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Synopsis

Theme:

An amateur Ufologist and his frustrated, skeptical friends must decide their priorities when extraterrestrials begin abducting people.

Logline:

An amateur Ufologist and his frustrated, skeptical friends must decide their priorities when extraterrestrials begin abducting people.

Story:

We begin with a nighttime establishing shot of an old, abandoned 50's style gas station out in the desert. A lone streetlight illuminates the scene. In the distance, we can see the outskirts of a ghost town. The buildings are deteriorating and there are very few people still inhabiting the area. Like the gas station, many of the buildings in town look like they were built in the 1950s. Back at the gas station, we see three young men in their early twenties arguing. The three have been using the station as a base for them to look for UFOs, with various pieces of equipment set up. The most energetic of the young men, DUNCAN is busy bouncing back and forth between his computer, listening to a ham radio, and looking through a telescope into the sky. He and his friends, ZACK and RYAN, have been here for hours and unlike Duncan, have had enough and are ready to leave. They are visibly tired and irritable.
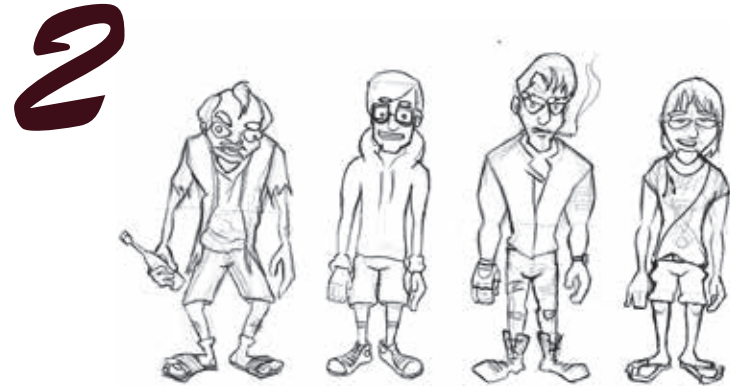
Character Design

Character Designers:

Patrick Thompson

Amr Rashaad

1
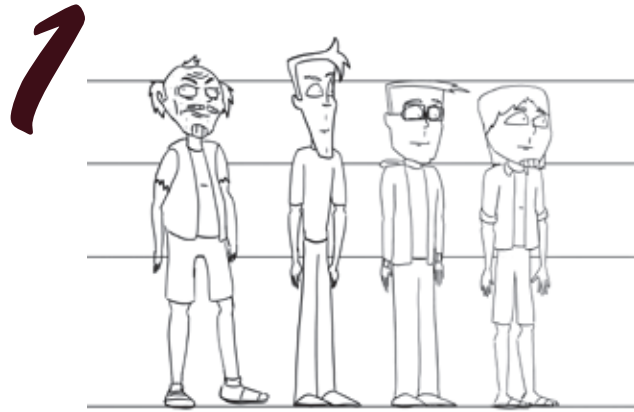
Original Character Design

2

2nd Pass Character Design

3

3nd Pass Character Design

4

Final Character Design

Back Ground

Like all the other films during our senior capstone project, Welcome to Mercury Bay was developed during Concept Development in spring 2018. However, underlying elements of the film have been in the works for years. Ever since I was around 12 years old, I had been coming up with a variety of stories set in a small, desolate, desert town where strange people live and events occur. One story was about a pair of brothers convinced their neighbors were aliens. Years later in the fall of 2017, I revisited this idea when I began doodling early sketches of what would become Mr. Winters and the rest of the cast. Eventually, I decided they would we be a good fit to inhabit the strange world that is Mercury Bay.

– Patrick Thompson, Director

Back Ground
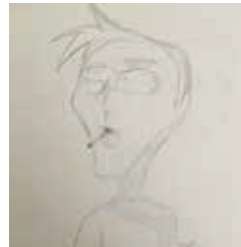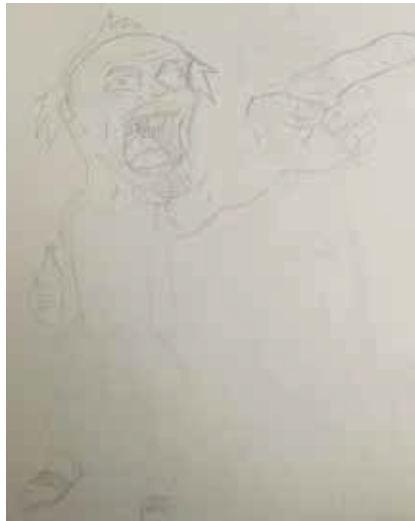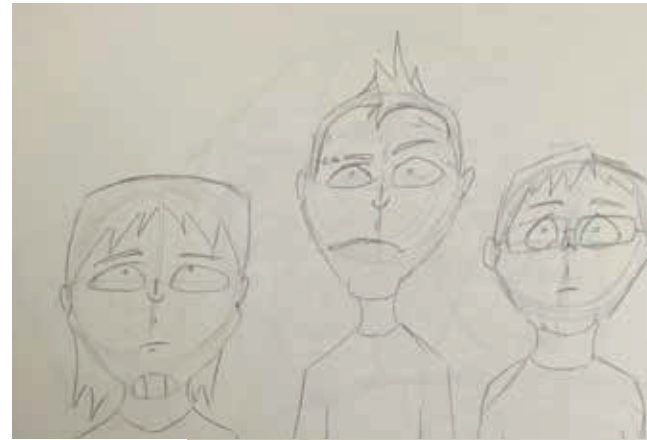
Duncan

Duncan is our main protagonist. Passionate about science and the paranormal, Duncan has had a lifelong obsession with finding evidence of UFOs. Which leads him to ignore his friends much of the time, This obsession is a point of contention with his two friends, Ryan and Zack.
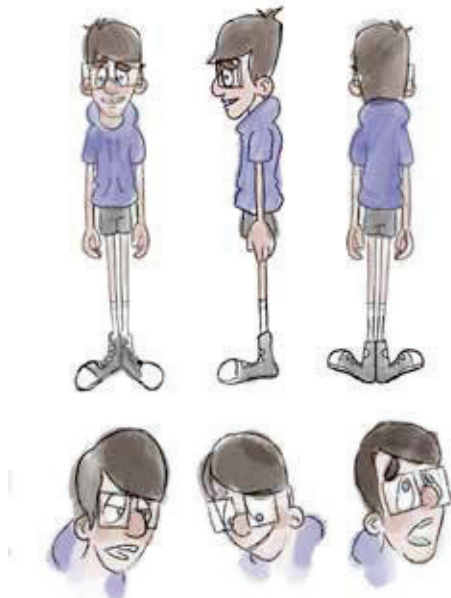
Original Character Design

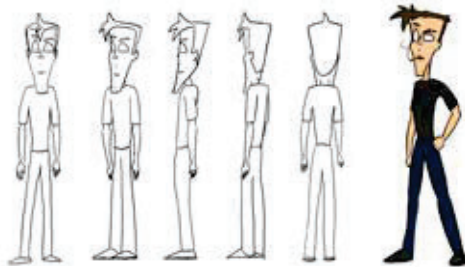Original Character Art

Final Character design

Duncan Model

When the film was first pitched, Duncan's original character design by Patrick Thompson was not intended to be nearly as nerdy looking as his final design. However, as the character's design was refined by Amr Rashaad, we felt that this best represented the personality we wanted to portray. With each iteration we can see him get progressively more nerdy before the third iteration, where we had to dial the design back and settle on the final product. The final product was modeled by Amr in ZBrush and textured in Substance Painter.

Ryan

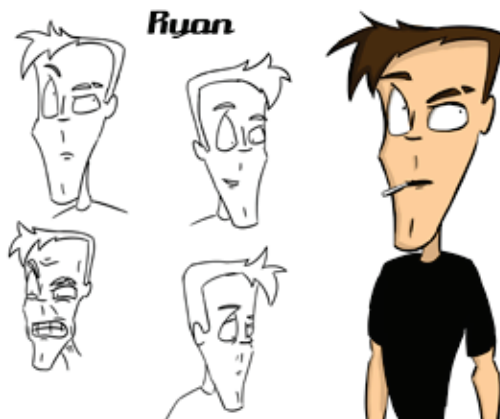Ryan is a rough, aggressive young man. While he is one of Duncan's closest friends, the two butt heads constantly. In contrast to Duncan's obsession with UFOs, Ryan is a staunch skeptic who thinks Duncan's search for evidence is a waste of time.

Character Mood Board

Original Character Turn Around

Original Character Art
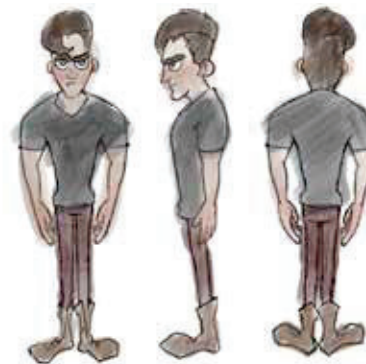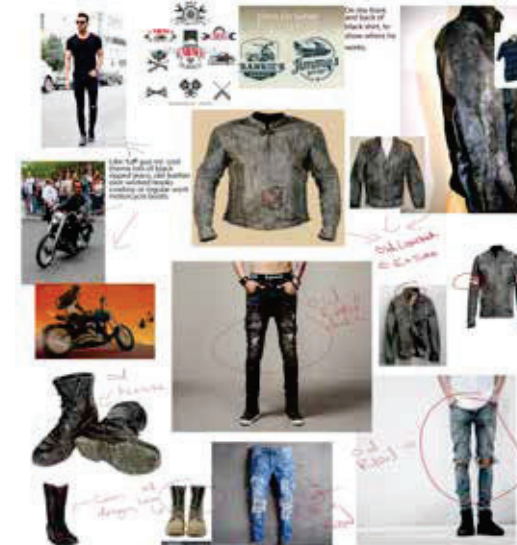
Final Character design

Welcome to Mercury Bay.com

Ryan Model

Ryan underwent the most drastic changes in preproduction Using the original design by Patrick as a basis, Amr worked to develop a distinct silhouette that would sell his personality. Again, like Duncan, we had to continually push his design until we had to dial it back. Once it was settled, the character was modeled by Eduardo Rojas and textured by Amr.

Zack

Zack is a laid back, mellow guy who rounds out the trio. He prefers not to get in the middle of Ryan and Duncan's bickering and tends to live in his own little world.

Original Character Turn Around
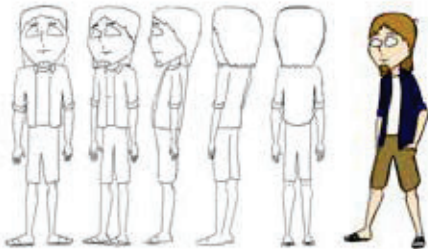
Original Character Design
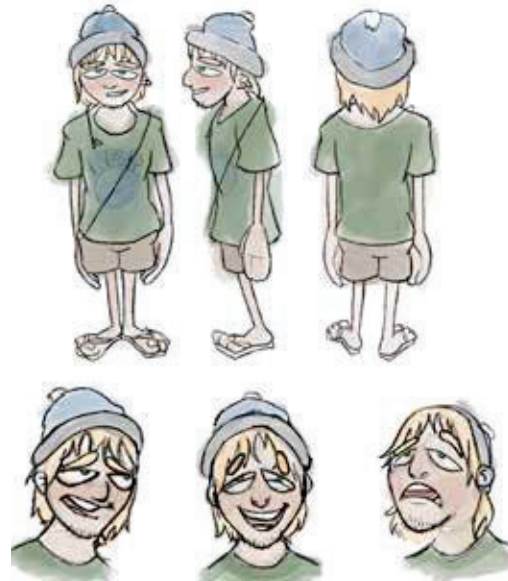
Zach Model

Unlike Duncan and Ryan, Zack's design did not undergo the same drastic changes. Rather, Amr redesigned the character along with the rest of the characters early in preproduction and he remained the same ever since. Zack was modeled and textured by Amr Rashaad.

Mr. Winters

Mr. Winters is the deranged local who is notorious for ranting constantly about aliens and other conspiracies. While seen as a pest by most people in Mercury Bay, Mr. Winters' rants fuel Duncan's passion and drive to learn about UFOs.

Mood Boards

Character Art

Original Character Design
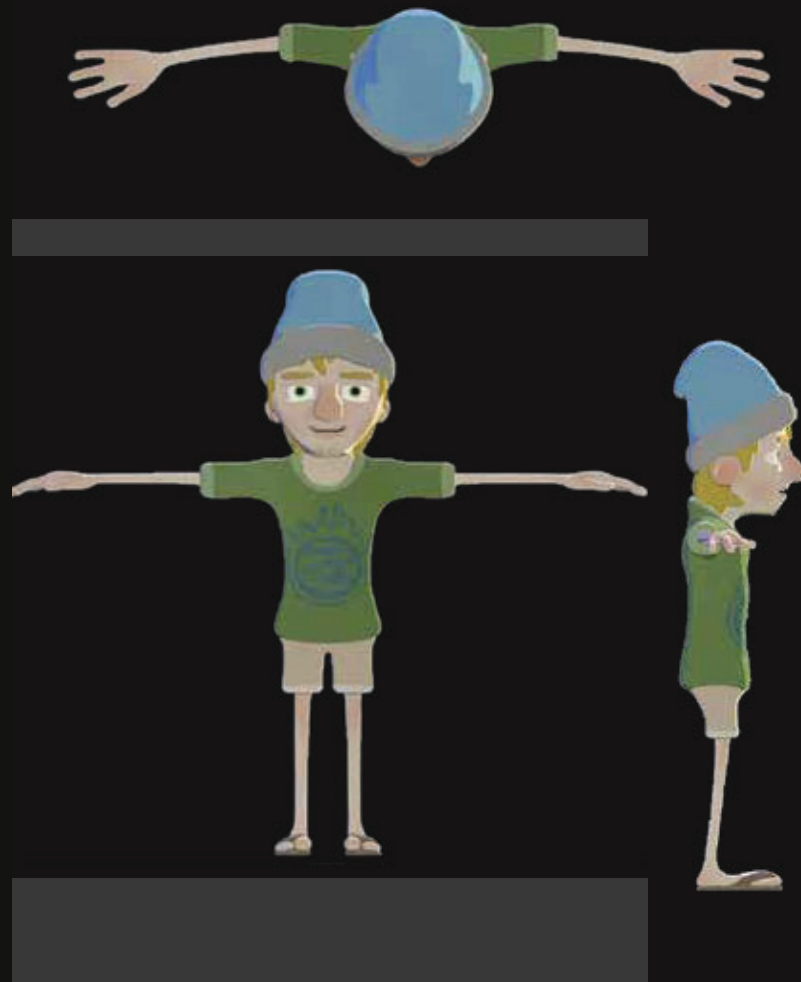
Mr. Winters Model

Character Model:

Out of all of the characters, Mr. Winters arguably changed the least out of the four main characters. Like Zack, Mr. Winters' design was largely locked down after Amr's first pass of character designs. However, there were early design suggestions such as a ceremonial robe and headdress, as well as a motorized scooter he would use to roll around the neighborhood. The final model was modeled and textured by Eduardo Rojas.

Environment

Environment Designers:

Patrick Thompson

Amr Rashaad

Kayla Kostage

Environment Inspiration

Mood Board

Design Solution
Our Films is modeled after classic alien movies, with inspiration coming from Californian deserts and old forgotten towns that were once booming, but now have been long forgotten. Our Primary location, is modeled after 1950's –1960's gas stations with a similar feel of being neglected and forgotten.

Environment layout

Location Background:
The film is set in the outskirts of an old ghost town named Mercury Bay. The town was once a popular resort town in the 1950s but has been largely abandoned due to pollution in the nearby bay. The town takes inspiration from ghost towns in California such as Bombay Beach and Salton City. The overall aesthetic of the environment is based on 1950's architecture and design coupled with a sense of decay and ruin, with the remains of the town being a world our characters to discover.

Environment Props

Radio

Gas

Trailer
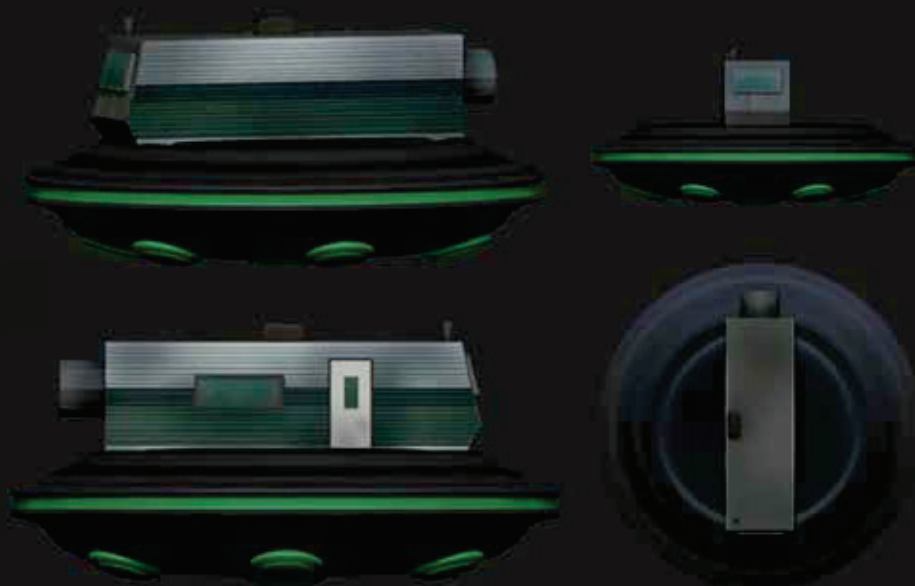

Mr. Winter Chair

Telescope

Gas Station

Tire

Barrel

Lamp Post

Environment Props

UFT

Unidentified Flying Trailer Interior

Environment Props

Retro Car
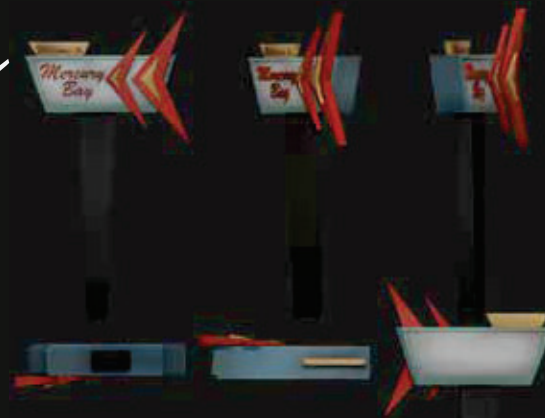
City Sign

Gas Station Sign

Cigarettes

Soda Cup

Lighter

Camera
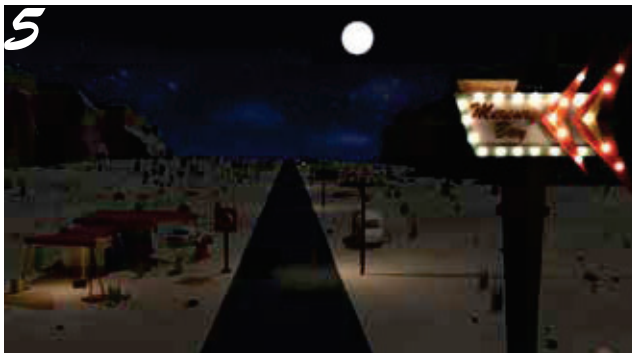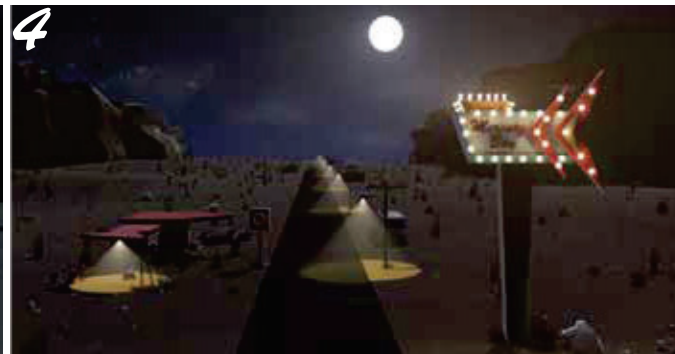
Modeled Scene

Layout Break Down

Production of the movie layout was broken down into several steps to achieve our desired esthetic's. First, all major props were modeled and placed. Second, smaller models and lighting tests. Third, the lighting for night scene was created. Finally adding set lights for the street, gas station, sign and adjusting diffuse controls for the final look of our layout.

Story

Story Artist's:
Patrick Thompson
Eduardo Rojas

Beat Boards

Duncan, Ryan and Zack at an abandoned gas station. Duncan Looking for UFOs.

Ryan and Zach want to leave but Duncan wants to continue looking for UFOs.

Zach sees something in the distance in the sky.

Zach tries to get Duncan's attention. Duncan ignores him.

Zach tries and gets Ryan's attention, he ignores him.

Zach gets caught by the Alien's ships beam.

Ryan sees Zach being taken by the beam and tries to save him.

Duncan sees and tries to record the UFO.

Duncan has to choose between his friends and evidence.

Beat Boards

Duncan chooses his friends.

However, it was too late and they were taken by the Alien beam. He looks at his "evidence".

He his sad over loosing his friends realizing they were more important then his evidence.

Suddenly Ryan and Zach return falling down from the sky.

It is clear they went to some kind of Alien party.
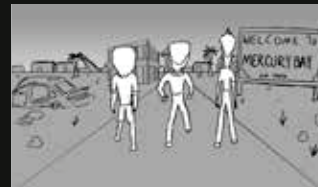
The group heads back to town. While Duncan tries and asks the others questions. They tell him he rather not know. (End)

Storyboard's

Storyboard's

Action Notes NEXT MORNING, DUNCAN IS UNCONSCIOUS			
Action Notes DUNCAN WAKES UP.		**Action Notes** DUNCAN LOOKS UP, LOOKING OF ANY SPACESHIP REMINDINGS.	**Action Notes** DUNCAN LOOKS TO HIS LEFT.
Action Notes DUNCAN LOOKS AT HIS CAMERA THAT IS ON THE GROUND.	**Action Notes** DUNCAN LOOKS AT HIS CAMERA THAT IS ON THE GROUND.		**Action Notes** DUNCAN APPROACHES THE CAMERA.
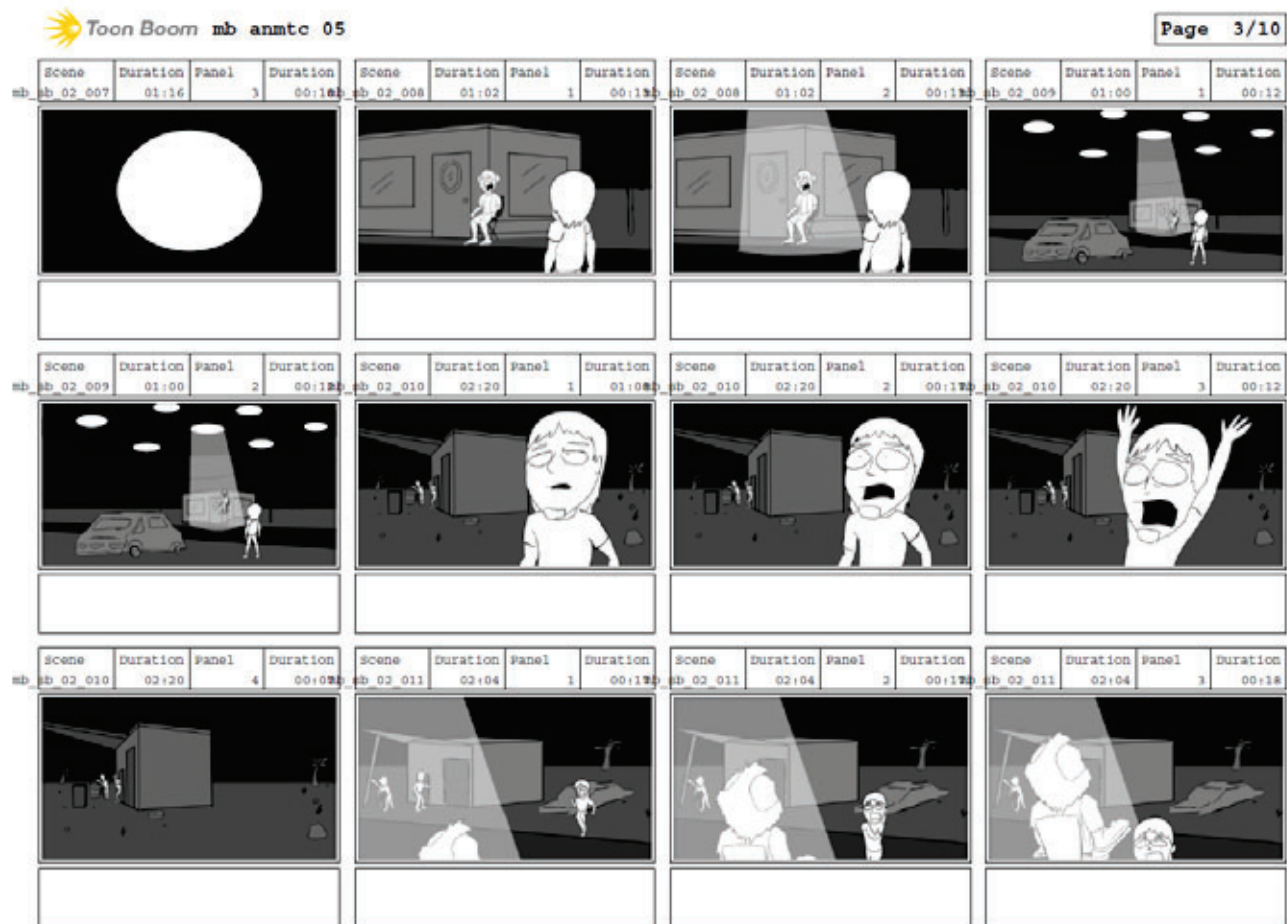
Rigging

Rigger's:
Nick Demaioribus
Patrick Thompson
Kayla Kostage

Rigging

Duncan
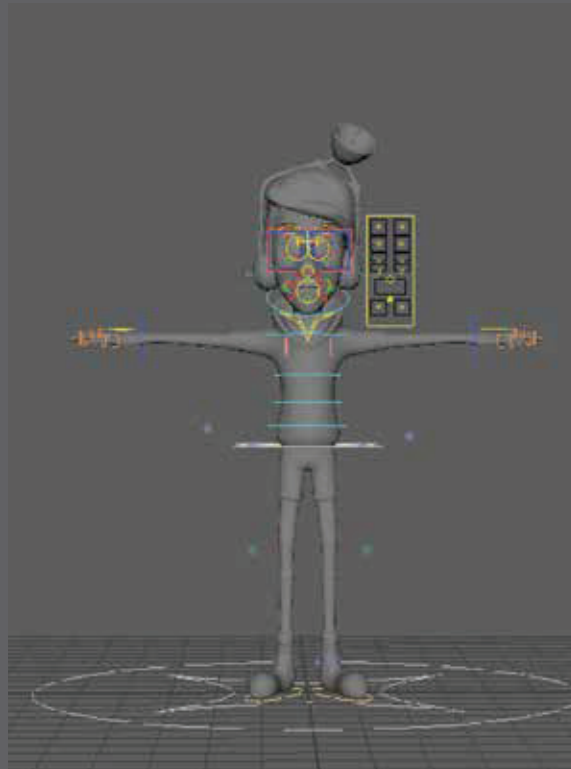
Ryan

Duncan's final rig with both IK/FK body controls and basic facial rigging. Additional features include prop controls of glasses and head set.

Ryan's final rig has full IK/FK basic body controls and similar face controls as the other characters. Additional features are detachable shoes with the character being able to be posed with or without the fully rigged shoes attached.

Zach
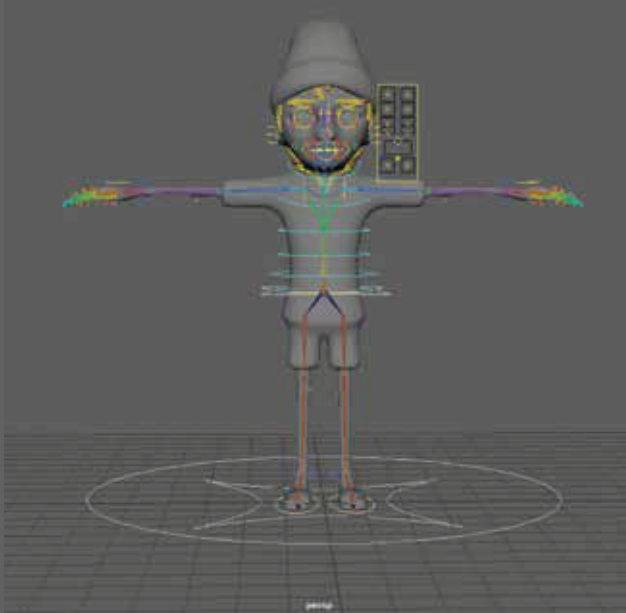
Mr. Winters

Zach final rig has full IK/FK basic body controls and similar face controls as the other characters. There was little need for any additional features for this character.
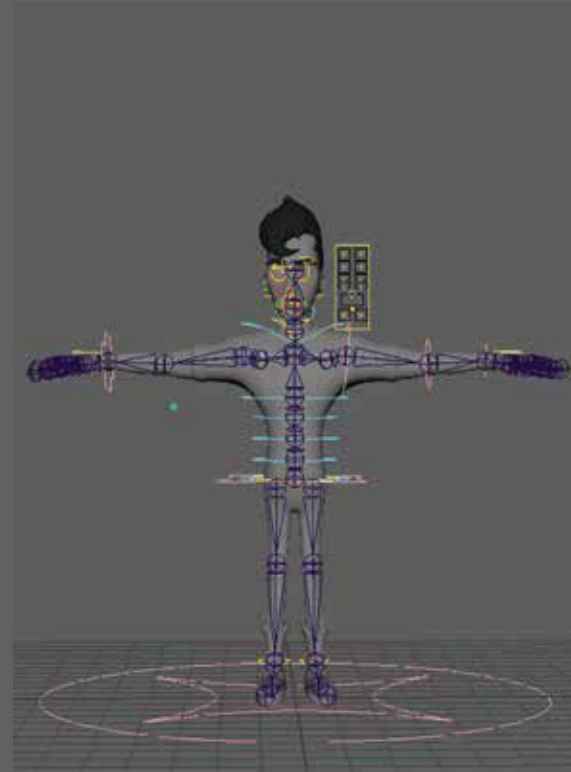
Mr. Winters final rig has full IK/FK basic body controls and similar face controls as the other characters. Additional features are chair controls, ability to function with or without chair, Size and body adjustment controls.

Asset Rigging

UFT Rig

Camera Rig

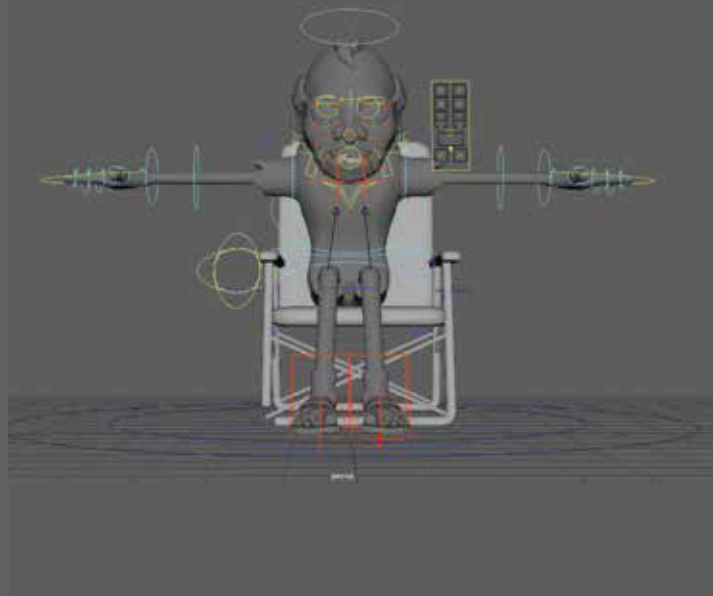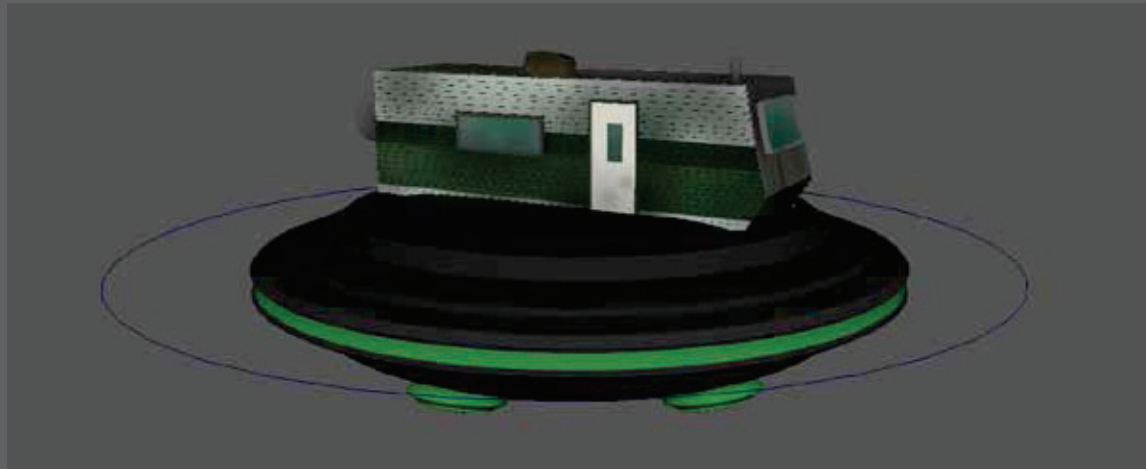

Telescope Rig

Animation

Animators:
Alex Bridges
Micheal McClellan
Patrick Thompson
Eduardo Rojas

Animation
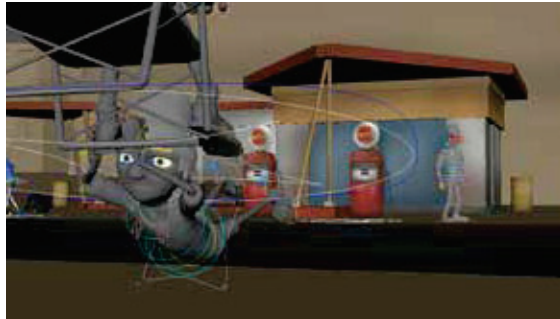
First Pass: Shot# 16

In this scene, we see Zack run up, leap and grab Mr. Winters, only to start being pulled up along with him. In this pass, the main focus was to pose out Zack and time it out. This was done with earlier versions of the rigs, before their faces were rigged, so there was no facial animation or lip sync yet.
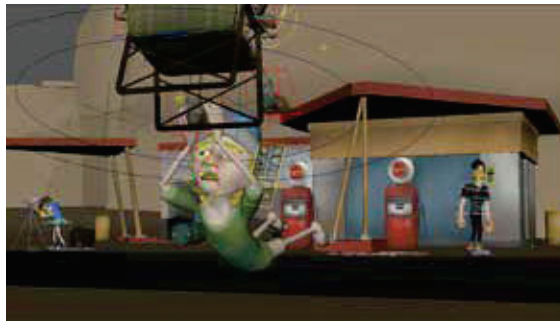
Second Pass: Shot# 16

With this pass, more attention was given to overlap, secondary action, and other additional details in the animation. This time, the rigs had faces, so now I could do lip sync. We also added a subtle camera movement that tracks on Zack and helps sell his weight as he lands on the ground.

Final Pass: # 16

This is the final version of the shot, fully rendered. Now, we see it in the final layout and fully lit.

Animation

First Pass: Shot # 4

This shot was used as an opportunity for Ryan to be more likable to the audience as he relaxes on the barrel and appeals to Duncan. The intent was to give Ryan time to go through a range of emotions like frustrated, insistent, and furious as Duncan gives him the cold shoulder. Ryan ultimately pushes himself off of the barrel and abandons Duncan.

Second Pass Shot # 4

The time for the entire team was extended by forty frames because the emotions conveyed by the earlier pass were too rushed. Duncan had no time to respond to Ryan's pleading, while portraying Ryan as an unlikable character.

Final Pass: Shot # 4

Ryan hand gestures were minimized as he folds his arms after pleading to Duncan instead of holding his hand out for several seconds. Also, the part where Ryan exits by using his hand to push off of the barrel was removed for making Ryan's movement less busy.

Animation

First Pass Shot: # 48

First Pass: In this shot, all three friends are piled up together, one on top of the other. This is a bit of a complicated scene die to the fact that each character is influenced by the others movement. So lots of careful attention to detail and secondary action was necessary to make it look natural. For this pass I was unable to pin the hands to the ground so they came off as very stiff at first.

Second Pass: Shot # 48

Second Pass: I was able to find a much more natural looking pose for the characters all laying down. After getting all of the blocking out of the way, I was able to focus much more on the small details and made them look like they actually were heavy in space, I also incorporated the new rigs with facial animation.

Final Pass: Shot # 48

Final Pass: This pass was me working out the fine details of the shot. Making sure that all of the facial features and expressions worked as well as creating more smooth arcs for the character's movements. After the all of the smaller touches have been implemented I was able send it in to be rendered!

Rendering
And
Compositing

Animators:
Patrick Thompson
Amr Rashaad

Rendering

Night Light

The first half on Welcome to Mercury Bay, the story is based around midnight so our main source of light is the moon light, alongside with some lights placed on the streets of Mercury Bay.

Morning Light

The other half of the film is based on early morning lighting, so we used Ambient Occlusion as our lighting-source.

Render Passes

Ambient Occlusion
Ambient Occlusion pass is used for ambient day light and gives us control over how intense the shadows are.

RGB
RGB pass is the main source of colors on our render.

Lights and Shadows
This pass is used on night light to represent the lights and shadows coming from our light sources.

Rim light
We are using Rim-light on our characters and main props to isolate it from the environment.

Depth
Depth pass is used to both darken models that are far away, and also blur them.

Alpha
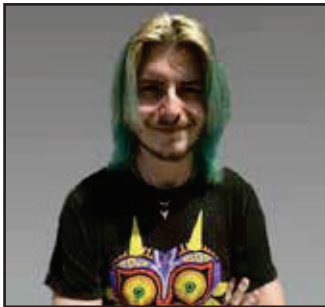Alpha pass is used for final compositing and adding in the sky, the stars, and the moon.

Mercury Bay Productions

The Mercury Bay Team

Alex Bridges, Nick Demaioribus, Amr Rashaad, Kayla Kostage,
Michael McClellan, Patrick Thompson, Eduardo Rojas

About Us

Alex Bridges

About me: I'm a 22 year old animation student who specializes in 3D characters. I got my start in animation making very sloppy scenarios on Power Point. Since then I've built my way up from flip notes, to Flash, and finally Maya. When I tried 3D, it instantly became my favorite and it's been a long journey learning the ins and outs of the craft. I wanted to be on this Senior Film in particular because I love expressing emotion in characters and this was one of the few that had actual dialogue in it.

Nick Demaioribus

I'm Nick DeMaioribus. I was lead character TD for Mercury Bay.

I'm originally from New Jersey just in the shadow of New York, New York. I've always been fascinated with the creative industries though I also have always had a very technical mindset as well. I'm very happy to have found and perfect mix of the two in technical direction. Being in technical direction lets me flex my technical side while flexing my creativity for problem solving.

Kayla Kostage

I'm Kayla I'm from Jacksonville Florida. I worked on research development of environment and characters, prop and environment modeling, rigging, as well as development of our film's processes book and promotional package.

My favorite part of the film was creating the environment and bringing the story form 2D to our dynamic 3D adventure. I have a mind of a builder, being a builder means you are always learning and creating something new.

To be a part of building out our world and creating ability for movement for these characters inside this world was extremely satisfying and rewarding and is something I look forward doing for the rest of my life.

Amr Rashaad

My name is Amr Rashaad I'm from Saudi Arabia, and I worked on Character design, modeling, lighting and compositing in Welcome to Mercury Bay. Since I was a kid it's been I dream of mine to make an animation film, with much working, learning, and patient the dream came true.

I think to be an artist means to be expandable, to love learning, and to see every weakness in your skills as an opportunity to learn something new.

Michael McClellan

My name is Michael McClellan, and I am a 3D Character Animator from Lexington,Kentucky. Like many other kids I grew with Disney films imprinted into my memory. However, I had never considered being an animator until I reached high school. It is there that I discovered how much I enjoyed writing short stories and creating artwork.
In my free time, I challenged myself to learn Blender from YouTube tutorials which I enjoyed despite my limited knowledge. My time with Blender coupled with my passion tell a memorable story is what drove me to study animation.

Patrick Thompson

I'm Patrick Thompson. I wrote and directed Welcome to Mercury Bay. I took part in storyboarding, prop modeling, rigging, rendering and animating and I also voiced Mr. Winters. I'm originally from Chevy Chase, Maryland, just outside of Washington DC.

Storytelling is part of my nature. I loved writing little stories and making comic books as a kid, but I realized the potential of my story-making when I discovered animation at the age of twelve. Ever since, animation has become a passion of mine and I strive to make my characters to act and perform and live out all the different stories I have, and make them as entertaining to watch as they are to write.
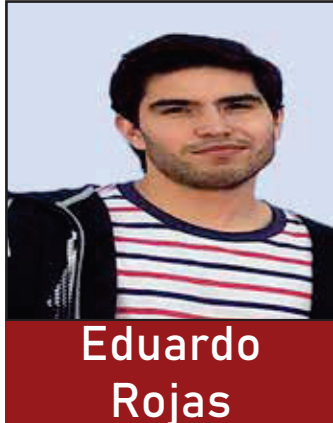
Eduardo Rojas

I'm Eduardo Rojas and I'm from Mexico. My roles in this film were: Storyboarding, Character Modeling, Animation, and Cover Book Art. I had worked on a few shorts before, but not to the scale of Mercury Bay. This taught me how every role in the film can affect the final product – the storyboards set the plan for the film, the models need to have the correct anatomy and topology for rigging, and the animation has to follow the style of the film. Every role matters. Therefore, getting help from the group and the professor pushed us to get the look we were striving for.

Contact: Welcome to Mercury Bay Team

WelcometoMercuryBay.com
WelcometoMercuryBay@gmail.com