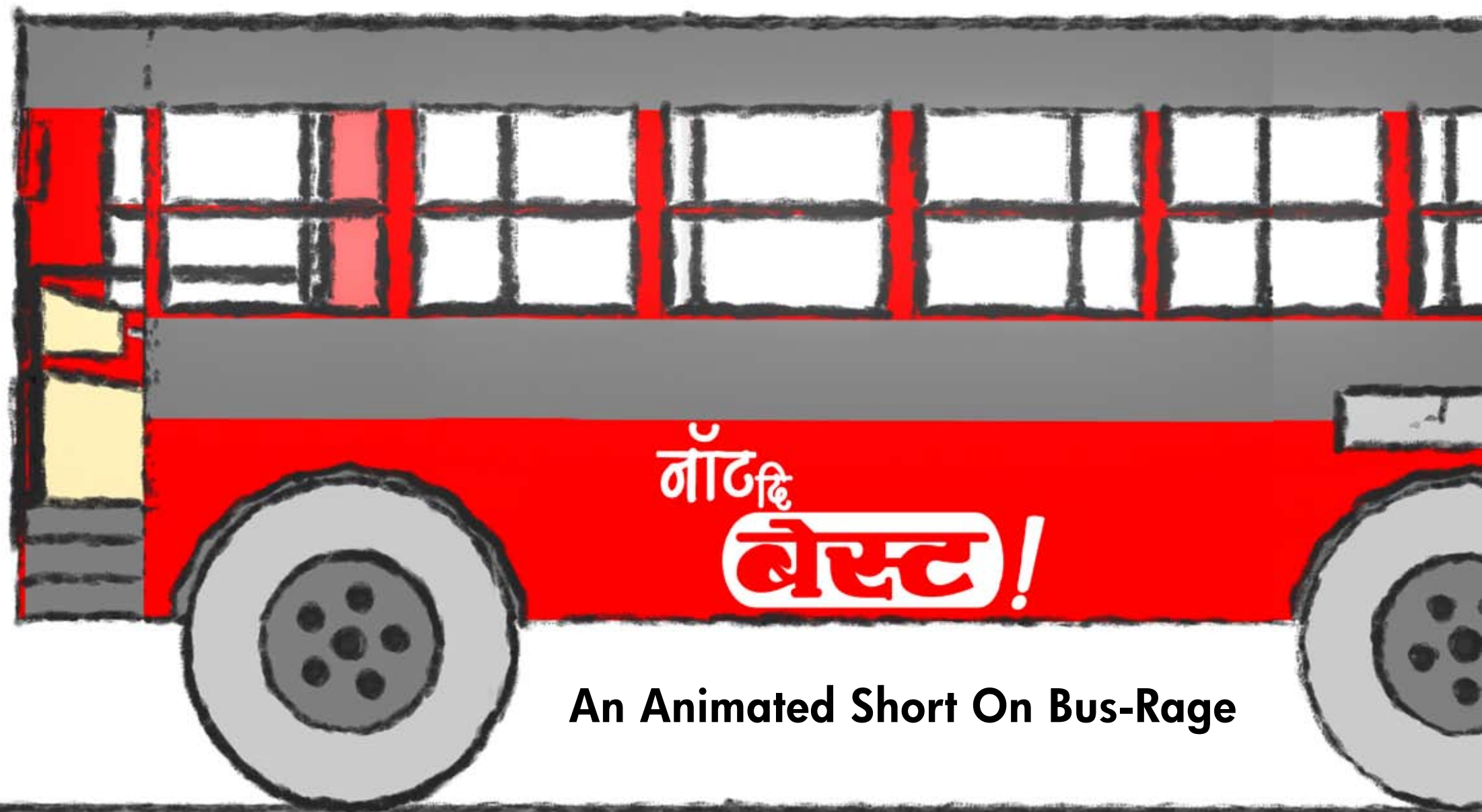
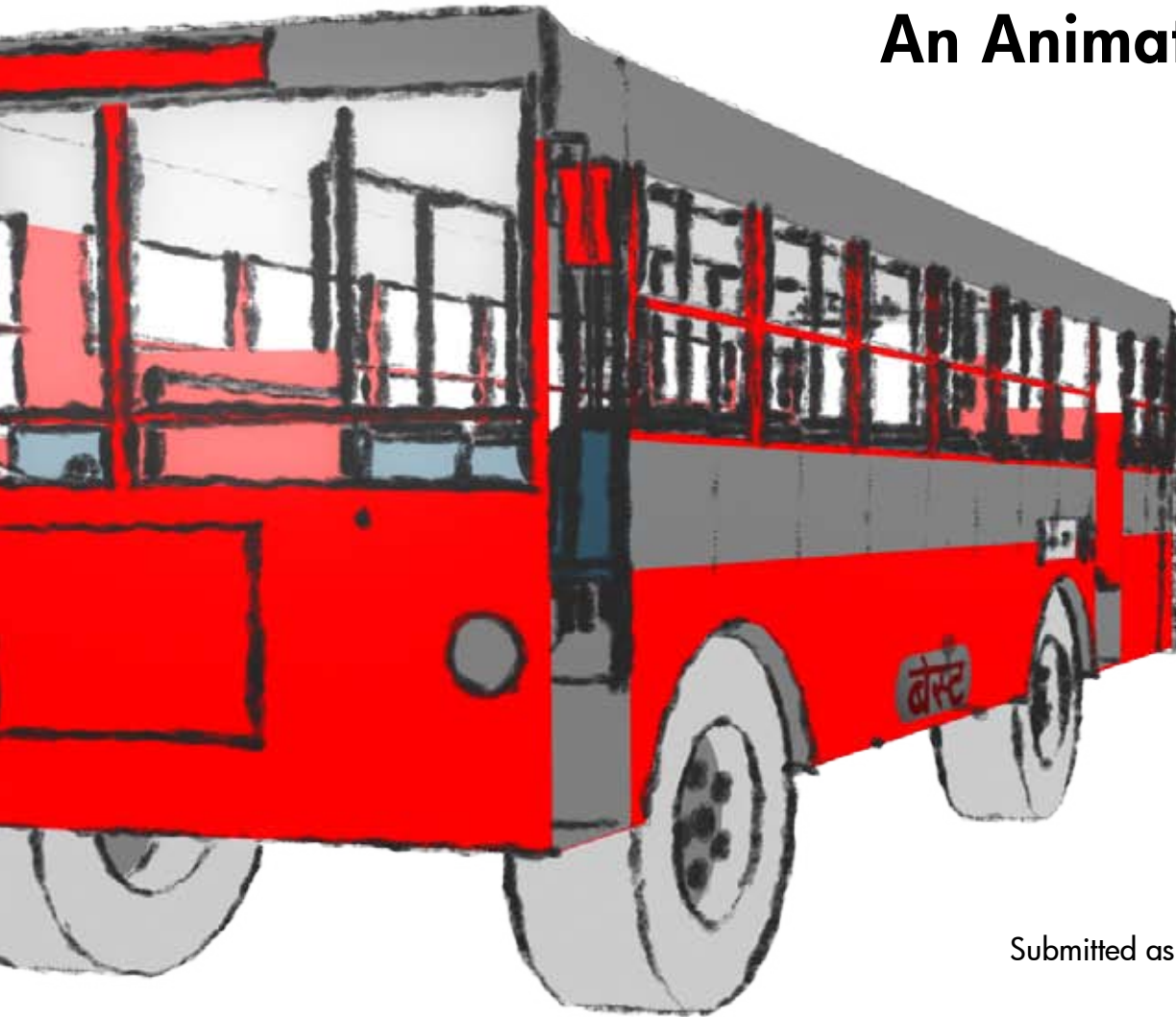




An Animated Short On Bus-Rage

Not The Best!

An Animated Short On Bus-Rage



Project by
Ashwin Dongre
07634007

Project Guide
Prof. Nina Sabnani

Submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirement for the
degree of **Master of Design in Animation.**

Batch of **2007-2009**

Industrial Design Center
Indian Institute of Technology
Mumbai - 400076

Approval Sheet

The project II titled **"NOT THE BEST - An Animated Short on Bus-Rage"** by Ashwin Dongre is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirement for M.Des. Degree in Animation

(Guide)

(External Examiner)

(Internal Examiner)

(Chairman)



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I would sincerely like to thank my guide Prof. Nina Sabnani for her immense guidance and support throughout the course of this project. I also thank Prof. Sumant Rao and Prof. Shilpa Ranade for their valuable suggestions during presentation.

I would also like to thank all my friends for their constant feedbacks and suggestions. I am thankful to all the people at IDC who have helped me to fulfill the requirement for my project by lending their support and facilities all the time.

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The Concept

The BEST bus drivers start the bus without waiting for all the passengers to board or alight the bus. Thus the passengers either cant get on or off the bus, or are forced to do that on a running bus, thus often fall down and get hurt.

Thus this movie is my statement against this erratic behaviour of the BEST bus drivers!

How It All Began...

The First Incident

My major travel by BEST buses started after I joined IDC, in August of 2007. I had to, and still do, commute from my home at Goregaon to IIT by BEST buses, changing it once on the way at Dindoshi depot. Now this incident happened on one particular morning when I was getting off the bus at Dindoshi depot. As I was alighting, the driver pulled the bus away while I was still on the last of the stairs with one foot getting off. I lost the balance and fell down. It had been raining since previous night and there was a small puddle right on the road and I promptly fell in to it. All my clothes got dirty and I had to return back home to change them. Obviously I was late to college. We are allowed to sign the muster till 9:30 in morning and Nancy madam, who maintains them, is very particular about them. But when I told my plight, she kindly allowed me to sign it that day.

On TechFest Night

The other main incident that happened is on the first night of TechFest 2008. I was returning to my home after the final event with my wife, brother and a friend. It was nearly 12 in night and there were very few buses as we were waiting at the IIT Main Gate bus stop. After some time a bus came. My brother and his friend boarded the bus successfully, but as my wife was about to board, the driver took off, and with such a speed. Well, I shouted and ran after the bus and had it stopped to get us two boarded. The driver asked what was the fuss all about, and wouldn't agree about his actions being wrong. Well we made quite a scene. It wasn't a nice way to finish a day spent so well.

How It All Began...

The Sudhakar Uncle Incident

If that incident was less, this one is particularly disturbing. My uncle had been visiting me with his family from Nagpur. One day we had planned to visit Juhu beach. For that we took a bus to Goregaon station from where we were to change it. Now my uncle has been suffering from ill health and can't walk fast. So he was the last one to alight the bus. And as he was, again, the driver took off. He did that so fast that my uncle fell down and twisted his leg. Of course, we had to cancel the excursion. What I don't understand is, it was the last stop and the driver had only to take the bus to the depot. What was the hurry all about? Specially, he chose not to notice all the shouts and commotion that caused around my uncle because of him.

These and many other small incidents have been in my mind all the time. I am a little scared of being the last to board or alight the bus myself. I understand that the BEST bus drivers have to face all the occupational problems and they have the problems of their own. But that surely doesn't justify their playing with people's life. I always felt something needs to be done. And with such a great tool at my hand and such an opportunity, I decided to make a movie that point to this particular problem.

So What Exactly Do They Do?

In its most simplicity, the BEST bus drivers simply pulls the bus away long before all the people are onboard or alighted. It is not necessary that they do it with only the last person, they do it with two, three or more people waiting around the bus door to hop on. I've also seen them pulling away even as half the passenger's line is still to board.

Impartiality

The drivers are very much impartial in their way. They don't care if it is a man, or a woman, or an old person, or even the school children. They don't care if the passengers have large bags in their hands. Oh they do care if it is a woman carrying a child in her arm. But even in her case, they will pull the bus away as soon as she is on board, not caring to think about her situation, that she is holding the child in one hand and the bus in other and doing all this while standing on the bottom most foothold of the stairs.

One other thing they do is, they stop the bus well before or after the bus stop, or away from it in the middle of the road (if they stop at all, and more than often they dont). So now the people have to run all the way from the bus stop till the rear door of the bus and climb up. Well, that is their problem, all the driver know is to stop the bus at the stop and pull away.

On an average, a local train stops longer at the station than the bus does at the bus stop.



Why They Do It?

A Full Bus?

One argument is that they do this because there is no space for more people in bus to carry more people. Even if we except it as a valid reason, that is not the true reason. I have lots of video footage that show that the bus is nearly empty and still the driver does it at every single stop. So not a true argument after all.

Traffic?

So you would say the driver want to get on in the heavy traffic. Because there is heavy traffic on road ahead, and they are holding even more behind the bus by stopping it at stop, not to mention vehicles overtaking while the bus stops and causing even more traffic in front. Well, when that is the situation, the BEST bus drivers simply don't stop the bus at the stop. They drive right in front of it, from middle of the road, far away from the stop, without stopping.

And I have many video clips that show an almost empty road ahead and behind the bus, and yet the driver doing their stunts. No traffic is definitely not the reason.

The real reason I can think of from all these evidences is that, they love to speed the bus on road. They like the power they have in their hands in the form of the BEST buses. The surety of the government job, that no matter what they are not going to lose it. So they drive the bus imagining themselves as he F1 driver on a fast track, at the expense of plight of the passengers.



On Top Of It All...



These photographs are taken from the BEST buses' front and rear passenger door. Translated in English, they mean "Please do not board or alight a running bus, as it is fatally dangerous to life".

So what are they trying to say, Don't travel on the BEST bus at all?

What I DID?

Capturing the act on video

So I started with gathering video evidences of these incidences. And as it turned out, it was not difficult at all. I got various things happening (as described previously). One of the two most interesting video clips I got from this exercise is a clip of about three minutes which shows *six* buses coming to the Dindoshi stop, their drivers pulling the bus up and then away as people are still boarding or alighting. The other clip is from one single journey from Dindoshi to IIT in an nearly empty BEST bus and the said problem happening in many different variety at every single stop, bus not waiting for people to board, stopping away from the stop, not stopping at all, not waiting for women and children to board the bus, woman carrying a baby in one hand, man with some machinery in one hand trying to board the bus as the driver pulling it away and so on.



The two most bizarre incidences I simply couldn't capture on camera because they happened so quickly. In one particular incident, a couple was trying to board a bus at Virvani Industrial Estate stop in Goregaon, the bus started running as the man was boarding and by the time the woman (she was wearing a saree) was trying to board the bus, it had already gained speed, so she was half running half dragging behind the bus with only one hand on the rod. The woman cried in horror, other people on bus made some commotion, so then driver simply slowed the bus to allow the woman to hop on. This all happened so quickly, and by the horror of it, I couldn't think of taking the camera out and have it shot. Couldn't have done it anyways. It happened all so fast.

In one other incident, a woman put her 3-4 year old daughter on the board and was about to climb herself up, the bus started. She cried but the bus did not stop, not even the conductor rang the bell. She somehow managed to lift her daughter off the bus. But the driver never noticed it happening. He just went on driving. And oh, there were at least half a dozen people yet in the line to climb up, and the bus was not even half full with sitting passengers.

What I DID?

Drivers' Point of View

Then I talked with some drivers about this problem. All of them refused that they do it. So I showed them the video clip taken on their bus. They fired back at me that I had no business taking video on the bus, thus completely ignoring the original question and refused to talk any further. Two of them mentioned that they have so many problems at hand, trouble at home, heavy traffic on road, fast riders flying past the bus, one of them actually complained that reaching the stop, the passengers have already reached their homes, but the drivers have to check the bus at depot before getting on to other bus to their homes. So he actually accepted that they are in hurry to reach homes, that they don't care whether the others do or not!



What I DID?

Passengers' Point of View

I talked with many BEST bus commuters. I asked them about their problems while commuting in a BEST bus. Mainly people complained about the rash driving, ie. Driving so very fast, that with every turn or jerk the standing passengers are practically thrown off balance. They complained about the foul languages BEST conductors and drivers use when complained. Infrequency of buses specially in rush hours. Buses not stopping at the stop. Buses stopping away from the stops. Some people actually mentioned the busses being pulled away before their being able to hop on, thus had to run after the bus to hop on to it. I also talked with the woman I mentioned above. People are so very disgusted by the indifference and the insensitivity of the BEST drivers and conductors that many of them retorted if only they could snap their head off (this I used in my movie) or simply beating them to death, but somehow teach them a lesson fatally. But off course they are all human and one of them actually questioning if these drivers are not human, but some machines?



The Object of My Movie...

I myself share many of these viewpoints and feeling with these passengers. I myself feel, no matter what problems these drivers have, domestically or occupationally, it is their job to carry the passengers safely, they are actually paid for the cause. And despite those problems they have no rights play with the lives of these people, who pay for that ride, which eventually becomes the salary of these drivers. Effectively it means they are hiring these driving to kill themselves.

No, I believe what is happening is happening wrong and something must be done against it. The best I could do is point toward the problem. Show what is happening and show what goes in to the mind of the passenger.

Hence the object of my movie

- **is not to discuss solution**

No, I definitely do not want to discuss the solution to the problem. I simply want to drive the attention toward this problem.

- **is not to judge the action of the protagonist right or wrong**

I do not want to say the actions of my protagonist themselves are correct, or incorrect. I do not want the people to do the same.

- **is to show what goes in to the mind of a traveller**

I just want to show what goes in to the mind of the commuters, to show that they are human, and should be treated like one.

I question the humanity of the BEST drivers!

The Story (Initial Draft)

This is a story of a young man, in his early twenties. You wouldn't call him shy, but he is not outspoken, he'd rather do, than talk. He is in final year of his college and has to commute everyday on the BEST bus. And thus inevitably he is faced with the situation where the driver starts the bus as or before he hops on to the bus. Unfortunately, he isn't good at it and thus always finds it difficult to board the bus.

Having faced this problem so many times, he is naturally frustrated and angry. On one such occasion, the bus starts as he is boarding it. Somehow he manages to hop on. Enraged, he rush to the drivers cabin, stand there, glaring at the driver. The driver, on his part, completely ignores him and keeps on driving the bus, enjoying as he is making good speed, at the passengers' expense. In the ecstasy, he passes one bus-stop without stopping. The boy, still glaring at him, wishes he could tear the driver's head apart and eat it sandwiched in bread, Driver-Pao!

Next day, he nearly falls off the bus, as it again moves before he is onboard, but saved by a fellow passenger, who pulls him up. He rushes to the driver cabin, stand there glaring for a moment before he draws out a gun from his bag and pointing towards the driver. The driver, looks at him, scared a little. At the last moment, the boy pulls the gun away and shoots. The bullet whizzes past the driver's ear.

Yet, on the third day, as if to avenge him, the driver pulls the bus as the boy is boarding. This time, the boy fell down. Wounded with a sore leg, he gets up and sees the bus stopping ahead because of traffic. He rushes towards it, hops on to the bus, goes to the driver's cabin and again draws the gun out and points at the driver's forehead. The driver swore at him and waves him away. But the boy pulls the trigger and doesn't miss the target.

The Story (under development)

The story in its simplicity shows what goes in to the minds of the commuter. The “driver pao” scene did show the feelings (*kachcha chaba jaunga*) exactly. Also the usage of pao was very much *Mumbaiyya*! But yet the story had many problems inherently. I found them out as I discussed the story with friends and professors and as I thought more on the story.

The first problem was that showing the shooting twice was taking out the impact that it would have otherwise have taken. So I decided show the shooting in final scene only.

Although it was clear that the boy was having the said problem, his character wasn’t developed properly and fully. The intensity of his rage was not shown properly. The reasons to cause it couldn’t justify the its intensity and the intensity itself did not go with the intensity of his actions. Some other reasons were necessary to be put in to match the increasing rage.

And although he kills the driver in the end, which exactly every suffering passenger wants to do, the way it was shown showed the boy as the bad guy of the movie. Despite all the erratic actions of the driver, he was overshadowed by the boy as the bad guy. The facts that he willfully bring the gun, kills the driver premeditatively, did not help. This needed be handled properly.

Most importantly, it did not show that the boy was human, and the humanity of the BEST drivers was not questioned!

So after days of brainstorming over the story I developed the final story as narrated here next.

The Story (final)

This is a story of a young man, in his early twenties. You wouldn't call him shy, but he is not outspoken, he'd rather do, than talk. He is in final year of his college and has to commute everyday on the BEST bus. And thus inevitably he is faced with the situation where the driver starts the bus as or before he hops on to the bus. Unfortunately, he isn't good at it and thus always finds it difficult to board the bus.

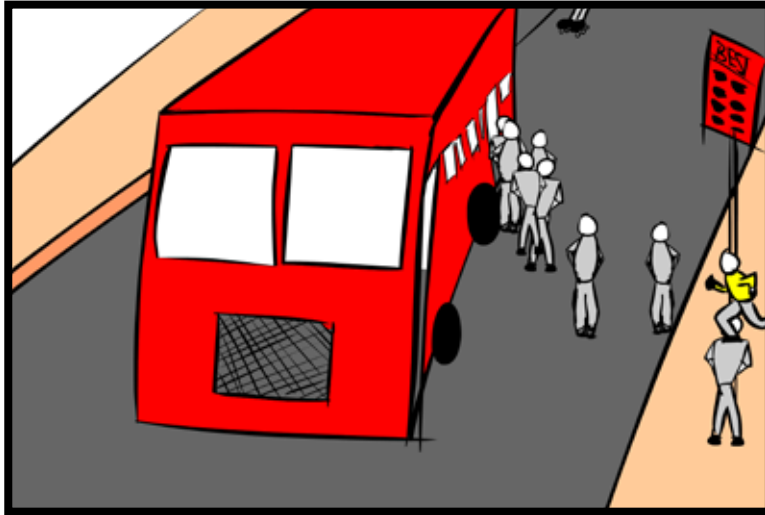
Having faced this problem so many times, he is naturally frustrated and angry. On one such occasion, the bus starts as he is boarding it. Somehow he manages to hop on. Enraged, he rush to the drivers cabin, stand there, glaring at the driver. The driver, on his part, completely ignores him and keeps on driving the bus, enjoying as he is making good speed, at the passengers' expense. In the ecstasy, he passes one bus-stop without stopping. The boy, words failing to come, keeps glaring at him!

Next day, he nearly falls off the bus, as it again moves before he is onboard, but saved by a fellow passenger, who pulls him up. He rushes to the driver cabin, as he is walking in the aisle, the bus takes a turn in full speed and along with everybody else, the boy loses the balance and fall over a woman standing. The woman slaps him. Still speechless, he rushes to the driver's cabin where the driver is laughing as he is enjoying the his joy ride. As the boy stands there, glaring at the driver, he wishes he could tear the driver's head apart and eat it sandwiched in bread, Driver-Pao! On reaching his destination, as the boy is getting off the bus, the driver pulls ahead and the boy fall down in a puddle hitting his head on a rock there, hurting badly.

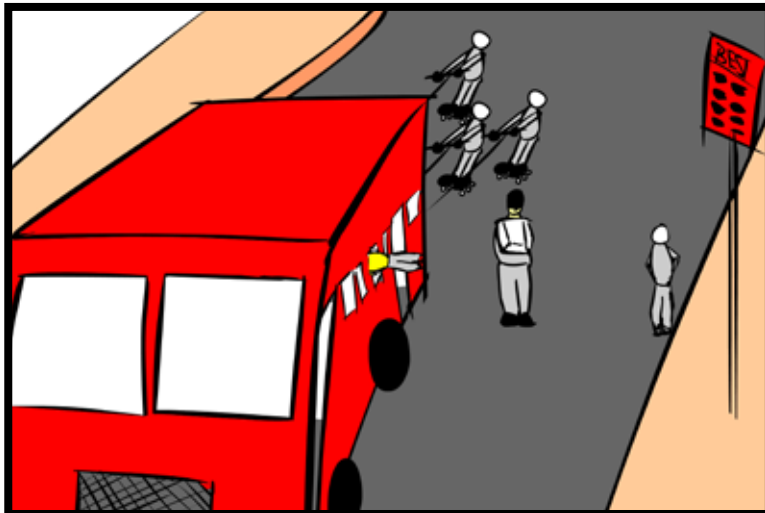
On the third day, the driver starts the bus as he has his foot half onboard. The boy falls down and is narrowly saved from being crushed by a car coming from behind. He gets up angry and hurt as the bus comes to a halt at a red signal. He walks up to the bus, climbs in and goes to the driver's cabin where the driver himself is grunting in anger. He looks at the boy, swears and waves him to go away. Enraged, the boy turns into a monster ready to strike the driver. But when he see the fear in the driver's eyes, he begin to become normal again and turns away. The driver when notice that he is no more under threat, jumps at the boy to beat him up. The boy turns back in reflex and slashes his hand at the driver. The hands, still not completely transformed back, cuts the driver's tummy. As the driver fall down, the boy stares at the wound, where blood should have been oozing out, there are electric sparks from the damaged wiring & machinery inside the robot driver!

Storyboard

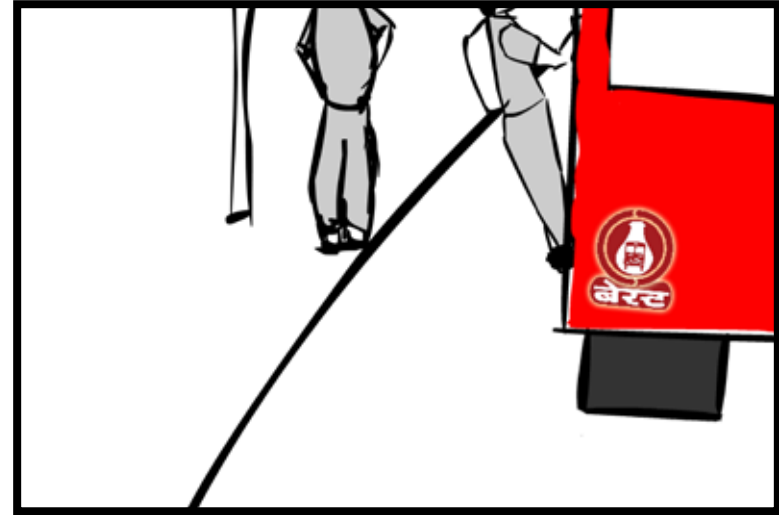
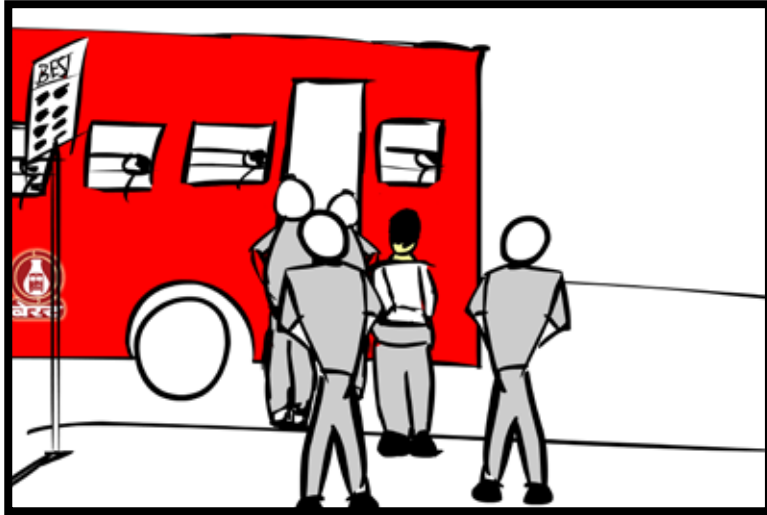
I then did quick animatic of the movie. At this stage, I did not emphasized on the looks of the movie and characters. I was more interested in the getting the timing right and be able to get the sense of what was happening. The animatics also went through revisions as the story got improved. Here are the storyboards of it.



As the movie begin, we see a BEST bus pulling up at a bus stop. Some people gather around the bus door to board the bus, one of them is the protagonist boy of the movie. Most of them do board the bus, and the bus starts as last few are about to board it. Left behind, the boy runs after the bus, but can not board the bus. The bus goes off the frame as the camera zooms in to the close up of the exasperated boy.



Storyboard



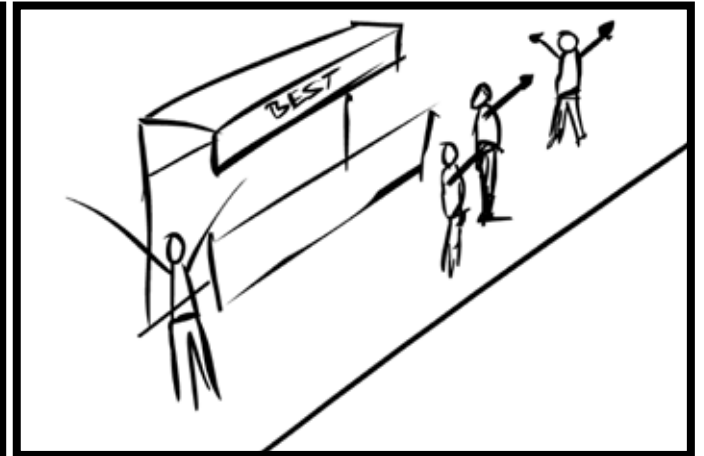
Next day, we see the boy waiting for the bus, as it pulls up at the bus stop. And the boy, with other couple of people, gathers around the door to board the bus. As the boy put his foot on the bus after the other people, the bus pulls up. The boy loses the balance but somehow manages to hang on to the door.



Storyboard

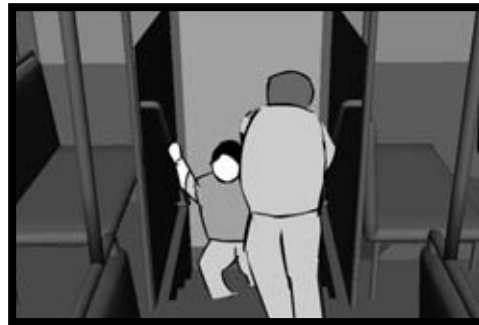


Enraged, the boy rushes to the driver's cabin. The bus is not particularly full with commuters, though all the seats are occupied; only a few of them are standing. The boy stand there, glaring at the driver. We can see thunderbolts, electric sparks and bomb blasts around the boy's head, implying the his anger. The driver is enjoying driving the bus, making good speed, and thus ignores him. He is driving the bus so fast and enjoying it, that he doesn't stop at a next bus stop. As the bus rushes past the bus stop, the driver laughs in ecstasy, looking at the poor people standing at the bus stop, waving him to stop the bus. He still is unaware of the boy's existence. The boy is still glaring at him.



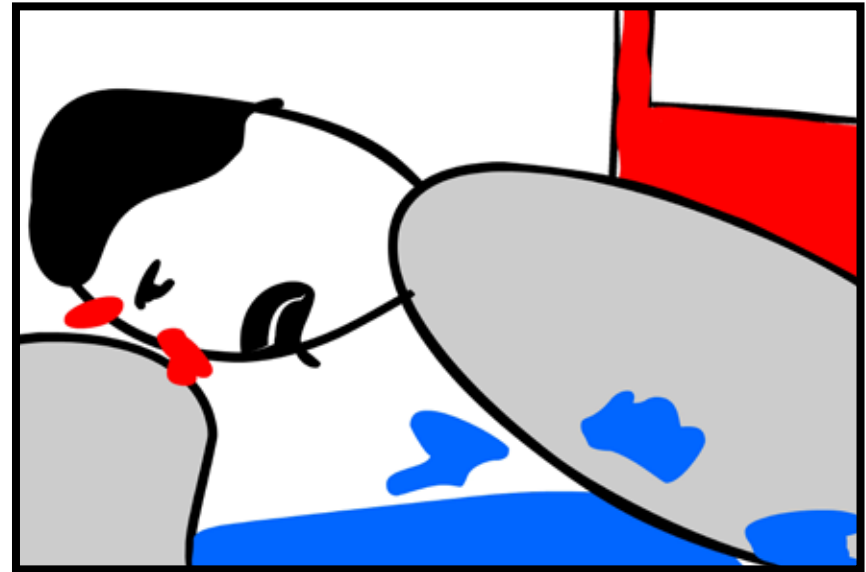
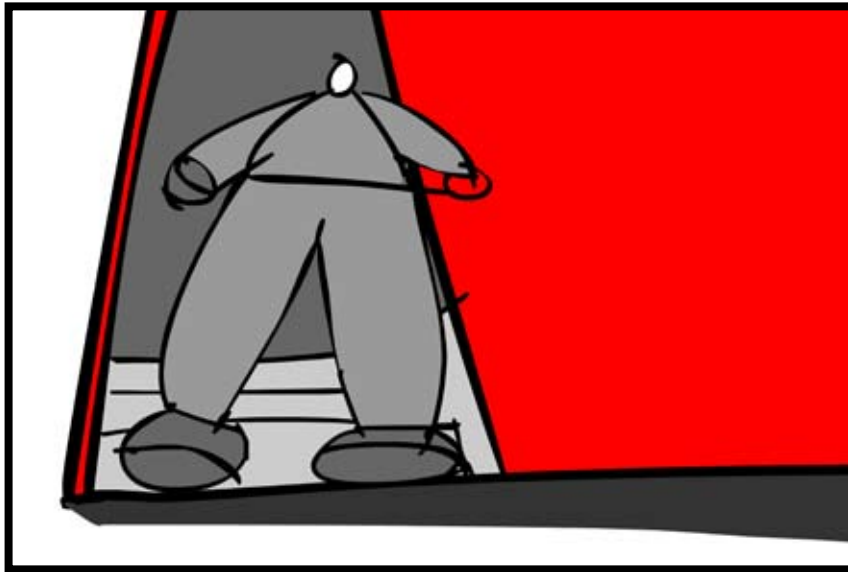
Storyboard

Next day, the boy is about to board the bus, with his only one foot on the stair, the bus starts. The boy loses the balance and begins to fall but is saved by a fellow passenger, who grabs him just in time. Once onboard, the boy again rushes to the driver's cabin. As he is walking in the aisle, the bus takes a turn in full speed and along with everybody else, the boy loses the balance and falls over a woman standing. The woman slaps him. Still speechless, he rushes to the driver's cabin where the driver is laughing as he is enjoying his joy ride. As the boy stands there, suddenly the whole scene turns red, the background fades while the boy grows in size while the driver shrinks in front of him. The boy stretches his hands, grabs the driver, lifts him up in air. He holds the driver's body with one hand and his head with the other, twists it and snatches the head apart. He puts it sandwiched in to a pao, and takes a bit of it. Suddenly the red background melts away and we are back in the bus. He comes out of the dream, looking at the driver who is still laughing in the ecstasy.

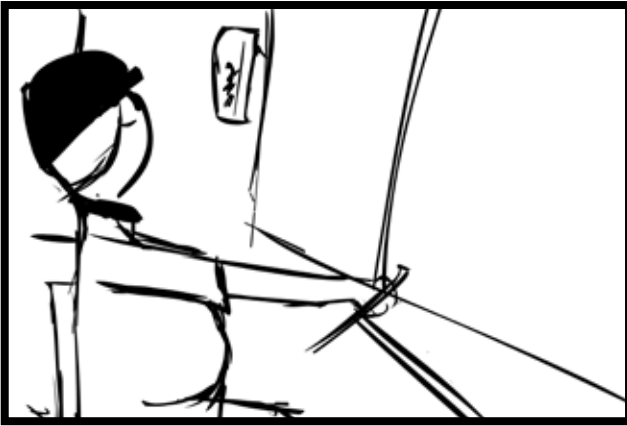


Storyboard

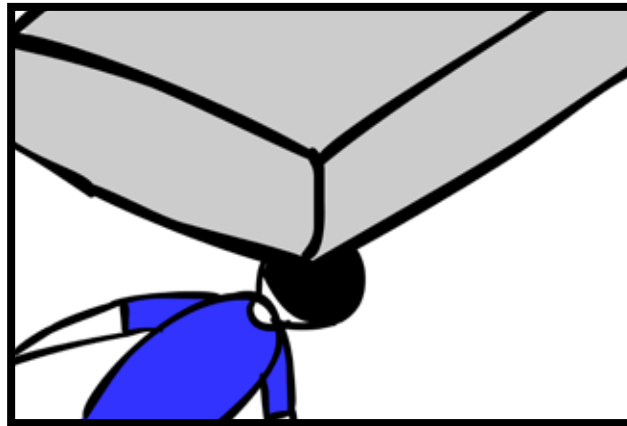
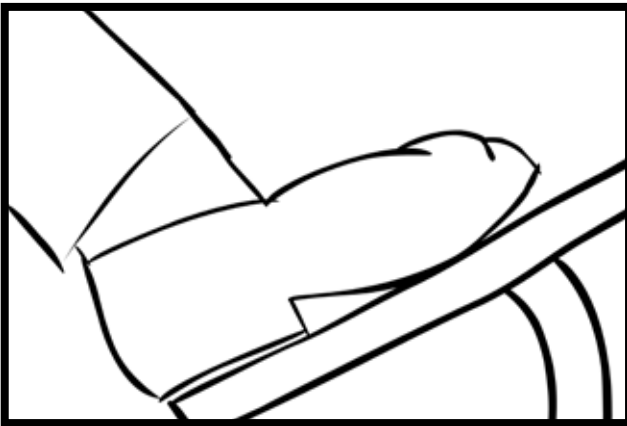
On reaching his destination, as the boy is getting off the bus, the driver pulls ahead and the boy fall down in a puddle hitting his head on a rock there, hurting badly.



Storyboard

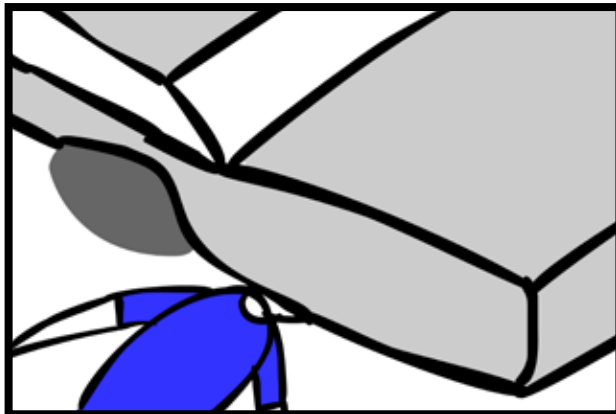
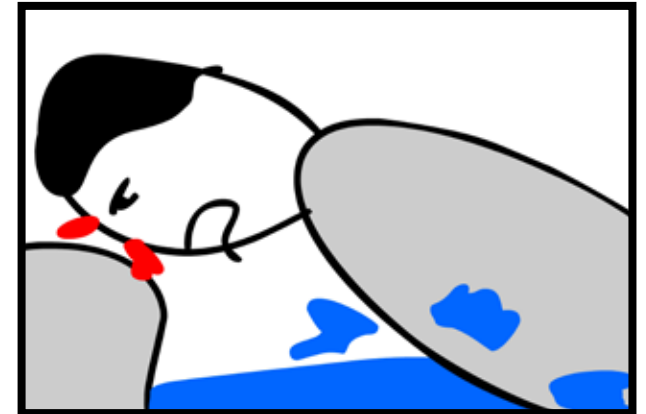
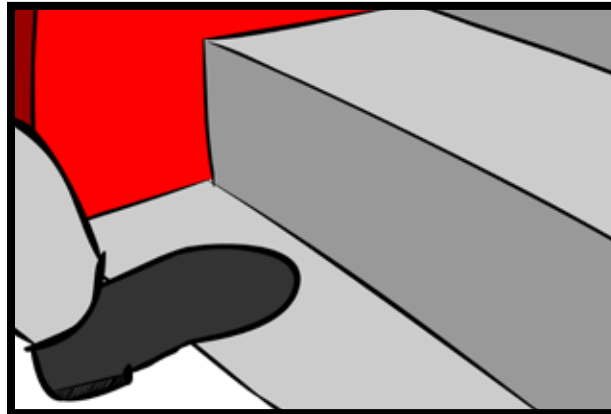
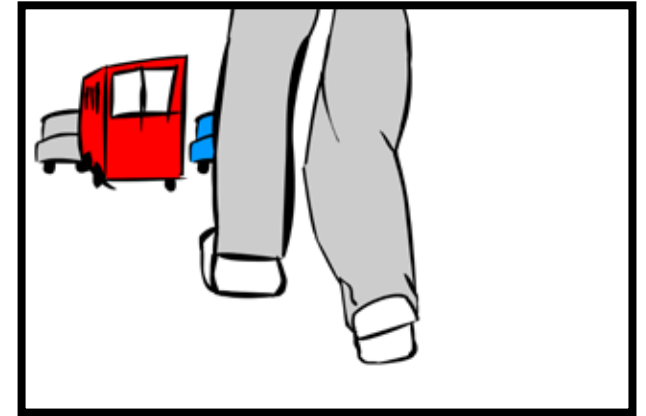
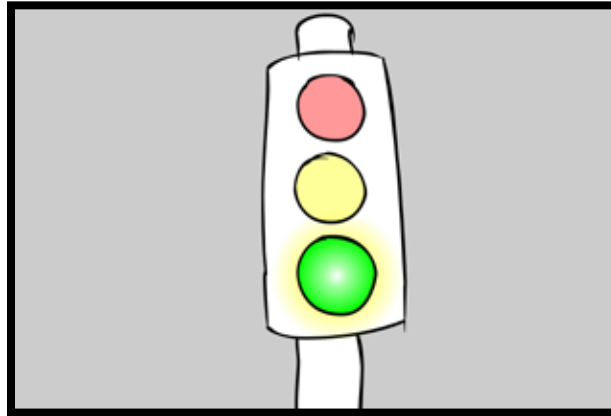


On the third day, the bus comes to halt at the bus stop. The driver is looking in the rear view mirror as the people are getting onboard. He accelerates the bus as the boy has his foot half onboard. The boy falls down right in front of a car coming from behind and is narrowly saved from being crushed. The driver then laughs ecstatically.

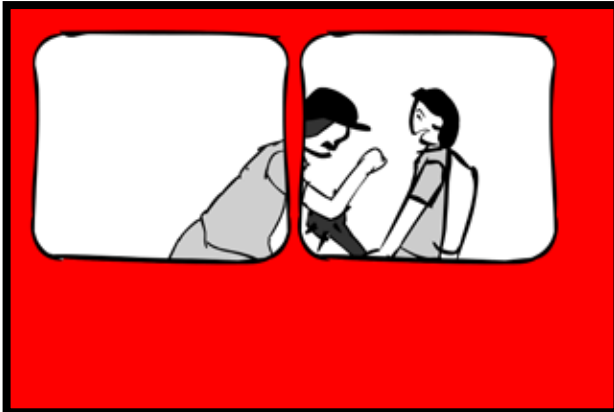


Storyboard

A signal turn red and he has to stop the bus along with the traffic ahead. At this point a montage begin. The boy gets up. He is bruised, but determined. He walks towards the bus, hops on, and goes toward the driver's cabin. While he is walking, we can see the incidents from past which tried his patience and have lead to this moment's extreme rage. We see him falling off the bus hitting his head, narrowly missing death from being crushed by a car, a woman slapping him for no mistake of his, but of the driver's.



Storyboard



He walks up to the bus, climbs in and goes to the driver's cabin where the driver himself is grunting in anger. He looks at the boy, swears and waves him to go away. Enraged, the boy turns into a monster ready to strike the driver. But when he see the fear in the driver's eyes, he begin to become normal again and turns away. The driver when notice that he is no more under threat, jumps at the boy to beat him up. The boy turns back in reflex and slashes his hand at the driver. The hands, still not completely transformed back, cuts the driver's tummy. As the driver fall down, the boy stares at the wound, where blood should have been oozing out, there are sparks from the damaged machinery inside the wildly laughing robot driver!



Style Exploration (references)

I explored some different styles for the movie. I wanted the style to be a little surreal, giving certain uneasiness, disturbing effect. Here are some of the references of the art.

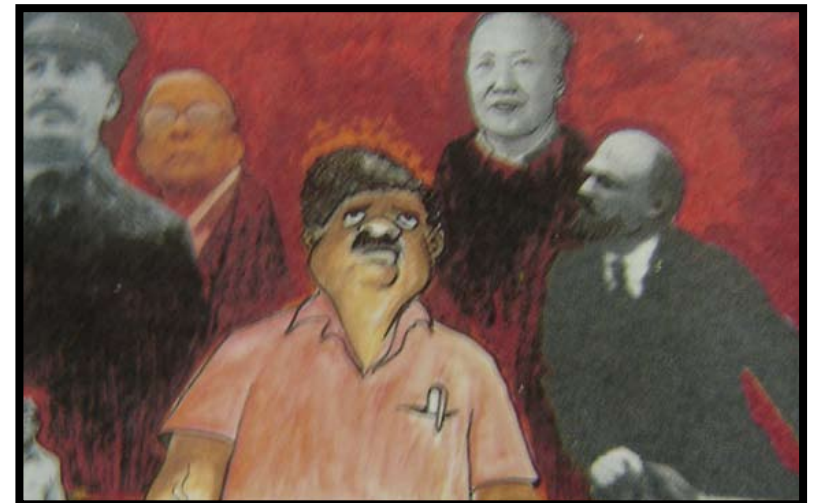
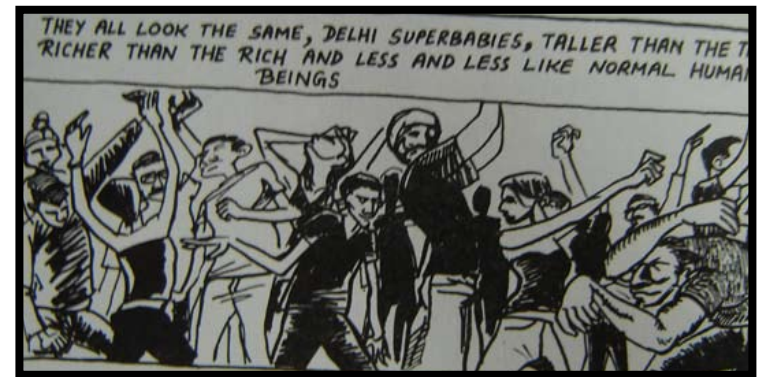


Sincity Comics Art

Style Exploration (references)



Graphic Novels (Corridor & Kari)



Style Exploration (references)

Movies (A Scanner Darkly)



Style Exploration (references)

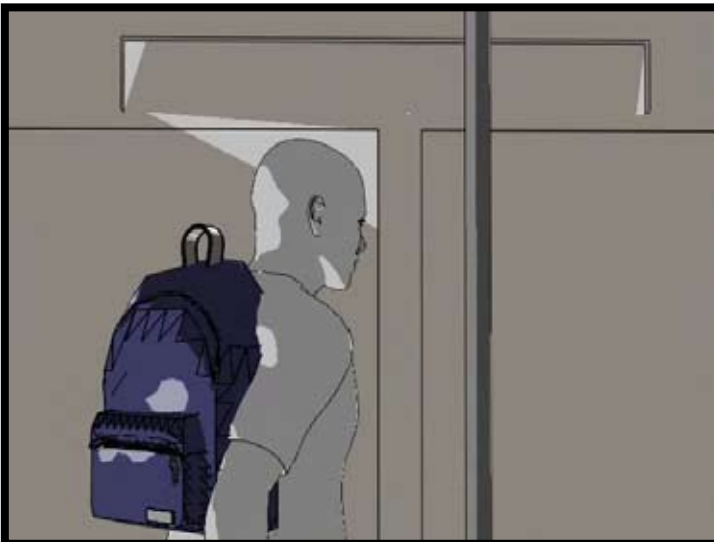
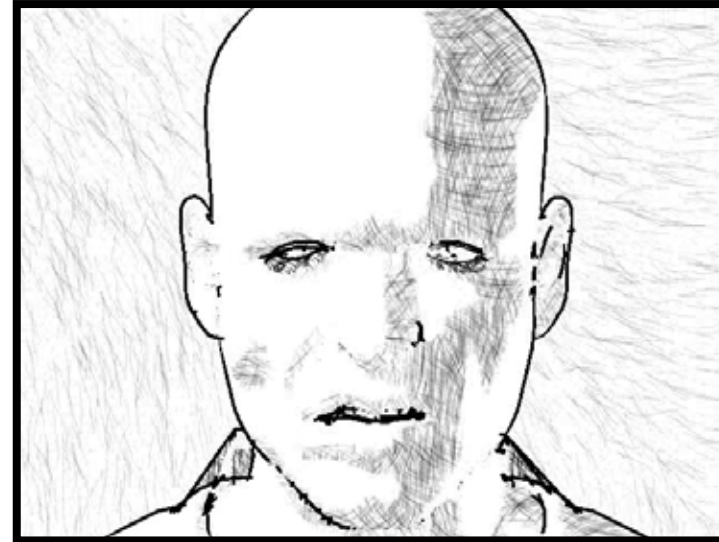
Of all these, I liked the the style of “Waking Life” the most and I decided to explore it myself.

Movies (Waking Life)



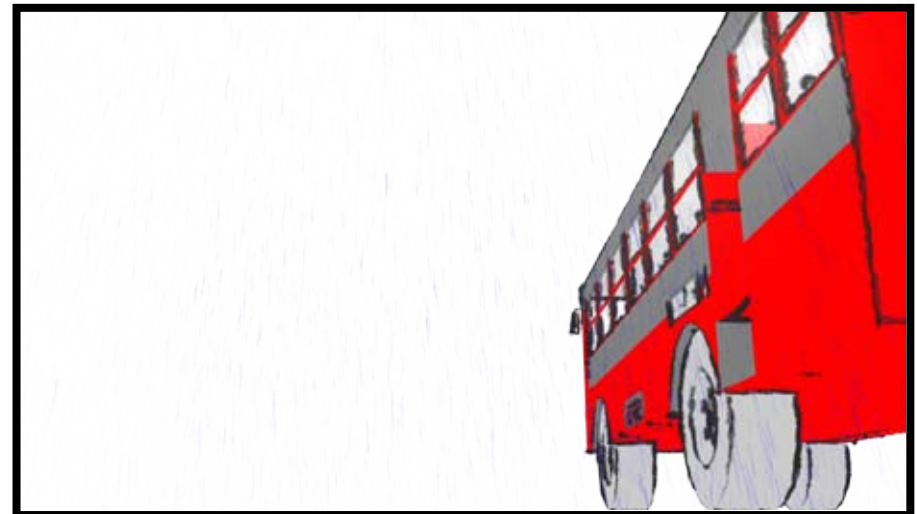
Style Exploration

Then I set to try some styles myself. I tried some in 3D. I tried toon shaders in 3D, tried to customize them. Here are some of the concept arts from those:



Style Exploration

As I said before, I like the art style of “Waking Life” the most, I tried it out and the video came out just fine, so I decided to use that for my characters and 3D with customized toon shader for the background.

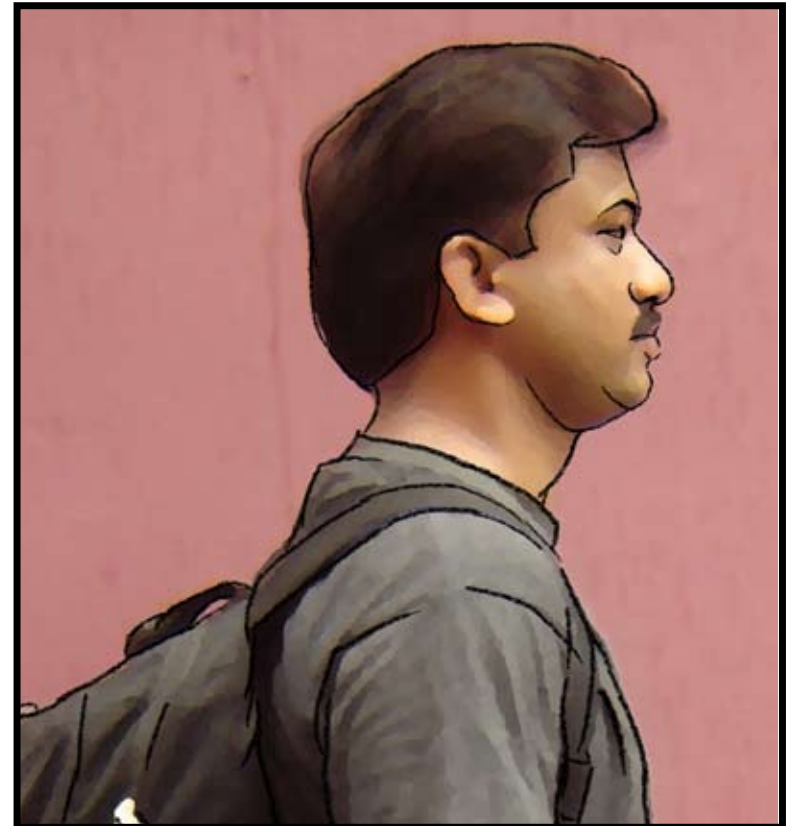


Characters



The Protagonist Boy

This is a story of a young man, in his early twenties. You wouldn't call him shy, but he is not outspoken, he'd rather do, than talk. He is in final year of his college and has to commute everyday on the BEST bus. And thus inevitably he is faced with the situation where the driver starts the bus as or before he hops on to the bus. Unfortunately, he isn't good at it and thus always finds it difficult to board the bus.



Characters

The Driver

He is a middle aged man, heavily built with thick moustaches. So sure of the security of his job, he loves driving the BEST bus and feels the power of it. He likes to drive it fast, even if that means not stopping at the bus-stops. He is an impatient kind, cant wait to speed the bus on the road, through the traffic. Effectively, he almost always pulls the bus away before people board or alight the bus.



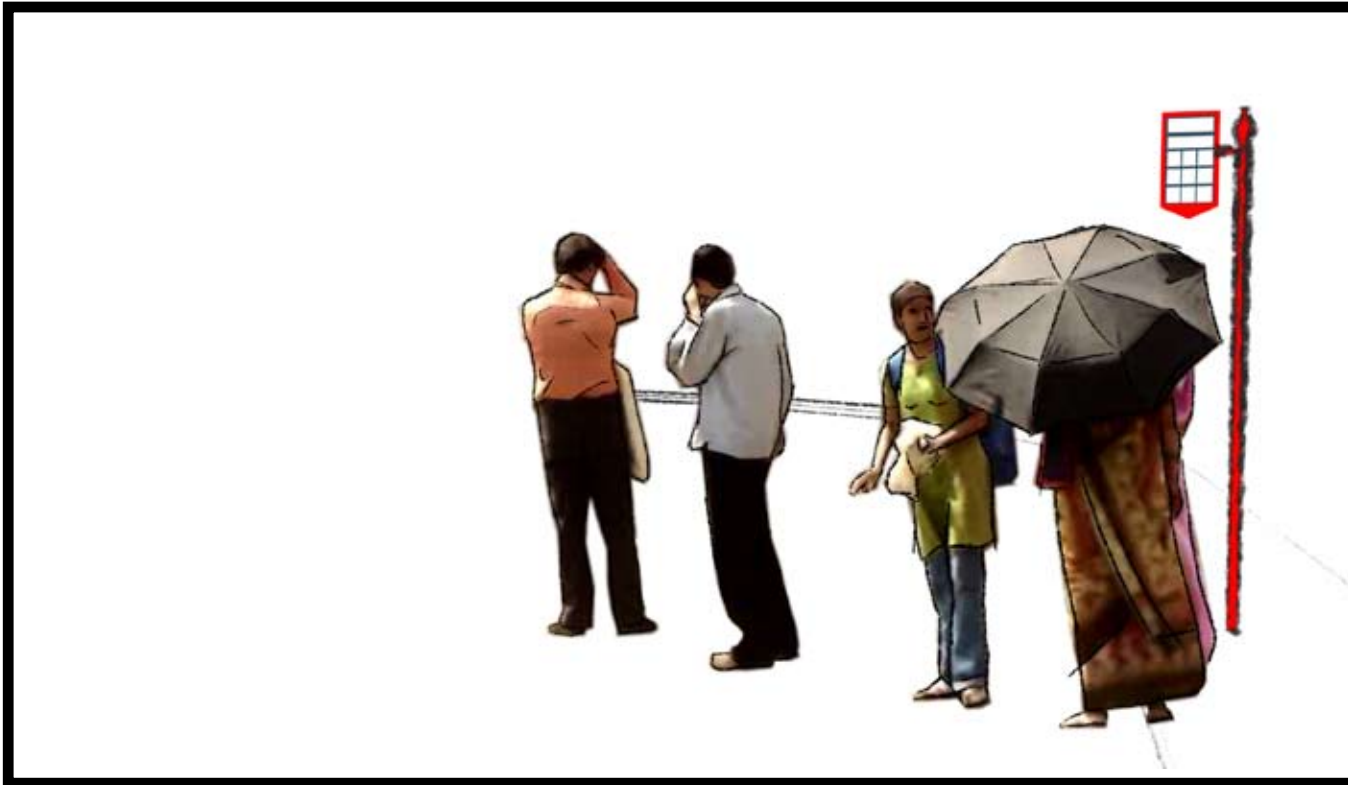
Characters

The Fellow Passengers

These are all kind of people who commute on BEST bus daily. They are average middle class people, who constantly try to reach their destinations in one piece, no matter they what it need to achieve that. Even if that means entering the bus from windows.

They also helps the protagonist of the movie.

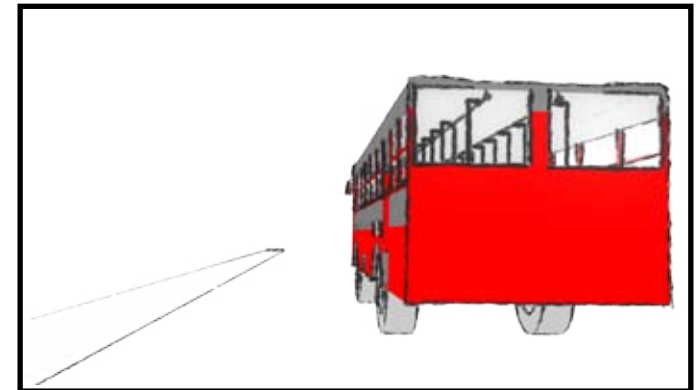
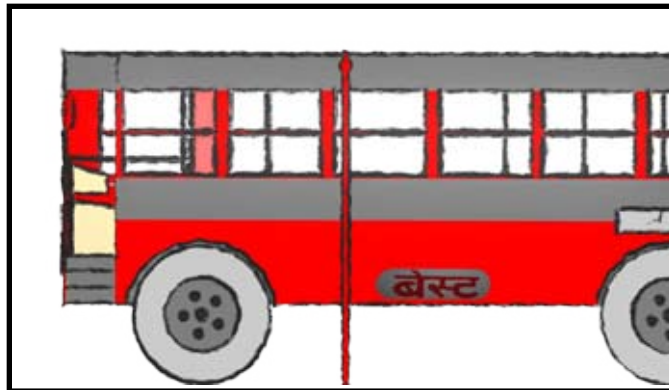
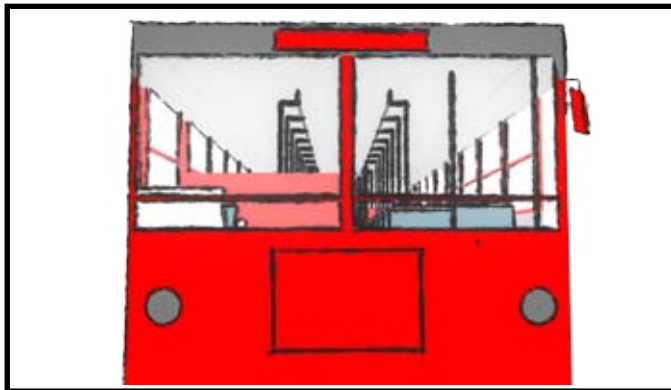
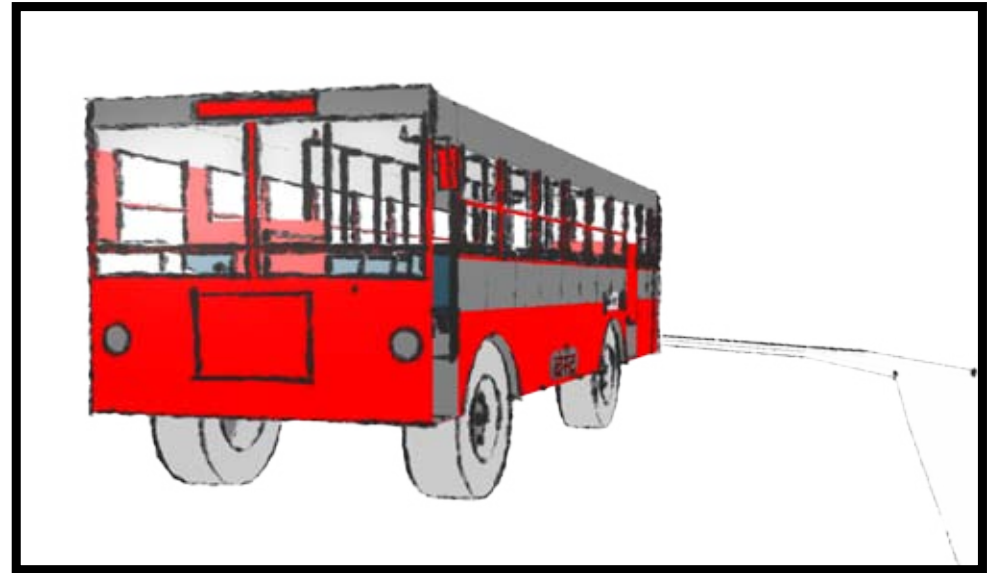
One particular woman of these, plays a crucial part by slapping the boy for no particular mistake of his but that of the driver. Thus further enraging him against the driver.



Characters

The BEST Bus

The BEST Bus happens to be the chief character of the movie. The protagonist and other passengers travel onboard her, the driver drives her. She can run very fast and can be very difficult to catch on or alight. Off course its not really her fault, but sheer possession of her is enough to make the driver feel the most powerful person on the road. She gives him the entire pleasure of being so and thus effectively become the accessory to the driver's act.

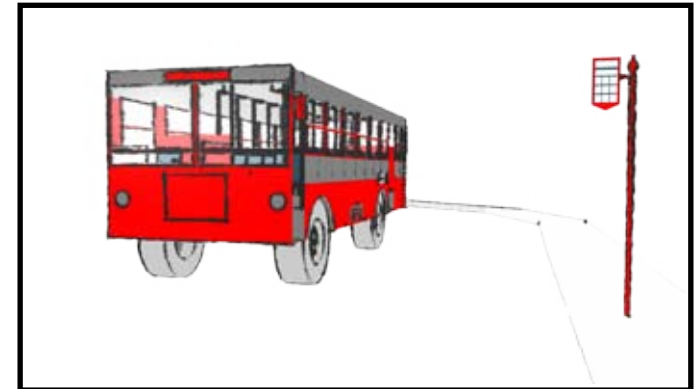
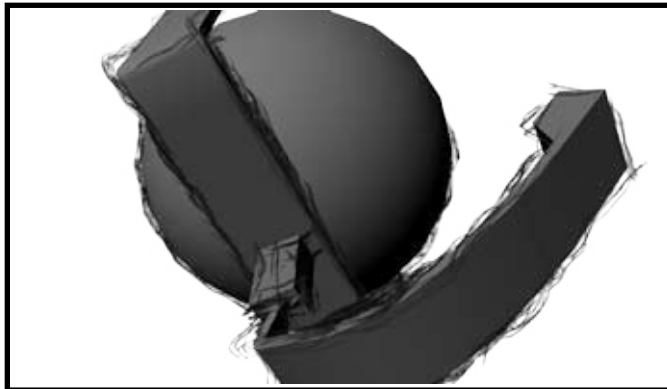
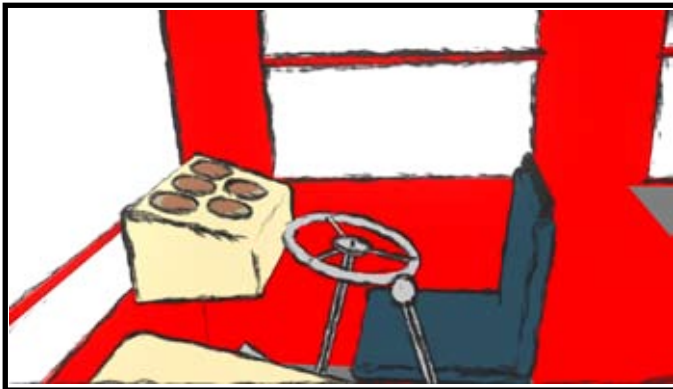


Techniques

For animation three basic techniques were used, viz. Manual Rotoscopy, 3D Modelling & animation and Non-Rotoscopy frame-by-frame animation.

3D Modelling & Animation:

This technique I used for the bus and other vehicles and other backgrounds. The reasons behind this was, this way I could reduce the efforts of drawing the many details inside the bus and to get the correct perspective. This also gave me the freedom to use any angle that in future seemed to be better for some particular shot. I could also try various angles and choose a suitable one. One other reason to use 3D was that I wanted to try two altogether different techniques in one single animation. I also wanted to use 3D in such a way that after rendering it won't look as made in 3D, but be a part of the 2D animated movie. One of the influences for this were the many Indian animated movies, like "Krishna", used 3D animation, but the characters looked too much mechanical and non realistic, which of course wasn't the attempt. These characters also moved in jerks and did not have the agility that otherwise living characters have. I, on the contrary, always saw the potential of 3D that it can be used to create much more better visuals. So to make these 3D models look like 2D, I used toon shaders. I customized these shaders to match the looks and colour palate. I also customized the outline to wiggle in every frame to give that disturbing and lively feel. I animated these models. Finally I rendered them to high quality large HD format transparent PNG image sequences.



Techniques

Manual Rotoscopy:

I mainly used Manual Rotoscopy mainly for character animations. Simply put the technique is three staged. After doing the 3D work, I had the camera angles and other settings known. So then I shot the actors performing in front of a plain single colour, evenly lit background using a digital video camera in the same camera angle and settings. These video files I then transferred on the computer, where I processed them in the second stage. I imported these files in Flash scaling them to the large HD resolution of 1920 x 1080 pixels. I was not going to use the actual video, therefore I was not worried about the loss of video quality while scaling. Now these files were imported at a frame rate of 12 fps. And then from Flash, I rendered image sequence of these videos. In the third stage, I opened these images in Photoshop, processed them with some effects. Then I painted them over using brush tool. I have made a customized brush for this purpose so that, the final image will look like actually hand painted using brushes and pencil.



Frame-By-Frame Animation:

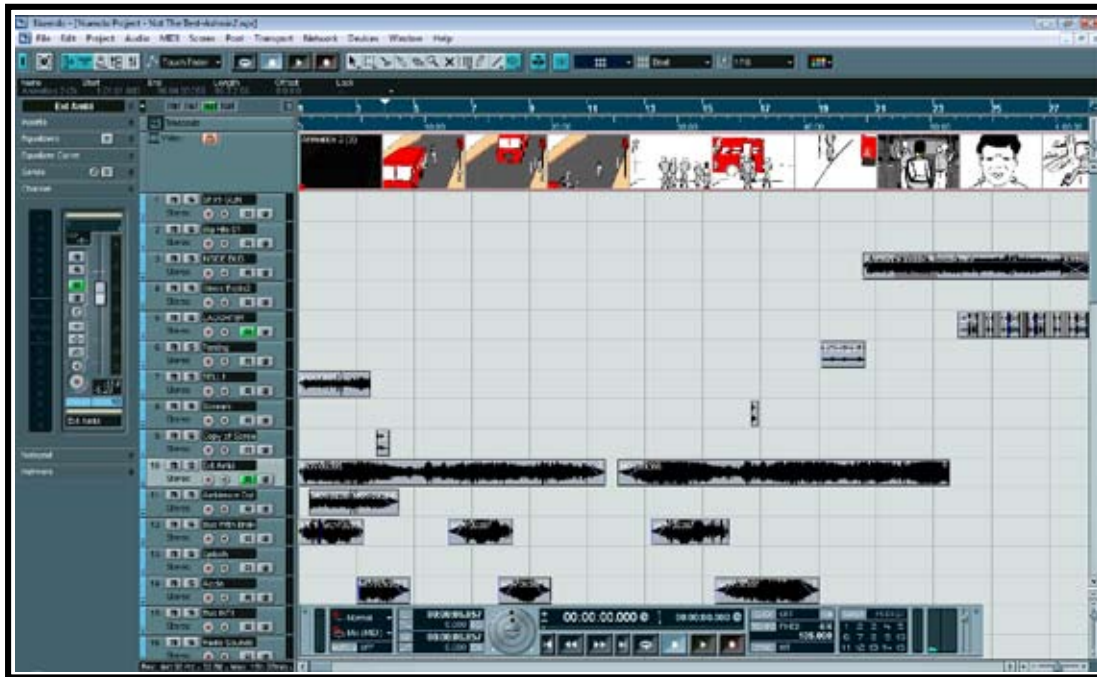
This technique was off course used in my Rotoscopy, for I actually drawn and painted every frame there as well, but for some surreal shots, such as the one where the protagonist turns into a monster, I couldn't do those by rotoscopy. So I did this scene in conventional non rotoscopy frame-by-frame animation.

Sound & Music

I used ambience sound for most of the movie, except for the final montage, which is completely a music score. The reason for this was to set the mood immediately to the real surrounding. I also used some background music for some sequences to heighten the drama, but even there I kept the sound level down, a little overshadowed by the ambient sound.

Technically, I recorded the ambient sound, on the road, at bus stops and inside the bus. Some stock sounds were also used. I got the background music done by a composer. My instructions to him were simple. For montage, create music that simply heighten the drama, without overdoing, and for other pieces, something that support the visuals, ambience and mood, again without overdoing. Sound effects were composited in Nuendo and exported a wave file.

Finally when everything was ready, I composited them in Adobe After Effects.



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