

Inseparable Bonds

**A 'mini-feature'/film; written & directed by Lars Magnus Holmgren.
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19 minutes 30 seconds, live-action + CG animation (FULL LENGTH VERSION),
13 minutes 55 seconds, live-action + CG animation (SHORTENED VERSION)

Screenings and Awards:

1. Screened at The Moving Picture Company, London, September 2003
 2. Screened at Bio-Reykjavik in Iceland November 2003. **Won equal-first as 'filmmakers-of-the-month'.**
 3. Awarded 2003 OPIÐ BÍÓ's "**Most-popular International Filmmaker**" (offered only once every four years).
 4. Accepted into the upcoming Bio-Reykjavik 'Best-Of'2003 screenings to be held in February 2004.
 5. Screened in the short-film-festival at AEAFF (Australian Effects and Animation Festival), December 2003.
 6. Nominated for - 'best cutting-edge film' @ BAA (British Animation Awards)
 7. Submitted for screening on the TV- show "Mosquito"; Swedish National Television
 8. Finalist - screenings at Bermuda International Film Festival, March 2004, USA.
 9. Accepted as finalist Fearless Tales Genre Fest, May 2004, USA.
 10. Accepted as finalist into DC Independent Film Festival, April 2004, USA.
 11. Reviewed in 'Broadcast' magazine – February 2004
 12. Included in the Official Selection of the NEW YORK SHORT FILM FESTIVAL, April 2004.
 13. Accepted for screenings at Siggraph (the Animation & Electronic Theatre's), LA USA, August 2004.
 14. Accepted for screenings at The Independent Festival of Digital Arts, Berkley CA, June 2004.
 15. Accepted for screenings at The Brooklyn International Film Festival, Experimental Category, USA, June 2004.
 16. Winner of VIDFEST (Vancouver International Digital Festival) **Critic's Choice Award** in the Experimental/Mixed Media category.
 17. Internet screenings via BIFF in collaboration with Metal Tiger Vision visit: www.metal-tiger.com/mtv.html
 18. Accepted for screenings at Da Vinci Film & Video Festival, Corvallis Oregon, USA, July 2004.
 19. Screened at 'Muppet Talent Time', Beirut Lebanon, June 2004, as part of artistic collaborative.
 20. London Nightclub: DJ Lester Parker screened my work as part of his show "Hoi Polloi", April 2004.
 21. Accepted for screenings at Rhode Island International Film Festival (RIIFF), September 2004.
 22. Awarded the "**Seahorse Award**" for **best short film**; Moondance International Film Festival, May 2004, Boulder Colorado, USA.
 23. Included on the 'Televisual 2004 DVD'; July's issue of the journal
 24. Awarded "**Best Fiction Film**" at San Francisco Short Film Festival 2004.
 25. **Awarded and screened** at Festival Der Nationen, Austria, June 2004.
 26. Accepted for screenings at Shriekfest - International Horror/Science Fiction festival, California, USA, September 2004
 27. Accepted for screenings at Taipei Golden Horse Film Festival - International Digital Shorts Competition, November 2004
 28. Accepted for screenings at Spiritual Film Festival, February 2005, Goa, India
 29. Accepted for screenings at Goteborg Film Festival, as part of the "Mosquito Showcase", January 2005
 30. Screened at Seoul Animateque as part of "Siggraph In Seoul", December 2005
- ARCHIVE: Archived at The University Of Technology, Sydney

Synopsis:

Challenging complacency in the media-arts, Inseparable Bonds offers a fresh sliced alternative to "reality" television, presenting instead "surreality" television.

Like a thorn in the proverbial butt of utopian dreams, Inseparable Bonds serves as a 'tongue-in-cheek' reminder that ultimately perfection in life is acceptance of its inherently imperfect stage.

Our host with the most "Sir Real" interviews his latest special guest, a couple who have merged mind, body, emotions, soul and gender to become the one abominable character - Gareena.

... guaranteed to unclog the arteries of lacklustre television.

Poetic description:

Ladies, gentlethings, reptiles and the dear strange little green things that dance-macabre in the corner of my minds-eye ...

Join us as we tear away the rusted nails that hold down the dank carpet to the stage of reality television, revealing instead the regal magic-carpet ride of surreality television, putting the red into current affairs & ripening them into fruity red-currant affairs.

Dripping with celebrity pastiche, our host with the most, Sir Real, is delighted that you join him on the show Inseparable Bonds, as he interviews his latest guest, Gareena ... tongues stitched firmly in cheek, with a twist of saccharine.

... guaranteed to unclog the arteries of lacklustre television.

Cast:

Helen Watkins – Reena (Gareena character)

Richard Mazda – Gary (Gareena character)

Stewart Harvey-Wilson – Sir Real.

Michelle Ricci – Queen Lady Beetle (dance reference for the 3D beetle)

Director – Lars Magnus Holmgren

Producer – Dominic Buttimore

Sound Design – We Write Music Ltd (Oliver Davis and Bouke Visser)

Camera & Lighting – Matt Lee-Redman

Editor – Alan Andrews

Cast Representation – Olivia Bell Ltd

3D Animation - Lars Magnus Holmgren

Stage Manager and Gaffer – Robert Le Merle

Assistant stage Manager – Michelle Ricci

Makeup – Cat Martin

Titles Design/Credits Design - Lars Magnus Holmgren

2D Pre Visualisation – Andrew (Ziggy) Ziggourias, Christophe Allender, Paul O’Shea

Digital Compositing - Lars Magnus Holmgren

Steady Tracking – Francois Gilguy, Lars Magnus Holmgren, Ric Comline, Nick Seresin

Digital Matte Cutting – Richard McKeand

Key Grip – Jonathan Coutts

3D Particle R&D – Greg Massie

Data Management – Paul Stocker, Sal Umerji, Paul Brannan.

Bookings- Sam Davidson, Oliver Money, Sharrudin Rosunally

Blue-screen Facilities – Centrestage Studios Ltd

Notes on the Sir Real character:

Sir Real has all the "smarm-charm" of a television chat-show host yet moves like a cool Jazz-jack-in-the-box.

Picture Fred Etaire, Jim Carrey in The Mask and the "Willy Wonka" character played by Gene Wilder in Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, all rolled into one.

Sir Real is able to shift between realms ... he is like a holographic projection from a faulty projector that keeps threatening to erase his image from (existential) existence. This is visually portrayed by the 'electric-aura' effect and further enhanced by sound effects as distortion (out-of-tune-radio) to his voice.

Note: See below also for paragraph on "time displacement".

Notes on the Gareena character:

Audience expectation was a point of focus. I wanted the character Gareena to traverse the roads of personality - from banality, eccentric hobbies and fetish, antagonistic retaliation to attempts at enlightening the viewers by preaching their brand of esoteric visionary philosophy. The idea being that this personality-merger has allowed for a quantum evolutionary leap in mind, yet the residue of egotistical patterns and habitual hangovers still linger on with their now united persona. I wanted a personality that the audience find difficult to categorise.

I wanted the screenplay and the characters therein to traverse the roads of the familiar and the peculiar, self and the selfless, time and the timeless.

The Post-Operative self, Gareena:

I drew reference from many sources, The Dr Who "Davros" character, Max Headroom, Bladerunner, Frankenstein's monster, the Hannibal Lecter character (especially the close-up psychoanalytic dialogue between 'Claris' and 'Lecter') and Pin-Head from Hellraiser. This was all shaken and stirred with dollops of sub-cultural references, varied human cultural trends and esoteric philosophy.

Gareena is 'wired' in such a way as to allow a total fusing of their former individual selves, becoming the one entity, although, I envision that the surgery required was a secretive 'backyard' affair, using cutting-edge (futuristic/sci-fi) technology yet rushed in such a way as to leave wounds unstitched, and no time to monitor the operation's success, hence there is a sense that they are like a human-'dada' sculpture, slowly decaying/self-destructing. Another side effect is that their guiding 'willpower' could not be successfully merged.

Sometimes they communicate effectively as one, talking in unison, although more often than not the 'will' of one character often drowns out the other's so as one speaks the other will go into a catatonic sleep and then wake up to complete the sentence ... Sparks and flames show their willpower entangled with heated emotions creating short-circuits in the machinery.

Like a thorn in the proverbial butt of utopian dreams, the Gareena character serves as a 'tongue-in-cheek' reminder that ultimately perfection in life is acceptance of its inherently imperfect stage.

Gareena's habitat/dwelling:

Existing within a fish aquarium, like a mini-mobile-home with skateboard trucks and wheels, driven by a mish-mash of lawn-mower parts with motorcycle engine, they live like sci-fi cyber-nomads of the particularly freakish kind. They are able to use their combined power of psyche to operate this vehicle.

Time displacement:

Time is a vital ingredient in what I envision "surreality TV" to be about. The treatment and overall production dynamics attempt to draw the viewer through that proverbial vacuum in time and space ... a wormhole linking futuristic concepts with ancestral memory.

I used variations in the grade from full lush TK colour to 1930's sepia and B&W complete with scratches and camera shake. The audio also reflects this transition.

Inseparable Bonds - (notes on treatment):

- live action with 3D-CG + 2D effects/compositing.
- sophisticated seamless merging of live-action with cg elements and environment.
- Shake was used to composit all scenes.
- Inferno was used for pre-visualisation techniques.
- Maya (Unlimited) was used for all 3D animation.
- Photoshop and Matador was used to create textures.
- Digital camera was used to take reference stills for the 'outro' sequence.
- All Live Action was shot using Mini-Dv and then graded using Shake.
- Final tweaks to grade was added via telecine.

The stage for "Sir Real" is a 3D environment. The character was shot on blue-screen and composited into the cg environment. The levitating/hovering flat-screen monitor was modelled and animated using Maya. Shadow passes were raytraced out using Maya and then composited using Shake. Attention to details such as refractions and reflections of the live action into the glass tv-panel was essential in marrying the live-action with the cg environment and foreground elements. The 'follow-spot' effect was achieved using Maya lighting/fog effect and further enhanced by compositing 'live-action' dust using Shake.

The two "heads" (Gareena character) were achieved by mapping steady-tracked footage (stabilised using Shake) of the actors onto 3D geometry. Inverse kinematics was then used to control the neck rotations. Since this is such a dialogue intensive movie, a smart way to bring these two characters to life was essential. Animating the heads with a 3D lip-sync solution would have been an extremely time-intensive affair (especially considering there was only one animator). Also, achieving a highly 'natural'/'photo-realistic' result was considered important, with subtleties such as muscular deformation, wrinkles and skin-folds, dialect quirks needed attention. Therefore, the chosen solution was to shoot the heads in a relatively steady position, with tracking markers in key positions. This footage was steady-tracked using Shake and then projected onto 3D geometry. The lighting of the live-action was carefully considered so that the heads would work effectively with the 3D-rig. The 3D heads were modelled using image-planes as a guide to allow for accurate facial features. Attention to detail such as lighting and shadow subtleties was all-important in seamlessly merging the live-action maps to the 3D-rig. Two variations of the model was built for each head, a detailed one for the 'outro' sequence as they hoon off in their strange vehicle/mobile home and a less-detailed one for the dialogue intensive 'interview' scenes. During the scene where the vehicle turns and races off, I used Maya 'blend-shapes' to create an effective morph transition from the less-detailed heads to the detailed heads. Sparks and flames were then added (tracked into position using Shake) in the compositing stage to add further kick.

The Gareena-vehicle (mobile home) was modelled based on various reference such as a fish-aquarium, skateboard wheels + trucks, motorcycle and car engine parts. The exhaust smoke was rendered using Maya particles and then composited using Shake.

Particles were developed for the holographic-"aura" effect on the Sir Real character. The aim was that he was to shift in and out of the immediate staged-reality like a projection from a sophisticated yet faulty holographic-projector.

The 'Lady-Beetle' was based on a dance ritual by and actress. This footage was then brought in as image planes, thus the animation was based closely on Michelle's dance and then exaggerated by having her leap high into the air etc. Ik animation was used for the dance sequence. Hires digital-stills were then treated in Photoshop and used as maps, projected onto the polygonal model. The 3D beetle was built to match the proportions of Michelle. Subdivisional accuracy was then increased for the final render. The wing textures were painted using Photoshop whilst the shells were created using Maya - procedural textures.

The 'helicopter-chickens' were modelled and textured based on stills taken with a digi-stills camera. Maya was used to model and animate these creatures.

The 'fog' was rendered in several layers using Maya.

Depth maps (rendered via Maya) were all important in achieving the required depth-of-field.

All shadows for the 'outro sequence' were rendered (raytraced) via Maya and composited using Shake.

The sound design was invaluable in providing the beat, pulse and mood for the movie. Many hours were spent designing and then spotting sound-effects to match the 'sparks', 'flames', 'fireworks', head rotations, electrocution effect, aura effect and hi-tech machinery of the 'heads', Sir Real and the multi-layered 'outro' sequence.