Star Pilgrim: Blending UE Cinematics with AIGC for an Elevated Fantasy and Surrealism in Visuals

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ABSTRACT

Star Pilgrim is an experimental short video artwork displayed on a 16:9 screen. It combines Unreal Engine filmmaking with AIGC techniques. The project used Midjourney to generate a customized dataset of stylized images, which was then used as LoRA training data for style transfer applied to the video footage. Additionally, the creative process involved human-AI collaborative generation of original music and poetry. By blending cinematic visuals with AI-powered generative content, this work aims to explore the unique artistic potential of human and machine creativity. Through its experimental approach, *Star Pilgrim* seeks to push the boundaries of conventional filmmaking, offering a dreamlike and hyper-real interpretation of the concept.

CCS CONCEPTS

• **Applied computing** → **Media arts**.

KEYWORDS

AIGC, Unreal Engine Filmmaking, AI-Generated Content, Style Transfer, Human-AI Co-Creativity in Music, Experimental Video

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1 INTRODUCTION: ARTIST STATEMENT

Star Pilgrim is a visual story and continuous mental journey inspired by the two great sci-fi films *2001: A Space Odyssey (1969)* and *Solaris* (1972)[5][3]. These two Sci-Fi films have held a significant place in the Sci-Fi film genre and film history. In 1968, film master Stanley Kubrick teamed up with Arthur Clark to make *2001*, which was not only famous for many spectacular montage sequences, but its thought-provoking theme on the love and hate relation between humanity and AI technology is so forward-thinking even to these days. In response to *2001*, another film master Andrei Tarkovsky made *Solaris* (1972). The latter Sci-Fi film made film history in its own right regarding its deep space context and theme of humanity in confronting an alien life form unlike anything we have seen before. These two films inspire *Star Pilgrim* by their unconventional and unique presence of alien life forms. The images of other life forms in the universe represent the limitations of our human imagination, the various intelligences that appear in these two films have transcended that limitation and demonstrated a higher level of human imagination.

These two films served as inspiration for the creative development of the pilgrim concept, fueling our desire to combine space art[6] with the exploration of the cosmos.*Star Pilgrim* also pays homage to these two great Sci-Fi films with an original AI soundtrack. It features the interstellar journey of a lone astronaut traveling with a space rover to some remote distant planets experiencing various cinematic surreal situations suggesting intervention of higher intelligence and the unknown of the human future. In one scene, the mysterious pyramid is seen as an intertextual reference to another critically acclaimed contemporary Sci-Fi film *Arrival* (2016), suggesting that our limited concept of time is the communication barrier between humans and aliens.

With emerging technologies, we are trying to combine Unreal Engine (UE) and AI-generated content (AIGC) to explore visual and auditory extensions of the "Star Pilgrim" idea. Employing AI image style transfer, music generation techniques, we aim to experiment with innovative effects on existing UE filmmaking materials. We made a story begin with a poetic and evocative approach, imbuing a sense of mystery and ethereality and adopting an open-ended narrative style, leaving room for interpretation and allowing the audience to engage in their own reflections.

2 PRACTICE METHODS

Date Training: We used 70 Midjourney-generated images as the foundational imagery to train a LoRA of a specific sci-fi style. The Midjourney material featured cyborgs, futuristic robots, and cities, predominantly in blue and black hues. The LoRA was trained through image cropping and automatic labeling, followed by attempts to incorporate specific elements into the style transfer process for the video.

AI-generated Content: We generated content using two methods. The first method involved style transfer using the previously trained LoRA, utilizing SD and Ebsynth[4]. The second method employed AI video generation through Krea[1] third-party platform, by generating motion frames from our original video frame.

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AI-generated Song: We initially drafted the first version of the lyrics and iterated them with the assistance of ChatGPT. Then we use Suno[2] to composed the music, experimenting with various styles and effects. Ultimately, we selected one of the tested styles as our background score and voiceover. The final version combined narration and singing.

For this project, we deliberately used AI technology sparingly in the video to differentiate it from fully AI-generated short films. We aim to explore how AI special effects can be reasonably extended and applied under specific requirements. We hope only using AI as an suitable expressive tool to adapt visual content.

3 CO-CREATING SONG LYRIC

We first write the initial draft of the lyrics, then have ChatGPT polish and modify them several times to get the final lyrics. Then input the lyrics into Suno, through human intervention we continuously adjusting 3 different prompts and undergoing 6 iterations, and select one of the 14 generated songs that best meets the director's expectations as the background music. Here is the following lyric for our Pilgrim theme concept:

The AI Song Lyric:

Since the moment of birth,
It has been there beside our mirth.
It could be a mountain, a sea,
or the unknown of our destiny.

A pilgrim of the stars,
a seeker of relief,
racing against time,
defying physics driven by faith.

Star pilgrims,
believers in the void.
Planets beyond our sight,
Like fish cannot fathom fire, light,

This lonely road,
throughout the day and night.
Star Pilgrims,
believers in the void.
It's been there beside our mirth.
It could be a mountain, a sea,
or the unknown of our destiny.

A pilgrim of the stars.
A seeker of relief.
Racing against time,
defying physics driven by faith.

Star Pilgrims,
believers in the void.

Figure 1: Screenshots of *Star Pilgrim* (2024) scene are provided below, showcasing a range of visual effects from top to bottom: Unreal 3D bulid effect(Image 1), AI style transfer effect (Images 2 and 3), and AI-Generated dynamic Video Imagery effect (Image 4).

This collaborative process of human-AI creation has brought new visual and auditory possibilities to our *Star Pilgrim* project. Allows users without professional music knowledge to easily and economically express their ideas, achieving unity in both visual and auditory aspects. Further enriching the overall conceptual and imaginative space.

4 CONCLUSION

Recent advancements in AI technology have provided artistic new possibilities for creativity. It enables us to quickly and efficiently achieve richer, more surreal visual styles, thereby expanding the potential for imagery and narrative. Our exploratory project explored two methods, based on the concept of *Star Pilgrim*, and are aim to combine realistic visual style of Unreal Engine with the dreamlike, surreal charm of AIGC, adding a new layer of visual poetry to the story. Additionally, we used AI to create songs that aligns with the theme, bringing music composition into a new dimension of expression.

However, this paper does not evaluate the creative impact of human-AI collaboration in content generation. We hope to collect audience suggestions and feedback through surveys in the future. We hope the feedback can continually help us adjust the content, achieving better human-AI co-creation results.

We believe this preliminary artistic exploration can serve as a catalyst, showcasing the potential of AI technology. We aspire for more creative methods to be applied practically in the industry, aiding imagination, enhancing the future possibilities of filmmaking, and opening new avenues for artistic exploration.

Video Link: Star Pilgrim

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