Wicked Ways: A Case Study

1. Project Overview

Title:
Wicked Ways

Client/Brand:
This was a personal project created to showcase my growth in animation and video editing over the three years of the Micromedia program.

Project Goals & Objectives:
The main goal was to create a short animated film that reflects my skills in After Effects, focusing on storytelling, animation, visual effects, and sound design. I wanted the film to feel cohesive and impactful by syncing the story progression closely with music and sound effects.

My Role:
I was responsible for everything — concept development, animation, editing, sound mixing, special effects, and rendering.

Timeline:
I worked on this during our entire March break, having completed the storyboard 2 weeks before then.

2. Problem Statement

Design Challenge:
The biggest challenge was achieving perfect timing between animations and music beats to enhance the emotional flow of the story. Another major challenge was rendering such a complex file with Adobe Media Encoder, which initially couldn't handle the full project in one go.

Target Audience:
This project was meant for anyone interested in short animated storytelling, particularly fans of fantasy, supernatural themes, and emotional narratives.
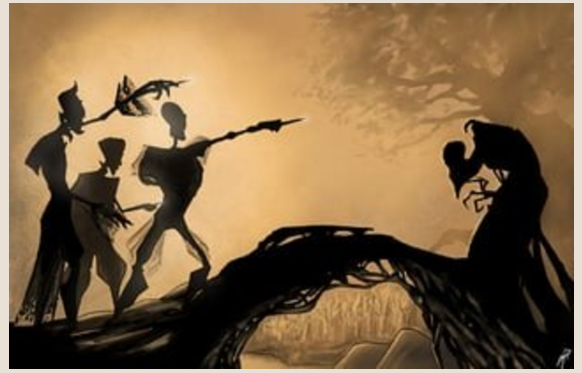
Harry Potter and the Deathly Hollows-Part 2 (2011)

Practical Magic (1998)

Sleeping Beauty (1959)

Pan's Labrynth (2006)

3. Research & Inspiration

Competitive Analysis:
While I didn't do formal competitive research, I drew inspiration from fantasy films like Sleeping Beauty (1959) and Pan's Labrynth (2006), Practical Magic (1998) and Harry Potter (2001-2011) because those are the type of movies I grew up with. I also paid attention to how timing, transitions, and effects were used to enhance emotional storytelling.

Moodboards/Concept Exploration:
I brainstormed visual themes like dark forests, medieval villages, magic lightning, and fire, elements that could bring supernatural energy and emotional impact to the story.

User Insights:
Since this was a personal project, user research wasn't formal. However, I did reflect on audience expectations for pacing and visual storytelling in short fantasy films.

④ Design Process

Initial Sketches/Concepts:
I first mapped out the story arc of the witch's mistreatment and revenge. I also storyboarded key scenes where major effects would occur like the fire, lightning powers, and disintegration.

Refinement Process:
I constantly shifted the timing of animations to match music beats. I also edited the original music track by cutting and rearranging parts so that the audio fit the final length of the film without feeling abrupt.

Tools & Techniques:
After Effects: Main animation and editing
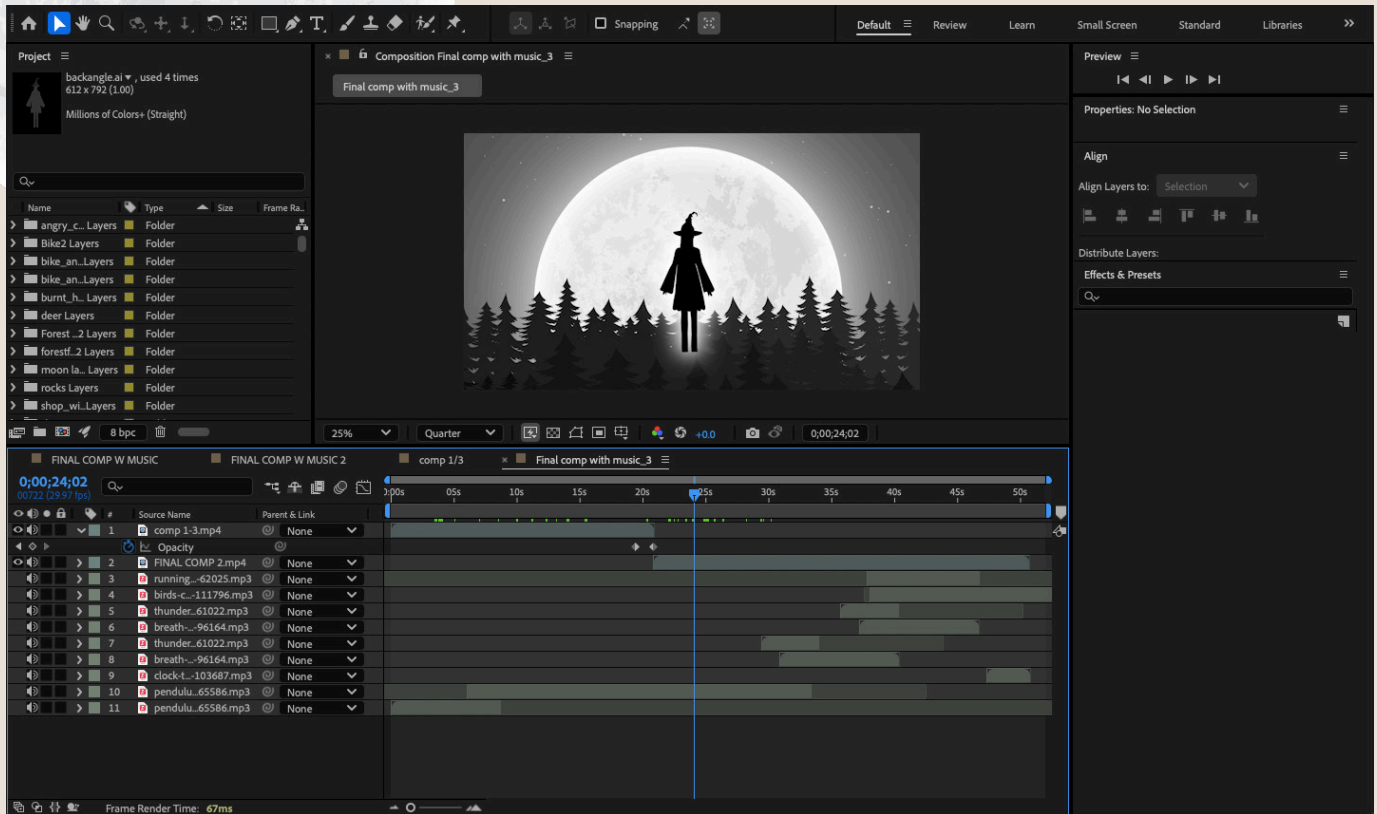**Adobe Media Encoder:** Rendering (after troubleshooting)
Sound Editing: Mixing ambient sounds (sigh, footsteps, birds) into the music for more depth
YouTube Tutorials: I learned new techniques like whip pan transitions, energy effects, and disintegration animations.

# Character Design

Editing Process

5. Final Product

Key Features & Solutions:

- Dynamic, music-synced animations for a stronger emotional impact
- Seamless special effects that match the supernatural theme
- Creative problem-solving in post-production to ensure the project could be fully redered without sacrificing quality

Scan for Final Video!

Stills from Wicked Ways:
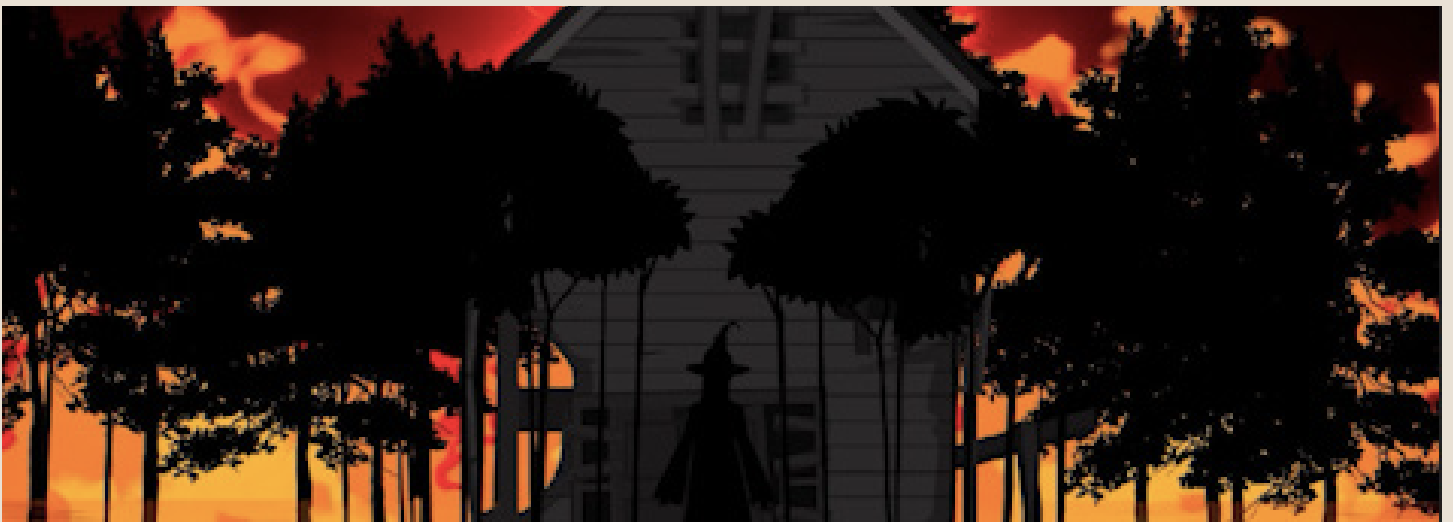
6. Results & Impact

Client Feedback:

Since this was a personal project, there was no external client. However, personally, I was very proud of what I achieved, especially considering all the new techniques I learned and applied successfully.

Metrics or Success Indicators:

The biggest indicator of success was that I finished a technically and emotionally challenging project without major compromises, despite serious rendering issues.

Personal Reflection:

This project pushed me to problem-solve at a professional level. I learned:

*   How important animation timing is in storytelling.
*   How to re-edit music tracks creatively.
*   How to optimize heavy project files for rendering.
*   How to self-learn advanced techniques and apply them organically into a story.

The fact that I overcame the rendering problem without giving up or significantly downgrading the final product was a huge personal win.

7. Conclusion

Takeaways:

This project is a great representation of my growth in animation, editing, and problem-solving. It reflects my personal design aesthetic — emotionally-driven storytelling enhanced by bold visual and audio effects

Refinement Process:Next Steps/Other Projects:

Completing this short film has encouraged me to pursue even more complex animation projects. It showed me that I have the determination, patience, and creativity to bring ambitious ideas to life, no matter the technical obstacles.