
>for yourself.

ARTHUR rubs her hair and exits. STEPHANIE sits to read her
book.

>NARRATOR
>From front to back, cover to cover,
>Stephanie sat and red her book.
>And when she reached the last page,
>she started again.
>She had found her story and All was
>right in Mythsville. For now at
>least...

Dissolve to a college shot of all the character's we've seen
with "The End"

>GNOME
>A-HA! The great and powerful spork
>of Greg! At last!!!

Appendix C: Story Boards

Storyboard for _Stories For Stephanie_ , page _1_
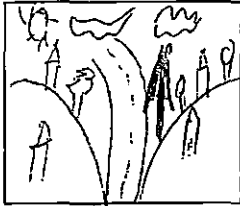
Wide Shot from above
Mountain Scene w/ houses
+ trail Slow Zoom Across
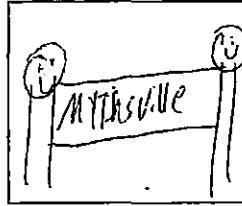
Zoom Ends on Town
Sign.
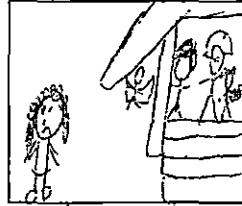
Cut to Single house
Family in background
Laughing etc

Close up on Stephanie

Text appears on c/
Footprints "Telling" it
Story
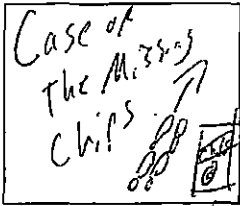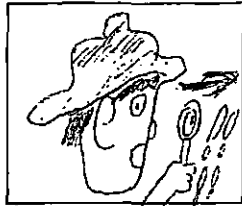
Picks up sff glass
+ follows the footfalls
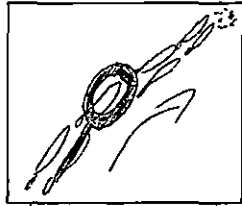
Foot steps follow along to
Counts on floor
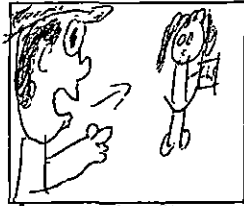
He sees that Stephanie
has taken his chips

C/U on steps she
Smiles + shrugs
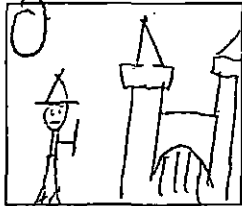
Mom stands in front
of a Haunted Castle

She lowers her head...
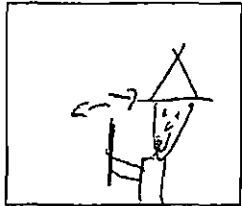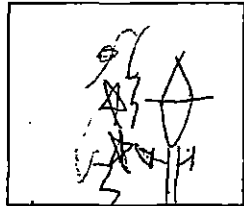
And conjures herself
a slice of pizza

Clark stands in a
"Super Pose"
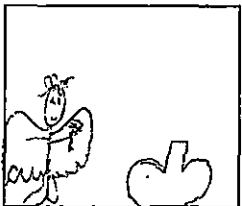
Clark shoots lasers out
of his eyes, Turns +
flys off frame

Emma, dressed as a fairy
princess uses her wand to
make a Pumpkin grow...

And grow + grow

Storyboard for Stories for Stephanie **, page** 2
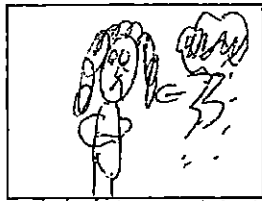
Row 1:
- He Cut to Stephanie looking sad Stem Clous start coming @ her.
- Mom uses her Magic to seal the clouds Away
- Dad sits next to Steph. puts his arm around her.
- Stephanie deportsas her Family Watches on
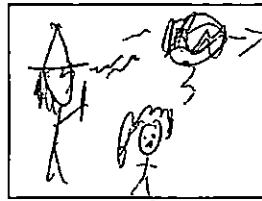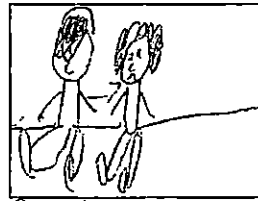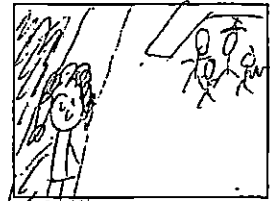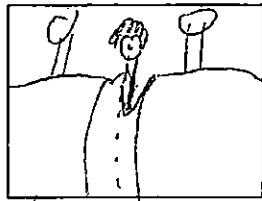
Row 2:
- Stephanie Walks over the top of a hill being silly
- A laser beam flys past her head
- She looks in the direction the beam came from to see
- Space man running @her He is wearing a space Suit, no Helmet
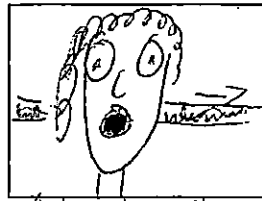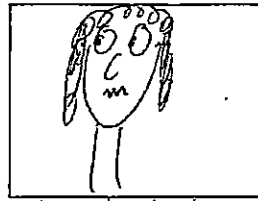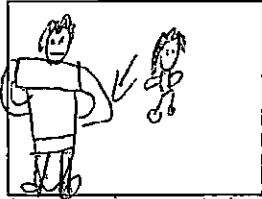
Row 3:
- He looks in to the distance, Stephanie Approaches him
- He holds out his hand in a dismissive manner
- She looks around trying to see the thing, but doesn't.
- Space man CU. looking annoyed.
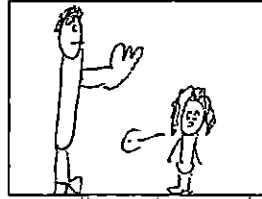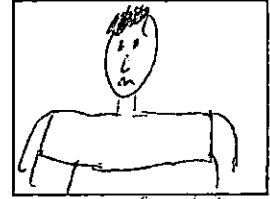
Row 4:
- Reaches for his space glasses + realizes he lost them!
- Exasperated, Space man Ixcame Back to his Ship.
- Close up on Steph looking frustrated
- Steph before walking away with a wood femie actor: The road
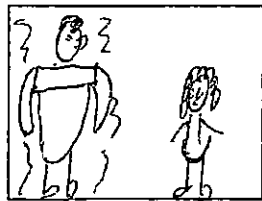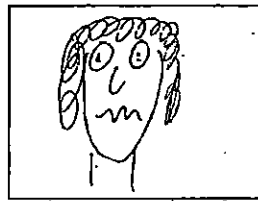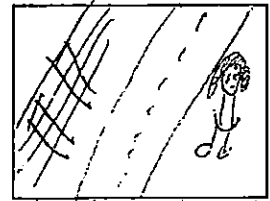
Storyboard for _Stories for Stephanie_, page _3_
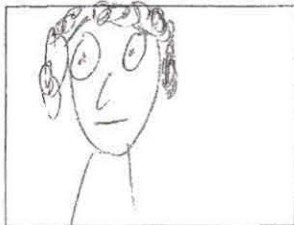
Startled Stephanie runs inside who's yelling for help	In the distance a Cowgirl is tied up, screaming for help	Finally runs she explns how she got tangled	Stephanie begins untying the Cowgirl
Close up on CowGirl	Close up at Stephanie looking up at Cowgirl	Cowgirl slumps under the floss	Close up on Steph. She looks thankful
They Shake hands Steph Turns back to the road	Stephanie walks down the road.	Until she runs into something.	Stephanie + the home sit on the ground, both rub their foreheads.
Clse on Gnome a Magic Ring appears over his head	a question mark over the Abs on Steph's CU.	Gnome w/a sword looking more hopeful	Sword shatters between them.
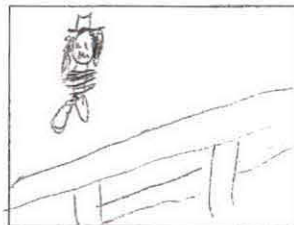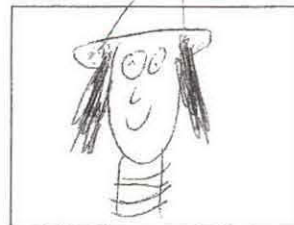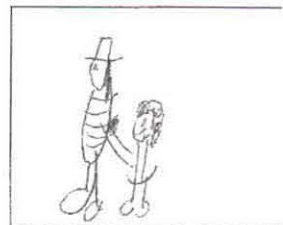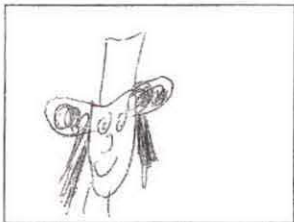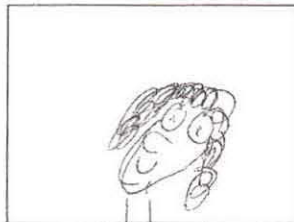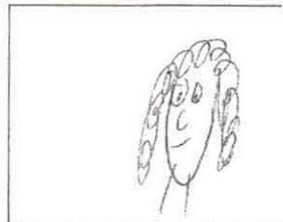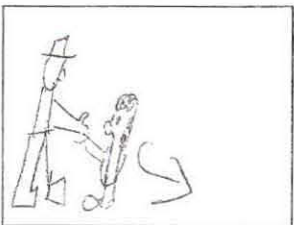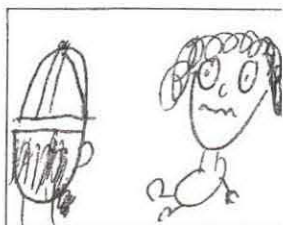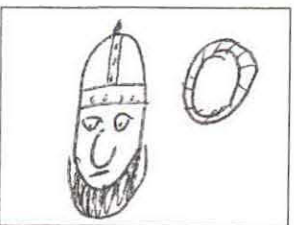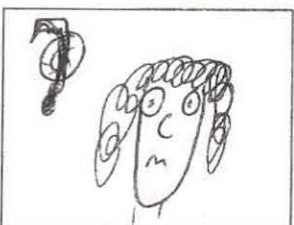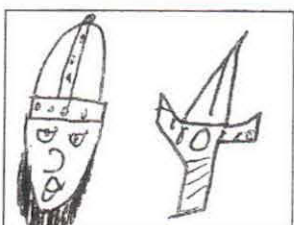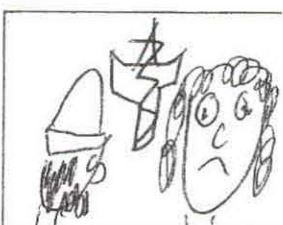
Storyboard for _Stories for Stephanie_ **, page** 4
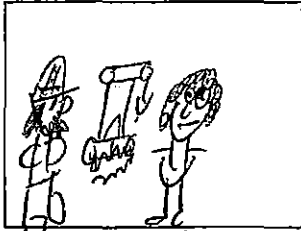
A Magic scroll unfolds before them, then bursts into flames
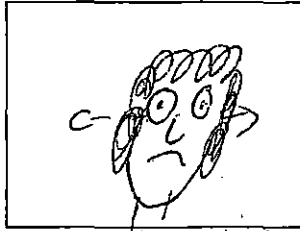
Steph shakes his head
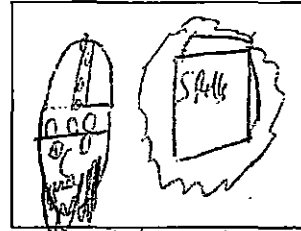
Magic ball over Gaines' shoulder, then rests easy in smoke
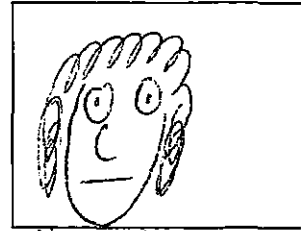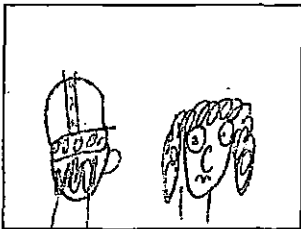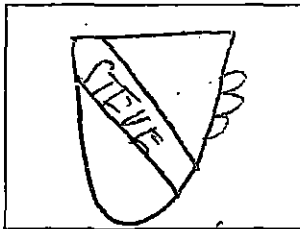
C/U on Stephanie

2-Shot

Shield of Steve full screen Gaines fingers effects on side
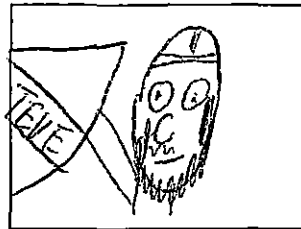
C/U on Gaines holding Shield
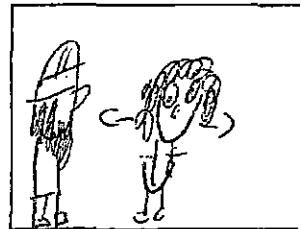
2-Shot. Steph shakes her head no—

C/U on Gaines
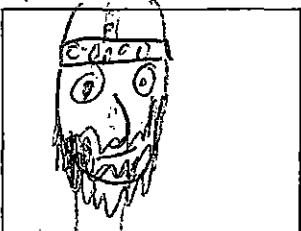
Stephanie on road

Wide Shot of Library
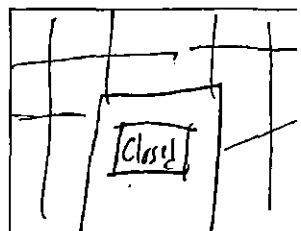
Zoom into Door Closed Sign Hangs out
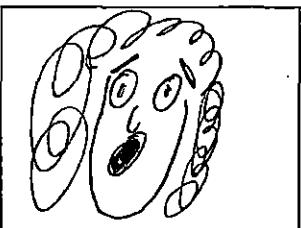
C/U on Stephanie in Shock!

Library wide shot— Stephanie walks up then drops her head & crosses

Stephan sits on Steps, sobs.

Arthur enters from Left

Storyboard for _Stories for Stephanie_____, page __5__
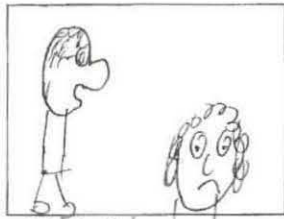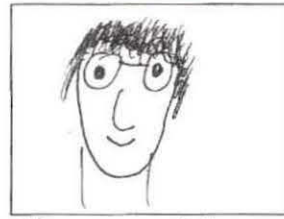
Mid-J Shot.	Close-up on Arthur, Smilling	C/U on Steph, still crying	C/U on Arthur.

(Alternate Between these 3 X L!)
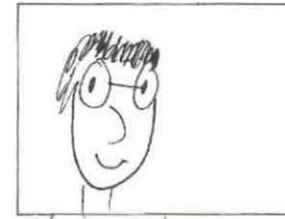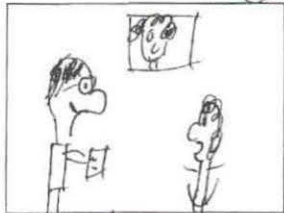
2-Shot. Arthur writes as Stephaine tells him about her day, Video Box in middle	Stephane Close-up. Continues telling her story	C/U on Arthur. He confirms writing.	2-Shot. Arthur rustles Stephanie's Hair.
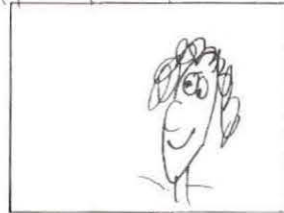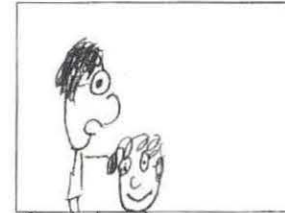
Close on Arthur	Stephanie Close, looking confused	Arthur takes his notes & walks up the stairs to the Library Door	Close up on "Special Story Making Machine" Slot on Door. Arthur puts paper in
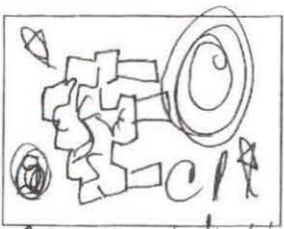
Gears & symbols clash! Clash on Screen	The book escapes the slot. Arthur Retrieves it.	Mid-J shot. Arthur Gives Stephane the Book.	C/U on Stephanie, excited
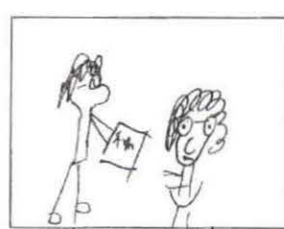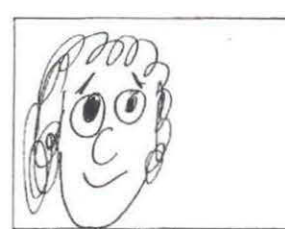
Storyboard for _Story for Stephanie_ , page _6_
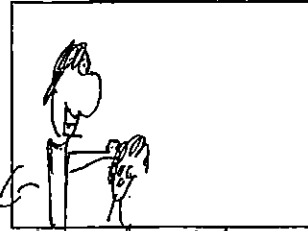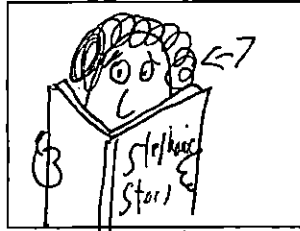
Arthur tabs Stephanie on the head, then exits	Close-Up on Stephanie. Her eyes fly back and forth,	Zoom out of Stephanie to a Lib. Station.	Zooming out...
And finally, All zoomed out to match 1st Shot. "THE END."	Credits	Gnome Nis on fame, holding his magical staff	
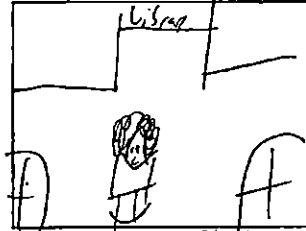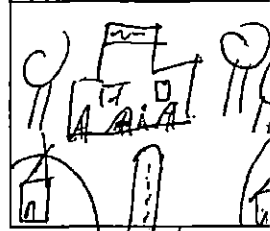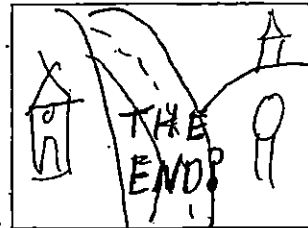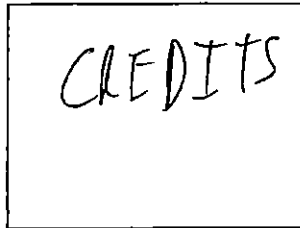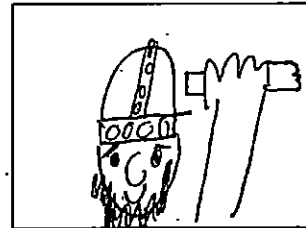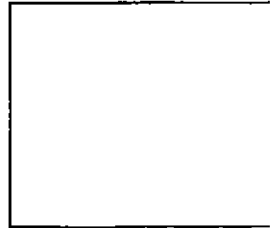
Appendix D
Figures

Figure 1: GNOME Makeup

Figure 2: Cowboy Mustache
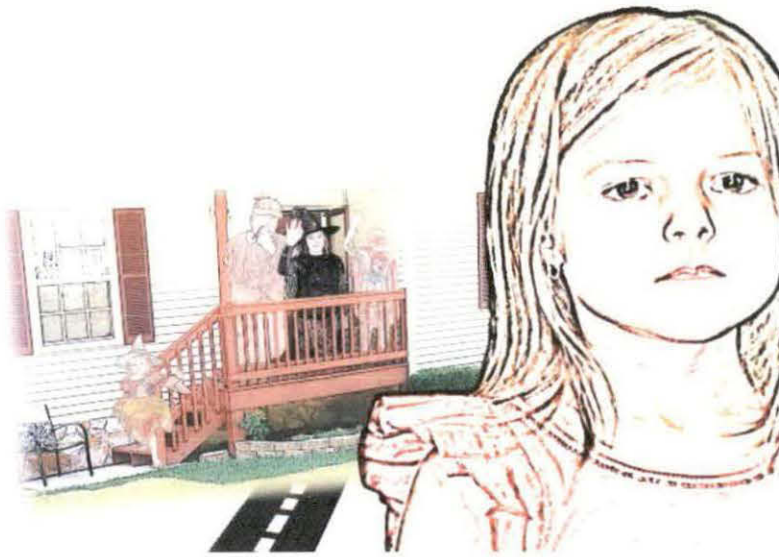
Figure 3: SPACEMAN Makeup

Figure 4: The BARDS

Figure 5: 3-D movement in a 2-D world

Figure 6: Cylendar in After Effects used to create Tornado. Note the flying Cow.

Figure 7: Star Field Effect

Figure 8: Example of Live Type effects. Can you find the Easter Egg?

Figure 9: 12 inch Design graphics used for planet animations.

Figure 10: Gnome Scene

Figure 8: Street Sequence