



CREATE

Canterbury Research and Theses Environment

Canterbury Christ Church University's repository of research outputs

<http://create.canterbury.ac.uk>

Copyright © and Moral Rights for this thesis are retained by the author and/or other copyright owners. A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge. This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the copyright holder/s. The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given e.g. Malek, D. (2015) Exploring machinima: the impact of virtual filmmaking practice on the creative process. M.A. thesis, Canterbury Christ Church University.

Contact: create.library@canterbury.ac.uk



Exploring Machinima: The Impact of Virtual Filmmaking Practice on the
Creative Process

By
Darius Malek

Canterbury Christ Church University

Thesis submitted
for the degree of MA by Research

2015

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	Page 4
Submission Inventory	Page 4
Abstract.....	Page 5
Production Diary	Page 6 - 77
Conclusion	Page 78 - 82
References.....	Page 83 - 84

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Craig Smith, my first supervisor who I developed a fantastic relationship with during the study of my MA. Craig was with me every step of the way, and I am truly grateful for his assistance and contribution throughout the last year. He pushed me further than I believed I could go and I am really proud of what we managed to achieve together.

I sincerely thank Darren Ambrose, my second supervisor who contributed to the theoretical side of my MA. Darren helped me during a very tough period of the MA; it was his assistance that gave life to my Journal and the importance of my research questions, and for that I am truly grateful.

I express my sincere gratitude to Ashley Potter, a valuable friend who provided the majority of the voice acting for my machinima film, and also worked with me to create a musical piece for my soundtrack. I am very grateful for his considerable contribution to my project.

I would like to thank Canterbury Christ Church University, especially the School of Media, Art & Design who provided me with all the resources I required to complete my research. I am truly thankful for the opportunity to study at this University. Lastly, I would like to thank Ellie Russell, who constantly presented feedback on the work I produced, and was always there to offer help whenever required; her contribution was truly appreciated.

Submission Inventory

Production Diary (16,625 words)

Practical Element – DVD of machinima film ‘The Cure’

Abstract

Machinima is a relatively new field of filmmaking practice. Therefore, it is vital to deepen our understanding regarding its creative potential and suitability as an expressive film production tool. This research MA is focused on investigating machinima from the perspective of a filmmaker, who utilises existing videogame software to produce original short films. I aim to create a practical film that will be 20-25 minutes in length; which will be constructed from recorded footage captured within a heavily modified version of The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim. The entire process will be documented through a reflective 'production diary' that aims to discover precisely what is required to create a machinima film, while responding to a number of research questions. The production diary will also reflect upon some of the processes and capabilities of machinima as a filmmaking tool. The research posits that machinima creation is a technically challenging process that poses a number of difficulties for the aspiring filmmaker. Conversely, it also provides a number of opportunities to create digital films without the need for large production teams and prohibitive budgets.

Production Diary

Journal Entry 01 –MA Overview - December 18th

I will be creating a practice-based machinima film (the use of computer graphics to create a story/cinematic production), that enables me to create a film using computer characters to assume the role of actors (fully voiced) that would otherwise be very difficult due to budget constraints.

Matt Kelland argues that machinima ‘puts the resources required to make exciting movies into the hands of literally millions of people worldwide. With far greater potential than the simple video camera, it can bring an entire film studio into the home, complete with sets, actors, and special effects’ (Kelland et al, 2005). Hugh Hancock suggests that machinima opens up innovative forms of filming that would otherwise be financially and technically difficult. He is aware that ‘you can already do all these things in conventional 3D animation packages’, but also states that ‘normal 3D has two problems: It’s expensive (\$900 minimum for a good 3D package, and much more for most industry-standard tools), and more problematic’ (Hancock and Ingram, 2007).

Consequently, I intend to direct my research towards investigating machinima from the perspective of a filmmaker who utilises existing videogame software to produce short films. Cynthia Chris notes: ‘New media scholars have praised machinima as a venue for low-floor, high-ceiling’ production’ (Chris et al, 2013). I agree with that view and I therefore intend to explore and demonstrate some of the more complicated aspects of creating machinima, in producing a short film that aims to reach ‘the top of the ceiling’ in terms of both production quality and narrative.

This type of research is important because multiple facets of the video game industry are rapidly advancing, for example, the tools that are available to the end users. The users are now able to personally manipulate these video games to create new experiences and narratives that perhaps even the game developers themselves would never have predicted. It is possible to deconstruct and reconstruct new narratives, using existing footage to create something new, much like a form of montage.

One example is that it is possible to use the characters within these video games as actors; each given their own personality and voice actor to create a number of different narratives. There have been recent discussions on the possibilities of using existing footage to create something new, and it is now officially recognised as a form of art/filmmaking titled 'machinima.' There is much research to be carried out on this subject, and many possibilities. One of my ideas is to combine both film and video game footage to create a new narrative experience.

- **Problems**– The main problem machinima has are that due to it being a new medium, it has a lot of uncertainties surrounding it. It is still largely up for debate on what exactly can and cannot be done with machinima, and how or where it fits into the industry. Can machinima be artistic? Can it be experimental?
- **What's out there?** - There have been a number of recent machinima pieces that have been hugely popular and have a large fan-base such as Red vs. Blue (2003). Some of these pieces do indeed reject conventional filmmaking practices, however, many of these films are also trying to emulate the film industry, rather than embracing the fact they are different. This is not to say that doing so is wrong, but it does mean that there are many possibilities left unexplored within machinima.
- **Approach** - The approach that this MA will take is to create something that would be extremely difficult, or even impossible (at least, without a large budget) in the film industry, allowing the opportunity to take advantage of every reason to use machinima, whilst also using techniques and skills found in film.
- **Result** - The outcome of this approach aims to prove that machinima is more than just a tool for mimicking the film industry by using computer graphics with a lower budget, but rather if used correctly, can become something else entirely.

Research Questions:

1. Can machinima be used as an experimental filmmaking tool?
2. Can machinima be used for artistic and 'personal' narratives? (as opposed to commercial)
3. Can machinima reject or subvert 'classic' forms of machinima landscapes/environments?
4. Can machinima be combined with other forms of filmmaking?

Plan of Action:

The MA by Research practical film will be 20-25 minutes in length; this will be created using recorded footage from a video game, The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim (2011). This will be made easier through mods (Modifications), which are created by other people to modify the original game, thus adding new features and possibilities within the game. This gameplay will be recorded using a video capture program called 'Action!' This will then be exported for editing in Avid, and will subsequently be subject to further modifications created in Photoshop and After Effects.

Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim will be used because it allows many different modifications to the original game; this will give me greater control over the machinima that I create. For example, it allows you to import new graphics and landscapes, therefore allowing the 'actor' to travel from one environment (original Skyrim world) to another (such as real life or another game world). This will all be documented in a journal that will contain my reflection on the process, including the outcome and new directions/ideas that may arise from this.

Journal Entry 02 – Pre-Christmas Update - December 21st

I wanted to submit a MA progress update to both my supervisors before Christmas, to give them an idea of where my MA was at this moment in time, and to show that the path leading to my desired result was now becoming much clearer. Therefore, much of this production diary is very descriptive of what is going on in the screen-grabs, rather than evaluating them myself.

For the creative practice I will be subverting classic forms of machinima landscapes/environments, which will be done by splitting the screen into multiple 'sections. The character can then travel between each screen, interacting with a number of landscapes and characters. However, as the character leaves one section of the screen, that section does not become inactive and/or go black; it is possible that events could still occur within that screen without the main character present, and the character can even revisit previous locations that may have changed since he/she was last in them. Below are some examples of how this could work, however, please note that these are just examples and do not represent the final film, in which the graphics and quality will be much higher.



The above screen grab shows 3 sections of an inn, each screen acting as their own 'camera', the left being the lobby (screen 1), the right being a bedroom (screen 3), and the middle (screen 2) being the stairs (route) between screen 1 and 3. This allows the opportunity for this scene to show a number of sections of this location simultaneously. One such scenario could show the main character asleep in screen 3, when a bar-brawl suddenly breaks out in screen 1; the main character could then wake up and begin to travel to screen 1 through screen 2, while the bar brawl is viewable during this whole travel period. This may not necessarily be limited to three screens, and it could be possible to add more 'cameras' and for example, have five screens.



In this example, the three screens show separate areas of a village. The arrows show the ways in which the character could start in the middle screen, and then have a choice of travel between right and left. However, while it is possible that the viewer would not know the route the character would take, it is unlikely I will provide any choice for the viewer, as this is a non-interactive film.



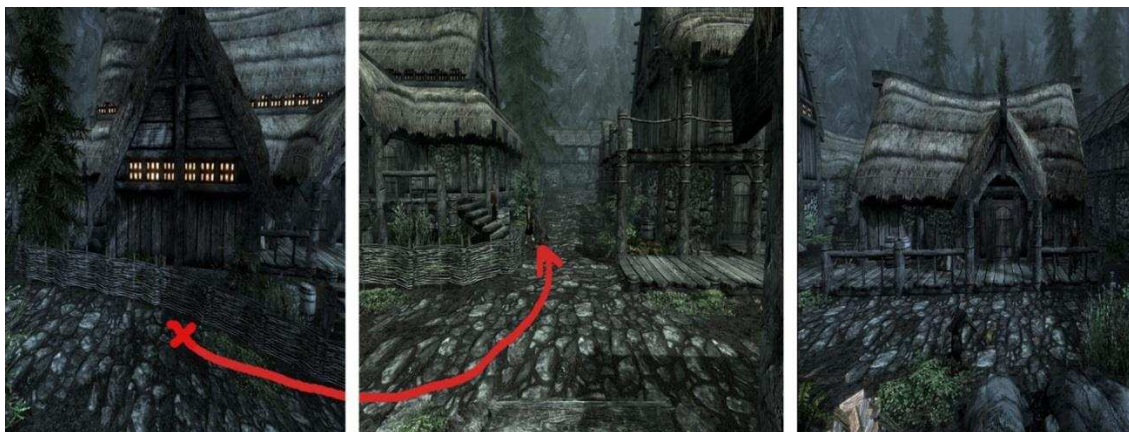
In this last example, we assume that the character had travelled to the left screen, before then coming back onto the middle screen, however this time approaching the young child to engage in conversation. This is an example that presents the character revisiting a screen that is not the same area he was in before, and new opportunities would thus be present.

Journal Entry 03 – First entry of the year - January 7th

My first task of the New Year involved taking a look at the work I had most recently done. This proved useful, as it quickly became evident that there were problems with some of these early prototypes. For example, here is one of my previous screen-grabs again:



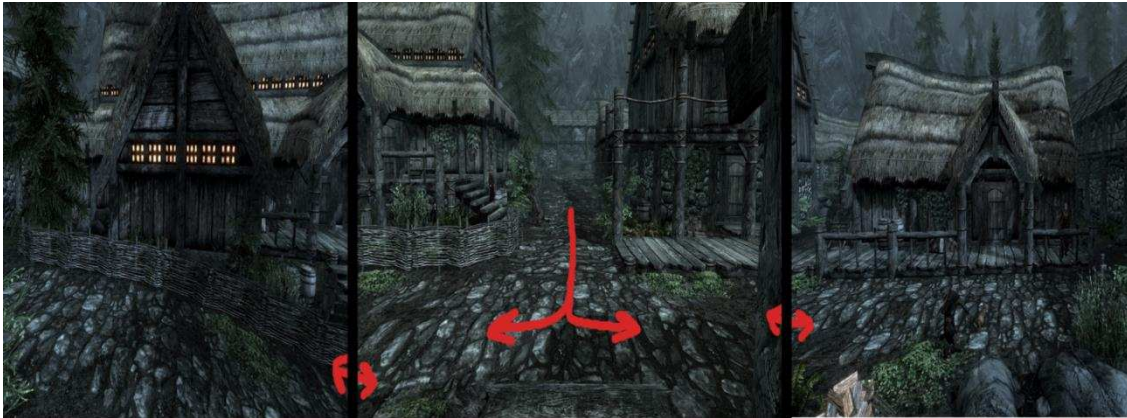
The problem with this demo is that it is possible that the viewer would become confused as to what is a different screen and what is not, with just a black border separating the screens. After speaking with my supervisor, who was in agreement with this, we made a decision to test the same scenario with white borders instead.



This is the result of replacing the original black borders with white ones. While this is definitely an improvement, considering that the viewer will easily recognise the multiple screens, I still feel that this needs more work and aim to come up with another way I could do this to greater effect.

Journal Entry 04 – Split-Screen issues - January 13th

This week I have been experimenting with different methods of ‘filming.’ One issue that arose is that due to the three-way split-screen, some of the minor details are hard to see.



As is evident in the above image from my previous journal entry, it can be difficult to see exactly what is going on when all three screens are of equal size. I have been thinking of ways to solve this problem, and perhaps one solution could be to have a rule where I am prohibited from having three equal sized screens, much like one of my earlier examples which included a smaller screen as well as two bigger ones.



Here it is easier to see the action on the two bigger screens, with the main action taking place on the left screen, which is why this screen is the biggest. While originally I tried using multiple screens of similar sizing, I will be required to write the script in a way

that the smaller screens portray less important events occurring, thereby acting as more of a 'path' that the character must take.

Reflection - Split-Screen Concept

The split-screen effect is an interesting concept of using advanced filmmaking techniques in machinima. However, split-screen that runs side by side is already a complicated filmmaking technique- add in the complexities of machinima and it would be very difficult to accomplish with a one man team. The MA machinima film will therefore reject this particular idea, as it would be a very time consuming task, and has a high risk of impacting the overall quality of the film.

Journal Entry 05 – New Year Meeting - January 21st

Yesterday I carried out the first meeting of the year with my Supervisor; this was an extensive catch up of progress made during the Christmas break, and a discussion of the next direction in my MA. Below is a copy of the notes that I took down during this meeting:

The journal is an important area of the MA; therefore it would be beneficial to include more detail than i had captured previously, such as:

- In-depth tutorials/walkthroughs of how the mods are used and implemented within a machinima piece
- Video tutorials/footage of a machinima scene/piece being created, such as character placement or creation
- My experiences of learning new mods, rather than just how to use ones I am experienced with
- Changes of direction within the MA itself, and any influences I may have come across

Some further research into potentially essential mods such as:

- UV Unwrap
- Texture Mapping

- Camera Assist
- New Characters/Sounds

A particularly useful technique that could save a lot of time would be to research using existing dialogue found within the game, for the following reasons:

- Existing library of narrative
- Re-using existing dialogue (saving time)
- No need to use extra voice actors

Lastly, we discussed a new method of creative strategy:

Journal > Mods > Short Piece (1-2 minutes) > Reflect > Repeat.

Therefore, this journal will now consist of the whole journey I take throughout my MA, rather than just the issues that arise from the study. I will be documenting my experience with a new mod within the next few days, and plan to experiment with a number of mods over the next few weeks. However, I also plan to offer tutorials for the mods that I am familiar with; this will give some insight to those who are not aware of what is involved in creating machinima.

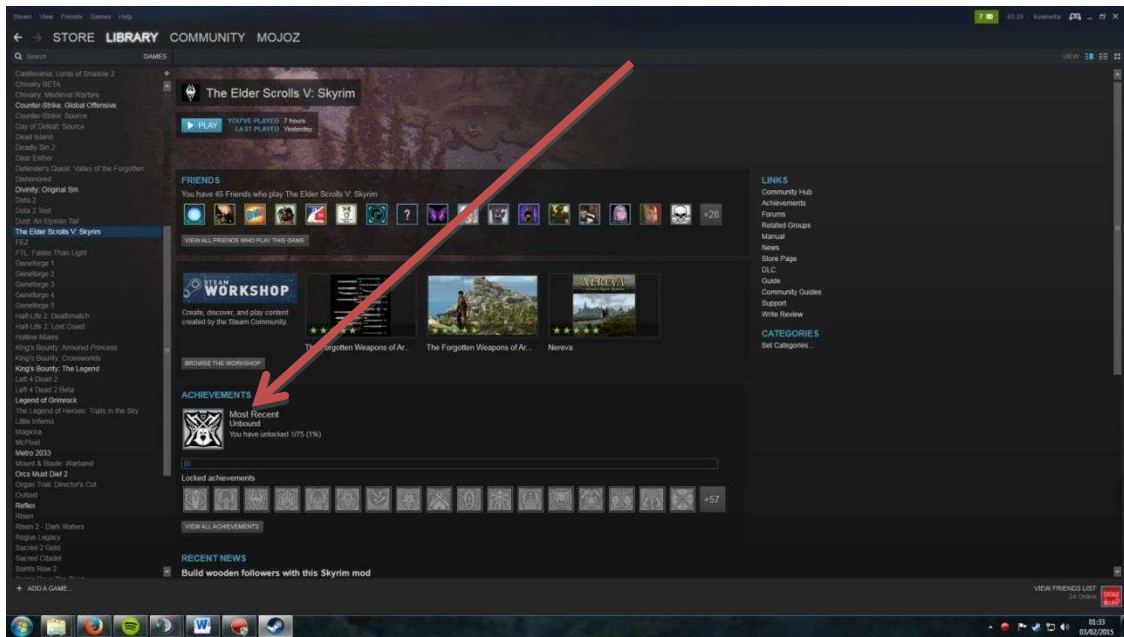
Journal Entry 06 – Modding Tutorial - January 23rd

I felt that it would be useful to document the process of modding Skyrim before experimenting with new mods. Therefore, this journal entry will explain how you download and then enable mods in the game.

There are two popular methods for modding Skyrim. One of them is to visit www.nexusmods.com/skyrim, where you can download your chosen mod manually. However, this also means that you will have to install it yourself, find the correct folders and place the correct files in them. This is not easy if you are a beginner, and it is also more time consuming than the alternative method.

The second (and easier) method is through the steam workshop; this is my preferred method for modding my game, as it will automatically download and install the mods to the correct location. As a result, it is much easier to get them running, and eliminates

potential mistakes that can be made when manually installing. To locate the steam workshop, first you will need to launch Steam. You will then need to locate your games library and find The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim. Once selected, you must click 'browse the workshop' as shown below.

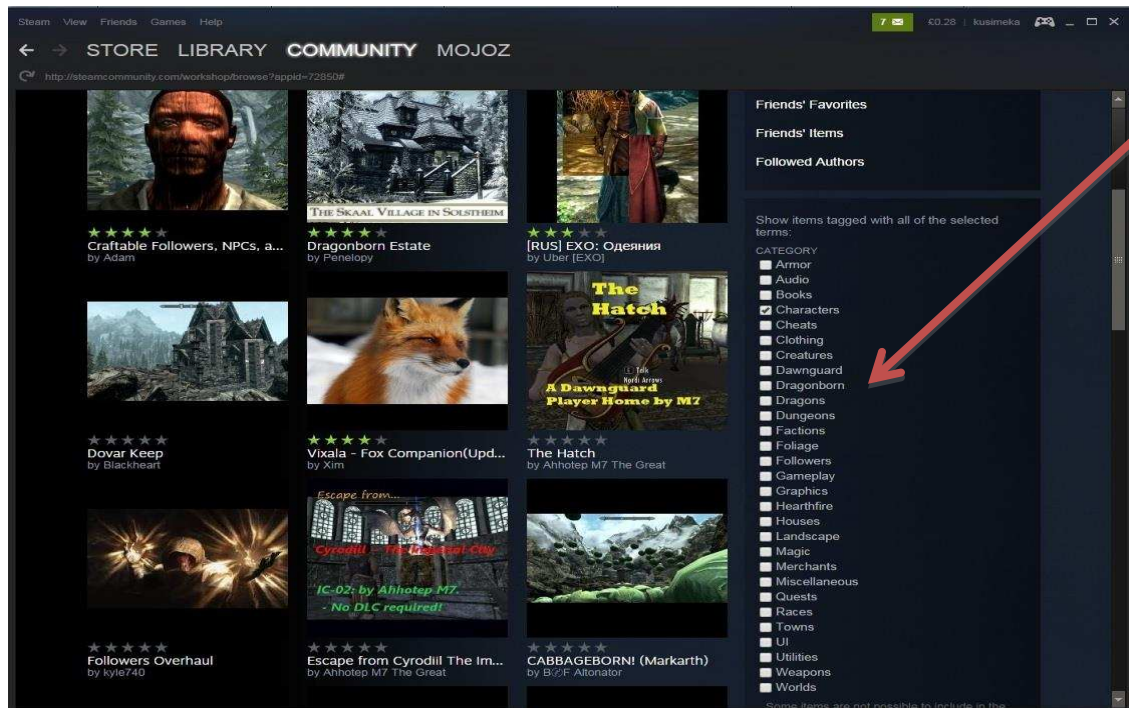


You will now be in the Steam Workshop exclusively for Skyrim mods.



The Steam Workshop for Skyrim

There are many mods here, 24,433 to be exact. It is unlikely that you would want to look through all of these to find the correct mod for you; therefore you need to narrow this number down. For example, if you want to find a mod that adds new characters to the world of Skyrim, you can hover over to the category section on the right side of the workshop, where you can tick the characters box.



Once the characters category is ticked, all the mods shown now will be related, however you may need to narrow this down further.



To do so, you need the 'Sort by' drop down menu, where you can view the mods in order of their popularity. This could be within the last week, month or even the last year. You can also sort them by their rating- this is particularly useful because there are a number of mods which do not work very well, might not be finished or perhaps don't even work at all. Therefore, by identifying the top rated mods, it is likely that these will be the most complete and functional.

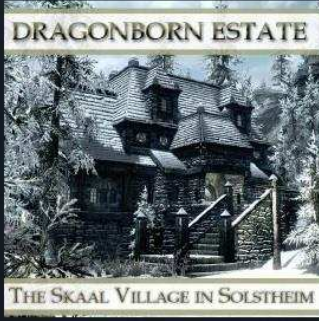

Once you have chosen your mod, you will be taken to the description page where you can find out more information. In this guide, I will use the 'Dragonborn Estate' mod as an example.

The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim > Workshop > Penelopy's Workshop

Dragonborn Estate

★★★★☆ 43 ratings

Description Discussions 0 Comments 27 Change Notes



Category: Characters Dawnguard Followers Houses Merchants

File Size: 0.630 MB
Posted: 30 Jan @ 3:46pm
Updated: 1 Feb @ 12:53pm
4 change notes (view)

Rate Favorite Share Add to Collection

Subscribe to download Dragonborn Estate [+ Subscribe](#)

CREATED BY:
Penelopy
View all shared files

USABLE IN:
The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim
View Workshop

DESCRIPTION

You will need Dawnguard, Dragonborn, and Hearfire for this mod to work.

The Skaal Village is a small Nordic settlement located in the icy tundra of northern Solstheim. You will find this house there. Fast travel there using the map marker.

On this page you will find out everything you need to know about the mod, including any requirements that there may be use it. You can also read the comments section to find out what other users have to say about the mod, this ensures that it has been working correctly and won't be a waste of your time. It is also possible that the page may contain screenshots and/or a trailer video for the mod, which is the case with 'Dragonborn Estate'. Once you have read through this page and are happy that you would like to download and use the mod, simply click the 'Subscribe' button which will automatically download and install the mod to your game.

The next step is to go back to your Steam library and relocate The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim. Instead of accessing the Steam workshop, you will now click 'Play'.



You will then be greeted by the above ‘launch screen’; here you have a number of different options before launching your game. However, we are only interested in the modding aspect, and as you can see there is a message here that says ‘Finished synchronizing subscribed mods!’ which lets you know that all your mods have finished downloading and are up-to-date (if they are not then they will be updated automatically.) You will be required to click ‘Data Files’ to access the mod section of this menu.



You will then see a list of all your installed mods, here you can turn them on and off, modify the load order, or delete them. It is important to check this screen every time you install a new mod, as a tick under 'Load?' will ensure that the mod is enabled. This allows you to turn on and off mods as you please, which is particularly useful if you only need a certain mod for one scene. For example you could have 'Customizable Camera' enabled for one scene, which you could then un-tick once the scene was completed and you wanted to go back to the default camera. It is also important to note that not all mods will work together. Therefore, it may be required to only have some mods running at any given time.

Reflection - Mod Process

The modding community involves several sub communities. For example, there are mods that only focus on improving gameplay within the video game, and there are mods which focus on machinima. The wealth of available mods has enabled me to find creative solutions to issues that otherwise could have been very problematic, or even impossible, to overcome using machinima as my main production tool. The machinima modding community is very tight-knit, and when a mod that targets a certain problem is developed, it is shared with the entire community.

However, there are also negative aspects of the modding process. For example, when the mod count begins to increase, so does the potential risk of mods being incompatible with each other, which can cause the game to become unstable or not work at all. It is also important to be aware that every mod used requires extra resources from the computer, and when many mods are being used at once, it is possible that the computer will struggle to accommodate them all. This could cause a number of issues, such as general slowdown, crashes and glitches.

Journal Entry 08 – Halo Advertisement in Machinima - January 25th

Recently I saw a television advertisement for Halo: The Master Chief Collection (2014) which is a collection of all the Halo games. What caught my attention was that the entire advertisement was made using machinima. Much like my 'Gun-Song' example I created in my third year at university where I used gun sounds to create a musical piece,

this advertisement was using in-game sound effects from guns, explosions, and heads being battered to imitate the song 'We Will Rock You' by Queen.

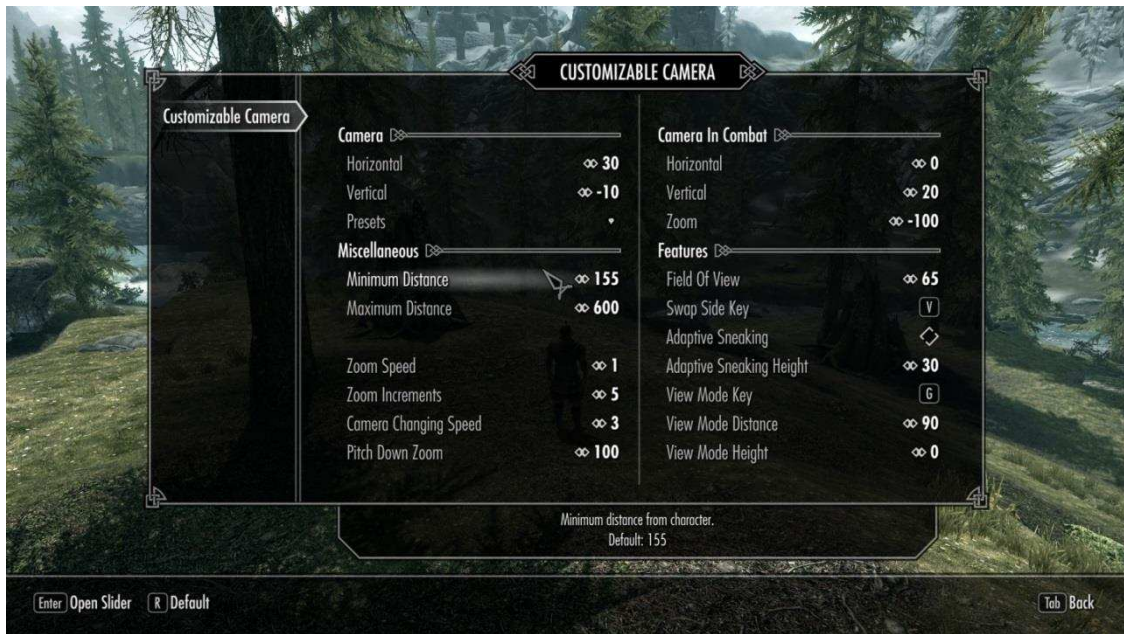
This advertisement was very well received; and currently has over 2 million views on YouTube with a 98.5% like rate. What is important to note here is that the company behind this advertisement is Microsoft, one of the richest companies in the entire world, with all the money at their disposal to create a cinematic advertisement for their biggest gaming franchise. Instead, they chose to advertise it with machinima. I am sure that the reduced costs were a big bonus for an advertisement like this; however, I'm not so sure this was the main reason, as perhaps it could be for smaller companies who don't have a ready amount of funds at their disposal.

This proves that even when cost is not an issue, Microsoft chose to advertise their game in this manner. This is great news for people like me, because an advertisement like this could be created by a single person, and shows how far machinima has come: being the choice not only for the reduced cost (although I am sure this is a potential factor) but also for the effect it can have on the viewer, who want to be entertained while also seeing what the gameplay has to offer.

Journal Entry 09 – Customisable Camera - January 27th

Machinima requires a large amount of time setting up the camera; this can be very difficult, especially when the camera options are highly limited. I plan to document a short machinima scene soon, to showcase the process. However, for now I have been searching for Mods that could help me set up a variety of Camera angles. In my most recent search I came across 'Customizable Camera'; therefore this journal entry will cover my experience with this mod.

The general purpose of this mod is to increase the control the user has over the camera, allowing you to zoom in or out with much more control than before and change the angles of the camera. To access the extra camera controls, you must locate the Mod Settings Menu, where you are greeted with a number of options.

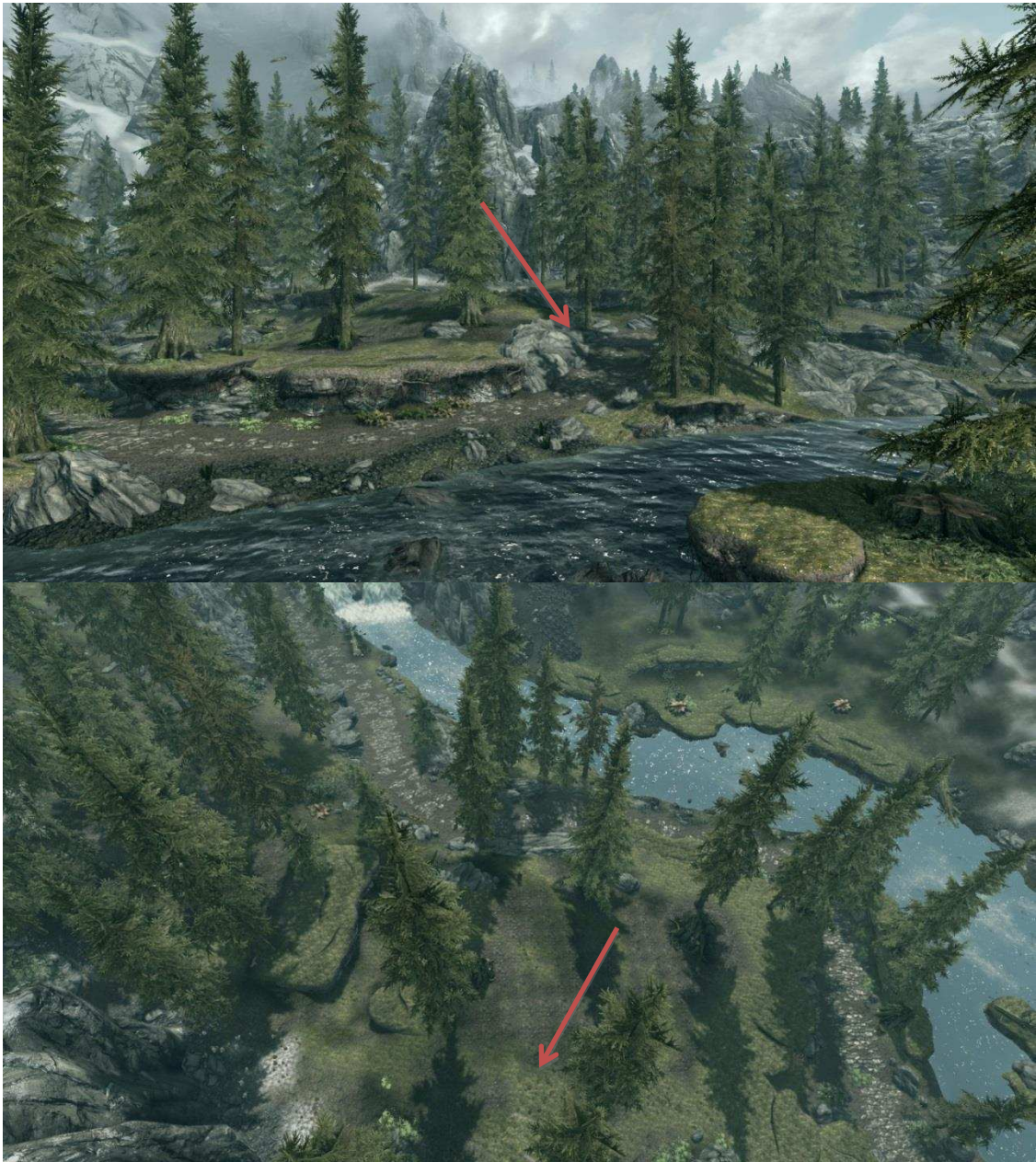


The first feature that I wanted to test was how much more I could zoom out (while still behind the character). To do this, I chose to increase 'Maximum Distance' from 600 to 1000, which was the highest it allowed me to go.



The screenshots above show the default maximum distance (top) and the new distance with the mod (bottom). As you can see in these examples, the modded distance is almost double that of the original, this is very useful for scenes that may require a larger view of the action on-screen. This is a positive result, but I felt that I still needed more. The machinima I want to create will require an even higher maximum distance. Typing 'TFC' into the console enables 'fly mode' so you can freely 'fly' around the world, which is particularly useful for establishing shots. However, I wanted it to be possible to retain focus on my character, giving me an easier method to keep the camera 'locked' onto the action.

As I experimented with this mod some more, I discovered the ‘view’ setting. While this was intended for an overview of the world/area, by manipulating the settings I managed to get some good results.



In the previous screenshots, the camera has zoomed out quite a lot; however, it is still locked onto my character by using the view mode key (the arrows show where the character is). Please note that the images have been shrunk so the character is difficult to see. The top screenshot shows the potential for an establishing shot which could then slowly zoom into the character, allowing whole scene to be seamless, rather than having to cut from the establishing shot to the character. The bottom screenshot is shot from a

completely different angle. While it is unlikely that I would shoot a scene this way, this technique could be particularly useful if I needed an overview of a large-scale battle. Another useful feature of this mod is that thanks to the settings menu, I can keep the camera placement consistent between scenes by using the same settings.

Reflection - Customisable Camera Mod

The Customisable Camera mod will enable me to shoot machinima in ways that were simply not possible before, with a much greater scope for customization. I can now zoom out much further than before, adjust the camera angles to fit the scene, and even create establishing shots with the option to slowly zoom into the action.

Previously, shooting a simple scene would require a large amount of time manipulating the camera due to the low zoom out distance, therefore I would need to have my character in first-person view to film another character that I had set up to act in the same scene, making it much more difficult because I had to program that character. This involved a long process of trial and error. While I will still be required to program a number of characters; I can now use my first-person character to exact direct control.

I will definitely be using this mod in my machinima, as it has reduced my filming time significantly. I still feel that I need a bit more control, such as being able to run my character towards the camera, which is not currently possible. However, I am sure that could be solved through the use of another mod.

Journal Entry 10 – Improving Graphical Quality Part 1 - January 30th

The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim was released on November 11th, 2011. The game is now visually out-dated, several graphical advancements have been made since Skyrim launched, including the release of the new generation of console systems, PlayStation 4 (2013) and Xbox One (2013). Therefore, I have been searching for mods that could improve the graphical quality of my Skyrim game, and as a result, increase the quality of the machinima I create.

The first mod I discovered was called ‘Enhanced Lights and FX’, this caught my attention immediately because I am highly aware that Skyrim’s original lighting quality

is not very good. There are numerous areas where a few torches manage to light the entire room, even if there are obstacles blocking the light source. The lighting quality is also flat, and feels ‘fake’, resulting in a very unrealistic experience.

My initial impression after installing this mod was positive; not only did it make the way in which the torches light the rooms more realistic; it also dramatically increased the graphical quality of the fire itself.





The screenshots above show exactly how this mod has improved the lighting effects, which has created a much more realistic look and feel overall. The only concern I have about this mod is that now some areas are not ‘magically’ lit, therefore the machinima I shoot could be difficult to see in certain situations; I will have to be careful of this issue arising. Overall I am pleased with this mod, but I am still not satisfied and resumed my search for graphical improving mods.

Journal Entry 11 – Improving Graphical Quality Part 2 – February 2nd

Today I want to improve the quality and realism of the grass and trees found around the world. The original graphical quality is very out-dated by today’s standards, and considering that much of my machinima will be shot in outdoor environments, I felt that this was a very important aspect to improve. I found a number of mods for this purpose and after lengthy consideration, I settled for ‘Lush Trees’ and ‘Lush Grass’. The idea behind these mods is to not only improve the graphical quality, but to increase the amount of them on-screen at once, thereby creating a ‘lush’ effect.





After installing this mod, there was an impressive improvement to the grass and trees as shown above. It was mostly evident with the grass, where there are now thousands of individual strands. It was quite a sight to behold as I watched it moving in real-time, swaying in the wind. This makes the world feel so much more alive, whereas before there were only random patches of grass, as if the world was dying (even though this was not the developer's intention).

Journal Entry 12 – Improving Graphical Quality Part 3 - February 4th

The next area I want to graphically improve is the water effects. While I'm not sure whether water will play a part in my film, I felt that it was quite likely that it would and therefore would benefit from an overhaul. The mod I chose for this was 'WATER', which is fairly self-explanatory; it simply improves the quality of any water found within the game.





The previous screenshots show that after the mod has been applied the water now has a more realistic look and feel to it, however not all of this is evident in screen grab form alone. It has also removed that 'shiny' look the default water had which appeared unrealistic. However, the before and after photos from this mod are not as dramatic as the previous graphical mods I have used, but the quality of the water was always of a good standard. I will be using this mod in my machinima, but I also intend to find a mod that improves the rain effect, as rain will definitely be included in my final film.

In part 4 of my journey to make Skyrim look better than ever, I shall be looking at improving the textures of the world, including the towns. It is unlikely I will have time to document this before the 9th (my next meeting with my supervisors), due to other commitments. I shall however aim to complete part 4 as soon as possible.

Journal Entry 13 – Pre-Supervision Meeting Thoughts - February 6th

As I briefly mentioned in my last journal entry, I shall be meeting both my supervisors on Monday. This will be one of the most important meetings up until now, because it has now been confirmed that my review meeting must take place before March 31st. In this review meeting my work so far will be reviewed, to make sure it is of high enough quality and that I am progressing at the expected level. Therefore, I am sure we will have a lot to discuss on how I need to prepare for this throughout the next month and what to expect.

I also have been thinking about split-screen in my final film, and after the short experiments I have been working on, it has become increasingly evident that it is an unrealistic task to complete a 20-25minute film with split-screen present the whole way through. This is not my only concern; I am also worried that certain scenes will not have the attention that I want from my viewer. For example, if there are 3-4 screens live at one time, while an important scene is being played out on only one of those screens, I do not want the impact of the scene to be lost.

As a result of this thought process, I came up with the idea of having split-screen present at certain times in my machinima, but not the entire way through: for example, perhaps 5-10 minutes of the entire film could use split screen. This would allow me to spend more time on the film, as I would be required to have a lot less footage. I could then think of creative ways of including split-screen in the narrative, rather than just having it present at all times simply just to prove I know how to use it. This is a big decision that I must discuss in further detail with my supervisors on Monday; hopefully after sharing my concerns with them we can come to a solution.

Journal Entry 14 – Post-Supervision Meeting Thoughts - February 10th

The meeting with my supervisors went very well, they both appeared to be satisfied with my progress so far, and my Journal received good feedback. There were many discussions throughout this meeting; however, the two main talking points were my concerns with split-screen and the upcoming review meeting.

I shared my concerns regarding the use of split-screen throughout the entire film, and both supervisors understood the potential issues that this could create and felt that they were valid points. This led to the discussion of ways that I could incorporate split-screen into the narrative itself, rather than simply showing I know how to use it. The idea that stuck was having two worlds, similar to ‘The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe’ which has the characters moving between two worlds through a wardrobe. In my film, I could have the main character also moving between worlds in a similar method, for example, through a portal in a hidden cave. This would allow me to have the ‘alternative’ world, which could be where the split-screen takes place, and the ‘real’ world being filmed as normal. This could make the alternative world feel really bizarre and out of place, which is the feeling that I want to achieve.

There was also a lengthy discussion on the review meeting, which has now been confirmed to take place on the 17th March. The requirements for this meeting are as follows:

1. · A cover sheet listing the contents of the portfolio
2. · A review of progress
3. · An action plan for the coming year, including a thesis plan where appropriate
4. · Extensive samples of actual written work completed since the last review.
(Written work or preliminary video)

Therefore, this journal will be the main source of work for the review meeting. I will also have my tutorial videos ready for the review panel to show if required. My supervisor also recommended that I have a script overview completed by the review meeting, which gives me an action plan for the next month. I plan to have the mod experimentations completed within the next two weeks, once that is complete I will then

move onto the script. This will be a script overview, so it will only contain the main plot and no character dialogue will be present. I have never written a script for a film this long before and my supervisor informed me how tricky it can be. However, I look forward to the challenge.

Journal Entry 15 – Improving Graphical Quality Part 4 - February 12th & February 13th

I have now overhauled the graphics in the outdoor sections of the world, however when it comes to towns and villages, they remain graphically inferior. Therefore, this is one of the last major graphical areas I need to improve. This has proved a little more difficult, since each town and village have a variety of art-styles, it is not as simple as overhauling the grass which is then used throughout the entire world, as a result each town requires its own mod. However, after a thorough search I came across one of the largest mods yet, 'Static Mesh Improvement Mod'. A mesh is a part of a model, for example, a model would usually consist of more than one mesh, and also consist of other elements such as animation.

Therefore, this mod would improve the graphical quality and appearance of many items throughout the game (but not the animations) such as furniture, rocks, food, skeletons, ropes, and many more objects. This means that the majority of towns will also receive a graphical overhaul, as all the meshes found within towns and villages will now be improved.



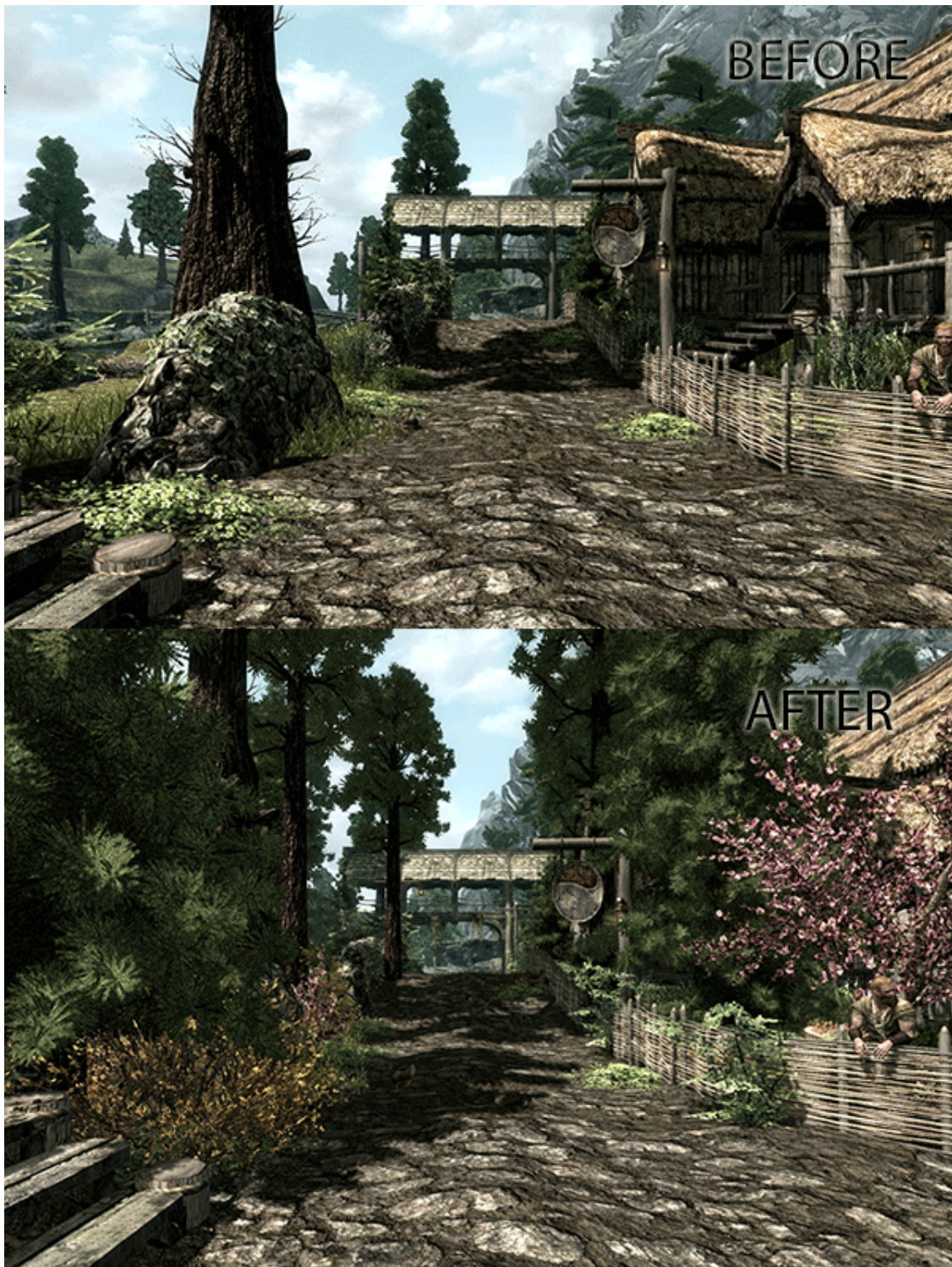
This mod alone has had a greater impact on the town than I expected, as you can see in the previous image, not only is every mesh now much sharper and more detailed than before (this may be a little harder to see in small screen grabs) but the town is now vibrant, bursting with much more colour and life than before.



However, it is not until you get closer that you realise what a dramatic effect this mod has had. Every individual piece of wood has now been improved to look far more realistic than before, the cheese, the potions, even the rocks contain such minor details that add to the immersion of this world. I now have almost every graphical aspect of the world of Skyrim improved and with this mod every town and village will receive equal enhancements. Nevertheless, I wanted to go one step further and combine this mod with the ‘town overhaul’ mod to see how it would react.

Journal Entry 16 – Improving Graphical Quality Part 5 - February 15th

For today's entry I have all of the previous mods enabled. However, I recently suggested that I would be interested to take the town overhaul one step further, and the mod I have decided to attempt this with is with a new mod called 'Cities Enhanced.' What this mod does is add a number of new objects and textures around the existing towns, attempting to make them feel more populated and 'lively'. There were a number of mods that enhance cities and towns, however I settled for this one due to it being the latest most up-to-date version, which also seemed to be of the highest quality.



The above screenshot shows the outside of an inn inside a village, after the application of the 'Cities Enhanced' mod there is a significant increase in the amount of trees, plants and objects in this area. While the trees used to appear 'dead' inside the town, now they are just as 'alive'. However, due to the increased amount of objects inside the town, it may provide difficult to achieve the camera angles that I require, as the town is now far more 'cluttered'. We can examine another area of the town to see if this could indeed be a problem.



The town looks beautiful; the extra trees and general plant-life give the feeling that it really was built around a forest. Unfortunately, the same issues seem to be present. There are a large number of trees and objects blocking potential camera angles here. While I will not know for sure until I practice shooting a scene, I can sense it being a problem. It is likely that I will have to also get some feedback on this, because the overall look is effective but I'm also concerned it may not be to everyone's taste/style. Perhaps this is one part of the game best left untouched.

Reflection - Improving Graphical Quality

Improving or altering the graphical aspect of the video game engine used to create machinima is similar to having a distinct art style, much like the traditional filmmaker. Through the combination of a variety of graphical mods, it is possible to create vast amounts of different graphical styles. This is very useful for the machinima filmmaker because it distances the film from the original videogame, thus allowing the film to take on its own identity. However, many of these graphical modifications are extremely taxing on computer hardware, this is due to the fact that they are usually created by non-professional game developers; as a result they can be more demanding on computer resources than the improvements they generate would suggest. There is also the possibility that some graphical modifications overhaul similar areas of the game, resulting in conflicts that can affect the stability of the game engine.

This concludes the graphical overhaul phase of my MA. While it is possible that I may still discover mods in the future that I decide to use, it is unlikely any of them will be as drastic as some of those present here. I now have an aesthetically pleasing machinima production 'toolkit' that looks like it was made this year and I am pleased with how this turned out. I still have a number of mods/improvements I would like to address, but this is one important step towards being ready to shooting my machinima.

Journal Entry 17 – Lanterns of Skyrim - February 17th

In this entry I am going to be covering a small, but very useful mod. This mod is a direct result of the 'Realistic Lighting' mod, which makes the lighting effects in the game closer to real life. Therefore, when it is night time it is mostly dark and you cannot see much. This makes it problematic when I am shooting machinima at night, because there is a lack of a light source in towns and especially on roads/in caves.

To counter this issue, I have discovered the mod 'Lanterns of Skyrim', this mod simply places lanterns all around the world. While the towns had lanterns previously, they were simply there for cosmetic purposes and their light source was very weak, this mod rectifies that by boosting their output of light.



The screenshots show that while the town had lanterns before, they were barely noticeable. Now, the town has a more realistic light source and allows me to easily film in the darker areas of the towns.



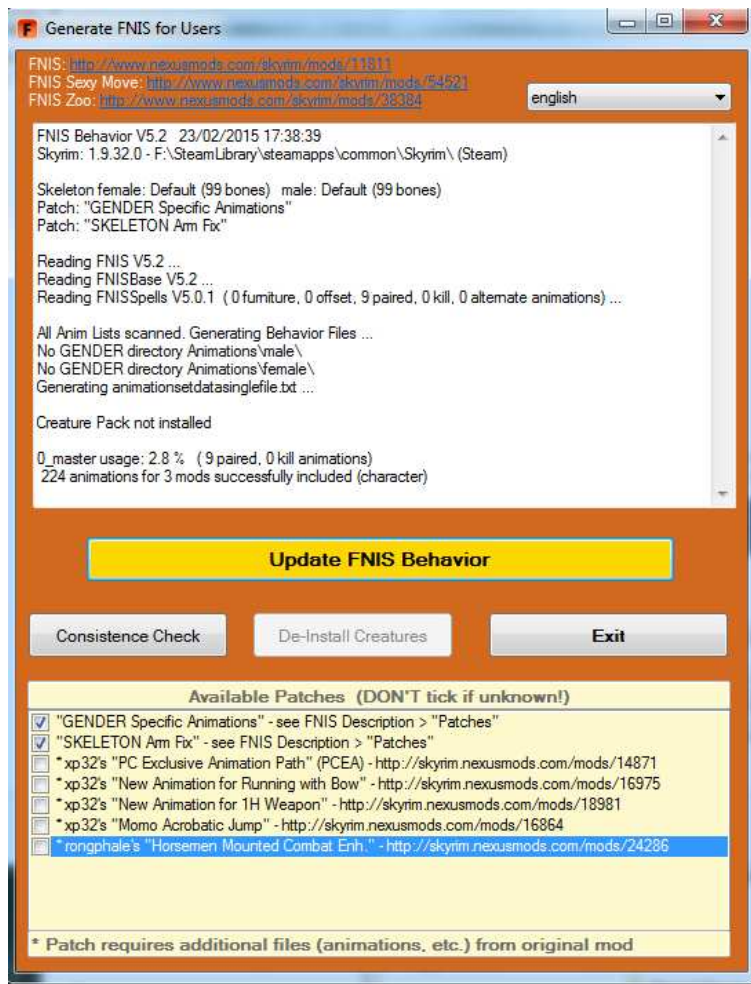
This is an even more interesting example of how the mod works. Now I may have not chosen the best example (darkest area), but what the screenshot above shows is how the lanterns have been placed sparingly throughout the course of the road. Not only does this improve the lighting, it also feels far more realistic.

This is all part of the lengthy process of modding: requiring new mods to counter issues that have been caused by other mods. It is not as simple as finding a mod and using it, as even the best mods can cause problems that require other mods to fix them. I imagine this will not be the only issue I come across, but for now I feel comfortable with the current mods I have, and can now look into adding some new features.

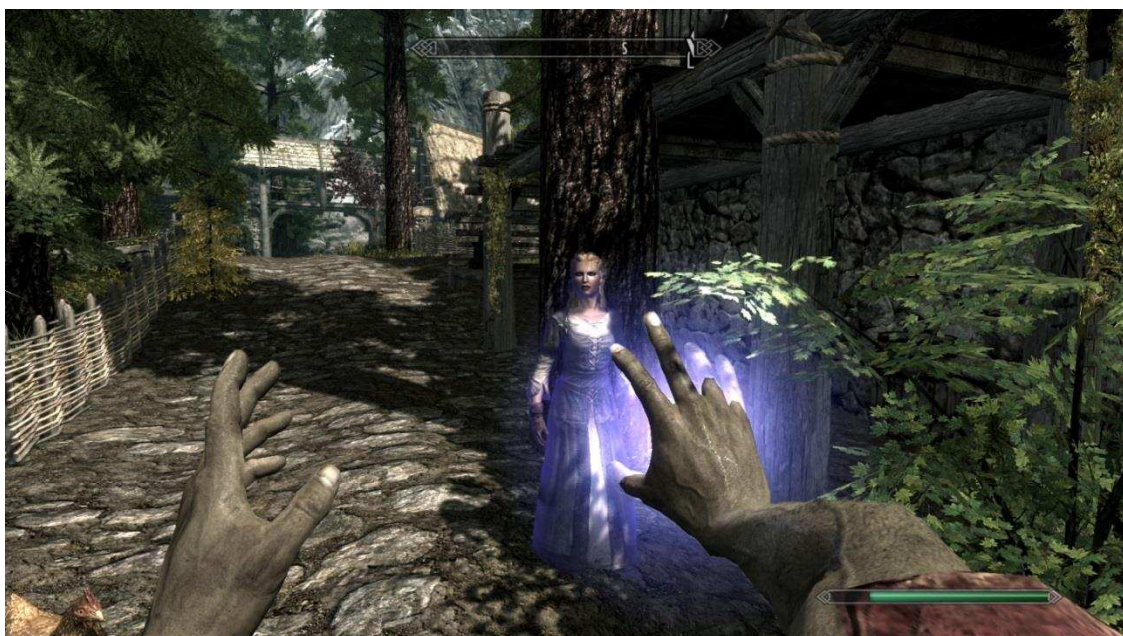
Journal Entry 18 – Animation Improvements - February 19th

When creating machinima, the characters need to perform specific actions. This could include a character walking into the scene, talking to another character and then walking out of the scene. To achieve this, I currently use a mod called ‘Puppeteer’; this allows me to program the actions and behaviour of each individual character on screen, including my own character. However, this is still limited to the animations included with the original game (which is quite restrictive).

I was initially searching for mods that would allow me to manipulate the dialogue found within the game to use as my own voice actors (previously mentioned). However, when I was searching through the top mods I discovered a mod called ‘Fores New Idles in Skyrim’. This mod works in a similar way to the puppeteer mod; however one major difference is that this mod has new animations and sequences that are not present in the original game. It also allows users to create their own animations and simply add them into the mod, thus you have an almost limitless amount of possibilities. Installing this mod is slightly different to the previous ones I have shown. With ‘Fores...’ you need to generate the animations before you start the game. To do this, you use the provided generator, and as you can see in the screenshot on the following page, once I generated what animations I would like to include, a total of 224 animations were added into the game. The reason you have to generate the animations is because if you want to include animations that you or other users have created, here is where you can do so by ticking the boxes at the bottom.

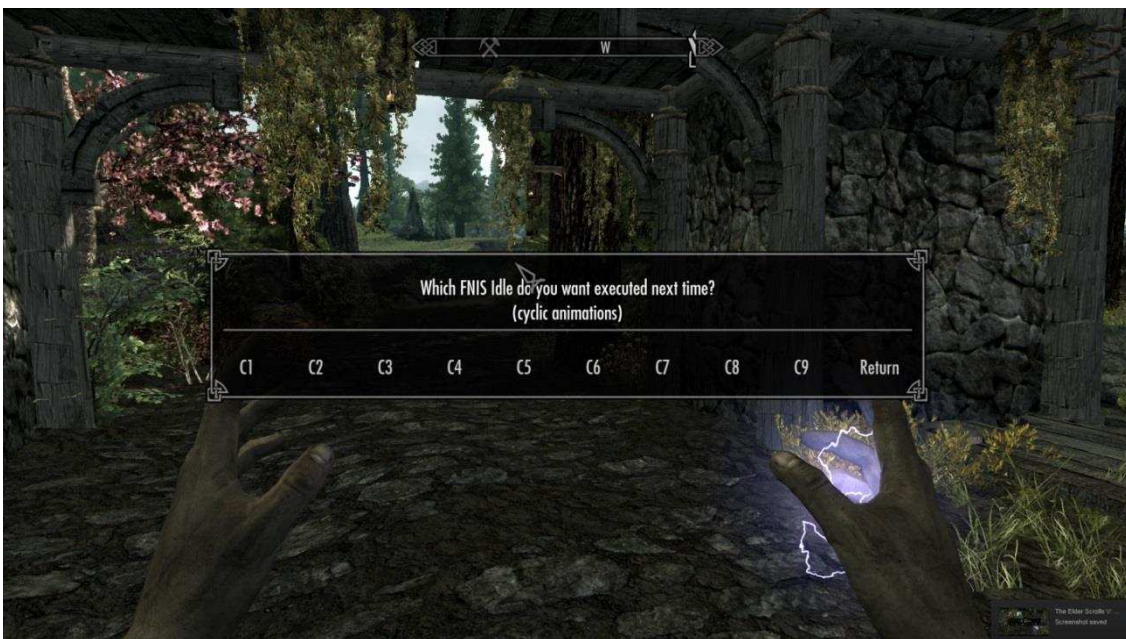


Once in the game, to activate the mod you do so by casting 'code' on characters or yourself as seen in the image above. Once you have cast this onto any character they will then perform the action.





To access the different animations you must hold right click. This will take you to the primary menu, this consists of a number of sub-menus, where you can choose from a number of categories each consisting of a different style of animation. For example, on the end the 'pa1' means pairing animations, these will be animations that a character can perform with another character present.



Once you click one of the sub-menus, you will be greeted with another screen that shows all of the animations inside, for example, the ‘C5’ animation.



Once selected and cast on the character, he will then perform the animation as shown in the image above.

I am very impressed with the functionality of this mod: the option to search and find new animations means that it is far less likely that I will be unable to find the right animation for the right scenario. However, it is also very hard to know exactly what the animations do, with no description at all; you are required to discover their effects through a lot of trial and error. The mod also does not allow you to change the interval (as far as I am aware) of the animations, therefore it is vital to get the timing right and I can imagine it being difficult to achieve while filming.

Taking all this into consideration, the mod is fantastic and allows me to set characters to perform actions that simply were not possible before. I am keen to combine the effects of this mod with the puppeteer mod; I imagine they will work extremely well together. Before I complete this journal entry, I will also note that I have been experimenting with screenshots I have previously taken to see what my final film could look like: below are a few examples that I have been editing to achieve a cinematic look and feel.



Reflection - Production Research

In conclusion, I have finished the majority of my initial research, thus I am in a strong position to move onto the next stage of my MA, which is to begin planning the final machinima film. The next step is to begin work on my script, which I expect to take roughly 3 to 4 weeks to finalize. Once the script is complete, I will then begin work on the final machinima film.

Journal Entry 18 – Pre Review Meeting - February 29th

During this last week there have been a lack of Journal Updates; this is due to the review meeting submission date being very close and the requirement to send the work up for review two weeks prior. In the last week I have been polishing up my work to this point, going through the entire journal, re-wording and spell checking everything. This entire Journal will be submitted to my chair for the review, therefore I have also re-written the entire introduction, with the aim of providing those who are unfamiliar with machinima with a clearer understanding.

I have now also begun to think about my script, which will be the next stage of my MA. I plan to spend the next week or so finishing the cover sheet and front page for my review, and the rest of the time I will allocate to script ideas. This will be the first time I have written a script of this magnitude, which I think will be challenging.

Journal Entry 19 – Review Submission - March 3rd

I am now almost at the halfway point of my MA and have submitted my Journal for review. I am feeling quite confident and I am pleased with how much I have managed to achieve up to this point, and look forward to starting my script. I have also been approached by my programme director, Chris Pallant, who asked whether I would be interested in teaching first year students for a day, and also whether I would be interested in doing some work experience for one of his clients, this would include creating a poster and logo. I will have until the end of March to complete this, so it is likely that it will affect my work progress for this month. However, this is an excellent

opportunity, in addition to the fact that it is paid, which will help a great deal with my MA expenses.

The teaching would involve presenting my MA research to year 1 digital media students; this would last 15 minutes and be followed by 45 minutes of discussion. I will also be joining an earlier class to chat with students, answering any questions they may have about the programme or Masters, and giving them advice on their work.

Journal Entry 20 – Presentation Complete - March 8th

I have just finished my presentation in preparation for the teaching I will be doing on 12th March. In fact, this was very useful for my overall MA, I will be presenting to students who likely don't know anything about machinima, therefore I had to cover all aspects, such as what it is, how you make it, and why you would use it. I also decided to research possible career possibilities if you decided that machinima was something that interested you, and this was very beneficial to me as well.

Personally I would be interested in a career working in a video game company, but the other students may not, therefore I found a number of different jobs that would benefit from the skill set you would be learning. This included self-employment through YouTube, creating a web or film series, which if popular enough, would create a lot of ad revenue.

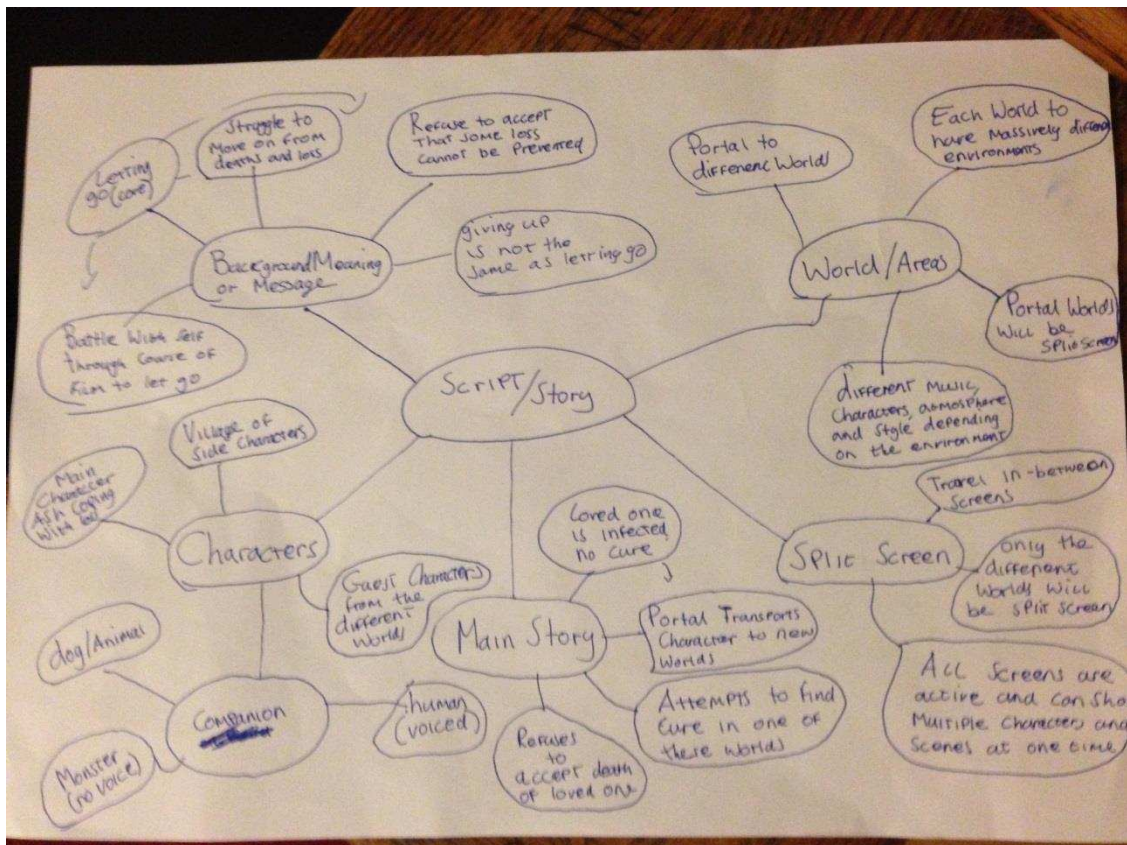
Journal Entry 21 – Teaching Complete & Work Experience Draft - March 11th

The teaching went very well, and was much less daunting than I expected it to be. Speaking to a number of different students who all perceived machinima in different ways was interesting, this also meant that I was asked many varied questions which helps to prepare me for my review meeting. It is likely that my chair will not be familiar with the concept of machinima, so I will be in a very similar situation to teaching the students and am therefore adequately prepared to answer any question that comes my way.

I have also started my work experience; I have created a few drafts that I plan to send to my client. I expect this to take a large chunk of my time during the rest of March, but hope to get my script planning complete before then. I also would like to have started my script overview.

Journal Entry 22 – Review Meeting & Script Brainstorm - March 14th

It is now just days before my review meeting, and I decided that I would get my script brainstorm complete prior to this date. Writing my ideas down allows me to examine them all together and also solidifies my general idea, which will allow me to easily discuss it at the review. Below is the mind-map that I created, that is essentially a list of ideas, most of which I do want to include in my script.



This has greatly helped me in preparation to write my script overview, as it has allowed me to get a general shape before starting to write the script itself. For example, as you can see in the mind map, I would like to have the general meaning/message of my film to be about the main character struggling to let go through his life, both people he has lost and people he is going to lose. I previously mentioned in my Journal how

machinima can be very personal in terms of narrative, and letting go has always been something that I have struggled with, therefore it felt natural to include this in my film.

This also allowed me to essentially split my main story into 4 sections. The first part is the build up to the main character discovering that someone he loves is dying (infected), the second part will portray him travelling to a new world. The third part will concern his attempt to find the cure for this loved one and then finally the fourth part will be his return to his world to attempt to cure his loved one, only to discover that it won't work which will result in him having to somehow let go.

I also considered adding a side character/companion, as it soon became evident that the second half of the story would have little dialogue. However, this will be decided after my overview is complete. It could be the case that less is more, allowing the visuals to tell the story. There could also be a potential issue with the inclusion of a companion: more dialogue means a longer film, and it may turn out that I simply do not have enough screen time.

Journal Entry 23 – Post-Review Meeting - March 18th

The review meeting was highly positive. The chair was pleased with the quantity of work I have done so far, and the direction that my MA is taking. I also received some useful suggestions for improvements I could make. The panel suggested that I should make a time plan for the rest of my MA. This ensures that I avoid spending too long on my script and give myself enough time to create my film. Therefore, I created a time plan today. I expect that by the end of March, when my work experience is complete, I can devote all my attention to my script and get it completed swiftly.

MA Timeline

March 18th – March 31st

Work Experience (Poster & Logo)

Script Overview Introduction

April 1st – April 10th

Script Overview 1st Draft

Feedback

April 11th – April 20th

Script Overview 2nd Draft

Script Overview Final Draft

Script Dialogue 1st Draft

April 21st – April 29th

Script Dialogue 2nd Draft (Near Complete)

Meeting with Darren & Craig (29th April) – Feedback Gathered

May 1st – May 10th

Script Overview & Dialogue Complete

Machinima Intro Scene (1 minute footage)

May 10th – Onwards

Machinima Film (Timeline to come)

I have made this timeline as a guide to keep me on track and avoid a situation where I have insufficient time to complete the film. Although it is possible that I may miss deadlines, this would only be by a couple of days at most.

Journal Entry 24 – Script Overview Progress - March 25th

I am now in the final stages of my work experience, meaning that I am almost ready to devote all my time and attention to the development of my script. Now that I have reached this stage, I realise that it will be more difficult than I initially thought to get one idea set in stone. I finally settled on an overall narrative, and I have written my introduction to help immerse myself in my story. I plan to complete this by next week, and I can then receive feedback and make adjustments from there.

Journal Entry 25 – Working with Music - March 28th

I assumed that I would have to find copyright/royalty free music for the soundtrack of my film. However, after speaking to my friend Ashley Potter, he offered to create some of the music for my machinima. Ashley will also be the main voice actor for my film, so I am very grateful for all his contribution to my project.

We have already created a piece of music for my film; I wanted an atmospheric piece that would play when the character is in another world. The world that the character will be travelling to will be a much stranger location than he is used to, and this piece will help bring out those emotions in the viewer. It can be listened to here:

https://soundcloud.com/ashpot/leaving-ozma?fb_action_ids=10153156867462996&fb_action_types=og.shares

Journal Entry 26 – Script Overview Complete - April 6th

I have now finished my work experience and have been able to complete the first draft of my script overview which took longer than expected. I underestimated the difficulty in creating a script, even though this version does not contain the dialogue yet.

Fortunately, my film will not have a large amount of dialogue. I plan to get some feedback from my supervisor and friends, and then I will post the script overview to my journal.

Journal Entry 27 – Script Overview - April 10th

This entry will contain my entire script overview, despite the fact that this is a near-final draft it is highly possible that this will change as I make progress throughout my MA. In this case it is likely that I will return to this entry and update the script overview, therefore, this will always be the ‘final’ script overview. See Appendix 1.

Reflection – Overview Script

I am pleased that I now have my script overview complete, and I am glad that the story contains all the elements that will allow me to use machinima with some exciting techniques, such as flashbacks, battles and split screen scenes. However, I still feel that something is missing and it fails to reach that ‘standard’ that I want to achieve.

However, after several unsuccessful attempts to ‘improve’ my script, I have decided that the new ideas are no better than the existing ones.

Therefore I am going to start on my dialogue script, which should hopefully highlight any areas which perhaps do not work quite as well. It will also be relatively easy to change scenes/dialogue as I am in the process of creating the machinima film; therefore I see this as the beginning of an on-going process.

Journal Entry 28 – Dialogue Script - April 15th

I have now done about 25% of my dialogue script, this has proven to be even more difficult than I expected. I found that I was spending far too much time on trying to make each scene ‘perfect’, spending multiple hours on that one particular scene.

Therefore I have now written certain scenes that are ‘placeholders’; this means that they do not meet my desired quality standard, and I can revisit them later to improve them. I expected that I would be required to change certain scenes completely, that perhaps they would not make sense or fit in with the overall plot and I was correct. I have changed the opening scene completely, which means that I must also change the ending, as the opening scene was the scene that I originally ended on.

Journal Entry 29 – Meeting Preparation - April 20th

I have my next meeting with both of my Supervisors on the 29th April, by which date I hope to have my dialogue script ready to be shown. This will be the first time I have met with them both since my review meeting, so it will be useful to gather some feedback on the finishing stages of my overview and dialogue script.

I have been thinking about how I plan to use split-screen in my film once again, and I have some concerns. I am worried that the transition to split-screen may be a bit disruptive, and then I also have the issue of how and when to transition from split-screen and then back to normal again. I had planned to just use split-screen in the 'other' world, but certain scenes such as the prison scenes will prove difficult. Therefore, this is one concern that I plan to raise at the meeting.

The other concern I have is the use of voice actors, I have the option of manipulating dialogue from within the game to allow me to use those same voices for my characters. However, this creates the issue of familiar voices. This is also an issue when using music from the game. While I am allowed to do this, whenever one of the songs from Skyrim is played, rather than complimenting the scene, the viewer could instead be reminded of the actual game, rather than focusing on the machinima film.

Journal Entry 30 – Post Meeting - April 22nd

The meeting was a success, as both my supervisors were satisfied with both my overview script and dialogue script. After some discussion we considered the most effective way to end the film. Originally, the plot described how Ash returned to the village to find out he was too late to save his mother. While the core of this ending will stay the same, we spoke about having the village overrun by the zombies when he returns. This would mean being able to film a more action-focused scene, which is something that I wanted to include in the film.

In regards to my concerns about the split-screen, my supervisor mentioned that it could simply be the case that it won't work and it could be something that I may have to remove altogether, which is difficult seeing as it was one of my original ideas. I still plan to experiment with it, and if it is possible that I can include it in some form, then I will.

The issue regarding dialogue was not as easy to solve and we came to the conclusion that ideally all my voice actors should record at the same location, so that the voice quality is consistent and not disruptive. We agreed that I will use voices from within the game for minor characters, but all the main characters will be recorded in the studio.

Journal Entry 31 - May 12th - Machinima First Steps

Today marks a significant step in my MA, I have now moved onto the last stage, creating the machinima. I prepared my first scene, which features Ash returning to the village, and then the scene where he leaves the village. The reason I chose to start with these scenes were because when Ash leaves the village, a flashback occurs. I wanted to experiment with the flashback scene early on, because I am unsure of how to indicate the transition from present-day to flashback.

Unfortunately, a difficult problem arose. The mod that I use to make the characters talk is no longer working, and this seems to be the case with every other machinima creator. I researched why this issue was occurring, and it is due to a recent patch that has caused issues with lip movement in the game. I have spent the majority of the day attempting to find workarounds, but it seems that no one has yet discovered a fix for this issue. I am quite concerned about this, because my entire script is written around the ability to use dialogue, and I do not want to have to revert my film to silence.

Reflection - Game Engine Patches

There are certain situations during machinima production where issues can arise that are out of your control, for example when a patch (update to fix or improve software) is released for that particular game or engine, it is not uncommon for the patch to break certain features of a game, while also fixing others. Furthermore, mods are often created to work with a particular feature, or even a specific patch version of that engine. Consequently when new patches are released they can prevent these mods from operating correctly. Therefore it is vital that the game engine being used to create the machinima is not updated during production unless absolutely necessary, otherwise it is possible that you could face problems such as the mouth movement no longer functioning, which I am currently experiencing in the production of my film.

Journal Entry 32 – Machinima lip movement, solution and reflection – May 15th

I spent many hours researching possible fixes, none of which worked, so I knew that I either had to create my own fix or change the narrative of my film. However I refused to accept changing my narrative so I set out to create my own solution. I am proud to announce that I have solved the lip movement issue after many hours of work. I managed to develop my own strategy for overcoming this issue. The way in which I achieved this is by programming a completely new character and making my original character act as an invisible activator. Therefore, I simply place my invisible character in front of my actor, and when I want him to speak I press the 'E' key and my invisible character activates the actor.

This technique is easier in practice and after several attempts; it's very easy to work. I am proud that I have managed to create my own solution that many experienced machinima creators are yet to discover and am considering creating a video to explain my solution, which would help everyone experiencing this same problem. I am now able to proceed onto creating the film.

Reflection - Machinima Experimentation

To create a high quality machinima film it is likely that a large amount of production time will be spent experimenting with every aspect of that game engine. It is also likely that the game engine being explored will have certain obstacles that must be overcome. The standard tools and essential mods are useful in many ways; however, on their own there are still many limitations. There is a certain level of originality and creativity that is necessary to overcome production obstacles during the creation of a machinima film. For example, the solution to the lip movement issue demonstrates how the machinima filmmaker must be inventive in order to deal with the obstacles that are almost certain to arise.

Journal Entry 33 – May Machinima First Scene Complete – May 20th

I underestimated how difficult it can be to create a scene with multiple different characters in it. It took me around 5 hours just to prepare the scene where Ash enters the town and is greeted by the villagers; I had to program each character to be cheering when Ash entered the gate. In the end though, I finally achieved this and now have a finished scene. I am still getting into the flow of creating machinima, and I am sure that the process will get easier as I go on. I am pleased with how the scene is taking shape. In comparison to the machinima I created for my degree in Year 3, it is highly superior in terms of quality.

Reflection - Machinima Time Investment

Machinima is often considered to be a useful filmmaking tool which can generate 3D images quickly, and through a far more simple process than creating them from scratch. However, machinima can also be mistaken for an easy method of making full-length films. Machinima creation is a very time consuming process, and it can often take many hours experimenting with the game systems to achieve a simple action from a digital character. There are instances where you can create a high quality machinima scene very quickly and others when it is a much longer process of trial and error.

Journal Entry 34 - Machinima Editing and Refinement – May 22nd

I have decided to edit and prepare my first scene, this will allow me to show it to my supervisor and receive feedback. Therefore, I plan to treat this like a near finished section and add in some placeholder sound effects, I also plan to add the cinema look and feel to the film through editing.

Journal Entry 35 - Flashback Transition – May 25th

I spoke with my first supervisor, and we discussed methods of making it clear that a flashback had begun. I had a few ideas; one of which was to make the actual screen feel more ‘dreamy.’ This is very similar to the manner in which the Bourne films implement

their flashback effects, usually known as the 'Bourne flashback effect'. The other method, which is probably my preferred method, is to use a sound effect to indicate that the flashback is beginning. I plan to experiment with both, and then present them to my supervisor for feedback.

Journal Entry 36 - Character issues reflection – May 29th

This week I discovered an easier way to set my machinima scenes. Originally I was using a standard guard, which then had to be customized every time to look like my main character. The reason I chose a guard is because they do not have a personality like the 'named' characters found within the game, so were therefore easier to manipulate. However, I have recently been having several issues with the guards; they will now randomly reset their appearance, and then refuse to react to my commands. I came to the conclusion that this must be because I am now using more than one guard, and the coding must be getting confused and mixed up.

Therefore, I had to find a workaround. After many hours of attempts, I was unable to fix the issue, so I experimented with using a 'named' character that did not have a part in the game. Luckily, this was successful and because the named characters have no dialogue I was able to command them like the guards. This also means that I no longer have to set the appearance of the guards every time I set a scene, which speeds up the whole process. Unfortunately, this means that I now have to re-record the footage that I have so far, because my main character has changed. I feel like that this was the right choice, because it means I am now also less likely to encounter issues further on in the machinima creation.

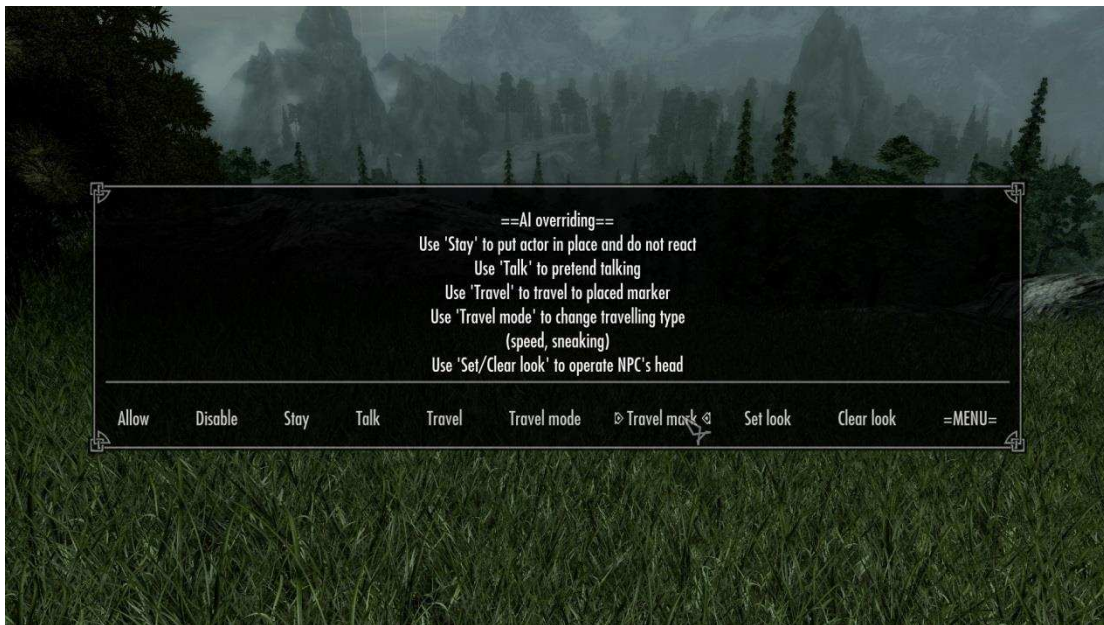
Journal Entry 37 - Stability Issues and Progress – June 2nd

After watching the footage I have captured so far, I noticed some scenes where there were some stability issues. This is likely due to the amount of mods I am currently using. While it is fine during normal gameplay, I noticed that when recording it is even more taxing on your system. Therefore I have had to remove some of the graphical mods, while trying my best to maintain the best image quality I could. I mainly focused on removing quality from terrain in the distance, while keeping everything nearby at the same quality as before. This seems to have worked well and my film now appears a lot more stable.

Conveniently this came at the time when I changed my main character and therefore needed to reshoot the original scenes either way. Therefore, I now have multiple reasons to do so. I am currently at around 4 minutes of footage, so the progress of my machinima is speeding up, as I become more familiar with the whole process.

Journal Entry 38 - Machinima Creation Demonstration Pt 1 – June 4th

When you are preparing to film your machinima, just like a traditional film you need to prepare the scene. The first thing I do is set up the scenery, this means I need to think about the atmosphere that I want to create for the scene. Since I am manipulating a game world, this often means removing or adding objects to the specific location. I would then ‘program’ the characters that I want present in that scene. This involves setting a ‘start’ location for your characters, and an ‘end’ location.



As you can see in the above image, there is a command called 'Travel Mark' this sets the location of where you want the character you have 'placed' to move to. This won't do anything until you click the command 'travel'. This means you can set the end location of every character, and then when you click the travel button all the characters will move to the desired location. This is a basic method of creating simple machinima scenes.

Journal Entry 39 - Machinima Creation Demonstration Pt 2 – June 6th

I would next like to demonstrate and discuss some of the more advanced machinima techniques. I have already mentioned the process of controlling character movement, but what about making the characters perform certain actions?

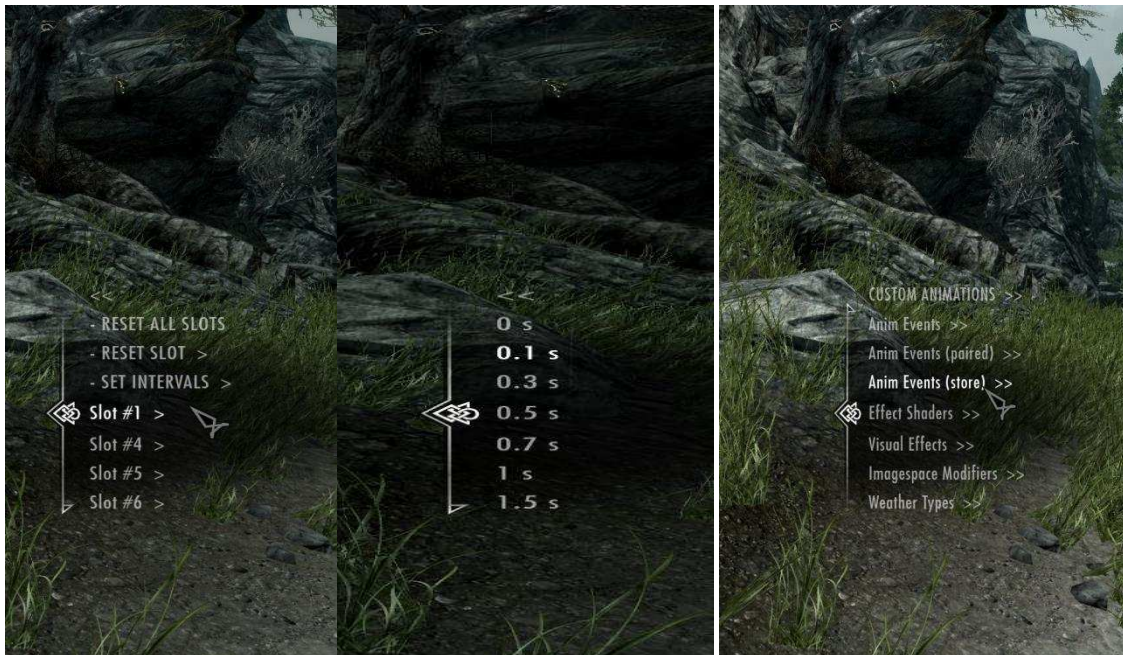


The above screenshot shows a number of different animated actions the character can perform. There are a number of ways to get the character to perform them at the correct times. The easiest method is to begin filming as the character starts the animation; however this is not a viable method if you want the action performed at any time after the beginning of the scene.



As shown above, an advanced technique is to create a 'scene.' This allows you to program a sequence of actions that will be performed after an certain amount of seconds- this can prove quite difficult as a lot of trial and error will be required to get

the timing right. However, you can include a number of different characters in the scene. I used this technique for Ash's return to the village, where upon arrival, a large amount of villagers are seen greeting him.



Another method as shown above, which is commonly used in my work, is to attach an animation to a key on your keyboard. When this key is pressed, the character will perform the action. You can also set the time intervals between each animation. This is useful for when you only need one character to perform an animation, however, if you need multiple characters to do so at once, only using the more complicated method of creating scenes will work.

Journal Entry 40 - Machinima Creation Demonstration – Pt 3 – June 8th

I have previously discussed creating scenes and using animations, but character design is also very important. There may be scenes where you need your characters to look a certain way, or be using a certain item/object.



The above screenshot shows an example of changing a character's appearance, this involves using the 'console' which is a tool that allows you to manipulate the game world using coding. The first stage is to wipe the current appearance of the character, this is done by highlighting a character and typing 'inv' this then brings up a list of the characters clothing and items. You then simply type 'removeitem' followed by the code of the item/clothing.



You then need to work out the codes of the items you want to add to this character. There is a helpful online database which contains every code for every item found in the

game. Once you have found the correct code, you type ‘additem’ followed by the code of the item you want to add to that character. This becomes slightly more complicated, as you need to make sure that character has that clothing/item equipped.

Item Name	Item ID	Quantity	Notes
Belted Tunic	00018E1A	1 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worn by Gestur Rockbreaker in Rockwallow Mine in Stonehills, Rhoftak, Louis Letrush, Camilla Valenus, Una, and others. Carried by Brand-Shei, Mason Black-Dvor, General Tullius, Mercer Frey, and others. Sold at Radiant Raiment in Solitude. Found in Kimmek's house, Bely'n Hlaalu's house, and Hod and Gerdur's house.
Blacksmith's Apron	0005869F	1 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worn by Amokar Ember-Master, Ghorza gra-Bagol, Heimar, Adrienne Avericci, and others. Sold at Radiant Raiment in Solitude. Found in the Blacksmith Quarters in Windhelm, Ahor and Sigrif's house, and Rustleif's house.
Blacksmith's Apron	0006FF37	1 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worn by Krijafr in The Ratway in Riften, Bendr, Odar, Anton Virane, and Gianna in Castle Dour in Solitude. Found in Radiant Raiment and in the Bards College, both in Solitude.
Chef's Tunic	00018532	1 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worn by Krijafr in The Ratway in Riften, Bendr, Odar, Anton Virane, and Gianna in Castle Dour in Solitude. Found in Radiant Raiment and in the Bards College, both in Solitude.
Clothes	000239A5		
Clothes	0003432E		
Clothes	00017895		
Clothes	000281C0	2	
Clothes	0006C1D8		
Clothes	0006C1D9	1	
Clothes	0006C1DA		
Clothes	000F1229		
Clothes	000586A1	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referred to in the Creation Kit as Barkeeper clothes. Worn by Sabjorn, Dagur, Hadring, and Eydis.
Clothes			

This is done by using the command ‘equipitem’ followed by the item’s code. However, when a scene is played out it is possible the character will attempt to revert back to its original state, and during this attempt all the clothing/items you equipped onto your character will be wiped. Therefore, the only workaround for this is to first start your scene, then immediately open the console and then equip the items. This means the first half a second or so of your scene is usually lost, which you therefore need to take into consideration when setting up your scene.

Journal Entry 41 - Machinima Limitations – June 16th

I am currently working on the last scene before Ash passes through the portal. In this scene Ash is supposed to be attempting to gain access to the cave containing the portal. In my script Ash tells the guards that he has spotted a group of zombies and when they refuse to believe him he throws a torn-off zombie’s arm onto the ground. I have spent many hours trying to get this scene to work, but it quickly became apparent that there was no way I could get a zombie arm to be a single object. Therefore, I attempted to try something else.



As you can see in the above image, there is a zombie's head on the ground. What I have done here is actually place a zombie with its head and body intact under the ground, far enough so that only the head is visible. I would then have the main character act as if this was in fact a decapitated head he had brought as evidence. However, after thinking I had found a creative workaround, every time I went to film the scene, the game-engine would assume that this zombie was glitched or had an issue, and bring it back up through the world, placing its feet back on the ground. As a result, I have unfortunately had to rethink this idea. Having discussed this with my supervisor, he suggested that it is possible that the guards had already been alerted to the fact that the zombies were back, and that it is therefore likely they would believe Ash anyway.

Journal Entry 42 - Machinima Slowdown Issues Return - June 20th

I have mentioned previously in my journal that an issue arose due to the fact that I had improved the graphical effects so greatly that the engine was failing to run smoothly and was proving too taxing for my system. I assumed I had solved this previously, however, after exporting a large amount of footage I had captured this week, I noticed that the same issue had returned. I am still unsure of what is causing this, because while I was filming, the engine seemed to be running smoothly without any problem.

I have also captured an extremely large amount of footage and as a result my hard drive is now almost at full capacity. Therefore, this could also be one of the causes of this issue. This is very frustrating because it is the third time I have had to re-capture footage I had already filmed. Hopefully I can solve this issue as soon as possible.

Journal Entry 43 - Dialogue for main protagonist 'Ash' complete – June 24th

After spending a few days transporting all my main voice actor's equipment from my friend's university accommodation to his house, setting it all up, and then going through the entire script with him, I have now managed to record all the dialogue for my main character, Ash. I am highly satisfied with the outcome, especially considering that I have the opportunity to re-record any lines I am not happy with, due to the fact that he lives close to my home address. I now feel that I am on the way to making my scenes far more 'complete'. I look forward to starting work on my voiced scenes.

Journal Entry 44 - Holiday July 7th- 13th - Work Experience July 13th – 16th

I have my last break coming up before my MA the serious task of completion begins. This will be a very busy few weeks for me, as the morning after I return home I immediately have work experience with my course leader. This means it is unlikely I will make any progress during this period, and there will also be a lack of updates.

Journal Entry 45 - Progress Update – July 25th

Since my last update in the Journal I have added in a couple of scenes that I felt would benefit the narrative of my film, due to the fact that as predicted, there are plot holes that I only discovered once the actual footage was already captured.

One example is when Ash discovers that his mother is infected and that there is no cure, I have added a scene that shows Ash expressing the guilt he is feeling and the anger that comes with it. In the scene Ash is heard slashing his sword at a tree and when Bob happens to walk past and hear the slashing, he approaches Ash and attempts to calm him down. I hoped this would further demonstrate Ash's personality, and just how much the situation with his Mother is affecting him.

I am pleased to have got some footage captured during this period and I look forward to being able to work on some of the sound editing.

Journal Entry 46 - Progress Update – July 28th

I have made good progress this week, and have polished up some of my earlier scenes, working on adding some music into my machinima for the first time. This had an instant impact. There were times that I really felt that my film was missing ‘something’ and this seems to be exactly what it was missing. It is important to realise how much music can affect the impact of a film, and while I still plan to add some of my own music (composed by a friend) into my film, I also plan to use some royalty free music as it would be too difficult to compose the entire soundtrack myself.

Journal Entry 47 - Supervisor Meeting - 12th August

I have just met with my first supervisor and showed him all of my footage so far, including my recently edited voiced scenes. He seemed pleased with my progress and also offered me some very useful feedback. The main concern I had was with some of the continuity between scenes, however he suggested that I first get a rough draft of the entire machinima film first, even if it is incomplete and then we can get an idea of how the film flows. I felt this was a good idea, and I plan to do this before our next meeting.

I was also concerned about the amount of voice actors I needed. I assumed I would need a different voice actor for every character in the film, even the minor characters such as the guards. However, my supervisor being impressed by the main characters voice actor suggested that I ask him to voice all the male characters in my film. Given that he is a close friend and I have very easy access to his recording equipment, this seemed like a fantastic idea.

This also relieves me of the potential stress of attempting to find numerous male voice actors for my machinima, whereas now I only need to find a couple of female voice actors. Overall, it was a very useful meeting and I now have a solid plan going forward into the last stage of my MA.

- Editing Practice – Not used to editing such a long piece.
- Voice acting coming together, film coming together.
- Learning new ways to do things, improving consistently as I go along.

Journal Entry 48 - Ongoing production – 15th August

After the feedback from my tutor, I am now working on getting a rough draft of my film complete. Therefore, I am now currently filming every scene in sequence, rather than my previous style which was to film, edit, and polish. I am glad that my tutor suggested this, because it then allows me to invent a rough estimate of how long the film will be and what needs to be added/removed.

Reflection – Ongoing Production

It is unbelievable how far my machinima and editing skills have come since I began the MA. Originally, it would have taken me roughly 6 to 8 hours just to shoot a simple scene. I am now managing to film these scenes in 2 to 4 hours. Essentially, I am now working at least twice as fast as before. I have developed a number of techniques for speeding up the process, and my creativity is reaching new heights. The only issue that arises from this is the concern that the first half of my film could be inferior, because of my increased skill level for the second half of the film. I plan to discuss this with my tutor and ask his opinion, but it is likely I will return to the original scenes and ‘touch’ them up a bit.

Journal Entry 49 - Voice Acting Issues – 20th August

I have now implemented ‘test’ voice acting into a number of my scenes, and to be honest, it has not had the desired result. It has a large amount of echo, and the overall quality is mediocre. I have attempted to remove some of it through editing software, however so far I have been unsuccessful. It is likely that I have to revisit my friend’s house to re-record the dialogue. I have spoken briefly with him about this, and he seemed more than happy to do so, as considering I was going to ask him to do the voices for the side characters anyway, this could in fact solve two issues at once.

Journal Entry 50 - Creating the Portal & the ‘Other World’ – 23rd August

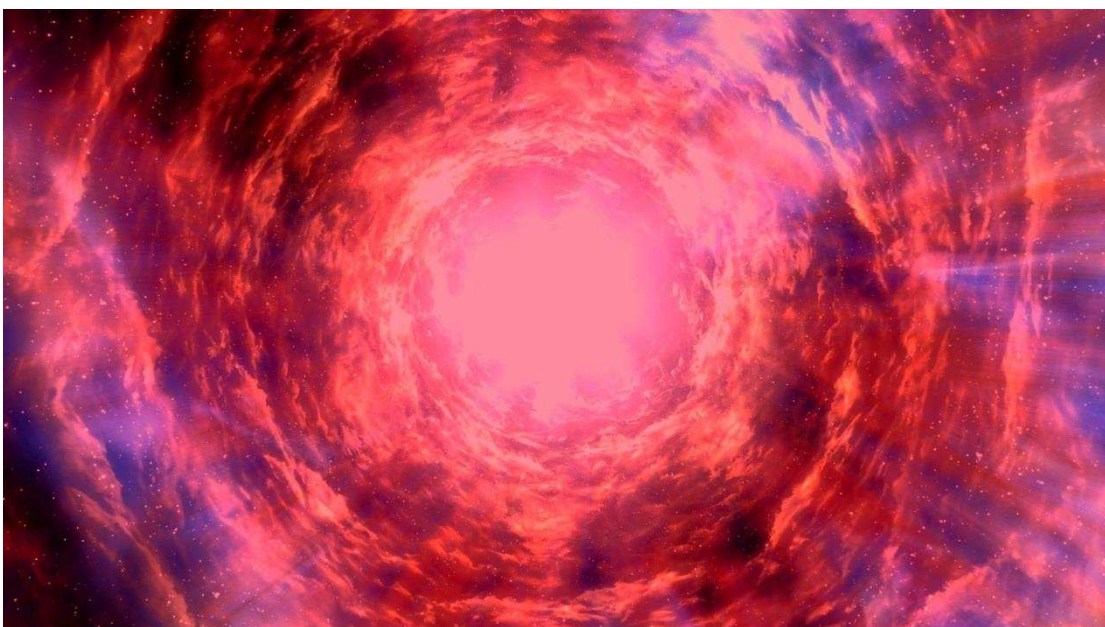
To create the portal, I knew that I was going to attempt to find a modification that had this feature, or as a last resort I would have to create it myself. Luckily, I managed to find a mod called ‘Portal - Dynamically Placed Teleportation’. This allowed me to place a portal in the cave. However, the issue of making Ash vanish when he entered it remained. I have managed to achieve this effect by placing another portal at another location in the cave, therefore when Ash enters the portal it gives the illusion that Ash has entered the other world.



To create the portal travelling effect, I combined a number of special effects. The first thing I did was place a visual effect on the sky. This created a 'starry' effect; I used the appearance of the sky when you are looking into space as inspiration.



I then added another effect to create the 'dreamy portal' effect, this was done by taking the sky from one of the end locations in the game, when you are about to face one of the final enemies. I combined them to achieve this effect.



I then decided I wanted to give the other world a darker atmosphere. I experimented with a number of different effects and imagespace modifiers.



Once again, the end result is a mix of a number of different imagespace modifications, in each of which I reduced the 'strength' of each effect. Therefore, there was no dominant mod, which allowed me to combine them.



Journal Entry 51 - New Dialogue Recorded – 2nd September

I have now managed to re-record the entirety of Ash's dialogue, and I am much happier with the second recording. We managed to reduce the echo, by re-arranging my friend's room. I now also have the entirety of the male voice cast. All I require now is the voice of Maria and then I will have all the voices recorded.

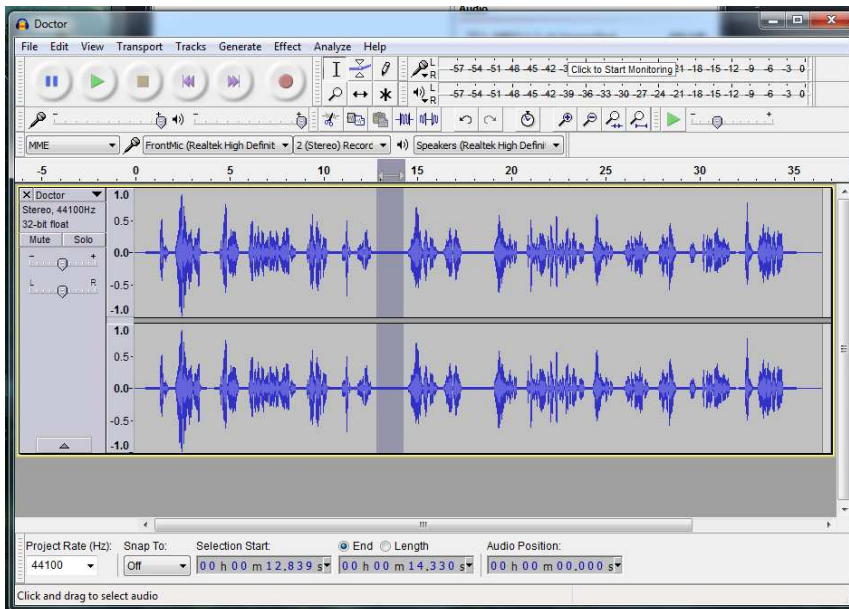
Journal Entry 52 - Dialogue Background Noise – 3rd September

The dialogue still contains a large amount of background noise; which poses a significant problem because you can hear the background noise before the characters begin to speak. It is far less noticeable when there is music or ambience present; however, I still feel that it is an issue. I am going to try my best to reduce this, however, considering I have never edited sound before and I am a complete novice when it comes to these types of issues, I decided the use of tutorials would be my best option.

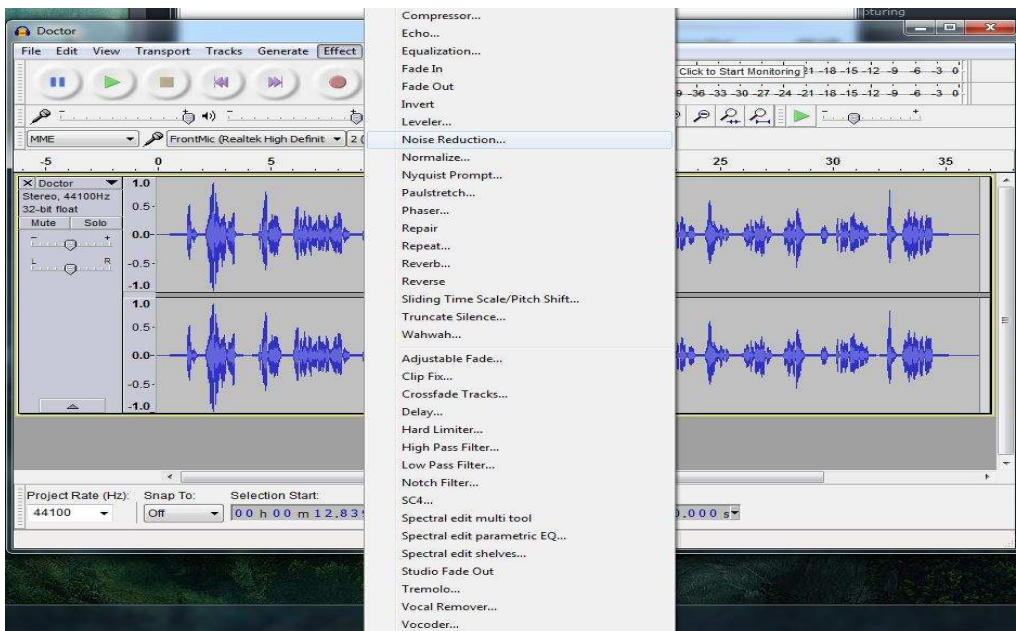
Journal Entry 53 - Dialogue Background Noise Fixed – 4th September

I have been looking at tutorials on how to fix background noise, it seemed like many people suffer with the same problem. I managed to find a free program called 'Audacity', which is a fantastic piece of software which allows to you to completely manipulate the sound file.

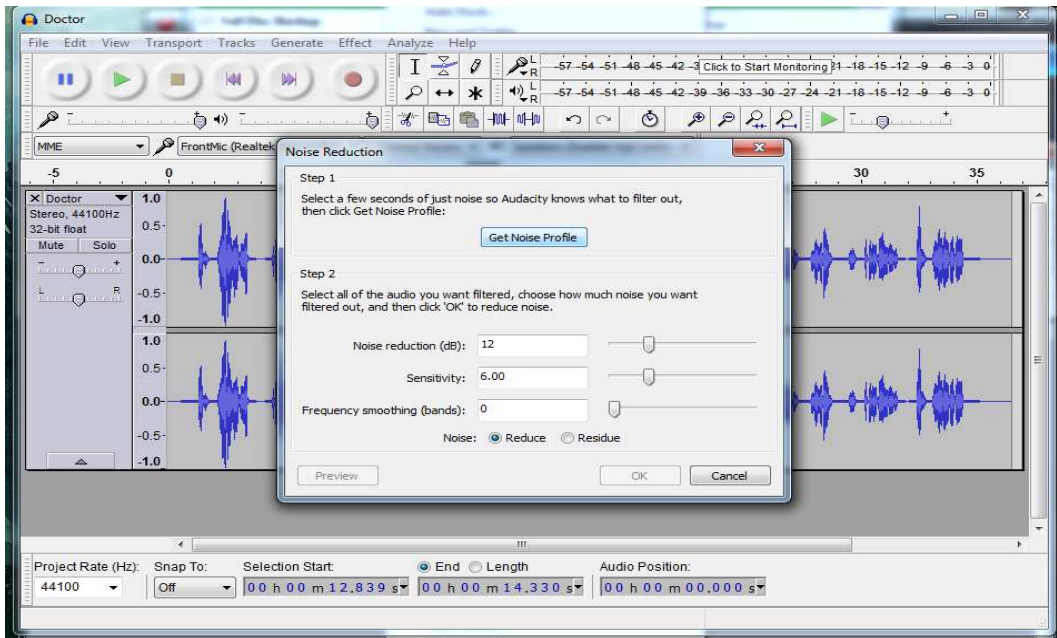
I managed to significantly reduce the background noise using this program, which is easy when you know the technique. The first thing you do is to highlight the background noise on your timeline, which is made obvious because it is the smaller waves of noise.



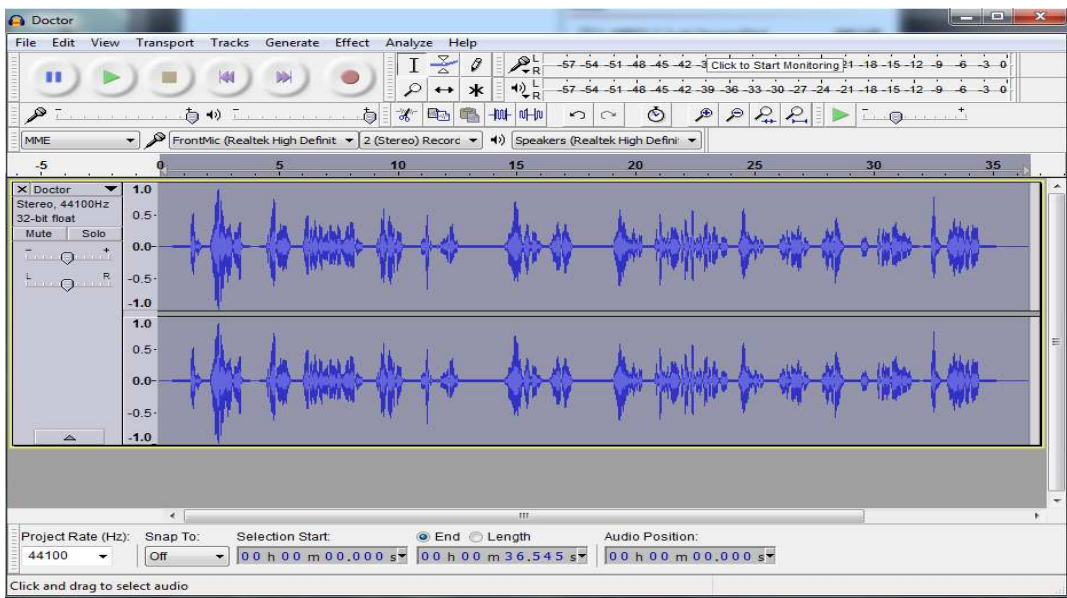
The next step is to find the effect called 'Noise Reduction'.



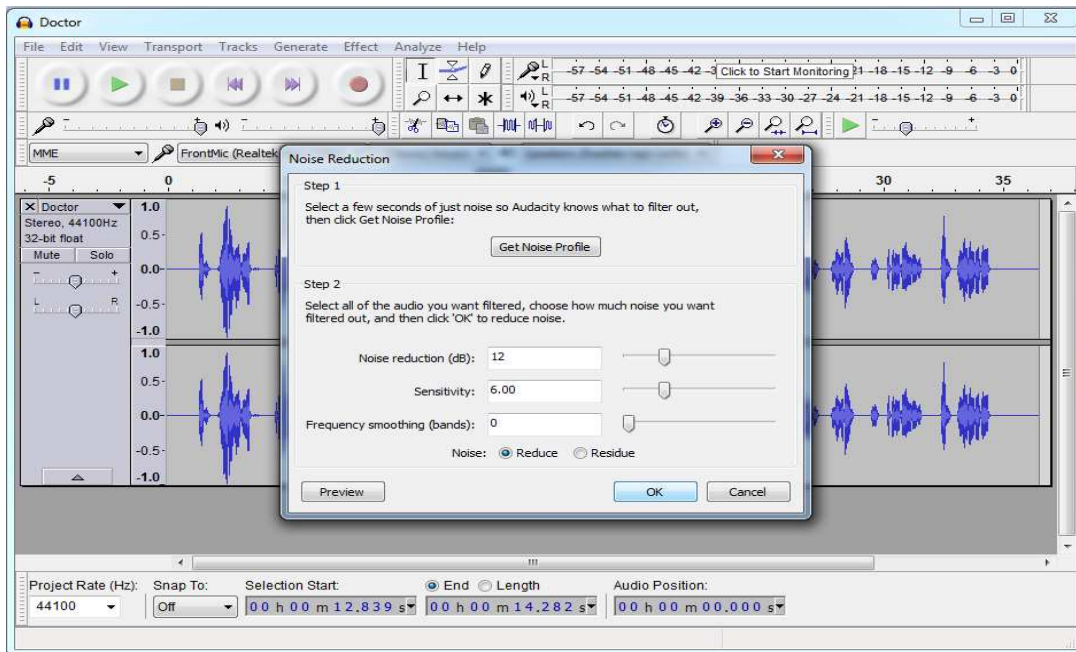
Once you have clicked this effect, you will see a menu with two steps. Start with Step 1, which targets the noise profile of the area which has been highlighted on the timeline. This informs the program which kinds of sound you want to remove.



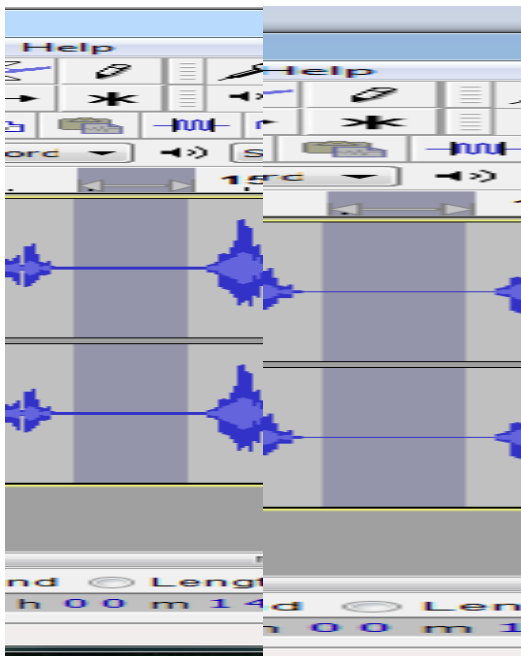
Then you must return to your timeline and highlight the entire sound file.



Once selected, you return to the noise reduction effect and go through Step 2, which is done by clicking OK.



When we compare both the original timeline and the new timeline, it is easy to see how much the straight section of the sound wave has been reduced in size, and the removal of background noise is complete.



Reflection - Sound Production

The post-production phase of the machinima film has highlighted the importance of the sound recording process. The majority of the sound recorded for this machinima film had to be improved through editing software. A great amount of care and planning is required before sound is recorded; as you often only have one attempt to get it right. Background noise, room setup and quality of the microphone can all massively impact the quality of the recording, and therefore the viewing experience. It is also very important to have suitable sound effects, for example it is easy to underestimate the importance of footsteps until they are not present.

The soundtrack in the film is also a huge part of post-production; as the quality of the soundtrack will affect the overall tone of the film, and can greatly impact the viewing experience. Additionally, the voiceover performances themselves were important for setting the tone of the film in certain areas, there are certain emotions that are difficult to convey through the characters alone. For example, during scene where Ash and his mother see each other for the first time, it was difficult to express how happy his mother was to see him due to the limitations of machinima, thus this led to an increased reliance on the voiceover performance.

Conclusion

Machinima is often perceived as simply re-using computer graphics to create a film, and because the majority of the graphics have already been created for the user, that it is therefore a simple process. This research demonstrates the process of creating a cinematic machinima film, and how the demands are inherently more difficult and time-consuming than is perhaps initially evident. Earlier ideas evolved or changed as the machinima film developed occasionally due to a lack of time, and at times due to the fact that many of these techniques and tools are difficult to grasp, with many obstacles that must be overcome alone, with limited tutorials and guides. However, as is commonplace with machinima, it is possible to overcome these issues with a creative approach, while also recognising the limitations of the game engine. I have provided evidence throughout the journal of instances where different obstacles were overcome through experimentation of the game engine, pre-set actions and console commands until a solution was found. Machinima is not as easy to grasp as it would appear at first glance, however, with in-depth knowledge of the process, it is a powerful filmmaking tool with huge potential.

The initial research questions provided a set of conditions that my research and machinima film could respond to. The first question was: 'can machinima be used as an experimental filmmaking tool?' and the conclusive research shows that the answer to this research question is in many ways, yes. This was illustrated by how the film developed in an experimental way via machinima tools, mods and approaches to filmmaking. For example, the portal (cave) scene offered a simple method of enabling the character to enter new worlds.

The film also had to develop experimentally through the use of pre-set actions that the characters could perform, as opposed to other forms of 3D film creation tools such as Maya, where these actions would be created manually to fit the scene. Thus, machinima offers the filmmaker the tools to experiment with ideas that would usually be very difficult, and incredibly expensive. Additionally, it became clear during the course of filming the machinima that it would have been possible to experiment with visualising camera paths/shots that could be seen as storyboarding for a major cinematic film. As a

result, filmmakers would be able to reduce the number of errors made during the creation of film, saving money and time.

The response to the second question: ‘can machinima be used for artistic and ‘personal’ narratives (as opposed to commercial)?’ suggests that machinima can indeed be used for artistic and personal narratives. A notable difference between machinima and standard filmmaking is that machinima can be created with a much smaller team, or even a single person. This allows a large amount of personal narrative to exist within the film; thus allowing the individual to express their artistic side and experiment with new ideas. The focus of this particular machinima film was to explore a more personal form of filmmaking that rejected classic forms of commercial filmmaking, which typically demand high production values and larger teams. This immediately changes the approach and process of creating the film and enabled me to pursue a more personal outcome.

The third question: ‘can machinima reject or subvert ‘classic’ forms of machinima landscapes and environments?’ resulted in an interesting response. The mod ‘Review Studio With Green Screen Rooms’ allows you to film a single character, and then easily place him/her as a ‘layer’ over a number of different landscapes. These landscapes could be found within the game that the character that he/she originated from like the MA machinima film, or be placed in completely new game worlds. Furthermore, it is evident in the machinima film that when the character passes through the portal, the original game world has been completely subverted. This was achieved using a number of special effects and imagespace modifications that give the game world a new appearance and atmosphere.

The final research question was: ‘can machinima be combined with other forms of filmmaking?’ and the research affirmed that it can, particularly through the use of the mod ‘Review Studio with Green Screen Rooms’, which essentially combines newer forms of digital filmmaking with machinima production techniques. For example, this mod allows you to add new effects, characters and objects into a scene that they were originally not present in; much like CGI is created during post production of a film. Tracy Harwood’s definition observes the hybrid nature of machinima production: ‘it is the convergence of filmmaking, animation and games development. The attributes of real-time creation of content from 3D computer game engines, puppeteering and

manipulation of game resources, modding and post-production editing, often using third-party applications, remain central to its identity' (Harwood, 2011). Additionally, machinima can be combined with major cinematic films as a means of testing ideas, scenes, and narrative. Marino noted that Spielberg used machinima 'to pre-visualize camera paths for his special effects shot for his film A.I.' (Marino, 2004).

One of the major obstacles to overcome during the creation of the machinima film was the tension between the videogame engine and filmmaking- for example, ensuring that the machinima film did in fact resemble a film as opposed to a video game. There would be a number of viewers of machinima films that would be familiar with the game or game engine that the film is being created with. Therefore, there is a constant struggle to prevent the viewer from thinking about the video game world, and instead focus on the machinima film. In one of the machinima film drafts, there are a number of scenes where the main character is travelling from one location to another.

The time spent travelling would more closely resemble playing a video game, where the player would often be required to travel to a certain location to complete their goal, however in my film this has been cut down considerably. There would be a greater focus on the action; consequently in the later stages of editing the machinima film, I spent a considerable amount of time trimming scenes in which the footage did not advance the narrative. This and other factors had an impact on the script, which evolved as the filmmaking process began. While the overall shape of the narrative remains, there are noticeable differences, such as Ash's mother now has her own scene, removal of flashbacks and the intro and ending are completely different. These changes have improved the film in numerous ways, particularly in ensuring the narrative is advancing at all times, helping the audience to empathise with Ash's mother, and become emotionally involved in his motive

Furthermore, every machinima scene recorded contains the original audio from the videogame that could easily be used for the film itself. However, this would also remind the viewers of the videogame or engine that is used to create the machinima piece, rather than a new narrative film. As a result, the machinima film uses mostly new sound effects, voices and soundtrack. There are a few sound effects that still exist from the

game, nevertheless when taken out of context it is unlikely the viewer will make the connection that these were originally present at places within the game. The machinima film originally intended to use existing dialogue found within the game, which would have been used for minor characters and would reduce the amount of voice recording required. The script could have been written to accommodate for the dialogue that was present, and considering there are 60,000 lines of dialogue in the game, this would not have been very difficult. However, this may have contributed to the possible tension between the videogame and filmmaking, and as a result this idea was disregarded.

As a result of the machinima practical work, many areas of the machinima filmmaking process opened up. As previously mentioned, all existing sound contained within a scene is stripped away, this highlights the requirement of 'laying the sound carpet' which is a term that describes placing the ambient sounds into a scene, and then building on top of that to create the desired atmosphere. There are moments when this can be a difficult challenge, for example when two characters are engaging in conversation in a house, it is difficult to imagine the importance of ambient sound until it is not present.

The difficulties of working with voice talent for the machinima film were also opened up during the creation process. Largely due to the fact that machinima films are created in small teams or by a single person and on a limited budget, it is unlikely that there will be access to the equipment and tools that major films will use. When the voiceovers had been recorded initially, there was a large amount of echo present, which resulted in the need to re-record the entire dialogue. Additionally, there was the issue of a large amount of background noise that was too noticeable, which required the use of a third party program to remove. When recording voiceovers, it is also very important that a similar quality microphone is used when recording the actors; therefore it would be difficult to manage to record the desired voice actors at the same place when the voice actors all live in different areas. Originally the voice of Maria was recorded in a different location and using a different microphone, however when inserted into the machinima film these issues were immediately made obvious and completely ruined the immersion of the film. As a result the same voice actor was used for many of the male characters, the only difference being the accent and it was necessary that the room layout for each recording was as similar as possible.

It is also important to note that machinima forces the user to be very creative in how they deal with certain limitations. For example, as previously mentioned in the journal, there was an issue where the actor's mouth would not move when necessary. Therefore, the machinima required the use of an invisible character placed in front of the actor, this would act as a mouth movement initiator. This could be initiated by pushing 'E' on the keyboard (which had been manually assigned as the interact command within the game), which would then cause that character to engage in conversation with the actor, causing the mouth to move.

Ultimately, machinima is a double-edged sword. While it allows the filmmaker to flex their creative muscles, it also restricts them. For example, in one of the scenes in the film where Ash is leaving the village to go in search of the portal, in the original script Ash looks over his shoulder and shout at Bob 'I'll be back soon, I promise!' However, this was not possible within the limitations of the game engine, and as a result it had to be changed to Ash looking ahead while he shouted this at Bob. Despite these reservations, I would argue that machinima and the additional mods are effective tools in creating films that would otherwise require larger budgets and much more specialist teams.

Bibliography

BOOKS

Chris, C. and Gerstner, David A. (2013). Media Authorship. London: Taylor & Francis Ltd. p207.

Hancock, H. and Ingram, J. (2007). Machinima For Dummies. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons Ltd. p1-3.

Kelland, M, Hartas, L. and Morris, D. (2005). Machinima . Lewes: Ilex. p1-5.

Marino, P (2004). 3D Game-Based Filmmaking: The Art of Machinima. Phoenix, AZ United States: Paraglyph, Incorporated. p12-16.

JOURNALS

Harwood, T (2011) 'Towards a Manifesto for Machinima' Journal of Visual Culture. vol.10.1. p6-7.

FILMS/VIDEOS

Red vs. Blue. 2003 - present. [Series]. Burnie Burns. dir.

Gun Song. 2014. [Film]. Darius Malek. dir.

GAMEOGRAPHY

The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim. 2011. [Video Game]. Todd Howard. dir. USA: Bethesda Softworks.

Halo: The Master Chief Collection. 2014. [Video Game]. USA: Microsoft Studios.

Bibliography - Non Cited

BOOKS

Cefrey, H (2008). *Machinima: Using Video Games to Make Movies*. New York: Rosen Publishing Group.

Champion, E (2015). *Critical Gaming: Interactive History and Virtual Heritage*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Group.

Johnson and Pettit (2012). *Machinima: The Art and Practice of Virtual Filmmaking*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co Inc.

Lowood and Nitsche (2011). *The Machinima Reader*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press Ltd.

Ng, J (2013). *Understanding Machinima: Essays on Filmmaking in Virtual Worlds*. New York: Continuum Publishing Corporation.

JOURNALS

Frølund, L (2011) 'Animated war: Perspectives on resemiosis and authorship applied to two DIY film project' *Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*. Vol 18. p93-101

Kirschner, F (2011) 'Machinima's Promise' *Journal of Visual Culture*. Vol 10.1. p20

Appendix 1 – Script Overview

The film begins with the main character, Ben, standing over a burning corpse, although it is unknown at this point who this burning person is, it is made clear that this was someone that Ben knew. While this scene is playing out, a voice-over from Ben will be heard, during the speech he will explain the emotions that he is going through while watching the corpse burn, the sadness that he is feeling, mumbling to himself that he doesn't think he can carry on.

The next scene (flashback?) begins with Ben walking into the village of Whiterun, as he is entering the village he will be welcomed home by the local villagers. As he approaches his house, Bob (a side character) will stop him, he begs him to tell him where he has been and if he had seen any of 'them'. Ben explains that he is exhausted and will share all at dinner later tonight.

It is now night, Ben and the locals are in the local Inn celebrating his return. Ben's mother enters the room, and the two run over to each other, it is clear that these two are very close. A while later, Ben begins to explain over dinner to everyone what he has discovered and where he has been, it is now beginning to surface that Ben is very respected and considered important. Everyone is sat absorbing every word he says. There is a danger and Ben is trying to figure out how to stop it. This scene comes to a close as everyone leaves to go back to their own houses and sleep.

The next scene begins with Ben in bed asleep; the sound is muffled and as it slowly begins to clear, a warning alarm and loud screaming can be heard. Ben jumps out of bed and runs out into the village, he looks around and sees several dead bodies, a villager runs to him screaming that 'they' are back. Ben runs back into his house and grabs his sword, as he says to himself "mother". Ben sprints to his mother's house as fast as possible, as he arrives he can see that the front door has been smashed down, he runs inside to see his mother on the floor bleeding, with a monster (zombie) standing over her. He draws his sword, and then cuts the monster's head off.

He runs over to his mother, he pulls her hand away from her neck to reveal a large bite. He falls to the floor crying, mumbling that this wasn't supposed to happen. The film

then cuts to a calmer scene with his Mother lying in bed with Ben by her side. The doctor walks in and Ben asks him how long she has before she 'turns'. He informs Ben that she has about a week, and that he knows what he will have to do. Ben says that perhaps he can control her once she turns; maybe she won't be like the others. The doctor then hits Ben, telling him to accept the situation. Ben stares at the man blindly, and then a flashback begins.

Ben, as a younger man is seen carrying an injured friend. They are being chased by more of the zombies seen earlier in the film. Ben, with the extra weight of his friend, is slowly losing pace and the zombies are catching up. The injured friend tells Ben that he is finished, that he will die either way, and that he should leave him. Ben refuses, however the friend insists that Ben must let him go. Ben tells his friend that they can make it; however, the zombies are now really close to them. The injured friend manages to fling himself off Ben's shoulders, and the zombies swarm round his body.

The film then resumes present time, as Ben is still blindly staring at the Doctor; he then shouts that he will not let his mother die this way. The Doctor tries to calm him down, telling him that he knows very well that there is no cure and that he needs to let her go. Ben refuses to listen; he then storms out of the room.

He goes back to his house and begins to pack essential items, during the packing he hears a knock but he ignores it. The door then bursts open and Bob runs into the room, he questions Ben and asks where he is going. Ben explains that he intends to find a cure for his mother, and that he is going to the portal. Bob freezes and tries to stop him, explaining that it is forbidden and that everyone who has entered the portal has never returned. Ben confidently tells Bob that he has made his decision, and that while there is no cure in this world, perhaps there is in another.

Ben sets out to find the cave where the portal resides; he arrives to find two guards at the entrance. Ben throws a rock to distract the two guards, he lights his torch and then sneaks into the cave. He makes his way through the cave, and after a while, finally arrives at the portal. He slowly approaches; just before he enters he takes a deep breath, then runs through the portal.

Ben appears in a new world; he slowly opens his eyes to witness a drastically different location. The environments are very bizarre; it almost feels like a dream. As he stands up, an arrow shoots past him inches from his face. He then sees numerous soldiers standing atop the hill, he turns around and runs as fast as he can. He doesn't make it far before they have caught up, they have a number of soldiers on horses and he could not outrun them. One of the soldiers approaches Ben, he insists that he is not a threat, and during his explanation one of the soldiers knocks him unconscious.

Ben awakens in a prison cell; he tries to make sense of his surroundings, calling out for someone. A lady appears; she is dressed very well and seems to be of high standing. She introduces herself as Queen Maria and asks him who he is and where he has come from, Ben explains his story and she believes him. She tells him that the King plans to question him, fearing that he won't believe Ben; she agrees to help him escape.

Maria successfully aids Ben in his escape of the Castle, once they are at a safe location; Maria tells Ben that they have an herb called the Royal Lotus that is used to cure almost every illness, that if anything could save his Mother, it would be this. She agrees to help him and takes him to a cave where they find the herb. Ben successfully packs away some Royal Lotus, however the King's guards have tracked him to the cave, and after a brief goodbye, he flees back to the portal and returns to his world.

Ben rushes back to his Mother's house. As soon as he arrives he reaches for the herb, only to discover the doctor covering up his mother, who had just passed away. Ben, in tears screams at the doctor "I was only gone for one day; you said she had a week!". The doctor explains that he had in fact been gone for six days. Ben immediately leaves, intending to return through the portal; perhaps they can bring back the dead? As he is leaving the town, a flashback begins.

Ben has returned to where the previous flashback left off, although this time, it is at a later date. He has returned to find his friend, who will now have been turned into a zombie himself. He manages to locate his friend; he is distraught seeing his friend this way. He draws his sword, and mumbles to himself that he will free him. He slowly begins to approach, as the infected friend notices him, he begins to aggressively come at

Ben. As the friend draws near, Ben in tears turns away and leaves and the flashback ends.

The film returns to Ben leaving the town, however he is stopped by Bob. He explains what he intends to do, however Bob attempts to speak some sense into him, explaining that this is the last chance he has to say goodbye, and that he needs to let go. Ben is finally persuaded, and he returns to his mother's house.

Ben slowly walks up to his mother, and begins to apologize to her that he couldn't save her. The doctor approaches him, puts one hand on his shoulder and says "You know you don't have long, the body must be burnt". Ben insists that he can't do it, but the doctor tells him that he has no choice.

The first scene is then played again; we now discover that it was his mother who was the burning corpse. The scene is slightly extended and additional voiceover from Ben reveals how he cannot cope without her, and that he plans to end his life.

The next scene is not of Ben ending his life, but of Ben heading back to where the flashbacks had occurred. This time, he sets his friend free. Ben has let go.