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a shortfilm by Alli Sadegiani

“Monsters are real, and ghosts are real too. They live inside us, and sometime, they win.”



Bubbling underneath the skin of humans, greed can make him the most ferocious, most brave and even the most stupid. Alli Sadegiani's award winning graduation short film is a dark comedy on this aspect of human nature, all seen through the eyes of a devastated outlaw during the lowest time of his life. In the following interview Alli shares with us his experience making this film.

Hi Alli! Welcome to our pages.

Hi! Thanks for having me!

**Tell us how you stepped into this world of animation and filmmaking.**

Like most of the artists and animators, I have been into drawing and cartoons ever since I was a kid and went eventually to an art school. Since I was also into video games, I started to do graphics and animations for computer games as a hobby, with different groups of friends.

With this combination, and also my interest for movies and film making, it came very natural to me to get curious about Visual Effects and right after I was finished with art school, I jumped on another school to learn more about 3D and Film. Although the world of VFX was, and still is, fascinating, I felt it was more technically oriented than anything else. Since I'm not that kind of a technical guy, I started to more and more fall in love with animation and the pure art form of it. So I set up my own light-table, bought books, learned

software that made sense to the left side of my brain and by the end of the school, I somehow managed to put together a very very poor reel. It was horrible!

Somehow it landed me a job at the Swedish game developers Digital Illusions (DICE), who are now owned and part of EA. Here I worked as an animator and pipeline coordinator for "Battlefield 1942" and "Battlefield 2" which were two pretty anticipated and so far has been very successful titles. It was a great experience but I eventually left DICE/EA in 2004 since I felt, with games, I couldn't evolve characters and tell stories the way I wanted to. I set up my own small studio and have been working on commercials, games, music videos and short-films as a freelance character animator since then.

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### Now we wish to hear how the idea of Greed took birth and evolved?

I remember that I was taking a shower and had only 3 days to come up with 5 story ideas to pitch during my last terms at Animation Mentor. I was starting to get very desperate. As always and as strange as it sounds, I tend to come up with most of my ideas while in the bathroom or taking a shower. Anyway, I was preparing to shave my face and brainstormed at the same asking myself "what if..?" questions. One of the questions was "What if a pimple suddenly popped up on my face. And what if once I pushed it, moneys appeared from nowhere."

I spinned off from that idea and the first story pitch I had was very different from the final version you see and the main conflict was in him looking like Hitler going to the date or giving up all the gold in order to find the razor buried under all the money.

The story was kind of flat at that point and not evolving in any direction. After a lot of bounces back and forth with my mentor Chris Derochie and other people at the school, the whole concept evolved into being more about the weaknesses within the character and his addictions and his greed. Suddenly the gags about him transforming into Hitler, which I originally just had put in for no particular reason

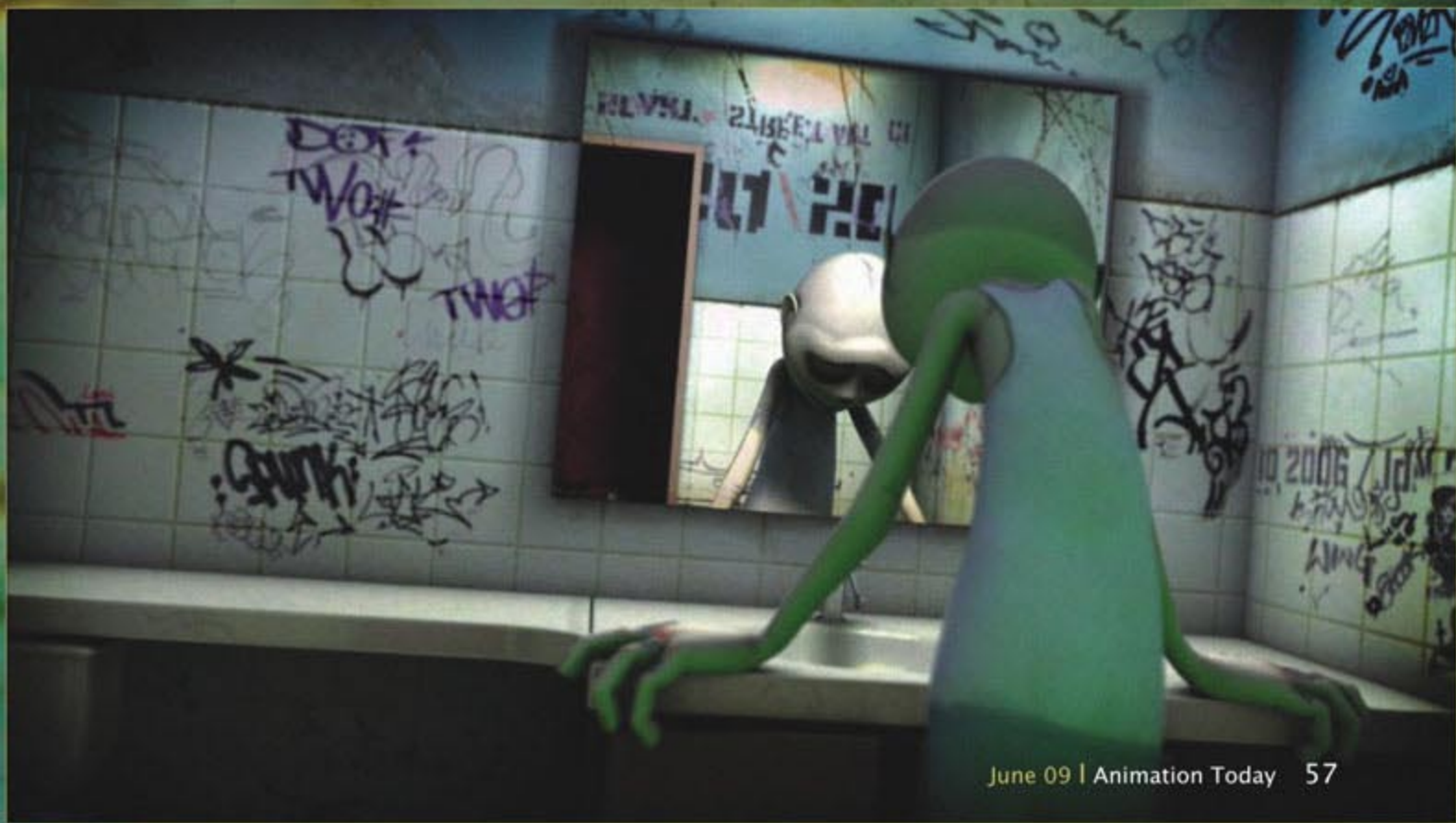
more than being just gags, made sense in so many ways and I also think it gave the story depth on several levels.

### Let me ask you what does the pimples and the Hitler moustache signify?

I guess the pimples in a way represent the choices we make in life and the things that trigger us as human beings. The Hitler transformation is a way to portrait and question why terrible things during the history has happened to our world caused by mankind and why we never learn from it. The funny thing about human mind is even when we know the consequences are incredibly negative, people still have the urge to keep pressing the button and see whether some more riches will come out.

### And there is a very creepy aura for the film.

Yes, this was a kind of a tribute to the filmmakers and directors who have inspired me during my career and have made the biggest impact on me. Also I wanted to go the opposite direction of what many animated shorts do and make something more "adult" out of it. This genre is pretty well used in Eastern and Japanese animation tradition but unfortunately, as far as I know there are not many thriller/horror animated movies coming from west. It's a shame since I think it's a wonderful genre to explore.





“I had to work very hard and sacrifice A LOT to get the film finished. There were times I wanted to give up. But somehow I stood by and forced my self to stay focused partly because I was seeing progress I guess. I think the one big lesson I learned is to never give up on your goals and consider all the mini-mini steps as big steps when they are put next together.”

**Can you name the filmmakers or movies inspired you in making this film?**

Yes. There are many, and I might forget some names now but the main influences came from David Lynch, Alfred Hitchcock, Tim Burton, Terry Gilliam, Donnie Darko, Requiem for a Dream, Reservoir Dogs, Western promises and Oldboy among others.

**The background score complements the movie very well. What was your vision here and tell us more on the role the music/audio effects played in the whole film.**

I wish I could have Stefan Strandberg here with me since he is the main guy and responsible for the Sound Design. I told Stefan what direction I wanted to go with and what movies I had been inspired by. I think my biggest inspiration was Mulholland Drive and I passed the thought to Stefan. He more or less took it from there, and I think he did a superb job capturing the atmosphere I wanted to go with.

The audio is such a huge part in a movie and I think it adds depth on so many more levels than what can be seen by the eye. It draws images in people's mind based on their own imagination and I think plays a big part in the overall experience. My goal was to have people feel the presence and pain of the character and I think the sound for this film brought people even closer to that experience. It's best portrayed at the end of the film where there is no images supporting the audio and it stand only on its own.

**How much time you took for the pre-production, production and post production phases?**

I believe I spent about 3 month on each phase. It took me about 9-10 month to finish the whole piece and it's reasonable to say that each stage took 1/3 of the total production time.

**What were the major hurdles and challenges you had to face during this project?**

I think the main and biggest challenge for me was to stay focused during the nine months. When you do a production more or less all solo and wear the hat of different persons it's not only easy to dig too deep into certain areas and forget about to take a few step back, but it could also make you very exhausted and make you loose motivation since there are so many roles you need to play. The mountain can be really huge sometimes and the top light years away from where you stand. But you need to remind yourself to just dig in and do it! Eventually, mini-step by mini-step the goal gets closer and closer.

**If I ask you the oneline for this film?**

I guess the quote in the beginning of the film by Stephen King is what the film is all about:

"...Monsters are real, and ghosts are real too. They live inside us, and sometimes, they win." I found the quote when searching the net for Stephen King to gather inspiration. It hit me directly and captured everything I was trying to say with my film in just two sentences!

**Which all were the tools used for this project?**

Maya, Photoshop, Aftereffects, Illustrator

**And how was the first screening experience? What all were the kind of comments you received?**

I was very excited to put the film on forums and have people respond to it since I didn't know if they would even get the story. So far the responses have been very positive and I'm happy so many people like the movie despite it's fairly twisted and dark atmosphere. Thanks to the somehow abstract theme of the film many people have been spinning off and come up with their own interpretations of the story and I think it's really a great thing.

**Alli, what is the one big lesson you learned making this film?**

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partly because I was seeing progress I guess. I think the one big lesson I learned is to never give up on your goals and consider all the mini-mini steps as big steps when they are put next together.

**And your advice to students and young filmmakers who wish to make their own film?**

Find your way to stay focused. Also make sure to have support from your family and friends. I had wonderful people around me that despite my absence in their life and me prioritizing my film before them had an unbelievable understanding and patients. To have their love and support is a priceless boost when times are as hardest.

**Since you are a former student of Animation Mentor I wish to hear more on how effective is web based lessons compared to real world classrooms for art/animation education?**

I think the biggest difference and the thing you must be prepared for is the way you interact with people. Since it's more or less a forum-based way of communicating, you must be used to, and willing to write and know your way around for how to leave mark, support, and network.

I know it took me some time to get used to that kind networking and I know still have issues with it since I'm more of a talking, rather than writing type of person.

Writing on forums and webspaces is quite different compared to if you were sitting next to your peers in a physical classroom or met in the corridors of the school. You don't have that direct kind of face to face interaction with people as in the real world. On the other hand it gives you more time and room to express yourself and could be used in much better way for communication compared to the real world if you just get used to it. I must say the tools

and systems Animation Mentor has set up for their school is just pure mindblowing and erases many of the borders between the physical and "virtual" world. They have without any doubt set the bar and standard for how e-learning should be.

**Now what is your professional role today and how you look forward to be known in this industry?**

As for today I guess I will be continuing to explore and find new type of projects to work on to grow more as an animator. One of the main reasons for putting my short film out was to experience the role as a director and writer and I am hoping to get the opportunity to explore those rolls even further. However, I have to admit that highest on my list right now is to get the chance to work on animated feature. I guess giving back and inspire others the same way I have been inspired would be just fine. I have been inspired by so many talented and marvelous people so I guess giving a tribute to them and hopefully passing a bit of new inspiration forward would be a good way of being recognized.

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**Thanks Alli. It was a pleasure talking to you.**

Thank you! It was nice to share my thoughts with you.

- by Ranjith PM