Filtered Pieces

(Concept note)

-Ursula Uday

Overview:

My idea is to use small clips from different sci-fi movies which are independent on their own. These clips will then be arranged together to make a short video collage. In the video, certain frames will be split to have filters. The filters will cover 1/3rd of the frame i.e. the original frame will still be predominant. The filters will have various coloured hues, colorama effects that distinguish the video frames as one watches it. The split filters are placed and synchronized within the video with the aim of 'blending in the disturbance' i.e. the filters mustn't degrade the essence of the clips while watching the video.

Context:

In the talk '*A mouse. A laser beam. A manipulated memory*', given at TED x Boston, Ramirez and Liu talk about their motivation for studying memory manipulation. "*I see a world in which we can reactivate any kind of memory that we like. I also see a world where we can erase unwanted memories,*" says Ramirez in the talk. "*I even see a world where editing memories is something of a reality because we're living in a time where it's possible to pluck questions from the tree of science fiction and to ground them in experimental reality.*"

This talk helped me form my general concept of creating a storyline which revolves around the subject of memory manipulation for the video collage. Since memory manipulation is a theme that is wildly experimented in Sci-Fi films and since respective films under this category were the only ones I was familiar with in relation to Sci-Fi films, I chose to work with this theme as my final project.

Storyboard (the video plot):

A scientific breakthrough allows patients traumatized by haunting memories from their past to erase them with the help of 'volunteers' who travel into their minds with data packs containing memories for deletion. Events turn brutal when one such volunteer attempts to clear the disturbed mind of a patient who believes that he murdered his wife.

The nature of this video ends with a revelation of certain personal betrayal. This recreated short narrative with the twist of 'erasure of memory' storyline is often found in Sci-Fi films. The storyline was scripted for the audience and myself to easily understand the film genre as one watches the video. The nature of the video takes a form of the storyboard as the edits were clipped from existing Sci-Fi film trailers which happen to be chosen mostly from commercialized Hollywood films.

Objective:

Out of most of the films that I have watched involving the theme of memory manipulation under Sci-Fi genre, the storyline has always taken a negative or dark turn e.g. In Inception, the story involves planting an idea(seed) under the larger goal of stealing valuable information from a virtual memory Or in the film Eternal sunshine of a spotless mind, erasure of upsetting memories or altering memories again took a negative toll(in the story) on the main character of the film.

Under this age of experimental reality, as fun as its sounds to alter memories One thus needs to question, who gets to choose what memories to keep (because its not a one man job) or borderline are those certain memories necessary to delete. In all if one questions certain 'whys' to their decisions, one may realize that every memory and emotion related to it moulds a person's identity.

The Edits (frame splitting) in the video are to experiment whether a story is viewed differently-

- does change of colour hue or any other effect add on to the dynamic experience of watching a film, here sci-fi genre? or
- does it have no effect at all ? or
- if not edited well, would the filters cause disturbances that could make it worth not watching the video?

Research and observational output from the project:

The video is predominantly white and male - no women, no people of colour etc.

On the one hand, sci-fi/fantasy is a fairly homogeneous group dominated by people whose Common wisdom states people like reading about themselves, therefore commercial publications stress on putting white people on the cover, widely seen in for Hollywood films which also changes regionally eg.in Asian films and productions, there are Asian characters on posters. But, by that logic, the community is self-selecting the type of reader welcomed within the hallowed walls of fandom, and utterly ignoring everybody else. The primary reader of sci-fi/fantasy is a white male or female precisely because that's the demographic publishing houses are selling to.

I went back to observe the original video clips and noticed how the 'female' entity or character are often side-tracked or kept negative. Usually the number of female characters are limited to two/three in the films. The characters in the video clips are always hero driven, either the female is characterized with a negative nature or have been gender neutralised from their feminine aura.

Video and clip footage (material) used:

- I started with researching on what Sci-Fi revolved around the subject of memory. Out of most I selected 10 films.
- Since I hadn't seen most of those films, I decided to see their trailers to have a better understanding of them. While watching the trailers I realised every trailer had certain elements that gave a strong impact(either they were dialogue or scenes). So I extracted certain elements and clips from the selected trailers to build a narrative.
- As mentioned earlier, the films plots seemed to always end up with a negative notion of betrayal or loss. So my narrative was built vaguely to revolve around the subject of '*memory alteration turning to memory manipulation*'.
- I later realised that the clips that I used were mostly from Hollywood films which set a certain background and taste for the type of video I compiled. Since I used existing footage the video's nature was bound to relate Hollywood style of making.
- I used Adobe After Effects software to make the video collage. I learnt this software through YouTube tutorials.

*Clips that were selected are from these film trailers:*

- **Extracted:** A scientist who has invented a technique to watch people's memories finds himself in a dangerous situation after he's tasked with entering a heroin addict's mind to see whether the man committed murder.

- **Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind (2004):** This is another movie that contemplates the effects of altering memories, as a former couple, played by (Jim Carrey and Kate Winslet,) have their painful memories of one another erased.

- **Inception (2010):** In this suspenseful film, a future brain-hacker for hire portrayed by Leonardo DiCaprio takes on the task of surreptitiously implanting an idea for a business deal into a sleeping person's brain.
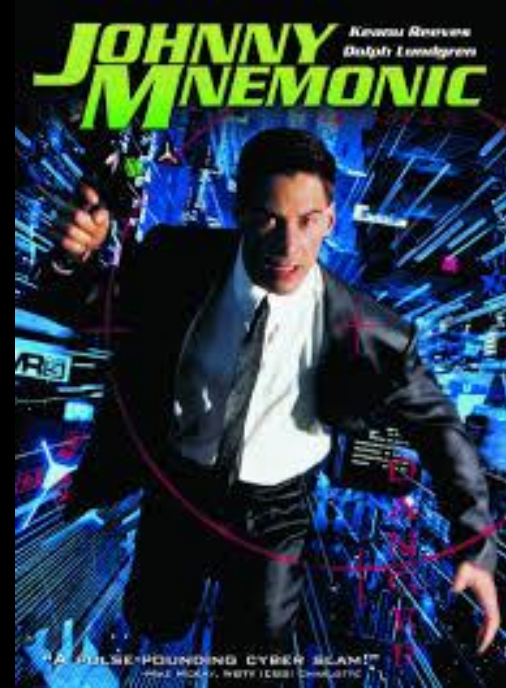
- **Johnny Mnemonic:** Johnny is a data courier who literally carries data packages inside his head for a fee. This time he carries a package that is too large to hold for long and he must race against time to deliver it. He must deliver it before he dies from the burden or is killed by the Yakuza.

- **Memento***:* The 2000 film *Memento,* directed by Christopher Nolan, is a story told in two directions — both in reverse and chronologically. In it, a man with anterograde amnesia (Guy Pearce) is not able to store new memories, and thus uses tattoos, notes and photos to give himself bits and pieces of his dark, complex reality.

- **The final cut:** Set in a world with memory recording implants, Alan Hakman is a cutter, someone with the power of final edit over people's recorded histories. His latest assignment is one that puts him in danger.

Certain clips were edited out. The clips (from the given film trailers) were used in the first draft.

- **The Terminal Man (1974):** A man, played by (actor George Segal) undergoes surgery in which tiny computers are implanted into his brain to control his violent impulses—but instead, he only becomes more brutal, due to his belief that machines are taking over the world. Today, government-funded research actually is trying to find a way to use implants to control the emotions of mentally ill people.

- **Total Recall (1990):** An ordinary man (played by Arnold Schwarzenegger) dreams of escaping his dull job by having artificial memories of a trip to Mars encoded into his brain. He soon has difficulty telling the difference between whether what seems to be happening to him actually is real or implanted fiction. Scientists already have demonstrated the ability to alter memories in a mouse's brain.

- **The Matrix (1999):** This thriller, the first in a trilogy, tells the story of a 22nd Century uprising against a computer network that has imprisoned humans in a virtual reality illusion. In our real world, Wired magazine predicts that virtual reality technology is poised to transform the world even more radically than the Web did.

- **Altered States (1980):** In this thriller, a scientist, portrayed by (William Hurt), probes his own brain with hallucinogenic substances and sensory deprivation, and ends up bizarrely altering himself physiologically as well as mentally. The film was in part inspired by the real-life inventor of the sensory deprivation tank, neuroscientist John C. Lilly, though he never turned himself into an ape-like creature, as Hurt's character does.

Special thanks to Rhea Rajesh who helped me script the narrative of the video collage.

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