

the university of oklahoma

college of arts and sciences film and video studies program

# FVStakes

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# International visitors take campus by storm; FVS faculty members retreat to brainstorm



By Andrew Horton  
Jeanne H. Smith Professor of FVS  
Director of FVS

**FREEZE FRAME:** As a new year begins to unfold, it is worth pausing to at least briefly sum up the 365 days that have just passed by. For starters our FVS majors often remind us that one of the big plusses of being an FVS major is getting to know so many guest scholars, critics and filmmakers brought to campus from around the world. Last year kicked off with “The Making of ‘The Lord of the Rings,’” a world premiere with the filmmaker from New Zealand, Costa Botes, who shared what it is like to work with Peter Jackson. And to skip to the very end, we closed the year with a Kosovo filmmaker, Avni Abazi, and a talented filmmaker from Guatemala, Luis Argueta, brought in by FVS faculty member Robert Lauer.

But our special guests represent only a part of last year’s accomplishments. To focus only on the fall semester, here are 10 areas we are proud of as 2003 begins:

1. Having our two full-time

faculty members — Vicki Sturtevant and Gary Rhodes — settle into the FVS Program.

2. Having our half-time academic adviser — Odette Horton — begin making a fine difference in the quality of advising for our majors.

3. Organizing and hosting the Second Oklahoma Film and Video Studies Conference.



Vicki Sturtevant, Avni Abazi, Gary Rhodes and Andrew Horton at the second Oklahoma Film and Video Studies Conference

4. Offering two courses — Latin American Cinema and American TV Comedy — that had not been taught before.

5. Receiving financial support from the OMU Programming Board, OU School of International and Area Studies and dean of Arts and Sciences to bring Kosovo filmmaker Avni Abazi to campus.

6. Running an evening series of speakers from our own FVS faculty — Sturtevant, Rhodes

and Ben Keppel — as well as Arts and Sciences Dean Paul Bell, together with outside guests such as Janet Staiger of the University of Texas, Austin.

7. Playing host for a visit by the director of the Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival in Clermont, France, Roger Gonin. He screened the Best French Shorts & Best International Shorts. The City of Norman, The Oklahoma Museum of Art Film Program and the OU College of Arts and Sciences co-sponsored the event.

8. The organizing of 100 minutes of OU student and area short films for the Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival in February 2003 with FVS faculty members Rhodes and Heidi Mau traveling to France with the films.

9. An increasing number and variety of internships available for FVS students in California, New York, London, Paris, Greece, Australia and elsewhere.

10. Our first semester of operating with our additional office space in 103 Old Science Hall.

On a more personal note, let’s turn the focus toward alumni who are working successfully in Hollywood. My winter

vacation in December began as FVS grad Matt Payne returned home for the holidays from his full time job on the hit TV series, "24," and stopped by to bring FVS a gift: a set of scripts from the show including the pilot, signed by Keifer Sutherland, the writers, producers and other stars. Then as 2003 began, another recent grad working at an important studio sent a gift to FVS of that studio's Academy Award nominated films on DVD. What I'm highlighting here is a simple but wonderful trend I have noted in the past few years: OU FVS alums want to share and give something back to us, to the program and to the university. The FVS faculty and staff send a hardy "thank you" to all such alums who are truly helping to make a difference in our program for our students.

That brings us to January and the FVS Brainstorming Retreat held on the 11th. The backstory is simple for this event. Even though we are still a young program on campus, we have already had by my count at least three previous Brainstorming Retreats in which faculty, staff and some students talk about what we have been doing, are doing and wish we could do.

Our last retreat was two years ago and featured as an outside observer and commentator, the well-known film scholar David Bordwell of the University of Wisconsin. That fruitful day led to a wish list that included items such as the need for two more full-time faculty and an academic adviser, all

goals that have been met since our session that chilly day in the past!

In the same spirit, 22 of our almost 40 faculty members and three staff members met in January to talk primarily about three areas: What accomplishments from the past two years we are proud of, what we could do better and, finally, what fantasies we would have for the program if we didn't have to worry about dollars, etc! And in the spirit of our previous gathering, we brought in an outside expert to be a sounding board and commentator: John Belton of Rutgers University, the author of many fine film books such as *American Cinema/American Culture* and *Widescreen*.

We are still completing the lists that grew out of what one faculty member called a "joyous" gathering, but some frequent responses include the following:

*What accomplishments in the past two years are we most proud of?*

The diversity of courses, speakers, internships and opportunities for our students; our growth, including adding two faculty, an academic adviser, a larger office staff and increased scholarships, awards and aid for students; new equipment for editing and shooting videos; and pride in the newsletter and our publication of fine student writing.

*What can we do to make FVS better?*

More private funding given this current era of budget cuts across the country in universi-

ties; a technician to maintain and keep track of our new equipment; more space and better classrooms with better working DVD and video equipment; a refining of the balance between film studies and production; new courses that reflect television and new media studies; and a stronger emphasis on the need for quality reading and writing in courses. Belton was impressed with our retreat. In fact, as he noted, had he tried to organize such an event on his campus (and they had never had a film studies retreat), perhaps only two or three people would come.

Belton encouraged us to build on the accomplishments, energy and interdisciplinary enthusiasm of our FVS "community," as he called it, focusing on refinement and quality rather than quantity and expansion.

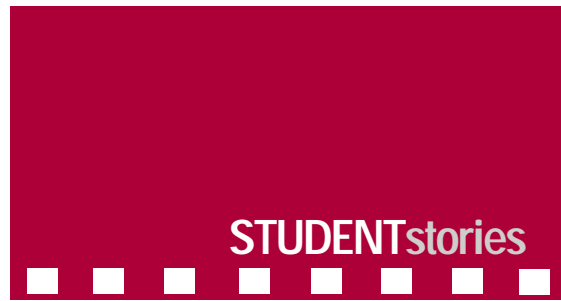
"What I want to suggest is that you recognize the great strengths of the program and do nothing to jeopardize them," he wrote in his report. "Those strengths include a solid core of film studies courses, anchored around a very rigorous Introduction to Film course, and an amazing number of courses dealing with highly diverse topics.

"At the same time, there is clearly a great *esprit de corps* among the faculty and staff. I have never seen such enthusiasm on the part of faculty and staff for a program."

What else can we say!

FVS continues to look forward to a very bright and active future.

# How to get a sneak preview of a current release on campus: an industrious fvs student shares his secrets



By Mark Long  
FVS Senior

*Mark Long's narrative clearly shows that OU students are not only strong in the classroom, but also are strongly proactive individuals who make things happen that benefit the whole community.*  
*Fade in!*

My first exposure to Mexican art came during the spring 2001 semester when I was taking The Art and Architecture of Mesoamerica, taught by Mary Jo Watson.

I did an assigned term paper about Diego Rivera's recreation of Mayan frescos. While researching Rivera, I learned of his marriage to Frida Khalo, who was a driving force in his life and work. In fall 2001, I took another art class called 20<sup>th</sup> Century Mexican American Artists, again taught by Watson. The class centered on the works of Rivera, Khalo, Jose Orozco and David Siqueiros.

In Spanish 1225 I had a conversation with instructor Elena Blackmon about Khalo's works. She told me about a movie that Salma Hayek was making about the life of Khalo. I checked on the Internet Movie Database and found that the film was in production, with Miramax as distributor.

In March 2002, I decided to contact Miramax for a special screening at OU. To increase the potential for success in this

planned venture, I asked Paul Rocha at Hispanic Student Services to point me in the direction of a campus organization with which to team up. The Pan American Student Association, which students call PanAm, contacted me about this proposal. They very much wanted to help me bring this picture to campus.

I e-mailed Miramax and did not get a response. I wrote a letter to the California office and did not get a response. I wrote a letter to the New York City office and did not get a response.

Finally, I contacted Gray Frederickson, FVS faculty member and producer of such films as the "Godfather" series, and he gave me both contact names and phone numbers. One of the phone numbers he gave me got me in the front door. I left a message with a receptionist at the New York Miramax office. Miramax called me in July 2002 to ask what kind of screening I wanted to conduct at OU. I told the representative that I wanted to coordinate the showing with a Hispanic Awareness event. They forwarded me to the production assistant who was showing "Frida" at the Toronto Film Festival. I left a detailed voice mail message about my plans for the screening.

In mid September, I received a call from Elena Zilberman, special promotions representative

for Miramax. She asked me whether Gray Frederickson intended to attend the screening. She also wanted to know whether other guild members who were faculty were going to attend. Gray said that he would be present. When I conveyed this information to Elena, she asked for the date we wanted for the screening. Alejandro Mier, president of the Pan American Student Association, and I selected a date and asked Jane Dye in the FVS office whom I needed to contact for a screening. Kristen Eckstein at the Union Programming Board set the date for Oct. 1 at 7 p.m. and 9 p.m. We had to move it to Oct. 10 because of a change at Miramax.

Alejandro decided to make the first showing a ticketed event and the second one general admission. He enlisted a PanAm student to design the tickets. Elena sent me 10 27-inch-by-40-inch high-quality movie posters, and Alejandro arranged for a one-eighth page advertisement in *The Oklahoma Daily*. UOSA provided publicity funds.

I decided that while Ed Harris had come to campus to introduce "Pollock," it was unlikely that Salma Hayek would introduce "Frida." Given that, I introduced the film, noting the screening was a joint project of PanAm, the Union Programming Board, the UOSA and me.

The 118-minute movie was fantastic. The color registration was spectacular for the meticulously designed lighting, scenery and sets. Stunning visual effects captured the unusual nature of much of Khalo's work. Alfred Molina, the Comte De Reynaud in "Chocolat," played Diego Rivera and Ashley Judd played

Khalo's friend, Tina Madotti. Antonio Banderas played Siqueiros and Edward Norton played Nelson Rockefeller Jr.

A slight frame click at each reel splice, probably resulting from equipment in Meacham Auditorium that is different from that in the new stadium seat theatres, was the only glitch.

However, the auditorium's sound system is better than that in most stadium theatres.

The day after our successful, well-attended screening, Alejandro called to ask what to do with the movie print. My last words to him were, "Send it back to Miramax."

## FVS student accepted as special guest at Sundance

FVS major Sterlin Harjo, a Native American, was accepted as a special guest of the 2003 Sundance Film Festival in January under a special award created by one filmmaker who has had his film accepted in the 2003 festival.

Bird Runningwater, director of Native American Projects for Sundance and a graduate of OU's Native American Studies Program, made the award. It covered Harjo's flight and lodging at the festival and provided the opportunity for

meetings about one of his screenplays with expert advisers.

Harjo was a finalist from among 2,500 applicants for the Sundance Script Development Workshop offered in the spring.

"The head of the Sundance feature film program called to tell me that she loved my script and said that she really wants to support me as a filmmaker and help me make my scripts into films," Harjo said.

Harjo's January Sundance award trip and the script meetings will help him shape a

rewrite that the Summer Script Development Program at Sundance will select next year.

"This is not only a great opportunity for Sterlin, but also a happy moment for our students and program as well," FVS Director Andrew Horton said. "Our graduates continue to find positions and recognition in the film industry."

Harjo, who completed Horton's FVS summer script program in Greece, has finished shooting his first feature film on digital video.



## Horton's Spring 2002 senior seminar class

FVS seniors must complete a senior project that represents their interests. The 2002 class produced videos, scripts and in-depth film studies papers.

# Dean Paul Bell explains all about making home travel videos into works of art

CAMPUSevents

By Heidi Mau and Joanna Rapf  
FVS Faculty Members

It's rare, except perhaps at professional film schools, that faculty and students can learn from their dean about the art of making home movies, travel movies or even an art flick. Paul Bell, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, taught his audience about all those things Oct. 17 as part of the FVS fall lecture series.

We've all watched hours of friends' home movies of various exotic trips, bored by the passing parade of scenery, monuments and the silly antics of participants. These painful productions usually have too much footage, no structure, no sound and no titles. But with

the Apple editing program, iMovie, home moviemakers can edit their footage to create a concise and coherent narrative, make fades or dissolves from one scene to the next and add titles, sound effects and music. iMovie is a simple program that now comes installed on every Macintosh computer.

Using this program, Bell explained how to build a small movie, working with the footage he shot on a trip to China in summer 2002 with a group of OU students. He explained how he selected shots, inserted transitions, made titles and, finally, added appropriate Chinese music downloaded from the Internet into an audio file.

The result was not a long, boring travelogue, but a bril-

liantly condensed overview of a student trip to China, capturing the radiant color of the landscape, the joy of people interacting with each other and the excitement of eyes and ears opening to a new world.

Bell made it obvious that even a simple, free editing program can do wonders, saving moviemakers from investing a lot of money to get a first-rate small movie. They must, of course, invest time and a creative eye and ear.

With enthusiasm and knowledge, Bell presented a complicated process in a way that an audience of varying technological skills could understand. He recognized that the production could be tedious, but showed the rewards are worth the effort.



FVS faculty members and a special guest surround Dean Paul Bell (center) after his presentation on editing home videos. From left, Joanna Rapf, Heidi Mau, Ned Hockman, Andy Horton, Bell, Gary Rhodes, patron Jeanne H. Smith, Misha Nedeljkovich and Tim Hudson. Scott Hale stands behind the group.

# South African brothers share stellar documentaries and star-making advice

By Donovan Kosters  
FVS Senior

What could be more fun than spending several hours in a car driving to Tulsa and back on an otherwise beautiful Saturday with Craig and Damon Foster, filmmakers from Cape Town, South Africa? Nothing, I assure you. I met the Foster brothers when they visited in January to present their acclaimed films, "Cosmic Africa" and "The Great Dance: A Hunter's Story," and served happily as their driver to a Tulsa workshop.

"Cosmic Africa" is the story of an African astronomer, Thebe Medupe, who journeys into Africa's astronomical past, unveiling the deep connection humans have with the cosmos.

In "The Great Dance: A Hunter's Story," the Foster brothers explore the unique relationship between the bushmen of Botswana and the animals they hunt, capturing on film not

only the ritual of the hunt, but the essence of how integral it is to the hunters' very existence.

Both films played to crowded auditoriums and were well received by students and faculty alike. Following "Cosmic Africa," a panel

discussion with the Foster brothers, Andy Horton and Betty Harris, director of women's studies, gave the audience a more in-depth view into the world the brothers documented so well.

The brothers say this is a true story that forces the viewer to look at Africa and the cosmos in a completely different way.

My view of Africa has



Damon Foster, Donovan Kosters and Craig Foster visit Tulsa for the Foster brothers' film workshop.

drastically changed since meeting the Fosters.

On Jan. 25, I drove Craig and Damon to Tulsa, where they conducted a workshop on documentary filmmaking for the Oklahoma Territory Film Council.

Everyone who attended benefited greatly from being taught by two gifted and committed filmmakers. I learned more about the world of digital filmmaking in their three-hour workshop than I could ever learn about it in a book, or many books for that matter.

In addition to the formal workshops and discussions, I was privileged to spend informal driving time discussing their techniques in great depth. While squeezing all the knowledge possible out of them, I found that their interests in life are as varied as mine.

It was a great day. I learned a plethora of information and made two friends.

## The magic of storytelling



Adella, Adella the Storyteller regales an audience of one with a sampling of her tale telling. In January, she shared storytelling strategies and tale techniques in a presentation to Norman residents and university faculty, staff and students.

# A laugh a credit hour: new FVS course explores American TV comedy from Lucy to Homer

FEATUREDCOURSE

By Andrew Horton  
Jeanne H. Smith Professor of FVS  
Director of FVS

Greetings, Dear Friends!

FVS strives to offer new classes exploring various areas of film, media and video not previously taught at OU or, perhaps, anywhere. In fall 2002, I taught a course in American television comedy from “I Love Lucy” to “The Simpsons.” We covered everything from early anarchistic sketch comedy such as that of Ernie Kovacs and Sid Caesar, through early sitcoms like “The Honeymooners,” to classics comedies like “The Mary Tyler Moore Show” and “Northern Exposure,” to “The Simpsons” “Seinfeld” and “South Park.” I asked students to respond to the question, “Years from now, what will you remember from your study of TV comedy this semester?” Below are two responses.

**Tanner Bean**

There are many things that I will take from this class and remember for a long time. Before this class, for instance, the only sitcom that I would have considered myself an “expert” on would have been “Seinfeld.” “Seinfeld” is really the only sitcom that I have watched religiously in a very long time, so I learned a lot about many different sitcoms in this class. One aspect I enjoyed

was learning how much certain sitcoms were influenced by previous ones. For example, I had no idea that “All In The Family” was basically an Americanized version of a British sitcom or that “The Jeffersons” was a spin-off of “All In The Family.” I was also unaware of how certain aspects of Kramer from “Seinfeld” were influenced by Ed Norton in “The Honeymooners.”

The element that I think will be the most memorable experience from our class years from now is a newfound respect and understanding of just how powerful and important sitcoms and just comedy in general are. Sitcoms have been around pretty much since TV began, and it was cool to see older shows that meant so much to so many people decades before I was even born. Also, laughing at sitcoms that were roughly 50 years old made me really respect the timeless nature of comedy. I guess some things have always been funny and always will be!

In addition, the most significant aspect of our class that proved to me just how important sitcoms are was just watching my fellow classmates talk about their personal favorites. There were a lot of common favorites, but there were other sitcoms that meant a great deal to one person while another might never have even seen an

episode. Regardless of the majority, my classmates would talk about their favorite sitcoms with passion and excitement whether anyone else liked them or had even heard of them. So basically what I am trying to say is that it was interesting to see who liked what and why. I never really thought just how meaningful a mere TV sitcom could be.

**Amanda Morgan**

I feel I have had a lifetime of watching American TV comedy. Much of my childhood as well as recent times has been centered around watching television.

But the ways in which we in this class have looked at television comedy has definitely opened my eyes and helped me to understand more about it. I now better understand comedy as a whole, and I think many of these ideas I will carry with me long after the class.

One of the most important ideas I have come to understand in the semester is the importance of laughter, humor and comedy to people, which began much before any of our times or before television.

I think I now also have a better understanding of different types of comedy. As we began the semester dealing with the anarchistic comedy of Ernie Kovacs and Sid Caesar, I found it amazing how each of these comedians captivated the Ameri-

can audience. I had never seen, and barely even heard of either of them, before watching them in this class. I began to see roots for “Saturday Night Live.” The success of each of these shows definitely proves Americans need to laugh. No plot draws people to watch such shows each week. It is the “anarchistic freedom to try just about anything and everything” (Horton, *Laughing Out Loud*, 75) that makes these shows such a success.

We next ventured onto a territory I personally knew more about, the sitcom, although the course has introduced me to a few programs that are new to me. Again, the power of comedy is clear in the sitcom, as scholars point out when they note that of the six blockbuster shows in TV history, four have been sitcoms.

Comedy has amazing power to bring that many Americans together at one time every week. To me it is even amazing that comedy has the power to bring

Cosby Show,” as forming a “family.” It may not always be the husband, wife and 2.5 kids combo, but it is a family. Possibly the weirdest of combinations is

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**“My classmates would talk about their favorite sitcoms with passion and excitement whether anyone else liked them or had even heard of them.”**

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one family together. Just as the popular show “The Simpsons” begins every episode “showing each Simpson rushing home to watch...television” (Horton, 121), many American families do the same.

Finally, this idea of “family” is one that I am sure I will not forget. I had never really thought of every sitcom, be it “Friends,” “Seinfeld,” “Cheers” or “The

that of “Seinfeld.” Jerry, George, Elaine and Kramer “are about as unlikely a bunch of would-be-friends as we can imagine. In fact, as many have pointed out, they are not friends at all” (Horton, 123). But there is a connection among the members of this group, one that is like that of a family. They share just about everything; this is what keeps our families laughing!

Four FVS faculty members and two graduate students attended the annual Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference March 6-9, 2003, in Minneapolis.

Performance and the Image was this year’s plenary session topic and conference focus.

FVS Director Andrew Horton chaired a workshop on new approaches to teaching screenwriting within the university.

Karen Craig, graduate student in drama and associate FVS faculty, participated.

A short film by Heidi Mau, associate professor of Art and Film and Video Studies, titled

“Back to Misery,” was in the conference’s screening program.

English and FVS professor Joanna Rapf chaired a panel on comic performance and presented a paper, “Doing Nothing: Harry Langdon and The Performance of Absence.”

English graduate student Kirk Ashworth presented a paper on Rapf’s panel titled, “What’s So Funny About Pudding, Love and Adam Sandler? The Comical Quotidian in P.T. Anderson’s ‘Punch Drunk Love.’”

FVS assistant professor Victoria Sturtevant presented a panel paper, “Stop the Wedding! William Haines and the Comedy of the Closet.”

The 2003 conference was the first under the organization’s new name, Society for Cinema and Media Studies, which adopted the new name to recognize the impact and changing role of technology on the moving image.

Founded in 1957, the Society is the largest professional organization of educators, filmmakers, historians and scholars dedicated to the study of the moving image in the world.

The Society established its national office at the University of Oklahoma in 1999. For more information about the goals of or membership in the Society, go to [www.cinemastudies.org](http://www.cinemastudies.org) or call (405) 325-8075.

# Greek cinema and culture to come to life during summer adventure

Seminar on the Greek Islands of Kea, Milos & Santorini  
May 28 - June 12, 2003, with seminar director Andrew Horton

The 2003 FVS study tour in Greece will focus on Greek cinema, culture and history as the group travels through the Greek isles.

Daily lectures and screenings of films with visiting Greek filmmakers make this a unique chance to experience another culture and learn about its cinema from "Zorba the Greek" to the current Balkan crisis and beyond.

Discussions will focus on both ancient and modern Greek culture from Aristophanes and Sophocles to Nicos Kazantzakis and George Seferis, among others.

Participants in past years include OU students and alumni as well as interested individuals from across the country and from other nations, including Ireland, England, France and New Zealand.

"A life changing experience," said one participant in Andrew Horton's 2001 script journey through the Greek islands.

Ages of participants in past trips have ranged from 10 to 85.

Frequent opportunities exist for beach time, hikes, shopping and simply time to be alone, read, shop and, of course, sit in cafes by the sea.



2002 FVS Greek seminar participants on the steps of a monastery

The 2003 trip will include time on the islands of Kea, Milos (where Venus de Milo comes from!) and the volcanic isle of Santorini together with time in Athens, Corinth and Delphi. The typical day includes a morning class from 9:30 to 11:30 and a screening and discussion at 6 p.m. Academic credit is possible.

Tour leader Horton is the director of the College of Arts and Sciences Film and Video Studies Program and the Jeanne

H. Smith Professor of Film and Video Studies. He lived in Greece for more than eight years and has led 13 study tours to Greece. Horton is the author of more than 16 film studies and cultural studies books and a

prize-winning screenwriter whose films include Brad Pitt's first feature, "The Dark Side of the Sun."

The price of \$2,775 includes roundtrip airfare from Oklahoma City to Athens, hotel accommodations, transportation, guides, academic and museum fees,

breakfasts and several lunches and dinners.

The trip's cost will vary for travelers originating from other cities, and individuals can purchase their own airfare and pay \$1,590 to cover the other expenses. A reduced rate of \$2,675 is available for OU faculty, students and staff members.

For further information contact the FVS office at 405.325.3020 or visit the Web site at [fvs@ou.edu](mailto:fvs@ou.edu).

INTERNATIONAL FVS

# Hearing the whisper of the gods: the sounds of silence at the annual Pordenone Silent Film Festival

By Vicki Sturtevant  
FVS Faculty Member

*Let us be silent — so we may hear the whisper of the gods.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

The high holy days on my personal calendar are marked off in the third week of October: the Pordenone Silent Film Festival. Those of you who know me are familiar with the besotted look that comes into my eyes when I talk about the Pordenone fest. For those of you who have had the good fortune to escape the enraptured tale, the festival is an eight-day marathon of silent movies held every October in a small town outside of Venice, Italy.

While I know that more than a week of silent films is not the sort of festival that makes every cinephile's heart skip a beat, Pordenone is for me, well, let me put into perspective how much I love this festival: I've never even seen Venice. I've attended this festival twice now, and all I ever see of Venice is the airport, and what I can see from the windows of the bus on the way out to Pordenone. I've always wanted to take a day to explore this lovely city (at least to take a quick gondola ride), but there has never been an afternoon's program of films that I was willing to miss. Not once.

These films are entrancing.

I have resigned myself to the fact that the talkies are probably here to stay, but frankly, contemporary films suffer from the rattle and buzz and overstimulation of everyday life. Silent films have no traffic noises in the background of the sound mix, no gaudy color,



no pop soundtrack, no Dolby digital anything. They exist in a serene universe of soft light, soft music and great glowing faces. It wasn't until my first Pordenone fest that I really understood the grandeur of silent cinema. The part of your brain that processes words and the mundane details of life simply shuts down. You're left in a world filled only with the glory and wonder of the image—the whisper of the gods, indeed.

So if you're looking for Sundance, Pordenone is not the festival for you. There are no limos, no paparazzi, no hotshot young directors. But then the

point of film festivals is to showcase films that otherwise would not be seen. And this aspect of the festival is perhaps the most amazing. The Pordenone films are taken from the bowels of the world's film archives and slaved over all year by chemists and historians devoted to the task of restoring our endangered film heritage. Experts estimate that as much as 90 percent of the silent films ever made are now lost. And even the ones that are "safely" housed in archives are still threatened by a lack of funds and interest. The celluloid and chemicals used to create early films are notoriously unstable. Silent films burst into flames; the plastic crumbles; the chemicals decompose. Archivists exercise constant vigilance in restoring these films and striking clean prints. Every year we see films that were unavailable only the year before. Every festival promises new treasures, films that have been brought back to life, frame by frame.

But then what are these archivists working so hard for if the films that they restore lie fallow in a museum somewhere? The resurrection is not complete until the light shines through the celluloid, and the images come to life before an audience. Being a part of that audience is a privilege, a beautiful and moving experience.

Oh, and the food in Italy is pretty good, too.

# The Chiapas Media Project: videos bring powerful stories of indigenous peoples in Mexico to campus



By Clemencia Rodriguez  
Associate Professor  
Department of Communication  
FVS Faculty Member

Alex Halkin from the Chiapas Media Project showed two videos, “Zapata’s Garden” and “Song of the Earth,” Dec. 5, both of which allowed the campus community to learn about the political and social situation in the Mexican state of Chiapas without intermediaries.

Approximately 200 students and faculty from film and video studies, communication, Spanish and other departments attended the screening and discussion.

The Chiapas Media Project emerged from a political and historical context in which processes of globalization clashed with indigenous communities, Halkin said.

In 1994, a few days before the approval of one of the major free trade agreements among the United States, Mexico, and

Canada, the Zapatista movement took the world’s center stage.

The Zapatistas, a resistance movement of southern Mexico’s indigenous communities, use the Internet, video and e-mail to spread their message that they completely disagree with the agreement, that free trade has only brought more poverty to

indigenous communities, Spanish is a second language; they did not know the history; they did not understand the situation; and they did not have the time to inform themselves.

Typically, foreign reporters have to go in and out of a site in a matter of hours; they interview a couple of English speakers, take

some photos and produce the news story.

The indigenous people realized they needed to tell their story to the whole world in their own terms, and since then, they have made a great effort to master different information and communication technologies.



Indigenous Mexican women taping for their self-produced videos about lifestyle and culture.

their indigenous communities and that not everyone in Mexico is interested in pursuing the American dream of consumerism.

Hundreds of international media and foreign reporters descended on Chiapas to get the story. But they did not speak the languages, given that for Mexican

In service of that goal, Halkin has since 1995 provided video technology and training to indigenous communities in Chiapas. Indigenous video makers have produced dozens of videos about their lifestyle, their culture, their music and their dreams for the future of their communities.

# An offer he couldn't refuse: Rucker pens the familial and culinary history of HBO's "The Sopranos"

By Allen Rucker  
Author  
"The Sopranos Family Cookbook"

*"You're born to this s\*\*t...you are what you are."*

Tony Soprano

I was born in Wichita Falls, Texas, and raised in Bartlesville. My only contact with the mob as a kid was "The Untouchables" on ABC on Thursday night. I met my first Italian-American when I went to college in St. Louis and a waiter on Italian Hill ambled up and said, "Hey, howya doin'?" Before that I thought spaghetti came in a can in the form of little o's.

Then I went to film school at Stanford and met a fellow student from New Jersey named David Chase, family name, De Cesare. Chase made a thesis film titled "The Rise and Fall of Bug Manousos." It was about a guy so fed up with brain-numbing TV and bad take-out food that he turns himself into a mobster and promptly gets killed. Being from Bartlesville, I made a film about motorcycle racing.

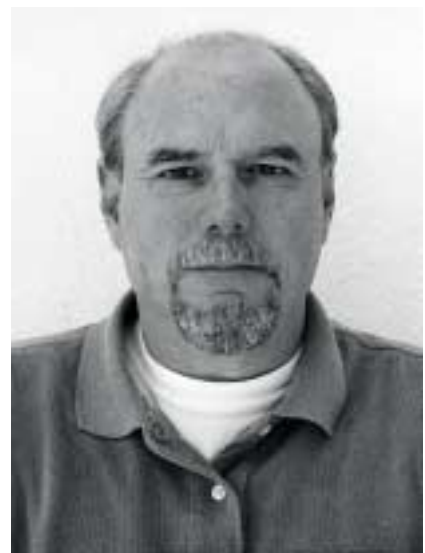
Thirty years later, Chase finally got a shot at making "The Sopranos" and called me to write a book about the show. A few years before, I had written, with comedian Martin Mull, a book and a series of cable specials titled "The His-

tory of White People In America." It was a bone-chilling examination of white-bread, mayonnaise-eating, Midwest culture. Somehow Chase made the link between Mayo-Americans in Ohio and Italian-Americans in New Jersey. Go figure.

The book I wrote, *The Sopranos: A Family History*, was in the same mock-journalistic style as "White People," only bloodier. Through a made-up crime reporter named Jeffrey Wernick, I traced the Sopranos and friends from their roots in the province of Avellino in southern Italy through Tony's boyhood in West Orange, N.J., and up to his daughter's whiny e-mails about her overbearing parents. There are few television shows where the characters are so rich and so rooted in reality that they have a compelling history. The history of "Yes, Dear" would run about a page and a half.

The next call I got was to write a Sopranos family cookbook. Apparently HBO kept getting letters from viewers who wanted to know what to fix for their friends who came over to watch the show on Sunday night. Being neither a cook nor Italian, I hesitated. Then we called in a fine southern Italian food writer, Michele Scicolone, who probably got the job on the basis of her name alone. She knew the food, I knew the

ALUMNIVIEWS



Sopranos – it was a marriage made in paisan heaven.

Like the family history, *The Sopranos Family Cookbook* is written from inside the show, not outside. In this case, the faux-author is Artie Bucco, proprietor of Nuovo Vesuvio, Tony's favorite eatery and home to Artie's own creations like "Osso Buco a la Bucco." As Artie implores, "Please come by and sample our best. Reservations are recommended."

Food is more central to "The Sopranos" than probably any television show not on the Food Channel. Every character has a favorite dish, or 12, and a story to go along with it. Uncle Junior waxes nostalgic about the old days in Newark's Little Italy. Tony's sister Janice reminisces about her mom's overcooked

(Continues, Page 14)

## Publications, awards, presentations and other faculty accomplishments



**Andrew Horton**, Jeanne H. Smith Professor of Film and Video Studies — **Book chapters:** “Jerry Lewis in Emir Kusturica’s ‘Arizona Dream’: ‘Nobody Drives the Big Models Any More,’” in editor Murray Pomerance’s anthology *Enfant Terrible: The Films of Jerry Lewis*. New York University Press. “Reel Landscapes: Cinematic Environments Documented and Created,” in Penny Richards and I. Robertson’s *Studying Landscapes*. London, 2002. **Journal Essays** “Laughter Dark & Joyous in Recent Films From the Former Yugoslavia,” *Film Quarterly* (published by the University of California Press). October 2002. “Going for Both Laughter and Tears: The Craft of Mixing Humor and Pain,” *Screentalk* (September/October 2002) pp. 60-61. “‘No Man’s Land’: A Review,” *Cineaste* (Spring 2002) pp. 38-39. **Screenwriting:** script adviser for the documentary “Andy Payne: Cherokee Runner” by Dan Bigbee (56 minutes) aired on PBS stations, October 2002. **Conference papers:** “Dark & Joyous Laughter in the Balkans: ‘No Man’s Land,’” The Australian-New Zealand Film and History Conference, Flinders University, Australia, November 2002, “History as Myth and Myth as History in the Cinema of Theo Angelopoulos,” The First Film & History Conference, University of Cape Town,

South Africa, August 2002. **Speaking Engagements:** Invited speaker at the University of Michigan in September 2002 to speak on Balkan and Greek cinemas and at McAlaster University in Minneapolis in October 2002 to speak on global screenwriting today, guest on NPR’s Saturday morning cultural program in October, speaking with Lynn Neary on Hollywood remakes.

**Tim Hudson** was selected as a National Association of Television Program Executives Faculty Fellow. As an NATPE Faculty Fellow, Hudson received complimentary registration, lodging and full access to all sessions and activities at the NATPE 2003 Conference and Exhibition in New Orleans Jan. 20-23. He also participated in several exclusive fellowship events at the conference. “This year was a particularly competitive year. We had a large pool of first time applications as well as many applications from past NATPE faculty fellows,” said Greg Pitts, director of NAPTE Faculty and Student Programs.

**Gary Rhodes**, FVS faculty member. **Book:** *Horror at the Drive-In*, published by McFarland and Co. The book is an edited collection of works from cinema scholars around the world. **Journal essays:** “Mockumentary and the Production of Realist Horror” in

the new issue of the journal *Post-Script*, and “The Horror Film Crisis of 1932” in *Monsters From the Vault*. **Films:** “Lugosi: Hollywood’s Dracula” has just been released on DVD, and “Solo Flight” will be released on DVD in March 2003. **Book Contract:** He has just signed for the co-editorship of a book-length anthology on mockumentary film to be published by McFarland and Co.”

**Victoria Sturtevant**, assistant professor of film and video studies, spent Oct. 12-20, 2002 in Italy this year, as an invited participant in the “Collegium Sacilense,” a gathering of silent film scholars and students held at the annual festival of silent films (“Le Giornate del Cinema Muto”) just outside Venice. **Papers:** “As If It Is a Masterpiece: Conversations with the Giornate accompanists,” in the festival’s annual publication, *The Collegium Papers*. She is currently at work on a paper titled “Getting Hysterical: Thelma & Louise & Laughter” for a forthcoming anthology of essays on the film “Thelma & Louise,” published by the Cambridge University Press Film Handbooks Series.

**Jeff Van Hanken**, professional screenwriter and filmmaker on the FVS faculty, taught the FVS Feature Screenwriting class during fall 2002. After successfully working with Dreamworks’

producer Michael De Luca on the initial HOLA Film Project — an award-winning short film project comprising five films based on original stories written by at-risk Latino and African-American youth from Los Angeles' Rampart District — he is now making the film project a permanent line in the budget for Los Angeles' HOLA youth center. Because of the hard work of the original participants — all of whom are currently pursuing future film ideas — others from their community will have the opportunity to write, act and produce their own original stories on a continuing basis. One of his other goals is to produce a similar project in Oklahoma, one that he hopes represents the community of Oklahoma as well as the first one represented the neighborhoods of inner-city Los Angeles.

**Joanna E. Rapf**, FVS faculty member. **Journal Essays:** "Queen of the Movies: Marie Dressler and 'Politics,'" in *The Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (October-

December 2002): 309-322.

**Robert Lauer**, FVS faculty member. **Article:** "'Run Lola Run' at the Dawn of Postmodernity," accepted for publication in the first issue of *Simile*, a University of Toronto e-journal at <http://simile.fis.utoronto.ca.>, is scheduled to appear in the February 2003 issue.

**Misha Nedeljkovich**, FVS faculty member. **Book essay:** "Freedom of Personal Choice"

has been published in *Television, The Age of Maturity: Fifty Views*, edited by Branka Otasevic. (RTS Publishers 2002) pp.177.

The author asked 50 European television professionals to come up with their ideas about the future of television. The respondents come from many different areas of television production.



Still from one of the films in the HOLA series

pork, or what her father called "Particle Board a la Livia." Hefty boy Bobby Bacala rants about "the cult of thinness" in America that is tormenting our young people. The characters, in short, wrote the book – I just typed it.

Twenty times a day people ask me, "Why is 'The Sopranos' so popular?" My reply is, besides being arguably the best written, best acted show in the history of

the medium, it is about a universe of rich, complicated characters who love life. They sing, tell jokes, wear nice clothes, hang around friends, drink vino, and *eat*. Food is key. As Artie so aptly puts it, "Food is *giola di vivere*, zest for life." Everyone else on TV seems to have a *job*, whether it's solving a bloody homicide or picking a wife from 30 starry-eyed ingénues. The Sopranos and

friends, whatever their criminal and emotional shortcomings, have a *life*.

So pull up a chair and try a little baked ziti. As any Italian grandma would insist, "Mangia, mangia!" Eat and enjoy.

*Allen Rucker attended OU as a freshman in 1963-1964. He has written two books about "The Sopranos," HBO's award-winning drama.*

## Contributors

Tanner Bean  
Andrew Horton  
Donovan Kusters  
Mark Long  
Heidi Mau

Amanda Morgan  
Joanna Rapf  
Clemencia Rodriguez  
Allen Rucker  
Vicki Sturtevant

# FVStakes

Editor  
Kathryn Jenson White  
Assistant Editor  
Rachel Lipsey

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University of Oklahoma  
Film and Video Studies Program  
640 Parrington Oval  
Norman, OK 73019-2004

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