

Interactive Audiovisual Narrative- Case Study: The Telephone Man

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ABSTRACT

Interactive Audiovisual Narrative (IAN) deepening studies aim at educating Interactive Audiovisual Media creators with a strong sense of the significance and various approaches of narrative and drama. Interaction, audiovisual and narrative studies are combined with historical backgrounds and journalistic ethics in order to make apparent the power of the stories we tell, how they reflect and shape our whole sense of the world and ourselves as human beings, whether in fiction or documentary and news.

IAN's fall term consists of a variety of course modules that can each be taken separately, as the spring term focuses on experimental team productions that require the spring term commitment to teams.

IAN's tutored productions may be MA degree works or the 1st year approaches to a subject that is encouraged to become a part of a MA degree work next year. In the interactive (and/or algorithm-generated) productions, IAN seeks to expand the narrative logics, languages and rhetoric of Audiovisual Media and thus push forward the ways we understand and reflect by stories.

Learning outcomes: on completion of the course the participant have clarified their vision on deeper understanding how to design and describe an interactive narrative product. The demos may be qualified to further development in the industry if their design and description have true potential.

The IAN hands on productions are focusing on the creation of interactive narrative ideas. Every participant is bringing a seed of an idea to the course. Some of the ideas are then further developed to programme concepts for one or many of the platforms of interactive audiovisual narration that may be interactive television, interactive cinema, web or some other medium. The course is divided into two parts:

1. lectures, visiting experts, exercises and designing
2. producing a demo

The demos are evaluated by the professionals of the industry.

KEYWORDS

Audiovisual, Interactive, Narrative, Cinema, Television, Drama, Production

CASE STUDY - THE TELEPHONE MAN - TV BASED INTERACTIVE GAME

Digital Narrative

The domain of moving image is currently being redefined by the potential of new digital media systems. Numerous attempts have been made to

give the user an active role in narratives. Branching plots and video game mazes have been considered insufficient for representing dramatic action. The biggest challenge for the digitally extended audiovisual media remains the development of new narrative techniques that

allow the interactive features of the medium to be fulfillingly embodied.

Telephone Man is an interactive television project using a new experimental narrative technique and showing the result in public mass media. The user is represented by his own voice. The individual performances and improvisational aspects create the suspense of the narrative. A character based story structure is used to create a dialogue between the user and the narrative.

Telephone Man is a TV-based interactive game played on live TV. The game production has just been finished. The programme has not yet been broadcast. The game is produced in the Media Lab of University of Art and Design Helsinki. The project is financed by the Finnish Broadcasting Company and Media Lab.

Telephone Man is a live TV-show. The show host guides viewers in playing the game by telephone. In this sense the show works like the interactive TV-show Hugo, but Telephone Man is using video footage and the interaction happens by speaking to other game characters.

The main character has no voice of his own. The viewer can phone the show and give the main character his own voice. The caller is performing as the main character's speaking voice and inner monologue. His voice will be part of the live TV-show and his performance is heard by the TV-audience. The clip-editor of the show is also listening to this performance. Numerous versions of each scenario have been shot. Based on the caller's input, the clip-editor chooses adequate movie clips and decides how the story progresses.

EXAMPLE - The first game episode

Telephone Man is a parody of an educational programme. It teaches you how to be successful and popular. By playing the interactive game you

can practice turning difficult situations to your own benefit simply by talking.

Main character Elias wants to be a star. He has met some interesting people who could help him. Local TV-producer Anders is coming to interview him for a job as a TV-host. A young promising rock singer Laura has shown interest in Elias on both professional and private level. Elias has greatly exaggerated his abilities and work record for both, but has told them different kinds of stories.

The episode takes place at Elias's current work place in a trendy bar where both Anders and Laura arrive. The caller's ability to perform successfully as Elias is in a tight spot is tested. The story has many potential endings, depending on the caller's approach and performance.

The Production

Media Lab plays an active role in research and production of new contents and technical innovations of interactive television. One mission of the Media Lab is to expand the narrative logics, languages and rhetoric of audiovisual media and thus push forward the ways we understand and reflect by stories.

Telephone Man is final thesis work for MA in New Media for Minna Nurminen and Petri Kola in Media Lab.

Minna Nurminen and Petri Kola have been working with interactive moving image for several years and have been involved in projects including interactive television programme Aquarium. Their scream-interactive movie "Can't Anyone Help?" was featured in Espoo Ciné Film Festival 2002.

REFERENCES

<http://www.mlab.uiah.fi>