# Storyboarding 101

Introduction

The objective of these notes is to introduce Storyboarding. These notes will not discuss drawing skill, but how a storyboard is used to develop ideas and your communication skills.

A storyboard is a number of drawings, supported with directional notes, that form a visual script for an Animation. They act as a concept (idea) planning aid, that outline the events and actions. The detail, to which a storyboard is drawn, depends on the action, the length and the audience it is aimed at.

Each drawing in the storyboard should illustrate a clear element of the film. A camera movement, an action, a camera cut, character dialogue.
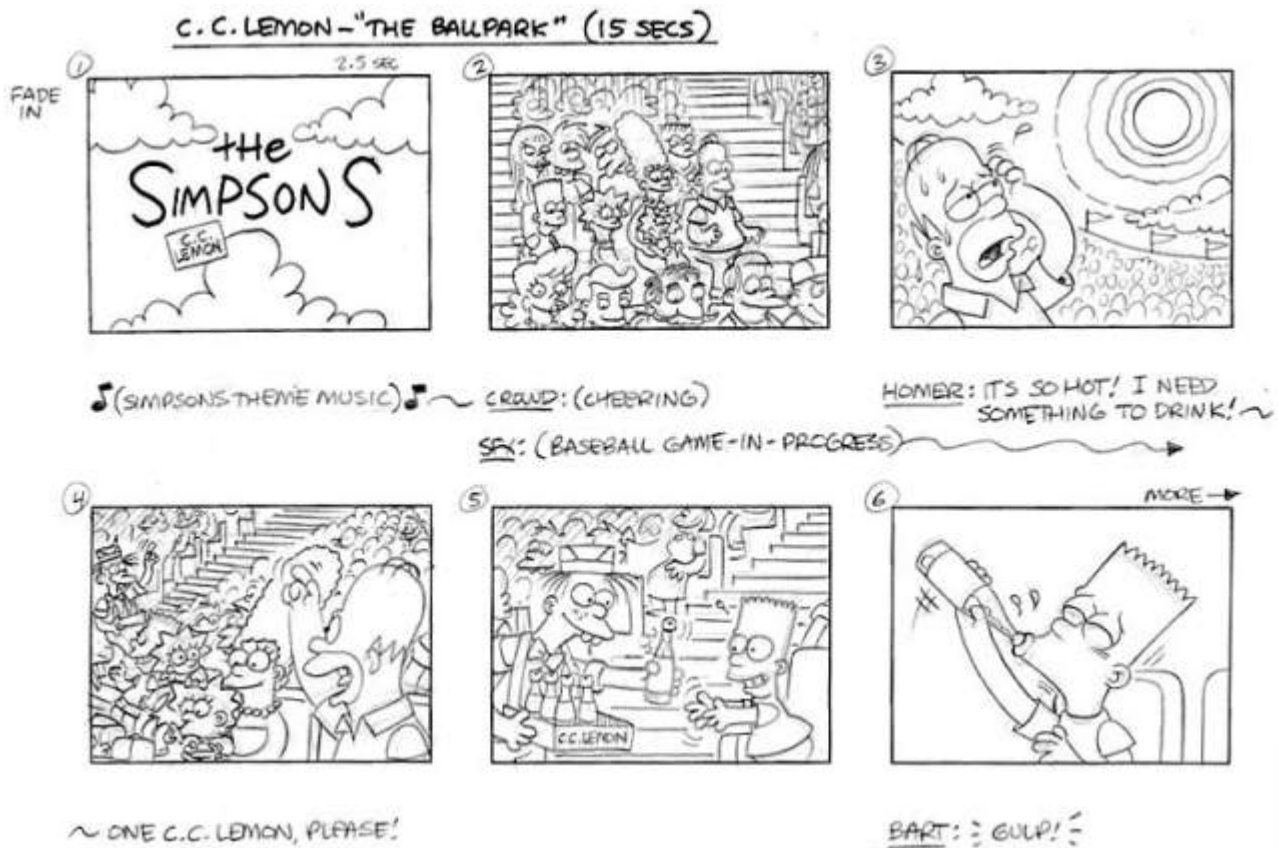
Film making is a very expensive process and therefore requires careful planning and intense thinking. Since the Disney studios first developed the technique, Storyboards have remained the central process in the production of animation. The form storyboards take and the techniques employed are as varied as the approaches to film making.

Remember there are no rules in storyboarding, only guide lines. The essential objective in storyboarding is to communicate an idea clearly and without any unwanted confusion.

As students, the storyboard provides a system where the elements of film making can be defined before production commences. You clearly need an understanding of the established film conventions for the construction of a well structured film....The storyboard allows us to develop this before productions starts. The storyboard helps refine shots, scenes and sequences. Also the techniques for the transition between them.

Remember that a scene is sandwiched between two scenes. The effects of a scene is greatly influenced not only by the content of previous scenes, but by the transition between scenes. Try to keep an overall view of the whole storyboard and how it is working. Every time you finish a drawing place it with the other drawings and evaluate how it is all taking shape.

"We edit the entire movie first in storyboard form"

Bonnie Arnold co-producer Toy Story

How long should your Storyboard be?

Include as many drawings in the storyboard as are needed to accurately and adequately describe the sequence of events. Each drawing should show an important aspects of the film. A drawing should contain at least one of the following:

Back Focus On The T-Rex

- An Event.... ...A key movement/action.
- Camera Cut/Dissolve/Fade.
- A camera move.
- Ask yourself, "What is the point I wish to make?".

The number of drawings required for a storyboard varies dramatically. Ideally, there should not be too many, but there should always be enough to adequately communicate your ideas efficiently as possible. Too little is bad. Too much is just as bad.

We To The Group... Looking Toward Camera A Fallen Tree Blocks There Path Ahead... ..

They look forward...

They All Turn To The Front And....

Duck. Just As The Windshield Hits The Tree... And...

Shatters into Camera...

LOW WIDE TRACKING WITH VEHICLE AS...

THE T-REX PLOUGHS THRU TREE IN FRONT OF JEEP...

CAMERA MOVES CLOSER TO JEEP. THE T-REX CLOSES IN AND.....

RAMS THE SIDE OF THE JEEP....

INSIDE. EVERYONE FEELS THE IMPACT.

MALCOLM FALLS FORWARD AND KNOCKS THE GEAR LEVER OUT OF GEAR.

ELLIE GRABS THE GEAR LEVER AND...

SLAMS THE JEEP BACK INTO GEAR.

CLOSE ON ELLIE'S FOOT ON THE GAS PEDAL.

OVER MALCOLM TO THE T-REX CLOSE TO THE JEEP...

But you said you could animate the entire history of the universe by now!
There is always a temptation is to be too ambitious with your ideas. Try to be as realistic as possible about what is achievable. The storyboard very quickly draws home the reality of an over ambitious projects.

For commercial projects the storyboard acts as an aid for creating budgets.....This can be invaluable when pointing out difficulties that may arise, justifying cost and formulating a production schedule. Clients often picture epic productions for the price of peanuts.

Storyboards resolve a lot of these problems early on. This not only can save time, energy and cost, but bad feelings. Document all meetings and suggestions for future reference. Any decisions you and the client make should always be documented.

Action.....Reaction
Always, always consider the audience's response. Like any book, play or live action film, you are able to create action which should create a reaction in your audience. You have the tool to generate an emotional response from your audience. What you need to do ask yourself is "What reaction do I want here?"....."So what action will create that?".

Computer animation has generally been used to amused audiences or illustrate natural and scientific phenomena. Consider the content of your film and then the audience carefully. Traditional animation is not only about Mickey Mouse or Tom and Jerry. So why should computer animation need not be restricted to spaceships or robots?

The content of your storyboard is therefore your earliest and most important decision. You can't make a good film from a bad idea.

Get as much feedback as early as possible. There is a common tendency in creative areas to guard your ideas. Getting close to your ideas often clouds judgment. Ideas come from one source - your own personal experience and your ability to look around you. An idea can come from anything. Be on the lookout for possible material. A story about a friend of a friend, a news item, creatures from under the fridge - they all come from your imagination - Therefore stimulate it as often as you can. Ideas can always be strengthened and elaborated on with further research. Research itself is not reserved to books. Look. Always look around you. Observe the world you live in. When you have the seeds of an idea consider possible access to research material.

Keep thinking

You may discover the basic seed for what you think could be a wonderful idea. Be prepared to let go of it at any point. The initial idea is never enough.

Make no commitment to an idea until the whole idea works. Any areas you can isolate of weakness will be noticed by your audience. It's a very good idea to keep showing to your colleagues. Never make the mistake of thinking those untrained in the filming making don't have valuable comments to make….They are your audience. Listen to them. The best feedback you can possible get, is from the audience the film is aimed at.

The aim of the storyboard is two fold:

- To communicate your idea as accurately as possible to others.
- To resolve problems as early as possible in production.

Communicate your ideas:

- Define the purpose of your film. To convey information or to sell washing powder?
- Collect as much reference as possible. Researching will create stronger ideas and increase you awareness.
- Order your incidents and consider the structure. Be aware of the pace and how tell your story. We can all tell the same joke, but some people tell jokes better than others.

The amount of visual detail within each panel should be as economical as possible. Never overwork a storyboard. Clearly define the point of each drawing before you begin the storyboard. Include points only relevant to the film. Do not waste time and effort drawing worthless detail at the an early stage in development. If detail is not of importance to the script and structure of the film, leave it out. It is sometimes a good idea to include supporting sketches with a storyboard. Plans of rooms and a few sketches of details to back up your ideas would be a good idea.
Points to consider:

- continuity
- sound
- music
- movement

- composition
- colour
- mood
- structure
- staging
- dialogue
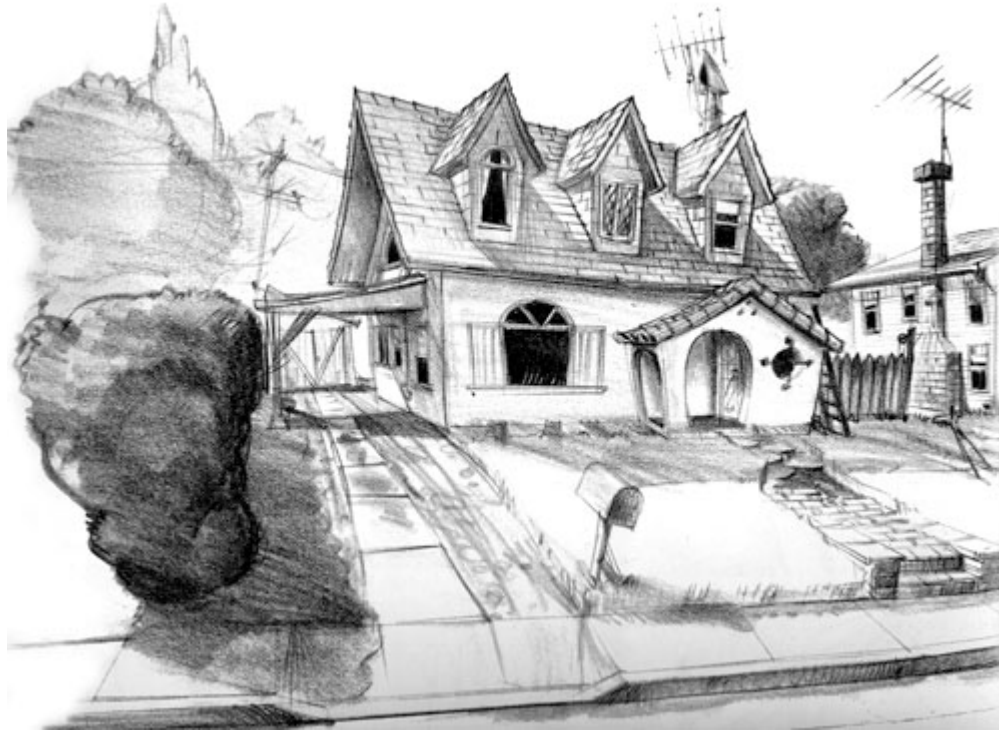
The aim is to resolve your ideas and foresee problems.
Remember to always question throughout the storyboard process. Never, never commit to an idea without having considered alternatives first.

Questions to ask before your storyboard:

- Who is the storyboard for?
- What is the budget?
- How much time is there?
- Get as much as feedback from colleagues as possible?
- Where will the film be shown?
- What format should be used?
- How long is the film?
- Consider the emotional response of the audience.
- How are you going to get their attention?
- Consider the pace of film.

Questions to ask while you storyboard:

- Is each drawing necessary?
- Is the information for each drawing clear?
- Do the drawings communicate the structure?
- Does the storyboard contain all the information you have?
- Consider the camera angle?
- Consider the camera position.
- Consider the lighting of the scene.
- Consider the pace of the film.
- Consider where the cuts should occur.
- Consider how the cuts should occur.

Storyboard panel from Pixars "The Incredibles".

Rough Storyboards
A basic indication of the action in a crude sketched form. Rough storyboards are usually monochrome.

Working Storyboards
All the information needed for production. A working storyboard should include:

- dialogue
- camera movements
- lighting
- soundtrack
- brief summary of the action

Presentation Storyboards

A fully worked out version of the working storyboard. Various key panels of the storyboard can be made up to a fully rendered state or the entire storyboard can be rendered up. The Presentation storyboard is part of a pitch to a possible client. The aim of the Presentation storyboard is not only to communicate the idea, but also to demonstrate the professional standard of your working practices.

The storyboard is complete when your ideas are defined as clearly as possible and there is enough information for the entire production team.

Animatic/Leica Reel :

Animation, as we all know, is a time based media. This means it is a collection of images viewed for a specific amount of time. It is not a single image viewed for an unspecified amount of time.

The Storyboard we have seen is an invaluable for the planning shows a running order. An Animatic is the process of assembling and viewing the Storyboard drawings together with an Audio track. With the use of non-linear editing software this allows accurate scene planning and editing. The Animatic you will find sometimes referred to as a ' leica reel '. This term comes from the days of video.
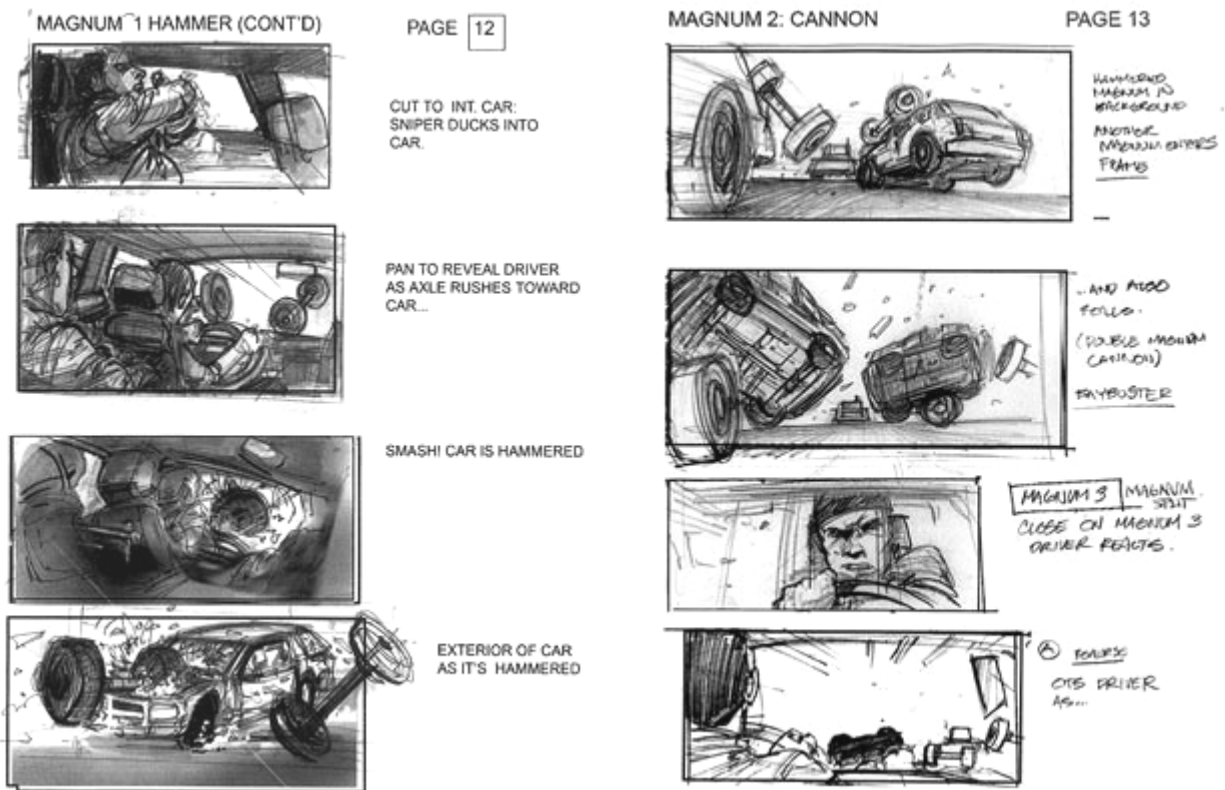
THE ISLAND

PAGE 14

OTS MAGNUM DRIVER AS PLATE CRASHES THRU WINDOW...

WIDE SHOT OF PLATE SLICING INTO CAR

REVERSE ANGLE of sedan getting hit. Plate tears in...

...AND THRU THE CAR.

ARMORED CAR FLIP

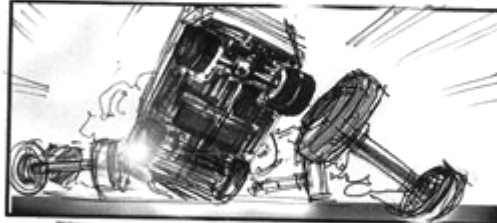THE ISLAND

PAGE 16

LOW ANGLE TRACKING W/ TRUCK
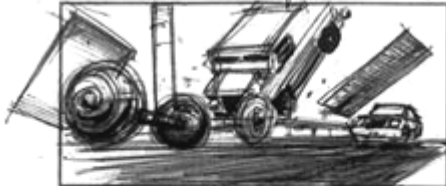
(BAY BOMBER)

...AS IT HITS AND LIFTS UP...

(INSERT)

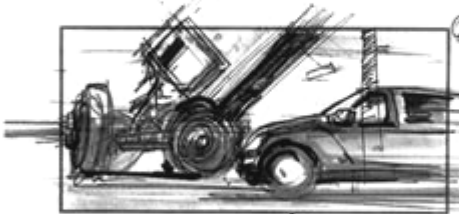LAURENT REACTS AS HE'S THROWN UP AND FORWARD...

ARMORED CAR FLIP

THE ISLAND   ALTERNATE ANIMATIC ANGLES   PAGE 16A
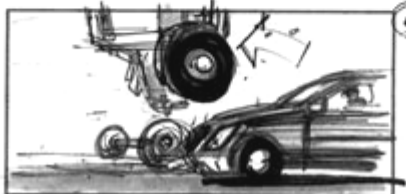
ALTERNATE (A)

- 3/4 SHOT TRACKING W/ ARMORED CAR AS IT RIDS UP....

STROBING - A-C HITS RAIL AXLE AND FLIPS UP...

...AND OVER...
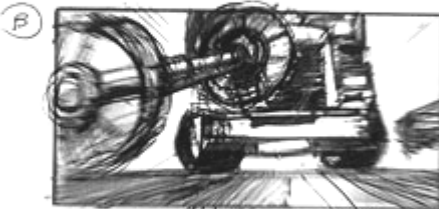
ARMORED CAR FLIP

THE ISLAND   PAGE 15

(A)

TRACKING BACK WITH ARMORED CAR AS IT SWERVES AROUND WRECKAGE...

...AND INTO THE PATH OF AN ONCOMING AXLE

OTS DRIVER AND LAURENT AS AXLE SMASHES INTO THE ARMORED CAR

Presenting your Work

When presenting your storyboard try to remember the following points:

- Define the statement of the film as efficiently as possible.
- Try to appear confident in your presentation.
- Accept all forms of criticism and argue your point constructively.
- Prepare your presentation.
- Know the basic points of your presentation.
- Be prepared to elaborate on your points.
- Run through the structure of your presentation before hand.
- Include all your reference to support your film.
- Try to get a good nights sleep the night before the presentation.

At the end-of-the-day, it makes no difference if a storyboard is scribbled on the back of a cigarette packet, doodled on the back of these notes or lovingly rendered on Bockingford watercolour paper - As long as the idea is clearly defined. If storyboard helps communicated your idea, then

Hints and Tips

Remember the average person needs 16 frames to read each word if text.
Use flow diagrams and write your ideas in words before you start to draw.
Produce early working storyboards on Post-it notes. This allows the storyboard to be edited very easily.