

THE EGG AND AVOCADO SHOW

An Undergraduate Research Scholars Thesis

by

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I, Cheryl Cruz, certify that all research compliance requirements related to this Undergraduate Research Scholars thesis have been addressed with my Research Faculty Advisor prior to the collection of any data used in this final thesis submission.

This project did not require approval from the Texas A&M University Research Compliance & Biosafety office.

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ABSTRACT

The Egg and Avocado Show

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The Egg and Avocado Show creative thesis is a cartoon short film following the protagonists, Egg and Avocado, through eight animated episodes of their musical talk show. As each episode delves into its own ideas and commentary on internet culture, the series also features an overarching story of the two characters' "online journey" as they gain fame and traction, and by some stroke of luck, get picked up by a network. The project will explore themes of the disingenuousness of maintaining an online presence, chasing fame rather than staying true to one's own creative voice, and the difference between professional entertainment and working as an independent creator.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Contributors

I would like to thank my faculty advisor, Professor Samuel Woodfin, for all the blunt critiques and strong guidance these past three years, inspiring me to always strive for my best. Thanks as well to my peers who worked alongside me this year; Jordyn Goodman for encouraging me to be my fullest self creatively, Jordan Stawski for teaching me that whatever I do, I should do it with dedication, and Kyle Rively for reminding me of every due date I would have otherwise missed.

A special thanks to Jared Thome and all his summer midnights sacrificed in talking me through my exciting new ideas, as well as my teary creative ruts.

Finally, thanks to my parents for believing I could do this whole “art thing”.

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1. AESTHETIC MOTIVATION AND RESEARCH QUESTION

The main theme conveyed by *The Egg and Avocado Show* is how the pursuit of fame can affect someone creatively, politically, and personally.

I found this an intriguing topic to discuss in my thesis as it is a very common thing people in the creative industry struggle with. Oftentimes the pursuit of an audience leads to sacrificing creative vision for something that appeals more to the masses. While a creator might have their own style, themes, and ideas, it may not be in line with what people want to see—hence having to alter their work for the sake of appeal.

This is especially prevalent in a political context as audiences often struggle to separate the work from the artist. Everything a creator does is scrutinized and judged, leading them to having to either water down their beliefs or views, or just never mention them at all—both of which are untrue to themselves.

Finally, being in the spotlight can change a creator's relationships both professionally and personally. This will be depicted in the dynamic between the characters, Egg and Avocado, shifting as the series progresses. The episodes will show the strain, break up, and eventual reconciliation of their friendship over the course of their internet journey.

The Egg and Avocado Show seeks to explore a portrayal of two online personalities and their journey to become internet famous, to answer the question of what happens when someone pursues a bigger audience for their work at the cost of their individuality and artistic integrity. This dilemma is faced by many content creators and in addressing it in my project I hope to contribute to the ongoing conversation of whether it's more important to gain influence or stay true to your work.

To do this, I utilize a cartoony, colorful art style that evolves as the series progresses to show the increase in production quality in relation to the quality of the content that they are producing. The beginning two episodes are chopply animated with minimal in-between frames, and a low frame rate. The animations become smoother and more attractive as the series progresses, up until the episode featuring *Late Night Avocado* which is purposefully tweened and more clinical in appearance in order to demonstrate the high budget work present behind the show, as well as the lack of heart and personal involvement in its production. The series ends on an expressive but medium quality art style to represent the creativity found in independent, homemade, passion projects.

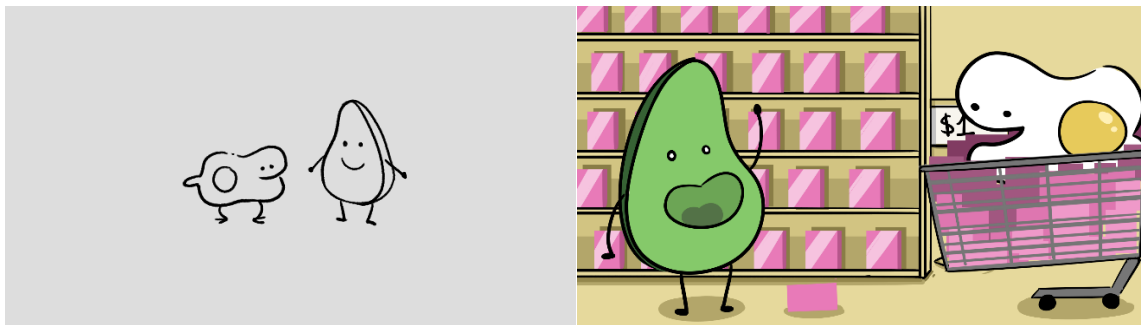


Figure 1.1: Episode 1 song frame (left) in comparison to episode 3 (right)

The animations accompanying the song breaks also begin very rudimentarily as simple and sketchy black and white drawings, before evolving to be smoother and more colorful. Episode 1's song is animated much more jumpily and fast in comparison to episode 3's song which has much more detailed and brightly colored frames during the Strawberry Farms sponsorship segment (*Figure 1.1*).

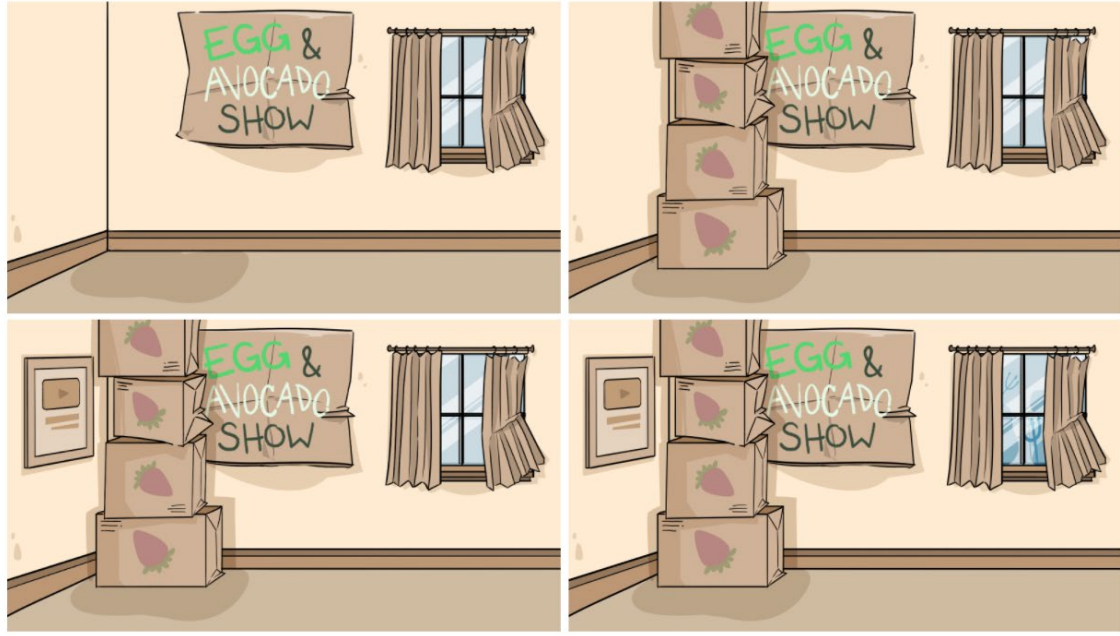


Figure 1.2: Egg and Avocado set progression

Finally, the background sets also change slightly as the show progresses, giving insight as to what is happening quite literally “behind the scenes” of their show. Depending on the point in time, you can see Strawberry Farms cardboard boxes piled up in the back from their sponsorship deal (*Figure 1.2 top right*), a commemorative award on their wall (*Figure 1.2 bottom left*), and even a mob banging on their windows in protest (*Figure 1.2 bottom right*).

Through these artistic methods, *The Egg and Avocado Show* visually develops and portrays its themes of the clash between one’s personal creative vision and the vision that arises from the social and political influence on their work.

2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT, DISCIPLINARY PARADIGMS, AND AESTHETIC STANDARDS

The idea for the Egg and Avocado originally began back in high school as a small doodle on my iPad, followed by a more fleshed out drawing of the two characters holding pink juice boxes in my art sketchbook (*Figure 2.1*).

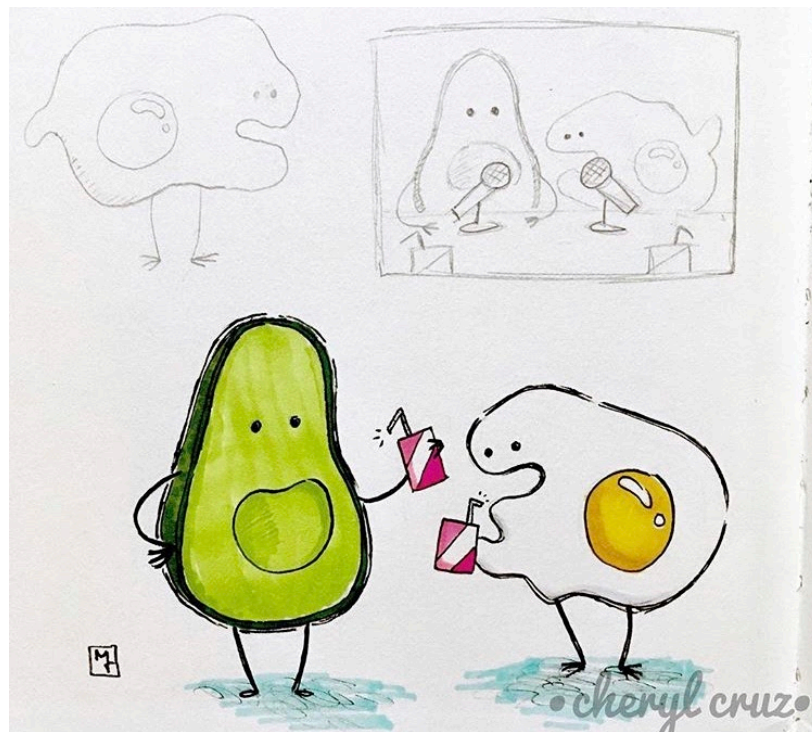


Figure 2.1: Early Egg and Avocado concept art

At the time, the two characters were nothing more than a doodle, however, when trying to brainstorm ideas for my final project in my VIST 105 class my fall semester of freshman year, I flipped through my sketchbook and rediscovered the old drawings. It gave me the idea for a series of comic pages describing Egg and Avocado's day to day lives, giving more insight to their personalities, relationship, and environment.

The final project ended up being a set of three comic pages of independent events—the first was a humorous comic of Egg lamenting to Avocado about his failed attempt at flirting with, and getting the number of Banana, a girl who rejects his advances (*Figure 2.2*).

The second page comic was a set of panels that went into detail about the Strawberry Farms strawberry juice production process. It begins with a strawberry leaving his wife in the morning to go to work, arriving at the factory, and stepping onto a conveyor belt that slowly dumps him, along with many other strawberries, into a giant blender, ending with a shot of Egg and Avocado enjoying a box of strawberry juice together (*Figure 2.3*). The unethical production of strawberry juice is heavily referenced in *The Egg and Avocado Show* thesis project as well in the Strawberry Farms sponsorship video where Egg and Avocado promote the company despite its shady business practices.

The third page of comics was simply a set of “Sunday funnies” type comics that had little bearing on the plot but helped to further develop Egg and Avocado as characters (*Figure 2.4*).

STRAWBERRY FARMS



SHE SAID SHE WANTS NOTHING TO DO WITH SOMEONE WHO THINKS MAKING A BANANA PHONE PUN WILL GET THEM HER NUMBER.



Figure 2.2: Strawberry Farms Comic 1

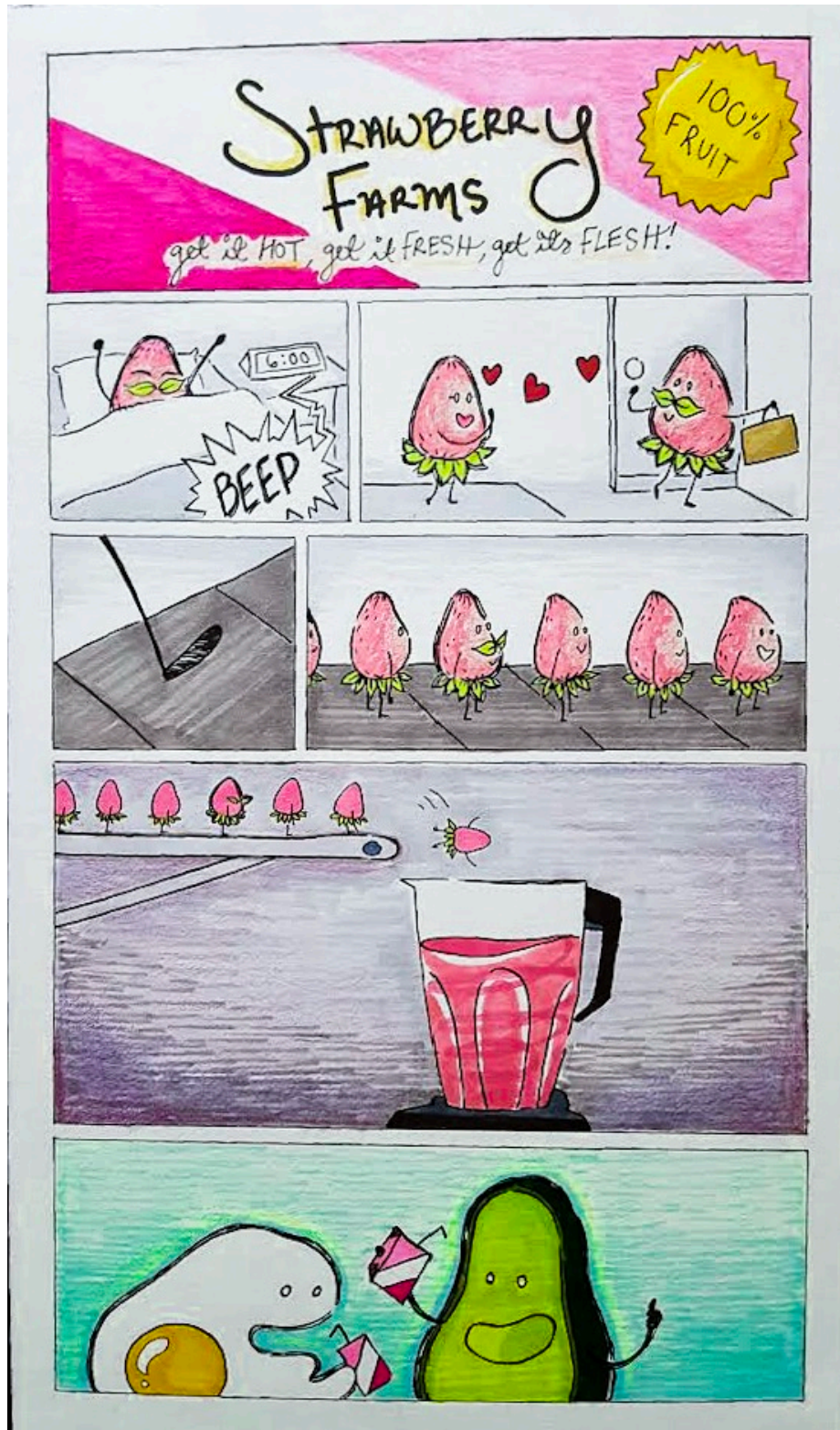


Figure 2.3: Strawberry Farms Comic 2

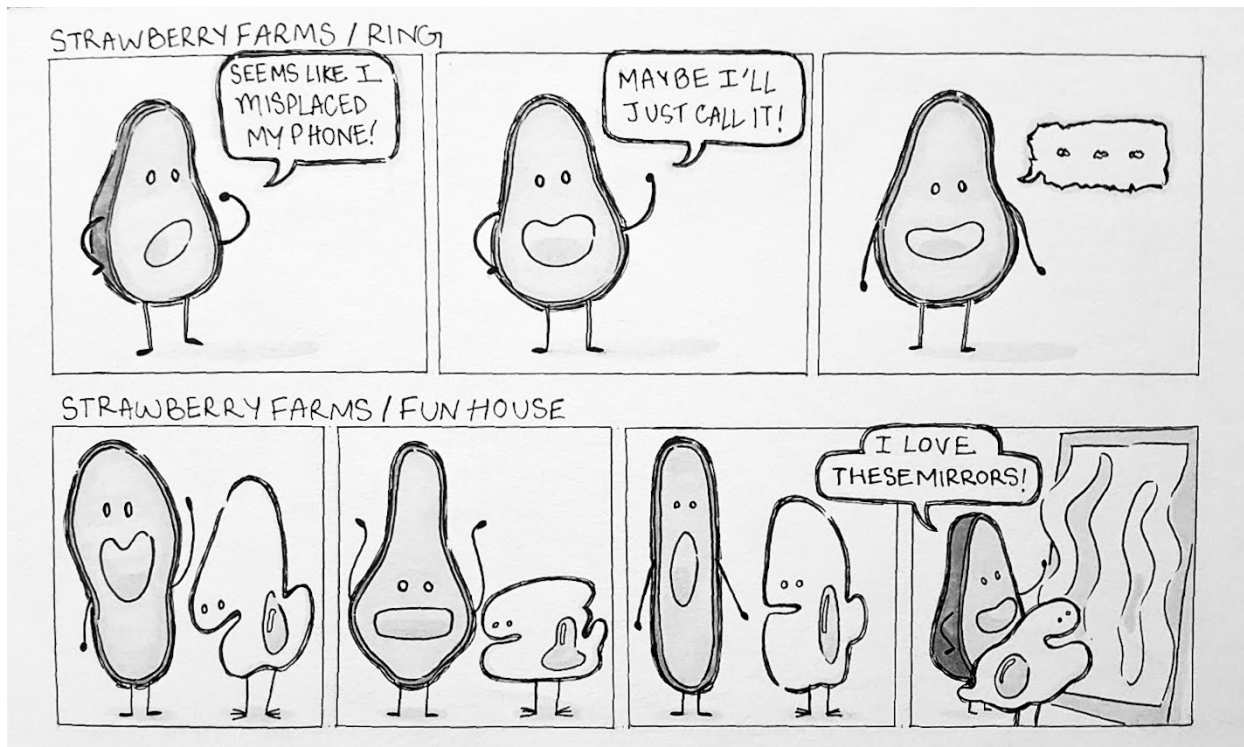


Figure 2.4: Strawberry Farms Comic 3

These comics that I had drawn two years ago helped me in developing my ideas as they gave me something to reference when I was thinking through the reimagined world of Egg and Avocado that I wanted to depict in my thesis project. In the comics, I set out to portray the feeling of being a poor, depressed, millennial, trying to make the best of their life. The comic characters are roommates living in a cardboard apartment and the stories focused on their mundane, day-to-day lives. The stories were one page long and revolved around humor and a feeling rather than an overarching plot. However, *The Egg and Avocado Show* thesis project is a little different: the characters are still roommates in a cardboard apartment, but instead of focusing on their daily lives, the project follows their internet talk show with an emphasis on the idea that the audience can never fully see behind their facade of internet happiness.

As for my references for this project, I looked heavily to the existing YouTube talk show *Good Mythical Morning* for style inspiration. *Good Mythical Morning* is an internet show hosted by two childhood friends, Rhett and Link, who spend each episode humorously bantering about the day-to-day events happening in the world. I have always loved this format of talk show and as I first began working on this project, I initially derived much of Egg and Avocado's personalities and interactions from those of Rhett's and Link's. After having time and distance from those initial planning phases, Egg and Avocado have grown into more of my own characters, however, I do credit their beginnings to *Good Mythical Morning*.

Another thematic and comedic influence of mine for *The Egg and Avocado Show* is the Netflix original series, *Bojack Horseman*. The cartoon follows similar themes of struggling to discover one's individuality while under the scrutiny of the public eye; following the point of view of a depressed actor and the struggles he faces under the magnifying lens of media. The Strawberry Farms episode of *The Egg and Avocado Show* also draws heavy inspiration from the *Bojack Horseman* episode, "Chickens", which revolves around a chicken farm set in a world full of other anthropomorphic animal characters, and the controversy surrounding it.

3. EXPLANATION OF EXHIBIT

The Egg and Avocado Show creative thesis is an eight-part collection of episodes that follow the beginning, rise, fall, and reconciliation of two video content creators' online journey. It is 2D animated using Adobe Animate and MediBang Paint Pro and compiled and edited in DaVinci Resolve. Music is a strong component in the story, as throughout the episodes, there are various songs sung by the characters that help move the plot along as well as add another element of humor. All songs are written by me, as well as the ukulele tracks.

Adobe Animate was my tool of choice for drawing the frames for the characters, Egg and Avocado, as its timeline system was intuitive for me and I already had some experience in using it in the past. Since the actual complexity of the character movements is somewhat limited, the frames are all drawn by hand and generally don't use any motion tweeing (except for *The Late Night Avocado* episode) in order to have more control over the individual movements, expressions, and beats.

The backgrounds, however, are drawn separately in MediBang Paint Pro, in order to get a more organic feel to the linework, light, and shadows--something which would have been much more difficult to achieve in a vector-based program such as Adobe Animate. The animatic frames used during song transitions are also drawn in MediBang in order to help highlight the change in tone.

After exporting each frame individually from Adobe Animate, I pulled them into the video editing software DaVinci Resolve to reorder them, fix timing issues with the audio, and add polish. I've found editing animations in a separate video editing program has always helped me as it's much easier for me to visualize the project as a film rather than just a set of frames.

The voices for Egg and Avocado are recorded by Andrew Mahoney with his personal microphone setup. To get the recordings for Egg and Avocado's voice lines, I simply sent my scripts over to Andrew, however, the process for recording the musical numbers was a bit more involved. I would initially record the songs myself into my phone microphone to give him a sense of the melody and cadence, and then send the demos to Andrew to record his own vocals over it. Once I got the voice tracks back, I rerecorded the ukulele lines for Andrew's singing and stacked the two audio tracks in DaVinci Resolve. The instrument tracks were recorded in the Texas A&M Langford C recording studio using an AT-2020 microphone and an acoustic-electric ukulele.

The creative artifact will be exhibited in a digital video format separate from the thesis paper. The script for the project, however, is documented in the appendix (*page 17*).

4. REFLECTION

Looking back at this past year and reflecting on the growth and development of *The Egg and Avocado Show*, I can see that although some of my original artistic goals for the project have changed and bits of the story structure have shifted around, my original vision for the short film is still very much intact and I am happy with the final product.

When I first started animating these episodes, I planned my time so that I would create the rough storyboards for it first, then go back and reanimate everything cleanly once the writing and style was finalized. The storyboards were in mostly black and white, and featured my voice that was recorded into my iPhone microphone. These rough episodes were done to map out the story beats and get an idea for the timing and flow of the series.

After completing the set of rough episodes, I found several things that weren't working with my project, including a lack of songs for what I wanted to be a series of "musical comedy episodes." After taking it back to the drawing board, I scripted two new episodes, rewrote a few scenes, and composed two extra songs in order to develop the musical side of the project more. This meant I also had to write and illustrate new animatics to accompany the songs, which are also meant to help support the idea that Egg and Avocado's production quality is increasing as the story progresses.

My process for writing songs usually begins with me sitting at my computer looking up chords to popular songs I enjoy, then strumming into my phone microphone as I hum random melodies until I stumble across something I like. Once I have the spark of inspiration, I begin writing random lyrics just to see where it takes me, cutting it down to fit the cadence as I go. I also like to come up with jokes and ideas for lines while walking around campus or standing in

the shower, and I text them to myself and try to work it into my melody later when I get the chance.

The song that gave me the most trouble to write was the Tomato Tomato jingle that plays at the end of episode 2. It was the last song I wrote and was the most difficult to write a melody and lyrics for as I had to find a catchy and concise way to tell his story. It went through several rewrites before I settled on the final version just days before the thesis deadline. Although it was a last-minute addition, I felt that more songs were necessary in developing the series' style and theme and therefore imperative that I include it in the final version. Once all the songs were in, I felt much more confident in the pacing of the series.

After many months of working on *The Egg and Avocado Show* and seeing this project develop firsthand, I have learned a lot about myself as an artist and writer, as well as how to commit to long-term projects, which is something I have always struggled with in the past. Despite the long work nights and occasional bouts of stress, this experience has overall been incredibly rewarding. I'm proud of both myself and my peers who participated in the Undergraduate Research Scholars program for pushing ourselves to create those projects we've always wanted to see get done someday. It's inspiring to see the art that my friends have put out alongside me, and I can only hope that my work on *The Egg and Avocado Show* inspires others to pursue their own creative passions too.

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APPENDIX: CREATIVE ARTIFACT

The Egg and Avocado Show

The creative artifact is uploaded separately from the thesis and is an approximately eight-minute-long short film going through eight episodes of Egg and Avocado's musical talk show.

Shown below is a still from the third episode of the series (*Figure A.1*).



Figure A.1: The Egg and Avocado Show episode 3 still

Full Script

Episode 1

Egg: Hello and welcome to *The Egg and Avocado Show*! I'm Egg!

Avocado: And I'm Avocado! Welcome to *The Egg and Avocado Show*!

Egg: I already said that.

Avocado: Yes! And I just realized it!

[crickets]

Egg: Anyway! Avocado and I wanted to start this as a musical talk show, and since this is our first video together, he wrote us a song to introduce us!

Avocado: Yup! This one is, appropriately titled, *The Egg and Avocado Show!*

Avocado (song):

Hi we're just two produce items on an adventure

To distract us from our loveless lives and lack of furniture

We hope that you enjoy our songs and thoughts about the world

Packaged in a set of videos we call The Egg and Avocado Show!

Episode 2

Egg: Hello and welcome back to *The Egg and Avocado Show!* Today we're gonna be discussing a recent development involving the TV star Tomato Tomato: an award winning actor and model, known for his roles on shows like *Law and Onion*, *Vegetable Tales*, and most recently, *The Office*, but for *Vegetables*.

Avocado: As someone who also identifies as a nontraditional fruit, I felt it would be a fitting topic for today's episode to explain this controversy through a song:

Avocado (song):

Tomato Tomato thought he was a vegetable

Until one day he learned that's not true at all

Although he'd taste so bad as juice

Turns out Tomato is in fact a fruit

And now he's no longer confused

Despite the stereotypes of produce

Episode 3

Egg: Welcome back to *The Egg and Avocado Show*! Today's episode is sponsored by Strawberry Farms! Now Avocado, have you ever started a small-scale internet show and found yourself absolutely parched from the sheer amount of talking you have to do?

Avocado: Yes.

Egg: Well look no further than Strawberry Farms strawberry juice to help meet your needs! Strawberry Farms; they take pride in their quality! Hiring only the best and brightest, harvesting them young and raising them ripe. These strawberries know no world outside of Strawberry Farms, so rest assured they are fully dedicated to providing you the fastest, freshest, strawberry flesh on the market!

Avocado (song):

Strawberry Farms 100% real juice

Questionably sourced but it tastes so good

\$1 a box at your grocery store

Or you can buy it in bulk just like us for more

Episode 4

Egg: Well. Our subscribers have brought to our attention that Strawberry Farms is an unethical provider of strawberry juice and we have cut ties with them. We are truly very sorry.

Avocado: *[takes sip of strawberry juice sitting on the desk with obnoxious straw sound]*

Egg: In other news, we would like to celebrate a new step for the channel! Avocado has just been offered his own TV show, premiering 2 AM this Saturday on Food Network!

Avocado: Sadly this means I'll be leaving the channel for a bit, but I'm looking forward to where this road takes me. So for the last time in a bit, I'd like to say thank you for watching our show. Goodbye for now!

Episode 5

Egg: Welcome! To *The Egg Show*! Get it? Because there's no Avocado! Hehe! Since I'm holding the fort down a bit, for this video I wanted to try my tail at writing a song of my own!

[clears throat and takes a deep breath]

Egg (song):

This is The Egg Show

Hosted by me

No more Avocado

Episode 6

Avocado: Hello folks to the very first taping of *Late Night Avocado*. Joining me tonight is our very special guest: TV star, fruits rights activist, and pop culture icon, Tomato Tomato!

[crowd cheers]

Tomato: Hi! Avocado! It's great to be here!

Avocado: Well it's great to have you! Now I have to ask. Recently I've heard about your newly found identity as a fruit--can you tell us a bit more about how that's affecting your career in entertainment?

Tomato: Well it was a hard road for me but I've been met with an outpouring of support from the network. Not only are they keeping on my show, *The Office*, *But for Vegetables*, they are also

exploring new, more inclusive plotlines in hopes that it will help a whole new generation of nontraditional fruits such as myself grow up no longer feeling like they are bruised or rotten.

Avocado: Think you can reveal any more details?

Tomato: Aha, as much as I'd love to, I don't think I'm allowed to just yet.

Avocado: Are you sure? I'm sure it's not just me wondering how they're gonna write around it.

Tomato: Around?

Avocado: Well you know. You can't quite play the role of a vegetable anymore, but you also don't really fall under the category of a traditional fruit, right?

[crickets]

Tomato: Are you suggesting I'm not a real fruit?

Avocado: No not at all! Tomatoes are a fruit! But I'm just saying...you wouldn't put a tomato in a fruit salad right?

Tomato/crowd: *[gasps loudly; murmurs through audience]*

Avocado: Wait no, I'm sorry--you all took that badly.

[Audience member throws tomato on stage as Avocado and Tomato look in horror]

Avocado: Okay that's super messed up! Umm! We're gonna cut to commercial now but we'll be back after this short break!

Episode 7

Egg: Well. Here we are. I want to be honest with you all. I began this channel with Avocado starting in a cramped apartment filled with cardboard furniture. My bed is still cardboard-- everything is cardboard. Except for this desk. It's real wood. It's the only real thing I have. You see, I've put everything I own into making it look like I own something, but it's done nothing but make me aware of how much I don't have: it's all cardboard. I can't write, I can't come up with

my own ideas, and I can't keep doing this. Avocado, if you're watching this, please come home! Without you, it's just "The Egg." --There is no you and there is no show. I need you!

Episode 8

Reporter 1: Is Avocado anti fruit? After his most recent interview with pseudo-fruit Tomato Tomato, it sure seems like it.

Reporter 2: Avocado, former web star and host of *Late Night Avocado*, has found himself in hot water.

Reporter 3: This isn't the first time Avocado is receiving backlash. After the Strawberry Farms scandal from his *Egg and Avocado Show* days, it was only a matter of time.

[video frame cuts]

Avocado: They do know avocados are also a fruit right...?

Egg: Yeah.

Avocado: What a mess.

Egg: I know. But hey, Welcome back to *The Egg and Avocado Show*. It's nice to have you back.

Avocado: Thanks Egg.

Egg: I think I speak for both of us when I say that I think we kinda lost ourselves somewhere on the path to making content we were proud of. So for today's video, we figured it would be a good idea to return to our roots a bit--meet y'all where this all began. So Avocado and I have a new song for y'all.

Avocado: Yep, yep. I wrote this at the beginning of the show and thought it'd be nice to bring back. Anyway, here it goes!

END