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FACULTY OF ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING

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MULTIMEDIA SYSTEMS AND APPLICATIONS

(ECE551)

CASE STUDY (ANIMATION)

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INTRODUCTION

In February 2001, Mr. Bean was revived to form part of an animated cartoon series,[37] with Rowan Atkinson reprising his role as the title character providing references for all of Bean's animated actions. Much like the live-action series, the animated series features little dialogue; although some words are spoken, most is either little soundbites or mumbling. The cartoon introduced a list of new characters, alongside regulars in the live-action (such as Teddy, and Irma Gobb), including an unpleasant landlady of Mr. Bean, Mrs. Wicket, and her evil one-eyed cat, Scrapper. Other characters' voices are provided by Jon Glover, Rupert Degas, Gary Martin and Lorelei King.[38]

Between 2002-2004, 63 episodes were broadcast, each consisting of 2 stories. In 2015, CITV commissioned a brand new series of episodes.[39] The new series amended the format, in which some episodes featured stories where Bean had more dialogue than he normally did. 52 episodes were broadcast between 2015-2016.

BACKGROUND

The character of Mr. Bean was developed while Rowan Atkinson was studying for his master's degree in electrical engineering at The Queen's College, Oxford. A sketch featuring Bean was performed at the Edinburgh Fringe in the early 1980s.[3] A similar character called Robert Box, played by Atkinson himself, appeared in the one-off 1979 ITV sitcom Canned Laughter, which also featured routines used in the feature film in 1997.[5]

One of Bean's earliest appearances occurred at the "Just for Laughs" comedy festival in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, in 1987. When programme coordinators were scheduling him into the festival programme, Atkinson insisted that he perform on the French-speaking bill rather than the English-speaking programme. Having no French dialogue in his act at all, programme coordinators could not understand why Atkinson wanted to perform on the French bill instead. As it turned out, Atkinson's act at the festival was a test platform for the Mr. Bean character, and Atkinson wanted to see how his character's physical comedy would fare on an international stage with a non-English speaking audience.[6]

The character's name was not decided until after the first programme had been produced; a number of other vegetable-influenced names, such as "Mr. Cauliflower", were explored.[7] Atkinson cited the earlier comedy character Monsieur Hulot, created by French comedian and director Jacques Tati, as an influence on the character.[8] Stylistically, Mr. Bean is also very similar to early silent films, relying purely upon physical comedy, with Mr. Bean speaking very little dialogue (although like other live-action TV series of the time, it features a laugh track). This has allowed the series to be sold worldwide without any significant changes to dialogue.[6][9] In November 2012, Atkinson told The Daily Telegraph of his intentions to retire the character, stating that "someone in their 50s being childlike becomes a little sad."[10][11] However, in 2016 Atkinson said he would never retire playing the beloved Mr Bean. [12]

CHARACTERS

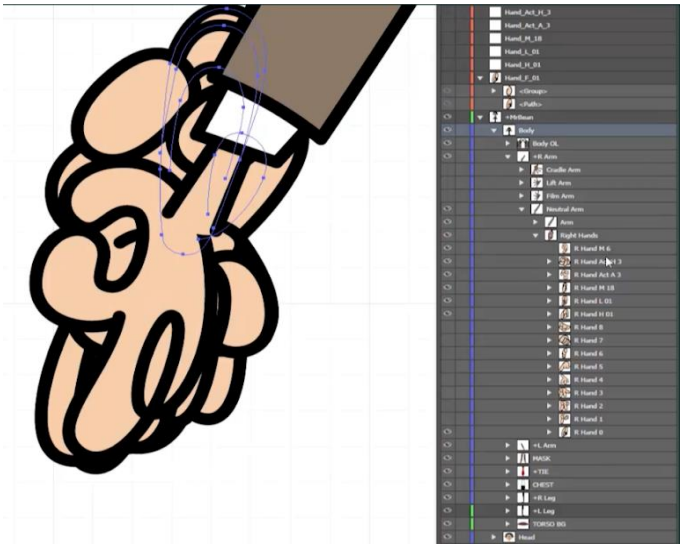
- Mr. Bean (voiced by Rowan Atkinson) - the title character who serves as the main protagonist of the series. He wants every environment around him to be clean and out of trouble.
- Teddy - Mr Bean's lifelong best friend. As a stuffed companion, Mr. Bean assumes Teddy is alive.
- Mrs. Julia Wicket (voiced by Sally Grace) - Mr. Bean's demeaning landlady, an old woman who occasionally serves as the main antagonist. She is the owner of the evil one eyed cat named Scrapper. She is rarely nice to Bean. Her favourite TV show is wrestling.
- Irma Gobb (voiced by Matilda Ziegler) - Mr. Bean's girlfriend. She, is in love sometimes with other guys but Mr. Bean tries to stop her. She has a teddy name Lottie.
- Mr Bean's Mini - Mr. Bean's loved green Mini. It is green as seen throughout the whole series, including the live action episodes (except for the first episode in the live action version, which was orange, and destroyed after a stunt). The plate number of his car is "STE 952R".

TYPE OF ANIMATED USED

The hapless hero Mr Bean has made us laugh for 27 years. Following the successful live action comedy series in 2001, Mr Bean launched a classic animated series and is currently the largest TV entertainment brand on Facebook with over 70 million fans. Recently, the team behind Mr Bean at Endemol Shine Group, worked with Adobe and the Adobe Character Animator CC (Beta) team to enable for the first time the animated Mr Bean to have ever interacted live with his fans. Animation technology has come a long way from hand drawn sketches. New technologies, like Adobe Character Animator, are making it possible to animate faster than ever before, but that certainly doesn't mean animation is an easy task.

The animated Mr Bean is quirky, but highly detailed. He isn't famous for long-winded conversation. Instead, he is known for his over-exaggerated body movements and facial expressions. With this is mind, the Mr Bean designers knew they had a challenging task ahead of them. They needed to keep the quality of the animation as faithful to the Mr Bean character as possible but also animate Mr Bean on the fly, without a script, with millions of fans watching live. With these design challenges, the team turned to a game of charades to interact with the audience.

Illustrator CC was used to create the various hand shapes used in the charades game.



1. Creating simple but powerful animation

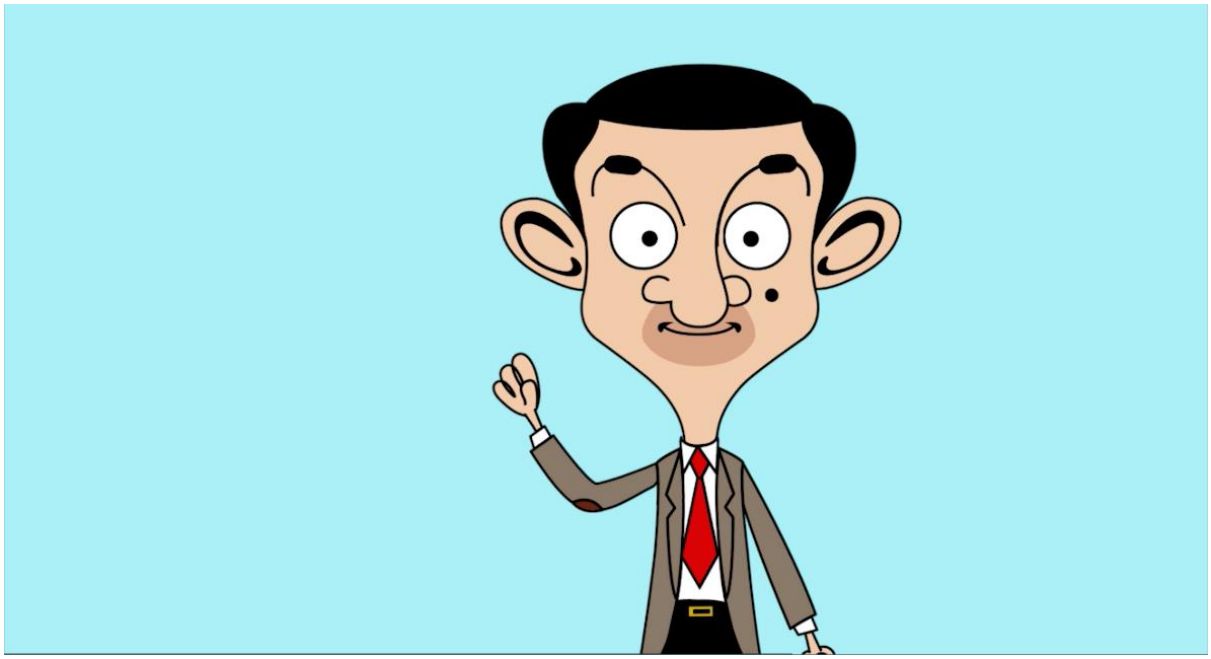
The first step to prepare Mr Bean for his livestream was to simplify the animation. The amount of detailed elements for the basic Mr Bean rig (think 1553 mouth shapes, 777 hand shapes, and 96 head shapes) was reduced to a more manageable number that could be brought together into a single Adobe Illustrator document. In the end, the completed character had 22 different hand shapes and 18 mouth shapes, including a stuck-out tongue and gritted teeth.

Mr Bean still needed synchronised hand and arm motions. By using animation cycles, his arms could animate independently or together with a mix of keyboard triggers and mouse movements and with a further stroke of the keys, his hands can animate simultaneously. Of course, Mr Bean's trademark elbow patches make the 2D character more dimensional.

For a game of charades, Mr Bean's varied hand gestures should appear as clearly as possible. Yet with a huge head and tiny hands, the challenge was to make the different gestures readable. The key for the design team was to fine-tune the timing so that each motion was slow enough for the audience to read, but quick enough to keep energy high and the fans engaged.

2. Enabling live reactions

Giving Mr Bean the ability to react live to fans' comments depended heavily on his facial expressions. After animating a facial movement, Adobe Character Animator's controls allowed the designers to attach that movement to a keyboard trigger. That way, the animators could control Mr Bean's expressions during the livestream with the press of a button.

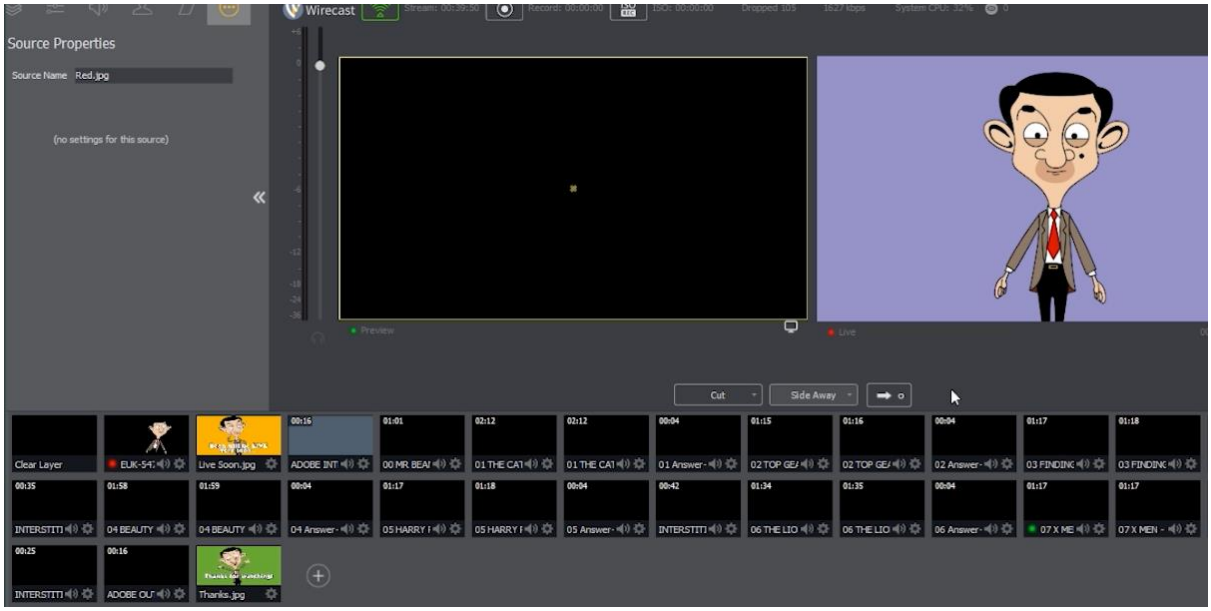


For example, anyone familiar with Mr Bean knows his trademark ‘glare,’ ‘squint,’ and ‘huh?’ expressions. By manipulating the upper and lower eyelids separately, designers could create a wider variety of Mr Bean’s signature faces. These eyelid movements were assigned to keyboard triggers and, at the end of the process, the team had created 34 triggers for Mr Bean’s in-the-moment expressions and actions.

To guide fans through the game, designers used Adobe After Effects CC to add a series of symbols to each charade. Icons such as ‘2-words,’ ‘film,’ or ‘repeat’ displayed on screen will help viewers identify when Mr Bean is doing a new charade or repeating himself.

3. Broadcasting the stream

Endemol Shine Group and the Adobe Character Animator team partnered with NewTek and Telestream to integrate cross-platform, machine-to-machine video using NewTek’s innovative Network Device Interface technology (NDI). The new processes enabled a seamless handoff of the live animation signal into Wirecast, Telestream’s live broadcasting software, as a camera source, which could then composite it with any other sources, graphics, or titles, and encode and stream the feed to Facebook.



“It’s exciting to empower creators with a whole new set of tools for live video production, made possible by Adobe, and bridged by NewTek’s NDI technology,” says Andrew Haley, Wirecast Evangelist, Telestream. “Animation processes that used to take days or weeks to produce can be done in the moment, on-the-fly, and streamed live on Facebook, YouTube, Periscope and nearly any other streaming destination. It’s truly awesome stuff.”

On the day of the livestream, a team of seven people gathered to make Mr Bean come to life. A director monitored the game of charades and determined how Mr Bean will respond to the audience. An animator worked together with the voice controller to manipulate Mr Bean’s movements and reactions. A Wirecast switcher controlled the broadcast stream, and a community management team responded to fans’ comments on Facebook. This was broadcasted to over sixteen thousand viewers live and to over one million via the video replay.

BEHIND THE SCENE

A comedy animation for fans of all ages, following the daily trials and tribulations of Mr Bean (aided by his best friend Teddy of course!) as he stumbles from one mishap to the next, always finding complex solutions to the simplest of problems. Based on the original Mr Bean series, starring Rowan Atkinson, and following the first animated series, released in 2002, this colourful, quirky and evergreen comedy animation is one for the whole family. The series is being produced in CelAction 2D, in-house by Tiger Aspect Productions, and is voiced by Rowan Atkinson. The first series of Mr Bean: The Animated Series still achieves fantastic ratings across the globe and has borne a successful licensing programme and online following.

Format:	Series
Production company:	Tiger Aspect Productions

Production Year:	2002/2014
Running Tme:	104 x 11 min Series
Genre:	Kids – Animation/Puppet
Available Rights:	TV and Home Entertainment Rights
Distribution Rights:	Worldwide excl. UK and Germany