

KARAN SETIYA &
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A Comic Story

A Multimedia project by Karan Setiya and Yasin Yildirim

Having superhuman abilities is something that we all have dreamt of or fantasized about. May be because of all the superhero movies, cartoons, comic books or action figures, or is it because life is just too hard that we need to fantasize about these powers to escape from reality. Superpowers actually give a person 'power' in the sense that they are/feel superior to the rest. Is this something that we as man desire; Superiority above all? Perhaps it is just an innocent fantasy. For some reason it is the childhood fantasy or dream of almost every young boy.

In just about every superhero story there is a main character that is insecure, or can't quite get that thing in life that he desires most. Once they acquire the superpower, they are able to realize their hopes and dreams, however there is always a sense of humanity; a sense of justice or conscious that tells the person to do what is good with their powers.

The most popular stories are obliged to set an example for young children; this might explain the sense of justice and humanity in these stories. However, most people today might not use their powers for good, we can name some examples from politics and history: A. Hitler, J. Stalin, G.W. Bush (it might be over the top to put former-president Bush in this line-up, but the point is made). Real life just isn't that easy. We could categorize these people to 'villains' if we were to set them in a 'superhero setting'. In short, the stories are about heroes and villains with a strong moral backdrop of doing the 'right thing' and good versus evil.

Taking this format we started to brainstorm about how we could incorporate this into an interactive video. In real life we are able to choose what we want to do with our 'powers' (these powers being: opportunities, money, responsibility etc.). A user of this video should be able to choose what they want to do with their powers; flipping the whole concept of a pre-chosen path or storyline. This became the foundation of our project.

Sticking with the original 'format' of a superhero story would be best because users would have a familiar feeling with the video. Thus we built a concept of two geeky guys obtaining superpowers. The main characters are played by us and we shot most of the footage ourselves. We tried to be as creative as possible regarding the story; which became a mix of different existing stories with our own fantasy.

To summarize the story in a few lines: Two geeky guys have the dream of making a highly advanced superhero suit. They work hard to realize this dream and actually succeed. They celebrate by going out to get the latest release of their favorite comic book when something strange happens; they find a box from another planet and get superpowers from an alien tribe leader named Pando. They get to choose a different superpower everyday for three days. What would a superhero story be without villains? Obviously we have incorporated villains in the story to add to the excitement and adventure.

Each day faces them with new choices and situations where they experience different things. The moral of our story is to be yourself; you don't need superpowers to be happy. Being yourself and being confident about yourself is impressive as it is.

Whenever we see a superhero story we naturally put ourselves in the position of the main character. You might have thought to yourselves: 'I would have done that differently'. This is the main thought that drove us to set up the choices in the video. The choices that the user of the video can make are based upon the critical moments of a superhero: Choosing between right and wrong (what is 'right and wrong' in a given situation?). That is a discussion that I will discern here.

Super strength, invisibility and the power of flight are the powers incorporated in this project. As there are many more powers to choose from these are three of the main powers that most people are familiar with; which is why we chose these powers. This idea has so much potential that many new interpretations of this concept could be made. Which is why we would like to invite others to create something based on this concept, this could, in our opinion, lead to very interesting and entertaining projects.

Every time that there is a moment to make a choice in the application, you have 2 choices. One of them is good of noble, while the other one is bad or selfish. This way you can test yourself in the way that you would react in given situation (obviously it is no scientific or significant testing, however it is a way to get you thinking).

Working with Ximpel was new and fun. We had many possibilities to use programming skills along with the interactivity of the video. However, we had put so much time and effort in shooting, and editing the film material itself, that we did not have time left to invest in Flex. Configuring the application and creating the playlist in Ximpel was fairly easy. With some knowledge of html/xml and programming, this was not too difficult. Also it is a very positive point that Flex and Ximpel can be used as elaborately of as simple as you would like. With little programming skill you can build a very nice interactive application by modifying given examples. This is what we did and it worked out pretty well. If we had some more time we might have dove into the programming side of this software. However for now, we are satisfied with the result.

Our focus group for this video is primarily young males up to the age of approximately 25. Because this group will relate to the story the most and will have their childhood feelings brought back to life. Being able to choose in the various situations will give the experience a whole new dimension and will become even more exciting to the user.

We have seen that our fantasy runs farther than the hours in a day or the equipment and energy at hand, however we have tried to make this project as fun, interactive and creative as we could. This multimedia-project is a great closing of the first year for IMM-students because you get a lot of freedom to be as creative as you want and create something that you really enjoy working (hard) on.

We have enjoyed creating it and have tried to inspire others and introduce a new concept of self-awareness in a fun way.