

Final Report
Major Project – ADGD7008
‘Ground Worms’



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Introduction

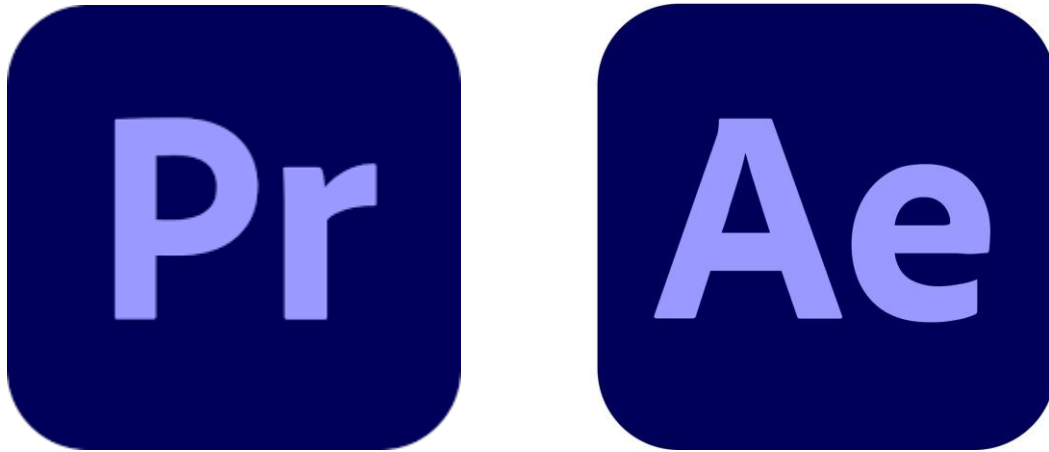
The 'Ground Worms' project was a collaborative effort between me and two team members to create an animated short film designed for children. The idea for 'Ground Worms' came from my team member Igor, and me and Dan loved the concept and wanted to help bring his idea to life. The animation was centered around a group of quirky worm characters, with an emphasis on creating a fun and engaging visual and auditory experience for the target audience. As a team, we aimed to create a lighthearted, cartoony aesthetic that would appeal to a young audience. Every element of production, from the colour design to the sound, was tailored to evoke a playful atmosphere suitable for children.

Within this project, I took on several key roles. These included primary and secondary roles. My roles were asset collector, sound designer, colour corrector and compositor. My involvement with this project spanned both pre-production and post-production stages, where I contributed to the technical, creative, and organisational aspects of the animation.

As the asset collector, I was responsible for sourcing third-party materials for this project, which were essential for the lead animators to develop parts of the environment. This role required me to locate and organise visual elements that aligned with our projects cartoony style. I ensured that the assets I collected matched the animation's tone and aesthetic, allowing the animators to seamlessly integrate them into scenes when needed. Effective communication with the animators was crucial here, as I needed to understand their needs and adapt my asset collection process accordingly.

In addition to asset collection, I also was the sound designer. The sound was a vital component of 'Ground Worms,' as it brought the characters and the environment to life. I began this process by gathering third-party sound effects and recorded my own Foley, including ambient noises, sound effects and character noises. One unique aspect of my contribution was using my own voice for the worm characters, which I recorded directly into Premiere Pro and then edited/pitched my voice. This involved experimenting with different vocal modulations and pitch adjustments to create a high-pitched, quirky tone that complimented the animators visual design of the worms. The sound design helped shape the overall feel of the animation, adding layers of personality and energy to the scenes.

In compositing, I used Adobe Premiere Pro to combine the various visual and audio elements, ensuring that everything came together seamlessly. This stage was critical in the post-production process, as it involved aligning the timing of animations, sound effects and my own dialogue to create a cohesive final product. My focus was on maintaining the pacing and flow of the animation, ensuring that the transitions between scenes felt smooth and engaging for the audience.



Finally, I worked on colour correction. During the initial stages of the project, I practiced colour correction to speed up time during these stages, using different techniques to get the right look and saved these as presets. In this final colour correcting stage, I used my presets (different ones for the inside and outside scenes) and adjusted the brightness, contrast, and saturation of the scenes to enhance the cartoony, kid-friendly aesthetic we were aiming for. The colour also played an essential role in setting the tone for the animation, and my goal was to create a vibrant, visually appealing look that would resonate with the target audience. By refining the colour palette, I ensured that the animation matched the overall playful nature of the animation.

This report will explore the specific processes I undertook in asset collection, sound design, compositing, and colour correction. It will also reflect on the methodologies employed, analysing the effectiveness of each process, and identifying potential improvements for future projects.

Processes

My Approach and Inspirations

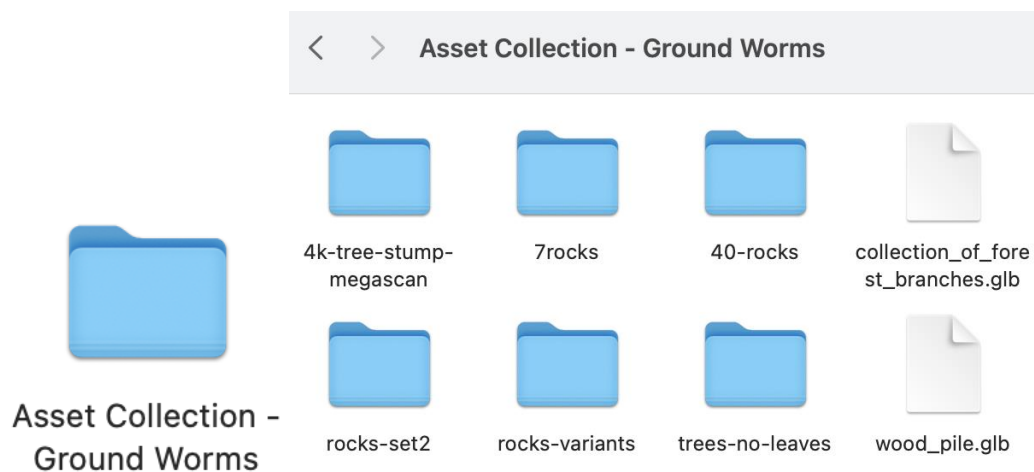
To ensure that the 'Ground Worms' animation would be engaging for a young audience, I took an intentional approach to the creative aspect of the project. One of my primary inspirations came from watching cartoons and animated films that are specifically aimed towards children, with Pixar's Toy Story, and Monsters Inc. standing out as key references. Pixar films have always been a personal favourite of mine, not just for their storytelling, but also for the unique visual style that manages to be both vibrant and deeply immersive. I took note of how the bright and saturated colors in these films contributed to their appeal, particularly for the young audiences, and I knew that our project could benefit from a similar aesthetic.



From my own experiences as a child, I remembered being drawn to these kinds of bright eye-catching colours and I wanted to replicate that feeling in 'Ground Worms.' The goal was to evoke a sense of fun and playfulness while maintaining a coherent style. I focused on using bold, vibrant colours that would help the characters, and the environment stand out during the colour correction phase. I made sure each scene had its own colour correction that would flow nicely into the next scene. I paid special attention to the overall balance, enhancing brightness and contrast to ensure that the animation had the vivid, almost toy like look that is so effective in Pixar films. I found that this colour aesthetic worked particularly well for the type of lighthearted, comical animation we were producing.

Asset Collection

Another key responsibility of mine was the collection of third-party assets that would form the environmental parts for our animation. I knew early on that the environment would be crucial as there are only two throughout the short. The animation takes place primarily underground in the worm's home, the other environment was outside of the home where the seagull is, so I focused on collecting assets that would fit into a naturalistic setting. This included small, significant details that would help tie the world together. Things like dirt, twigs, rocks, branches, and trees. These environmental elements might seem small on their own, but they collectively create the texture and realism needed to make the world feel alive. I was careful to select assets that matched the overall cartoony aesthetic we were going for, avoiding anything too realistic or detailed as that would clash with the simpler design of the worm characters.

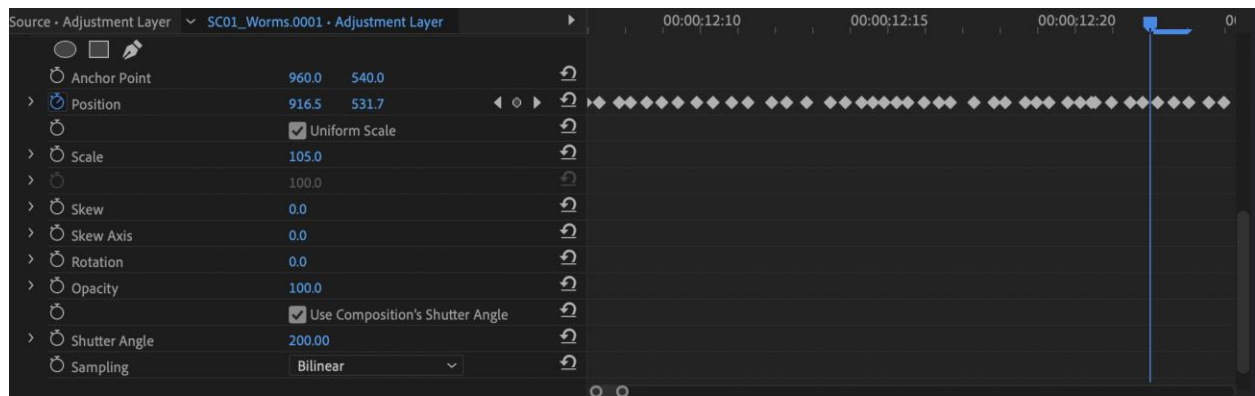


When collecting assets, I also kept in mind the practicalities of animation. The assets needed to be flexible enough to fit into the various scenes we had planned, especially the action heavy moments such as when the worm and seagull interact towards the end. The choice of assets had to allow for easy manipulation within the animation software, so I made sure they were easy to download and integrate into Maya.

Compositing and Animation Enhancements

Compositing was a crucial part of my role in 'Ground Worms,' and this is where I spent a considerable amount of time blending the various elements of the animation, visuals, sound, and camera effects into the final product. Using Adobe Premiere Pro as my primary tool for compositing, I was responsible for integrating the assets I collected from the lead animators and the sound effects I designed and recorded myself.

One of the creative decisions I made early on after studying several kid friendly animations was to add subtle camera movements and shakes. This idea came from the observation that dynamic camera movements can add depth and energy to a scene, making it feel more immersive and engaging. For example, during the beginning scene where the seagull is stomping on the worm's home, I added a shake effect to the camera, as though the force of the stomping was reverberating through the ground and impacting the camera itself. This added an extra layer of intensity to the moment, making the action feel more impactful and interactive for the audience.



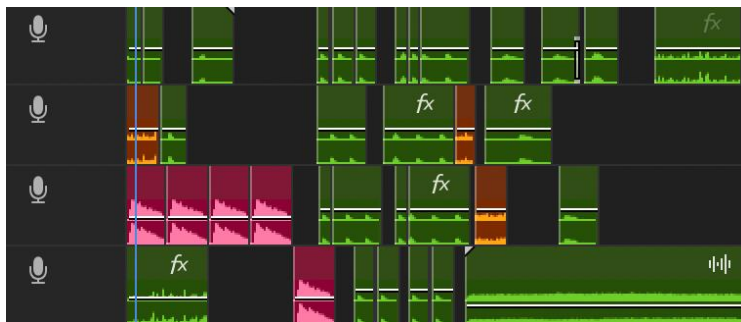
I also invested time in creating my own presets and keyframed animations in Premiere Pro to enhance the animation's uniqueness. These presets allowed me to maintain consistency across multiple scenes whilst giving me flexibility in adjusting specific details, when necessary, in the effects panel. Creating keyframes for specific camera effects and camera movements was particularly rewarding as it allowed me to inject my own creative touch into the animation. Beyond simply assembling premade assets above, these personalised elements helped give the final product a distinctive flare.

Sound Design and Foley

In addition to visual compositing, I was responsible for the sound design of the animation. This involved sourcing third party sound effects. Environment sounds in action, but also recording my own fully to create custom sounds specific to the worm's world. I use my voice to represent the worm characters, manipulating it within Premiere Pro to match the comical high-pitched tone we wanted for the worms. Initially, I planned to use sourced sound effects, but this did not work for the worm voices. I also used Adobe Audition to manipulate the sound effects I recorded.



The Foley I recorded included ambient noises that contributed to the underground setting, as well as unique sounds for actions like the worms wiggling and communicating. The worms do not speak in a traditional sense, so the challenge was to use sound effects and vocalisations that can convey emotion and intent without using specific words. By adjusting the pitch, speed and tone of my voice recordings, I was able to craft sounds that felt appropriate for the worm characters and fit seamlessly into the cartoony aesthetic of the animation.



Adobe Audition played a key role in refining the audio too. I spent time experimenting with various pitch shifting techniques to make the worms voices sound funny and exaggerated, adding to the playful nature of the animation. However, I found that when I test recorded within Premiere Pro, it worked just as well, if not better, for this part of the sound design. I went with the Premiere Pro version instead of what I had created in Adobe Audition. The careful manipulation of sound was critical in shaping the characters personalities and maintaining the correct tone throughout.

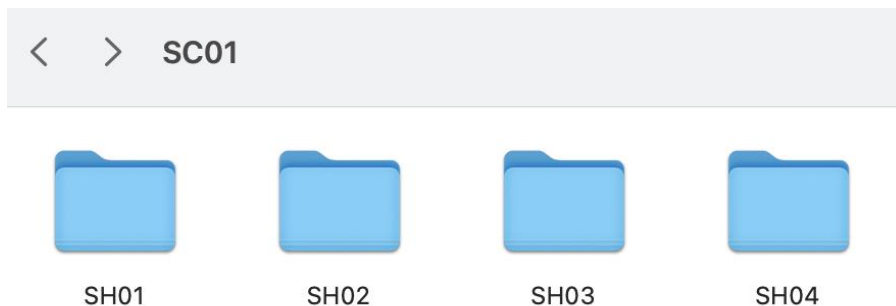
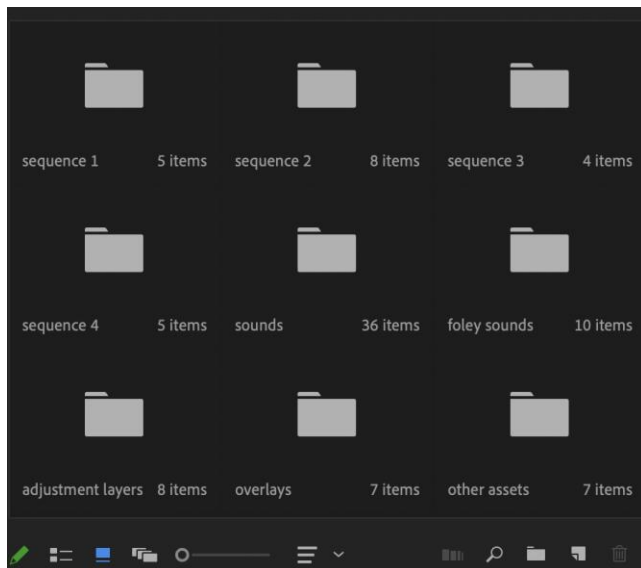
Colour Correction

Another significant part of my own role was colour correction, which required me to adjust the brightness, contrast, and saturation of the scenes to ensure a cohesive visual appealing look. Colour was particularly important for this project as it set the tone for the whole animation. The bright and saturated palette was designed to appeal to children and reflect the lighthearted nature of the narrative. I used the Adobe Premiere Pro to fine tune the color palette, enhancing the vibrancy of each scene without overwhelming the viewer. This required a balance between making the colours pop and ensuring they would flow with the rest of the visuals. For instance, I focused on ensuring that the underground setting, whilst realistic in its use of dirt and natural textures, still felt colorful and inviting rather than dark and dreary. The worms themselves needed to stand out against their environment, so I made sure their colours were bright and contrasted to the background.



Organising Workflow

To manage these creative and technical tasks efficiently, I organised my workflow carefully in Premiere Pro. I created many folders to keep all my assets, audio files, and project elements neatly arranged. This organisation was crucial in ensuring that I could quickly locate the materials I needed during editing, especially as deadlines approached. Having a structured workspace also helped me stay on top of the various stages of production, allowing me to juggle multiple tasks like compositing, sound design and colour correction simultaneously.



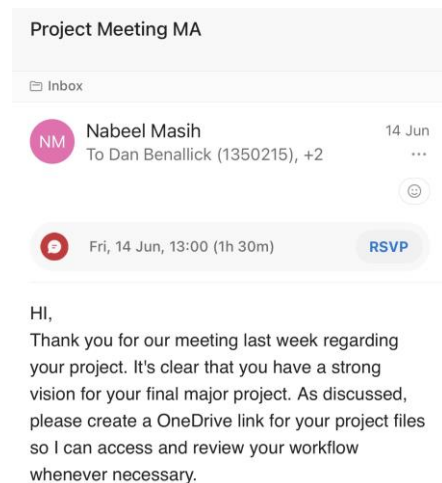
Methodologies

Throughout the 'Ground Worms' project, I employed a range of methods that let me efficiently manage my roles whilst ensuring that the creative vision of the animation was met. These methodologies encompassed both technical and organisational approaches with feedback meetings, collaboration, time management, and adaptive problem solving playing key roles in my workflow.

Feedback and Improvements

One of the core methodologies we followed was receiving feedback from our supervisor Nabeel. Regularly scheduled team meetings with Nabeel provided us with invaluable insights into our progress. Nabeel would suggest ways we could push the project further creatively or technically. His feedback was often focusing on ensuring we all had our specific roles and were all pulling the same amount of weight throughout.

These sessions helped me refine my approach to asset collection, sound design and compositing. I would take his advice and integrate it into the next iteration of the work. Our team's responsiveness to this feedback allowed us to maintain a flexible, evolving project that grew stronger over the summer.



In addition to formal meetings, we also communicated frequently through WhatsApp and Microsoft Teams, where we would judge our drafts and give each other feedback throughout the various stages of production. This constant exchange of ideas ensured that we stayed aligned as a team and it allowed me to make real-time changes to my tasks, whether it was tweaking some audio levels or adjusting colour schemes. Doing this at various stages helped us catch small issues early and ensure that everyone was working towards the same goals.

Problems and Solutions in the Group

One of the difficult aspects of creating a group project during the summer holidays was not taking into account the lack of days spent at university and the times where group members may be on holiday or someone might be away for the weekend, so we made sure to communicate on WhatsApp whenever something like that would happen, but it was something to be mindful of during the six weeks break. Luckily, we had an excellent group, and this did not become a big issue. Another problem we faced as a group was the file transferring, I know Dan and Igor had issues with this as Maya is such a powerful software that produces large files, so when these were uploaded to Microsoft Teams, some of the textures weren't rendered properly and stuff was missing even though it wasn't when rendered, they managed to solve this issue between them. Once Dan had rendered a scene, he would upload it to Microsoft Teams for me to download, this went smoothly for the first few scenes, and I was able to unzip these files and create the image sequence within Premiere Pro. For the last few scenes, Dan had switched from using PNGs to using TIFFs because the quality was much better, so when he would upload these to Microsoft Teams, they were not coming through to me fast enough as the files were now a lot larger because of the switch to TIFFs, so Dan took the last few scenes and image sequenced them within Premiere Pro and exported them as MP4's to get them to me as quickly as possible as the deadline was approaching.

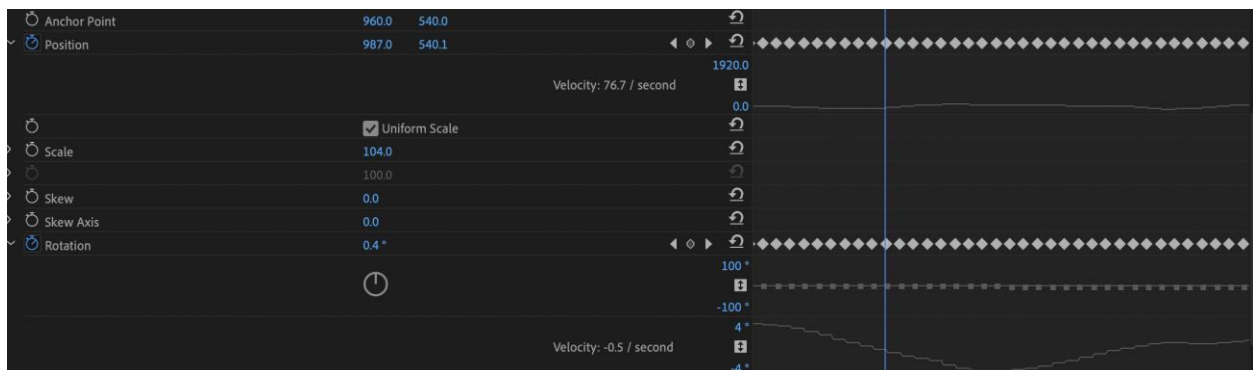
Documents > General > **Rendered_Shots**

 Name ▾	Modified ▾	Modified By ▾	-
 SC01	August 28	Dan Benallick (135021!	
 SC02	August 28	Dan Benallick (135021!	
 SC03	August 28	Dan Benallick (135021!	
 SC04	August 28	Dan Benallick (135021!	
 SC05	August 29	Dan Benallick (135021!	
 SC06	August 29	Dan Benallick (135021!	

Tool Management and Adaption

The technical aspect of the project revolved heavily around the use of Adobe Premiere Pro, After Effects, and Adobe Audition. Each of these tools has its strengths and its weaknesses, and learning how to use them efficiently was crucial for delivering high quality work on time. Initially, I relied on both Premiere Pro and After Effects for compositing and key framing, as After Effects is generally more powerful when it comes to creating complex animations and visual effects. However, I encountered significant issues when working with both programs simultaneously, often experiencing crashes and losing progress. Given the complexity of the project, with multiple assets and effects being integrated, these crashes became a serious concern.

After losing some progress during a crash, I had to adapt my workflow. Whilst After Effects offered more advanced capabilities, I decided to shift my focus primarily to Premiere Pro for tasks like keyframing. Although Premiere Pro lacks some of the finer controls that After Effects provides, I was able to find workarounds that allowed me to achieve nearly the same results. This adaptation took a bit longer and was not as streamlined as working directly in After Effects, but it ultimately saved time by reducing the number of crashes and ensuring that I could maintain a steady progress without any more interruptions.



This adaptive approach to using the tools at my disposal became a defining part of my workflow, illustrating the importance of flexibility in problem solving. It also highlighted the need for backups and frequent saves, which I integrated into my methodology after losing progress. By the end of the project, I had learned how to balance efficiency and creative control between the two programs, leveraging Premiere Pro's reliability to complete the compositing work without further disruptions.

Time Management and Organisation

One of the key areas where I improved significantly during this project was in my time management. In past projects I had sometimes struggled with managing my time effectively. This time, however, I made a conscious effort to ensure that time management became one of my strengths. I knew from the outset that this would be a time intensive project, so I established a clear daily schedule to help me stay on top of my workload.

I used reminders and alarms to breakdown the project into smaller manageable tasks and to make sure I completed specific objectives on certain days. For example, I dedicated one day solely to asset collection, another to sound design and so on. This was my go-to for each week leading up to deadline week, breaking down tasks into days of the week. This helped me stay focused and prevented the overwhelming feeling of having to do too much at once.

I also found a change in my working environment occasionally helped maintain my productivity. I would take my laptop to coffee shops to work, which allowed me to step away from distractions and focus solely on the task at hand. This change of scenery was particularly helpful during the longer, more tedious tasks like downloading the large animation files, unzipping them, ensuring everything was correct in the scenes, and organising my folders in Premiere Pro.

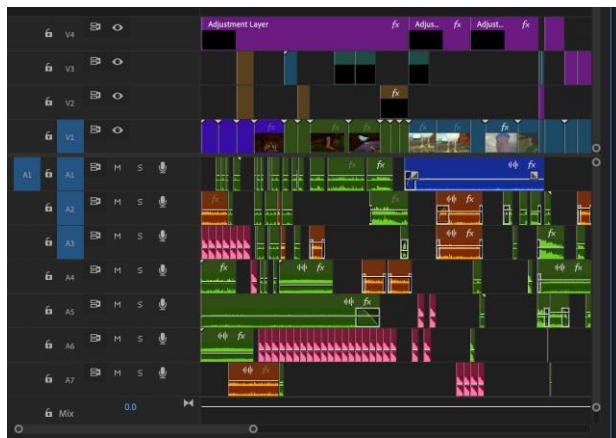
Additionally, I kept a detailed notes page where I tracked my progress. This included a list of completed tasks, and tasks that still needed attention, helping me to stay organised and avoid overlooking important details. The combination of these strategies made time management one of my strongest points in this project. I was able to keep up with deadlines and maintain consistent progress without feeling rushed at the last minute.

TASK	DAY OF WEEK
Asset Collect	Mondays
Create Colour Presets	Tuesdays
Record Own Foley	Wednesdays & Thursdays
Source Sound	Fridays
Additional Stuff	Weekends

Strengths and Weaknesses in the Execution

Whilst my time management and adaptability were definite strengths. I also recognise areas where I could have improved. One of my main weaknesses involved overlooking minute details in some of the elements. For example, during the sound design process I spent a lot of time perfecting the character sounds and the ambient noises, but did not always focus as much attention on the finer aspects of the audio levelling. In retrospect, I realised that some of the sound effects might be too loud for certain viewers or too soft compared to the rest of the audio mix. However, this is just me nitpicking and when I showed the final piece to friends and family, it is nothing they noticed, so it did not impact the overall animation.

Moving forward, I plan to address the weaknesses by paying closer attention to playing levels throughout the production process in future projects where I will dedicate more time to refining the sound mix and perhaps seek more frequent feedback specifically on audio to ensure that it matches the rest of the production. This experience reinforced the importance of double checking the small details, especially in areas like sound design, where even minor imbalances could affect the audience's experience. I also would like to reiterate that saving as you go along is extremely important when working on a lengthy project.



Conclusion

In conclusion, my involvement in the 'Ground Worms' project required a delicate balance of creative, technical, and organisational methodologies. As an asset collector, compositor, sound designer and colour corrector I contributed to the creation of a kid friendly animated short by drawing inspiration from Pixar films, focusing on vibrant colours, dynamic sound design and engaging camera work. My approach to the creative aspects was influenced by a strong foundation in children's animation where I sought to recreate the colorful, lively worlds that had captivated me as a child. From a technical standpoint, I employed tools like Adobe Premiere Pro, After Effects, and Audition to bring the project to life. Despite technical challenges such as software crashes, I adapted by shifting my focus to Premiere Pro for keyframing and organising my workflow. Adaptive problem solving allowed me to maintain steady progress without losing significant portions of my work, even if it required more time than originally anticipated. My ability to pivot and find solutions when things did not go as planned was a critical aspect of my methodology.

I honed my time management skills, turning what had previously been a weakness into one of my strengths. By setting reminders, alarms and breaking down tasks into manageable chunks, I was able to stay on top of deadlines and ensure consistent progress throughout the project and this allowed me to show progress to my team. Working in various environments such as coffee shops and maintaining a notes page helped me to stay focused and avoid burning out. This method of breaking down larger tasks into smaller pieces made the process more efficient and less overwhelming.

Collaboration was another vital aspect of my workflow. Frequent meetings with my team and our supervisor Nabeel helped keep the project on track. By consistently sharing progress, receiving input, and adjusting based on that feedback, we were able to refine and improve the project at each stage of development. This process ensured the final product was polished and aligned with our creative goals.

While I succeeded in many areas, particularly in asset collection, compositing, and time management, I also identified key areas for improvement. Overlooking small details such as the audio levels and the lack of saving throughout was a weakness I encountered during the project. In future endeavors, I plan to spend more time refining the details and will likely implement more frequent checks to ensure that nothing is overlooked. Overall, this project was an incredible learning experience, teaching me valuable lessons in adaptation, collaboration, and attention to detail. It also highlighted the importance of being flexible with both tools and adjusting methodologies where needed while still staying true to the creative vision. The processes and methodologies I developed and refined during the

production of 'Ground Worms' will carry me into future projects, allowing me to continue to grow as an artist.