In Vain

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Interacitve DVD
a stepping stone between TV and ITV?

Think tank ITV

C-MD 2004

1. Acknowledgements

One computer, six months, countless brain cells, some friends, one social life and a whole lot sleepless night; that is what cost me this thesis.

Thanks go out to my parents, my sisters, my friends from Fuego, Roland Brouns[1], the Killbots[2] and most of all the think tank ITV. These guys have all contributed in their own way to the content of this paper. Some more than others have helped me through this hard time in my life.

I'm very happy that I could do this project. It is something that combines most of my interests: movies, horror, fantasy, philosophy and the production of multimedia products. I'm pleased to say it all worked out well, as you can read in the rest of the work.

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Interactive | Media | Marketing |Graphics

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[1] Remixing the music of…

[2] the Killbots, Overall nice guys and winners of Limbomania 2003

2. Introduction

The object of this venture was to combine as many skills as possible that we picked up in the last four years of C-MD[3]. As you might know, this course is not only programming and computers. It holds also things like marketing, graphics, people management, audiovisual management, filming and a whole lot of organisational skills. These last four have always taken up most of my interest in the past years. The idea was conceived in the summer of 2003 during one of many movie nights that my friends and I held in our garden. Every time we chose a different theme. Obviously, the theme of this night was horror. We saw films like Jeepers Creepers (very bad), C'est arrive près de chez vous (very good), Eraserhead (bad) and Peter Jackson's first project brain-dead, which was so bad it turned back into extremely good.

This actually worked to my advantage. We started wondering how things would be if we could change the stupidity of those plots into our own silly stories. Interactivity could do that. I started exploring the possibilities of an interactive stories, trying to link it with a more practical approach.

ITV is on the brink of breaking through in Flanders but is too new to work directly. Combining everything we got an interactive horror DVD.

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[3] www.c-md.be

3. Contents

4. Justification

The question is not whether ITV will happen. The question is when it will arrive and if it will be welcomed with open arms. Interaction is the logical next step in media.

From the beginning of time Man has tried to bend the world to its will. Taking over from *the maker*, is maybe reaching out, but man has always made attempts to modify its surroundings to better suit its needs and desires. At this point in time technology lets us transform an, otherwise passive, medium as television and film to fit our personal tastes. Interaction provides that possibility.

The next question we should ask is if the average consumer is ready for this transfer. People are afraid of what they are not familiar with. Keeping the curb as low as possible will help make this transition easier.

In a paper written earlier by myself[4] I state that there are three requisites to a revolution, whether it is a technical one, a political one or even a medical one.

The first one is talent. Before a revolution can take place there have to be people to build the foundation. Professionals this day are jumping for a chance to take on this new technology. I myself and many other students can not wait to tackle this new challenge.

Requisite number two is money. A revolution without financial backup is not possible unless the basis for the revolution is a system without money. In this scenario, this is not the case. Money will have to be spent to see if the technology will have the impact it is capable of.

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[4] See addendum: De toekomst van ITV (Dutch), M. Depière

The third one is the tricky one. There has to be social acceptance in order for a radical change to take place. But how do you change a medium that is so deeply embedded in the households around the world? One of the best ways to do that is to take a technology that is widely accepted and give it new meaning. The DVD is such a technology. Sales figures[5] indicate that the sale of audio-visual consumer products consists of an average of 90% DVD and only 10 % of videocassettes.[6] This is music to the ears of anyone with an interest in the new interactive media. It proves that DVD is a medium that already is accepted. The possibilities of this are far from exploited.[7] Where DVD is primarily used to display movies and television series, there is also an embedded level of interactivity. The title menu e.g. is a small example of this. Later in this document we will explore the other opportunities that this medium contains.[8]

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[5] See addendum : sales figures video products

[6] Sales figures Fnac Belgium 2003

[7] See: unexploited possibilities

[8] See: unexploited possibilities

4.1 Why is DVD a stepping stone between TV and ITV?

4.1.1 Is there need for a spring board?

In the next figure we see that ITV is not as easy as most manufacturers make it out to be. This "ease of use" table depicts how the UK population feels about the current installation of Interactive digital television. On a scale of one to four the users could tell how easy it was to use the interface and get around in the menu in general. We see that the difference between *normal* television and ITV is still 2.04. In a market that has been in effect for some years, this is not as good as one might think.

Airplane	1.6
ITV	2.71
Computer	2.75
Video recorder	3.06
Mobile phone	3.14
Radio	3.75
TV	3.75
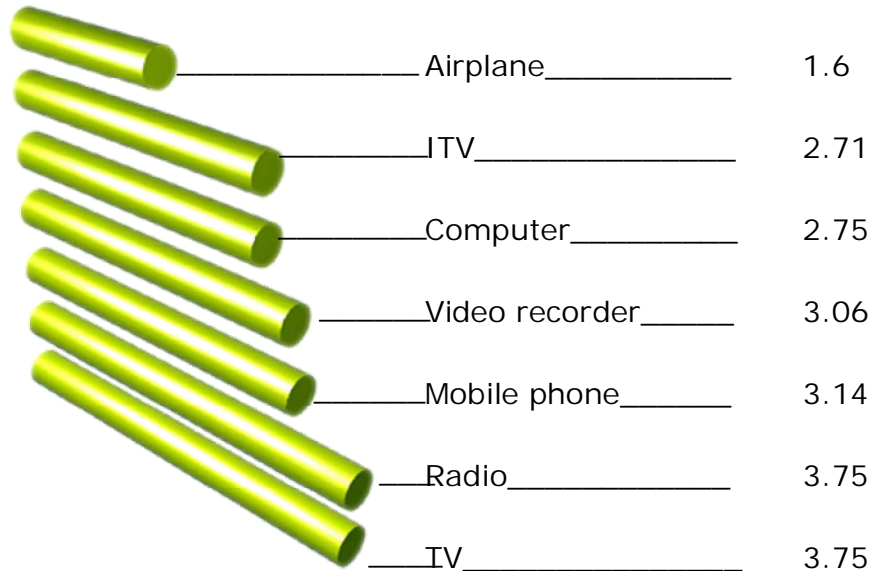
Figure 1: ease of use table

To bridge that gap the spring board of an interactive DVD is ideal. In the following chapters, I will prove that it is a medium that is not yet developed enough, which we can use to accustom the average viewer to the possibilities of interactivity.

4.1.2 Why DVD is the next step
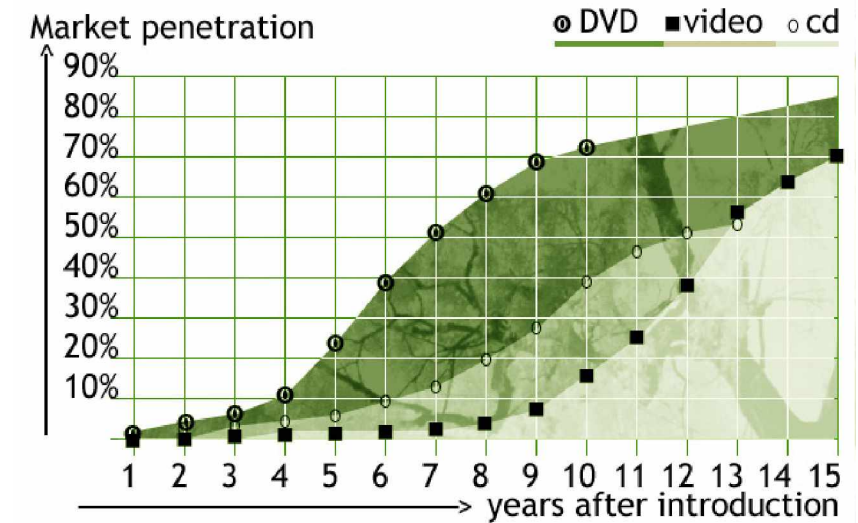
figure 2: sales of video products: DVD Demystified, Jim Taylor, 2001

In the figure, we see the penetration of the different media in the U.S. households. We can see that success stories as the compact disc or the video tape are not nearly as successful as the DVD. This creates a lot of market possibilities. The DVD is as yet not totally exploited in its potential.[9]

With this graph, we can tell that the medium is rapidly embedded in the households. The social acceptance is there. The step from video to DVD has already been made. The consumer will accept this medium when it's used as a stepping stone.

For the producer, DVD is also a good choice for a number of reasons:

The cost to print and manufacture is relatively low in comparison to video. It is larger then a CD-ROM, stores more information and is already available in the larger part of new computers.

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[9] Also see addendum : sales figures video products

A DVD does not need a large production house. Starting companies can make new DVD's out of their own house. DVD-burners are becoming cheaper by the minute.

DVD is also a bridge building medium, it keeps the middle between IT and AV. Therefore there are two target groups that are easily acquired.

As stated in figure 2, the consumer is at ease with the medium and thinks of DVD as easy to use. The usability of course depends on the different products but the overall use is very easy.

Other not yet overly developed uses of the DVD include:

- Product training
- Corporate reports and newsletters
- Video 'billboards'
- Trade show demo discs
- Point-of-sale displays
- Repair and maintenance manuals
- Lecture support resources
- Language translation assistance
- Databases
- And many more

4.1.3 Embedded interactivity

The features of DVD-video and DVD-rom have an inherited interactivity in them. While the larger part of the public use this medium to watch movies and television shows, there are vastly more possibilities to consider. These are derived from the interactivity.

The greater part of the public is already familiar with choices as subtitles, languages and chapters[10]. Yet there are vastly more uses that are not yet know by the spectators.

- The use of multiple audio tracks
- Karaoke
- Different camera angles
- Multi-story seamless branching
- Parental lock
- On screen lyrics and slideshows
- Access restriction
- Programmability
- And so on…

These features open a wide array of applications for the creator to play with and the viewer to enjoy.

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[10] See: unexploited possibilities

4.2   Preliminary conclusion

As gathered here we can conclude that DVD is simply too good to miss out on in terms on interactivity. According to the British ITV public, the usability of interactive television is just a little easier than flying an airplane. This is in a market that has been active for several years. Here we can conclude that a stepping stone could benefit the potential audience. On the other hand, if the public needs a springboard and the audiovisual sector can benefit from the experience and the necessary funds, we have ourselves a win-win situation.

The DVD would make a good intermediate product because it is already embedded in the lives of most of the viewing public. This medium has a lot of potential interaction features.

5   Technical features

In this part the DVD will be dissected to provide the basic package for anyone to work in DVD conceptualisation or production.

5.1   Basics
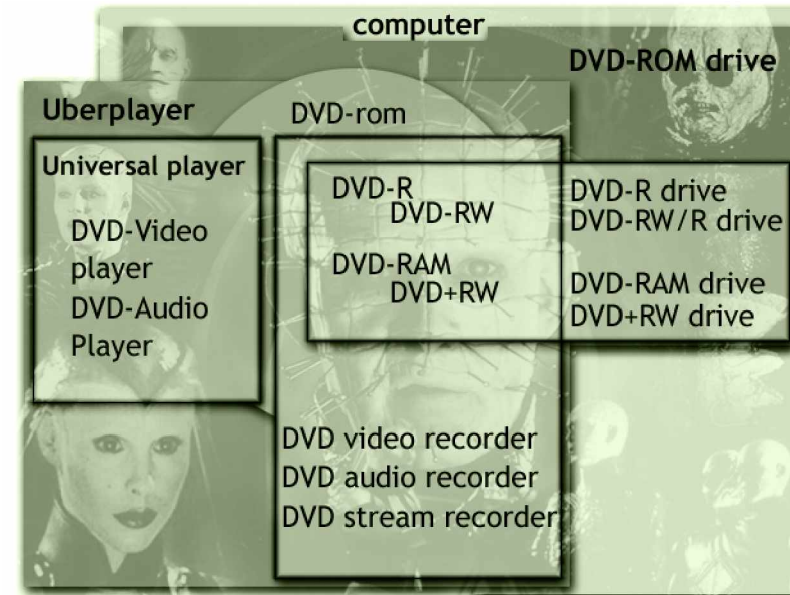
Figure 3: technical classification of DVD media: DVD demystified

DVD on itself is nothing more than a storage box for information. It is the next step from CD-ROM in terms of capacity and storage method. Where it is the same size as its predecessor, it is more than nine times faster and stores more than 25 times the information. What makes the difference between, just another, storage medium and the video-DVD as we know it are the authoring tools. They transform the disc into a usable medium of a specific type. DVD is after all not just the disc; it is a family of possibilities.

There are some problems with compatibility between the different types of DVD.

File system compatibility: This is not a common problem. Most hardware can read the normal UDF and ISO 9660 file systems. When using a specific system such as Microsoft FAT, NTFS, Macintosh HFS, UNIX or other there can occur some problems.

Application Compatibility: It is not always clear which application format the specific player can read. As a user you must read carefully the specifications of your player to know which disk it can read and therefore play.

Implementation compatibility: Every player reads and plays its disks in the same way but with subtle differences. These can however lead to display problems and other bugs. Since there are a lot of different types of players, not all DVD's can be played on every player.

These problems are, how strange it might sound, minor inconveniences. Most of the disc types are area specific and efforts have been initiated towards a standard compatibility.[11]

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[11] Multiread specifications, 1997 OSTA

5.2   Myths

Over the years some myths about this medium have arisen. It is pertinent that these are refuted, as to start with a clean slate, when you read this paper.

- **"DVD is revolutionary"**

This is not true. As said earlier, the technology is the logical evolution of the media that preceded it.

- **"DVD players can play CD's"**

True; all DVD players can read compact discs. However, most commercial discs have a protection on it that prevent it from being copied on a computer. This results is an inability to play it on computer and thus on a DVD player. Most CD-R's can be played on the bulk of DVD players.

- **"DVD is better because it is digital"**

It is wrong to assume this, but you are also mistaken if the contrary would be correct. Filming in a digital format gives you a number of possibilities that producing on celluloid does not have. On the other hand, traditional cameras have features that can not be assimilated into digital technology. Transferring one type of file on the other sometimes leads to a loss in quality or as some critics might say: "soul".

- **"DVD will replace your VCR"**

Not true; indeed most features of the 'old' medium are incorporated in the 'new' medium. For now the price of the DVD-recorders is too high to fully encapsulate the market for VCR.

- **"DVD holds 133 minutes of video"**

Not true; this depends on the quality of the images, of the sound and of course of all the extra's that are included in the specific edition. These are the most important myths, widely spread around most households. As you can read, most of them are not true. This proves my initial point that there are many possibilities, yet to exploit.

5.3   Authoring tools

If not for programs to direct the way players read the files, DVD would be just another means of storage for files. The software that changes all that is called an authoring tool. These programs make it possible for stand alone players[12] to read the discs. To better understand these tools, As most of these programs are targeted to the inexperienced author the features on them are basic, to say the least. Choices are constricted to subtitles, menu making and the occasional slideshow creator. These however will not do if we want to realize the medium's full potential. When realizing this, we will create an even better growth in the market and improve *pull* from the consumer.

Before we get on to that, I have summarized the specific features that some of the more used tools have in order to better understand the logic behind them.

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[12] not in a computer

5.3.1 Ulead DVD workshop

- Design your own menu's
- Archive folder: added DVD-ROM content
- Automatic slideshow: another DVD-ROM application.
- Play lists: the viewer can choose different paths in playing the files that are on the DVD
- Subtitles
- Multiple audio tracks
- Audio volume control
- Language encoding
- Copy protection
- Region coding
- Widescreen support
- Metadata
- …

5.3.2 Cyberlink Power producer

- Menu's
- Photo backup
- Add backup music
- Set chapters
- Create play lists
- …

5.3.3 Sonic Scenarist NT 2.0

- Create and outline for the project
- Create a scenario to help implement the already shot video
- Menu creation
- Navigational commands
- Karaoke
- Slideshows
- Subpictures and subtitles
- Multiple audio tracks
- Multiple video tracks
- Copy protection
- …

As we see in the features of the different programs, certain forms of interaction already are embedded. We see that most of the features are used in the every day use of the DVD. Of course these features come to good use in a *traditional* video-DVD. But this does not implicate the full use of its interactivity. The full use will undoubtedly never be realised as creative minds can think of more ways in years to come. For now there are a few main points that call our attention. This is explained in the following chapter.

5.4   Unexploited possibilities

As mentioned in the previous chapters, the DVD contains more than the bare essentials of interactivity that we can find on most common DVD's. When we look into the field of new movies that are published on disc, more and more interactivity can be found on them. Looking deeper, we find that the extra's on the movies give a better insight into the underlying possibilities. A few examples:

5.4.1. "Follow the white rabbit"

On this first chapter of the Matrix trilogy, we discover this potential use. The rabbit is in reference to *Alice in wonderland*, tumbling down the rabbit hole. The meaning on the DVD is the following: An icon of a white rabbit appears in the corner of the movie at some specific times. When clicking it the viewer is transported to a new menu. Here he can choose to see the *making off* segment of the particular scene in the movie. Here we unravel the feature to put interactivity in a movie, by just clicking an icon. This of course we can use to improve a number of aspects of interactivity.

5.4.2. Storyboards

Included in many DVD productions incorporated is the storyboard. The still images are depicted next to the moving images of the actual movie. Here we discover the combination of illustrations and movie frames. Of course this opens up a range of new content.

5.4.3. Director's comment

A less frequently used feature is the director's commentary included in a DVD. Here a soundtrack is put over the original gamma of sound effects and lines to give the more interested viewer the option to really grasp the meaning of the movie by listening to the meaning of the director talking about the particular sense behind some scenes or actions.

5.4.4 Multiple angles

This facet is even less known than former one. It is mostly used in the production of *adult* DVD's. The viewer here is given the option to view a scene in a couple of other perspectives. For the use mentioned before, the benefit is obvious. But the possibility to give that power to the viewer goes much further than this.

5.4.5 Play lists

The mere mention of a play list made my heart jump. This is a much underrated attribute of DVD authoring tools. In *normal* productions this is used to get more raunchy production a lower pg[13] rating by giving the under aged viewer less access to parts that might harm their upbringing. What is done here is that some scenes of the movie are left out or switched by other parts, better suitable for the specific age range of the viewer.

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[13] rating from the MPAA

5.5   *Effects on the content*

The unexploited features, mentioned in the former chapter have consequences to the overall view of a DVD. It is these factors that bring purpose in the quest to exploit the medium to its fullest. The essence of interactive storytelling will depend on how these aspects are taken advantage of. Of course not only the story but also the usability will be affected. The meaning of an interactive narrative is to be discussed now. A fictional story, told by one way communication as television or movies, can only give you so much information. The information is determined by the producers of the product. By letting the viewer choose which information to see or not to see, you give him the option of personalizing the content, thus guarding him from an overload of substance that he has not asked for.

Interactivity also provides the creative team to draw the audience into a fictional discourse as never before.[14]

A number of facts should be held into account when making passive medium interactive.

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[14] see : 3. practical side of the *story*

5.5.1 Levels of interaction

Before we can go on to the consequences, a short explanation of the different planes of interaction is in order. According to Marc Stephen Meadows[15], four distinct levels exist.

- **Observation:**

The viewer makes an assessment of the story and the medium. Interaction here goes as far as the possibility to make up ones mind about a certain environment in which one is situated. Some games make use of this type of interaction to immerse the player into the atmosphere in which the game is played.

- **Exploration:**

The user of the specific media type is confronted with a situation and is given the possibility to pursue its own method of discovering the state of affairs at that particular point in time. Only the point of view is changed.

- **Modification:**

A conscious choice of the reader of the medium leads to a change in the story itself. Man changes the form of the discourse to his or her liking. Here, the story itself is modified. This characterizes an intrinsic change in interaction. By selecting an option, the course of the narrative is altered to enhance the experience.

- **Reciprocal change:**

The system tries to change the user. Both medium and user are changed by a decision. The decision maker is given a choice. In choosing this particular alternative the medium responds by giving him, or her, a new situation to deal with and ultimately another choice. The user has to adapt to this modification.

5.5.2 Passive interaction

Contradiction in terms as it is, the expression can not be differently phrased as this. While the viewer has choices to make in observing the plot, the story itself stays unchanged. The inter-actor modifies the viewing experience to his or hers, personal tastes. Here we speak of the second level of interaction: Exploration. Aspects that can be used to summon this type of manipulation are the following:

- **Camera angles**

This method is primarily used in the adult entertainment industry. In a particular set scene, the viewer is given a chance to change the perspective of the event. The content of the scene is not altered. According to the quality of the audio and video footage on the DVD more choices are available.

- **Multiple audio tracks**

While dubbing audio tracks is the traditional use of this feature, there are more uses then this, e.g. the choice of soundtracks. There are too much factors to make a movie that appeal to everyone. Where most of the work was done for you with movies, the DVD provides the viewer with a choice. And that is the point. In this day and age we can not deny the user of options that will improve the viewing experience.

- **Which persons to follow**

The choice of the viewers is important to the experience of the movie. As in some video games, the players can choose with which player you play the game, this choice is also part of the vast possibilities of the DVD. The immersion level is greater when the audience can relate to the main character. Some parts of the story can be re-written to be overlaid on the original to better suit the spectators.

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[15] Pause & Effect: the art of interactive narrative, Mark Stephen meadows, 2003

Which parts of the story to see

In a story, not everything is shown to the *reade*r; there are things that are not important to the narrative. On the other hand, there are things that are vital to withheld from the audience in order to not give away the plot.

What we can do, is give the viewer the option to choose which of the main characters to follow in the storyline. This has already be done in the Dutch movie "de zapfilm"[16]. This was a movie, displayed on two separate television channels on they 28th of May, 1992. The viewers had the choice which story lines they followed by changing channels. This was one of the first examples of an interactive narrative in an audiovisual production. There were however a few details that can be improved by the interaction on DVD.

In this particular movie, there were parts of the narrative, where the clever viewer would know that he or she had to change channels because the information he got by following one channel was redundant. In keeping some aspects of the tale a mystery, this adds to the tension.

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[16] Zapfilm: Moordkeus; murderous Decisions, Oliver Hirschbiegel, 1992

5.5.3 Storyline manipulation

The biggest asset that interactivity has is the ability to change the storyline. As you will see in my own experience with interactive DVD making, there is more to it than just giving people a choice. Viewers will be presented with all sorts of choices. They will go from the *passive interaction* described in the previous chapter to full fledged two way change.[17] The major concern with getting the viewer participating in the story is immersion. The spectator has to get the feeling that his actions really have an effect on it. While *normal* movies are basically a passive activity, giving people a choice in the matter will get them more interested in the situation. Immersion is a subject that has been described by many. The following extract is taken from Steve Woyach's paper "The Science of "Real": Immersion through Video Games". [18]

> "What is Immersion?
>
> "Suspension of Disbelief" is the literary term for a reader's decision to accept what is presented in a story as a realistic event. It is the first step in the formation of people's emotional attachment with fictional characters in novels, movies, and video games. Immersion is a technique of lowering people's need to suspend their disbelief by removing the text, the seat, or the keyboard, and putting a person into the scene itself. Immersion is the removal of the barriers between ourselves and our entertainment, until it is as real to us as everyday life." …
>
> "Turing's Test is a challenge, invented in 1950 by Alan Turing, a British Mathematician and Computer Scientist. The test involves a person sitting at a computer and asking questions of two individuals sitting at computers in different rooms: one is another person, and the other is a computer. If at the end of a period of time, say 5 minutes, the investigator could not determine which was human and which machine, then the computer could be said to be intelligent (Britannica). This test applies to more than just automated chat programs, however. In assessing a media's ability to immerse the player, intelligent reactions, visuals, sound – everything is held to the same standards. How real is it? How immersive?" "

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[17] See: 2.5.1 Levels of interaction: reciprocal change

[18] The science of the "real": Immerson through video games, Steve Woyach, 2003

We see immersion happening on a whole new level in first person games. These are the games in which the player does not *control* the main character, but actually is the character. After playing for while the player is so immersed in the game that he or she totally loses track of the real world. The actual room he or she is sitting ceases to exist. Only the game is real. This idea has, of course, been exploited on a new level by the different episodes of the blockbuster movie "the matrix". In this film, the *player* is literally plugged in to a game, where his senses are taken over by what the game lets him or her feel. This is, of course, total immersion. I do not suggest that we go as far as this. My point is this: the further we can take the viewer into the story, the better his focus will be, the more the story will be his or her own and eventually, how much more the viewer will enjoy the experience. Because that is what an interactive movie will be: an experience, with the foundations built by the creators, but made personal by the individual. Every participant will see the story unfold as it is intended to unfold by him- or herself.

Immersion is however not the only thing to hold in account. There are more factors. Tension is one of those that is crucial to the experience. It is best to explain this cinematographic concept first.

5.5.4 Freytag

The reason to use interaction in a fictional discourse is the build-up of tension and immersion in general. The German novelist Gustav Freytag invented the Freytag Pyramid. The thickening of the plot is reflected in time.
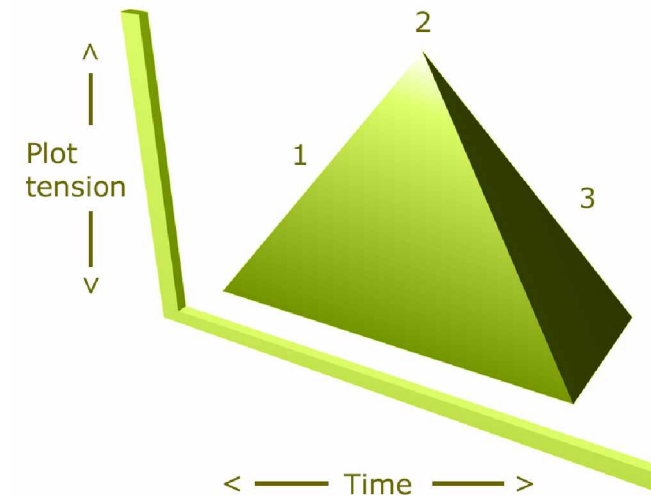
Figure 4: building up tension, Freytag[19]

The rising action and complication thickens the plot. In the first part the tension is built up and the viewers get to know the characters.

Climax and Crisis: the plot comes to a high and there is a crisis that has to be resolved.

The unwinding of the story: every little detail is worked out, every loose end is fixed. In the case of a difficult plot, it is explained for the less experienced viewer. This pyramid is essential to building a good story. What choices the users make, this way of creating interest must be followed.

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[19] Pause & Effect: the art of interactive narrative, Mark Stephen meadows, 2003

5.5.5 Choices

One might ask "If everything has already been pre-programmed for the viewer, why let them have a choice at all?" And that would be a good question, with a perfectly simple answer to follow. It is choice what makes us human and it is choice that makes the movie theirs.

The options the viewers get may seem simple to the spectator but there are is a lot of thought put into those selections.

There are two kinds of structures: the nodal and the affinity based systems. Nodal indicates that the choices that are made, are put together, are at a specific time and are conscious ones. They are made by the viewer. Within these possibilities, there are more choices.

Binary

A binary choice is a question with two answers. The viewer has to decide between two options. For an interactive movie, this is the best way t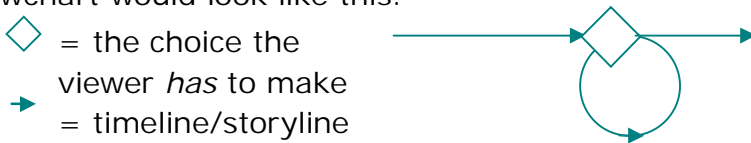o go. It is easier for the audience and as we'll see later[20], the flowchart of the total project will be less difficult for the team that creates it.

The binary choice again has two alternatives.

Yes/no: At some point in a fictional narrative the user could e.g. have the option to let the characters do or do not do a particular action. The flowchart would look like this:

◇ = the choice the
viewer *has* to make
➜ = timeline/storyline

The part that is added by the viewers' choice is something that the audience normally does not see.

One or the other
The audience is given a choice between two ways to go in the story. Whichever choice they make, the story will develop differently.
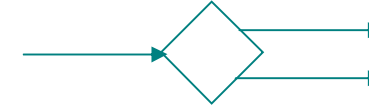
Multiple

The choice with many options is not one to hold into account when making an interactive AV production. When presented with more than two alternatives, the viewer will become more aware of the game aspect. This will diminish the immersion that is built up in the story.
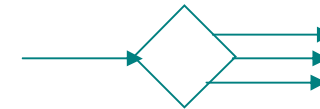
Affinity based system are totally different. They are mostly used in game. The player is given choices along the way of playing the game. The effects of the choices are accumulated and when they reach a certain target, the participant is put in a position where he or she can do something or view something more than before these choices were made.

Points   1/3   2/3   3/3

While the player collects points, the system adds them to a score. If this score reaches a certain target (3/3) the player can do or view more than before.

5.6   *Preliminary conclusion*

There are many ways for the user to interact with an interactive narrative, especially an audio-visual one. The choice to use which system or combination of systems is up to the production team. In my own experience the binary choice is the best one to keep the audience interested and immersed. With every choice that is provided, the viewer is aware of the fact that he or she has to make that choice. The concepts of "looking at" and "looking through" spring to mind.

"Looking at" means that the audience is aware of the fact that it is watching a tale. "looking through" signifies that the immersion is that big, that the spectators' immersion is so high, that they forget the gap between the world of the fictional and the *real* world.

The effects on a potential interactive content are great. We can positively play with the medium and adapt it to the needs of the story and the other way around too. If we would adjust the story to the medium, the immersion would be a lot bigger too. In the case of building up tension and immersion, we have to take into account that every choice, that has no effect on the content but rather on the way that it is displayed, will diminish the feeling that the audience is *in* the movie. In the other case, a more game feeling will emerge from the choices.

6   Effects on the traditional AV professional

The setup of this work is to determine if an interactive DVD the way to go is, when we are trying to bridge the gap between the passive media, like television and film, and interactive TV, in Flanders called iDTV.

We know that the effects on the content are many and that the public would benefit from such a project. The only thing left to determine is whether the man in the field would benefit from this transitional medium.

To specify the medium; the subject of the questions is a *new* interactive production. I indicate this because most interactive content is the interactive version of an existing *passive* format. This is not the point of this research. To adjust an already traditionally made product, is not a genuine new interactive creation.

6.1 Method

The way to determine how big the repercussions are is to go ask these people what their experiences are in this new field. There is one big problem however. This has not yet been done in this region. This means that *our* professionals are not yet skilled in this discipline. They have yet to learn about the possibilities and little weaknesses an interactive production has. What I did to find out their expectations, is to go talk to the different people that are active in a normal production and ask what they see as problems.

6.2 Different professions

There are many jobs in this field. To be as complete as possible, in this chapter, you will see all the traditional jobs, with the problems and possibilities therein.

1. Scriptwriter

A good story is the first thing that is needed in a movie. Without this, the only thing people will see is, maybe, a lot of action that does not lead to anywhere. When writing an interactive narrative, there is a lot more work than a *flat* script.

Storylines

First and foremost, storylines are the most important innovation in this medium. In a passive medium, there is nothing more than the one main line. The challenge of a writer of an interactive product is to make every plotline different and independently worthy for the audience. The thing to keep in mind here, is that every user will take a different path in the plot. Therefore, as a screenwriter, you can not fall short on any of them.

Point of view

This has, at first sight not that much to do with the screenwriter. But when we look deeper, we see that he also has a say in the visualisation of the story. He has to know when a viewer will have the chance to perceive the story in a different angle. Adjustments will have to be made.

Viewing different parts of a story

In this choice in production, the viewer decides which storylines to follow simultaneously. Again, the writer must hold this into account.

2. Solicitor

When making a movie, a good attorney is very important. Murphy's Law dictates that anything that can go wrong, will go wrong. An good lawyer keeps the damage to a minimum.

For the large part however, his or her tasks stay the same whether it is an interactive production or a passive one. Contracts still need to be written, deals made and most of all, copyright protected.

3. Insurance

As the previous part states that there always will be problems, insurance is pertinent. The forms are the same ones as passive media, so no problems here.

4. Accountant

This seemly dull job can, in small productions, be done by the crew itself. An interactive production is by definition a larger production than what it would be if the same product would be passive. Every choice that a viewer gets in the end is something that has to be made extra by the production team. Consequently an accountant is a good idea.

The difference between a passive and interactive production are so small they are practically not worth mentioning.

5. Casting director

When making an audiovisual product, actors and actresses are always on the menu. Even an animated creation will have to have voice-overs. This professionals' task is to find the proper people to fill in the different parts in the production. When the plot is complicated and e.g. the endings are different, the actors will have to play the same fraction of the script, in several different fashions. Each of these ways will have to be convincing for the public. This means that the casting director will have to choose very versatile people to fill in the openings.

6. Producer

This is the individual around which the whole world turns in a production. He or she has to approve of everything and everyone. Most of the time he or she is the initiator of the production. For this particular type of creation, he or she will have a lot of work, on top of the already heavy load. It is not evident to find professionals to jump in to a risky product as this. The producer would have to have great convincing power or a very good name to get skilled people to work on an interactive production.

When this is done, every time segment must be accounted for and filled in to the best of everyone's timetable. This is more work than a *normal* production because of the simple fact that the production is larger.

7. Grip

This is an integral part of every movie. The workload grows however when the endviewer is allowed to view the same scene from different angles. For every angle that the director decides upon, a camera must be set up. Not only this, the cameras have to be set up in such a way that they do not fall into each others' view. By hook or by crook, this is possible.

8. Lighting

Here we have the same problem as grip. Different storylines are no problem. It's different viewpoints that requires a new approach to this task. Again the lights have to be set up in a way that they are not seen on the screen. Sometimes more lighting sets have to be ready to accustom the directors' needs.

9. Sound

The audio guys have the same tasks or similar ones to the ones in a traditional production. Their assignment is to record the sounds on the specific sets. When there are more audio tracks, the difficulties arise. However small this seems, all the characters' voices will have to be recorded on different tracks. In larger productions, this is done automatically. In the smaller ones, the decision is sometimes made to record directly on digital camera, with the sound included on the track.

When you give the viewer the choice between different audio tracks, these must all be rendered separately.

10. Director of photography

Another important member of the crew. He or she decides on the way the story is captured on film. With different storylines, his or her tasks stay the same. Bring in the different viewpoints and they change drastically. A good D.O.P. is very headstrong and a perfectionist. He will question every decision that is made on the different angles of the scene. Naturally, this means that he will have to go to great effort to get everything to look as he planned it. This results in more work for the camera-, light-, and sound guys. The other ways of interactivity described earlier[21] do not have large repercussions on this professional.

11. Special effects

More and more special effects are used in movies these days. From explosions, to action sequences, to visual manipulation, every time these things are put into a movie, it costs a lot of money. These things should not be put lightly into a movie. When a new storyline appears or an explosion is filmed from different angles, it must be done right from the first time. To these people the difference between interactive media and traditional is neglectable.

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[21] see "effects on the content"

12.   Editor

A movie editor will curse the day when someone thought of putting interaction in film. His or her workload will grow exponentially. For every storyline or point of view that is added, he'll have to start editing from the top. By being creative with similar parts from different plotlines, this can be taken down a notch. However, the workload will be a lot larger. The bright point here is that the content of his job description will stay the same.

13.   DVD authoring

In this field, everything that is necessary to insert interactivity in a traditional medium is

> "In our tools the possibitlity to embed interactivity is already there."
>
> Avid belgium

already present. Not only in avid but in most other authoring tools, the possibility of interactivity is within reach.

14.   Music

A movie must have music in it. While audio effects can bring the viewer closer to the story, it's the music that actually immerses the audience. With the possibility of multiple audio tracks, the possibilities grow. The public can e.g. choose in which frame of mind he can watch the movie. In the practical part of this work, we will see that remixes of the audio material are in reach and not that much work.

6.3 Marketing possibilities

When all is said and done, making an audiovisual production costs money. Not only a traditional design requires funds, an interactive one does too and relatively more. The costs are greater because the length of the footage is a lot more. Where to get funds is another question. Next to the conventional means of attaining the finances there are some aspects of the *game* that needs to be held into account. This <section is to go deeper into these things.

When we see the modern customer service cycle, we can adapt this to our specific needs.
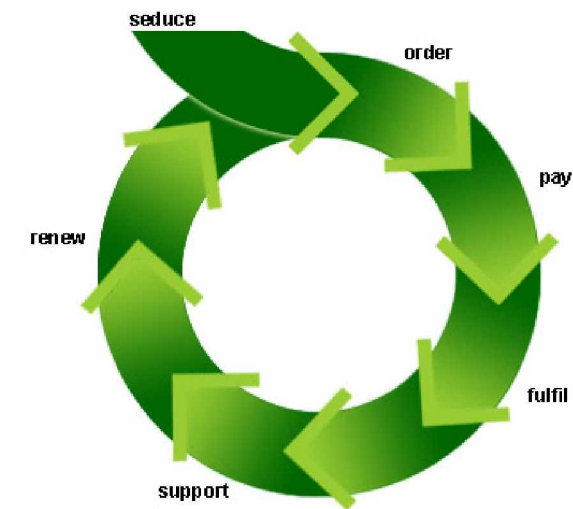

Figure 5: the customer service cycle[22]

The six stages of the service cycle must be fulfilled to get as much as possible out of a product.

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[22] How to win customers in the Digital World: P. Vervest, A. Dunn, 2000

- **Seduction:**

Enticing the possible customer is the first task on the menu. This is when the promotion sets in. The objective here, is to get the potential customer interested in the product.

- **Order:**

Once the DVD is ordered, the path stops at most cycles. In this case this is not happening. In the first step, you have got the viewer interested, now it is time to keep him or her happy.

- **Pay:**

In the mind of the buyer, we must convince them that they are not buying a simple movie but an experience and that they will get more than their money's worth. They are actually buying a number different movies in one. This is the grand total of the various storylines which they can choose.

- **Fulfil:**

When viewing the product at home, the buyer must be kept aware of the extra features of this product. We promised a whole new experience. We should deliver it.

- **Support:**

After the product has been used, the viewer should be able to get all the support he or she needs to understand the product and get as much as they possibly can, out of it. This is done by cross platform work such as, an unlocking code for extra material, more info on a website and a help feature for newbies.

- **Renew:**

One of the most important parts of this cycle is the renewal. When they bought one product of the company, they should be enticed to buy more and learn more about the next one, making the step to the seduction process a whole lot easier.

6.3.1 Traditional means

These resources can, and are used, in passive *media* productions to raise money. Marketing does not solely apply to promoting and commercials. As a producer, you have to start early with raising capital. If not, you will soon find yourself very nearly bankrupt and most of the time very actually bankrupt.

- **Loan**

Going by a bank is the first thing on the agenda when thinking of realising a project of this magnitude. For this, you have to have enough people (and money already) backing you. First time production crews are more often than not rejected because of bad credit history and an unexisting palmares.

- **Grants**

There are a lot official ways to get government money. In Flanders, this may seem not that obvious. With our political system you can go from regional, to federal, to national and even to European instances to ask for a grant in order to attain the necessary funding. [23]

- **Credit cards**

A more unorthodox way of getting the cash to start your production, is getting a lot credit cards and maxing them out. This way, you have a lot of capital from the start. The only drawback here is that, if your creation is not as successful as you estimated, you are deep into debt. This is always a gamble.

- **Investments**

The hardest way to find money is getting investors. In the economical climate that we see today, no company will just hand you the cash on a silver platter. As with the loans, you will have to show some references. The corporations often ask for a chunk of the profits too.

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[23] see Tax shelter

6.3.2 New ways

The fresh ways of making the capital to start a profitable production are few but effective. These will be developed in the near future. This small part in the document is just a start of the possibilities.

- **Tax shelter[24]**

This tax break for businesses is very recent. To promote the Belgian seventh arts, the government has made it possible for the companies to deduct the investments in these products. For the producer, this is a tool that has a lot of leverage. If the shelter works as it is supposed to, the audio visual professionals in Belgium will finally get a break.

- **Product placement[+]**

If you notice the little "+" after "placement", it indicates that the normal term does not apply anymore. Internet marketing brings us new possibilities in this sector. The possibility to interact in certain times in the course of a fictional story transports us into a new era of marketing.[25] E.g. when a character in a movie is driving a car, on the bottom of the screen, there can be a link to more information on the car, the dealers and maybe even links to a website. Studies have shown that in an ITV environment, those links are not often clicked, but in the case they are clicked, the users will spend an average of 15 minutes *browsing* the information.

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[24] see addendum

[25] see unexploited possibilities

- **Cross platform**

With everything that is happening in media these days, it is impossible to work on a single platform. The technology we have today provides us with the means to provide new and exciting ways to promote our product.

Incentives:

Putting encouragements in other media to promote a DVD is done in the past. We can however, put a link in the movie, where to find more info on a site. Putting an unlock code on the site of the matrix[26] worked for them. The production team of this multi-platform creation got more hits than ever before on a movie site.

offline/online

This technique is used in the promotion of websites. Where does it say, that it can not be used in advertising this type of medium? The online medium would be ideal to get interested people over from different media. When we do this, we get a couple of new target audiences to *play* with.

- § Digital enthusiasts
- § Movie enthusiasts
- § General early adapters: In marketing context, this group is a target for anything that is new. This mostly male populated gang are also known as *gadget freaks.*
- § Gaming enthusiasts: Interactivity and immersion is a quality that is directly transferable from games to interactive movies. When promoted correctly, this group can be a firm basis for an underground fanclub.

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[26] see: www.whatisthematrix.com

- **Web DVD**

This technology is not yet available in most countries, because it is still in a development stage. When the evolution comes, again, this medium will bring a lot of new possibilities.[27]

> "Maybe within eight or 10 years everybody will have big fat pipes coming into their house and will be able to cache MPEG-2 in their home servers, and the DVD format might not be the way to deliver it," Livingston admits. "But this is a great intermediary step, and it's important to tell clients that this is here to stay for several years.
>
> Bryant Frazer, Tape-Disc Business

The web DVD provides the new media marketer with a way to use e-commerce in a way that even more of the masses get in touch with it. The user can e.g. directly click on a link in his *movie* and be transferred to the site with more information, which he then gets on his or her television screen.

- **Multiple viewings**

The main strength of this product is this: the audience will not stop with looking at the movie once. They will look again and again, because every time they look, the story will be different. This makes good sales talk from the producing team towards possible investors and companies that want to promote by product placement. Every time the audience is confronted with the story, they will get that little bit more excited and immersed. After all, they know the basic story but they don't know what exactly will happen when they choose a different option than the last time.

7   Conclusion

ITV is the first contact that most people will have with *real* interactive audiovisual media. Looking at the acceptance figures from the United States, first time users could benefit a lot from a period of adjustment.

Whether it is my proposed Interactive fictional DVD is a question for producers.

In the first few chapters we see that the need for a stepping stone is real. The DVD is a widely accepted medium that already makes good use of its possibilities in the interactive range. As a movie buff myself I wondered if these features could be used to enhance the story which the DVD is trying to bring across and in doing so, contribute to the viewing experience and immersion.[28] There are many paths as yet unexplored that could help the novice interactive viewer ease into the new world of ITV.

Not only the benefits for the audience are large, the production crew has little to adjust to with this *new* technology. As I said in the justification, there are three perquisites for a successful (r)evolution: talent, money and social acceptance. Talent is already there in the form of the traditional AV professional. Social acceptance is a direct consequence of the success of the DVD. In the marketing part we see that money is there for the taking, if you just put your mind to it.

All the factors that would make this a success are present. The only thing to do now is to create the product. This we will see in the next big part of the dissertation: the practical case.

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[27] See addendum Web DVD

[28] More on this subject in the practical part of the paper.

8   The practical side of the *story*

To fully comprehend the impact that an interactive video DVD has to content and the production, I set out to make my very own creation.

The concept was actually conceived on a hot summer night. My friends and I held a few movie nights in my parental garden. We put the television and the video recorder under the stars and watched some movies. Every time we did this, we would choose a different type of movie. It is on the horror night that it came to me: What if we as viewers would get a say in the story. Every old horror movie has the same plot. Before you get to the ending, the whole story comes together and the finale is not that surprising anymore. But if there would be different storylines and conclusions of the narrative, the movie will become a personal experience. In stead of a lean back medium, it will become a lean forward one. With my final project in my mind I began exploring the possibilities. In the theoretic part we found these conclusions. The question is if the concrete realization is as uncomplicated as we think it is.

8.1 Terms

A few aspects will regularly return in this part of the paper. Before I can go any further I will expand a little on this subject. These factors are the reason why I set out to manufacture a project of this nature.

8.1.1 Horror

Firstly the style of the movie is more important than everything else. When a someone ask how the movie was to anyone who has seen that particular one, they will say if it was good or bad. When he or she asks what it was about, the first thing the other person will say, is what genre it was. The type of story is pertinent in the reflection of the audience before and after they have seen the product.

Secondly, the horror genre is one of the more immersive ones. When seeing a movie of this type, the spectators tend to identify with the characters a lot and thus getting more involved in the story. That horror is the most immersive genre out there is not proven, but it has to be one of the top three.

Thirdly, for the actors playing the parts, there are a lot of different styles involved. When remembering a horror movie, people tend to pick out only the scary parts like a girl running half naked through a forest while being chased by a madman with a chainsaw[29]. What is not remembered, is the parts before the action sequences start. There can be a lot of drama in an action movie too.

And lastly, in a movie of this type, the special effects are sometimes what make the motion picture special. This is an additional motive of mine: to prove that special effects are not necessary to make a good horror picture.

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[29] "the texas chainsaw massacre", 1974

8.1.2 Music

The choice of music is important in every movie. A traditional horror movie is no exception to the rule. This horror movie is however an exception to the rule. Music plays an even greater role in the concept.

In the part of the scenario, we will see in the *acquaintance* part that in this movie, the soundtrack is an integral element of the story. It is used to immerse the audience and to steer them into the right frame of thought.[30]

8.1.3 Viewer interaction

As seen earlier, there are different types of interaction in an interactive narrative[31]. As the executive producer of this project we decided in a meeting of all the people involved that a nodal binary choice is the way to go. There are a few reasons for this choice.

- We chose a binary "one or the other" choice. The audience will have to make a choice. By this necessity they will get *sucked* into the story. They will not be able to remain indifferent to the narrative. A conscious selection will have to be made.
- If we selected the "multiple options" alternative, the viewer will be more inclined to think the product is a game instead of a movie. Therefore the immersion will greatly diminish. By choosing between two options, the choice is not that difficult and will be easily made, thus making it easier for the user to accept the DVD as a movie.

- Practically speaking, the less storylines the DVD has, the less work goes into producing the movie. By keeping the choices to a minimum, the number of narrative tracks will be as few as possible to maintain the movie-feel as stipulated in the last point.
- The major difference between a game an interactive movie is the fact that the larger part of the power in the story lies with the producing team. The director of photography can still approve of the angles the movie is shot in, the story will basically stay the same. The users will be limited in the choices which they can make instead of being able to do whatever they want within the programmed boundaries of a game.
- As we saw earlier[32], the video-DVD is not an endless storage medium. It does not hold a particular amount of minutes but a specific amount of data. By keeping the nodes, and thus storylines, to a minimum, the quality of the picture, sounds and menus can be kept as high as possible.
- Graphically the choices would be made as dictated in the flowchart[33]. Right now is not the time to go into this. This subject will be elaborated on shortly.

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[30] See scene 1: acquaintance
[31] See: 2.5.5: Choices

[32] See 2.2 Myths
[33] See 4.1 Flowchart

8.1.4 Immersion

This topic has been discussed at an earlier stage[34]. I elaborate on this because this is a very large part of the goal I'm trying to accomplish. The immersion in a story *can* be improved by giving the audience the choice in the matter, however guided this choice is. With the narrative we created in this work, I will prove that this is correct.

The object of the movie is to transform the passive medium television into an active immersive medium that this DVD can be. By doing this we will see that the experience changes the spectators in the way that the television will become a *lean forward* medium instead of the *lean back* medium that it is now. In doing this, the viewer will take the first small step towards the very interactive medium that is ITV. This has a very large *lean forward* rate.

When you will read the story and the choices that lie therein, you will notice that the choices the viewers have to take become more and more radical. They start with a simple "stay together or split up the group" dilemma that will not get the spectators' hearts racing. The further we go into the tale, the more intrusive the options will be. These will become more obvious too. I will at this point not go too far into this point in order not to give away the whole plot.

The one thing that I *do* have to say is that I want the viewer/participant to walk away from the experience with one question in mind: "Did I do that?" If this is fulfilled, I will be happy with my work. In defining this storyline we set out to write the audience into the story, just as in *adaptation*[35] the writer has included himself into the story.

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[34] 2.5.3 Storyline manipulation

[35] *adaptation,* Spike Jonze, 2002

8.2 Flowchart

8.2.1 Key to the symbols

We see that in the flowchart, there are a few new possibilities. A binary choice does not necessarily mean an easy pattern. In total, this kind of structure provide 18 different ways to view a story. This is worth stressing.

A few key points here are worth mentioning.

- Choice 2/3: This is a typical example of how easy a storyline can be; The viewer selects his or her option and the storyline splits into two separate parts which come together after a while. This is nothing out of the ordinary

- Choice 4/5: Here we see again a point where the audience makes a choice that, at first, does not seem like anything special. Looking a bit further down the line, we reach the point where Stefanie has an accident. In the flowchart we see this occurrence where the two storylines become three. This is an illustration of how a simple choice can result in drastic changes in a narrative structure. specimen

- Choice 10/11/12: Two storylines become three. A choice results in the combining of two different parts of the story.

Later on we go deeper into this structure. Only When the explanation of the flowchart is done, we can truly appreciate the depth of the structure.
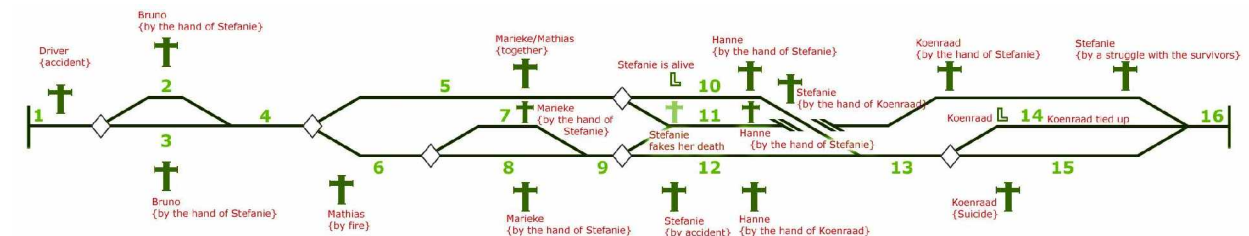
A larger specimen is provided on the left part of this page.

If this is not present, please contact the writer

8.2.2 Graphics

The choice not to work with a menu structure when the choices for the viewer appear inside the movie is a very conscious one. Whenever the audience is confronted with a pc-like screen, their mind will atomically link this to IT and games. This is one thing I would not have them do to my project. The fact that you *can* make a choice does not lead to the concept of a game. It is imperative that the public still in a movie frame of mind is. How we solved this problem is actually pretty simple.

The idea is mildly based on the television series 24[36]. The idea is to split the screen into two little screens. On these two little screens, the scene that is played out continues. The two screens alternate in giving inform ation.

Start screen

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[36] « 24 », 2001-2002, Joel Surnow, Robert Cochran

Start of the fading screens

Middle of the fading screens

First choice

Second choice

The "final choice"-screen expands
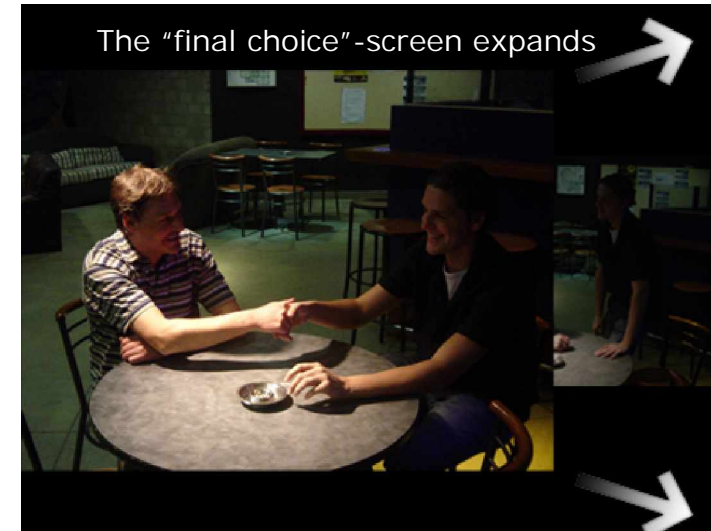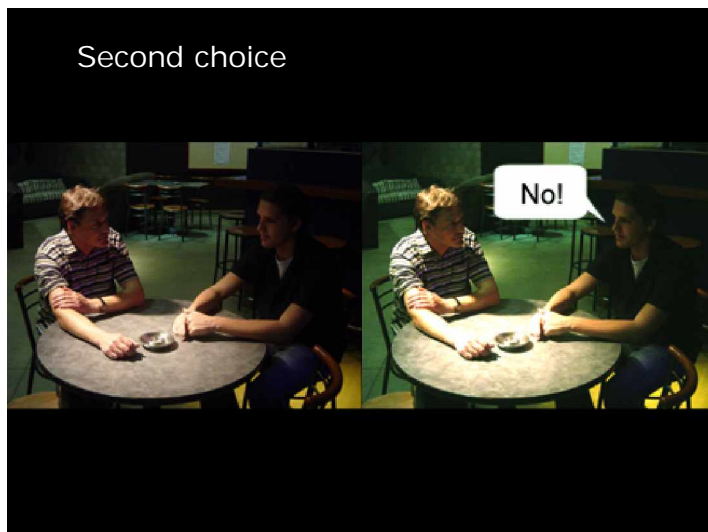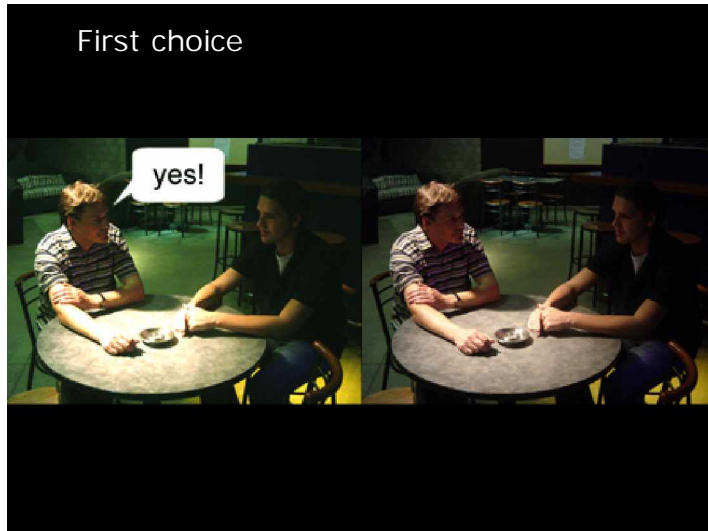
For clarification: the white letters on the screens are explanations of the content on the display.

As you see, there are no menus on the screen. These things remind the viewer of the fact that they have to make choices and by consequence have the image of a computer game more in their heads.

8.3 The story

8.3.1 Main goal

The title of the project is In Vain. This reflects the feeling that I want to generate in the audience and at the same time, it is the basic theme of the story. The story is an existential one. *Do we have control over our own lives? Do our choices make a difference? Is the concept of choice an illusion?* These are the questions that the characters will pose but on a deeper level. These are questions that the audience has to ask themselves too.

You can see a story as three levels of reality: the audience, the storyline and the producers. Where in adaptation[37] the producers and the storyline are mixed together, in *In vain*, we combine the audience and the plot. At the start, the choices will be trivial. Going further in the story, the choices become more radical and the characters will pick up on this fact. From that point on, the audience is a real *player* in the story.

The plot itself takes the characters into a search for the meaning of their reality. In the end they start to act out resentment towards the viewers because they are the puppeteers that control them. The characters are powerless and find themselves in a catch 22[38] situation.

The goal towards the audience is that when the movie ends, they ask themselves "Did I do that?". This will entice them to view the film later on again, to make different choices and try to get a different ending. The will discover sooner or later that there is only one ending. The existential questions at the start of this chapter really do also apply to the audience. Trying to save the people in the *alternate reality* is in the end *In Vain.*

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[37] *Adaptation*, Spike Jonze 2002

[38] *Catch 22*: Joseph Heller, 1961

8.3.2 Main features

Before the movie starts, there are a couple of basic features that are present. These are here to guide the audience away from the normal train of thought but also to introduce the viewers into the possibilities of this new medium.

- Standard features
    - Subtitles
    - Parental lock
    - Extras
        § Making off
        § Storyboard
        § Contact information
        § Directors comment

- New features
    - Enhanced parental lock:
      Where normally, the parental lock is a yes/no choice, in this case we take it to the next step. This choice is also present but once it is bypassed, the viewer will have a choice on how gruesome the content of the movie will be. When selecting a less frightening movie, some scenes will be edited and the tension will be improved by the story itself.
    - Music choice:
      When preparing this paper, I actually went into the studio with a band[39] to record a song that would be used for the soundtrack. Keeping in mind the possibilities of the DVD, I had the song remixed to fit one scene. Scene one of the movie is a double scene, where the images switch over between two places. These cuts are done on the beats.

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[39] Many thanks to *the killbots*, www.thekillbots.tk

Whenever the story switches from one place to the other, the music also drastically changes between these two.

The underlying possibility here, is that in a DVD the soundtrack could be different every time a different audience watches the product and the video editing can stay the same. Remixing an audio track is not that hard to do.

- Possible storyline choice

This is an option, that is possible in general, but not in this case. The story relies on viewer participation as you will see a bit further[40]. In other cases, the director can select a few paths in the storylines which he or she thinks is the best way to view the movie. In stead of making choices while the move is playing, they would be made at the start.

8.3.3 Characters

Eight main characters are chosen for the story.

- An even number: to keep it easy for the writers to *kill them off* in a particular order.
- Eight: to provide very different types of persons so that everyone of the spectators will be able to identify with them.
- 4/4 ratio of male/ female: this is done again to reach as many niches of the market as possible.

- **Stefanie**

This is the *hot chick* of the pack. She is a typically dumb blonde with a few exceptions. She is 22, has had a lot of sex and some bisexual experience. She's a college girl on her second year of psychology. Her boyfriend is everything to her and the reason she is popular too. She is what we call *popular by proxy*. Actually she's a grey person. This is the first time she actually goes out by herself. Her choice of music is mainstream pop. She has no direct link with the rest of the group apart from some time in grade school.

- **Marike**

Here we have our natural beauty. She's a bit on the curvy side but she is a genuine *good* person. At 19, she's just in her first year of nursing school and is set on experiencing everything new about the college life. Dido is her kind of music. She has a boyfriend (Bruno) but they have been together so long that they are used to each other. Her middle class family is very tedious at this moment and wants something new and exciting. The question is if she is ready for it. She has been a chiro (youth organization) counselor for a long time, where she has met a lot of the gang.

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[40] See: 4.3.3 Storyline

- **Bruno**

The only word to describe this boy is *jock*. At 18 years of age, he is in his 7th year of auto mechanics. With the *nice girl* as his girlfriend (Marike), he is the only one of his friends that has not had sex. His girlfriend makes him listen to the mainstream pop radio stations, but he rather listens to the harder house type. This guy is very stupid but is good with his hands. The fact that he works out every day after school only solidifies the stereo typicality. While his girlfriend is exploring new possibilities he hasn't got a clue. He is very satisfied on where he is, working on cars, going to clubs with his friends, wrecking the occasional phone booth. This last thing is no problem because his father own the largest bmw dealership in the region and he pays everything Bruno breaks... the spoiled little brat. His friends worship him though.

- **Tristan**

This guy is what you call a philanthropist. He enjoys life as much as he can. Being 27, he tried Germanic studies for two years and switched to philosophy, in which he has taken an extra year to finish his thesis. In contrast of what you might think, he's not the ladies man and is thus not that experienced sexually. To finance his studies he works as a night watchman, but he reads books and listens to Nick Cave while he works his late shifts. He's an outsider in the group and a bit of a lone wolf. Suffering from insomnia sometimes he can't tell reality from a dream and that makes his reactions sometimes really strange.

- **Jitske**

This really smart girl originally wanted to go to music conservatory but eventually decided on Bio engineering for practical reasons. She listens to straight edge hardcore music and is 20. While reading of over thinking things, she plays with her pet white rat. Jitske has taken over the *duties* of her mother around the house because her mother is dealing with a lot of issues. Her father is away a lot, working as a doctor for MSF. To keep her mind of her problems, she writes poetry because she very much believes in the power of words.

- **Koenraad**

This 22 year old virgin teaches grade school. His image is very important to him because he nurtures the ambition of going into politics. Unfortunately he is *too* friendly and people like him but do not want to be around him much. He is very insecure about himself, mostly about his weight. He has bulimia but every time he throws up, he prays for forgiveness. As you might have guessed he is a classic case of a religious, homosexual, perverted choirboy. Actually this character is pretty sad. He tries too hard to be friends with everyone but they still don't like him enough to really get to know him.

- **Mathias**

This cool young *dude* plays bass guitar in a punk band. He's a typical adolescent, trying to find out what he wants in life. He goes to college and follows courses in animation
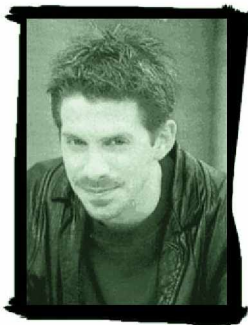
At 19 years old he has a girlfriend who is older than he is (Hanne). This girlfriend is a transitional one for him. He was just looking for someone to bum cigarettes off and keep him busy. He still likes to watch cartoons out of a scholastic point of view. Up until a few months ago he was a bit of a momma's boy, having an older sister on top of his over protective mother. Being always late and sometimes even steeling little things, he has to charm his way out of a lot. Which he does most of the time.

- **Hanne**

A bit further in age than her boyfriend (Mathias) at 23, she has more experience on a lot of different planes. She has finished her studies of Germanic languages and is now going deeper in to cultural sciences. She has, as they say, a degree at the university of life. The major connection with her boyfriend lies in the fact that they are both big fans of Disney cartoons. In contrast to her age and her boyfriends, she is submissive to him, so far that she stands of the brink of losing her identity to him. To people who don't know her that well, she can be very intimidating, even when she takes the fall for various mishaps her friend seems to get into all of the time.

8.3.4 Storyline

In this part of the paper, you will be confronted with the story and its interactive potential. In the left column, I tell the tale, in the right one I clarify the possibilities and choose which ones I would use for this movie. The numbers of scenes correspond with the numbers on the flowchart. Keep this in arms reach in order to effectively follow the story.

Scene 0

We start off with an overview of a forest. When going further we see a building showing up. It is the workplace of Tristan. He's a Night watcher in this multinational. He's a philosophy student by day. Every couple of nights he works at the front desk of this big firm. The tiresome conversations are wearing him out. He's reading a book while his colleague is trying to have a chat with him.

Suddenly he's getting a vision. It starts with very short flashes of images but they keep getting more frequent and longer. They are pictures of cars. While they keep coming faster, they are getting *darker* and more intense. Tristan puts his book down and totally gives in to the hallucination. It ends with a car crash of two cars that both end up total loss. It ends abruptly.

Tristan stands up, totally ignoring his fellow night watcher. He starts moving to the door while his co-worker yells that he should stay or he's going to get fired. Tristan just keeps walking, goes through the door and keeps going. He starts to run; very slowly at first but speeds up until he's running full speed.

This part has no interactivity whatsoever. It is the first scene of the movie. You might see it as a teaser.

Scene 1

In this scene we meet most of our players. It is a double scene that is set on a concert and on a bingo night. This will automatically create contrast between some of the characters. This is the part where we learn about the people that carry the story.[41] The images switch on the music[42] that has been especially mixed for this scene.

When every personality is effectively brought into the limelight, they decide to go to a party somewhere else.

The group at the concert gets a lucky ride outside the door of the club. They driver is a pretty strange man who doesn't say a lot. Music on the background is an omen for things to come.[43]

The gang at the bingo night hitch a ride with Koenraad. As you read in the character description, he is not the most popular guy.

At this point the conversations in the two cars continue and the images that Tristan saw earlier in his vision are popping up in real life.

Tristan himself is running towards where the cars are coming from. He knows they are going to crash. On a certain point, he will cross one of the cars. He turns around and starts screaming at the car but they can not hear him. Running after the car and screaming he can not help that the two cars crash seconds later.

Both cars are total loss but practically everyone is

This is the part where the first possibility of choice is introduced. The music could be changed in order to suit the audience more. As producer of this project I chose not to take this option because this part of the soundtrack is important for the story.

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[41] See chapter characters

[42] Thanks to *the killbots*, www.thekillbots.tk

[43] Since it is my plan to complete this movie after I graduate, I will not give all the details.

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ok, apart from some bruising. The only one that is hurt is the strange guy. His head is bleeding badly. While trying to save him, this guy is the first to go in the grand scheme of things.

Tristan comes up to the place of the accident and tries to explain what he has seen in his vision. Most of the others are still recovering from the shock. Some try to call the police on their mobile phones but they are too far from civilisation and have no reception. While Hanne is trying to think of a plan, her boyfriend Mathias is lighting up a joint on the trunk of the stranger's car. When he sits down, he hears sounds coming from in the car. When the whole group opens it, they discover Stefanie tied up and gagged. Nobody asks why she was in there. Everyone just assumes the stranger was the bad guy.

With the phones down, Hanne comes up with a plan. They have to get help. The only relevant question is: does the group go together or do they split up.

This is the viewers first sign of interaction with an effect on the content. The question is trivial and will not take a lot of thought to keep the audience immersed.

Whichever choice is made, the effect is the same[44] as we will see in the next scene.

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[44] Hence the title of the project "In Vain"

Scene 2

The viewer has decided that everyone will stick together and start walking. Marike remembers that a few miles away, there is an old army base that is open to the public. She remembers because she took her *children* in the youth organisation there. She also remembers a shortcut through the forest that will cut off an hour or two of their travelling time.

Koenraad has recovered from the shock and tries to "comfort" Stefanie. After all, she's a blonde bombshell and in stressful situations, anything can happen. Obviously she is not interested and makes that very clear.

A few minutes later, they get to a moist wooden log that bridges a small stony river. Stephanie goes over second to last, just before Bruno. He let her go first to *check out her fine ass*. Very subtly Stefanie sticks one of her tall heels through the wood, making the bridge even more hazardous. No one sees this and Bruno, also ignorant of that fact, walks boldly over the overpass. This starts to collapse and the jock loses his balance, crashing down 15 feet on sharp rocks and branches, killing him instantly. Everyone is really upset, especially Bruno's girlfriend Marike. Stefanie immediately takes her into her care and tries to console her. Unknowingly everyone reluctantly continues to their destination, knowing that it will not help to drag a body with them. The atmosphere is very grim. The group arrives at their destination.

The choice of the viewer results in the death of one of the main characters. The atmosphere becomes very gloomy. The audience is confronted with the first effect of a choice it has made.

Scene 3

They decide to split up. Bruno, Stefanie and Marike stay behind. Bruno will try to fix the car as he is in his final year of auto mechanics. Marike stays with her boyfriend and Stefanie says she is still too shocked to move.

The others follow Hanne to an old military complex that is open to the public. There should be a phone there.

Bruno starts to repair the car that is on the brink of a ditch next to the road. He thinks he might save the car if he could just get under the hood. He climbs under the car with Stefanie behind the wheel to try and start it later on. Without Marike looking at one point, she relieves the handbrake and the car starts moving towards the ditch. Bruno is to late to get out and Stefanie is screaming hysterically to keep up appearances as Marike is trying to stop the car. It goes without saying all effort is useless. Bruno is pushed under the water by the car and is drowned.

Marike is out of control. Stefanie proves herself to be stronger than she seems and decides to go after the others. The two girls take a short cut through the woods and meet the others at the complex where they explain what happened.

Scene 4

The group find a doorway to the courtyard of the base. This place is bigger than they anticipated. They look around and try to figure out what to do. Marike still can not handle what has happened.

When watching the second time, the viewers have a hint here that even though, they have control but that there is an even greater presence[45] than them.

The audience has the choice between going through the buildings one by one (5) or walking around first and trying to figure out which building houses the phone. (scene 6)

Scene 5

Everyone goes through the buildings together. They have to find a way of communicating with the police or they should at least find some help. Koenraad's theory that people can get together under great stress is proven true. Unfortunately for him, it is charming Matthias that wins the heart of Marike when his girlfriend Hanne is busy organising the group. They disappear together. The others continue in the wake of the fearless leader. In this part Jitske and Tristan start talking. They find their common love for *dark* music strangely appealing under the circumstances.

No one notices that Stefanie sneaks away from

[45] The producer; i.e. me.

the group for a second. A few minutes later, when she is back they hear screams. Arriving at the location we see the two half-naked bodies of Marike and Mathias, throats slashed. This very gruesome sight makes Jitske jump into the arms of Tristan. Hanna is trying to cope by being even more un-emotional than usual. They must continue on their path. A very cold Hanne drags everyone around with her. Jitske and Tristan find company in each other. Koenraad is silently coping with the occurrences. We see him steadily becoming more and more nervous.

At this point everyone knows foul play is happening. Hanne is getting that Stefanie was away from the group for a while and she starts an argument. Koenraad starts freaking out. The dispute between the girls turns into a fight with pushing and shoving. Stefanie is thrust into an old supporting pole which starts to buckle. Hanne steps back to take cover. Stefanie throws herself the other way. The part of the roof comes down.

The viewers choose at this point whether they like Stefanie or not. This choice will result in the next storylines.

Scene 6

Walking around on the courtyard and between the buildings, Mathias spots and old car that looks like it could work. Having *some* experience with stealing and cars, he tries to hotwire it. At one time it looks like it is going to work. Eventually it is a no go. His hands are very dirty from all the bird droppings on and in the vehicle. He tries to wipe everything off, but it is no use. So while everyone is looking for a phone, Mathias spots a water tap. When he attempts to get it to go, he fails. Luckily he sees a bucket of colourless fluid in the corner below the sink. He uses this to wash his hands. The dirt is very quickly washes off, even amazing himself.

Koenraad keeps following Hanne, who is emotionless at this point. Jitske and Tristan get into a philosophical conversation that heats up pretty quickly although their ideas coincide at more points than one.

Mathias, feeling left out a bit, lights up a joint. Unfortunately it seems that the clear fluid he washed his hands with was a strong detergent, leaving his hands very flammable. The spark of the lighter makes his palms burst into flames, consequentially making his clothes light up, burning him alive. The others are too far away to help them. It is Hanne's turn to have a fit. With Matthias gone, Koenraad takes over but keeps giving her advice to pray and trust in God. While Hanne is not that religious, it is the only thing she really can do in her opinion.

Here we see story-line manipulation and not story manipulation. The viewer has the chance to choose which groups to see. The storyline with Marike and Stefanie are most important here, this choice is mandatory. The real selection is between the other two groups. This reflects the audience's will to go in deeper in the philosophic side or the religious side.

This is a part where the viewers' choice does not change the whole story but alters the feeling in the audience; the immersion as you will.

Under leadership of Tristan, they decide to split up the group into three parts. Putting himself in team with Jitske, Koenraad with Hanne and Marike and Stefanie.

Scene 7

We follow Jitske and Tristan. They talk philosophy, trying to understand what is happening. One accident is plausible, but three in total is not. Every death is caused by accident in their opinion which makes this scenario even more unbelievable. They start discussing the impact of choices, existentiality amongst other things. Here and there a rodent scares Jitske into the arms of the tall Tristan. They become closer as time passes.

In the other story we follow, Marike and Stefanie start to bond too as it seems. Marike is still upset about the death of her friend. Strangely enough, the closeness with Marike rekindles her bisexual feelings. When starting to show physical affection to Marike, the latter fends off the *attack* vigorously. Stefanie is very mad by this but holds it in until a few minutes later. She takes her concealed knife and stabs Marike in the back. To keep the suspicion off herself, she marks the body with some religious signs. Koenraad is known for his religious tendencies so he should take the blame.

Here, again we have a choice like the one that results in scene 3 and 4. Any way the story goes, Marike is killed by Stefanie.

Scene 8

Hanne and Koenraad keep talking religion and fate. The *man* in the company takes the upper hand in the discussion and keeps Hanne, who is at this point still mourning for her boyfriend, busy. But Hanne does not give in to everything he says. Koenraad however is very fanatical in his opinions. And the argument turns in to a pushing and shoving contest, where Koenraad tries to grab Hanne's *more delicate bits*.

In the other story we follow, Marike and Stefanie start to bond too as it seems. Marike is still upset about the death of her friend. Strangely enough, the closeness with Marike rekindles her bisexual feelings. When starting to show physical affection to Marike, the latter fends off the *attack* vigorously. Stefanie is very mad by this but holds it in until a few minutes later. She takes her concealed knife and stabs Marike in the back. To keep the suspicion off herself, she marks the body with some religious signs. Koenraad is known for his religious tendencies so he should take the blame.

Scene 9

All the groups reconvene in the courtyard. Koenraad en Marike are not there. Hanne explains that she escaped the grasp of a sexual pervert. Marike ran away in tears according to Stefanie. The whole group decides to retrace the steps of the last group and find Marike. After a while of searching, they fine Koenraad, bent over the body of Marike. He's holding a knife and is crying over Marike. Tristan grabs him and throws him into a supporting beam near Stefanie. That beam collapses and a part of the ceiling comes down. Koenraad has leapt away but Stefanie is too close to the falling debris.

At this point, the viewer has to choose whether she is fast and devious enough to leap to safety and escape the sight of the survivors or if she is caught under the debris and dies.

Two of the storylines come together again. For the writer this is one of the tough parts. He or she has to make sure that the way people are killed in scene 2/3/7/8 is not mentioned. This is a question of skill and practise.

Scene 10

Luckily the two girls get away safely. That event brings both girls with their two feet on the ground and they choose to leave the dispute at that. Stefanie sprains her ankle and Tristan and Jitske help her to go on. Hanne is leading the way determined to find a way of communicating. Koenraad slips into hiding without anyone noticing. He is starting to freak out with all the deaths

The story is evolving. People are beginning to grasp what is going on, not only in the characters but also the viewers.

Everyone thinks he killed Marike and they are starting to suspect he had something to do with the others too. Actually he starts to doubt himself. He is starting to think he could kill someone. Further and further his mind starts to wander and

This is the part where the story turns truly gruesome.

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eventually he starts to think he should test it like a true psychopath. He runs forward on the path and lies in wait for the others to come. He is in a small room that has a whole in the floor and an light bulb hanging from a rugged electrical wire. He hides behind the door. This light will attract the others… and it does. Hanne walks in and shouts out to the others that there is nothing there. Turning around she stumbles upon Koenraad but before she has a chance to shout out again, he pushes her head through the electrical chord and pushes her down the hole in the floor. This is effectively muffling her sound and strangling her. The gruesomeness even worsens by the fact that the struggling Hanne has her throat cut by the rugged chord. Eventually her head is cut off. Koenraad escapes by jumping to the floor below. The others run after him but lose him in the hallways of the building. With Jitske and Tristan as the only fully functional persons, Stefanie is left behind. Koenraad is a devious bastard and backtracks to find the injured Stefanie screaming at him. Taking the first weapon handy, a large iron beam, he bashes in her head from behind.

We made the story here very horrible as an example of what the people can think of. The choices lie in different layers of reality.

This is the same way Stefanie kills Koenraad in a different storyline. It should provide for some interesting acting achievements.

Scene 11

In the dust that follows, she sees her chance to get away. When the air has cleared up there is a whole lot of debris and no sight of Stefanie. The four *good guys* reason about where she is. The pile of rubble is too big and they decide she must be caught by the falling roof and is dead.

The rest of the gang continuous on their way. Hanne spots a light further in the building. The rest follows her. Stefanie has however, runs ahead and waits for them in the room that they are looking for. She hides behind the door. Hanne walks in and shouts out to the others that there is nothing there. Turning around she stumbles upon Stefanie but before she has a chance to shout out again, Stefanie pushes her head through the electrical chord and pushes her down the hole in the floor. This is effectively muffling her sound and strangling her. The gruesomeness even worsens by the fact that the struggling Hanne has her throat cut by the rugged chord. Eventually her head is cut off. Stefanie escapes by jumping to the floor below.

Koenraad is totally freaking out at the sight of the headless body, falling through the whole as the rest of the group enters the room. He starts screaming and crying, collapsing on the floor, his

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46 This is the same way that Koenraad killed Stefanie in Scene 10

head buried in his hands. Jitske and Tristan are shook up too and try to temper Koenraad but to no avail. They decide to go on because they are not going to have much help from the wreck that is Koenraad. Of course, as they left him alone, there is no one to protect him. Stefanie creeps up on him and bashes his head in with a large iron rod.[46]

Now all the pieces fall together, what Jitske and Tristan do not understand is that Stefanie who is typically a blonde bimbo is that clever. After all, the couple are both scholars. She could not possibly outwit them both. The discussion of *choice* comes back to mind. What if someone else is thinking for her, making her choices. That would make sense. But how is that possible. They start to think how they themselves act normally. This is totally different than usual. What if there is someone else that pulls the strings. They figure out what is actually happening. They have no choice. At this point Tristan asks Jitske to start screaming into the nothingness. She really should get the attention. When Tristan eventually taps Jitske on the shoulder. Tristan shows a bloody piece of glass. He says he put this in his arm when she was screaming. Only now it starts to bleed. Apparently the screaming was much more interesting to the audience. We really have no say in what they do. They totally give up. Nothing they do will change anything anyway.

The camera stays with Jitske the whole time now. Only turning back to Tristan when he says something.

They go back to the courtyard screaming to the viewer, asking what the audience wants. Stefanie meets them there. The couple tries to explain to her what is happening but she can't grasp the

idea. In true horror fashion, there is a catfight. Stefanie falls over and cracks open her skull on a sharp piece of rock.

After sitting for a while, doing nothing special, the sun starts to rise. With no transportation and no means of communication the choice is made to go further down the road to the tiny train station and wait for the first train.

Scene 12

With Stefanie actually dead under the debris, only Tristan, Jitske, Koenraad and Hanne remain. Hanne is still taking the lead to look further for a phone. Koenraad is breaking down, he can not cope with it. Jitske and Tristan keep talking. The events that occurred this night are far from coincidental. The discussion of *choice* comes back to mind. What if someone else is thinking for her, making her choices. That would make sense. But how is that possible. They start to think how they themselves act normally. This is totally different than usual. What if there is someone else that pulls the strings. They figure out what is actually happening. They have no choice. At this point Tristan asks Jitske to start screaming into the nothingness. She really should get the attention. When Tristan eventually taps Jitske on the shoulder. Tristan shows a bloody piece of glass. He says he put this in his arm when she was screaming. Only now it starts to bleed. Apparently the screaming was much more interesting to the audience. We really have no say in what they do. They totally give up. Nothing they do will change anything anyway.

Koenraad can not accept this. His religious background contradicts everything that the *lunatics* are saying. Tristan tries to calm him down by talking when Hanne grabs him. They start to fight and he throws down Hanne, straddles her and start to beat her very hard. Tristan and Jitske are nailed to the ground until they snap out of their trance and pull Koenraad off.

The fact that Tristan and Jitske do nothing is totally against their nature. This is a sign that they don't have control.

Scene 13

At this point, Koenraad looses control. He can not grasp the concept of someone other than God having control over him. His eyes start to role and he turns into himself. Tristan grabs him and ties him down. He can't do anything anymore to harm someone. Tristan reasons that the persons that control their lives tonight have decided that Tristan and Jitske are a couple and nothing else. So they shouldn't worry if the only threat is tied up.

As the couple is correct, the viewers have a choice to make. Should we leave Koenraad tied up and call on help later or should they give in to the audience's wish and kill one more time to preserve the horror of the story.

Two very different narrative paths coincide at this point. The writer of the story should be very aware of this fact. This is the start of the mental breakdown of Koenraad. The audience has chosen certainty in the story over a higher thriller aspect this is what will follow.

Scene 14

Koenraad stays tied up. The two lovers leave the complex and start to head for the nearby little train station. Since there is no ticket office, there is no way to communicate until the next train comes. In other images we see Koenraad starting to get more insane by the minute. But he stays alive. This part of the story terminates in an open ending.

How horrible is the viewer? Will they be empathic with Koenraad or does he or she chose to go with the more cinematic option?

Scene 15

The two friends decide it is best to kill the remaining threat. Koenraad overhears them talking and self-preservation takes over. Struggling wildly, he tips over. Characteristically, he falls down into a puddle and drowns. The couple is not affected by this. Their spirits are totally crushed and decide to go to the small train station up ahead. Leaving so many corpses behind.

Scene 16

They reach the train station and start talking again about the night. Tristan, who reads a lot of horror books, knows that at dawn, the story ends. That is a rule in every scary movie. Jitske grabs Tristan's hand but he pulls it away from her. "Why?" she asks. The choices that they made that night are not their own. Even the fact that they are a couple now is not their choice. Tristan explains that he can not live with the thought that he has nothing to do with a decision that will have such a great impact on their lives. Jitske is in tears. At this point, the train comes and they both get on it. Sitting on different sides of the same bench.

The ending is the same way in every path the audience has chosen. The *InVain* mentality does not only apply to the characters in the story but also to the public. There is nothing you can do to change the outcome. You have 18 different ways to go but in the end nothing will help them.

The end

8.4 Marketing

- Appraising the medium:

As stated in the general marketing possibilities of this new medium, the key to bring this type of DVD to the masses is to emphasize the novelty. The uniqueness of the product is a major player in the fact whether the movie will sell or not. It is the first step into a whole new level of audiovisual media. This should a campaign for promoting the film reflect.

- Promoting the story:

The story is a good one in itself.[47] The concept is written to suit the medium; a demanding task in itself. Apart from the odd exception to the rule ITV formats are adaptations from an existing design. One of my secondary goals in this project is to make a whole new product, especially created for this type of medium. This story has done that. It is only fair that the promotion of the concept enthralls this. Keywords here should be *horror, choice, surprising, innovative*.

- Promoting the possibilities

To the public this subsection would be superfluous. The endorsement of the features will attract a whole market section of gadget enthusiasts, but the main target of this part of the campaign would be future investors. It is the job of this production team to smooth the way for further enterprises because this road in the grand pattern of technology is long from built.

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[47] I don't want to blow my own horn, but I have had that comment on several occasions.

8.5 Practical conclusion

An interactive narrative as this one falls or stands with the story. It is particularly demanding on the writers and the editing professionals. The filming itself, lights and other traditional jobs stay the same, only different in the fact that it is more work. The other great distinction between a conventional audiovisual production and this type is that the actors have a more demanding situation too. They are given the chance to show what they have in their repertoire because they will have to act out the same scenes in different ways.

In the marketing department, the possibilities are great at this point in time. This sort of story has never been done on such a scale. This opens up doors to various different promotional tactics.

Pragmatically speaking, it is a gamble in production but not one in promotion. In this writer's opinion, they are odds that are to my liking.

9   Final conclusion

The total of the paper breaths this finale. An interactive DVD is a plausible stepping stone between traditional audiovisual media and interactive media as I(d)TV. In putting down these words, I'm not saying that it is *the* way to go. What I'm saying is that this project can open the doors to the next audiovisual evolution.

The possibility is there, the talent is there, and even the social acceptance is present. It is up to the producers to find the money for this kind of project. Every factor is accounted for. I will personally try to finish this project myself, seeing as all the research is done and a lot of the pragmatic work has a sturdy base in *the practical side of the story*.

10   Addendum

1. Press conference Tax shelter (Dutch)

STEUN AAN DE BELGISCHE CINEMAPRODUCTIE EN -CREATIE

De Minister van Financiën, Didier Reynders, heeft bij het Parlement een wet ingediend om de productie van audiovisuele werken te ondersteunen. Die wet is enkele maanden geleden gestemd en treedt in de komende dagen in werking. Het koninklijk besluit voor die inwerkingtreding werd immers op 4 april laatstleden door de Ministerraad goedgekeurd, vervolgens aan de Raad van State voorgelegd, en moet in het Belgisch Staatsblad verschijnen.

Die wet wil een federaal mechanisme invoeren met fiscale stimuli voor de investeringen in de productie van audiovisuele werken.

Het voorgesteld stelsel houdt rekening met de huidige realistische Belgische noden, met de moeilijkheden en de algemene kenmerken eigen aan de investeringen in de audiovisuele en cinemaproductie, en vult de bestaande ondersteunende instrumenten aan, zowel op gewestelijk als op communautair niveau.

Wat houdt de wet in ?
Dit stelsel voorziet, vanaf het aanslagjaar 2004 (inkomsten 2003), in de vrijstelling van de belastbare winst van binnenlandse vennootschappen en van Belgische buitenlandse vennootschappen, andere dan vennootschappen of ondernemingen voor audiovisuele producties, ten belope van 150% van de werkelijk aangewende bedragen voor de uitvoering van een raamovereenkomst voor de productie van een erkend Belgisch audiovisueel werk.

Een erkend Belgisch audiovisueel werk wordt omschreven als een langspeelfilm, een documentaire of een animatiefilm bestemd om in de bioscoop te worden vertoond, een animatieserie of een documentaire voor televisie en die door de bevoegde diensten van de betrokken Gemeenschap zijn erkend als Europees werk zoals bedoeld in de richtlijn " Televisie zonder grenzen " van 3 oktober 1989 (89/552/EEG) en bekrachtigd door de Franse Gemeenschap, door de Vlaamse Gemeenschap en door het Brussels Gewest. De productie- en exploitatiekosten voor dit werk die in België gemaakt werden binnen een periode van ten

hoogste 18 maanden vanaf de datum van afsluiting van de raamovereenkomst voor de productie van een audiovisueel werk, moeten ten minste 150 % belopen van de totale sommen niet zijnde onder de vorm van leningen die in beginsel zijn aangewend voor de uitvoering van de raamovereenkomst met vrijstelling van winst.

Het totaal van de aangewende sommen uit leningen mag niet meer bedragen dan 40 % van de sommen die in beginsel zijn aangewend in uitvoering van de raamovereenkomst met vrijstelling van winst.

Het totaal van de door het geheel van de binnenlandse vennootschappen die de overeenkomst hebben afgesloten daadwerkelijk gestorte sommen in uitvoering van de raamovereenkomst met vrijstelling van winst mag niet meer bedragen dan 50 % van het totale budget van de kosten voor het erkend Belgisch audiovisueel werk en het daadwerkelijk voor de uitvoering van dat budget werd aangewend.

Via dit stelsel bekomt de investerende vennootschap een belastingvrijstelling op de winst, waardoor hij aangemoedigd wordt om in dit soort producten te investeren. De producent beschikt over een aangepaste financiering om zijn werk te realiseren.

Ook de Staat heeft er baat bij : 150% van de geïnvesteerde bedragen die geen lening zijn moeten in België besteed worden, wat zal leiden tot bijkomende werkgelegenheid in de betrokken sectoren, en via de sociale bijdragen en de belastingen de Staatskas zal spijzen.

2. Law text

FEDERALE OVERHEIDSDIENST KANSELARIJ VAN DE EERSTE MINISTER

22 DECEMBER 2003 - Programmawet (1) UITREKSELS: : TAX SHELTER (B. Staatsblad, 31 déc. 2003, Ed. I)Afdeling 5. - Wijziging van de artikelen 194ter en 416 van het Wetboek van de inkomstenbelastingen

1992, tot instelling van een fiscaal stelsel ter bevordering van de investering in de productie van audiovisuele werken

Art. 291. Artikel 194ter van hetzelfde Wetboek, ingevoegd bij de wet van 2 augustus 2002, wordt vervangen als volgt :

« Art. 194ter .

§ 1. Voor de toepassing van dit artikel wordt verstaan onder :

1° binnenlandse vennootschap voor de productie van audiovisuele werken:

- de vennootschap die als voornaamste doel de ontwikkeling en de productie van audiovisuele werken heeft;

- niet zijnde een televisieomroep of een onderneming die verbonden is met Belgische of buitenlandse televisieomroepen;

2° raamovereenkomst voor de productie van een audiovisueel werk: de basisovereenkomst gesloten, naargelang het geval, tussen een binnenlandse vennootschap voor de productie van audiovisuele werken, enerzijds, en één of meerdere binnenlandse vennootschappen en/of één of meerdere belastingplichtigen bedoeld in artikel 227, 2°, anderzijds, voor de financiering van de productie van een erkend Belgisch audiovisueel werk met vrijstelling van de belastbare winst

3° erkend Belgische audiovisueel werk:

- een langspeelfilm, een documentaire of een animatiefilm bestemd om in de bioscoop te worden vertoond, een animatieserie of een documentaire voor televisie en die door de bevoegde diensten van de betrokken gemeenschap zijn erkend als Europees werk zoals bedoeld in de richtlijn "Televisie zonder grenzen" van 3 oktober 1989 (89/552/EEG), gewijzigd bij richtlijn 97/36/EG van 30 juni 1997 en bekrachtigd door de Franse Gemeenschap op 4 januari 1999, door de Vlaamse Gemeenschap op 25 januari 1995 en door het Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest op 30 maart 1995;

- waarvoor de productie- en exploitatiekosten die in België werden gedaan binnen een periode van ten hoogste 18 maanden vanaf de datum van afsluiting van de raamovereenkomst voor de productie van een audiovisueel werk, ten minste 150 pct. belopen van de totale sommen, die, anders dan in de vorm van leningen, in beginsel zijn aangewend voor de uitvoering van de raamovereenkomst met

vrijstelling van winst overeenkomstig § 2; 4° de productie-en exploitatiekosten die in België werden gedaan: de exploitatiekosten en de financiële kosten waaruit beroepsinkomsten voortvloeien welke, ten name van de begunstigde, belastbaar zijn in de personenbelasting, in de vennootschapsbelasting of in de belasting van niet- inwoners, met uitzondering van de kosten vermeld in artikel 57 die niet worden verantwoord door individuele fiches en een samenvattende opgave, van de kosten vermeld in artikel 53, 9° en 10°, alsmede alle andere kosten die niet werden gedaan voor de productie of de exploitatie van het erkend werk.

In afwijking van het vorige lid, worden, wanneer de kosten, voor de begunstigde, de vergoeding van dienstverrichtingen vertegenwoordigen en wanneer de begunstigde een beroep doet op één of meerdere onderaannemers voor de verwezenlijking van deze dienstverrichtingen, deze kosten slechts als in België gedane kosten aangemerkt indien de vergoeding van de dienstverrichtingen van de onderaannemer of onderaannemers 10 pct. van de kosten niet overschrijdt. Deze voorwaarde wordt geacht te zijn vervuld wanneer de begunstigde zich hiertoe schriftelijk heeft verbonden, zowel ten aanzien van de vennootschap voor de productie als ten aanzien van de federale overheid.

Voor de berekening van het percentage bepaald in het vorige lid, wordt er geen rekening gehouden met de vergoedingen van de onderaannemers welke hadden kunnen worden beschouwd als in België gedane kosten indien deze onderaannemers rechtstreeks een contract zouden hebben aangegaan met de vennootschap voor de productie.

§ 2. Ten name van de vennootschap, niet zijnde een binnenlandse vennootschap voor de productie van audiovisuele werken, die in België een raamovereenkomst afsluit voor de productie van een erkend Belgisch audiovisueel werk, wordt de belastbare winst binnen de grenzen en onder de hierna gestelde voorwaarden vrijgesteld ten belope van 150 pct. van de door die vennootschap effectief betaalde sommen in uitvoering van de raamovereenkomst.

De in het eerste lid bedoelde sommen kunnen worden aangewend voor de uitvoering van de raamovereenkomst, hetzij door de toekenning van leningen, voor zover de vennootschap geen kredietinstelling is, hetzij door het verwerven van rechten verbonden aan de productie en de exploitatie van het audiovisueel werk.

§ 3. Per belastbaar tijdperk wordt de vrijstelling als bedoeld in § 2 verleend ten belope van een bedrag beperkt tot 50 pct., met een maximum van 750 000 EUR, van de belastbare gereserveerde winst van het belastbaar tijdperk vastgesteld vóór de samenstelling van de vrijgestelde reserve bedoeld in § 4. Indien een belastbaar tijdperk geen of onvoldoende winst oplevert om de sommen ter uitvoering van de raamovereenkomst te kunnen aanwenden, wordt de voor dat belastbaar tijdperk niet verleende vrijstelling achtereenvolgens overgedragen op de winst van de volgende belastbare tijdperken, waarbij de vrijstelling per belastbaar tijdperk nooit hoger mag zijn dan de in het vorige lid gestelde grenzen.

§ 4. De vrijstelling wordt slechts verleend en behouden wanneer :

1° de vrijgestelde winst op een afzonderlijke rekening van het passief van de balans geboekt is en blijft;

2° de vrijgestelde winst niet tot grondslag dient voor de berekening van enige beloning of toekenning;

3° de schuldvorderingen en de eigendomsrechten die werden verkregen bij het afsluiten of de uitvoering van de raamovereenkomst blijven behouden, zonder terugbetaling of retrocessie, in volle eigendom door de oorspronkelijke houder van deze rechten tot de verwezenlijking van het gereed product welke het afgewerkte audiovisueel werk is; de maximale duur van de onoverdraagbaarheid van de rechten welke voortvloeit uit hetgeen voorafgaat is evenwel beperkt tot een periode van 18 maanden vanaf de datum van het afsluiten van de raamovereenkomst bestemd voor de productie van een audiovisueel werk;

4° het totaal van de door het geheel van de binnenlandse vennootschappen of de Belgische inrichtingen van de belastingplichtigen bedoeld in artikel 227, 2°, die de overeenkomst hebben afgesloten daadwerkelijk gestorte sommen in uitvoering van de raamovereenkomst met vrijstelling van winst overeenkomstig § 2, niet meer bedraagt dan 50 pct. van het totale budget van de kosten voor het erkend Belgisch audiovisueel werk en het daadwerkelijk voor de uitvoering van dat budget werd aangewend;

5° het totaal van de sommen die ter uitvoering van de raamovereenkomst, in de vorm van leningen, zijn aangewend door het geheel van de binnenlandse vennootschappen of Belgische inrichtingen van de belastingplichtigen bedoeld in artikel 227, 2°, die de overeenkomst hebben gesloten, niet meer bedraagt dan 40 pct. van de sommen die ter uitvoering van de raamovereenkomst met vrijstelling van winst overeenkomstig § 2 zijn aangewend;

6° de vennootschap die de vrijstelling verzoekt een afschrift van de raamovereenkomst overlegt binnen de termijn bepaald voor het indienen van de aangifte in de inkomstenbelasting voor het belastbaar tijdperk, en het bij de aangifte voegt;

7° de vennootschap die aanspraak maakt op het behoud van de vrijstelling uiterlijk binnen twee jaar na de afsluiting van de raamovereenkomst voor de productie van een audiovisueel werk een document overlegt waarin de controle waarvan de binnenlandse vennootschap voor de productie van een erkend Belgisch audiovisueel werk afhangt, verklaart dat de voorwaarden inzake de kosten in België overeenkomstig § 1, 3° en 4°, voor de doeleinden voorzien in voornoemde raamovereenkomst, alsmede de voorwaarden en grenzen bepaald in 4° en 5° van deze paragraaf zijn nageleefd;

8° de binnenlandse vennootschap voor de productie van audiovisuele werken geen achterstallen heeft bij de Rijksdienst voor sociale zekerheid op het moment van het afsluiten van de raamovereenkomst;

9° de in 1° tot 5° van deze paragraaf bedoelde voorwaarden op een ononderbroken wijze worden nageleefd.

Ingeval één of andere van deze voorwaarden gedurende enig belastbaar tijdperk niet langer wordt nageleefd of ontbreekt, wordt de voorheen, vrijgestelde winst als winst van dat belastbaar tijdperk aangemerkt.

§ 5. De raamovereenkomst voor de productie van een audiovisueel werk bevat de volgende verplichte vermeldingen :

1° de benaming en het maatschappelijk doel van de binnenlandse vennootschap voor de productie van audiovisuele werken;

2° de benaming en het maatschappelijk doel van de binnenlandse vennootschappen of de Belgische inrichtingen van belastingplichtigen bedoeld in artikel 227, 2°, die de raamovereenkomst hebben gesloten met de in 1° bedoelde vennootschap;

3° het totaal van de met toepassing van § 2 aangewende sommen evenals de juridische vorm, met een gedetailleerde opgave per bedrag, van die aangewende sommen ten name van elke deelnemende vennootschap vermeld onder 2°;

4° de identificatie en de beschrijving van het erkend audiovisueel werk dat het voorwerp uitmaakt van de raamovereenkomst;

5° het budget van de uitgaven die nodig zijn voor het audiovisueel werk in kwestie, waarbij een onderscheid wordt gemaakt tussen het gedeelte dat ten laste wordt genomen door de binnenlandse vennootschap voor de productie van audiovisuele werken en het gedeelte dat gefinancierd wordt door elke binnenlandse vennootschap of Belgische inrichting van een belastingplichtige bedoeld in artikel

227, 2°, die aanspraak maakt op de vrijstelling bedoeld in § 2;

6° de overeengekomen wijze waarop de bedragen worden vergoed die, naar gelang van hun aard, worden aangewend bij de uitvoering van de raamovereenkomst;

7° de waarborg dat elke binnenlandse vennootschap of Belgische inrichting van een belastingplichtige bedoeld in artikel 227, 2°, geïdentificeerd overeenkomstig 2° geen Belgische of buitenlandse televisieomroep is en niet verbonden is met een dergelijke onderneming evenals dat de geldschieters geen kredietinstellingen zijn;

8° de verbintenis van de binnenlandse vennootschap voor de productie van audiovisuele werken :

- overeenkomstig § 1 in België uitgaven te doen ten belope van 150 pct. van het geïnvesteerde bedrag anders dan in de vorm van leningen;

- het definitieve bedrag dat in beginsel wordt aangewend tot uitvoering van de raamovereenkomst met vrijstelling van winst te beperken tot ten hoogste 50 pct. van het budget van de totale uitgaven van het erkend Belgisch audiovisueel werk voor alle betrokken binnenlandse vennootschappen en Belgische inrichtingen van belastingplichtigen bedoeld in artikel 227, 2°, en om alle overeenkomstig § 2 gestorte bedragen daadwerkelijk aan te wenden voor de uitvoering van dit budget;

- het totaal van de sommen die in de vorm van leningen zullen worden aangewend voor de uitvoering van de raamovereenkomst te beperken tot ten hoogste 40 pct. van de sommen die in beginsel zijn bestemd voor de uitvoering van de raamovereenkomst met vrijstelling van de winst voor alle betrokken binnenlandse vennootschappen en Belgische inrichtingen van belastingplichtigen bedoeld in artikel

227, 2°.

§ 6. De voorgaande bepalingen laten onverlet het recht van de vennootschap aanspraak te maken op de eventuele aftrek als beroepskosten van andere bedragen dan die vermeld in § 2 die eveneens besteed werden aan de productie van audiovisuele werken en dat binnen de voorwaarden vermeld in de artikelen 49 en volgende.

In afwijking van de artikelen 23, 48, 49 en 61, zijn kosten en verliezen, en ook waardeverminderingen, voorzieningen en afschrijvingen met betrekking tot, naargelang van het geval, de schuldvorderingen en de eigendoms- en exploitatierechten op het audiovisueel werk, die voortvloeien uit leningen of verrichtingen vermeld in § 2, niet aftrekbaar als beroepskosten of -verliezen, noch vrijgesteld. » .

Art. 292. Artikel 416, tweede lid, van hetzelfde Wetboek, ingevoegd bij de wet van 2 augustus 2002, wordt vervangen als volgt :

« In afwijking van artikel 414 en onverminderd de toepassing van de artikelen 444 en 445, is op het gedeelte van de belasting dat proportioneel verband houdt met de gereserveerde sommen welke belastbaar worden overeenkomstig artikel 194ter, § 4, tweede lid, tengevolge van het niet naleven van de voorwaarden als bedoeld in § 4, eerste lid, 3° tot 7°, van hetzelfde artikel, een nalatigheidsinterest verschuldigd, berekend overeenkomstig artikel 414, vanaf 1 januari van het jaar waarnaar het aanslagjaar wordt genoemd waarvoor de vrijstelling werd toegestaan. » .

Art. 293. De artikelen 291 en 292 zijn van toepassing vanaf aanslagjaar 2004.

3. Sales figures video products

CONSUMER ELECTRONICS ASSOCIATION
UNIT SALES TO DEALERS OF SELECTED VIDEO PRODUCTS
NEWS RELEASE
December
(Units)
For Release: January 14, 2002

	December		
	2001	2000	% Change
Analog Direct View Televisions	2,572,654	2,542,950	1.2
Analog TV/VCR Combinations	521,855	415,355	25.6
Analog Projection Televisions*	98,117	142,452	-31.1
VCR Decks **	1,356,160	1,483,072	-8.6
Camcorders	453,982	543,547	-16.5
DVD Players ***	1,862,772	1,303,091	43.0
Total Video Products	6,865,540	6,430,467	6.8
	Year to Date Sales (52 Weeks)		
	2001	2000	% Change
Analog Direct View Televisions	21,166,862	24,175,344	-12.4
Analog TV/VCR Combinations	4,630,033	4,963,861	-6.7
Analog Projection Televisions*	933,086	1,215,896	-23.3
VCR Decks **	14,910,476	23,071,541	-35.4
Camcorders	5,283,807	5,848,023	-9.6
DVD Players ***	12,706,584	8,498,545	49.5
Total Video Products	59,630,848	67,773,210	-12.0

Supplement: Dollar Sales of Television

(Thousands of Dollars)

	November		
	2001	2000	% Change
Analog (TV/VCR, Projection, and Direct View)	671,507	788,817	-14.9
Digital (DTV, HDTV)	346,920	190,921	81.7
Total Television Sales	1,018,428	979,738	3.9
	Year to Date Sales (47 Weeks)		
	2001	2000	% Change
Analog (TV/VCR, Projection, and Direct View)	6,077,171	7,653,898	-20.6
Digital (DTV, HDTV)	2,293,289	(S) 1,204,322	90.4
Total Television Sales	8,370,460	8,858,220	-5.5

Information contained in this report reflects total market statistics for products sold in the United States regardless of the brand name or country of origin.

* Does not include HDTV projection televisions

** Does not include Digital VCRs.

*** DVD/LD Combi Players are included exclusively with DVD Players.

(S) Year to date will not equal the sum of months due to CEA security restrictions

Source: Consumer Electronics Association

2500 Wilson Blvd.

Arlington, VA 22201

For further information please contact Jenny Miller at (703) 907-7079

4. Studios Expand DVD Marketing Concepts

Billboard Magazine

By JILL PESSELNICK

May 25, 2002

LOS ANGELES - When The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring streets Aug. 6 on DVD, the New Line Home Entertainment release won't simply offer fans the now-standard behind-the-scenes footage, commentaries, and featurettes. It will also include a 10-minute preview, narrated by director Peter Jackson, of The Two Towers—the next theatrical release in the trilogy, which comes out in December. It is only the latest high-profile example of how a growing number of studios are taking advantage of DVD's multiple movie-marketing opportunities. From upcoming movie teasers to ongoing DVD-ROM content, the popularity of DVD has forged an expanding synergy between the promoting of franchise titles by studios' home video and theatrical marketing teams and like-minded properties that many believe can drive sales.

As Lions Gate Home Entertainment director of worldwide DVD operations Zachary Hunchar notes, "We all get paid from the same place, so anything one division can do for the other helps the company."

New Line VP of theatrical marketing Kevin Shelby concurs, adding, "Whereas be-fore, home video was sometimes a lower priority, now we see home video as an important tool by which to enhance our efforts and increase our chances for a strong-performing theatrical release."

The strength of DVD is undeniable. Recent first-week DVD sales include 2.5 million units for DreamWorks Home Entertainment's Shrek and 3.7 million units for Buena Vista Home Entertainment's Pearl Harbor. As Lord of the Rings demonstrates, one way to tie video and theatrical product together is by moving away from the traditional trailers most viewers are used to seeing on VHS tapes and instead making the trailers special-content features themselves.

"Contrary to popular belief, not everyone in the world went to the theater to see Lord of the Rings," New Line's Shelby says. "[With The Two Towers preview segment on DVD], we hope to reach a whole new segment of the populace who might not have the propensity to go to the movies, thus compelling them to go to the theaters in December [when Towers is released]."

This preview also helps keep the franchise in people's minds throughout the year, notes Mike Mulvihill, VP of DVD content for New Line's home entertainment division. "One thing that is really important to us with this property is to keep it fresh through the course of its three-year release pattern. Home entertainment is playing a key role in that, carrying it from being an Oscar winner through to being an event title on DVD in August and a unique title again in November and then the Towers theatrical release in December." A separate, extended-edition DVD of The Fellowship of the Ring will be available Nov. 12; the final part of the trilogy will hit theaters in December 2003.

As with Lord of the Rings, Warner Home Video is offering a preview of the sequel Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets on its May 28 DVD release of Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone that also includes comments from the film's producer, David Heyman, and its director, Chris Columbus. This is expected to keep interest in the franchise high, as well as potentially generate box-office dollars.

Warner VP of DVD marketing Michael Radiloff says, "Here you had a 12-month window between the two movies. Really, the video release was viewed as a bridge to keep the Potter world alive during that time." The next Potter film comes out this Christmas season.

Such DVD previews are more consumer-friendly than VHS trailers. Studios can plug theatrical releases without being too intrusive, because DVD viewers can choose whether to watch trailer materials and can do so at any time. But trailers on VHS tapes follow a linear pattern: Viewers must watch or fast forward past them to get to the film, so a 10-minute preview can be considered too invasive.

Non-franchise trailers are also becoming more prevalent. Such studios as Lions Gate report that non-franchise film previews on its DVD product have generated interest in upcoming films from consumers and reviewers alike. The company featured a trailer of its teen-oriented theatrical film The Rules of Attraction (Sept. 27), starring James Van Der Beek and Jessica Biel, on its DVD release O, which appeals to a similar demographic. Lions Gate's Hunchar says he has "seen some instances

online of reviewers that have reviewed our [home video] product and have also spoken very positively about the trailer. They've written that they are looking forward to this film coming out." Such bonus mentions create more impressions for the forthcoming release.

While VHS tapes have included (and continue to include) trailers similar to the featured film, Hunchar explains that it is the "perceived value" of a DVD that makes trailers on that product more effective. "If you put a disc out that has a couple of trailers plus commentaries, deleted scenes, and all that stuff, it seems like it's a bigger value to the consumer."

DVD-ROM OPTIONS

In addition to the trailering and preview features, the product's online and ROM capabilities are increasingly tying in to forthcoming movies. A noteworthy recent example is the inclusion of a preview for the next Star Wars film, Attack of the Clones—which opened May 16—on Fox's DVD release of Star Wars Episode 1: The Phantom Menace (Oct. 16, 2001). The DVD was used as a key to unlock a Web site featuring the trailer material.

Universal Studios Home Video debuted its new DVD-ROM feature, Total Axess, with the April 9 release of the Spy Game Collector's Edition DVD. By inserting the DVD into a computer's DVD-ROM drive, it can link to an exclusive Web site for viewing special bonus materials and trailers of upcoming Universal theatrical titles. Such features as Warner Bros.' online Harry Potter trading-card game (accessible only via the new DVD) have also been making their debuts. Radiloff says, "The great thing about ROM is that content that's on a Web site can be changing, enhanced, and added to, whereas the material on the DVD, unless you come out with a special edition with more features, once you send it off to replication, [it is] done. ROM offers a lot more flexibility."

While both ROM and trailer features are largely under the purview of studio content teams, film directors are also recognizing their potential value. Jessie Nelson, director of I Am Sam—starring Academy Award-nominated actor Sean Penn—says, "I'm sure that [teasing future theatrical projects on DVD] is the next wave where DVD can go. I'm sure

I'll also begin to open my mind to things [such as DVD-ROM content] as they start unfolding." (I Am Sam comes to DVD June 18.)

TIMING RELEASES

Home-video departments have increasingly been working to time their releases to best coincide with consumers' interest in a particular upcoming theatrical title. This can take the form of back-catalog releases or of reworkings of existing product into special-edition DVDs. For example, Warner Home Video is releasing the first five episodes of '70s TV cartoon Scooby-Doo on DVD June 4, and it is also premiering three long-form animated Scooby movies on DVD: Scooby-Doo Goes Hollywood, Scooby-Doo and the Ghoul School, and Scooby-Doo's Creepiest Capers. These titles, which feature an array of DVD-ROM and other special features, will fall into the marketplace just before the June 14 theatrical release of Warner Bros.' Scooby-Doo live-action movie.

"As soon as we know that a movie is green-lit or going into production, we work with the heads of [theatrical] marketing," Warner VP of family entertainment marketing Ewa Martinoff says. "We're going to offer free tickets to the movie inside specially marked packages. This is a direct, synergistic effort. It's also important to develop new [DVD] features, especially for kids. They are going to be into the new trends, and we want to make sure that we are on top of that."

Columbia TriStar Home Entertainment is taking advantage of new theatrical releases by marketing two reworked special-edition DVDs of Men in Black and Stuart Little on Tuesday (21) that contain all-new special features and trailers for their respective sequels. (Men in Black II is due July 3 in theaters; Stuart Little 2, July 19.) The new Men in Black DVD contains trailers for Stuart Little 2 and Spider-Man. Stuart Little includes a free ticket to see the new movie.

FILMMAKING SYNERGIES

The relationships that need to exist between home video and theatrical departments so trailer and DVD-ROM features can be created are now being generated far earlier in the filmmaking process. Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment senior VP of marketing Peter Staddon says, "The studios as a whole are definitely looking at home entertainment now and saying, 'Yes, this is an important part of the overall property.' What's

happening is that people aren't thinking about the [theatrical film] and that the DVD will just come out later. It's becoming a part of a seamless rollout of the property."

With DVD grosses often outpacing opening-weekend box offices—as Staddon notes, "On X-Men, the opening theatrical weekend was [approximately] $57 million, and we did $65 million in revenue on the first weekend the DVD came out"—missed synergistic opportunities can have a heavy impact.

"These opportunities are a much bigger deal than [they were] before," Artisan Home Entertainment senior VP of marketing Hosea Belcher agrees. "For instance, with Jonah, the VeggieTales movie that is coming up for us, we are partnered at the hip with [theatrical]—even though the video release isn't until 2003 and the theatrical release is this fall. We are working closely with them to take advantage of every synergistic opportunity in terms of promotional partners, in terms of what goes on the DVD, trying to secure partners for both the theatrical and DVD, how we're going to handle publicity, what we're going to dole out for theatrical and save for DVD. It's definitely a joint effort."

DVD AND THE BOX OFFICE

The burgeoning opportunities linking DVD to upcoming theatrical releases begs the question, Do these features have any impact on DVD or box-office receipts? While hard numbers are difficult to come by, studio executives and retailers believe the answer is yes. Artisan's Belcher thinks that theatrical trailers can induce people to buy new DVDs. "You probably can't isolate it, but I know anecdotally and from some research that we have done that overall, these things play a part. My personal feeling is that it's not going to convert people who really hate the movie. But I do believe that there are a set of people out there that I call 'on the fence.'

They may say, 'I was thinking of buying this movie, but wow, if I can get a glimpse of the next one, then OK, I'll buy it.' Can I quantify it? No. But I do intuitively in my gut believe it."

John Thrasher, VP of video for the West Sacramento, Calif.-based Tower Records chain, believes that including theatrical previews can directly influence sales of a particular DVD. "For the sequel efforts and big-budget

pictures, these things are very effective. It is difficult to quantify, but I think it does drive people [into stores]."

Likewise, previews on DVD may also influence the theatrical box office. New Line's Shelby explains, "The inclusion of such a feature increases awareness and interest in a theatrical release. You would hope that interest would translate into box-office dollars."

DVD CONCERNS

While most home-video companies concur that synergies with theatrical films (either through the timing of product releases or through the inclusion of material on DVDs) will continue to expand, some are concerned that DVD quality could suffer as a result.

MGM Home Entertainment senior VP of marketing Alex Carloss fears that cross-promotional materials could ultimately ruin a film's quality. "Any space you devote to all of these special features is digital space that is not dedicated to the quality of the transfer," he says. "Our approach is to give [consumers] what they are looking for, which is the best possible picture and best possible sound first and foremost. Then, give them deleted scenes and alternative endings. And once you've dealt with that, if there's still room, then you start dealing with additional space you can use to cross-promote."

Directors, too, can object to including these features. David Naylor, a DVD producer who has worked on a variety of discs (including Die Hard II and Die Hard III, On the Waterfront, and Dr. Strangelove, as well as season sets for Buffy the Vampire Slayer, The Simpsons, and The X-Files) says that "some directors are very particular about what goes on their DVD. It's the responsibility of the studio to be somewhat deferential to a director of a film. It makes total marketing sense to [include previews], but you don't want to incur the wrath of the director by doing it."

Additional features like DVD-ROM may also not appeal to the common denominator. "I think a lot of people want to experience the DVD in one box," Fox's Staddon says. "It's going to be an exceptional circumstance that will make them get up, walk over to the computer, load up the disc, and then watch it. Personally, I don't think we've found how to make DVD-ROM content work as effectively as it can. With the example of Star Wars, you're dealing with a very loyal and very fanatical fan base that

would crawl across broken glass to see a new trailer." Many note that the DVD-ROM solution will be when DVD set-top boxes have Internet connections themselves. "That's when you're going to see that kind of entertainment explode," Buena Vista VP of brand marketing Gordon Ho predicts. "We're going to provide those vehicles. But capability is one thing, and what consumers are actually desiring is another. For now, I think there's a chicken and egg thing going on. It's really going to be incumbent on the consumers seeing if there is sufficient value for them to go beyond what they're used to doing." Despite their qualms, studio executives conclude that while obviously benefiting their respective companies, these promotional features and the growing relationship among divisions are also satisfying consumers who are interested in entertainment titles. "I think the consumer is getting better product and better value as a result," Staddon says. "If we were just milking the consumer and not paying attention to what we're putting out and not delivering value, then it would be a very short-term strategy. I don't think that is actually happening."

5. Web DVD

Making Web DVD Happen.
By: Bryant Frazer
Tape-Disc Business
10/01/01

Abstract
Developers have been hamstrung, not just by a lack of compelling applications, but by an absence of clear programming standards. • Columbia TnStar Home Video's recent special-edition release of Lawrence of Arabia, for example, includes features that simultaneously examine the film, its making, and the history of the Middle East using graphics and mouse-based interfaces, Of course, those features don't require a Web component to be compelling. • To goose Web DVD development, InterActual launched its Inventor Connection, a subscription program that offers client licenses, development utilities and support and training at multiple levels.
Abstract by FireSpout, Inc.

Full Text
Developers struggle to set standards and reconcile compatibility issues.

Since the format's birth, industry pundits and pioneers have made the case for the Web-connected DVD. Finally -- there is a way to combine high-quality audio and video (on disc) and e-commerce (on the Internet). Who wouldn't be excited?

But some of the early enthusiasm for "Web DVD" has dissipated. Developers have been hamstrung, not just by a lack of compelling applications, but by an absence of clear programming standards. Despite early predictions that the family PC would become an important platform for content delivered via DVD-ROM, few software publishers have seen a good reason to migrate. That doesn't mean that DVD professionals have given up on the concept. Many forward-thinking producers still believe Web DVD is the future and progress continues to be made. "There are really no standards, and that's a drag," says Ralph LaBarge, managing partner of AlphaDVD, a DVD development studio in Gambrills, MD. Among AlphaDVD's Web-enabled titles are Mars: The Red Planet and StarGaze, both of which are tied to Web sites that can control playback of the DVD content.

Making Movies 'PCFriendly'

LaBarge is widely acknowledged as a trailblazer, but the most prominent Web DVD applications to date have been Hollywood movie titles -- the sort of discs most likely to be

booted up in a consumer DVD-ROM drive. New Line Home Video has perhaps been most aggressive, but other studios -- notably Warner Home Video and MGM Home Entertainment -- have experimented with live online chats synchronized to DVD content. Even smaller publishers commonly embed Web links in their titles.

InterActual Technologies is making these releases possible. It created PCFriendly, a software program that plays DVD-Video content on a PC and handles interactivity and Web links. Bundled with DVD-Video titles users were given the option of installing the program when using the disc for the first time. A revamped version, **InterActual** Player 2.0, was released earlier this year.

When the movie was the main thing and interactive elements just gravy, PCFriendly and **InterActual** Player became de facto standards. Though Hollywood's idea of interactive extras has been largely confined to script-to-screen comparisons and rudimentary Web links, innovation continues to take place. Columbia TnStar Home Video's recent special-edition release of Lawrence of Arabia, for example, includes features that simultaneously examine the film, its making, and the history of the Middle East using graphics and mouse-based interfaces, Of course, those features don't require a Web component to be compelling. And sometimes Hollywood seems to get it backward. Paramount's Mission: Impossible II, for example, requires consumers to download a low-resolution QuickTime file to see the film's theatrical trailer.

'The Poor Man's Web DVD'

InterActual's software is probably the best-known Web DVD tool due to its Hollywood roots, but developers, particularly producers of corporate DVD titles, have other options. Microsoft's MSWebDVD is a plain-vanilla Windows strategy that handles all aspects of DVD-Video playback and navigation, including menu selection, special features, and directional buttons.

"The poor man's Web DVD is the Microsoft API, because it's free," says LaBarge, who has developed titles using it and says it works "pretty well." Other producers, such as Luke Livingston of Creative Convergence in Acworth, GA, laud it as a solid open standard. "[MSWebDVD] is all HTML and browser-based. What I like about it is that it's open, simple to use, and it's easy to go get a DVD PC that will use all this technology," he says.

InterActual, though, may be on the way to dominance. The basic technology has been incorporated into authoring systems from Sonic Solutions. A rival system from Spruce Technologies was recently swallowed up when that company was purchased by Apple Computer -- which has, to date, failed to offer much in the way of Web DVD support.

To goose Web DVD development, **InterActual** launched its Inventor Connection, a subscription program that offers client licenses, development utilities and support and training at multiple levels. In a move aimed at corporate developers, **InterActual** last month instituted a new "QuickStart" level requiring a fee of $1000 per year and a software license fee of $500 for replication runs of 2000 units or less.

Who Speaks For The Industry?

Even though producers have tried to settle on standards, efforts to prescribe working methods for Web DVD developers have been unsuccessful. LaBarge was one of the leading voices in an informal industry group called DVD Haiku that tried to hash out a single, workable specification for Web DVD production. Meanwhile, the DVD Forum established an ad-hoc group chaired by **InterActual** itself to investigate advanced interactivity and Internet connectivity as part of the DVD-Video specification. "We changed [DVD Haiku's] approach to trying to influence the Forum rather than publishing an independent recommendation:' LaBarge explains.

The main question for the entertainment industry is how to extend Web connectivity to set-top DVD players. The DVD Forum is reportedly considering software from **InterActual**, a system being promoted by Matsushita Electric, and also MPEG-4 as potential standards. MPEG-4 is gaining ground thanks to the efforts of companies such as iVast in Santa Clara, CA, which demonstrated at this year's NAB trade show that a single MPEG-4 transmission can include upward of 100 separate streams, includ ing video, 2D and 3D objects, pop-up menus, digital rights management mformation, surround audio, and more. But MPEG-4 remains a largely unformed and unproven technology, with few development tools available.

To CD Or To DVD?

As the DVD Forum evaluates issues on the consumer side, some Web DVD developers have gone ahead with corporate projects. New York City's Zuma Digital recently completed a project for clothing giant Guess that germinated at a record company that wanted a project demo to combine music videos by recording artist (and Guess spokesmodel) Tyrese with Guess marketing campaigns. Zuma eventually burned the Tyrese/Guess project to an 8 cm mini CD-R, which wound up influencing Guess itself to order a total of 10,000 discs in both CD and DVD versions. The DVD version, with its high-quality video, was solely for internal use, while the CD was handed out to customers at in-store appearances by Tyrese.

The main difference between the two versions of the project is video quality. Users watching the DVD version can click on an article of clothing while the video stream is playing to link to a product information screen with more details and an "order" button. Clicking that button links back to a live page from the Guess Web site selling the item being showcased on-

screen. On the CD, viewers see product information listed below the video window with a picture of the item off to the left, and can click on the image of the product itself to reach the e-commerce links. The disc also includes links to a "VIP Lounge" at the Guess Web site, where user information and demographics are collected.

The DVD was created using Sonic DVD Creator and the standalone PCFriendly application separately, while the CD was built using Katabounga, a QuickTime-based multimedia authoring software package. At all times, Zuma sought to maintain key design features of Guess's Web site.

Livingston says the visually seamless integration of Web-style content and DVD-based multimedia is key to the Web DVD experience. "We integrate the design of the DVD window into the HTML," he says. "You can't see the borders of the DVD object -- the graphics transition from HTML into the Active X object to create one appearance. It's not a clunky video window in an HTML page.

"I can't wait to start integrating things like flash and animated HTML," Livingston continues. "Because the reaction time for DVD is instantaneous, you could have flash information that works together with the DVD, so that you could have 3-D animations pop up in the middle of your Web browser."

Livingston's Web DVD work to date includes a prototype of a distance-learning application for a foodservice company. Typically, training materials are delivered to branch locations on VHS tapes so that employees can pop them into VCRs and learn how to prepare specific dishes and use the kitchen equipment. "There is no way to capture and track that off-line learning," Livingston explains. "WebDVD sticks with the same paradigm of media-rich training, but captures that learning and tracks it."

A Solution For Today And Tomorrow

Looking forward, the possibilities are endless. As DVD becomes more ubiquitous, Livingston sees HTML-editing programs like FrontPage incorporating Web DVD functions, making applications that require specialized experience today a snap to author. For his own part, Livingston says Web DVD is the solution to a problem that has dogged multimedia producers -- the question of how to maintain video quality in online applications.

"Maybe within eight or 10 years everybody will have big fat pipes coming into their house and will be able to cache MPEG-2 in their home servers, and the DVD format might not be the way to deliver it," Livingston admits. "But this is a great intermediary step, and it's important to tell clients that this is here to stay for several years.

6. De toekomst van ITV (Dutch)

Michel Depière

Waar staat interactieve televisie over vijf jaar, tien jaar, twintig jaar? Gaat ITV meer zijn dan TV⁺ met een uitgebreidde teletekst en een internetaansluiting? Dit zijn vragen die we moeten bespreken als het gaat over de toekomst van het nieuwe medium. Persoonlijk ben ik tot de conclusie gekomen dat er drie factoren aanwezig moeten zijn om een innoverend product tot het grote publiek te kunnen brengen: techniek, geld en acceptatie.

Het eerste onderdeel, de techniek, staat op dit moment op een punt dat we praktisch alles kunnen doen met het medium. Er valt zelfs bijna niet meer te spreken over televisie, maar eerder over een kruisbestuiving tussen internet en traditionele media. De ideeën die men heeft kunnen grotendeels uitgewerkt worden. Het grote onderzoek met BBCi heeft deze mogelijkheden onderzocht en tot op bepaalde hoogte in praktijk gebracht. De techniek staat voor niets.

Geld is essentiëel. We leven nu eenmaal in een kapitalistische maatschappij die centen, boven alles, waardeert. Zonder financiële ondersteuning kunnen we nergens komen. Om een innovatie als ITV in gang te kunnen zetten en nog te onderhouden ook, is geld nodig, veel geld. Waar andere sectoren grote problemen hebben om de touwtjes aan elkaar te knopen ziet het er voor het nieuwe medium veel rooskleuriger uit. Het Mekka van het gouden kalf, Wall Street, voorziet een grote toekomst voor ITV. Het zou de revolutie moeten zijn die het internet had kunnen zijn. De *global village* komt nog maar eens een stap dichterbij. Volgens Professor Enrico Menduni en Arianna Basolli het beschreven in hun studie van hun experiment zijn er vier grote mogelijkheden. De test, die ze uitvoerden in opdracht van de gemeenteraad van Siena, in Italië, gaan specifiek over het dichter brengen van de politiek van de gemeente bij de inwonders ervan. De toekomst die zij zagen hield de volgende punten in:

- Direct contact tussen de gemeenteraad en het publiek

- Multimedia uitwisseling tussen alle inwoners
- E-bussiness
- Specifieke reclame, gepersonaliseerd naar de individuële persoon.

Hoewel de beweegreden voor het experiment heel gericht zijn, kunnen we toch een trend zien in hun beoogde doelstellingen. Doelstellingen die ze, zelfs beter dan verwacht, inlosten. Door ITV wordt de wereld weer een stukje kleiner. Dit natuurlijk op de best mogelijke manier. Mensen worden dichterbij elkaar gebracht. Informatie uitwisseling gaat weer eens wat gemakkelijker. En ook de geldschieters zien een mooi plaatje ontwaren in, toch wel, economisch mindere tijden. De resultaten schetsen een heel rooskleurige toekomst.

Met twee van de drie voorwaarden voor een *revolutie* voldaan, komen we aan een heel belangrijk item, zelfs het belangrijkste als je het mij zou vragen. Sociale acceptatie is niet te onderschatten. Een technologie als WAP zou vijf jaar geleden de wereld op zijn kop moeten zetten. Werkelijk mobiel internet, informatie in je binnenzak, en ga zo maar door. Maar de echte revolutie bleef uit. Hoewel WAP een grote meerwaarde kon brengen en het geld aanwezig was horen we er vandaag de dag nog bitter weinig over. Waar is het dan mis gegaan? Het geld was er en de techniek was optimaal. Alleen de sociale acceptatie was niet aanwezig. De modale gsm-gebruiker was niet gewoon aan de techniek. Alles was te ingewikkeld. En waarom je gsm gebruiken als gratis internet naar je hoofd wordt gegooid als slagroomtaarten in een Laurel en Hardy filmpje. Het publiek zag het nut niet van het medium.

Het belang van sociale acceptatie is niet te onderschatten. De hamvraag op dit moment is of ITV er even *goed* gaat ingaan als WAP. Het onderzoeksteam van de BBCi en dat in Siena is heel positief. Daar kunnen we niet onderuit. Het italiaanse team voerde onderzoek uit in een heel gerichte sectie van de menselijke geest. Het wou de politiek naar de mensen brengen. Die reden bleek groot genoeg te zijn om de inwoners van Siena te inspireren om gebruik te maken van het nieuwe medium.

BBC heeft een lange traditie van innoveren en heeft een grote basis om op te bouwen. Dit zijn factoren die in het voordeel spelen van de mediagigant. Zelfs als het nu nog mis zou gaan, dan kunnen ze het zich

veroorloven omdat net als de VRT, de BBC een overheidsgefundeerde instelling is. De stiff upperlip van de britten zou het begeven als ze zouden moeten toegeven dat een initiatief van hen, de mist in zou gaan.

Een voorwaarde voor het doorzetten van ITV is dus een risicokapitaal waarop men kan terugvallen in het geval dat het niet zou lopen hoe men hoopt. Dit impliceert dat alleen grote bedrijven de mogelijkheid hebben om deze mediarevolutie op poten te zetten. Bij multinationals gaat het zonder twijfel altijd over geld. Daarmee kan je als bedrijf twee kanten uit.

Je kan het grote publiek aanspreken en zodoende *gemakkelijke* programma's brengen. Dit moet je dan gradueel aanbrengen. Televisie is traditioneel een passief medium. Interactie inbrengen zal dus een grote aanpassing vragen van het publiek. Voor de overgang te vergemakkelijken zouden we drie stappen moeten doorlopen:

- Eerste fase: TV$^+$ met als basis het televisietoestel. Hier heb je geen antennes meer, kan je meer kanalen aanbieden en is de kwaliteit van het beeld veel beter. De vraag hier is of de inhoudelijke kwaliteit van de programma's kan volgen. Door de hoeveelheid aan kanalen slaan we een weg in met meer programmamakers waarbij het moelijk wordt om een standaard te zetten.
- Tweede fase: het medium, gebaseerd op een pc. Men bied een goedkope permanente connectie aan, zorgen voor een grotere bandbreedte en bieden in het algemeen veel mogelijkheden aan. Maar gaan het *traditionele* publiek voor een pc willen zitten om naar tv te kijken?
- Derde fase: dit is het vergevorderde stadium van ITV. Ze integreert de twee vorige concepten in één. Je krijgt een digitale hub. Maar hier is de sociale acceptatie onzeker. Daarom is het belangrijk om de vorige twee stappen te doorlopen. Gaat het publiek een werkinstrument als een computer en de ontspanning die het krijgt van een televisie kunnen combineren.

De tweede mogelijkheid waar we op afstevenen is de diversiteit van het publiek te bespelen. Ideaal zou hier zijn dat er een *kanaal* is voor elke kijker. Iedereen zijn eigen programmatie. Persoonlijk weet ik wel niet of

dat een goede richting is om uit te gaan. Op deze manier ga je het eerder asociale karakter van de televisie in de hand werken. Individualisering van keuzes kan op maatschappelijk vlak resulteren in vervreemding van je vrienden. Toegegeven: dit is een extreme mogelijkheid. Maar zelfs als het niet zo ver gaat maar wel in die richting is het aangegeven om er rekening mee te houden.

Om te concluderen zijn er enkele belangrijke gegevens die onthouden moeten worden. Ten eerste dat er twee op drie van de voorwaarden voor de creatieve revolutie zijn voldaan. Dit is zeker niet slecht. De derde reden, sociale acceptatie, is een werk in uitvoering. Gradueel komen we er wel en een mooie toekomst ligt in het vizier.

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