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**FOUR OUT OF SEVEN
CREATING THE EXPERIENCE OF THE UNKNOWN**

A Production Thesis

By

Rico L. Beard

A THESIS

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree of**

MASTERS OF ARTS

Department of Telecommunication

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ABSTRACT

FOUR OUT OF SEVEN CREATING THE EXPERIENCE OF THE UNKNOWN

By

Rico L. Beard

This thesis looks into the methods used to create the experience of the unknown within the science fiction genre. The process starts by placing the viewer in a familiar situation, then causes them to experience a paradigm shift moving the unknown within the science fiction genre. It places the viewer into realm of the unknown. The production aesthetic used in this thesis were:

- 1. writing**
- 2. monochrome color**
- 3. use of on-screen and off-screen space**
- 4. blocking**
- 5. canted camera angles**

Though the creation of the unknown is not limited to those five items, they are key elements within the thesis.

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Four Out of Seven
Creating the Experience of the Unknown
By
Rico Beard

Introduction

Creating the experience of the unknown," is what science fiction programs attempt to do. This is achieved through suspending reality, as we know it and simply asking the question "what if"? Carl Freedman in Style, Fiction, Science Fiction: The Case of Philip Dick (1992, pg.4), says science fiction is based on a ratio of 80/20 where the 80 represents every day real life and the 20 touches on subjects that are improbable or expand the horizons of the mind.

In this thesis, I will demonstrate the formulas and patterns that are used to create science fiction programming that has become successful. As the thesis illustrates, there is not just one way to create a successful science fiction program; it shows a variety of ways to make one program a success. A good analogy would be to think of creating science fiction as you would a recipe for chili. There are many forms of chili from mild to red-hot and from meatless to turkey. It depends on the chef's taste and what the person is trying to accomplish. Similar with science fiction; there are a few key elements necessary to make the program successful, but after that it is up to the creator to orchestrate the experience he wants his desired audience to have.

The research chapter of the thesis addresses the key concepts that many programs have in common. It also illustrates the importance and functions of each concept, including why the story must have something to which an audience can relate. This section also contains analysis of existing science fiction programs and how they incorporate these concepts within their stories.

The methods' chapter of the thesis demonstrates how I incorporate the concepts and ideas discussed in the research chapter and in the design of my program. Every aspect of the program is carefully examined to show why each step is made and to point out its significance to the overall project. This includes the initial idea, the writing of the script where many of the concepts are present, the production of the program, and the work of the post-production.

The results' chapter of the thesis describes the finished creative piece Four Out of Seven, as well as an evaluation by industry professionals.

The discussion chapter of the thesis reflects on the creative design of Four out of Seven in terms of the research question.

Chapter One

Review of Literature

The goal the creator of science fiction is to create a text through which the participant will question the ordinary and begin to explore the unknown to him. This is important because without exploring the unknown, participants will not be able to experience a reality outside of the norms in which they live. Learning Theory (1974) written by psychologist James McConnell expresses that when a creator establishes a story with characters a participant can relate to, the past experiences of the participants can be used to construct the desire experience. This function is vital in science fiction writings because it allows the readers/viewers to enter into a world similar to their own to establish a comfort level and only then can an unknown variable be introduced successfully.

Science fiction goes beyond the superficial and dares you to think thoughts you never thought before. As Isaac Asimov points out in Science Fiction and the Future (1953, pg. 157), it does not limit itself to the real, but imaginatively explores all possibilities that can be conceived. It invites you to leave behind everything you know to be factual or true and experience a different perspective of the world. In this created world nothing is assumed or taken for granted, for in this world anything is possible. There is no right or wrong, because who is to say what is right and what is wrong when everything is possible.

Clarence Williams said in the movie Tales for Hood, “sometimes reality is

just a matter of perception.” I feel this quote epitomizes the science fiction genre. By simply asking one question, science fiction views normal situations from a new perspective. That question is “what if”. By asking “what if,” the text allows us to crossover and begins explore things that are unknown to us. Science fiction attempts to create the experience of experiencing the unknown because everyday life is filled with unexplainable situations and unanswerable questions. For example, is there such a thing as ghost? Are there other forms of life besides life of the earth? Did dinosaurs really exist and if they did, what made them extinct? Is there life after death? Can animals communicate with humans? Science fiction takes those questions such as this and develops them into interesting story lines.

The motion picture Jurassic Park addressed the issue of dinosaurs and the existence of them with humans. Television shows such as Star Trek, The Next Generation, Deep Space Nine, and Star Trek-Voyager focus on what life would be like in the future. These television programs show ordinary people traveling in space, exploring new territories and interacting with new and different life forms. Yet, while they are exploring new worlds, they still face many of the same problems we face today...interpersonal relationships, racism, greed. This is a key tool in the construction made by successful creators.

The creator must create the experience of the unknown by placing some familiarity for the desired audience in the construction. David Brin in Waging War with Reality (1992) argues that a simply constructed story based solely on aspects and nuances of science fiction will cause a show to fail. A vital element for successful

science fiction is to have characters with human traits whether they are made of flesh and blood or not. The creator does not want to make characters that are totally invincible. Think of Superman: the man of steel who possesses supernatural power has vulnerabilities that he must overcome. Besides refraining from the obvious kryptonite, which instantly neutralizes his powers, he must deal with the fact that having his super powers came at the ultimate price. Because his world was destroyed and he was the only survivor, he may never actually see his parents or live in the original world where he was born.

The television program Monsters had a short life because it focused more on the monsters and less on the people combating these monsters. In contrast, programs that are based more on “reality” have more success. Programs such as Star Trek-Next Generation, Twilight Zone, Outer Limits (both old and new) and HBO’s Tales from the Crypt followed this formula and became successful. These programs begin the story in “reality” with characters that appear to be no different than you or I. One can identify with them regardless of whether it’s comradely, hate, or envy. You feel this way because they are facing the same problems and limitations of everyday life. Brin shows an example of this as the android Lt. Commander Data, of Star Trek- Generation. Data is little more than Pinocchio updated to the twenty-fourth century. Like Gepetto’s wooden son, he longs to learn all those indefinable human traits like happiness and depression, for which he’d gladly trade all of his impressive powers.

Once we are immersed in the process of familiarity, the construction changes

causing a paradigm shift. At this point the participant leaves the eighty percent of the show that represents “real life” and travels to the twenty percent that deals with subjects that expand the horizons of the mind. As Carl Freedman writes in Style, Fiction, and Science Fiction: The Case of Philip K. Dick (1992), successful programs follow this formula. A typical Twilight Zone program shows an example of this.

With the rumor of a large-scale war eminent, two families decide their only recourse for survival is to jump on a private plane and flee to better place. The two men keep their plans secret from their families until the day of the departure. The two men bribe security guards in order to gain access to the plane. Everything was set until one of their co-workers overheard their plans and decided he is going to steal the plane from the families and fly to safety. His plan was thwarted when the daughter of one of families knocked the gun away from their would be attacker. The families quickly ran to the plane and board. It is here where the paradigm shifts begins. We find out that the plane is a space ship and the families are headed to a small planet called Earth. As the story begins, we assumed the characters were on Earth since they appeared to be human. We begin to identify with the families and cheer them onto safety because they could easily be our family or our next door neighbors. It is only at the very end that we realize the two families are beings from another planet. We are drawn in to believe that they are flying to another country only to see that they are about to embark on travel to a different galaxy.

Another step in constructing a desired viewer’s experience in the world of science fiction is to create and illustrate with more than one interpretation of its

meaning. Using our previous Twilight Zone example we see that the initial story line is two families fleeing to better surroundings. If we take a deeper look we see a story dealing with theft and envy. Also, there is a story about how people coming together can overcome adversary. L. Sprague DeCamp in Imaginative Fiction and Creative Imagination (1953) best explains the reason for multiple interpretations. He says, “Before a thinker can conjure up associations he has to have associations to conjure up- a storehouse of memories which he could use as a source for his combinations (pg. 17).” This is essential because it shows that once the unknown is known the meaning is still ambiguous.

Many successful science fiction programs have another important characteristic. The programs “hail” their audience at the very beginning of the show. It constructs the subject position both visually and with audio. Visually, the hail starts a “conversation” with science fiction viewers by showing them a non-traditional opening. The opening could consist of a variety of shots such as shots of outer space or other improbable occurrences such as a hand growing from a tree or a puppet talking to us. Such an opening prepares viewers to open their minds and expand their parameters. Vocally the host or narrator lets you know that you are headed on a journey where the destination is unknown. The Twilight Zone, Outer Limits, Alfred Hitchcock Presents, Star Trek series, Tales from the Crypt, and Night Gallery all followed this process and successfully aired for many seasons.

The theories that are best suited for the construction of my science fiction program is Wolfgang Iser’s (Iser, 1993) gap theory and Herbert Zettl’s (Zettl, 1990)

use of aesthetics. Gap Theory explains science fiction structure perfectly. First of all Iser says that an effective way of constructing text is to start off with something with which your audience is familiar with and then gradually moves them into unknown territory. Secondly, Gap Theory constructs a text of information, both given and hidden, through the use of blanks and negations. The blanks build the story in one direction. Blanks are equivalent to the word “and”. An example of this would be “ I went to the store and bought some bread and then I went home.” Negations are used to change the story lines and are considered to be like the word “but”. In reference to the early example “...and then I went home but I ran out of gas on the way home.” The story has now changed its focus of a trip to the store to a car running out of gas. It is critical for science fiction that it leads you in one direction only to shift and move you into a different direction.

Chapter Two

Method

Program

When constructing my project Four Out of Seven, gap theory was used to create the desired experience for my audience. The story takes place in a pool hall, which looks like any other which could be found in any neighborhood. Inside the hall we see it is closing time and the only people still there are the manager, custodian, and the two regulars. The two regulars begin to argue over who is the better player. During the argument we find out that one of the men is in a rocky marriage and the other is single and somewhat lonely. We also discover the two men are heavy compulsive gamblers. The story continues on with scenes of connecting blanks (“and”). It appears that the story will be about the two pool players.

Our first negation then occurs. The manager appears to be tired of hearing the argument about who is the better pool player so he volunteers to put up ten thousand dollars if they will play eight eight-ball to see who’s better. The two consent to the agreement and sign a contract. The focus of the story now shifts from the players to the game of eight-ball where the winner receives ten thousand dollars.

The story continues in a new direction until we arrive at another negation, which causes a high paradigm shift. The two gentlemen find out that their game is based on even higher stakes than the ten thousand they agreed upon. With this

negation, the unknown is starting to be revealed. We find out that the manager is an agent for the Devil and that the loser of the game must relinquish his soul to the devil. The story is now treading in the territory the unfamiliar. We have creatively been drawn into the world of science fiction.

The next negation occurs when the two gentlemen, with the help of the custodian figured out a way to beat the devil. The story leads us to the point where the audience should feel relieved because it appears that neither of the two men will lose his soul. Yet, the story shifts again because of another negation. The two pool players find out that they were set up and even though they didn't lose: the manager and custodian were damned to spend the rest of their lives in the pool hall because they had consented to the same deal earlier in their lives and they never finished their game either. They were told their only recourse would be to find two people to take their place. The audience should know realize the actual battle placed the two players against the manager and custodian. The unknown has been revealed.

Using gap theory, a text was structured to construct the world of science fiction. Blanks and negations were used to gradually guide the viewer through an experience. Zettl's media aesthetics were also used to guide the viewer in creating an experience of experiencing the unknown.

Aesthetic Structure

Aesthetically several steps are used to visually construct the unknown within the text. First, the text is constructed in black and white. This is vagueness. For example, one often hears people talk about a “gray area” of a particular subject, which means those areas are not clearly defined. Since science fiction deals with areas that are not clearly defined, it appears appropriate that the media text be in monochrome causing everything to be cast in shades of gray. The other reason for using monochrome was to cause the viewer to focus on the internals of the story, rather than on the external environment (Zettl, 1990) p. 79

Another aesthetic step taken was to focus only on the two pool players until the paradigm shift begins. This is done by purposefully excluding the custodian and manager from the camera so that the viewer only sees the two players. The viewer sees the two players talking and arguing in a combination of single shot, two shots, and over the shoulder shots. These force viewers to focus on the two players because they only see the manager and custodian briefly until the bet is made.

The use of limited space and representation were very important. The majority of the media text takes places at the cashier’s table, which represents a pool table. The characters interact with each other within that space which is similar to pool balls interacting on a table. The custodian represents wisdom and becomes the catalyst to the action; he can be seen as the white cue ball. The two

pool players are manipulated throughout the entire text so, needless to say, they represent the stripes and the solid balls. The manager, appearing to be evil and stationary until the end of the story, represents the eight-ball. The manager and the custodian walk out the door and, as with the eight-ball, if sunk along with the cue ball, the game is over. Whoever caused it loses.

Through the use of Iser's gap theory and Zettl's media aesthetics, I have constructed a media text that creates the experience of the unknown.

Sound

There were different elements to the use of sound that can be focused on in Four Out of Seven. The first aspect is the use of off-camera narration. The off-camera narration was a means to supply the viewer with additional information. (Zettl 1990, p. 342) Off-camera narration simply means that the viewer only hears and does not see the narrator. The narrator was used to set and describe the scene at the beginning of the program. Conversely, his words were used to bring closure to the story.

Sound was also used to establish off-screen space. An excellent example of this technique was in the montage of Dave and Mo playing pool against each other. In the montage, the viewer only sees a medium close-up of the two men and not the game on the pool table. The game is referred to by the sound of the balls falling into the pockets. This leaves the audience to assume that the two men are playing a

game of pool.

Music was another element of sound used in Four Out of Seven. According to Zettl in Sight, Sound and Motion, music is one of the most direct ways of establishing a certain mood. Ominous music is played throughout Four Out of Seven. This type of music was selected to enhance the viewer's sense of danger and darkness. The volume of the music steadily increases with the suspense in the program.

Evaluation

The method chosen to evaluate this creative piece was a panel discussion. This was the best method because it made it possible to collect more complex information, qualify answers and generally obtain results with a greater "depth". Nick Moore in How To Do Research reiterates this point when he states that the main advantage of a panel discussion is that it provides an opportunity for matters to be discussed in depth.

Chapter Three

Results

Part 1: Producing Four Out of Seven

Scriptwriting

I would start this off by saying the most difficult stage in creating a science fiction drama is the initial idea, but as you will soon see, every stage in creating science fiction is difficult. I will say this: it took me two months just to come up with the initial idea and story line. Coming up with an original story is nonexistent just as there is no such thing as an original song. The trick is to come up with a different variation of an existing story.

Originally, my script was going to entail two pool hustlers who make a deal with the devil himself. The two would be locked into the contract with no way out until the janitor, who happens to be an angel saves them from eternal damnation. The reason why a religious theme was chosen is because it has always been and will remain mysterious. If you think about it, the Bible could be interpreted as being full of science fiction stories. For example, there is the story of a talking serpent in the Garden of Eden, of Moses holding back the waters of the Red Sea, and of Jesus feeding over 5000 people with two loaves of bread and five fish. I feel the miracles and events that took place in the Bible are accepted by most but with the understanding that those types of things can't happen today. The problem with

that way of thinking is that nowhere in the Bible did it say that miracles and strange events would cease to exist. On the other hand, if I were to say that I can cause the sun to stop shining for three days, people would call me crazy much like the Egyptians did of Moses. I say all of this to point out the fact that I believe religion is the epitome of science fiction because it deals with the known and the unknown. Consequently if many accept the stories in the Bible to be true, then why not accept science fiction as another outlet for the truth.

As the script began to progress, one fact was becoming evident. The equipment at my disposal was not adequate to perform the tasks that my mind envisioned. I wanted Gabby, the angel, to just disappear after he saved the two hustlers, but it could not be done effectively and yet be aesthetically pleasing. This caused me to rewrite the story by coming at it from a different angle.

Instead of having the actual devil and an angel in the story, why not have Lou and Gabby be represented by actual people who somehow got tangled into a never-ending game of pool? Since the game never ends, no one loses a soul to the devil, though they do suffer consequences. The two are damned to live out the rest of their lives in the pool hall. Their only recourse is either finish the game or finds someone else to take their place, this they do with the two pool hustlers.

Once I figured out the ending, I then constructed the story in reverse order. This was done so that each step would be logical, concise (since it is a short story), and believable. I know where I wanted to start and where I wanted the story to end and going in the reverse order allowed me to stay true to my revamped story and

not to stray.

After the story line was completed, it now came time to construct the script. In following the patterns of successful science fiction shows, I knew the style of writing was critical in producing effective science fiction. The script was constructed with multi-tier level of depth allowing readers/viewers to get as much out of it as they wanted. On the surface the screenplay is a lesson on where greed and male ego can lead. Two self-centered, trash-talking pool hustlers who rush into a situation without considering the repercussions characterize this. There is also ageism and classism at work. Mo and Dave, the two hustlers, were more respectful of Lou, the proprietor of the pool hall. This is because they view Lou as their peer. Conversely, they were less respectful of Gabby because they view him as a janitor who was beneath them, even though he is the voice of reason and wisdom.

On a deeper level you find out that there is a game going on within a game. The game of eight-ball that Mo and Dave are playing is really secondary. The primary game is the battle, which teams Lou and Gabby against Mo and Dave where the losers lose their souls. Lou and Gabby realize the only way they can leave the pool hall is to find two replacements. Lou seizes the opportunity by enticing Mo and Dave into the deadly agreement. At first, Gabby is reluctant in recruiting the two. As the story progresses, he realizes that the inevitable, that the two men will foolishly take the bet, so he decides to play along to make sure the two do not finish their game.

The character names also play a key part in reflecting their personalities.

Lou is an authority figure who is deceptive and manipulative. He is similar to the devil whose real name is Lucifer. Gabby is a wise but meek man who is always looking out for your best interest. He is based on the arch-angel Gabriel. Mo and Dave are excellent pool players but are flawed with sins of arrogance and greed. They are similar to Moses and David in the Bible who are great men but had to pay a great price for their flaws.

The entire script took close to two months to write. The most difficult period was a three-week stretch where I had trouble making the transition from the build-up to the climax. The question was how I could get Mo and Dave, the pool hustlers, to trade places with Lou and Gabby. After three weeks and a vacation in Atlanta, the answer came to me. Mo and Dave would each win three games. Subsequently during this time Lou and Gabby would drop hints using the word “tie”. Also during this time Lou would reveal what happens to the loser.

The next step was finding a suitable location. The biggest concerns here were time, money (or the lack thereof), and the pool room layout. Several pool and billiards establishments were checked out, but the MSU Union adequately fulfilled my standard and became the least of all evils. The major problem with the Union’s Billiard Room was that it had too many pool tables. I had to confine the room to appear to have only a few tables, which I was able to do and by doing this, a great idea came to surface. Instead of showing the entire room, I would usually show only the pool table, the counter where Lou was sitting and just the space between the two objects. Metaphysically speaking that entire area would represent the confined area

of a real life pool table. This also means the characters now became real life pool balls. Mo and Dave represent the solid and striped balls because those are the ones that get manipulated. Gabby represents the cue ball for two reasons. The color of the cue ball is white which usually means good and throughout the story it appears that Gabby is the one who is trying to prevent the men from falling in the trap. The second reason is, because the action does not really start until Gabby walks into picture then the story line starts to develop. This is similar to the way a cue ball is used to break at the beginning of a pool game.

Lou represents the eight-ball. The eight-ball is usually stationary until the end of the game when a player shoots on it. Consequently, Lou stayed behind the counter until the end of the game. Once the eight-ball is removed from the table the game is over and when Lou walks out of the room with Gabby, the game is over. Mo and Dave are the losers.

Casting

The next step in this process was the casting of characters. Through the help of a telecommunication graduate student Hal Widlansky, I was able to secure theater department graduate students to act in Four out of Seven. One July 16, 1995 auditions were held and by the end of the day, the cast was set.

Production

The production shoot took place on November 12, 1995 at the MSU Union's

The Cue. The crew consisted of a videographer, a steady-cam operator and his assistant, a boom mic operator, a production assistant and of course, me the director. The equipment used to create this science fiction illusion consisted of two S-VHS cameras, a boom mic, a lighting kit, and a monitor.

Lighting the set was a difficult task because I knew the final product would be in monochrome. The challenge came in constructing shadows to set the appropriate mood. In the beginning of the sketch everyone was well lit. Later, during the signing of the contract, Lou becomes darker. This is done with the use of a blue gel. The change in lighting adds to the negation of the story.

The blocking for this story had to be carefully constructed. I wanted to use character movement to cause shifts and changes (negations) in the story. As stated in the previous chapter, the four characters represented different pool balls. Gabby's blocking was the most calculated of the four. He represented the cue ball and therefore was the catalyst for all the action. The overall key was to play a pool game with people instead of balls. When the idea to have a bet is brought up, Lou, Mo, and Dave are in a triangular position similar to the triangular positioning of the balls before the break. The three are stationary discussing the parameters of the wager when Gabby passes through with a stick (broom) in his hand. The game has now begun.

Another technique used during the production was the use of close-ups. The close-up, when effectively used, draws the audience into the world of character. It forces you to get up close and personal (each character has one close-up at key

moment within the program). Lou has the first close-up and within that brief period, it is revealed that Lou is representative of the devil. Gabby has the second close-up. His close-up was also significant because he becomes the conscience of the two pool players. This is done by him asking the question, "Could you really live with yourself knowing that you condemned a mans soul to hell?" This one line, though it is addressed to Dave, gets both players to wondering what have they gotten themselves into.

The next close up is of Dave. During this time, he realizes that he may never see his wife again. Early in the program it was suggested that he and his wife were having some problems. He now knows that those problems pale in comparison to losing one's soul.

The last close up is of Mo. It is during this close-up that the entire story comes to light. Mo begins to tell Dave and Lou that is okay not to finish the game. The only consequence of that action is that the two pool players cannot leave the pool hall until they find two people to replace them. As this monologue is going, the close-up changes to a two shot of Mo and Gabby and then to a wide shot of Mo and Gabby leaving while Dave and Lou watch.

Post-Production

The first task accomplished in postproduction was changing all the footage to black and white. The first reason this was done was to eliminate any distractions and force the attention of the audience on the story. What are meant by

distractions would be the pool room set, the characters clothing, and especially the color of the pool balls. The monochrome pool balls are important because, the real game was not played on the table but between the four men.

In addition, this relates to Zettl's definition of the color of gray. Gray represents the unknown, so by having my creative piece in black and white instead of color I created a work masked in shades of gray. It is in my opinion the gray represents science fiction since science explores the unknown.

Part II: Evaluation

Four people, who are professionals within the video production industry, were selected for the panel discussion. Each received a questionnaire and a video tape of Four Out of Seven. The panel members were asked to watch the tape privately and not to discuss it with anyone.

Demographics

The first panel member is a producer and director of corporate videos. He is a white male between the ages of thirty and thirty-nine. The second panel member is a producer and on-air talent of corporate videos. He is a black male between the ages of forty and forty-nine. The third member of the panel is a television news producer. She is an Asian-American female between the ages of twenty and twenty-nine. The fourth panel member is a station manager of a television station. He is a white male between the ages of thirty and thirty-nine.

Responses

The panel's responses were dissected to see if they interpreted the program as science fiction. Moreover, did the program create the experience of the unknown through various maneuvers? Four people were asked to view the program and then answer a series of questions in regards to what they just viewed. The questionnaire consisted of the following nine questions.

Are you a science fiction fan?

Do you feel this program fits into the science fiction genre?

What was the program about?

Did you find it interesting? Why or why not?

At what point did you realize that the story was not about pool?

Does the story seem believable or possible?

Which character stood out the most and why?

Which technical aspect did you like the most and least?

Did you notice the music? Did you like it or was it distracting?

Their answers were tabulated into four categories to test the effectiveness of the different strategies used to create the unknown?

The goal of figure 1 was to establish whether or not Four Out of Seven was perceived as science fiction. According to the American Heritage Dictionary,

science fiction is defined as”...a work of fiction based on prediction of futuristic, fantasy or scientific possibilities. The responses given by the four panel members varied. Three believed the work fit the science fiction genre. They used words such as “weird, supernatural, Twilight Zone, and particular arena” to describe it. The fourth disagreed and said that it was not scientific in its content. Instead he said it was more like fantasy or what if, which still fits the science fiction definition. So even though he felt it was not science fiction, his comments showed that the program was unanimously recognized as science fiction.

Figure 1. :Science Fiction	
yes/effective n=3 weird supernatural “Twilight Zone” particular arena	no/not effective n=1 fantasy what if type program not scientific

The second question addressed whether or not Four out of Seven created a sense of the unfamiliar. As shown in Figure 2, the panel’s responses showed that they felt the program was effective in creating a sense of the unfamiliar. They used words phrases such as “weird, supernatural, underlying story, and fantasy” in their evaluation of the program. These words give the meaning that they did not feel as if the program was ordinary or familiar.

Figure 2. :Creating the sense of the unfamiliar

effective n=4	not effective
underlying story supernatural fantasy weird	

The focus of the third question was to determine if the strategy of the program effectively created a paradigm shift from the familiar to the unfamiliar or unknown. Panel participants described different aspects of the program by saying things such as “...two players who got tricked into betting their souls”. Another states how on the surface they understood the program but then realized there was an underlying story. This same person describes how he was waiting for a twist. These descriptions show the effectiveness of the program’s strategy. But not everyone felt the program’s strategy worked. One of the panel members called the program “predictable.” (see Figure 3)

Figure 3. :Strategy- create paradigm shift

effective n=4	not effective n=1
tricked twist on the surface believable trapped	predictable

Figure 4 was broken into three sections. Section A was used to evaluate the effectiveness of the theme of the program. The responses from the questionnaire showed that the program's theme was very clear. Each person had very similar remarks in describing Four out of Seven's theme. They used words such as "soul selling, two competitive egocentric pool players who were tricked into betting their souls, aggressive spirit of competition and two men who signed away their souls."

Figure 4. :Techniques Section A- Theme	
effective n=4	not effective
soul selling two friends realizing what they mean to each other two contestants one would lose the most two competitive, egocentric pool players betting their souls aggressive spirit of competition sign away their souls	

Section B of figure 4 focused on the aesthetic content of the program. The panel members were asked to react to the different aesthetical aspects of the show that they liked disliked. The comments went both ways on this subject, something was found to be effective and some were not effective. Unfortunately it was hard to decipher because in this section because there answers were based on opinion,

meaning what some liked was the same thing others disliked. Three of the panel expressed the composition; framing, perspective, and editing were well done. The fourth did not like the framing and composition. Two members enjoyed the music and the other two didn't.

F4. Section B- Aesthetics	
effective n=3	not effective n=2
scene around the corner had good perspective and composition framing, composition, and editing are well done music added to atmosphere light and shadows well done	lighting and cutaways music distracting didn't flow audio was uneven light was a little stark

Section C of figure 4 focused on the allegory of the program. The program had several dualities and hidden meanings throughout it but based on the answers to the questionnaire only a few were actually noticed. One response speaks of Lou, the pool hall manager. It said, "the little guy seemed suspicious." The character of Lou was designed to be suspicious, dark, and have a hint of evilness to him. Another response referred to Gabby, the custodian, as a fence walker. Fence walker is a pretty accurate description of him because he knows the pool players are being tricked and yet he tries act as their conscience to try to get them to back out of the bet. And another response was "in the Place all things seem possible." That statement is true because in the science fiction genre, there are no boundaries.

F4. Section C - Structure: Allegory	
effective n=3	not effective
little guy(Lou the manager) seemed suspicious Gabby was a fence walker “The Place” all things are possible	

Overall, it seems that according to the panel, Four out of Seven did prove itself to be effective in all four categories. Subsequently, it leads me to believe that the program can indeed be classified as science fiction. It created a sense of the unknown. It shifted from the familiar to the unfamiliar. Also, its theme was well recognized.

Chapter Four

Discussion

The problem addressed in this study the design of Four Out of Seven's ability to create the sense of the unknown. Four panel members viewed the program and answered a series of questions. The tabulation of the answers showed the effectiveness along with the inadequacies of the program. Overall their responses stated that the program did in fact create a sense of the unknown through various methods.

There were several facets of the program's design that were unanimously agreed upon by the panel. First of all, Four out of Seven was perceived to fit the science fiction genre. They used words to describe it such as "weird, supernatural, fantasy, what if type show and Twilight Zone" to describe it. This was a critical question because if I were ineffective in creating a science fiction program, then this entire study would become obsolete and I would have to focus on why Four out of Seven was not received as sci-fi. I say this study would be obsolete because if the goal of making a science fiction were not achieved then consequently I do not believe I could have created an experience of the unknown.

Another item that was effectively portrayed in Four out of Seven was the ability to create a sense of the unfamiliar. This was a key element in the design of the program. From the onset of the program, I wanted the viewer to know that

reality as they know it to be was about to be suspended. The voice of 'The Place' alerts the viewer "...be prepared because things will never be the same"; it then foreshadows the program with the riddle "...competition is a force that drives men to great extremes but sometimes there is more to a game than just winning." These items, according to the panel establishes a hail to the unfamiliar.

All four-panel members also recognized a paradigm shift. Four out of Seven has several shifts in it. It starts with the announcer's opening dialogue alerting the viewer that this is not an ordinary show. The next shift occurs when the program is revealed to be about a substantial bet and not just a pool game. The next shift occurs when the two pool players find out that the loser of the bet loses not only the game but also his soul to damnation. Another shift happens when the two men decide not to finish the game and end it in a tie so that no one loses. The final shift occurs when the two men find out that the purpose of the entire game was to get them to play a tie game in order to replace the manager and the janitor, who were the last two players of the game. In other words the manager and janitor could not get out of the bet until they found two people to replace them and in order for Mo and Dave to be release from the bet; they have to trick two new players into taking over the bet. Each of panel members recognized a paradigm shift but no one recognized all of them. Two members noticed the second shift. One member noticed the first and the fourth noticed the third shift. It was at each respected spot where the panel members noticed a change in the story for the familiar to the unfamiliar.

Finally, the theme or concept of the program was well recognized by the four panel members. The actual theme of Four out of Seven consisted of a story about two headstrong, competitive pool players who placed a bet with their soul as the stakes. The reaction that the program received from the panel members mimicked the actual theme. An example of the phrases used are “soul selling, two competitive egocentric pool players betting their souls, and an aggressive spirit of competition” were mentioned.

One of the facets that were not acknowledged as much as I would have wanted was the recognizing of the allegories throughout the program. Over two dozen allegories were used in Four out of Seven ranging from the characters’ names to the blocking of the movements. Many of the allegories had a religious overtone to them. For example, Dave and Mo were derivatives of David and Moses from the Old Testament of the Bible. The two were strong leaders whose major downfall were that they became victims of their own arrogance.

Four out of Seven also had several dualities and hidden meanings throughout it but based on the answers to the questionnaire only a few were actually noticed. One example of a duality that was missed was the fact that the four men each represented a billiard ball. Mo was the striped ball because he was married therefore only half of him was there. Dave was the solid ball because he was single. Lou was the eight ball because of his darkness. And, Gabby represented the cue ball because he was the catalyst of all the action and movement. But, like I said earlier three of the allegories were recognized. One response speaks of Lou, the pool

hall manager. It said, “the little guy seemed suspicious.” The character of Lou was designed to be suspicious, dark, and have a hint of evilness to him. Another response referred to Gabby, the custodian, as a fence walker. Fence walker is a pretty accurate description of him because he knows the pool players are being tricked and yet he tries act as their conscience to try to get them to back out of the bet. And another response was “in the Place all things seem possible.” That statement is true because in the science fiction genre, there are no boundaries.

The panel members were asked to react to the different aesthetic aspects of the show that they liked disliked. The comments went both ways on this subject, something was found to be effective and some were not effective. Unfortunately it was hard to decipher because in this section because there answers were based on opinion, meaning what some liked was the same thing others disliked. Three of the panel expressed the composition; framing, perspective, and editing were well done. The fourth did not like the framing and composition. Two members enjoyed the music and the other two didn't.

Conclusion

If I had to do this all over again there are a few things that I would do differently. A major mistake that I (and some of the panel members) noticed was the first scene in Four out of Seven when we see Gabby. The mistake there was an audio problem. Unfortunately when we shot that scene, the microphone stopped working and the only sound picked up came from the cameras mic. This is why

"Gabby" sounds so hollow when he speaks. Originally the entire scene was that way but thankfully the audio in the cutaway shots of "Mo and Dave" worked. I replaced the cutaway dialogue with the bad audio of the wide shot and therefore limited the audio problem only to "Gabby". The next time I do this, I will carefully monitor all of the audio that is recorded and not take it for granted that it's recorded correctly. This is important because that scene cannot be re-shot because the actor who played "Gabby" has since moved to California.

Another problem that occurred was the allegories used in Four out of Seven were as easily recognizable as I would have hoped. Perhaps, I could have made a few of them a little easier to discern but then again, their purpose is to have a hidden meaning.

In dealing the aesthetic aspects of the program, I am placed in a difficult situation somewhat like a catch 22. Everyone who watched the program, from the four professionals on the panel to friends and colleagues, had different things that they liked and disliked. There was not one dominating factor of disapproval in all their comments except the "Gabby" audio problem. This leads me to believe the statement, "You can't please everyone".

Other than those problems, I feel that Four out of Seven accomplished its original goal of creating the experience of the unknown. Even though Four out of Seven accomplished its goal, I feel it necessary to point out what Isaac Asimov mentioned in Social Science Fiction (1953). There are many ways to create science fiction. No one particular way is the correct or only way.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

- 1. Are you a science fiction fan?**
- 2. Do you feel this program fits into the science fiction genre?**
- 3. What is the program about?**
- 4. Did you find it interesting? Why or why not?**
- 5. At what point did you realize that the story was not about pool?**
- 6. Does the story seem believable or possible?**
- 7. Which character stood out the most and why?**
- 8. Which technical aspect did you like the most and least?**
- 9. Did you notice the music? Did you like it or was it distracting?**

APPENDIX B

RELEASE

I _____, grant Rico Beard permission to use my likeness for his video thesis project. I realize that all participation is voluntary. I give him the right to reproduce my image or voice to his discretion. I hereby certify that I have read the foregoing and fully understand the meaning and effect thereof.

Date _____

Signature _____

APPENDIX C

The Script of Four Out of Seven

FOUR OUT OF SEVEN

BY

RICO BEARD

Copyright 1998

NARRATOR

Somewhere out there is a place. A place beyond reality. A place where the unlikely and the unbelievable are everyday events. Ready or not your journey has already begun. Be prepared because things are never how they seem. Welcome to "The Place".

Competition is a force that drives men to great extremes. But sometimes there is more to a game than just winning.

INT – POOL ROOM

The scene begins as Dave sinks the 8-ball to defeat his unworthy opponent while his archrival MO watches from the distance.

DAVE

And that, my friend, ends the lesson.

DAVE'S opponent reluctantly digs his hand into his pocket and pays DAVE the money he owes since he lost.

DAVE

Pleasure doing business with you. Come back anytime.

DAVE takes the money and walks over to the counter where LOU, the pool hall manager and MO, another pool hustler is standing.

LOU

Another profitable night?

DAVE

Always

MO

Just let me know when you're ready for some real competition.

DAVE
Competition! Competition? Where?

DAVE mockingly looks around the pool hall.

DAVE
Show me some comp and I'll play em.

MO
Oh, so I'm a nobody now! So I'm nobody!
I remember when this nobody beat you for
a thousand bucks last week...

DAVE
Yeah, well I guess that make us about even
then.

MO
We're far from even. I smoked you at least once
a week. As a matter of fact, I can't remember the
last time you beat me and...

DAVE
Look I was trying to spare your feelings. The
only reason I let you win is to keep you coming
back.

While this argument is going on, GABBY the janitor man walks past
cleaning. He jumps into the conversation.

GABBY
Every week we go through the same thing.
I'm so sick of hearing you two. You need
to be at home with your families.

MO
(To GABBY)
Didn't you miss a spot or something?

He points to the other side of the room.

DAVE

**Yeah, stay out of grown folks business.
Why don't you go somewhere?**

GABBY

**Alright, I know when I'm not wanted.
If you don't want me around, I'll get to
cleaning.**

LOU

Well, are you two ready to settle up?

DAVE

Yeah, what do I owe you?

MO

**Hold on hotshot! You got enough in you
for one more game.**

DAVE

(angry)

Look, I can beat you anywhere, anytime.

MO

Right here, right now.

DAVE

Lou, do you have time for one more game?

LOU

**I have all of eternity. Take your time.
What is one more game, but why don't you
make it interesting.**

DAVE

**Yeah, hotshot! Put your money where your
mouth is.**

MO

**Please! How much can you afford to lose.
Don't forget your wife almost put you out
last time you lost to me.**

DAVE

**Hey, don't drag my wife into this OK?!
This I between you and me. You leave my
problems out of this.**

MO

**Just trying to save your marriage that's all.
I guess you like going home broke and
sleeping on the couch.**

DAVE

**At least when I leave here I have someone
to come home to unlike yourself.**

MO

**Just because I have my freedom and I'm
not hen-pecked like you, don't be jealous.
Just put your money on the table.**

DAVE

So what's the bet?

MO

Name it!

DAVE

You tell me!

LOU

**Hey guys, I got an idea. The game is eight
ball. You'll play a best of seven series and
I'll put up the stakes.**

MO

What kinda stakes you talking about?

LOU

Let's say \$10,000 dollars. Unless you two are Scared.

DAVE

**Afraid?! Who the hell do you think I am!
I can beat this chump anyday but for
\$10,000 dollars I'll...**

MO

Beat me! What? You can't...

He is so upset he can't eve get out a full sentence.

Man for ten grand I'll...

DAVE

You'll what beat me, I don't think so.

MO

Well there is only one way to find out!

LOU

**Gentlemen, let me explain the rules.
First of all the loser...**

DAVE

**Ain't no need to explain the rules Lou.
Ten grand is ten grand. Now what, are
you afraid that we called your bluff?**

MO

**Yeah, you're still putting up the money,
right?**

LOU
Yeah, I'm still put up the money but ...

MO
All right then that's all we need to know.

DAVE
Okay, I'll break.

LOU
We will flip a coin. Dave, you're heads.
Mo you're tails. The winner breaks first
after that we will alternate at the start
of each game until we reach game seven
then we will flip again.

DAVE
If we need game seven.

GABBY walks past the trio slightly shaking his head.

MO
Gabby, I might need your broom because
I smell a sweep coming up.

GABBY
(to himself)
You need a lot more then that.

GABBY turns around in disgust.

GABBY
Don't you even want to know why he's
doing this?

DAVE
All I know is that at the end of this night
I'm going home \$10,000 richer and that's
gonna make my wife very happy.

MO
You mean I'm going home \$10,000 richer.

DAVE
Look I've just about had enough of you.

LOU
So is it a deal?

MO
You get it!

LOU
**Well, then you two wouldn't mind singing
right here.**

**LOU pulls out a contract from underneath the counter and places it on
the counter and holds the pen up in the air. DAVE and MO angrily look
at each other creating a silent pause.**

LOU
Well?

GABBY
**Gentlemen, remember fools rush in where
wise men...**

DAVE
Gabby! Shut the hell up!!!

MO
Go somewhere and sit down!

DAVE
Gimme the pen.

**He takes the pen from LOU, signs the document and gives the pen to MO.
MO takes the pen and starts to read the document.**

DAVE
Scared?!

**MO looks at DAVE with a stern look, takes a deep breath, and signs.
LOU grabs a coin out of his pocket.**

LOU

**Here are the rules. You two will play
a best of seven series in eight ball. I'll
flip a coin to see who goes first. After
that we'll alternate who breaks until
we get to game seven.**

MO

If there is a game seven.

LOU

**Anyway, when we get to game seven, I'll
flip the coin again to see who breaks first.**

LOU flips the coin in the air.

DAVE

Come on heads!

The coin hits the ground.

LOU

Heads it is. Your break.

**DAVE walks over to the table and breaks. He immediately starts to sink
balls and eventually runs the table. He then walks over to MO.**

DAVE

Your turn.

**MO walks over to the table and breaks. He runs the table too. The two
alternate victories until the series is tied three games to three.**

LOU

**Well, well, well. Looks like we are all
tied up. Winner takes all. Mo, it's your
turn. Call it in the air.**

The coin flies into the air.

MO

Tails!

The coin hits the ground.

LOU

Heads, you lose. Dave it's your break.

DAVE walks past MO.

DAVE

When you got it, you got it. Now let's see...

He breaks.

How will I spend my money? Lou, by the way what happens to Mo, I mean the loser.

LOU pats MO on the back and smiles.

LOU

The loser just loses his soul.

MO nervously smiles.

MO

Really what happens to the loser?

LOU

Oh, he really loses his soul.

DAVE pauses from the game.

DAVE

What are you talking about?

LOU
No soul, ok! The losers' soul belongs to me.
Well, not really me but, well...you know.

LOU motions his head and looks downward.

You know, Satan, the devil, the prince of darkness;
call him what you want but a deal's a deal.
And uh, gentlemen, you should have listened
to Gabby.

DAVE and MO run over to GABBY but GABBY ignores them. The two
then look at each other.

DAVE
Good luck.

MO
Say what you really mean.

DAVE
I hope I run this table.

MO
And I hope you miss every shot.

The two shake hands. DAVE takes a deep breath and breaks. He drops
two balls.

DAVE
I guess I got solids.

MO sits down and GABBY approaches.

GABBY
Can you live with yourself if you win
knowing that you have condemned a
man soul to hell?

MO

**Gabby, look I don't need this right now.
Unless you got a solution to this, leave me
alone!**

GABBY

**The answer is as easy as the shoes on your
feet.**

DAVE misses a shot.

DAVE

Your turn.

LOU

Nervous Mo?

MO

(sarcastically)

Just a touch!

MO walks to the table while DAVE sits down next to GABBY.

GABBY

**Well, think of it like this, could you really
lived with yourself if you had won. At
least this way you don't have to face your
wife again.**

DAVE

**Rose. I forgot all about her. How did I
get myself into this?**

**MO sinks another ball. The tension in the room is high. All MO has to
do is sink one more ball then he shoots on the eight ball. He looks at
DAVE and then sinks the easy shot.**

DAVE

**Mo, promise me you will watch after Rose
and let her know that I loved her very much.**

The cue ball rolls back setting up MO for a very easy shot. DAVE can't even watch so he lowers his head. Only LOU appears to be happy.

LOU

Hey Mo, your shoes are untied!

MO tries to ignore him, by not even acknowledging him.

Really, they are untied.

MO looks down and sees his shoe is untied. He puts the stick down and begins to tie it. He then pauses and looks at GABBY and remembers what GABBY told him.

GABBY(voice-over)

It's as simple as the shoes on your feet.

MO

Tied! I mean a tie. Dave we can just quit now and then technically the game will never end.

DAVE

And?

MO

And then therefore nobody loses.

MO looks at GABBY and GABBY winks at him. DAVE looks at LOU.

DAVE

Can we do that?

LOU sighs.

LOU

I guess you can.

He grabs his coat while Gabby puts the broom down. They walk toward the door

**Yeah, you can. Only one thing though.
You two can't leave here until you find
two people who are willing to bet their
souls.**

LOU tosses MO the keys.

**LOU
Make sure you lock the door.**

**MO
Where are you going?**

**LOU
Home, we found our two people.**

**GABBY
Home, I thought I would never say
that again.**

**NARRATOR
Someone said, "what would it profit a man
to gain the whole world and lose his soul."
Tonight the population of the place has
increase by two.**

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