
International Journal of Creative Multimedia

VFX Showcase Review: Projects at UNLOCK 2025

Anuar Hassan

Email Address: anuar.hassan@mmu.edu.my

Multimedia University, Malaysia

ORCID iD: 0009-0002-4523-7645

(Corresponding Author)

Ahmad Azlan

Email Address: ahmadazlan.zafri@mmu.edu.my

Multimedia University, Malaysia

ORCID iD: 0009-0000-0884-0889

Muhammad Firdaus Hashim

Email Address: firdaus.hashim@mmu.edu.my

Multimedia University, Malaysia

ORCID iD: 0009-0002-1560-3261

Abstract

The UNLOCK Final Year Project Exhibition 2025 presented the culminating works of graduating students from the Visual Effects (VFX) programme at Multimedia University. The showcase featured five projects—Sangkara Putra, Indina, Infectious, Vendetta, and Bongkok Tiga—that explored genres ranging from fantasy and science fiction to folklore-inspired horror. Each production combined technical application of industry-standard tools, such as Houdini, Maya, and Nuke, with narrative experimentation and cultural themes. This review examines the curatorial framing of the exhibition, the approaches taken by student teams, and the broader implications for VFX education and practice in Malaysia. By situating the works within pedagogical, industrial, and cultural contexts, the review highlights how the exhibition reflects both the competencies acquired by students and their potential contribution to the local creative economy.

Keywords Visual effects; Final Year Project; UNLOCK 2025; Storytelling; Malaysian creative industry; Exhibition review

Received: 29 August 2025, **Accepted:** 16 September 2025, **Published:** 30 September 2025

Introduction

The UNLOCK Final Year Project Exhibition 2025, organised by the Faculty of Creative Multimedia (FCM), Multimedia University, serves as an annual platform for graduating cohorts to present their final projects to the public, industry partners, and peers. This review focuses on the Visual Effects (VFX) showcase, curated to demonstrate how young artists merge technical expertise with cultural narratives and imaginative storytelling. The exhibition's purpose extends beyond mere presentation — it situates these works at the intersection of academic reflection and the professional VFX landscape. The curatorial framing underscores not only the projects' visual accomplishments but also their relevance to Malaysia's creative industries.

Exhibition Overview

The VFX showcase features five capstone projects (Fig. 1), each embodying a distinct genre and creative approach. Sangkara Putra by Image Nation situates audiences in a superhero narrative of alien invasion, only to reveal that the tale unfolds within a child's imagination. In contrast, Allat Effects' Indina offers a contemplative fantasy that bridges memory, grief, and magical realism, following a barista's journey guided by a mysterious book. The work highlights how the balance of magical realism and grief is convincingly portrayed.

The horror genre is vividly showcased in *CoffeeCrew's Infectious*, where a protagonist's struggle against a monstrous creature descends into the horrifying transformation of his own body. *WEML Production's Vendetta* fuses local corporate intrigue with sci-fi spectacle, blending corruption, vigilante justice, and android prototypes into a cinematic narrative enriched by striking visuals. This ambitious blend of corporate intrigue and science fiction was visually striking, though narratively dense. Finally, *4Mation's Bangkok Tiga* reimagines folklore horror, tracing a detective's relentless pursuit that culminates in a chilling metamorphosis into the mythical Nenek Kebayan. It depicts strong cultural symbolism but also the reliance on traditional folklore horror conventions.

Collectively, these works demonstrate technical proficiency in compositing, simulation, and CGI, while varying in their engagement with cultural themes and narrative depth. The students' commitment is evident in self-funding initiatives and cross-faculty collaborations, supported by peers in performance and cinematography. Guided by experienced Animation and VFX lecturers, alongside external professionals such as Azim Hulaimi (Mira Digital) and Wan Affendy (Bolt Studio), the projects align with industry expectations while retaining academic rigour.

Impact and Relevance

The UNLOCK 2025 VFX showcase holds relevance at multiple levels. Academically, it demonstrates how final-year projects integrate theory, practice, and multidisciplinary collaboration into tangible outcomes [1], [2], [3]. For the industry, these works highlight the readiness of graduates to enter production pipelines with familiarity in leading software, creative teamwork, and problem-solving. At a societal level, projects like *Bongkok Tiga* and *Indina* recontextualise cultural heritage and personal memory through visual effects, bridging Malaysian identity with global storytelling formats [5], [4], [7]. The exhibition suggests that Malaysia's emerging VFX talent is developing competencies relevant to both local and international creative economies [6], [8].

Conclusion

The UNLOCK 2025 VFX showcase illustrates how final-year student projects can function as a bridge between academic training and professional practice. Across the five works, students demonstrated a combination of technical proficiency, collaborative production, and engagement with cultural and narrative themes. While the exhibition primarily represents the achievements of a graduating cohort, it also indicates the ways in which emerging practitioners may align with industry expectations and contribute to Malaysia's growing VFX sector. Rather than a definitive statement on professional readiness, the showcase should be read as evidence of evolving competencies and creative exploration within an educational framework.

References

- [1] G. Bennett, "Pedagogical strategies for teaching virtual production pipelines," *ACM SIGGRAPH Education Papers*, 2023. doi:10.1145/3587421.3595408.
- [2] A. Boutellier, "Teaching virtual production: The challenges of developing a curriculum for real-time VFX," *Film Education Journal*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 175–192, 2023. doi:10.14324/FEJ.06.2.05.
- [3] R. Dober et al., "Navigating the future of VFX education: A SIGGRAPH panel discussion," *ACM Digital Library*, 2025. doi:10.1145/3686182.3687741.
- [4] K. Kasemsarn and F. Nickpour, "Digital storytelling in cultural and heritage tourism: A review of social-media integration and youth engagement frameworks," *Heritage*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 255–271, 2025. doi:10.3390/heritage8020018.
- [5] Q. Y. Lee, G. Musa, and H. Hashim, "Digital storytelling and cultural heritage in Sarawak, Malaysia: A case-based framework," *Journal of Sustainable Tourism & Entrepreneurship*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 45–59, 2023. doi:10.51200/jste.vi4i1.1989.
- [6] Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation, "Malaysia Digital Industry Report 2023: Digital Content Highlights," MDEC, 2024. [Online]. Available: <https://mdec.my/mdir2023>

- [7] H. Shim, S. Kim, and Y. Lee, “Heritage values, digital storytelling, and communication in virtual environments,” *Digital Creativity*, vol. 35, no. 1, pp. 22–38, 2024.
doi:10.1080/14626268.2024.2365124.
- [8] J. Swords, “The emergence of virtual production: A research agenda,” *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, vol. 30, no. 1, pp. 87–103, 2024.
doi:10.1177/13548565231174612.

Acknowledgment

The author acknowledges the Faculty of Creative Multimedia, Multimedia University, colleagues, external collaborators, and the students whose dedication made this exhibition possible.

Funding Information

The author did not receive any funding from external parties for the creation or publication of this article.

Authors’ Bio

Anuar Hassan is a lecturer and Programme Coordinator for the Visual Effects (VFX) programme at the Faculty of Creative Multimedia, Multimedia University. He specialises in cartoons and comics (pen name Sireh), visual effects, animation, and visual storytelling. His work spans academic research, creative practice, and industry collaboration, with a focus on bridging Malaysian cultural narratives with global multimedia practices.

Ahmad Azlan is a lecturer for the Final Year VFX Design 2 Project, with more than four years of combined teaching and industry experience. He plays an active role in assisting and mentoring final-year student projects, guiding them through both creative and technical processes.

Muhammad Firdaus Hashim is a lecturer for the Final Year VFX Design 1 Project, with over ten years of teaching and industry experience, both locally and internationally. He is actively involved in supervising and mentoring final-year student projects, helping students to align their creative outputs with professional industry standards.