

CLEANATORS

Animation / Live Action Feature Film Proposal

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Story Concept

The CLEANATORS story concept follows the adventures of a Troop of small variously ranked specialist robotic office cleaner devices led by their fearless but often beleaguered Sergeant unit as against great odds they attempt to locate and reunite with a lost inquisitive Corporal.

While structured as quality children's / family orientated entertainment featuring memorable characters and action elements, the story also includes an aspect of plot sub-text which should appeal to adult audiences. Both children and adult test readers have responded extremely positively (when an 11 year old can read a 100+ page script in 2 days you know you're doing something right!).

Production

A key goal was to create a project that in practical terms could be produced in New Zealand for a modest outlay in film terms. From an animation point of view, the characters are robotic mechanical structures not possessing the same intricacy as organic based creatures (i.e. hair, skin, clothing, movement etc.). Also the characters do not speak but communicate only by sounding modem type tones and buzzes together with eye movement and non-complex gesturing.

The live action is also straightforward with most back plates comprising empty static sets while most live action scenes featuring actors do not include animated characters. There is almost no direct interaction between actors and the animated Cleanators. Also there are no primary starring actor roles reducing costs and simplifying production scheduling. Acting roles are limited to one or two scenes only and most could be cast as cameo appearances of well-known celebrities further adding to marketability of the property.

Many of the Cleanator story character world rules (i.e. for the most part, Cleanators are night creatures and are not supposed to be seen in the company of humans) allow for techniques that work to reduce overall production costs. An example of another rule that Cleanator's should not be seen by / or look at human characters and so the presence of recognizable personalities inferred to be present (eg. Bill Gates) can be handled by POV shots from floor level showing only feet / legs etc.

Another technique would be to shoot many of the background plates in which the Cleanator characters appear as essentially still photographs using basic digital photography equipment. This reduces the requirement to carry out extensive match-move post production processing or extensive on-set camera motion control to align the

frame movement to the 3D action. The scene may still be panned (although to a lesser degree than with a moving camera) by applying 3D tilting to the still background frame and inserted 3D foreground action.

In regards to 3D character model development, all Cleanators are based on a standard design (a six wheel tracked boogie and a standard cube shaped main body unit featuring camera eyes, mouth vent etc.) allowing the extensive use of object orientated design principles. Common visual attributes, movement control interfaces, high level behavioural programming need only developed and implemented once for all characters. The features and markings that individualise each character need then only to be added.

The production of live action components would be well suited to emerging Digital Cinema technologies such as HD 24P thus reducing costs significantly. A large proportion of the shots required are either interiors or dusk / night shots where lighting requirements tend to be designed around existing sources to maintain location atmosphere as opposed to daylight work where sunlight is required to be equalized in many cases.

Financing

The 'Cleanators' project would ideally suit a co-production model with a 50/50 equity share between a New Zealand Production company (live action component) and an established Effects / Animation house. NB: Although the project was originally intended as a CG against live action production (i.e. 'Stuart Little' etc.), it could also be rendered as a full CG feature (i.e. 'Toy Story', etc.).

In both forms (CG only and CG + live action), internationally CG animated features have performed exceptionally well financially at the box-office and have the ability to cross multiple regional markets. The Cleanator project would be easily adapted to foreign markets due to the limited dialog requiring multiple language translation.

Additionally, the potential of DVD, book, clothing and especially toy, franchise opportunities should also greatly increase the commercial value of the concept. The Cleanators package includes rights to Internet domain names www.cleanators.com, www.cleanators.net, www.cleanators.org, Trade Name properties, character designs and drawings.

The music component will be an essential element in both the soundtrack and marketing strategies, ideally through the attachment of a high profile local or international musician (for at least the development of an original song). The establishment of key sound design and primary musical themes prior to shooting would ensure the visual production tone is in line with the soundtrack and would allow all music elements to be fully developed over the full period of the project lifespan rather than just considered towards the end of post-production.

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Cleanators Synopsis

Emerging nightly from their corner located steel box home, a Troop of 35, four inch high, variously ranked, robotic office cleaner units dutifully and skillfully clean their assigned corporate building office area. Led by their faithful Sergeant unit (SG) who directs the 8 Corporals (CP1-8) who in turn organize the private ranked specialist units (PGs, PDs, etc.), the various routine cleaning tasks are undertaken with total military like precision.

But occasionally accidents do occur, and most generally to an over eager Corporate unit designated CP7. But thanks to the organizational abilities of SG (the Sergeant) and often the combined efforts of the entire troop, the day is usually saved and the problem put right.

One day, after an office tenant moves out, the Troop are moved on to a series of locations that just don't to work out; there's the issue with a Bank security alarm, a seemingly haunted church organ, and then there's the problem at the restaurant at the top of the 1000 foot tourist attraction known as the Skytower.

While the work is well within their capabilities, the spectacular city views prove to be a major distraction so it's outside for a look. And of course inevitably a mishap occurs resulting in the inquisitive, problem plagued Corporal unit (CP7) being trapped outside in the cold, harsh and unforgiving city.

To make matters worse, the next day the remaining Troop is collected and accidentally delivered to a run down printing works where they must contend with the most atrocious of conditions. Meanwhile CP7 stumbles into CIA Headquarters causing mayhem and chaos by being mistaken for a robotic spy and explosive delivery device.

Life proves no better for the rest of the troop when a likeable specialist liquid carpet cleaning unit (LQ) becomes fouled with printing ink rendering it inoperable and stranded. Then when the Printing Company goes bankrupt, the Cleanators find themselves mistakenly locked up awaiting auction with the rest of the company's assets.

But following a daring rescue, an adventurous escape, and SG's unwavering leadership in the face of total adversity, plus a little help from 'above', CP7 and the Troop are eventually reunited, but only just before CP7 is replaced and LQ (the liquid cleaning specialist) is written off for good.

So with their grand adventure now over, they're cleaned, repaired and upgraded then packed into their shiny new steel Cleanator box home. Finally when delivered to their new cleaning assignment, one last surprise awaits; it's a modern ostentatious office environment belonging to an organization clearly at the highest echelons of the corporate world.

Cleanator Heaven at last!

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